Mother Talk: Maternal Masquerade and the Problem of the Single Girl

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With the advent and spread of cyberspace technologies, much has been made of how sexual differences play out in this new frontier, particularly since the flexible parameters of screen identity provide an anonymity that offers room for gender play. Feminist critics, however, observe that real-life women in such cyberspace forums as Usenet groups, email lists, Internet Relay Chat lines (IRC), and multi-user domains (MUDs and MOOs) encounter many of the same sexist problems they have long experienced in real-life interactions—for example, unwanted sexual attention from men, or conversely, a lack of recognition of their points or contributions—which might induce them to adopt masculine personae in virtual forums.[1] On the other hand, real-life men often adopt feminine personae online precisely to attract the attention a virtual woman receives, although some report they choose these feminine personae in order to experience "what it's like" to be a woman.

Whatever the stakes and motives are for contemporary gender play in cyberspace, it is hardly a new phenomenon. Indeed, the virtual reality of the Internet is not a new frontier so much as it is an enlargement of an already existing, technologically mediated virtual space, namely, that of the telephone. The shift from aural to visual medium does open up some crucial differences; however, my immediate concern is to examine the similarities, tracing the roots of our cultural experience of sexual difference and desire on the Internet, and attending particularly to how the practice of masquerade precedes and is linked to the creation of screen personae and avatars. Any role that we could take up, or pose in, in order to facilitate our agenda by deflecting attention away from any potential threat our agenda might suggest, is a strategy of masquerade. This practice is perhaps more literalized on the Internet, but we can see it at work in earlier technological forums.

The film *Pillow Talk* (1959) provides a particularly compelling case as a precursor to cybersex and virtual gender play. As a mid-century text that precedes the second wave of the women's movement, *Pillow Talk* displays technology and sexual mores that are both familiar and

recognizably outdated at the end of the century. The plot hinges on the conflict between virtual and real personae, and despite the sense of physical presence conveyed in the title, moments of intimacy between the two main characters tend to occur through the virtual space of telephone technology, namely a party line. The main characters initially meet over the telephone, and their phone personae—Doris Day's humorless career-woman and Rock Hudson's unrepentant womanizer—immediately clash. But because these are personae, a sampling of each character's personality and not a broader representation of their complexities, the charge of the film is to create different personae that would enable the characters not to conflict but to connect. Ostensibly this transformation takes place in reality, through the suitor's invention of a false identity. But, as I aim to show, closer examination of the film reveals how the party line itself enables a different masquerade that transforms the main characters' interpersonal (or interpersonae-al) conflict into consummation. Although I will draw upon Joan Rivière's notion of masquerade, I am interested in how the strategic use of identity serves as a tool analogous to the cyberspace screen identities that enable a character to perform a specific function in a larger field of cultural meanings, such as an online interactive game or discussion group. In the case of *Pillow Talk,* the larger discourse will be the ideological definitions of sexual difference, and maternity in particular.

Feminine Autonomy and the Freudian Mother

In *Pillow Talk,* Doris Day, icon of the American feminine ideal if there ever were one,[2] plays Jan Morrow, the very model of the post-war, modern, independent single woman: she has her own apartment, her own career as an interior decorator, and her own social life, complete with an ardent suitor. Indeed, she has everything she needs but her own phone line. She shares a party line with Brad Allen (Rock Hudson), a composer whose constant use of the phone for his own romantic dalliances establishes the plot's initial predicament. Her autonomy is underscored by her relation to others in the film, in particular a housekeeper Alma, played by Thelma Ritter, who is clearly not the ideal of the autonomous subject, as she is drunk or hung-over most of the film and can barely do her job for her attachment to the party line. Alma's sardonic detachment from the other characters and the ideals of womanhood contrasts with Tony Randall's character, Jonathan Forbes, Jan's rich client and suitor; he displays masculinity in crisis, the failure to achieve autonomy, as exemplified by his constant references to his

psychiatrist. Both Alma and Jonathan serve the structural purpose of depicting Jan's independence as a problem: while Jonathan wants her to give up her autonomy and marry him, Alma announces that the only thing worse than a woman living alone is a woman who says she likes living alone.

The central problem in the film, then, is the problem of feminine autonomy and its function as the antithesis of maternity. This is a quintessentially modern problem, since both modern technology and modern political movements have made the independent woman—not to mention independent mothers—more of a possibility than ever before.[3] And, as might be expected, the strongest force at work in the movie against Jan's autonomy is found in Brad Allen, for from the outset of the film he is marked as the man for her—the man who will marry her and render her dependent.

The plot highlights him as the stumbling block to her autonomy in several ways. Not only is there a certain literal restriction in the party line that she shares with him—a key constraint, since it is his constant use of the phone that creates the main obstacle to her independence in the first place—but more importantly, his manner in reaction to her consistently sets her off as the stereotypical single woman—rigid, frigid, defensive.[4] This foil threatens to render her unlikeable if she persists in her independent ways.

From a nineties perspective his reaction is unbelievably sexist—here is a professional trying to conduct her business but obstructed by his morning romances. Her party line partner utterly refuses to take her needs seriously. The shared phone line makes them not only party to each other's business, but attempts to establish parity between their businesses—his personal wooing and her professional decorating.[5] Her sense of propriety is clearly offended by what she overhears of his dalliances—all of which would be considered fairly innocent nowadays. An undercurrent in this film suggests an argument against a repressive sexual system, that single young working girls should get with the times, be sexually available to men, even, as one of Brad's dates offers, come over and fix dinner for them.[6] But as this example indicates, getting with the times is, for women, still about giving up autonomy and conforming to a narrow notion of femininity.

To explore the film's drive against feminine autonomy requires a consideration of the larger social backdrop—what factors work against the conceptualization of gendered and particularly feminine autonomy, or against the assertion of an independent woman? In short, we must wonder why feminine independence is such an intransigent problem, particularly in context of modernity's drive towards social and technological autonomy. A crudely biologistic answer would home in on the

fact that women are so often mothers, and maternity requires a level of attention to and care for offspring that seems to foreclose upon the freewheeling independence ideologically associated with autonomy. Yet technology, particularly telephone technology, has a strong role in augmenting precisely this form of maternalized autonomy. Consider that one of the big selling points in the dispersal of telephone "products" like cellular phones and paging services is as an aid to maternal autonomy, helping women maintain their independence and still be "good" mothers. If you believe a recent AT&T television advertisement, the cell phone frees working mothers from having to attend meetings at the office and gives them the independence to take their daughters to the beach without missing the meeting.

