

1. Desire, Perversion and Fantasy

It is widely held, by those true perverts in the know, that sexuality, amongst humans at least, is *undergirded* by taboo. That desire is necessarily rooted in *transgression*, and satisfaction of that desire is accompanied by a subtle current of disgust and guilt.

This is not to discourage you from sex. Quite the opposite. It is only to draw attention to the nature of sexual desire, and the perversion that is inherent in the act when it moves beyond the simple process of pro-creation.

Fantasy then, is something to be reached for, but never fully attained. Full satisfaction of the fantasy is always underwhelming. Romanticism, expectations and excitations posit a potentiality that is beyond the grasp of human comprehension. Of course, what we are left with, if the fantasy is realized, is a sudden onset of depression. This is the struggle of human existence; the constant tension between our fantasies and the world before us.

2. Restriction

Romance is borne out of the abyss...the space between the known and unknown. The less that is shown, the less revealed, the more romance, in its typical fantasising way, thrives. Romance, in many ways, is a product of restriction, not liberation.

Restriction means...to hold back, to build tension, to not show your hand, to only semi-partially expose the side of the breast, or the underside of the buttocks. This is the primary difference between the genres of ROMANCE and HARD-CORE PORNOGRAPHY. In hard-core pornography, everything is shown, everything permitted; there is nothing, as it were, that “goes too far”. We see intercourse, brutally and immediately; the focus of the scene is the act itself. But the stories are always farcical; something ridiculous, a pizza guy shows up and the surprised girl starts sucking him off through a hole in the box. In romantic movies, on the other hand, the drama that precedes sexual consummation is always done-up, exaggerated and obsessed over.

It is no wonder then that romance and mystery go hand-in-hand. In between the known and unknown there is space for fantasy to grow; the “what we suspect, but can only guess at”. Of course, our deepest desires have a tendency to spice the possibilities.

3. Relationships (2 or 3?)

Why is it that same-sex marriage is legal in most parts of the Western world, but polygamy is not? Polygamy has been commonly practiced throughout much of history...and for that matter, it still happens in many parts of the world today.

The obvious yet boring reason is the legal matters. Resolving who gets what after a divorce, the issues of child custody and inheritance. It would take a lot of work to rewrite all the laws to account for polygamous unions. But a more interesting response is this: it is a cultural matter, as deep as they go. There is something in the dualistic Western romantic mind that does not comprehend love between more than one individual, regardless of gender.

As mentioned in a previous essay, sexual desire is borne out of transgression. What is transgressive will differ depending on what is permitted in the cultural landscape you were raised in. It is symptomatic of the Western upbringing to regard romantic relationships as only existing

between two people. We would be less surprised, walking down the street, to encounter a homosexual couple than a polygamous triad (or quad). This is because polygamy undermines more about what we believe constitutes romance and relationships than same-sex marriage does.

4. A Casanova

A Casanova is...a form of an earwig. Driven by an insatiable desire for conquest, the Casanova has learned how to insert himself into any social circle, placing his tongue in the right ears, licking his way into the inner canals, slithering up to the brain.

A true Casanova is not your run of the mill open flirter or boozy tickler, but a refined gentleman; fluent in several languages, educated (or at least he claims to be) at the best schools, from noble stock...so they say. He comes with letters of recommendation, always dressed properly. Still, there remains the fact that the Casanova is indeed, an earwig.

Yes, it is only a true Casanova who performs that same play (only minor details changing) with every new seduction...oh what a word it is, to the Casanova's ears, that word, *seduction*. He lives for it, he breathes it, he practically reeks of it...it's a surprise anyone actually falls for it. But they do, the Casanova has but only to get a tongue in their ears and he is theirs, or they are his...he doesn't quite mind it, either way.

5. Sex and Death

Why are sex and death so inextricably linked? On the most basic level, is it because they constitute both halves of the biological cycle? Mate, gestate, die...mate, gestate, die, and so on. The French, those eternally woeful and melodramatic romantics, even have a deathly name for the orgasm – *la petit mort*.

Sometimes having sex can lead to death. Examples being a heart attack, or contracting a deadly venereal disease, or having a vengeful husband rush in on you with a shotgun with your pants around your ankles. Then there is the case of the female praying mantis, who bites the head off her beau once he's unloaded into her. And of course there is the inexplicable appeal of AUTO-EROTIC ASPHYXIATION. Somehow, nearly hanging yourself to death improves the quality of masturbation by a whopping 1.5x (or so I've been told).

In horror movies, we notice that people always die soon after or during sex. Clearly, the link between sex and death has been picked up by Hollywood. Perhaps dying in the throes of sex really is the best way to go. I've always wondered why people are so insistent on the "propagation of the species", as though there were some unquestionable instinctual desire to procreate. Maybe, the truest desire we all have is to die, and sex is the best way of getting there.

6. Lightheartedness

Despite all the attention of these essays placed lavishly at the feet of the supposed "darker" sides of sexuality – perversion, death, deceit and so on – there exists an element of lightheartedness that is indispensable to the whole affair.

One of the greatest annoyances, in the genre of romance, and not exclusively in film but applying to all the arts, and even life itself, is a romance that takes itself too seriously. That sort of Romeo and Juliet affair, which when romanticized ends tragically yet glamorously in the

death of both participants. Unfortunately, in reality such serious affairs often wind up with much uglier and pettier results.

Lighthearted depictions of love capture the ridiculous side of romance; the silliness of it all. Because in this way romance mirrors life as a whole – totally senseless, apparently pointless, a tumultuous affair of highs and lows. But the admirable quality is the ability of those engaged to take it all in good stride and with a flair for fun.