

8 Sissy hypno in a trans-affirming register

Shifting orders of pornography online

Maureen Kosse and Kira Hall

Introduction

During the past decade of new media and pandemic lockdowns, self-produced pornographic content has thrived online. Its proliferation on crowdsourcing platforms like OnlyFans has led to the production of increasingly niche sexual content (Easterbrook-Smith 2023), as citizen producers strive to create representations that appeal to more diverse publics. This development has paved the way for the trans-affirming subgenre of ‘sissy hypno’ that is the focus of this article. Hypnosis pornography and erotic hypnosis, referred to as ‘hypno’ collectively, is a comparatively new multimedia genre that typically involves the remixing of professionally produced pornography with sounds, images and text to induce a state of sexual suggestibility and hyperarousal in the viewer (Gilbert 2020). Building on a much longer intertwined history between hypnosis and pornography (cf. Mackay and Mackay 2021), hypno covers a wide range of themes, with sissy hypno – also known as ‘forced-feminization’ porn – one of its fastest growing genres. Sissy hypno is designed to make the viewer feel as though they are being brainwashed into a different gender identity (‘forced’), most often in the direction of male-to-female (‘feminization’). Videos feature visual and audio stimuli that include pulsing lights and images, fast cuts of pornographic videos, spinning spirals, binaural audio tracks and subliminal auditory and textual messages. Many videos are narrated through automated text-to-speech programs, lending them a clinical, robotic quality. Although sissy hypno initially emerged in a niche market, its broad popularity has contributed to the creation of hypno-specific platforms like HypnoTube.

Spokespersons promoting anti-transgender views have positioned sissy hypno as dangerous to public health, citing its potential to coerce vulnerable cisgender consumers into believing they are transgender (e.g., Gluck 2020; Shrier 2020). Yet producers and consumers of sissy hypno display a range of attitudes in relation to the genre. For instance, while ‘typical’ sissy hypno

reproduces scenes of erotic humiliation for an assumed cisgender male consumer, the emerging subgenre of trans-affirming hypno seeks to legitimate transfeminine identification. This chapter analyzes the rise of this higher indexical order (Silverstein 2023) with consideration of the perspectives of online sex workers who produce this content. Metapragmatic data taken from interviews, blog sites and online videos expose how a new generation of content producers disrupts the transphobic tropes of mainstream porn by taking a deliberately non-stigmatizing approach to transfemininity. Although the indexes of sissy hypno remain recognizable in these videos, the narrative framing is altered to advance new register effects that do not conflate feminization with humiliation, exemplifying the metapragmatic process of *indexical inoculation* (Silverstein 2023; Barrett and Hall 2024). The chapter highlights the importance of analyzing online pornography as situated within a politics of identity and thus always evolving, even as its critics remain focused on conventional indexical orders.

Anti-porn activists tend to focus on pornography as having static semi-osis based on misogyny (e.g., Bindel 2019), but researchers tracking the rise of self-produced pornographic content over the past decade have called attention to its shifting semiotic contours (Mercer 2017; Gilbert 2020; Watson 2021). For the purposes of this chapter, we define porn through Sarah Ashton, Karalyn McDonald and Maggie Kirkman's (2019:163) working definition: 'material deemed sexual, given the context, that has the primary intention of sexually arousing the consumer, and is produced and distributed with the consent of all persons involved.' We embrace this definition first because of its emphasis on consent, noting the fraught nature of this concept when applied to pornography and sex work (Padgett 2020; Rowlett and Borba, this volume). As feminist researchers, we maintain that nonconsensual representations are not pornography at all but instead acts of violence. Second, we appreciate the definition's recognition that interpreting material as sexual depends on context. As sociocultural linguistic researchers, we believe that pornographic representations are best analyzed with attention to changing societal attitudes about gender and sexuality (cf. Kosse 2022). Online feedback loops between producer and consumer have led to innovations that refigure pornography's expected tropes and thus may not be recognized as pornography at all by anti-porn critics.

The importance of context to pornography is readily seen in recent research emphasizing the vast imaginative capacity of online content producers. Although Ilir Rama et al. (2023) find that pornographic algorithms on Pornhub reproduce heteronormative perspectives, John Mercer (2017) emphasizes that online pornography shifts as consumers demand more compelling, unique fantasies. The widespread circulation of pornographic content over social media has led to the formation of

communities built around specific types of erotic expertise. For example, Brian Watson (2021:201) offers the example of a Reddit erotic community in which users critique the ‘gaps between erotic representation and users’ desires,’ demanding more responsive content. As pornography becomes more accessible to produce and circulate online, minoritized content producers are featuring ‘bodies and subjectivities that until now have only been contemptible objects of pornographic representation: women, sexual minorities, non-white or disabled bodies, transsexuals, intersexuals and transgender people’ (Preciado 2011, as cited in Heredia 2022:233). Sometimes called ‘post-porn,’ this movement ‘distorts traditional power relations and uses pornography both as an essential battlefield to make certain identities and sexualities visible, and as a political platform to fight against existing hegemonies’ (Heredia 2022:234).

Consumers of sissy hypno tend to be cisgender men and transgender women, although their explained reasons for watching differ. A pilot study conducted by Sundara Vadapalli and Daria Kuss (2024) found that cisgender men reported using sissy hypno to explore escapist fantasies and submissive sexual behavior, while transgender women reported using sissy hypno to self-affirm their gender identity (see also Gilbert 2020). Our collection of metapragmatic data, which includes an extended interview with erotic hypnosis recording artist Jenny DeMilo and feminization instruction videos by hypno creators SissyLegs and Nina Dream, suggests that producers are keenly aware of the differing motivations that lead cis and trans customers to engage with sissy hypno content. Much like phone sex workers in the telecommunications era of the 900 number (Hall 1995), online sex workers display knowledge of these differences and construct fantasy narratives that appeal to a diverse range of psychological motivations (see also Martins, this volume).

This chapter provides a social semiotic analysis of the role played by citizen content producers in countering the transphobic tropes of conventional sissy hypno. Although anti-trans groups depict the genre as a brainwashing tool for trans ‘recruitment’ (Section 2), its use of hypnosis tropes is situated within a semiotics of entertainment that can be traced back to early cinematic appropriations of clinical hypnosis as a sexy form of mind manipulation (Section 3). Our analysis of a conventional sissy hypno video (Section 4) alongside a trans-affirming hypno video (Section 5) reveals how the genre has adapted to changing views of gender under pornography’s democratization online, moving from conversion discourses based on humiliation to self-realization discourses designed to ‘unwrap the inner sissy.’ By reframing mainstream tropes in trans-affirming language, online sex workers provide the genre’s expected content while updating it to address evolving understandings of transgender identification, shifting the indexical relations on which sissy porn is based.

