

# The Naked Elephant in the Room

effect of editing in pornographic film

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Bachelor's thesis

2021

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Film Editing

## Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to study the effects that editing has on pornographic film, utilising analysis by inspecting the variety of editing styles and comparing the different methods of filmmaking found in adult entertainment. By breaking down five (5) different films of pornographic nature, ranging from hardcore to softcore, erotic, and fully pornographic, the aim is to understand the essential role of the editor as a mediator of the genre, in its most raw or artistically leaning expression. The nature of the reviewed films range between some well-known and less-well known films spanning a number of decades, gives a good perspective as to what makes a porno a porno when dissected into its individual cuts and parts. Editing is an art form and could be likened to weaving a tapestry. When choosing the thread, you subconsciously know that however small that single thread is it still plays a part in creating the full image, and each should aim to strengthen the other. When done right you'll have rendered something as utilitarian as pornography into something beautiful thing to look at, and to experience with your eyes. This is the editor's craft.

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## Introduction

According to PornHub's annual review of 2019 (Review, 2021), there were an estimated 42 billion visits that year alone, which when further dissected means an average of 115 million visits per day. Those are some hefty numbers and considering the ever-expanding nature of the internet and by default pornographic content, we are consuming more pornography every year. Porn has remained a pleasure mostly kept behind closed doors, even with sexual liberation the subject still gets treated with a level of shame and secrecy. The fact of the matter is most adult people do consume porn, some on a daily basis others, less so. Benes states that the annual US entertainment revenue from 2018 places porno in high up in evaluation (Benes, 2021), exceeding that of Netflix and Hollywood by a significant margin.

According to Wikipedia (Pornography - Wikipedia, 2021), pornography has existed alongside humans since the dawn of man, dating back to cave paintings to Greeks painting imagery onto vases. Indeed, the word pornography derives from the Greek words πόρνη pórnē "prostitute" and γράφειν gráphein "to write or to record". Since film was invented, it didn't take too long for this medium to be used to create pornographic movies. The reason we watch films holds true to why we watch porn, to entertain and engage us. Specifically, porn however fulfils a specific need. McNair defines the term and use by writing:

*"Pornography is defined by its intention to sexually arouse the user through the explicit, transgressive representation of sex. It does not invite debate or seek to shape opinion (although it regularly provokes heated debate in the public sphere), but instead to arouse, stimulate and then satisfy sexual desire. As a mode of communication, it is highly instrumental, aiming to make the consumer feel and do quite specific things – get turned on, masturbate or have sex with a partner, climax."* (McNair, 2013, p.17)

This paper will be studying the varied effects of editing on pornographic films. By taking apart and analysing the editing found in some well-known and less-known films ranging from erotica to hardcore pornography, this will perhaps give some answers as to what makes a porno a porno when dissected into its individual cuts and parts. Editing is an art form and could be likened to weaving a tapestry. When choosing the thread, you subconsciously know that however small that single thread is it still plays a part in creating the full image, and each should aim to strengthen the other. When done right you'll have a beautiful thing to look at, to experience with your eyes. Even though as a whole you don't pay much attention to a single thread, you understand the individual need for them to be exactly where they are. It is an editor's job to find and place the threads, for it is not how beautiful an individual piece is - it is how to accentuate that beauty further, to create a story out of pieces laid out

in front of you. Walter Murch in his book *In the Blink of an Eye* has a good analogy of what it is like to edit:

*"Theseus needed his thread to get out of the Minotaur's maze. With no plan, no map, no thread, film editing becomes just a thrashing about, a slamming together of images and sounds for momentary effect. But this kind of effect will have no long-term resonance with the film as a whole."* (Murch, 1995, p.57)

If you separate the parts of a film into the bare minimum, what are you left with? I'm interested in finding out how editing, which is essentially how a film is put together, affects the overall feel and rhythm of pornography and erotica. By comparing films from different periods and styles, I hope to find some answers to these questions. As mentioned at the start of this, humankind watches an ample amount of porno's and yet we don't talk about them in the same way as we would other mediums of film. By analysing these films through this dissertation, I wish to bring some insight into a more stigmatized field of film.

### [A brief history of pornographic film](#)

Due to the censorship and destruction of pornographic and erotic films in the 20th century, historians have argued as to which film could be classified as the first known pornographic film. One film that could be credited as such is the French film: "A L'Ecu d'Or ou la bonne auberge" (A L'Ecu d'Or ou la bonne auberge, 1908). The film was exclusively shown in brothels and widely considered to be the first hardcore film of its time. As discussed in Wikipedia (Pornographic film - Wikipedia, 2021), Throughout the mid-20th century, pornographic films remained strictly underground, made by mainly amateurs fearing the hefty fine and even prosecution that came with the distribution and making of such films. The target audience of the so-called stag films consisted mostly of middle-class white heteronormative males and were shown in brothels and frat houses alike (STAG: THE ILLICIT ORIGINS OF PORNOGRAPHIC FILM | MoSEX, 2021).

With technological advances of the 1950s such as the invention of 8mm film, pornographic films could be now potentially viewed and made from the comfort of your own home. Alongside publications such as Playboy and Penthouse which aimed to make the concept of porno less seedy, pairing imagery of full-frontal nudity with scientific articles became the new concept of the gentleman viewer.

By comparison, pornographic films made in Europe were considered to contain more hardcore content to its American counterpart. According to Wikipedia, (Lasse Braun - Wikipedia, 2021), in 1961 to 1977 Italian pornographer Lasse Braun, risking peril from legal prosecution, made a collection of looping 10-minute hardcore films, which were distributed to some 60,000 peepshow booths across

America. While studying law at the University of Milan, Braun wrote his doctoral paper, a study called Judiciary Censorship in the Western World, which after being translated to Danish helped to further the legalization of pornographic content in Denmark, 1969. In the year 1969, American artist Andy Warhol released his film Blue Movie which featured hardcore content and notably criticized the censorship within the industry.

The early 1970s marked a new era for pornography and saw consumption habits change. Films credited to the mass popularization of pornography include Deep Throat, Devil in Miss Jones and Behind the Green Door, all of which were distributed and shown in regular theatres and created a sense of chic around the genre of pornography. By the late 70s, the invention of the VHS revolutionized the industry, changing from large and expensive productions to relatively smaller and more affordable production made so by videotaping. Viewers could now choose from a vast array of films, catering to all types of fetishes, and bring these home to consume in privacy. The camcorder made possible the rise of amateur pornography, where a regular person could if they wished so would record themselves in sexual acts, for personal or non-personal use.

The VHS was eventually replaced by DVDs, which was superior in overall quality and could be produced en masse with relative ease. DVD, in turn, was made obsolete by the internet, where instead of having to buy said adult content from a specialized store or order it, you could access a limitless amount of pornography with a couple of strokes of a keyboard. As mentioned earlier in this introduction, the ever-expanding nature of the internet defines and constructs how we watch and consume pornography. Whatever the new invention shall be, pornography shall evolve alongside it. The human mind is a powerful tool, capable of great ingenuity and imagination, and as such where new possibilities come to light it is without a doubt that it shall be used to flame the fire of pornography.