Just as sexual difference and technological innovation are inextricable to our understanding of autonomy, so too is the role of the maternal. In developing his theory of sexual difference, Freud situates the problem of feminine independence in relation to maternity. Freud's texts provide an important, if contested, vantage on the ideological stakes of definitions of sexual difference, so it is striking that the mother plays such a key role. The choice of Freud for theoretical background is not accidental in relation to *Pillow Talk,* because the film is marked by the mainstream digestion of Freud in American middle-class urban (and urbane) social circles in the fifties and early sixties.[7] Thus, the terms for understanding how sexual difference operates in this film are quite feasibly Freudian terms. At the same time, I must acknowledge that the terms of the "modern" for Freud and for *Pillow Talk* are quite different, technologically and culturally speaking. Nonetheless, this difference is one of transformation rather than rupture.

In his essay on "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes," Freud raises the question of how a girl separates from her mother, a problem he will return to in "Female Sexuality" and in "Femininity." For him this is a difficult problem that undermines the parallels one might be led to draw between the sexes. For the boy, the process of individuation works in accord with the child's apprehension of sexual difference, but in Freud's view girls do not seem to have that same motive. So to account for the difference in girls, Freud outlines how the girl first develops penis-envy as a necessary stage for her giving up her attachment to her mother and then comes to substitute penis-envy with the desire for a child. A girl purportedly blames her mother for "sending her into the world so insufficiently equipped," but then, after repudiating masturbation and thus leaving behind her childish masculinity in order to take up the feminine position, "She gives up her wish for a penis and puts in place of it a

wish for a child," taking her father as a love object and her mother as the object of her jealousy.[8]

The problem of individuating from the mother is, for Freud, the heart of the knot of the problem of sexual difference. In the way that he poses this question, he consistently conflates the process of individuation, the inevitable process of growing up and becoming aware of oneself as an individual, with the distinct processes of becoming gendered and becoming sexually oriented. While all of these are important in the development of the subject, there is no way to predict precisely how individual subjects will interpret themselves through these processes, as we all fail to achieve the ideals of autonomy, masculinity or femininity, and romantic partnership in very different ways. Yet the tenuous and contested notion of penis-envy, which feminists both in and since Freud's time have contested, fails to resolve this problem of the girl's separation from her mother; instead of clarifying how girls become individual, full subjects, Freud's theory simply forecloses on the ability of feminine subjects to develop an autonomous subjectivity.

For Freud, the girl's turn away from her mother and towards her attachment to her father is not a simple substitution, but a puzzle with a complex emotional dynamic behind it. In Freud's account, both boys and girls experience in relation to their mother slights, disappointments in love, jealousy, and seduction followed by prohibition.[9] Freud claims that "unless we find something that is specific for girls and is not in the same way present in boys, we shall not have explained the termination of the attachment of girls to their mother."[10] What strikes Freud most about this termination is the amount of hostility attached to it; this is for him the mark of sexual difference, and he accounts for it by distilling it into anatomical sexual difference, or penis-envy.

The problem, of course, as many feminists have noted, is that Freud fails to take into account the way that cultural context enables sexual difference to make a difference; he leaves little room for gender play (e.g., through such practices as masquerade or screen personae), or for gender play to be considered to have an effect. The deterministic streak in Freud's text may be seen in his acknowledgment, glossing his discussion of consequences of anatomical difference, that "in their essentials, therefore, our findings are self-evident and it should have been possible to foresee them."[11] This claim is most striking, given that six years later he will announce that his findings on the same topic, the pre-Oedipal development of girls, are so surprising as to be comparable with the discovery of the Minoan-Mycenaen civilization behind that of Greece.[12] The element of surprise here seems to indicate a less deterministic interpretation, for surprise indicates deviation from a norm or

expectation. But the contrasting reactions point to Freud's failure to recognize that his underlying assumption of the sexual sameness of mother and daughter not only makes the daughter's self-differentiation a puzzle, but already projects a teleology of motherhood onto her.

In arriving at the conclusion that feminine subjects are compromised in their autonomy by jealousy and shame, Freud fails to acknowledge not only the inner drives but the social constrictions on women's autonomy; indeed legal, social, and cultural autonomy for women is a fairly recent phenomenon, one achieved—if it can be said to have been achieved—well after Freud's death. If the notion of the autonomous subject is par excellence a modern one, then we might want to ask why is the girl's attempt to separate from her mother and claim her own autonomy still seen as a problem not only after Freud, but after changes in both culture and technology actually afforded many women a measure of autonomy? Why is Jan's independence in *Pillow Talk* still cast ideologically as a problem?

Modern Maternity, Maternal Modernity

Whereas the biological determinist would claim a mother's inability to separate from her offspring as the reason why women fail to be fully autonomous, Freud suggests that the lack of autonomy is due rather to the girl's inability to separate from her mother, except through compensatory feminine strategies. Opting for a third direction out of this chiasmus, *Pillow Talk* seizes on reconnection with the mother as the preferred approach to this question. Indeed, the problem of the autonomous female is played out, and in some sense solved, by the film through the intervention not of the mother, but of maternal masquerade, a sort of mother-technology. Masquerade is a strategy, the use of an identity to enable a subject to achieve a particular aim while concealing the disruptive side-effects of that aim. Quite often associated with gender or role play, masquerade provides important critical insight into questions of self-determination. The film's deployment of masquerade provides different constellations of femininity, maternity, and autonomy that actually begin to carve out space for a broader spectrum of sexual difference.

The film's release, in 1959, was well after wartime employment had afforded many women a degree of autonomy but before the second wave of the feminist movement and its widespread cultural critique. The pressures of marriage and motherhood, of suburbanization and conformity, were dominant; the pervasiveness of Freudian theory in mainstream American culture served to reinforce these norms and

pathologize deviation from them, and the film is marked by this trend. At the same time, the film marks a moment of technological optimism and puissance in the US which provided a notion of progress that was inseparable from the normative injunctions to form nuclear families. The film is thus situated at a crucial confluence of technological culture and Freudian-influenced notions of sexual difference and desire, neither of whose subversive, perversive, or disruptive aspects can be countenanced.