Sissy hypno and its anti-trans critics

A previous generation of scholars writing about the politics of pornography in the late 20th century noted disturbing parallels between the anti-porn discourses of right-wing politicians and radical feminist groups (for a review, see Hall 1995). These parallels have found new life in the rise of what is often called ‘gender-critical feminism,’ a sex-essentialist platform holding that the fight for women’s equality must be based on the ‘fact’ of biological sex. The use of the term *feminism* to describe this movement is misguided in our view, as its deterministic perspective on gender upholds the binaristic thinking that excludes the political agency of all gender minorities, including women. Its practitioners argue that the understanding of gender as a social construct by queer and trans scholars is ‘an ideological tool of deflection away from the everyday politics of “real” women’s lives’ (Bassi and LaFleur 2022) and that the right to self-determine gender, therefore, constitutes a threat to (cisgender) women. In this section, we discuss the ways that sissy porn has become an unexpected player in attempts to undermine the legitimacy of transgender identities. Gender criticals (as we reference them here) have joined far-right groups in citing the genre’s rapid growth as evidence that transness is a social contagion (e.g., Shrier 2020) and sexual fetish (e.g., Blanchard 1989).

The political targeting of sissy hypno is seen in a statement submitted in 2020 to the UK Women and Equalities Committee on Reform of the Gender Recognition Act, which outlines why the right to gender self-authorship should be repealed. The author of the statement, the Women’s Human Rights Campaign, is a UK-based gender-critical organization founded in 2019 by Sheila Jeffreys, whose radical feminist anti-porn activism won her much notoriety in the feminist ‘sex wars’ of the 1980s and 1990s. To fulfill its stated mission of ‘maintain[ing] language protecting women and girls on the basis of sex rather than “gender” or “gender identity,”’ the Campaign strives to limit the UK government’s recognition of transgender people. When listing the ‘forces that construct transgenderism,’ the statement includes a prominent entry on sissy hypno:

A recently developed and rapidly proliferating category of pornography called ‘sissy hypno’ hypnotises men to feel as if they are women for the purpose of sexual excitement. There is considerable evidence from self reporting by the consumers that this hypnosis can make them feel as if they are transgender. Gluck found that, ‘there are countless threads posted to Reddit questioning if gender dysphoria is brought on by exposure to pornography and the development of a sissy fetish’ (Gluck 2020).

(Women’s Human Rights Campaign 2020)

The expert cited in this statement, however, is not a social scientist but an anti-trans essayist and founder of the anti-trans online newsletter *Reduxx*. Genevieve Gluck is regularly featured on anti-trans podcasts and platforms, where she speaks about ‘the trans cult’ and sissy hypno as a brainwashing tool. Gluck argues that viewing porn featuring transgender subjects leads to transgender identification, though there is no statistical evidence linking the two.

To be fair, although consumers largely express positive associations with hypno porn, Vadapalli and Kuss (2024) note that some do view their consumption of such videos as compulsive or addictive; this falls in line with research on pornographic addiction more generally, which finds that, among men, novel and taboo sexual stimuli trigger reward cues in the brain (Banca et al. 2016). Consequently, men contributing to ‘porn recovery’ chat forums occasionally point to sissy porn as a force that artificially changed their gender and sexual identity. Indeed, gender criticals often cite the work of trans activist Andrea Long Chu (2019), who theorizes transness-as-desire through a discussion of the ways sissy hypno ‘made her trans’, as proof of the genre’s coercive potential. These examples notwithstanding, scholars researching the effects of erotic hypnosis hold that the genre does not override one’s ability to consent but rather provides a conceit allowing consumers to offset shame around their sexual or gender interests (Gilbert 2020; Mackay and Mackay 2021; Vadapalli and Kuss 2024). The hypno content examined for this chapter indicates that there is much variety and nuance within the genre; this is overlooked by those who hold anti-porn and anti-trans positions.

The clinical and stage origins of erotic hypnosis

Anxieties about hypnosis as a form of brainwashing have led to widescale bans of hypno porn on Pornhub and OnlyFans on the premise that it is a form of brainwashing (Valens 2020). In this section, we reveal the ways that this premise is a social construction that emerged within medical discourses positioning hypnosis as a panacea for sexual perversion as well as media discourses associating the practice with nonconsensual seduction. From its very beginnings, hypnosis has been associated with deviance, making it a rich resource for pornography. We begin by asking two deceptively simple questions: What exactly is hypnosis? Does it even work? The first can be answered only through attention to the contextualized assemblages that brought it into being, and the second, as with most questions about desire and volition, is not quite answerable; the effectiveness of hypnotic methods depends on the setting as well as the disposition of the hypnotized. Here, we outline significant differences between what is often identified as *clinical hypnosis* vs *stage hypnosis*

(Brann and Williamson 2012), the former emerging within the medical industry as a psychologically oriented treatment and the latter within the entertainment industry as a consumption-driven practice. We argue that gender-critical and right-wing critiques of sissy hypno ‘misrecognize’ the distinction between clinical and stage hypnosis (Barrett and Hall 2024), interpreting a semiotics of entertainment through debunked tropes of clinical conversion.

In the foreword to *The Handbook of Contemporary Clinical Hypnosis*, Spiegel (2012:xvii) defines hypnosis as combining ‘highly focused attention’ with ‘the ability to disassociate.’ Research on the effects of hypnosis on patients indicates a heightened capability of concentration and imagination, greater tolerance for logical incongruities and associations found strange otherwise (Williamson 2012) and higher degrees of cognitive flexibility, which itself depends on hypnotic susceptibility (Dienes et al. 2009). However, this same research also reports a high degree of variability in the experiences of hypnosis subjects, with personal investment as a major factor in the effectiveness of the treatment. Michael Yapko (2014:25) asserts that hypnotism necessarily involves consent on behalf of the client, as hypnotic subjects cannot be forced to concentrate, relax or form bonds of trust with the practitioner; nonetheless, researchers agree that some people are more ‘hypnotizable’ than others (Dienes et al. 2009; Green and Lynn 2010). Notably, all the hypnosis research consulted for this chapter emphasizes that hypnosis should be used as a secondary therapeutic strategy to other forms of treatment. Studies suggest that hypnosis can be effective for treating pain, pre-surgery anxiety and migraines (Brann and Williamson 2012), but not for changing elements of one’s core sense of identity.

While induced trance states have existed in some form or another throughout human history, clinical hypnosis, as it exists today, began with 18th-century German physician Franz Mesmer’s (1734–1815) notion of ‘animal magnetism,’ the idea that all living beings have a universal life essence flowing through them and that mental and physical illnesses are the blockages of this flow. Mesmer advocated for hypnotism as a treatment involving the hand-based manipulation of this magnetic flow (Williamson 2012). The idea that hypnotic treatment could release an inhibited animal magnetism seized the public imagination and developed an erotic allure, mainly through descriptions of treatment scenarios involving female patients thought to be sexually repressed. Touted as enabling complete control over the mind of another, the practice became intimately associated with the eroticization of male power over women (Janik 2014; Mackay and Mackay 2021). Predictably, the treatment’s primary patients during this period were women categorized as ‘hysterical’ (Mackay and Mackay 2023).

