

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
J. Zimmerman, MA

Sexuality in Cinema

Anita: Swedish Nymphet (1973)

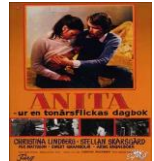
Torgny Wickman (1911–1997)

OVERVIEW

Director Torgny Wickman was a Swedish director and screenwriter, working from the 1930s until his death in 1997. He produced, directed, and wrote over 1,600 short films over his lifetime. Many of his films were erotic or pornographic in nature. Of all of his works, *Anita* (1973) is his best-known.



Film There isn't a lot of information about this film available. It was an early '70s exploitation film made with a very small budget and crew. There is no information about box office returns or making-of documentaries, and what information exists is mostly in archives or libraries in Sweden. Retrospective reviews of *Anita* have been kind, noting the strangely serious nature with which it addresses nymphomania.



MAIN CHARACTERS

Anita – A teenage girl with a compulsion to sexual promiscuity

Erik – A psychology student and musical mentor who tries to help Anita

Anita's mother – A judgmental and hypersexual woman

Anita's father – A colonel in the Swedish army.

Anita's "twin" sister – Anita's sister who succeeds in school and earns their parent's adoration

SYNOPSIS

The film begins with Anita trying to pick up men near the bus station, then at a pool hall. Sometime later, we see her running away from harassers near a sausage stand. The locals seem fed up with her promiscuous behavior, though many still seek her out for sexual experiences. Anita ends up with Erik after he finds her with a cruel man in a tent by a worksite. Beaten and alone, Anita stays at Erik's home that serves as a practice hall for young musicians. While Erik juggles schooling, mentorship of the musicians, and Anita's needs, we learn more of her story, like how she embarrassed her parents by performing a strip tease for her father's work friends and how she struggles to find meaningful relationships.

As a psychology student, Erik wants to help Anita recover from her nymphomania. Feeling like she'll ruin Erik's life if she stays, Anita runs away, sleeping with several more men before being captured in a police sting of a homeless encampment squatting in an old apartment. In state custody, Anita starts a lesbian relationship with her case worker before running away again, this time joining a group of performers at a lesbian strip club. Erik finds her here, telling her he is in love with her and willing to help her in the last challenge she faces in overcoming her nymphomania. They have sex for the first time, Anita saying it's virginal in a strange way, as she actually wants to have sex with Erik instead of feeling a compulsion to have sex with anyone. After, they take a trip into the country where they visit an old church. There, an organist begins playing the bridal march, spurring Erik and Anita to agree to marry.

PLOT

Under the bridge – After the theme plays and the title cards pass, we see a bridge over a courtyard in a Swedish city center. Here, people waiting for buses at the nearby depot gather to chat and smoke cigarettes. A young woman enters the shot, slowly walking up to random men and trying to get their attention. One man, she walks up and places her hand on his crotch. It doesn't take her much convincing, and the man walks away with her, leaving his friends staring at them.



Storage closet – A light turns on in a storage closet filled with discarded boxes and stock for a convenience store. "I don't have any money," the man says. "It's not money I want," the young woman says, lowering to her knees in front of the man. "You want to—I have to..." "Somebody might come in," the man says nervously as the young woman begins performing oral sex on him. Moments later, a pounding comes on the door. "Hold the door shut," the young woman says, muffled by the young man's member. She finishes quickly, standing and asking, "Was I good?" "Oh, God, yes," the man says. A bit later, the man asks to see the young woman again or at least learn her phone number. Frustrated, she pushes him away before walking quickly away. "Look at her," one nearby girl says to another. "What a slut."



Impromptu psychology session – In a library, the young woman sits next to a man who listens to music through headphones, his eyes closed. She extends her arm, rubbing the man's crotch and asking him to come with her. "Are you a hooker?" he asks. "No," she replies. "I just want you to come with me." We see her lead the man into a tent near a construction site. "You felt a compulsion to leave with the man," an unfamiliar voice says, "even though you'd just been with the boy?" Bandaged and bruised, the young woman now sits in a room surrounded by books. "Yes," she replies. "I was forced against my will. It would make you sick if you knew the types of men that I've felt a compulsion to sleep with or suck off." A young man sits at a desk, listening. The girl throws herself on a nearby cot, curled up in a ball. "Poor thing," the young man says as he crosses to her. "Having to go through all this just because you feel worthless."



Pool hall – Cars and bikes zip down a busy street in a small Swedish town. The camera finds the girl in her distinctive fur coat walking down the sidewalk. She steps inside of a pool hall. The girls from the bridge near the bus station see her, one saying to the other, "There's that damn slut." "She's gonna get it," the other says, storming over to confront her. "Get lost. You're done picking up guys in here." "Bravo, Karin," someone says from across the room as the girl in the fur coat scampers away.