## Glossary

Hardcore: "(mass noun) Pornography of a very explicit or extreme kind." (HARDCORE, 2021)

Softcore: "(of pornography) suggestive or erotic but not explicit." ((SOFT-CORE, 2021)

Moneyshot: "informal (in a pornographic film) a sequence in which an actor ejaculates." (MONEY SHOT, 2021)

Match cut: "In film and video, an edit that appears to show a seamless action by matching the continuity of its subject while changing the camera". (Match cut, 2021)

Flashback: "In a novel, film, or other fictional work, a sudden transition to an earlier episode in the narrative." (Flashback, 2021)

Non-linear editing: "Computerized film or video editing systems that manipulate footage in the form of data and which involve cutting, adding, and rearranging shots and sequences graphically represented on a timeline." (Nonlinear editing, 2021)

Cross-cutting: "In filming, cutting between two separate scenes as both are unfolding in narrative time so as to suggest a relationship between them." (cross-cutting, 2021)

Cross-dissolve: "In film and video post-production, a transition between two shots in which the first gradually fades out as the second is fading in, so that they overlap. This typically signifies the passage of time. Compared to a cut, the relative infrequency of its use makes it a marked transition, and it can generate connotations of femininity: see gendered editing." (Cross dissolve, 2021)

Scene: "In a drama, a subdivision of an act or of a play not divided into acts. A scene normally represents actions happening in one place at one time, and is marked off from the next scene by a curtain, a black-out, or a brief emptying of the stage. In the study of narrative works, 'scene' is also the name given to a 'dramatic' method of narration that presents events at roughly the same pace as that at which they are supposed to be occurring, i.e. usually in detail and with substantial use of dialogue." (Scene, 2021)

Continuity editing: "In film and video post-production, a technique of removing moments of redundancy in a moving image while still presenting the illusion of the continuous passing of time." (Continuity editing, 2021)

Montage: "1. Most broadly, in European film-making, a synonym for editing. The process of editing shots into a sequence and/or the editing of sequences into the form of a complete film. In film theory it is distinguished from mise-en-scène and is regarded as specific to the filmic medium.

2. The use of many short shots to portray action or a sequence of shots representing a condensed series of events" (Montage, 2021)

Intertitle: "Captions and titles that appear as a graphic element cut into a sequence rather than superimposed over camera footage. In silent films, dialogue and other information was communicated in this form." (Intertitle, 2021)

J-cut: "type of cut in which the sound of the next scene precedes the picture. The name comes from the shape these clips make in the timeline of an editing program." (Definition & Meaning J-cut, 2021)

L-cut: "a type of cut in which the picture changes but the audio continues. The name comes from the shape these clips make in the timeline of an editing program." (Definition & Meaning L-cut, 2021)

Jump cut: "A style of cutting that breaks the conventions of continuity editing by deliberately joining similar shots together in order to remove moments of redundancy but without masking the discontinuities this creates." (Jump cut, 2021)

Sequence: "In film and video editing, a series of shots or scenes that have been edited together" (Sequence, 2021)

Zoom: "(film and video) A shot that appears to move towards or away from an object so that it grows or shrinks in the frame. Zooms are created through the camera lens and shot from a fixed camera position and do not involve motion parallax." (Zoom, 2021)

Wipe: "(film and video) Any of a variety of optical transitions in the form of a line or shape that sweeps across the screen. The relative infrequency of its use makes it a marked transition compared to a cut." (Wipe, 2021)

Point-of-view shot: "In film and television, the visual representation of the physical viewpoint of a particular character: for example, a shot of a character looking around the room can be followed by a POV shot consisting of a surveying pan of the room." (Point-of-view shot, 2021)



## Films chosen for analysis

### Centurians of Rome

#### Plot

The plot of *Centurians of Rome* (*Centurians of Rome*, 1981) is set during the reign of a sadistic Emperor, two Greek countrymen are sentenced to slavery due to unpaid taxes. Octavius is captured by a Roman commander and is later saved by Demetrius who in turn ends up being bought as a sex slave by the ruling Emperor. As Demetrius faces a barrage of sexual deviancy while being taught how to fulfil his role as the Emperor's plaything, it is up to Octavius to come and save his friend by traveling to Rome with the taxes owed. He is captured by the same Roman captain, who later falls in love with him. The new lovers manage to free Octavius, but it comes with a price: the emperor now missing one of his slaves makes the captain his substitute for Demetrius.

#### Why I chose this film

The *Centurians of Rome* is quoted to be one of the most expensive gay pornographic film ever made, with production costing over 100,000 dollars according to (*How a Bank Robber Made the Most Expensive Gay Porn of All Time*, 2021). George Bosque, who financed the film, reportedly stole 2 million while working as a security guard at Brinks. The insurer of Brinks, Lloyd's London, became the unwitting co-owner of the film after its release in 1981. The reason for choosing *Centurians of Rome* comes from reading an article on how one man was able to run off with two million dollars and fulfil his dream of making a full-length gay pornographic film.

Oeuvre of the time being mainly heteronormative showed in mainstream pornography, or porno chic, *Centurians of Rome* stood out as a daring effort to bring notability to the gay scene.

### Behind the Green Door

#### Plot

The story of *Behind the Green Door* (*Behind the Green Door*, 1972) is told by two John Doe type characters, retelling their accounts through a flashback to a curious chef at a roadside diner. Marilyn Chamber stars as the mysterious and silent Gloria who finds herself abducted to become the main attraction at a voyeuristic sex club called The Green Door. The younger man recognizes Gloria and watches on as she engages in various sexual acts, such as being teased and licked by half a dozen women, penetrated by Johnnie Keys, and earning the film some of its notoriety a scene where while being penetrated performs fellatio to three men on a trapeze. The crowd present engages in an orgy, stimulated by the ongoing on the stage. Several minutes are devoted to the moneyshot, a psychedelic

scene with semen spurting in Technicolor. Barry takes off with Gloria and as the flashback ends his fantasies fill the night sky.

#### Why I chose this film

According to Paasonen and Saarenmaa (Paasonen and Saarenmaa, 2007) the porno chic of the 1970s saw the rise of popularity in mass consumption of pornographic film, aiming to bridge the gap between erotic cinema and hardcore pornography. The Mitchell brothers aimed to bring more highbrow respectability to the genre, the Green Door even showed at Cannes.

Based on Marilyn Chambers Online Archive (MarilynChambersArchive, 2021), I was intrigued as to what a hardcore porno would look like through a more artistic lens, but by any measure, the film itself didn't amount to much except an exercise in badly paced editing.

#### Pirates II: Stagnetti's Revenge

##### Plot

The plot of Pirates II: Stagnetti's Revenge (Pirates II: Stagnetti's Revenge, 2008) sets off from the first film, in which the feared pirate Victor Stagnetti was vanquished by captain Reynolds and crew. First mate Jules and captain Reynolds seek pardon for Olivia's cousin Serena from the Governor of Jamaica. In return for a pardon, he sends them off to capture and kill a mercenary group. While in pirates bay, Jules gets captured by Xifeng and put under a spell that makes her the pirate queen's slave. Captain Reynolds goes to a slave auction, after which he attends an orgy hosted by an Armenian gold pirate Takvor. The captain is captured by the enslaved Jules and narrowly escapes a fight with a monster by being saved by Olivia. Xifeng using the glowing magical marble she attained from a priest's stomach at the start of the film, uses its powers to resurrect Stagnetti from the bottom of the sea. Stagnetti now vowing revenge goes after Captain Reynolds and in the ensuing battle unleashed an army of undead skeletons and a sea monster. Olivia and Xifeng battle it out, with Olivia coming out victorious only to have to fight the still brainwashed Jules. Rigging gives way and knocks the two women unconscious. Captain Reynolds swoops in to save the day and fights Stagnetti, piercing him with his own sword. Evil is once more vanquished and the hero's sail toward Jamaica to gain Serena's freedom.

#### Why I chose this film

Pirates 2 was an even more expensive production than its previous part, so it intrigued me to see what results from a high-budget film would have on an adult entertainment film.

## Love

### Plot

The plot of *Love* (Love, 2015) follows Murphy, an American film student living in Paris. He wakes up on the 1st day of January to a voice message from his previous partner's mother Electra, saying she's worried about her daughter's life. This brings about an onslaught of memories and transports us in a counter chronological order through Murphy's memory of his lost love Electra, jumping to and from the present to the past. Throughout the day he recalls the various moments that brought him to the present, where he now lives with Omi and his son Gaspar. While still with Electra the couple engages in a threesome with their neighbour Omi to fulfil a mutual sexual desire. However, while Electra is away Murphy goes behind her back and has sex on his own with Omi, resulting in her getting pregnant. This leads to Electra leaving Murphy and falling into a downward spiral of sex, drugs, and alcohol. The film features several memories of the couple's two-year relationship, closing with two corresponding scenes where the two walk together, one where they end their relationship and second where they meet for the first time. Murphy is left alone, holding his son and crying in the bathtub for his long-lost love Electra.