The relationship between hypnosis and eroticism formulated in this early era set the stage for its uptake as an edgy but often glamorous method of entertainment, constituting the consumption-oriented genre of stage hypnosis. Although Mesmer intended hypnosis to be used as a healing technique, the mesmerist stage performance emphasized the more sensational ideas of hypnotic trance states and mind control. Such techniques coalesced into a fantastical theater genre showcasing the transformative power of what came to be understood as coercive persuasion, later appealing to the cinematographers who ushered in the silent film and classical Hollywood cinema eras. In fact, Georges Méliès (1861–1938), a silent filmmaker often credited as the first to recognize the potential of narrative film, was himself a magician whose interest in spectacular visual effects led him to feature a hypnotist-magician thief in his film *The Hypnotist's Revenge* (1909).

The cinematic shift to a visual-aural medium changed the way hypnotic action was represented. James Braid (1851), a pioneering researcher in medical hypnosis, had promoted the view of hypnosis as a kind of nervous sleep that can be brought about by prolonged fixation on a bright object. The shift from the hands to the eyes carried tremendous appeal for early cinematographers, who experimented with bringing viewers into the visual experience of being hypnotized. By the mid-20th century, visual illusions such as the spinning spiral disk, now emblematic of hypno porn, were broadly recognized as hypnosis-inducing tools (Cooke and Vogt 1965). By importing 'gimmicks' such as these, cinematographers manipulated the relationship between screen and audience to mirror that of hypnotist and patient, establishing the producer-consumer intimacy that is central to sissy hypno. Indeed, Deirdre Barrett (2006:13) finds that films depicting induction through the hypnotizer's stare instead of the hypnotizer's hand passes are almost always about seduction, noting their similarity to 'the eye contact ethologists have labeled "the copulatory gaze."' Ruggero Eugeni (2019:285) has rightfully observed that the cinematic screen 'plays a key role in allowing and encouraging the identification of the hypnotic and the cinematographic,' but to this we would add the erotic.

Early cinema was preoccupied with the potentially coercive nature of hypnosis, inspiring serious debate on whether it was possible 'to force a person of good principles and honesty to commit crimes' (Sacchi et al. 2020:93). This preoccupation intensified in the 1950s when stories of mind manipulation exacerbated anxieties around communism, nuclear warfare and McCarthyan ideological purges. Cinematographers picked up on the public's fascination with these connections by developing horror films like *Terror in the Haunted House* (1958), the first film to use 'Psychorama' subliminal communication techniques (Figure 8.1); textual and photographic images flashed so quickly in the background that they were barely perceivable. Notably, as suggested by the movie lobby card in Figure 8.1,



Figure 8.1 Psychorama and hypno spiral, *Terror in the Haunted House* (1958)

this is also one of the first films to feature the emblematic hypnotic spiral, used by the male psychologist to retrieve the female protagonist's deeply repressed memories. As observed in the next section, today's sissy hypno still makes use of these visual illusion techniques, bringing viewers into a kind of temporal drag (Freeman 2010, Hall 2013) indexical of an age when hypnosis had power.

Conversion discourses in conventional sissy hypno

Conventional sissy hypno differs from trans-affirming sissy hypno in that it relies on discourses of conversion. The genre builds on the longstanding widespread belief that hypnosis has the power to alter not just one's behavior but also one's core sense of identity. Ironically, this is the same belief that has driven the use of hypnosis in 'conversion therapy,' a now discredited set of practices, often religious in design, intended to change a person's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

The origins of contemporary conversion therapy can be traced to the 1970s when a team of psychologists at UCLA working with the 'Feminine Boy Project' adapted the techniques of autism-directed Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) to prevent gender-nonconforming children from becoming gay or transsexual (Silberman 2015; Yergeau 2017). The therapy's allure arose from Freudian-inspired views that homosexuality was a form of

arrested development caused by inappropriate parenting and could thus be corrected. Advocates for the use of hypnosis in conversion therapy report significant effects among already highly hypnotizable persons, but there is little evidence for the therapy's effectiveness overall (McConkey, Szeps and Barnier 2001). In fact, the US-based Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has suggested replacing the label 'conversion therapy' with 'gender identity/sexual orientation change efforts,' as the professional literature does not qualify these practices as genuine therapy (SAMHSA 2015). Even if successful conversions do exist, the practice is connected with higher rates of depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation among clients and is rejected by both US-based and international psychology and psychiatry professional organizations (e.g., Conselho Federal de Psicologia 1999; Ashley 2020; Heiden-Rootes et al. 2022; HRC Foundation 2023). Nevertheless, conversion therapy, including hypnosis, continues to be used by diverse social and religious groups to 'treat' LGBTQ+ identities across the world.

Given the influential place of such therapies in normative contexts, it is not surprising that mainstream forms of sissy hypno are framed in conversion discourses. Porn videos in this tradition typically assume a cisheterosexual male viewer who can be 'converted' to sissy identification against his will, specifically by subjecting himself to an audiovisual experience deploying brainwashing techniques that include the hypno spiral, the robotic voice and subliminal messaging. Conversion is the key conceit of mainstream sissy hypno. The viewer is positioned as a helpless consumer who is forced by the medium to take on feminized desires; hence, the label 'forced femininization.' The reasoning behind the use of this conceit is clear within a masculinist, cisheteronormative context that condemns feminizing behaviors in men. The viewer is positioned not as an active or intentional participant but as a brainwashed man incapable of resisting the identity-changing power of unwanted hypnosis. Stereotypical uses of homophobic and transphobic hate speech further evoke the illicit nature of the experience, affirming normative readings of emasculation as perversion.

Current censorship efforts to ban sissy hypno likewise revolve around the belief that the genre has the power to 'brainwash' unsuspecting men into thinking that they want to be women, posing a significant danger to normative visions of idealized American masculinity. In such discourses, the power to convert is attributed not to the religiously motivated therapist but to the sissy hypno content producer. As suggested by our earlier discussion of Gluck (2020), many gender criticals argue that sissy porn is a transgender recruitment tool circulated by 'gender ideologues' intent on converting as many men as possible into 'biologically false' ways of thinking. In this sense, the condemnation of sissy hypno by gender criticals

parallels their condemnation of nonbinary and transgender pronouns, which they likewise interpret as a form of linguistic brainwashing. For example, the broadly circulating gender-critical essay *Pronouns are Rohypnol* compares “‘preferred’ pronouns” to a mind-altering drug that will ‘change our perception, lower our defences, make us react differently, alter the reality in front of us’ (Kerr 2019). Given that Rohypnol is popularly known as the ‘date-rape drug,’ the comparison also recalls malicious associations of trans people with violence against women (Barrett and Hall 2024).