Technology plays the key role in this film to further the heterosexual aim, to link modernity with the goal of maternity. This is evident not only in terms of the party line Brad and Jan share—because clearly, as soon as we know an unmarried man and woman share a party line, we expect the narrative to bring them together in matrimony—but also in other forms of technological exchange. For example, Jonathan tries to give Jan a car to thank her for her professional services, though it is clear he also intends personal overtones to resonate in the gesture. The car, a convertible, is a flashy symbol of freewheeling independence and technological novelty; a two-seater, it is not a utilitarian vehicle but an icon of America's aesthetic, economic, technological, and cultural superiority over the Soviet Union. The car is thus a symbol of cultural power as well as individual self-determination. Jonathan's automotive exchange promises Jan freedom—indeed, the image of freedom as a woman at the wheel had been a threatening image in the early part of the century. His gift allays that pre-war anxiety by simultaneously acknowledging Jan's autonomy (if only contingently) and promising that it can be contained in marriage (which would be understood to follow her acceptance of the gift).

Similarly, in a subplot, a romantic tension is played out between Alma and the elevator operator who gingerly delivers the hung-over housekeeper to Jan's each day. As they arrive on the floor, Alma stumbles out of the elevator complaining that it's not a rocket or that the operator is not a jet pilot. She thus verbally invokes the emerging airline and aerospace industries and the Cold War space race, while the elevator itself metonymically conjures the skyscraper, another post-war claim to the skies. Whereas Jonathan's automotive appeals are met with indifference, the aerospace bids lead to a match. But Jan is untouched, unresponsive, untroubled by the apparatus of either modern technology or the heterosexual marriage imperative. She claims to enjoy living by herself, refuses both Jonathan's car and his offer of marriage, and continues about her business of decorating and navigating the dangerous waters of modern dating.[13]

As I indicated earlier, what marks Jan's singleness and autonomy more than anything is the absence of parents or kin; she is the modern

subject in the urban space, ostensibly free from traditional family networks and expectations. Her occupation affords her independence from constant supervision; indeed, scenes such as the one where her boss praises her having thrown out his ideas and replaced them with her own design reinforce this independence. She represents, in fact, the ideal of autonomous subjectivity, self-supporting, self-contained, claiming to miss or lack nothing. She even has a woman taking care of her house, so she can be free from day-to-day drudgery. She seems impenetrable, unflappable, and thus it is the aim of the film to flap her.

Yet Jan's independence, her having clearly made a break from her mother, does not put her in a landscape without mothers or maternal masqueraders. For Jan, there is no escape from the narrative technology that will not rest until she herself becomes a mother. There is a force to this narrative that is the reverse of the trajectory Freud examines—here, how a girl chooses to move from being autonomous to the interdependent relation of traditional heterosexual motherhood. The reverse trajectory is presented not as a puzzle but as a matter of course; the puzzling aspect of this choice is repudiated. This disavowal is all the more interesting since the film offers nothing to argue for becoming a mother, but merely takes such a desire for granted. It is striking that when Jan does achieve the goal of maternity, she is rendered absent from the screen. So just as her own mother is never present—in fact, the only thing we know about her, through a brief comment by Jonathan, is that she lives in Milwaukee—the maternal Jan never occupies our vision.

The absence of those who, narratively speaking, really are mothers does not therefore mean that the maternal is incidental to the film. The mother cannot be represented in the structure of the film precisely because motherhood is the telos of the film; it is the job of the film to sell the function of maternity as so socially necessary and desirable that a woman would be willing to give up her career and independence in order to fulfill this function. The absence of a mother emphasizes the need for the young woman to take up this role, since no one else is doing it. The real problem of the single girl, as Jan's comments illustrate, is that she does not think there is a problem in being single, having a career, and living as an independent woman. The narrative's ideological work marks the single girl as a problem in order to hold out the promise of a better life: the promise of fulfillment in the confluence of gender identity, sexual orientation, and a degree of autonomy within the social unit of the couple, all of which come together (in the film as in Freud) in the ideal of heterosexual marriage and propagation. This ideological problem is part of the structure of Jan's own subjecthood, since as a single girl, she has

repudiated motherhood in favor of her business; her frigid facade not only establishes her independence from connections with a husband and children, but also reinforces her repudiation of her own mother and family of origin, much the way classical psychoanalysis posits the ideal of the autonomous subject, who has repressed his prior dependence on parents.

Because of this maternal unrepresentability—which, by the way, belies the impossibility of achieving this ideal—other mother figures must stand in to compensate.[14] (You might say mother-nature abhors a vacuum.) Since it is the function and not the substance or identity of maternity that is ideologically necessary, the function must be carried out by someone; there must be some mother-substitute. I describe this as masquerade, because the other actors are *performing* maternity, albeit in differing ways. Joan Rivière first discussed the way that womanliness serves as a feminine woman's masquerade, enabling her to act in ways normally viewed as masculine and aggressive but that her use of feminine masquerade renders non-threatening. Here I want to build on her insight, because I think masquerade works for identities other than broad, binary gender categories like femininity.

Who is doing this masquerade? We might think that Alma is performing a maternal masquerade. After all, she is the keeper of Jan's house, she is the one suggesting Jan needs to hook up with a man, and ultimately she is the one to whom Brad must turn for advice in how to win Jan back. But her own agenda seems lost in her alcoholic haze. If anything, she might rather oppose than facilitate Brad's settling down with Jan, since it is Brad's womanizing shennanigans that provide Alma with her afternoon entertainment over the party line. (When she finally meets Brad in person, she tells him "I'm one of your most devoted listeners," as if he's a radio celebrity.) So I do not believe that Alma is really engaged in a maternal masquerade, whatever else she might be up to in this film.

As Jan's spurned suitor, Jonathan Forbes seems to be ruled out as the maternal masquerader, despite the fact that he intervenes at key moments to perform such maternal functions as taking Jan home from the house in Connecticut after she has discerned Brad's true identity, and he also plays a role in helping Brad win Jan back. Indeed, the moment in the film that comes closest to parental caretaking is on the road back from Connecticut, when Jonathan slaps Jan to stop her from blubbering uncontrollably over Brad in a roadside diner. Although Jonathan is then construed by the other men in the diner as a batterer, his disciplinary action did not come from some imitation of parental authority but from his own frustration at Jan's falling for Brad rather than him (though a queer reading might impute his frustration to Brad

falling for Jan rather than him).[15] Jonathan's moments of intervention are as a peer, a friend to Jan and to Brad, and not parental caretaking at all.

Apart from parenting, gender play might seem to recommend Jonathan. Since he is neither assertive nor autonomous, only whiney and overdependent on his analyst's advice, Jonathan's masculinity is compromised.[16] This weakening is furthered by Jonathan's poor showing in contrast with Brad Allen, whose heartthrob charm renders him a sort of masculine ideal. Jonathan's compromised masculinity could be seen as a feminization, but only in a restricted binary model of sexual difference that fails to accommodate differences within masculinity or femininity. It is important to view Jonathan's masculinity as a masculinity, however neurotic it may be; his weakness helps break apart the conjunction of femininity and weakness by raising the spectre of masculine weakness. To return to the example of his slapping Jan, in that instance he acts out of rivalry, which both cements his masculinity and underscores his ineffectiveness.