### Why I chose this film

I remember first seeing *Love* at a film festival in 3D. To me, it felt like a harkening to the old pussycat theatres, where punters would pool together to watch people have sex. This was not a porno however and was marketed as a shocking new drama by the director of *Enter the Void*. The film itself was not a success and viewers saw it more as a softcore porno than an exercise in arthouse filmmaking. I was interested in the differences in pornographic film and why *Love* couldn't be classified as such.

## Female Pleasure Circle

### Plot

*Female Pleasure Circle* (Female Pleasure Circle, 2019) was adapted from a viewer's story on Erika Lust's site Xconfessions (XConfessions Porn for Women, 2021). In the first part, six women give their personal accounts in interviews and voiceovers. As they are individually painted with a warrior-like body paint they talk about matters such as the first time they masturbated, how often, and what they think about. The second part features all-female masturbation which culminates in an orgy. As the women hold each other, the last interview is partly used as a voice-over as the women tell the viewer what they like to call their vaginas, giving power to their sexuality.

### Why I chose this film

The internet is filled to the brim with free porn, so seeing how indie porn is made for a certain type of audience and how it differs from the mainstream felt like a good comparison to consider. The Female Pleasure Circle also aimed to bring light and information to a subject matter that to all accounts still feels taboo.

## Centurians of Rome - Analysis

A long, long time ago, somewhere outside of Rome, In a village not so far away... Are the opening lines chosen for the title sequence, accompanied by a very John Williams type soundtrack and score mostly noted from Flash Gordon and Star Wars it becomes quite apparent who the film is paying homage to.

In the first scene, we see our two main heroes, the dark and rugged George Payne as Demetrius and the sandy blonde Scorpio as Octavio. The camera sweeps in on Demetrius chopping logs for the fire, Octavio notes that Demetrius is working harder than a slave (this becomes the centre point of the whole film later on) to which Demetrius replies that no man should deem themselves to afford another man's freedom. The dialogue is played out in an informative fashion, letting the viewer know of the predicament the two face from not being able to pay taxes to the Roman empire. Edits are made to point out an action, such as Octavio settling down on the ground and Demetrius ceasing the wood splitting to address him.

As the two settle down side by side, a zoom is used to signify that we are about to go into Octavio's head as they slumber. In this dream sequence, we see the first erotic scene featuring the two men, Octavio runs in slow motion to Demetrius as they embrace and begin to dance. The stage is simple while lighting is dramatic, using light and shadow to create contrast, while music is used to punctuate the dreamlike quality and to heighten the scene. The first edit takes place as the men kiss, going from a medium shot to a closeup that zooms out to a full shot. There appears to be a repetitive cycle of shot following shot, from Octavio in the act of fellatio to Demetrius doing the same, followed up by a sweeping full shot of both characters.

Overall, not many edits are made, instead of cutting the camera follows movement, such as hands and gaze. The dream sequence lasts for 5 minutes, and only 11 edits are made throughout the scene. A last slow zoom is used for the money shot, focusing on the fellatio and slowly moving up to the face.

A J-cut is used to rouse the two men from their erotic slumber, a Roman soldier, and cronies sit on horseback and demand the taxes of Octavio's uncle's farm be paid in full or otherwise they be taken as collateral slaves. The soldiers have a skirmish with the two Greeks and end up riding off with Octavio in tow, telling Demetrius to prompt the uncle to fill the pouch full of silver or risk never seeing his nephew ever again. The cuts are swift and the tempo is fast to further the action and to make the capture of Octavio seem abrupt.

An establishing shot of the Roman campsite at dusk sets the next scene, as we find Octavius tied up and helpless, being tormented by his captor, the Roman captain. After a lengthy monologue, where he states what is to become of Octavius, the shot remains on his face half in the shadow cast by the

firelight, edits happening when he calls guards to strip him and have their way with Octavio. As this is going on, the shot changes to reflect that of Octavio's POV, what he sees from the ground as the Roman captain pleasures himself above him.

The music used in this scene heightens the dramatic nature of it, the helplessness of the captive in contrast to the sadistic joy of his captors. The scene only lasts 4 minutes and 11 seconds but has 10 cuts more than the previous erotic scene, further highlighting the differences played out in each scene. The scene ends with a slow zoom into Octavius's face, and transitions to the same shot of the tent outside now at night-time.

An unnecessary edit shows us the men now asleep in the tent, cutting back to the outside where we see Demetrius coming to rescue his friend. Match cutting is used to show Demetrius entering the tent, and freeing Octavius. A glance is shed on the sleeping Roman captain, cutting back to Octavius leaving. Demetrius lingers behind with a rock in hand, pondering whether to kill the sleeping captain. Suspense is heightened by cutting back and forth from Demetrius to the sleeping man, ultimately deciding to throw the rock on the ground and make his escape.

The pursuit of the two Greeks is shown using parallel editing, firstly from the point of view of the Romans to the two lovers running away, which ultimately leads to Demetrius being captured while Octavius gets away. The capturing of Demetrius sets about the chain of events the film follows, most notably the hapless fate of Demetrius as he gets sold off and tortured ending up as the sex slave of the Emperor.

At this point, the film mostly follows Demetrius through his trials, however, the two Greek stories intermingle throughout. In a cutaway scene, Octavius later travels to Rome trying to plead for his friends' freedom by paying the owed taxes. In a shocking turn of events, although he gets imprisoned by the same Roman captain, the two end up falling for each other romantically. Sidenote here, in a rape/submission scene picturing the two, Darth Vader's theme music is used to colour the scene with another not-so-subtle homage to John Williams.

This scene is divided into three parts, firstly the rape of Octavio, secondly him being tied up in a Roman bathhouse to play witness to an orgy, to back to the captain's chambers where he finally gives consent. Most cuts take place within the bathhouse since there are multiple people involved hence more to draw attention to. The editing is pretty standard, the scene lasting approximately eight minutes with 74 edits in total.

Meanwhile, Demetrius is now being washed and oiled to be presented to Emperor with the washers taking advantage of him being tied up. In contrast to the previous scene, only 10 cuts are made

through 5 minutes and 17 seconds. Instead of using cuts, the camera zooms in and out following movement, akin to the cinematography used in the first scene, keeping the use of closeups only for fellatio and the following moneyshot.

A quick crossfade to an outside building transitions the scene to the Emperor's chambers, wherein in a rather histrionic fashion he wonders over his beauty and the lust he feels for men. The monologue is in a single shot, where no edits are made, making the scene feel even more theatrical and less cinematic. The mood changes dramatically with the introduction of Demetrius, although the main focus remains on the character talking, meaning either on the Emperor or the guards.

As the guards are bid to leave, we cut to a closeup of Demetrius's face, and back to a medium-full shot of the two characters together. The Emperor removes the binds holding Demetrius and orders him to disrobe. As he does this, we cut to the emperor's face as he watches Demetrius take his clothes off. He moves closer but the two remain in separate shots, the only difference being the shots are now more intimate and closer. The shot remains on Demetrius as he oils himself, focusing on his torso and lower body. The brief cut of the emperor reveals that it is through his gaze that we are experiencing this view. As the emperor grabs Demetrius's hand, the cut changes to include both men, changing to a full shot once they settle onto the bed. Cuts generally follow an action, switching from two-way mid shots to a close-up of either fellatio or penetration. The rhythm is interrupted on a regular interval, by switching to further away as is replicating that of an outside spectator POV.

After this, the camera angles change to give a more character POV, switching to and from Demetrius and the Emperor. The moment of penetration is shown with the use of a closeup, as the camera angles consist of a more rear-ended view of the scene. Once more, extra attention is drawn to Demetrius's fist being pushed into Crisco to lubricate his hand. The moment of hesitation is shown on Demetrius's face, after which we cut to his view of the Emperor guiding his hand into his anal passage (act of fisting).

Three cuts are used after this to him going through the action, to a shot of his unoccupied hand reaching for a knife. The shot changes from a medium shot to a full shot as the knife is raised. The editing pace speeds up, as in elongating the moment of decision, making the action seem more dangerous. As the knife comes down, we have a view of the Emperor's face in almost mock surprise that he wasn't killed by his slave. We see the Emperor laugh, after which we cut to Demetrius, his face filled with resentment. The rhythm of the scene is relatively even in regards to pacing, staying mostly in full to medium shots, occasionally cutting to close-ups of fisting. The scene ends with a low full shot slowly zooming in on the Emperor's face as he sadistically smiles while holding Demetrius to him. By length, this scene is the longest erotic sequence lasting 10 minutes, with roughly 68 cuts.