The analysis below focuses on a ‘typical’ sissy hypno video drawn from Hypnotube, posted in 2022 by user HypnoBunny69. Titled *Ultimate Sissy Hypno Deep Brainwash*, the 13-minute piece is popular, showing 480,946 views and a 93% approval rating at the time of this writing. While pornographic videos such as these are not usually analyzed in narrative terms, the visual progression of mainstream sissy hypno often incorporates each of the six elements that William Labov (1972) identified some 50 years ago as common to narrative structure: abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, evaluation and coda. That said, each element of the narrative showcases tropes and techniques that take on special meaning within the online genre of sissy hypno, leading to our use of a slightly modified vocabulary (admittedly tongue-in-cheek) that draws from sexual registers found on social media and porn sites: *fapstract*, *sexual orientation*, *cum-plicating action*, *sexual resolution*, *she-valuation* and *happy ending*. With the exception of she-valuation, which is a type of evaluation specific to feminization videos, these narrative elements are found in many genres of pornography. Our adaptation of Labov’s terminology is purposefully irreverent, acknowledging the sociolinguistic critique of the model as leading to idealized, essentialized and homogenized accounts of both narratives and narrators (Georgakopoulou and Goutsos 2000; Georgakopoulou 2007). In contrast, we adapt the model as an accessible heuristic for illuminating the narrative diversity found across sissy hypno’s indexical orders. Before continuing, we caution the reader that our analysis of this diversity highlights transphobic and misogynistic tropes, imagery and language.

Fapstract

Just as the abstract in Labov’s narrative model is designed to attract attention from the listener, the 20-second *fapstract* of this 13-minute video captures the viewers’ attention with a moving visual of the hypno spiral (Figures 8.2a–c). We have incorporated the slang term *fap* into our adaptation of Labov’s model to emphasize the importance of this initial narrative element to the ‘selling’ of online pornography (*fap* is an onomatopoeic term commonly used for masturbation on social media, as found, for example, in ‘NoFap’



Figure 8.2a Mindless (Timestamp: 00:08)

Figure 8.2b Blank (Timestamp: 00:09)

Figure 8.2c Relaxed (Timestamp: 00:10)

abstinence discourses; see Burnett 2022; Burnett, Borba and Hiramoto, forthcoming). In the case of sissy hypno, the hypno spiral is deeply indexical of hypno porn, recalling the trope of mind control that is central to the genre. Its use in the opening seconds sets out the experience as one of brainwashing instead of volition, potentially enabling cisgender viewers to release themselves from any agency they may associate with assuming feminine identification in the sexual act. Pink and black concentric rings move outward and toward the viewer, giving a sense of forward momentum, as if the viewer is being drawn into the mind-control experience. Behind the rings, slightly obscured, words flash quickly and repetitively: *mindless, blank, relaxed, mindless, blank, relaxed*. A faded human voice speaks in the background, but the words are not distinguishable. The loudest sound is an ongoing rhythmic slap of sexual intercourse (Figures 8.2a–c).

Sexual orientation

The narrative structure then shifts to what we call the *sexual orientation*. Like Labov's orientation, the sexual orientation of online porn videos contextualizes the participants, activity and situation, specifically with reference to the sexual fetish that constitutes the genre. The fetish of conventional sissy hypno, for instance, revolves around the imagined capacity to be 'forced' into an illicit feminine sexual identification. A successful sexual orientation will contextualize these aspects of the storyline for the viewer.

Facilitating this contextualization is the entry of a feminine-sounding robotic voice that articulates the flashing textual images introduced in the fapstract. The voice grows louder as the moving rings become transparent and begin to move faster. The viewer can faintly see photographic still images of clothed trans women in pornographic poses, wearing less and less as the images move on and off screen: a woman in lingerie facing the camera with



Figure 8.3a I am a sissy (Timestamp: 2:00)

Figure 8.3b I am a faggot (Timestamp: 2:01)

Figure 8.3c I am feminine (Timestamp: 2:02)

legs spread, a closeup of buttocks adorned by a g-string, a penis outlined by silk undergarments, naked buttocks awaiting penetration. A different feminine-sounding robotic voice adds to the chorus as the flashing of images becomes faster and faster: *going so deep, going so blank, head so empty*. Sentences in the first-person float across the screen, identifying the viewer with terms often used as hate speech against gender nonconforming men (Figures 8.3a–c): *I am a sissy, I am a faggot, I am feminine* [sic].

The broad range of language ideologies now associated with the robotic voice calls for much more attention than we can provide here. Above all, the robotic voice in hypno porn is an extension of the ‘mind control device’ trope that saturated the horror, science fiction and anti-Communist genres of the 20th century. But it is also feminine-sounding. Researchers in diverse fields have argued that the robotic feminine voice reflects gendered associations with subservience, assistance, caretaking, intimacy and heterosexuality (Shah and Roberts 2023), leading some to question the default use of a ‘female voice’ in assistive technologies like Siri, Cortana, Alexa and ChatGPT. Perhaps due to these associations, there is also an erotic appeal to the woman-who-is-not-a-woman: the disembodied voice implies a feminine human body devoid of ‘that leaky, emotive quality that we have come to associate with [women]’ (Bergen 2016:101). This appeal is enhanced by the reversal of heterosexual gender dynamics; in hypno porn, the feminine voice controls the actions of the masculine viewer. All of these ideologies clearly play a role in the use of the synthetic feminine voice within hypno porn, but our interview in 2023 Jenny DeMilo, a professional hypno content producer, revealed yet another benefit: it allows men to generate hypno content. Organic human hypnodommes (dominatrices who produce hypno content) are in high demand, but many consumers do not want to pay for that work. The robotic voice, now expected within online hypno porn, allows creators of all genders to produce these videos.

Cum-plicating action

The narrative element that we identify as *cum-plicating action*, like Labov's complicating action, constitutes the drive of the storyline. This is typically the most time-intensive segment of most online porn videos, designed to parallel the viewer's timeline to sexual climax. In conventional sissy hypno, the cum-plicating action often showcases an extended remix of pre-existing pornographic media with other sounds, images and video files such as animated GIFs. Aster Gilbert (2020:226) refers to these audio-visual montages as *micropornography*, the sets of user-made texts and practices circulating within online participatory cultures. Indeed, some scholars suggest that micropornography, as a democratizing practice, may enable the remediation of harmful tropes within mainstream pornography (Hester, Jones and Taylor-Harman 2015), a point we revisit in our discussion of trans-affirming hypno.

Micropornography resonates well with sissy hypno's tradition of incorporating subliminal messaging techniques. Popularized in the 1970s as an advertising strategy designed to engage people subconsciously, these techniques resemble the Hollywood Psychorama techniques discussed earlier, with barely perceptible images, drawings and scribbles flickering across the screen as a form of mind control. Although the effectiveness of such techniques for persuading consumers to buy a product has been debunked (e.g., Trappey 1996), their ideological resonance as a form of mind control lives on in horror and science fiction genres. Sissy hypno engages subliminal messaging gimmicks as part of its brainwashing trope, allowing viewers to see just enough of the flashing messages to metadiscursively recognize the technique. As with the hypno spiral, consumers' awareness of the presence of subliminal messaging opens the possibility that feminization fantasies can be attributed to the genre instead of personal desire, potentially offsetting the masculinist shame that underlies typical sissification porn.