No, the maternal masquerader is Brad Allen himself, which comes as no surprise, perhaps, given his attempts to appeal to Jan by masquerading as a Texan, Rex Stetson. But as far as the narrative dynamic is concerned, the Texas masquerade is simply a decoy concealing the real masquerade at work. The initial Brad Allen is not the same as the one who ends the film; he is initially a hopeless Don Juan, incapable even of understanding why he should want to settle down and have a family. There is, then, a double identity performance going on here—not so much between "Brad" and "Rex" as between "Brad" and "Brad." The unexpected doubling has interesting consequences for how sexual difference is interpreted in this framework.

Mechanisms of Maternal Masquerade

First, let me describe how Brad's maternal masquerade works. The most obvious evidence of it is the amusing play with the obstetrics office that happens to be on the same floor as Jonathan's office. Brad ducks into it initially to avoid encountering Jan, who has just been to visit Jonathan and break their date for that night in order to go out with "Rex." To cover for his being in the office, Brad tells the nurse that he needs to see the doctor; he puts his hand on his stomach, talks about how it could be just a spot of indigestion, and apparently unknowingly announces various symptoms of pregnancy. The nurse, alarmed, runs to fetch the doctor. Meanwhile, Brad peeks out the door, sees Jan get on the elevator, and quits the doctor's office for

Jonathan's. Although the nurse and the doctor frantically rush into the hall to find Brad, he has disappeared.

Naturally this escapade only sets up the film's spectators to expect another obstetrical encounter, and indeed these expectations are fulfilled twice. In a later scene, the nurse spots Brad as he is coming out of the ladies room, into which he had followed an angry Jan; the nurse runs to find the doctor again, only once again to have Brad give them the slip. Finally, in a tag scene labeled "3 months later," Brad is snagged by the doctor and nurse on his way to share the news of Jan's pregnancy with Jonathan. He cannot stop to talk to them because, he exclaims, "I'm having a baby!"

These three scenes are clearly intended for comic effect, played off against the seriousness of the doctor's and nurse's belief in Brad's maternity, which culminates in their seizing him for examination at the end. In fact, we could use these scenes of symptomatic maternity to suggest that the film is all about Brad's maternal masquerade. The positive effect of his maternal masquerade would be to free Jan up to remain the signifier of autonomy. This reading, however, is prevented by her absence from the film after the penultimate scene, when she is abducted into matrimony. Rather, I think we should view this scene sequence more seriously, as the film's attempt to join the spectacles of modernity and maternity—for modern science's progressive trajectory is invoked by the doctor more than once. (His interest in Brad's case springs from his belief in its value for medical science.)

These obstetrical scenes are, however, not the only, or even the most important, occasion for maternal masquerade. By impersonating a Texan in his face-to-face encounters with Jan, Brad Allen provides himself the space to intervene maternally into Jan's affairs. After his first encounter with her in person, where he introduces himself as Rex, he phones her up as Rex. Taking advantage of the shared line, he then interrupts the conversation as Brad, and complains to Jan about her use of the party line. This telephone technology gives him the pretext to know, as Brad, what's going on between Jan and Rex; he uses this platform to advise Jan about how these "yokels" behave. He tells her: "sharing a phone together, I take a certain responsibility. This ranch hand Romeo's just trying to lure you into the nearest barn. . . . I can tell you exactly what he'll do tomorrow night." This seemingly protectionist intervention—and notably, his "responsibility" is not paternal but maternal, because of their connection through the umbilical phone cord—is repeated later, when Brad implies to Jan that perhaps Rex is gay. In both instances, Brad shapes her expectations, only to subvert them as Rex.

Brad uses these maternal masquerades to move past Jan's defenses, just as the woman in Rivière's "Womanliness as Masquerade" used feminine masquerade to make her audience more receptive to her. In both cases, masquerade functions as a strategic distraction, concealing a truth that is not far from social expectation, but is nonetheless a truth that would be threatening to contemplate directly. For the woman in Rivière's study, feminine masquerade gave her a sense of warding off reprisals from her male colleagues, whom she unconsciously figured as fathers. For Brad Allen, the maternal masquerade helps him ward off reprisals from Jan Morrow, who may be falling in love with Rex Stetson but sees Brad Allen as an unrepentant womanizer and exactly the kind of man she does not want. In both cases, the fear of reprisal comes with a threat of loss—in Rivière's text, of her career and professional reputation, or in *Pillow Talk,* of his love object.

The interesting question is why the film settles on *maternal* masquerade to cope with this fear of reprisal and threat of loss. Here I return to Freud's problem of how the girl separates from her mother. The problem is bounded by two assumptions by Freud: that the girl, unlike the boy, has no gender difference from her mother, and that she, again unlike the boy, is expected to grow up and become her mother (or like her mother). Jan, having clearly made the break from her mother, has no one like her in the film—not Alma, who is also apparently a single woman, but much older, much less successful, and much less autonomous. Not Jonathan, who, though successful and closer to Jan's age, is too much in crisis, too neurotic, too dependent on his shrink.[17] And certainly not Brad Allen, who at first meeting is the other extreme of masculinity, the man who makes all women swoon, who can string along four different girls with his smooth charm, and who never wants to give up his social autonomy and settle down with a wife and kids.

The film ends up working Freud's problem of feminine development backwards and thereby implements a strategic domestication of both Jan and Brad. As Freud does, the film starts with the fact of the girl's hostility—in this case, Jan's towards Brad. Instead of tracing the past roots of this hostility, however, the film works forward into the future to resolve it. When Brad sees Jan, he reacts just like the girl who, according to Freud, immediately makes up her mind about sexual difference: "She makes her decision in a flash. She has seen it, and knows that she is without it, and wants to have it."[18] This is the catalytic moment in Freud's theory for the girl's development of penis-envy, and thus her beginning to separate from her mother. Playing on the reversal of this trajectory, the film has this moment of Brad's seeing Jan and knowing that he is without her and wanting to have her, be the catalyst for his effort not to separate from but to join her.