In stark contrast, we see the new lovers Octavio and the captain embrace in his chambers discussing the fate of Demetrius and their newfound union. Parallel editing intertwines the two Greeks' fate together in this scene, cutting from a close-up of Demetrius's face twisted in pain being whipped by the sadistic Emperor, to a similar-sized shot of the two lovers' mid-passionate kiss.

From here the shot zooms out to accommodate the conversation as to how to save Demetrius from his plight. The captain decides to help in freeing Demetrius, separating the two lovers into different frames, conveying the decision. A shot of a crescent moon tells the viewer it is night as the two make their way into the Emperor's bedchamber. Octavius frees Demetrius, and bids the captain farewell with a kiss, leaving him to ponder his fate alone.

As the two friends make their escape, we cut back to the Emperor's chambers, where the captain remains. The Emperor asks of his slave's whereabouts to which the captain does not answer. No cuts are made in this scene and the threat of the captain's fate is dealt to him off-screen as the camera stays on the emperor slowly zooming in on his grin. In the second shot, the captain returns to his bedchamber and touches the empty bed while looking up, this cuts to the two Greeks riding a horse together showing us they were successful in their escape. With the captain's capture imminent, we cut back to Octavius and Demetrius as they kiss, marking the bittersweet price their freedom cost them. Octavius states he must go and help his lover, once more setting the chain of events from the start of the film. In the last scene, we see the captain bound up in shackles, as the Emperor approaches, he makes his way behind him, the shot zooms in on their two faces, one twisted in pain from being fisted and the other in a gleeful sadistic smile on his face.

Overall, Centurians of Rome featured a vast number of erotic scenes, making up most of the film. This, however, did not take away from the plot development, or the characters from having distinct personalities. As with most films of the time, edits are few and far between, but the pacing does not seem drawn out or languid and in conclusion, even with the theatrics and wooden acting the film itself is cohesive and well put together. Not too much can be said about the editing as it mostly serves to further the plot and takes no risks in other artistic merits.



## Behind The Green Door - Analysis

In the opening scene, we see a man drive to a roadside diner. The establishing shot from inside the diner is long (50 seconds), as in waiting for the younger of the men to join the elder of the two at the counter. We cut to show the cook entering behind the two men, framing him between their shoulders. Through a match cut, we focus once more on the men sitting side by side, and prompted by the cook, they start to recount the story of the Green Door through a flashback.

It starts with a winding road opening out in front of us, carefree music playing as a red convertible flies through the green countryside, we cut from the wide shot to a closeup of Gloria (Marilyn Chambers), our all-American heroine seen through the car's windscreen, a sense of freedom marks the scene. The music continues over a zoom of a hotel looking over a body of water, the shot feels mostly pointless and only shown to give the viewer information as to where the woman was headed to. We look over Gloria's shoulder writing a cheque as if following her movements, she's closely monitored by the clerk who makes a suspicious phone call in a cutaway scene to a man in dark glasses to let him know that "she's here". All fairly standard editing for a flashback scene of the time, showing for information and cutting to include mystery and create tension.

On the outside terrace, we join our two narrators where the older man is in the middle of telling a story to his companion, a disengaging account of his weekend during which we are treated to the first of many unnecessary closeups, this time of his yellow socks in loafers. The younger man glances up as Gloria sits down at the adjacent table to drink a solitary beer, the elder still engaged in his story fails to do so. The editing here is to show the start of the character engagement between the two. The music drowns out the men's conversation as the shot focus alternates between the side profile of the man in the yellow socks to Gloria sitting on her own. Going from extreme close-up to two consecutive wide shots makes the whole scene feel misplaced and lacking in rhythm, however, it does give off the impression of someone stalking either the two men or the woman. There isn't much information given by this point and the rhythm continues to be off-kilter and rushed, further made so by the abduction of the woman later that same evening.

Parallel editing is used to show the two men's arrival at the very same mysterious Green Door club our abducted heroine is taken to. As the men make their way into the club, we cut to Gloria being escorted to a back room where a matriarchal type of woman tells her that no harm will come to her and that she's about to be "loved as she has never been loved before". This is the only extensive dialogue of the whole film, and the purpose of it in my supposition is so that the targeted female viewing audience would be placated to the apparent abduction/rape fantasy being played out. The

frame is held as the woman's hands travel over Gloria's body and back up to her face, where we stay as Gloria's gaze settles on the viewer.

A dissolve transitions Gloria's blank gaze to a mime performing on stage. We cut from the mime switching "faces" to a mostly disengaged languid crowd, some with their faces hidden by masks. The parallel is obvious, where the mime acts as a bridge from one face to another, with the editing showing the cleverness of these emotional transitions. The mood changes as Gloria now dressed in white is lead to the stage by several women garbed in dark robes, who strip her and proceed to painstakingly slowly "ravish" her, shot in unusual angles. At first, we stay on Gloria's face, gradually shifting to the point of view of the audience, giving us a 180-degree view of the stage. Cutting to a very of the time zoom-in on the younger man in the crowd, now recognizing Gloria as the same woman from earlier, a relatively standard realization technique. Tension within the crowd and mounting pleasure on stage is shown from switching from a wide shot audience point of view to a closer more intimate shot of Gloria and her captors. The point of interest is blurred as attention is too widely spread, the scene doesn't build due to the cutting of jarring close-ups of miscellaneous genitalia continuously interrupting the pace of the film, the editing not bringing a rhythmic attempt towards climax direction.

Our attention is drawn to the stage door, where a man wearing crotchless tights is making his way across to Gloria and the women. He appears almost hesitant, recoiling as the intimacy is broken by the crowd reaching out to touch him. The editing is sluggish as we stay for extended periods on the man's face, switching to and fro to similarly paced shots of Gloria's face.

Music is used to punctuate penetration, as the pacing becomes more fevered echoing the music rhythm, the editing follows the rhythm of the music in an attempt to follow the screen action. We remain in an intimate close-up shot of Gloria's face for over two minutes in expectation of her climax, the shot lingers on her pearl earring, a foreshadowing of later events. The camera swoops away from Gloria, taking the role of the audience, viewing through the eyes of the spectators. We alternate between shots of the audience, cutting to the stage as in anticipation of the next act to come. I'd noted roughly 180 edits by the 50th minute of the film, further highlighting the sluggish pace of editing used in this film.

So far Gloria is only shown to embody the ideal sexual object type, having no lines of dialogue, aside from the moans of ecstasy permeating the otherwise complete silence. In this way, the Mitchells could utilize the "blank screen" method, which gives room for the viewers to project their fantasies onto the characters/actors. There's little to no character development at all, and the lack of conceivable narrative marks this film's actual intentions rather than the pretence as an exercise in art-house erotica. This is shown by the editing of the film so far.

In one of the film key sequences and one which gave the film some of its notoriety, Gloria is simultaneously being penetrated and giving oral sex to three men hanging off a trapeze. Editing in this scene is faster than in any of the previous ones, a variety of angles is utilized, cutting from close-ups of fellatio and penetration to shots of the crowd now engaging in sexual acts. The line between the stage and audience is being blurred, with our attention being drawn to the spontaneous activity played out by the rapturous crowd of onlookers, an interesting parallel to the ceremony on stage. Although the film is cutting much faster than in any other part of the film, the considerations towards continuity in the edits aren't matched as our attention is being drawn between multiple locations. Confusing close-ups jump from one activity to another, it is as if the editor could not choose what to show or indeed how long for. Attempts to ensure that the 'right' shots are included in the film, but how they fit in is given much less attention.