During the cum-plicating action of our selected video, textual and photographic images flash faster than the viewer can absorb. A woman stares into the camera, a woman is penetrated from behind and penises ejaculate: *I submit to pleasure, cum tastes so good, slut, I am a femboy, I love anal*. The visual collage of images eventually covers the screen, drawing the eyes to fixate on the red dot at the center of the rings (Figure 8.4). In the background, there is a nude female figure covered by a hand-drawn diagram depicting anal sex. Around the perimeter are informative semi-transparent textual images in diverse fonts and colors: *rectum [Sissy Vagina]; Your little girly clit is totally useless but you can have a Tiny Erection; adapt the angle of penetration by leaning more or less forward and he will hit your little plasure [sic] spot!; I SUBMIT TO CUM*.



Figure 8.4 Plasure Spot (Timestamp: 10:15)

The increased use of nonstandard typography during this narrative element is noteworthy, as seen in the spelling of *pleasure* as ‘plasure.’ As the intensity of the video increases, the viewer is exposed to more and more of what seem like typos: *I am femenine, I am a fagot, my prastate is throbbing.* While we hesitate to assign any definitive explanation for this practice, we note a more general correlation between misspelling and pornography: not only do typographical ‘errors’ such as these contribute to a sort of linguistic illicitness derived from standard language ideology, they also have long been used by online pornographers to avoid algorithmic censorship and drive accidental traffic to their sites (Woods 2005). In addition, the heightened use of typos during the video’s cum-plicating action almost feels iconic in design, signifying the hurriedness of expression when sexual climax is near.

Sexual resolution and she-valuation

Our reason for using the term *sexual resolution* for our fourth narrative element should be apparent, given the genre’s intended use as a masturbation aid. This is the moment of sexual resolution found in many pornographic narratives, the ‘what finally happened’ of the sexual experience, the final key event of the story. In our selected video, the frenzy of images is reduced to an obscured photo of naked buttocks centered on the red dot of the hypno spiral (Figures 8.5a–c). The robotic voices fade as they are replaced with the sounds of oral sex.

This is one of several points where the narrative affirms what we call the *she-valuation*, the element designed to make the moral dimension of the sissy hypno story clear. Single lines of text, barely visible, appear across the spiral to remind the viewer that the feminization experience,



Figure 8.5a My brain is turned off (Timestamp: 11:34)

Figure 8.5b I am being changed (Timestamp: 11:49)

Figure 8.5c I am hypnotized (Timestamp: 12:37)

which would be shameful if chosen, was in fact coerced: *my brain is turned off*, *I am being changed*, *I am hypnotized*. The video displays a whitewashed effect (Figure 8.5c), perhaps to index the blankness of a brain perceiving only what is relevant to this temporary transformation.

Happy ending

The coda is the final element of Labov's model, signaling the end of the narrative structure. Often a generalized statement that is timeless in feel, it brings the viewer back to the point at which they entered the narrative. For the purposes of online porn, we have renamed this element *happy ending*, harkening to a popular slang term used for sexual services offered at the end of a massage session. The video narrative concludes in the simplicity with which it began; only the sounds of heavy breathing and the hypno spiral remain (Figure 8.6).

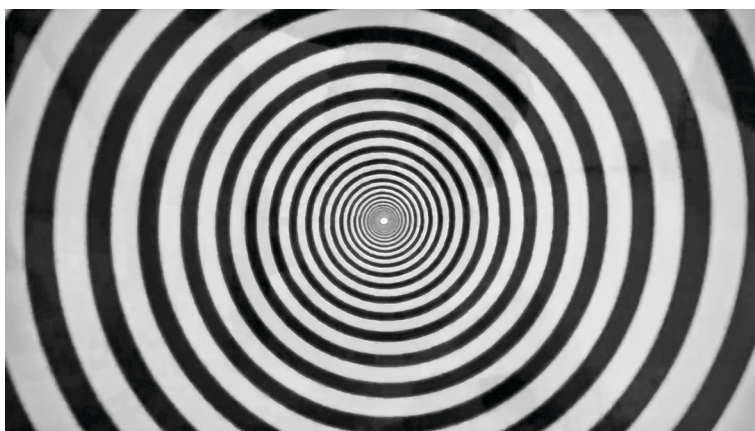


Figure 8.6 Happy ending (Timestamp: 13:10)

Self-realization discourses in trans-affirming hypno

In contrast to the transphobic conversion tropes used in conventional sissy hypno, content producers have begun to create trans-affirming narratives based on discourses of self-realization. Whereas gender-critical activists condemn the hypnosis trope as a coercive trans 'recruitment' tool (ignoring that the genre itself is deeply transphobic), these producers utilize it as a self-discovery aid and confidence booster. Videos associated with this emergent subgenre reflect the innovative styles of producers keen on responding to the participatory demands of online media cultures. Most notably, the conversion tropes of conventional hypno porn are rejected in favor of the 'born this way' tropes of LGBTQ+ activism. Videos are designed not to transform consumers into something they are not but to guide them into becoming who they already are. In the words of Pornhub's Goddess Nicole Renee, a popular practitioner of erotic hypnosis, the goal is to 'cut away the bandages' of social conditioning and 'unwrap the inner sissy.'

The born-this-way ideological narrative has a long history in Western movements to legitimize non-normative genders and sexualities (Draz 2017; Wuest 2023). Emerging in response to 19th- and 20th-century depictions of homosexuality as a psychiatric illness (and hence remediable through conversion therapy), the narrative holds that an individual is born with an innate and unchangeable set of sexual and gendered desires. If these desires are biological and, therefore, immutable, attempts to curb LGBTQ+ rights can be framed as inhumane. Within feminist, transgender and queer circles, born-this-way ideology (and interrelated born-in-the-wrong-body ideology) is acknowledged as a useful political view while also contested as biologically essentialist: it denies human agency in self-determination and parallels the deleterious history of Western colonial race science (Draz 2017). Discourse analysts have accordingly found that LGBTQ+ people approach born-this-way and born-in-the-wrong-body narratives in ambivalent terms: while useful as forms of strategic essentialism, they fail to capture the nuances of queer and transgender existence (Zimman 2009; Bettcher 2014; Jones 2020; Morgenroth et al. 2021). Nonetheless, born-this-way ideology has indelibly marked Global North discourses of gender and sexuality, influencing global medical regimes in highly problematic ways (Borba 2017). According to a 2019 poll by Gallup, 49% of those surveyed claimed that lesbian and gay identity is something one is 'born with' compared to only 13% of respondents in 1977, a perspective crystallized for younger generations in the 2011 Lady Gaga dance anthem of the same name.

The role played by citizen creators in shaping today's pornographic narratives cannot be understated, as Katrien Jacobs (2004) first highlighted two decades ago when noticing the importance of producer-spectator feedback loops to the self-produced pornography of Web 2.0. These loops have facilitated the development of a savvy, porn-literate consumer culture that is deeply participatory (Mercer 2017; Watson 2021), leading to sustained critique of the reductive, fetishistic categorization of marginalized others that has historically characterized conventional pornography. Platforms like OnlyFans and free tube sites like Pornhub have enabled cheaper and easier modes of production, giving creators of hypno content the means and flexibility to respond to evolving ideas about gender and sexuality. By summoning consumers to a trans-affirming register based on self-realization, progressive producers shield their clients from the transphobic tropes of shame-based sissy hypno. This constitutes trans-affirming hypno as a higher indexical order, exemplifying the metapragmatic process discussed by Michael Silverstein (2023) as indexical inoculation. Silverstein's choice of the term *inoculation* highlights the agential use of higher-order registers to protect against form-meaning relations experienced as oppressive (Barrett and Hall 2024), such as the shame-based register of conventional sissy hypno.