To do that, however, he will have to become different than he knows she thinks he is; he will have to become like her, to behave according to her rules and expectations rather than his. He thinks that he does this through his invention of Rex Stetson, but in fact it is through his maternal masquerade, the interventions he makes in Jan's life as Brad, that he clinches Jan's attraction to "Rex." The virtual space of the telephone relation enables a chiasmatic split between the "real-life" Brad, who's being Rex, and the virtual Brad, who then starts playing a different persona than his previous Lothario. Rex fronts the man of Jan's dreams, the vision of masculinity that she wants to see, but Rex is not, and in fact cannot be, the real thing. Brad's problem becomes how to resolve the contradiction between who Rex is and who Jan thinks he is, and the answer is maternal masquerade—a strategy which enables him to impose himself on Jan, but one which then gains its own momentum and reinforcement in the film. By performing the maternal masquerade, Brad moves further away from his old self, his staunchly masculine identity, and towards a less sexually different, less extreme, and less threatening identity.

Brad's choice of masquerade is predetermined in two ways: by the outcome that he is aiming at—here, marriage and presumably children (because in the ideology of the film, the two arrive together)—and by the need to become different from who he is—thus, less masculine, less womanizing. Maternity presents itself as an appropriate masquerade partly because the maternal is a mark of difference among women, and in the late fifties, probably the most obvious difference. As if to create room for this masquerade choice, Jan has already clearly established herself as not maternal early in the film. She has done this not only implicitly, through her construction as the stereotypically rigid and proper single woman, but more explicitly, in her visit to the phone company to try to arrange a private line, where she is told that she cannot be bumped further up the list unless she were to become pregnant. This comment is interesting for how it reveals the social pressures on women who were not conforming to the roles of wife and mother; they are put at the bottom of the list, a low priority in social services and technologies. When she complains about this state of affairs to Jonathan, his response is to propose marriage to her, saying, "Jan, marry me and I'll smother you with private phones." The connection between having children and a private phone line is implied at the end, when Brad announces the impending baby; presumably, by marrying their party-line party, the two now have a private line as well.[19]

By using maternal masquerade, Brad can say things to Jan that might seem hostile— look out for what that guy is up to, or who he might be—but claim to be looking out for her. And of course, as he

comes to care about her, he *is* looking out for her, just not in the way she might think. Paternal masquerade would not work, because it would still threaten difference to Jan: a man with the authority to tell her what to do. It is clear that the one person she listens to is Alma (we see this in the early scene after Brad has accused Jan of having "bedroom problems," when Alma says that if she does not know what she's missing, then she really is missing out. This comment actually gives Jan pause). Indeed, Jan's defenses are clearly constructed in this film as a resistance to paternal authority. We see this in a scene late in the movie, where her boss, Mr. Pierot, negotiates the power difference between them by giving her the room to choose, rather than pushing her towards the outcome he desires. His authority over her is diffuse rather than consolidated, but it is nonetheless effective. So Brad has no choice, if he wants to win Jan over, but to masquerade as something familiar and unthreatening, something that may appeal to Jan on an unconscious level as who she herself wants to be.

The result of Brad's maternal masquerade is not only the consummation of his desire, or the domestication of Jan by assimilating her independent single-womanhood into maternity, but more importantly an erasure of sexual difference altogether, within a reassuringly heterosexual frame. We see this erasure structurally, in scenes such as the split-screen bathtub scene, where Brad, as Rex, calls Jan up one morning to get a date for the evening. In this exchange, both are in bathtubs, facing each other, and the black line down the screen becomes nearly invisible. They pose similarly, extending arms and legs into the audience's view, putting one foot up against the shared "wall," and reacting bodily as if they feel the touch of the other's foot on the opposite side. There are no markers of difference other than the spatial split between sides of the screen; in fact, even their gestures mimic one another. While this is clearly a moment of assimilation to a new paradigm of the "couple," for shortly after this Jan announces to Jonathan that she's in love with Rex, the assimilation goes deeper, to an erasure of difference on the level of action and will rather than simply appearance. The couple is bound together in sameness, despite their purported heterosexuality.

To reinforce this scene of growing sexual indifference, the film plays with the threat of real sexual difference, of the distinction between gay and straight. Brad insinuates to Jan that Rex may not be heterosexual, and thereafter the signs of homosexuality proliferate. Not only does Rex enact the traits Brad had warned her about—drinking with his pinky extended and asking about recipes for dip—but the very the scene of the date occurs in a bar called the Hidden Door, thus suggesting the secret subcultural life of the pre-Stonewall gay world.[20]

The spectre of gay sexual difference is put to rest when Rex kisses Jan. This gesture is perhaps reassuring on the level of the trajectory of heterosexual romance, but it produces two effects. One is that the warnings from Brad's maternal masquerade further abet the heterosexual resolution of the narrative, winning Jan over even more to Rex's charm and bolstering the effectiveness of the masquerade. But the other is that heterosexuality becomes the only sexuality, and thus sexual indifference is assured.

This dynamic is doubled in the bar scene, as if to underscore the lesson. After the kiss, Jan leaves to fix her makeup, and Jonathan appears in the bar while Jan has gone. He stands framed behind Brad's shoulder, and the two men negotiate a scene of recognition and strategize the next step in the romance. Explicitly, this negotiation consists of Jonathan letting Brad know he is onto Brad's masquerade, but more importantly this is a moment for the mutual acknowledgment of the men's shared sexual interest.[21] The sexual interest is shared in object but not aim, however; Jonathan forces Brad to leave town for awhile and work in Jonathan's Connecticut house. This scheme not only removes Brad from Jan, but also supposedly provides him with motivation to finish writing the songs Jonathan needs him to write for the new musical Jonathan's producing. Once again, toying with different sexuality—raising the spectre of homosexuality—only suggests sexual difference before foreclosing it. That Brad subverts the plan and brings Jan with him to Connecticut reigns in any gay resonances in the service of heterosexual aims, neutralizing its difference by making it look impossible.[22]

Let me end by noting that this trajectory towards sexual indifference should not come as a surprise; indeed, the very theme song of the film, as well as the opening credits, signals sexual indifference as Jan's, if not the film's, desired goal from the outset. To underscore this, consider that the woman singing turns out to be Doris Day, as the credits segue to a shot of Day singing the theme as she dresses. The theme song celebrates a partner who will want to share in sameness: the same interests, the same willingness to spend an evening chatting in bed. The central dichotomy of the theme song is being alone versus being with someone; it is not the dichotomy between masculinity and femininity—despite the division of the screen into "his" and "her" sides, color-coded blue and pink, respectively—but rather a presumption of sameness within a putatively heterosexual relation. The song's sameness is played out on the visual level, despite the spatial and chromatic differences—both he and she are wearing pajamas, lie on their back with their legs crossed, and toss pillows into the center of the frame between the beds. Thus, I am inclined to

read the final line of the theme song as being imperative, rather than simply hopeful: "There must be a pillow-talking boy for me."