The scene culminates in a psychedelic optically printed money shot in metric montage, an endless solarized Technicolor spurting of semen in slow-motion which brings the film to an almost complete standstill for ten minutes. Time stops as dissolve and cross-fades alternate between the semen hanging mid-air to Gloria's open mouth. Penises overlap each other, repeating the same action of ejaculation countless times, as if stuck in a time warp all while accompanied by distorted carnival music. All of this heralds more the Michell brothers showcasing their technical aptitude than to portray any artistic merit, but even so, an interesting take on the money shot all the same. The skill/care in the editing here isn't matched elsewhere in the film, if even in their other works.

After the feverish sequence of multicoloured ejaculations, a dissolve is used to transition to a birds eye view of the room, the writhing bodies disturbed by the narrator of the story detangling from the mass onto the stage and carrying Gloria off, only three cuts were used to do this, a relative return to pace from the scene prior. The exit through the door brings us back to the present, the end of the flashback that started some time ago, the use of the time manipulation not for character, plot, or any other development, but as an attempt at an understandable framing device perhaps. We follow the younger man as he bids farewell and drives away into the night, cutting from his pov of the road to where a dissolve of images of him and Gloria having sex appear. The same music is played from the first time they met on the terrace, making the viewer wonder if the whole thing was just a fantasy to occupy his mind for the drive. The cuts are mostly dissolves and crossfades, slow-moving in pace, giving the scene even more of a daydreamlike quality. Interestingly in the end credits, there are glimpses into the missing sections not shown in the film, for whatever reason this choice was made remains a mystery to me; maybe a last-ditch effort to bring some clarity.

The overall editing in the film adds little to the erotica genre, perhaps being more intricately linked to other disposable films of a similar period. It is clear that to have action in itself is not enough to keep the momentum going, the editing should accompany the progression towards something, and the variation in the pacing produces no real climax.

Although common to a lot of erotica, nothing is used to create a sense of narrative or even purpose beyond the showing of the money shot in effect. For the most part, the film has been held in memory perhaps only for this part of the movie, the hypnotic attempt at a 'trippy' moneyshot, for which there is some credit to the editing in facilitating.

Overall, however, the editing was mismatched and unpaced, drawn-out, and dull which shouldn't be the first adjectives you turn to when describing a porno but so is the case in *The Green Door*.

## Pirates II: Stagnetti's Revenge - Analysis

A question that every filmmaker asks themselves before making a film is: Is it worth making? Is the script worth writing, do the actors play a part in making this film more or less relatable to the audience, can I move anyone with what I want to show them? My experience with editing remains limited, but the sensitivities remain intact. With Pirates II the first and foremost thought I had about this was, did the film have an editor at all, or was it that some poor intern was paid to watch hours of ejaculate fly accompanied by some rather awful acting and piece it all together?

As editors, our job is to search and combine the best possible outcome of the material available to us and make this all into a cohesive end product. It's safe to say Pirates II didn't do so well in this department, although to be fair it can't be an easy task to combine humour with a bare flank or two and make this into a cinematic masterpiece. Like many pornos made in the noughties (Category:2000s pornographic films - Wikipedia, 2021)) Pirates II is a porn parody of Pirates of the Caribbean and judging by the production value was almost as popular as the original franchise it was spoofing in the adult entertainment industry.

As the name suggests Pirates II is a sequel to the aptly named Pirates, the film follows almost directly from where the previous one ended. In the first scene, we are taken straight into an action sequence (not the naked kind).

A pirate ship gives chase to another ship, on which three men look on in horror. The cuts take place within movement, and shots remain on active speakers. A holy man and his young attendant are told to hide under the deck, here a jump cut is used to assist in making the action seem more abrupt. Once in the cabin, the priest in a stealthy manner swallows a glowing marble(?) and prompts the young assistant to hide him in a chest and take to arms. Jump cuts are used again to signify action, one where the young man locks the door and second as he grabs a sword, he glances up at a crucifix and steels himself for what comes next, which happens to be a swift death off-camera. Music heightens suspense, as on deck, the men are rounded up. The priest is held by the throat as the pirate queen Zifeng uses a tentacled scorpion-like creature to make him tell where the marble is located, the next shot being a close-up as she quickly plunges her hand into his abdomen retrieving the glowing orb. Here some rather fabulous CGI is used to show the ship being sunk by the enemy vessel, after which the scene fades to black to end it.

A ship is seen sailing the open ocean and a wipe transitions us inside the cabin where our strapping captain Reynolds is recounting his victory portrayed in the previous film to his manservant Oxford. Reynold's monologue is interrupted by Oxford interjection, ceasing the sweeping movement of the

camera to hard cuts between the two characters. This scene is played out in three parts, first where we see a flashback of the battle in black and white, highlighting the fact that it is indeed a memory. The captain's log acts as a voice-over to other musings of the goings-on, detailing the crew's everyday activities and informing the audience of past events that led up to the present.

Two wipe transitions are employed, changing scenes, one of which acts as a bridge to the first pornographic scene. In this, the sister of the ship's explosives expert (the other comedic non-sex character) is engaged with two men. The angles consist of three camera placements, punctuated with extreme close-ups, mostly of either penetration or fellatio. The cuts seem hastened, acting almost jump cut like in nature. This lasts for 3 minutes and 27 seconds, with 64 edits in total. The voiceover continues as we bring the scene back to Captain Reynold's cabin, where a wipe ends the scene and transports us to later that evening. Here, we see a conversation between the captain and Olivia, the gist of this scene to be informative, Olivia tells Reynolds of her cousin's arrest, and the crew travels to Jamaica to seek pardon for her.

Further plot points include the governor of Jamaica sending the crew on a mission to dispose of another group of pirates and to retrieve a treasure in exchange for a pardon. Later, as Captain Reynolds alongside his first mate Jules arrives in Pirates Bay, they set off on different missions. Jules goes off to find and capture Zifeng, while captain Reynolds attends a slave auction held by the Armenian gold pirate and happily participates in an orgy of slave girls and belly dancers. As this is happening crosscutting is used to show Jules being captured and enslaved by Zifeng using a mysterious liquid that gives her total control of Jules's mind and body. This, in turn, is used against the captain who after capture is made to fight a CGI monster, only to be rescued by Olivia. Later Zifeng, using the glowing marble resurrects Stagnetti from the bottom of the sea. The structure of the narrative remains linear throughout the film.

For a pornographic film, the plot is highly convoluted and strangely complex, drawing from the previous film's plotline. Most transitions from scene to scene are dealt with by using a wipe, which most editors would agree is about as useful a transition as using a golf club to stir your coffee. The term wipe transition, which is considered outdated by most standards, is, of course, where the incoming shot moves across the screen to replace the outgoing shot. This type of severely graphic transition shows the film's rather two-dimensional representation of space. One could speculate that the same people that enjoy the Star Wars franchise are the supposed target audience for Pirates II.

On the specific subject of actual pornographic content, the film features nine scenes of sexual content which put together is 45 minutes of its runtime of 138 minutes. All of which are similar in pacing and editing style, ranging from lengths of 2 min 45 sec to 8 min 15 sec, averaging around 102 edits per

scene. For a movie of this genre, that being hard-core pornography, the imagery has a way of moving from the intended purpose of being erotic to approaching more of a medical intervention.

The main points of interest, where editing is concerned are the two scenes that follow each other around halfway through the film (timestamp 1:34:15) This is because one is pornographic whilst the other is an action sequence, here I'll be analysing the similarities and differences of style found in editing in both scenes.

A wipe transition takes us to Stagnetti's ship, inside the first images shown are of skulls hanging from the ceiling which cuts to the now enslaved Jules who awaits demands from the pirate queen Zifeng and the resurrected Stagnetti. As can be expected this culminates in a threesome lasting 5 minutes and 12 seconds with 99 edits. The editing style appears to be episodic, opting to show certain action for only a short period, using jump cuts to transition into the next sexual act. The cuts most often take place from movement, creating a sense of continuity even when jump cuts take place. The only close-ups we see are of genitalia, and faces are shown either in a wide or as a reactionary shot. Rhythmically speaking, it becomes monotonous as every second shot is of penetration and fellatio, but this is perhaps needed when considering the subject matter.

As with previous scenes, the editing style remains abrupt and hastened, as if trying to squeeze in (no pun intended) as much imagery as possible. The camera angles remain in similar positions, following the rhythm of cutting from a wider sweeping shot to close-ups and back to wide. The ensuing moneyshot is kept in tight focus, where the main point of interest is a common pornographic trope whereby semen is passed from mouth to mouth.