During our research, we found a great deal of trans-affirming hypnosis videos on YouTube. These videos draw from many of the audio-visual techniques and thematic tropes found in typical sissy hypno, but their use of language and images is distinctly 'safe for work,' as required by an all-ages public platform. We suggest that the growing demand for erotic content on YouTube also contributes to the indexical shift identified here. As discourses of transness move in favor of legitimization and destigmatization, the erotic focus of sissy hypno may move from graphic depictions of cis male humiliation to more celebratory narratives of transfeminine self-acceptance. Trans-affirming hypno videos draw heavily from born-this-way narratives, assuring the viewer that their desire to self-feminize comes from an innate, hidden 'true' self. This is seen in the excerpt below, taken from a video hosted on a trans-affirming YouTube channel called SissyLegs.

The following trance is a daily practice of affirmations for sissy girls. This way you will learn from hypnotic triggers on a daily basis to bring to the surface your sissy girl self (to see a change in my life), making you more and more confident every time (I feel my body tingling) (I am a girl). The awakening of your feminine energy is happening right now. The human mind is a powerful tool and we are going to use it together to reveal the real you (I am a girly girl). Like a sculptor carving

a beautiful statue out of a stone block, the effort you put in will determine your results.

(SissyLegs, 'Sissy Affirmations – MTF')

The SissyLegs video does not come across as 'porny' at first glance, even as it recalls the broader genre in its use of an AI text reader and subliminal messaging (transcribed in parentheses). Because hypnotic techniques figure prominently in trans-affirming hypno and the safe-for-work versions are inspired by the pornographic versions, we posit that trans-affirming hypno functions as porn-that-is-not-porn. While some videos do draw from erotic tropes, the overt visual sexuality of sissy hypno is bleached out of the YouTube versions. Instead, safe-for-work videos use hypnosis as a self-discovery and self-acceptance technique. In the migration to nonpornographic platforms, the fearmongering tropes of sissy hypno are refigured as empowering self-feminization tools. By encouraging the potentially transfeminine viewing subject to access and accept their 'authentic,' 'deep' and 'true' self, the feminization narrative shifts towards self-empowerment instead.

Nevertheless, these videos, however positive in tone, problematize our analysis in their firm adherence to heteropatriarchal gender norms and essentializing tropes. DeMilo explained in her interview with us that sex workers must often navigate choppy waters when balancing their own ethical standards with the content they are paid to produce, describing how professional hypnodommes often have to choose between following one's own politics or creating content that consumers will pay for:

I use a lot of language that is unacceptable to people. But this is the fetish, right? And I use, you know, I use the word tr*nny. I have stuff named 'tr*nny.' The word 'f*g' is everywhere on my stuff. It used to be that bringing people into the thing [into buying hypno files], you really had to tell them what is was up front and throw it in their face. Because that's what they want. And, and so I service the fetish. I still have a mortgage to pay. And if it's serving a fetish and it's in the fetish space, I feel like I can say things I don't personally agree with. I would never call somebody a slur to their face in an argument.

(Kosse interview with DeMilo, 2023)

These excerpts point to a fundamental conflict inherent to this line of sex work: content producers understand what their audience expects and what they are willing to pay for. The reductive and fetishistic tropes of mainstream pornography are legible to their audiences. Thus, this first-order pornographic register is not easily dispensed of when money is on the line. This is especially true for non-affirming sissy hypno, which makes

up the bulk of hypno content online; the genre depends on a finite conceptualization of gender. Although the affirming videos embrace the concept of self-feminization, their tropes are also problematically enmeshed with patriarchal heterosexual norms, echoing a circular claim made by Chu (2019:77) in her description of the genre: ‘Getting fucked makes you female because fucked is what a female is.’ Perhaps unsurprisingly, very little attention is paid to trans lesbians or asexuals at all; femininity and womanhood, despite needing to be effortfully obtained by the transfeminine viewer, are characterized by sexual submission to men.

These contradictions surface in the trans-affirming video we have chosen to analyze in this section, posted to YouTube by hypno creator Nina Dream. Titled *Welcome to Womanhood*, the video shares a popularity comparable to the sissy hypno video analyzed in the previous section, with 317,000 views and 2.1 likes as of April 2023. Like many other videos in this trans-affirming subgenre, *Welcome to Womanhood* is made with safe-for-work stock video and stock music from the YouTube creator library, a repository for copyright-free video creation resources. Dream’s use of safe-for-work images enables her to crosspost files on public platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, Spotify and Apple Music while reserving ‘Over 18 Content’ for the monetization platform Patreon. In our selected video, the use of vanilla imagery, corporate music and unemotive text-to-speech dialogue collectively leaves an almost sanitized impression on the audience, in tonal contrast with its explicitly erotic script. Our analysis is attentive to the ways trans-affirming hypno both relies on and adapts the enregistered shibboleths of more mainstream versions of the genre, thereby catering to a diversity of cis and trans viewers.

The video’s 50-second fapstract captures viewer attention with a visual of the text *Welcome to Womanhood* in bright pink block letters trimmed in neon green, perhaps evoking the popular pink and green symbolism of feminine and nonbinary identification, respectively (Figure 8.7a). Like the hypnospiral of mainstream sissy hypno, the letters brighten and expand in size as they move outward and toward the viewer (Figure 8.7b) before fading into stock video footage of a brown-haired white woman in front of a beach background (Figure 8.7c). Wearing minimal makeup and dressed conservatively, the woman shifts around a little, nods and smiles widely as her gaze meets the viewer’s. The image fades into several other stock videos of white women, each displayed for five to ten seconds, all looking directly toward the viewer – blinking, smiling, laughing. The same clips reappear throughout the video, never speeding up, contributing to a calm, trance-like visual atmosphere.

Viewers will immediately notice a very different semiotics from what is found in typical sissy hypno, especially in the video’s avoidance of frenetic pacing, typographical errors and visual illusions like the hypno spiral.



Figure 8.7a WtW (Timestamp: 00:01)

Figure 8.7b WtW (Timestamp: 00:03)

Figure 8.7c WtW (Timestamp: 00:06)

This brings to mind a distinction made during our interview with DeMilo, who frequently contrasted her work with what she perceived as low-quality mainstream content. DeMilo described doing research and going to lengths to make an immersive fantasy: for instance, once she wrote a Latin chant for a Satanic-themed sissy hypno video. Many popular content creators put out a high volume of low-quality content for a low fee (called *dollar hypnodommes* by DeMilo); in contrast, DeMilo attests that she would rather produce carefully constructed hypno work for a smaller, more consistent and better-paying audience. To stay relevant and to draw a consistent consumer base, especially in today's saturated market, professional hypnodommes must pay careful attention to the needs of their audience – including and especially choice of language.