Technophilia

Yet sexual difference is not the only thing which is effaced in this film. The interesting thing about *Pillow Talk* is the tendency to efface technology, despite the film's strong interest in displaying technology. The trajectory towards maternity is not only a push towards heterosexual indifference, but more importantly a regressive move against technological mediation—and not only because presumably once they are married and producing children, Brad and Jan no longer need their party line. In fact, there is an interesting split between the exhibition of technology and maternity, for while the display of technology in the literal sense—cars, phones, elevators—diminishes towards the end of the film, the maternal masquerade does not. In fact, it crescendos.

This divergence is perhaps most evident in the final scene, which, as I described earlier, is the culmination of the pregnant Brad gag. Yet what is funny about that scene and important for my analysis is that Brad states the truth—he *is* expecting a baby. The misunderstanding between him and the doctor is that he is not *carrying* the baby, that there's no overturning of the "natural order" here. The humor lies in the contrast between knowledge and belief: the audience's reassuring knowledge that the baby is Brad's through entirely traditional, natural, and non-technological means, against which the doctor's belief looks preposterous and thus humorous. The doctor's optimism in the possibility that science and technology does not yet know everything is in fact implicitly ridiculed by this gag.

The doctor's silliness belies the film's own optimism about our mastery of technology: that its effects can be contained, subordinated to ideological guidelines, and so assumptions about ourselves—such as those about sexual differences, social order, and the predictability of the effects of innovation—can be left unperturbed. And yet forty years later, the kernel of truth in the joke is more apparent. The ridiculousness of the doctor's openness to new possibilities of sexual difference and reproduction has proved to be closer to reality than the film's smug defeat of technology by nature would claim for itself. Technological innovation, rather than seeming proof of our national prowess, now functions as a potential threat to not only our national identity but our understanding of the natural order. In modernity, maternity and technology have become wedded to each other, with quite disparate effects. In some cases, as feminist critics have pointed out, technology such as

ultrasound or laparoscopy has elided the maternal body entirely (just as *Pillow Talk* foretells), while in other cases, as the medical establishment and health management organizations are quick to point out, technology has made childbearing healthier and safer for both mother and child; indeed, technology has enabled some previously infertile couples to have children. Yet through reproductive technologies such as artificial insemination, the terms defining sexual difference itself have shifted, no less than through other forms of technology, particularly the identity and individually based communications technologies which likewise intervene in our conceptions of sexual difference.

The end of *Pillow Talk* evokes a certain smug assurance that technology will bring to fruition the heterosexual romance narrative, and that nature, unaffected, will take over from there and will contain technology's potentially disruptive effects on the naturalized social order. In such a view, the autonomy of the single girl is not only easily contained but rendered unnatural. Both her unnaturalness and technology's unnaturalness therefore must be written out of the scene. What escapes notice, however, is the method used to round up the single girl—in this case, specifically unnatural maternal masquerade—and its implications for changing and challenging ideological and cultural understandings of sexual difference, for denaturalizing these interpretations.

The film revisits the idea that technology can amplify individual autonomy by providing the space to explore new identities or to engage with others in new ways. In the face of this idealism, however, the film retains an investment in a "true" identity that is based in lived experience and that ultimately must reveal itself. While the "truth" of this identity, or at least some of the key traits, changes for each character over the course of the story, any changes in the "true" identity only serve to reveal a character's deeper commitment to assimilating to the social norms of heterosexual reproduction, rather than opening up the possibilities for imaginative interaction. Jan changes from independent career woman to acquiescent and then resistant lover to conquered love object and then invisible mother. Her transformation brings her in line with the cultural imperatives of the (white, middle-class, heterosexual) feminine ideal. But Brad's transformation from independent Romeo to caring and even maternal partner, while it brings him in line with one prescription for heterosexual men—to marry and settle down and become responsible—it takes him away from another ideal of masculinity, and it marks a significant change in identity. At a certain level, then, the film privileges social norms that further heterosexual reproduction above those that enable technological innovation and implementation.

Yet for all its willingness to facilitate heterosexual reproduction, which is the film's overt ideological aim, *Pillow Talk* raises questions about the extent to which normative definitions of sexual difference and desire have the power to override the creative deviation or even deviance of gender masquerades and the seduction strategies enabled by technology. In the process, the film plays with the question of what constitutes "real" sexual difference and "true" identity, in the face both of social forces and individuals' desires. The struggle over this question in the film suggests a parallel to the seemingly novel cyberspace technology—that in the move from aural to visual or even mixed-sense virtuality, little changes in how sexual difference and desires play out unless transformations also occur in our ideological definitions and our imaginative investments.

The role of masquerade is essential for the film to challenge definitions of sexual differences. Brad's maternal masquerade necessarily renders him less masculine, less gender-polarized. That a major star, such as Rock Hudson who was the number one box-office star in 1959, would or could play such a role indicates a certain cultural willingness to play with the possibility of less gender polarization, but this willingness signals a certain, perhaps overblown, confidence in the immutability of social roles, a belief in the power of cultural pressure (or simply the sizzling masculine presence of the right man, a Rock Hudson) to produce in autonomy-minded career girls a desire to give it all up for maternity. As Barbara Klinger notes, the proliferation of masculinities, and in particular the "plays with Hudson's sexual identity" do not necessarily "seriously tamper with his established persona," and his Playboy image "enabled the depiction of the single male that was so heterosexually fixated that it helped relieve the homosexual implications that had been attached to bachelorhood earlier in the fifties."[23] Yet the work of the star identities in the film's semiological dynamics suggests that to a certain extent, the masquerade effects not simply what Brad wants but what audiences—in their varying and often conflicting filmic desires—want.