A J-cut is used to transition scenes, a crack of lighting prepares the battle sequence as we see Stagnetti's ship give chase to captain Reynolds and his crew. The battle is divided into four parts, crosscutting between actions mostly in pairs leading up to the climatic sword crossing of Stagnetti and Reynolds. As shown in (The highest budgeted adult films of all time (10 Photos), 2021) significant chunk of the film's budget of 8 million USD I suspect went into special effects and CG, which considering the rest of the film isn't half bad.

Stagnetti raises an army of the dead from the bottom of the sea and orders the skeletal army to fight Reynolds and crew. An interesting factor I noticed in this battle sequence is the slowing down of edits made when showing the skeleton army, settling for a more sweeping motion of the camera to showcase the scene in comparison to the quick-paced editing of dialogue and fight sequences that take place later in the scene.

This is also true for the sea monster later deployed by Stagnetti against Captain Reynolds and crew. During the initial fight sequence, the editing pace is very fast, averaging an edit almost every second. The whole scene lasts roughly around 14 minutes, making it the longest consecutive scene in the whole film.

In conclusion, Pirates II utilizes a multitude of editing techniques, from general crosscutting, wipe transitions, jump cuts, and flashbacks. I can't say Pirates II could be called a masterclass in editing but aside from the racial stereotyping and the unreasonable amount of nude lip gloss, the film itself was an amusing watch with slivers of humour sprinkled between the sails.



## Love - Analysis

The opening shot sets the mood, a static camera looks on a couple as they pleasure each other facing the viewer for three minutes. Erik Satie's *Gnossienne No. 3* colours the scene with sweet sentimentality, as rain falls outside. The unmoving quality of the shot is highlighted by the lack of editing alongside the length, slowly moving to the crescendo of the film's first money shot.

A frame of black cuts in using an A J-cut of a phone ringing, which wakes up Murphy (Karl Glusman) now in bed with a different woman from the opening shot. As he lifts the phone to see who is calling, a voiceover narrates his internal monologue. A baby is heard crying and the shot follows him as he gets up to comfort the child. The camera stays on him framed in a doorway, a cage of his own making, as he listens to a message left on his phone. New information comes to light as we hear the teary voice of a woman telling Murphy that she hasn't heard of her daughter Elektra in months and is worried about her safety and the possibility of suicide.

Through this, we find out that two years have gone by, his voiceover continues to lament over his previous partner Elektra (Aomi Muyock). A mid scene blink-like frame brings us closer to Murphy's face as he delves into the memory of the past.

The film uses a non-chronological order to fan out the various stages of Murphy's and Electra's relationship, beginning from the end. The memories are conveyed as memories and presented in a jumbled mismatched fashion, blurred by time and recollection. Murphy now in the past alone calls Nora, Electra's mother, asking her for any information on Elektra, she angrily retorts to leave them alone and that he has destroyed her only daughter. He faces away from the camera, framed once more against the claustrophobic doorway. The steady single shot is punctuated with blinks of black frames, and as the shot slowly pulls away, we are transported back to the present. Here Murphy's internal voice takes over, embittered by his current predicament living with Omi, a woman he doesn't love. Through two intercut scenes we see him and Omi have sex with the condom breaking, and the second where she tells him that she's pregnant. A blackout blink separates the scene, where he and Electra side by side embrace each other in bed.

Once more in the present, the camera follows Murphy as he walks through the apartment, making his way to his last "secret corner" a residual memory of his past self. In a flashback he sees Electra facing him, saying that they should try to protect each other. Match framing shows him in the same position, now alone left with his memories. A blink frame takes him back to the past, where Electra gives him opium, for protection for a time she won't be there. The red is now permeated with hints of green, a tell-tale subtle hint to the present. He tells her of Omi's pregnancy, a jump cut with the use of a blink

screen sees Electra angrily spit in his face, and leave. A match cut with dissolve transports us further into the past, where traits of his jealousy and obsession come through as we see him following Elektra to various locations to try and talk with her.

The scenes are experienced through Murphy, the shots moving from a side profile to the back of his head depending on the mood of the scene. As the scene goes deeper into the memory of past events and the dramatic decline into madness, editing becomes more erratic to convey this, and more blink frames are used. Framing and colour play an important role, showing the viewer the various states of Murphy's mental state.

As he angrily calls Electra, the room is flooded with red light, the walls slowly closing in on him. A match cut brings us back to the present, wherein stark contrast his face is now blank from emotions he recalls Electra stating her love for him, in the present, his internal voice tells her he loves her as well. Match framing is used to mirror the past with the present, highlighting the unmoving nature of Murphy's character.

In the present we see Omi leave with their child, telling Murphy to take care of his past while she takes care of their future. Murphy now haunted by thoughts of Electra woefully thinks to the time spent with her, cutting to a scene of them making love. As he takes the opium gifted to him by Electra, the shot remaining in closeup, his voiceover tells us this is the only way to have her inside of him again. The scene cuts back to him and Electra in bed as he asks her what her ultimate fantasy is, she tells him that it is to have sex with another girl, a blond with blue eyes. As if luck would have it, the couple meets such a woman, who turns out to be the very same woman Murphy now detests in the present. Omi is brought into the couple's life with three scenes, cutting from asking her out to eat, where she tells them that she's pro-choice, to them dancing together in a club. Dialogue is played out in the same frame, and no cuts generally take place within them. Information is slowly given through dialogue, giving clues on how to piece together the present.

Maggot Brain by Funkadelic plays as the three start kissing, cutting from an angled shot above their heads to a wide full shot straight above them. The shot is permeated with blinks, jump-cutting at times to further action. The scene is long and drawn out, breaking rhythm periodically because of the use of blackout blink screens. Symbolism is however clearly stated when Murphy takes Omi from behind, Electra is left on the other side. A rift is being formed between them and is further highlighted later in the scene using framing.

Love weaves in and out of the present and past, juxtaposing each event with the internal monologue of the tortured Murphy. The viewer doesn't get to feel too much sympathy for him, as throughout the

film we see how he was the architect of his dire fate. After a while, this becomes arduous and repetitive, and even the highly stylized centred shots laden with symbolism can't save the drawn-out pacing of the film.

Indeed, *Love* comes across as an autobiographical film about its director Gaspar Noé, taking on the role of its protagonist Murphy, naming the son Gaspar and even playing the role of Electra's previous partner, a seedy art dealer. Murphy even declares halfway through that he wishes to make films "that truly depicts sentimental sexuality" and "blood, sweat, and semen", more or less the themes *Love* centres around.

Even though *Love* features a vast amount of erotic content, more or less half of the 2 hours and 12 minutes, it doesn't come across as gratuitous, partly due to how it is edited together. Shots remain long and focus is almost always centred, while editing is sparse relying more on the cinematography than showing more. It shows the viewer how love and lust can be confused and interchangeable sometimes. It aims to draw the viewer in, keeping a distance from what is happening and still retain the honesty of what it feels like to actually be intimate while in love. Most of us have felt this, and thus making the film's sex scenes feel relatively real.

The structure and feel of the film come across like a drama, but I understand how it could be misconstrued as softcore porno mainly due to the vast amount of sex and lack of emotion that sometimes went along with it. Cheap shock value comes from the film's more notorious scene when viewed in 3D the fourth wall is broken by a penis ejaculating toward the audience.

In one of the pivotal scenes, Electra and Murphy walk through Paris together after a disastrous attempt at spicing things up using a transvestite prostitute. As they walk the camera stays behind their back following them as they discuss secrecy and the need for it, two different opinions opposing each other. We don't see their expressions, and true feelings are hidden in words. They wear contrasting colours, which are mirrored in the Parisian night. A blackout screen jump cuts to early morning as they continue discussing still with their backs to the camera. As they face each other, we recognise the scene from the beginning of the film repeated now in the end. Another jump cut brings us to see their faces, the topic of discussion being taking a break.