Indeed, it is the spoken audio track that we find most interesting in this video, particularly in the way it adapts the humiliation tropes of conventional sissy hypno to a trans-affirming register. Also surfacing in the fapstract is a female voice in the form of an automated text-to-speech generator, a shibboleth of the broader sissy porn genre. Here, however, the voice is used not in the service of forced conversion but rather in 'finding the answer that already exists within you,' articulating the born-this-way discourse that drives the rest of the narrative.

- 0:09 So are you ready to join our club of
womanhood?
- 0:11 Are you ready to be one of us fully
and completely?
- 0:19 Are you committed to being a woman
100 per cent of the time?
- 0:23 From the moment that you wake up in
the morning to the moment that you go
to sleep at night?

- 0:32 I think you already know the answer to
that question, deep down inside you.
- 0:38 And if you don't, it's okay, because
it's simply a matter of time before
you find that answer that already
exists within you.

Here we are compelled to suggest another affordance of the synthetic voice: safety. Rodrigo Borba (2018:8) writes that one of the 'tricks' played by sex work on sociolinguistic theory is 'an ideology in which linguistic performance may be more or less (dis)embodied depending on a speaker's specific interactional goals.' The 'trick' turned by sissy hypno in this regard seems especially salient, as the entire premise of the genre is predicated on the disembodied feminine voice of the hypnotizer. DeMilo focused on this affordance when describing her move from escort to hypnodomme during the 2007–2008 financial crisis. As the US economy tanked, DeMilo's escorting work began to dissipate, leaving her in a financially precarious situation. She initially did cam work, phone sex and fetish audio until she noticed that her hypno content was selling in high numbers and for a higher price than her other work. An early adopter of online sex work, DeMilo was able to make 'a shit ton of money' by settling into a very small niche of online hypno content. In her view, this was preferable to escorting in many ways, particularly the fact that she did not have to risk showing her face online (or even sharing her voice, if she so chose). Our research suggests that DeMilo is not alone in this journey; the affordance of visual and aural anonymity also enables trans women creators to protect themselves from the online upsurge of transphobic harassment. The sissy hypno industry is now home to a diverse slate of cis women and transfeminine creators whose automated text-to-speech narratives, like Dream's, are taking the genre in more affirming directions.

Whereas mainstream sissy hypno highlights conversion into an illicit feminine sexual identification, Dream's video encourages the viewer to sexualize the identification they already harbor within. This perspective is set out early on as part of the narrative's sexual orientation, introduced by the excerpt below. The viewer is guided to find their 'true' sexuality by working backwards from their fantasies; the desire to be penetrated by men is explicitly linked to 'being the female' in the context of the sexual encounter. The segment thus establishes a liminal space where arousal and gendered becoming are assumed to be intrinsically linked; from this point forward, womanhood is treated as an extension of heterosexual desire.

- 0:52 Think about your sexual habits
- 0:54 Consider the things that you fantasize
about everyday.

- 0:58 Do you find yourself thinking about
men's penises a lot?
- 1:02 Do you often fantasize about having
sex with a man as a woman,
- 1:06 Bending over or perhaps spreading your legs
- 1:09 Allowing a man to have his way with
your body.
- 1:11 Is this something you find to be a
fulfilling sexual experience for you?
- 1:21 Perhaps you've already tried it with a man
- 1:23 And you know that you love being the
female in the intimate relationship.

A related theme utilizes the tactic of adequation (Bucholtz and Hall 2004) to link together the sexual desires of cis and trans women. As highlighted by our use of bold font in the excerpt below, which comes on the heels of the previous excerpt, identification as a woman is achieved through the shared 'understanding' that all women desire to be penetrated. This perspective is visually emphasized on the screen as different images of smiling women appear, along with superimposed text providing affirming comments and expressing a shared goal of finding a boyfriend (Figures 8.8a–c). The sum of these semiotic strategies is a discursively conjured friend group, allowing the viewer to imagine herself in a supportive social environment.

- 1:35 Look at all these women.
- 1:36 They **understand** you well.
- 1:38 They **understand** your desire to be
penetrated by men.
- 1:41 They **understand** how good it feels to
be filled with penis.

(a)



(b)



(c)

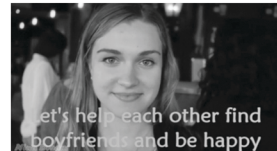


Figure 8.8a It's OK (Timestamp: 01:38)

Figure 8.8b That's awesome! (Timestamp: 02:05)

Figure 8.8c Let's help each other (Timestamp: 02:46)

- 1:47 They **understand** why you would want to
give up your manpower and devote
yourself to being penetrated by men
from now on
- 1:55 They totally **understand** you and your
desires for this.
- 1:59 They know how you feel
- 2:00 They **understand** why you like penis
so much.
- 2:09 It's okay to want to be penetrated by
men.
- 2:12 These women want that too.
- 2:13 You can **understand** each other.

The stock-photo women depicted in this video are not visually sexualized or positioned as objects of desire. Yet the sexual orientation nevertheless includes linguistic cues that index trans-affirming hypno's relationship with sissy hypno (and sissification as a BDSM practice). For instance, the viewer's penis is discussed in infantilizing terms common to small-penis humiliation genres; furthermore, the viewer is temporarily constructed as a 'failed male' whose femininity is related to an inability to please women. At the same time, it is precisely this 'failure' that enables the viewer to transition and become non-threatening to women, making cis-trans friendships possible:

- 2:22 And it's okay if you take female
hormones and are not able to penetrate
women anymore with your little wee wee
- 2:29 It's totally okay, these women
understand
- 2:32 They don't mind you not having a
functioning penis
- 2:34 It's okay with them, they want to be
your friends

The small-penis trope later becomes central to the cum-plicating action, where it is used to recall sissy fetishes while also advancing a pro-trans register based in visions of coalitional worldmaking. Viewers are encouraged to experience their feminization fantasies by constructing a world in their minds where they are surrounded by people who understand and accept them.

Compared to the frenetic qualia found in our previous video example, the cum-plicating action of Dream's video is slower in pace, gentler and

warmer in tone and visually conservative in its rotation of fully clothed, heterosexually 'femme' women. We suggest the narrative's slower pace iconically resonates with the video's affirming frame. The process of self-understanding highlighted by the audio extends far beyond mainstream uses of the genre as a masturbation aid, harkening to a longer-term and emotionally pleasurable experience. That said, the language becomes more sexually explicit in the cum-plicating action portion of the narrative, a shift signaled in the fourth minute by the introduction of thumping, heavy-beat disco music as the audio brings the viewer's focus to 'feminine sexual postures.' A few minutes later, the script redirects explicitly toward the 'failed male' motif first set out in the sexual orientation:

- 7:02 Maybe you once were attracted to women
 like this, but your little peanut just
 didn't get stiff enough to please them.
- 7:08 Just think now that your baby carrot
 is only soft and limp, now those women
 who are once having sexual issues with
 you can now find sexual freedom with
 men who can really please them deeply
 and lovingly.
- 7:22 And those women will be ever more
 grateful to you that you let them free
 and are now pursuing a path of being
 who you wanted to be, all along a
 woman like them.