If film technology provides a space where we can entertain multiple possibilities for sexual differences, only to winnow the perverse and weak from the normative ideals, the technology in the film plays against that impulse by creating uncontrollable differences—between the telephonically maternal Brad and the archetypally masculine ideals Brad and Rex each embody, and each of which falls by the wayside as outdated roles. On the other hand, as a cinematic device, the telephone serves to reconfigure the diegetic space(s) as much as it intervenes in the production of identities; the telephone is thus deeply imbricated in working with cinematic representation. While it is true

that technology is an instrument in the service of ideology, at the same time technology is not ideologically overdetermined, it does not have only one implementation or meaning. Like masquerade, technology is always instrumental, in use, and through this use—through repetition, iteration, reappropriation—technology has shown it can undermine the very things we take for granted, including stable, coherent, locatable identities. The collusions and tensions between cinematic and telephonic technologies in the film suggest that not only does Brad's maternal masquerade enact what "we" want, whether for conventional narrative closure or certifiable masculinity, but it makes us question why we want it by opening up or obliquely indicating the possibility that we do not want this stability and fixity—that we might rather be situated in the freeplay of the middle, or we might prefer the unresolved contradictions of Brad's/Rex's/Rock's abyssal identity.

This is indeed the promise that some optimists have found in cybertechnologies like the Internet. But at the same time, now, at the end of the millennium, technology is more often figured as a threat to the known order, particularly to the order of sexual differences. Whereas *Pillow Talk*'s ideological commitment to heterosexual reproduction permitted the room to play, to a certain extent, with gender roles and sexual difference, the efficient erasure of technology and the single woman suggests that however appealing either is initially as a display of our society's modernity and prowess, their threat still needs to be contained.

In our current context some forty years later, romantic narratives have lost that assured grounding in heterosexual reproductive ideology, largely because of the changes in culturally shared definitions of sexual difference. Indeed, romantic narratives focus less on heterosexual reproduction, which seems to be taken as a *fait accompli* (as in the romantic narratives like *Sleepless in Seattle* that focus on second marriages) or even separated from a romantic aim as a scientific or medical endeavor (through narratives of reproduction in the laboratory or through surrogacy; the film *Junior* is an example). Rather, alternative narratives that in a stricter sex-role world were proscribed—whether harmful practices like stalking, pedophilia, and adultery, or inculpable practices like cross-dressing, homosexuality, or consensual sado-masochism—have shifted to the fore. As a result, the category of the romantic has arguably been fragmented into the predilections of the "erotic," where the coherence of traditional gender identities breaks down. Usenet groups like alt.sex.bondage, soc.sexuality.spanking, or alt.sex.fetish.feet are not explicitly gender-defined, but focus on a particular sexual practice; that some seek to block or restrict minors' access to such groups indicates that the loss of traditional heterosexual norms is still threatening to the broader cultural imaginary.

But what is really feared here is the threat posed by desire. For desire is the thing that marks the direction of technology's implementation—this is clear in *Pillow Talk,* from Jonathan's gift of the convertible to Brad's telephonal seductions, as well as now, with the onset of phone sex, cybersex, or cross-gender play on the Internet. This is why the issue of masquerade is so important, and the connections between its use in the fifties and today need to be acknowledged. The realm of play that is opened up by cybertechnologies seizes upon a longer tradition of using identity to simultaneously dissimulate one's objective and achieve it. We thus need to see how the context of this playful tradition— the cultural biases, aims, and fantasies—shapes its instrumental effectiveness.

But the larger question remains unasked—that is, who is allowed this masquerade, and what social strictures enable and contain it? To what extent are cybertechnologies enabling the expression of desire by anyone other than the Brad Allens, the self-assured, culturally affirmed, successful subjects? To what extent is it possible to imagine the implementation of cybertechnology in the aim of a desire whose object is not to conquer or be conquered? It is true that, unlike in *Pillow Talk,* the use of masquerade on the Internet does not strictly lead to heterosexual reproduction, much as conservatives fear that it spawns sexual (re)production as people imitate or propagate the practices they read about online. The locus of critical analysis, then, should be on the interplay between instrumentalization and imagination—for example, the forms of masquerade, which signal the stakes of desire—rather than the technological object or subject. More importantly, we should be alert to how these masquerades produce a double effect, of not only reinscribing but displacing the very norms that they use to achieve their aim. In other words, the more interesting shifts may be taking place in the less obvious places; how does encountering and desiring other people online shift what we emphasize in our interpretations of what we want, what we value? What practices convey or belie the identities constructed online?

Maternal masquerade in *Pillow Talk* indicates that the socio-cultural practice, not the characters or objects, warrants our attention. This reading invites us to consider how other forms of masquerade may be operating through epistemological, commercial, and political differences, and to consider not simply masquerades that mark gender difference (although in a society that imbricates desire, sexuality, and gender, that difference will remain important) but masquerades that mark other forms of desire. The technologies of masquerade—that is, its instrumental employment to augment a subject's exercise of will—need to be recognized outside of their flashy encasement in the tools

of cyber-embodiment. By tracing the roots of these technologies in earlier technological forms and cultural identity norms, we can complicate, but also more truthfully understand, the possibilities not only of autonomous femininity, but of genders and desires that we have only begun to imagine.

NOTES

I would like to thank Ann Veronica Simon, Sylvia Schaeffer, and Judith Roof for their insightful commentaries on this essay.

1. A sampling of feminist work on this topic includes a number of essays in *Wired Women: Gender and New Realities in Cyberspace*, eds. Lynn Cherny and Elizabeth Reba Weise (Seattle: Seal P, 1996); Pamela Gilbert, "On Sex, Space, and Stalkers," *Women and Performance* 17 Special Issue on Sexuality and Cyberspace (1996), http://www.echonyc.com/~women/Issue17/art-gilbert.html; Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995); Dale Spender, *Nattering on the Net: Women, Power, and Cyberspace* (North Melbourne: Spinifex, 1995). Laura Miller, "Women and Children First" *Resisting the Virtual Life*, eds. James Brook and Ian Boal (San Francisco: City Lights, 1995) offers a critique of the scare stories that have surfaced in the mainstream press about women's reluctance and fears in going online, and she challenges the paradigms of sexual difference that underpin these stories.

2. Leonard Quart and Albert Auster note that in contrast to contemporaries like Marilyn Monroe, Day exemplified a kind of wholesome, sunny femininity, her characters nonetheless exhibited "drive, ambition, and spunkiness," and she projected a "tougher, more independent persona than most of the other major female stars." See Quart and Auster *American Film and Society Since 1945*, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger, 1991) 58.

3. Women's independence has classically been understood in a strictly binary relation to marriage; while a man's marriage does not render his autonomy an oxymoron, a woman's, historically speaking, does. Because the subject's autonomy is always figured in relation to a larger network—of a political system, in the earlier, eighteenth century versions of the modern, and of a technologically driven consumer economy in the later nineteenth and twentieth century moderns—the stakes of this oxymoron change. Modern autonomy has hardly been thought through against the backdrop of interpersonal relationships and emotional networks, despite the fact that changes in definitions of sexual differences and kinship relations are as much hallmarks of late-modern capitalism as are technological and political innovation. Indeed, in *Pillow Talk*, what marks Jan as the modern woman is precisely her

independence from the traditional kinship network, and her reluctance to become connected to it through marrying.