The scene is structured so that when the viewer finally sees their faces, it is to bring more meaning into the emotionally laden subject. We feel more for them as we experience their pain face on. They continue walking, stopping under a bridge so that their faces are thrown into shadow as they reminisce on the first time that they met. The scene then cuts to this, mirroring a similar walk, however, bringing

the end to the beginning. The bittersweet scene is dreamlike, a painful reminder of happier times when their love was only at the start of its journey.

The scene cuts to the present, where Murphy now begging God asks for forgiveness and the safety of Electra. The editing is fast, flickering through the memories haunting Murphy. Electra's voice is heard telling him that if she dies, she hopes he falls in love, again and again. As a broken Murphy cries in the bath, the scene intercuts Electra walking in pregnant, and again back to reality bringing home the truth of the situation of his loneliness. He fantasizes about holding Electra, where in actuality he's holding his son Gaspar. This match cuts to him and Electra holding each other in the same bath, the sound of the shower recalling the sound of rain from the opening scene. As the shot pulls back the walls close in on the two, framing the moment as if a painting, freezing time to last forever.

Overall, the editing relies on highly stylized shots where the camera stays static to create the scene. The film itself feels long and drawn out, perhaps a decision to highlight the varied stages of it. Notably, I'd say there are far too many filler scenes and the film could have done with editing at least 15 minutes out of the full runtime. The use of nonlinear structure works well, and the viewer is given ample time to piece the plot together. The characters remain one-dimensional, never breaking away from the film's self-serving attitude of living out the director's fever dream fantasy. This could also be the reason as to why the film is as long as it is, Noé being one of the film's editors failed to kill his darlings.

## Female Pleasure Circle - Analysis

The film's initial idea was from one of the sites Xconfessions viewer. Here, a text written over an orange screen is the first thing we see, graphic and bold, it is meant to be eye-catching and proud in its statement. Female masturbation is in some part still taboo and not widely talked about pleasure, and how to experience it should be something we all learn to feel in ourselves, and to know one's body is to love oneself.

In a full shot, six women in the nude face the camera, all appear relaxed and happy to be there. The shot cuts to a medium shot, as it sweeps over the women's faces one by one. We cut back to the full shot, as a woman with an easel walks toward the six women. Voiceover is used to tell the viewer about how she sees female nudity to be powerful, going on to state that to paint over a woman's nude body as an act invades their intimacy

The voiceover continues telling us that nobody touches our bodies, aside from partners, and perhaps the doctor, accompanied by a view of a torso being painted, cutting to an intimate closer shot of the brush sweeping over a woman's neck. Editing is fluid and moves quickly from shot to shot, picking up pace as it goes along. We as the viewer are meant to experience this as a participant, one of the women standing in line smiling and seeing what they see. The voice changes and we see in an interview style, the woman who was being painted. She is smiling while in a half-seated position telling us of the first time she masturbated as a young child, the shot remains on her, cutting back to her being painted as her voice colours the scene.

Similarly, as the second woman gets painted, we cut to her seated in a full body shot telling of her first sexual experience with her body, cutting back to her being painted. This is repeated throughout each woman, the closely intimate depictions paired with the imagery of the brush sweeping over skin paints a calm and serene environment. When each woman is introduced with her voiceover, we first see the part of her body being painted, then moving up to the face we cut to the interview of her in full paint explaining the subject matter.

After the stories of the earliest memory of masturbation, we cut to the same full shot of the women standing in line, now with warrior-like body paint. The voice of the painter tells us she sees a vast amount of female energy and power, and that the barrier of intimacy has now been broken down. Here, we cut to each woman in the same interview style telling how the body paint makes them feel, and what the sensation of it is. Highly cinematic shots of the six women facing the camera chapter the women's interviews, ranging from matters such as when and how they masturbate and how often, to what orgasms feel like.

The Female Pleasure Circle is divided into two parts, first the interviews which lasts for 21 minutes, and the second part which depicts the film's erotic content of the all-female masturbation/orgy lasting 24 minutes. Editing in the first part is fluid, mixing interviews and shots of the women being painted seamlessly. The style is more akin to that used in many documentary films, perhaps because of the use of voiceovers and interviews. Unlike a vast amount of erotica, the film aims to empower and educate while still being truthful to the genre. In the interviews, the shot remains in the same place and the subject matters follow organically each other.

An intertitle separates the two parts, after which an aerial shot is shown of the women lying down with their heads touching in a circle. The shot zooms in slightly and then cuts to closeups of the women's side profile. As the women pleasure themselves, three close-up shots follow of masturbation, cutting back to the aerial shot. The rhythm of editing in the scene mostly follows this order, balancing shots of detail with medium-full shots of the action taking place creating a full depiction of events. Cutting from action blends the movement of the women together, akin to a dance masking the transitions to different points of interest. Cutting to the aerial gives the scene time to breathe and making the closeups have more power in their intimacy.

The jump cuts aren't too apparent unless you pay remarkably close attention, as the overall rhythm has a flow and feels natural. As the group concentrates their efforts on one member, the shots remain close, cutting from the joyful expression of the woman pleasuring herself to the rest of the group and once more to an aerial. As the woman orgasms, the shot remains on her for a considerable amount of time, before jump-cutting to a close-up of double penetration. This transition is more noticeable but not invasive as it doesn't break the overall flow. The editing is fast paced when cutting from action, however, it lingers on moments of intimacy and closeness.

As the film draws to a close, interviews are used to bring it full circle, the subject being on what word for vagina they like to use. This sentiment reverberates in the last shot of the women, holding each other in post-coital bliss.

In a society that still shies away from the topic of female masturbation, this film is a breath of fresh air in a somewhat stagnant environment of pornography and even erotica. A vast amount of porn falls into an unattainable fantasy, whereas The Female Pleasure Circle is very much real in its approach to pleasure and how to view it.

Sexuality in all its forms comes from a seat of power, it can either destroy or rebuild. The act of self-love is one of the most intimate ways to fully embrace the natural essence of ourselves, this film is a celebration of exactly that. In conclusion, structurally speaking the film was well thought out and put

together, balancing elements of documentary and erotica into a cohesive unity. The editing although fast-paced at times never appears rushed, giving ample time for the viewer to take everything in.

## Conclusion

To speak of editing and its purpose in filmmaking is to understand why it is so important to the art of film. What does the editor want you to see and in what order, is the editing supposed to be seen or kept invisible, to draw us into the story, or to alienate the viewer? Cinema has advanced dramatically over its lifespan as have editing techniques, but the purpose remains the same: to entertain and to create a sense of wonder. Walter Murch in his book *In the Blink of an Eye* claims that emotion should come first in the list of criteria when editing film:

*“How do you want the audience to feel? If they are feeling what you want them to feel all the way through the film, you’ve done about as much as you can ever do. What they finally remember is not the editing, not the camerawork, not the performances, not even the story-- it’s how they felt.”* (Murch, 1995, p.18)

The line between film and art has been made into an invisible wall separated by the distinction of entertainment, and nowhere is it more obvious than in pornographic film. Nudity and sex remain intriguing and somewhat shameful, supposedly best kept hidden behind the heavy curtain of a porn shop, viewed alone or with like-minded consenting adults. Most films include some form of nudity, violence, or both, but it’s sex and sexuality that rattles the cages of the casual viewer into thinking it is best kept from the eyes of the innocent. Not all action is violent, and not all sex is pornographic. It is easy to speak of even the most gratuitously aggressive film as cinema but as soon as the topic turns to sex it’s no longer a film but pornography.

The films chosen for this analysis cover the main types of pornographic film, ranging from indie to high budget, documentary to fictional, as well as a range of time periods. This allows a good assessment of how editing plays a part in the filmmaking process from how it affects the overall feeling, how scenes are pieced together, and so forth.