There is an immediate benefit to this diminishing, infantile register. As this sort of language is already common in sissification contexts, it serves as a linguistic Trojan horse that houses explicitly sexual ideas in a register that will not trigger algorithmic censorship. Furthermore, as problematic as they are in constructing womanhood as failed manhood, tropes common to sissy fetishes (infantilization, humiliation) are here resignified as positive changes that facilitate the viewer's 'true' desire to connect with women as peers.

The video's focus on hyper-heterosexual gender norms also functions to diminish the phallus to cis women. There is no desire expressed for women in Dream's repertoire of videos, aside from one on the topic of trans lesbians. The kinky infantilizing register, a relic of the previous indexical order, is used in the development of a pro-trans register based exclusively on desire for men. While erotic humiliation may certainly figure into the equation, its representation here is unthreatening. The message, counter to pernicious representations found in gender-critical

(a)



(b)



Figure 8.9a We both KNOW (Timestamp: 12:07)

Figure 8.9b We both KNOW (Timestamp: 12:07)

and anti-gender discourses, is that trans women do not pose a sexual threat to cis women. The erasure of lesbian and bisexual trans women, in this reading, counters transmisogynistic narratives that trans women are ‘actually’ cisgender fetishists who seek to violate the privacy of (cis) women’s spaces (recall the *Pronouns are Rohypnol* example). Removing the possibility of desire for other women discursively positions trans and cis women as ‘on the same team,’ though at the cost of a nuanced representation of transfeminine sexuality. The cum-plicating action continues to emphasize friendships among cis and trans women even as the language becomes more explicit, ultimately summoning the viewer to join other women in accepting her sexually submissive ‘duties’ (Figures 8.9a–b).

- 12:17 What a joy it is to share this
 commonality with each other as women.
- 12:22 And it’s something us women can bond
 together with and help each other
 with.
- 12:27 So really it makes no difference if
 you are a cis woman, a gay man, or a
 trans woman, we all do the same for
 our men.
- 12:35 We all pucker our holes up and let
 our men pump us to completion.

After this point, the narrative arch begins to wind down to sexual resolution, reiterating a sense of solidarity between receptive sexual partners. The recapitulation of semiotic bonds between people-fucked-by-men calls to mind Stephen Maddison’s (2017:152) ‘comradship of cock,’ a phrase coined to capture the ways that gay porn forms coalitions between gay men such that ‘social relations flourish in the face of neoliberal alienation.’

In this passage, Dream constructs a gendered category based on the act of being penetrated; cis women, gay men and trans women are essentially alike through their roles as sexual recipients. The narrative interpellates the viewer as a woman through this sexual role ('penetratee'), using the similarity of 'holes' as a unifying gendered orifice; it does not matter if the hole is a vagina or an anus because in the context of sex, they are the same. The unification of holes represents a semiotic flattening of the body that allows for positive coalition-building across sexed and gendered positionalities – a 'sisterhood of holes,' so to speak. This invites comparison with other discourses resemiotizing the sexed body within a framework of gender, such as transmasculine discourses that remap the vagina as 'boycunt' or 'bonus hole' (Edelman and Zimman 2014; Zimman and Hall 2010; cf. Hale 1997 on the queer genderplay of leatherdyke boys and daddies).

The video concludes by re-emphasizing joy in the viewer's self-remapping as a woman and its resulting solidarity. Assumed to be in a pre-realized stage of her gender journey and likely aware of anti-transgender prejudice (Gilbert 2020), the viewer is promised stability and acceptance in transition.

12:39 All these women love doing that for
their men and they are so delighted
that you enjoy doing the same thing
with your man
12:46 You can see it in their smiles.

In this way, the sissy hypnosis process is retooled to an (imperfect) trans register in the service of trans joy (Bermudez Mejía and Marquinez Montaña 2024; Hernandez and Crowley 2024; Zimman 2024). As the music plays out, the viewer is left with the textual image 'So Happy in Womanhood' (Figure 8.10) – a very literal 'happy ending.' The cycle of self-acceptance, facilitated by images of sexual and gendered belonging with cisgender (and presumably heterosexual) women, is complete.



Figure 8.10 So Happy in Womanhood (Timestamp: 13:10)

Conclusions

Due to presumed fears about the power of hypnosis to override human will, hypno content continues to be banned on mainstream porn sites. Trans sex worker Sophie Ladder (2023) found that out of 29 major porn sites, 19 of them censored the term ‘hypnosis’ (including OnlyFans and Pornhub). At this same time, both in the United States and abroad, there is a large-scale right-wing attack on transgender people that parallels right-wing attacks on women and queer people (Hall, Borba and Hiramoto 2021). One of the central themes of this anti-trans movement, paralleling themes found in anti-feminist and anti-queer movements, is that transgender people are victims of societal brainwashing. In today’s context of social media, this victimization is blamed in part on the accessibility of online pornography. Although hypnotic practices are extremely limited in efficacy, having significant results only under conditions of trust and in combination with other treatments (Dienes et al. 2009; Yapko 2014), anti-porn and anti-trans advocates have pointed to sissy hypno as a form of cisgender-to-transgender conversion therapy (e.g., Gluck 2020; Shrier 2020). To examine these perceptions, we deployed social semiotic theory to investigate these phenomena: what representations cause the spectre of sissy hypno to loom so large in the discourse of anti-trans groups?

Our narrative analysis finds that sissy hypno, like many other forms of porn, is more conceptually complex than non-porn-researchers assume. The mainstream depictions of hypno focused on by anti-porn and anti-trans activists erase the diversity of perspectives found in the broader genre of sissy hypno. Conventional sissy hypno draws from reductive and insulting views of womanhood. Still, it forms a recognizable genre from which indexical innovations have emerged, including the affirming variety discussed throughout this chapter. Although this subgenre often carries problematic language from its previous indexical order – particularly the gross essentializing of womanhood and the erasure of queer womanhood – it also shifts the erotic locus from humiliation and coerced submission to self-acceptance, empowerment and positive affiliation with other women. This is not an exemplar of feminist theory by any means, as the register involves highly sexualized, heteronormative discourses that emphasize ‘taking care of your man,’ but it is moving toward a direction that is less harmful and reductive than what preceded it.

Key to our analysis is the perspective of sex workers. We are in a time of extreme media saturation, including porn, with an unprecedented growth of content creators from outside the mainstream porn industry.

Borba (2018) writes that the language of sex work is polymorphous and imbricated with complex and sometimes conflicting power dynamics. Jenny DeMilo's consideration of when and where to use slurs, for instance, involves conflicting dynamics. If she does not use the language and tropes clients want to hear, regardless of her personal ethics, her income is directly affected. The balance between viewer expectations and progressive language politics finds trans-affirming hypno creators using conventional forms of (unprogressive) language but within a progressive frame. This dynamic enables us to see the emerging indexical order of sissy hypno as a tool of transfeminine self-determination.

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