4. This stereotype is a peculiarly fifties—and white, middle-class—image; it contrasts with the images of independent women from earlier decades, for example, the twenties flapper or the New Woman, who were both sexualized. The notion of frigidity reflects the influence of Freudianism in American culture at the time, especially in Hollywood; in particular, we might trace this idea back to Freud who, in his popularizing lecture on "Femininity," commented that a woman at the age of thirty strikes one as rigidly fixed in her personality, in contrast to the flexibility of the man of comparable age. Sigmund Freud, "Femininity," *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis,* trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1965). See also Nathan Hale's chapter on post-war popularization of psychoanalysis in *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995).

5. It is interesting to note that the distinction between business and leisure, or work and home, is blurry even at the beginning. Both Jan and Brad work at least partly from home; he as a songwriter and she as a decorator. His songwriting, in fact, is instrumental to his wooing, just as, eventually, her decorating will be key to their romance.

6. In this offer of dinner preparation, we see that the notion of sexual independence is primarily a man's independence, along the lines of the Playboy model, which was a recognizable cultural feature by this time, as Barbara Ehrenreich has noted in *Hearts of Men* (Garden City, NJ: Anchor P, 1983). Rock Hudson, moreover, personified the Playboy bachelor in his sex comedies of the sixties (which includes *Pillow Talk*), as Barbara Klinger notes in *Melodrama and Meaning* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994) 115. The women in the film who are free to conform to this model of sexual independence are autonomous women, but autonomous in the sense of being independent of certain cultural expectations of a middle-class, white, American woman, or by virtue of being foreign (French) or a cabaret performer (so, a working girl, but not necessarily a respectable girl—the text is suggestive).

7. The spread of Freudianism in the post-war United States has been linked to the widespread psychiatric assessment of recruits in World War II, which exposed many to the terms of psychoanalysis for the first time. See John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983) and Nathan Hale, *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States.* This Freudian impact is evident not only in *Pillow Talk*'s references to therapists and the analysand's relationship with his mother but comes into play in similar films, such as *That Touch of Mink* (1964), with Doris Day and Cary Grant, where one of the key subplots centers around a secondary character's misunderstanding with his therapist. But its dispersal in American culture is evident from the psychiatric thrillers of the forties and, say Stephen

Faber and Marc Green, in 1950's *Guys and Dolls*. See Faber and Green, *Hollywood on the Couch* (New York: W. Morrow, 1993) for a detailed history of the imbrication of psychoanalysis and the film industry.

8. Freud, "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes," *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love,* ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Macmillan, 1963) 183–193. What is really interesting about this theory is that in his re-cap, Freud announces that the conclusion was obvious and should, perhaps, have been foreseen. There is a strong tension in Freud's work on sexual difference between wanting to draw a parallel between the sexes, even if it is a comparison that makes one the exact opposite of the other, and wanting to repudiate any possibility of comparison in favor of showing a pure difference.
9. Freud, "Femininity" 124.
10. Freud, "Femininity" 124.
11. Freud, "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes" 192.
12. Freud, "Female Sexuality," *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love* 195.
13. This danger was encapsulated by a scene of what we would now recognize as attempted date rape, where a college-age son of a client tries to force her to make out with him, and succeeds at the least in dragging her to a trendy nightclub for a drink and a dance.
14. Indeed, we can see Brad's maternal masquerade as operating to create a sort of cultural vacuum, which will pull single women into its influence—they will want to do it because he is doing it.
15. Cynthia Fuchs touches on the homosexual dynamic of Jonathan's desire for Brad in this film, "Framing and Passing in *Pillow Talk,*" *The Other Fifties: Interrogating Midcentury Icons,* ed. Joel Foreman (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1997) 240; and Steven Cohan adeptly traces the interplay and substitutability of the figures in this homosocial triangle, *Masked Men: Masculinity and Movies in the Fifties* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997).
16. Barbara Klinger notes that Jonathan's psychiatrically propped-up masculinity plays as weak, and serves to underscore Hudson's "normalcy" and strong masculinity (109). Hudson, in fact, was a well-known exception to the rule of stars seeking psychoanalysis, as not only Klinger (citing the fan magazine *Filmland*) but Boze Hadleigh's interview with Hudson shows.
17. Jonathan remarks ruefully at one point, "My psychiatrist told me never to listen to anyone but him," as if he hasn't the strength even to follow that simple injunction.
18. Freud, "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes" 188.

19. We see the split of the party line, represented as a split screen, healed visibly towards the end of the film, as Brad and Jan are splayed not across the split screen but an undivided single screen. In fact, as the film progresses, the split of the screen changes axis; it is no longer split between Brad's and Jan's side, but between Brad onscreen and Jan offscreen.

20. This scene has attracted quite a bit of critical commentary, especially after the 1985 death of Rock Hudson from AIDS, which many took to be confirmation of his homosexuality. Richard Dyer traces out the levels of semiosis at work in this scene: "Here is this gay man (Roy Scherer, Jnr [*sic*], Rock's real name) pretending to be this straight man (Rock Hudson) who's pretending to be a straight man (the character in the film) pretending to be gay," Richard Dyer, "Rock—The Last Guy You'd Have Figured?" *You Tarzan: Masculinity, Movies, and Men,* eds. Pat Kirkham and Janet Thumin (New York: St. Martin's P, 1993) 31. Alexander Walker, in *The Celluloid Sacrifice: Aspects of Sex in the Movies* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1966), and Cynthia Fuchs, in "Framing and Passing in *Pillow Talk*" 243, also comment on this scene, while Barbara Klinger, in *Melodrama and Meaning,* astoundingly misses the opportunity to cite this scene in support of her point that Hudson's characters were associated with homosexuality, when instead she describes the obstetrical running gag I discussed earlier—thus blithely and erroneously conflating homosexuality with cross-gender performance (115).

21. A queer reading of this film would push for the ambivalence of Jan as the object of desire; either she truly is, or she merely serves as a mask, the pretense, the go-between, for the men's mutual interest in each other, in the classic triangle of hommosocial exchange Luce Irigaray has theorized.

22. The occupations of the two characters, it is interesting to note, follow on stereotypically "gay" occupations—decorating and musical theater. This is not explicitly thematized in the film.

23. Klinger 115.