For example, when comparing the styles of editing found in *Pirates II* and *Behind the Green Door* (BGD), the primary difference comes from the intended audience, both films had a high budget, particularly so with *Pirates*, but *Behind the Green Door* was made to be a film that happened to be pornographic, to be viewed in a cinema, whereas *Pirates* was pornographic firstly, aimed to be watched at home and probably not in one sitting. Both films are plot-driven and edited to emphasize the on-screen sexual content. The languid pace of editing in BGD is in part from the fact that it was shot on film, which is also reflected in its sex scenes. Here in BGD they focus and stay on characters’ reactions and only cut to closeups as if to further highlight the action, with the overall feeling being closer to voyeurism than direct experience. *Pirates II*, however, uses multiple different angles, often



repeating similar shots in a frenzied array of cuts to show everything from all angles, titillating and being closer to a pornographic magazine rather than film. BGD is edited to make the viewer a participant in the film, giving ample time to gaze at each scene as in a daze, *Pirates II* punctuates most scenes with hardcore sex, but all this could be edited out and the film still be understood, the feeling not impacted by its pornographic content. BGD would be a different film with its pornographic content edited out or edited differently, it could equally be turned into a subtle wish fulfilment dream or an edge of violence feeling thriller, the editing controlling the balance through the pornographic content.

In terms of camera shot selection *Pirates II* uses the most variation, which, combined with the quick pace of editing, replicates the on-screen pornographic action, matching the pacing to the act of sex. The usage of quick cuts implies the need to keep the viewer engaged and interested, glimpses and impressions. A similar type of editing is generally found in action films and action sequences. The number of cuts increased within the sexual scenes for all of the films selected, however, none more noticeably than in *Pirates II*.

The two main hardcore porno films, *Centurians of Rome* and *Pirates II* include the most scenes of pornographic nature. The main focus of story arc building and action is to support the pornographic content, which bookends most scenes. While *Pirates II* uses a fast pace of editing in these scenes, *Centurians* opts for a slower pace using the camera to pan across the actor instead of cutting within the action. While both films have a storyline, using varied types of editing techniques such as flashbacks, crosscutting and quick cuts, the editing appears to have a more pragmatic function to explain the plot, rather than any effort from an artistic sense.

Analysis of the more cinematic films shows the editing styles found in *Love*, *The Female Pleasure Circle*, and *Behind the Green Door* take a more traditional approach to editing, where the pornographic content is treated more similarly to the non-pornographical content and treated more artistically rather than documentarily. *Love* for example, was shown at many film festivals, but due to its somewhat gimmicky use of 3D technology, it was written off as sensationalist. Using a nonlinear approach, the film aims to be experienced as both the protagonist Murphy and a fly on the wall. This becomes apparent through the use of black blink frames and the static, centred nature of the shots. The flow of the film is portrayed as memories, jumping from one to another, generally a more difficult way to edit cohesively. Instead of opting for quick cuts, *Love* lets scenes build by keeping the viewers focus centred and only cutting once the shot has been given enough space. Comparatively it takes a more filmic or at least erotica approach to the sexual content, where while still very much being present, it is not the main prerogative.

The Female Pleasure Circle represents a more documentary style of filmmaking and is more easily discussed in two parts. In the first part, where the main focus is to introduce the viewer to the concept of masturbation, the style of editing is periodic, using talking-head interviews to narrate visual elements, a standard for documentary films. The combination works to the film's advantage, creating an environment of ease and comfort, a sense of truthful connection to the person, giving power to each woman through the act of masturbation. Each character is given similar screen time, with each being felt to have an individual voice. This type of highlighting editing of the subjects in The Female Pleasure Circle allows time for each woman to convey her relationship with her body, while also keeping the flow of the film dynamic. The interview shots range from mid-shot to medium closeups, while the action shots range from long-shot to extreme close-up, more as would be expected documentarily than pornographically. The second part of the film introduces the main erotic content where the editing is kept tight, cutting from close-up to close-up to create a sense of intimacy and rhythm within the shots. An aerial shot that establishes the scene of group masturbation is the first of its kind used in the film and is then used periodically throughout. The style of The Female Pleasure Circle is kept toeing the line between fictional and documentary and is unique in the films analysed for this paper on the account that it aims to be seen as erotic and educational simultaneously. The film is also the shortest, with a runtime of 45 minutes. This signifies a well-thought-out and edited entity, where editing plays a major part in stitching it all together, given the largest range of points of view to be covered.

The two films studied that have the most notable differences in editing style were Pirates II and Love. While both films shared relatively similar runtimes (Love 135 min, Pirates II 138 min), and feature the largest number of pornographic scenes, the editing is vastly different. Pirates II uses a fast pace of editing within scenes, while Love opts for long drawn-out shots that are hyper stylised and centred. This is most noticeable when comparing pornographic sequences in each film, where in Pirates, a scene lasting just over four minutes could have more than 150 cuts, while Love within a similar time would only make at most 30 cuts, if even that. In Love, cuts take place to further the action or to strengthen the mood of the scene, while in Pirates the main prerogative is to show as many angles of action as possible. In both films approximately half of the scenes feature some form of sexual content, which is to be expected with hardcore pornography such as Pirates II, but perhaps less so with the more arthouse type film that is Love. Despite the similar amount of pornographic content, Love shares a similar type of editing as in The Female Pleasure Circle, rhythmic and at times slow, aiming to be less perceivable in cut points to the audience. While the editing in Pirates can be erratic at times, jumping from one angle to the next in a breakneck speed it could also be said that this type of dynamic editing has a way of keeping the audience engaged. The point of interest where this type of comparison comes

into play is to question what this means for the films: would Love feel more pornographic if edited in the style of Pirates, i.e. faster cuts and would Pirates appear more filmic if edited with slower pace in the style of Love.

Similarities in style arise from the use of varied storytelling methods, such as the use of nonlinear timeline in Love and flashback scenes in Centurians of Rome, Behind the Green Door, and Pirates II. Voiceover narration is also utilized in all but Centurians of Rome, which presents itself more in the fashion of a play. The number of cuts used greatly varies depending on the style and also primarily whether or not it was shot on film, (Behind the Green Door and Centurians of Rome) which both use pans instead of cuts to change focus within a scene. Highly stylized films such as Love and The Female Pleasure circle also use fewer edits, relying on the strength of the shot to carry enough interest for the viewer.

While editing styles are a good way to differentiate films and compare the varied methods of slicing films together, another way of looking at how editing affects film is by imagining films done in the style of the other. For example, what would Love look like with a faster pace of editing including swipe transitions, or Pirates II edited in the style of Love. While questioning what editing does to distinguish the pornographic film from the artistic or film containing sex, it comes down to what the editing does as a whole. In short, editing is the essence of what the film becomes. Between the cuts are choices, some visible and others not so. It is the art of choice acted through rhythm, seen and experienced through the maker and audience. While some editing styles are more decipherable than others, the way a film is edited undoubtedly affects how we view and experience them. Within pornographic film there exists a line between hardcore and softcore, high and low budget. These factors have an effect on the editing and for what reason these films were made for. Does the audience stay for the story or skip to the “good bits”, and the line gets blurred especially so in the more indie type productions or more cinematographically pleasing pornos.

Editing is not only individual cuts, but what those cuts mean and how they are made. While the innovation of digital editing has made the process easier and more accessible, and in general just more, the art of it remains the same. While the number of angles and the total amount of pornographic content affects the number of cuts, similar to that of action, more study is needed to fully realize the effect that editing has on erotica. The main differences in styles of editing within these films could be seen in what type of audience they were meant for, and how much intended artistic merit they had or at least was intended to have. The more hardcore sexual content the film had, the less the editing seemed to matter to the overall feel aside from catering to the audiences need to see all possible angles. There are bound to be hardcore films that have wonderful editing and are also

interesting as films aside from just the pornographic content, such as was seen in 70s German "fuck films", but the quality of editing depended strongly on how seriously taken the film wanted to be perceived as.

To answer the question of what impact the editing has on a pornographic film, at least from the study of these, it is that the role of editor can be perceived:

1. In purely pragmatic terms as a journeyman to advance with finer tuning or coarser the concourse of action, primarily pornographic and commercial in nature, or,
2. To advance pornography into a higher aesthetic beyond titillation and beyond its common cinematic companion violence to an accepted and more widely viewed and appreciated genre.

Editing is the invisible made visible but its authorship and in the creative tension between the vision of the scriptwriter and its actualization by the director is the driving force of any film. Pornography, while widely consumed can and should be viewed through a finer lens, which is the editor's craft.

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