Sausage stand – Later that night, a car pulls up to a stop outside a sausage stand. "Look," says one of the men in the car, "there's that cocksucker." They get out and form a mob around the girl in the fur coat as she takes a sausage from the cook inside the stand. As she goes to take a bite, she sees the strangers staring. "You going home to practice?" one of the women mocks. "Aren't you through sleeping around in this town?" One of the men asks, looming over her. The girl tries to push past, but the men push back, slapping the sausage from her hand. The cook says he won't allow them to harass his customers, standing up in her defense, but the people from the car won't let up. The girl in the fur coat manages to slip away and run down the road.



“Goodbye, girls” – Two girls exit a room in unison, crossing to a mirror where they brush their hair. Their father watches, smoking a cigar. “Don’t be too late,” he says. “Please keep track of the time.” “We promise,” the girls say in unison, putting on very similar fur coats. “Bye, mom. Bye, dad,” the girls say in unison as they leave. “Goodbye, girls,” the parents reply. With their girls gone, the parents argue about how to deal with the struggles teenage sexuality will cause them, the father wanting to make light while the mother thinks it a serious issue.



Disco – Loud music plays in a dark dance hall. The sisters sit at a table, drinking beer. A young man approaches and asks one if she’d like to dance. On the dance floor, the young man complains, “Did you have to bring your sister? She really gets around. A friend of mine saw her downtown.” The other girl overhears this, dipping her fingers in her beer and looking sad. Everyone else dances while she sits alone at her table.



“That’s no hooker” – At a store near a train station, the young woman in the fur coat gets a key from a woman. A train pulls into the station, and the young woman watches the people depart. On board, the young man who was talking to her about her compulsion looks at her: They’ve yet to meet. The young woman picks a man coming off of the train at random, asking him to come help her. “With what?” he asks. “I can’t tell you here,” she replies. The young man on the train watches as it begins to pull away. From a glass shop, two workers watch as the young woman leads the man into a nearby apartment. “What the hell is that hooker doing at Greta’s apartment?” The older man asks. “That’s no hooker,” the assistant says (we recognize him from the sausage stand). “She doesn’t charge.” “How do you know?” the older man asks. “I just know,” the assistant says nervously. In the apartment, the young woman and the man from the train have frantic, unsatisfying sex while a pair of nosy old women try to guess what’s going on in the apartment from outside.



Crying – Sometime later, the glass shop owner watches the man leave. After some thought, he puts on his jacket and walks into the apartment. He finds the young woman, nude, crying in the bed. “What the heck are you crying for?” he asks. Shaking, the young woman responds, “It’s terrible. Awful. I hate what I do.” “Then why do you do it?” the glass shop owner asks. “I don’t know.” she responds. “What do you do?” he asks. “This,” the young woman responds, rubbing the man’s crotch before kneeling in front of him.



Worthlessness – In the house surrounded by books and musical instruments, the young woman lies on the cot. The young man crosses back to his desk, asking, “Did you see the glassworker again?” “No,” the young woman replies. “He’s worthless.” “Why is he worthless?” the young man probes. “He liked you. And anybody who likes you is worthless, because you yourself are worthless.” He asks how long she’s felt this way, and she says it came about fairly recently: “I have a sister who’s a perfect hypocrite. She’s so good in school it makes me sick.” Sensing that the young woman is near her breaking point, the young man asks if she’s hungry, and they move to the kitchen.



Duet – The mother plays the piano as the twins sing a duet, wearing matching blue dresses. In the room nearby, a bunch of men in military dress uniforms listen, sipping drinks and smoking tobacco. Some ignore the performance, playing poker instead. “I hear the older one is a bit of a tramp,” one of the poker players says. “She picked up Tvarn in the square the other night.” The song comes to an end, and the men applaud, the twins turning to curtsy.



Strip tease – “What nice daughters you have,” one man says to the girls’ father as the elder twin elbows her sister, cuing her to start a record. She then raises her hands to silence the applause before saying, “We not only sing, we also dance.” The theme song from the beginning of the film plays as the elder twin begins to strip, horrifying her parents and causing the military men gathered in the parlor to hoot and holler. “What the hell can we do?” the father asks the mother. Both stand aside, watching instead of ending the display, complaining about how embarrassing their daughter is. The show comes to an end, and the younger twin turns off the lights as the men applaud.



Breakfast – Sausage and eggs cook in a pan. The young man carries the pan to the table and serves himself and the young woman. “Were they upset with you afterwards?” he asks. “They were always upset with me,” she replies, tucking in to her breakfast. “And condescending. Like I was nothing.” He asks which parent was worse, and she says they were both bad.



Home late – The young woman steps out of a truck and runs down a street lined with closed stores. She enters the home, throwing her distinctive fur coat on the floor and walking to a nearby drinks trolley. In their bedroom, the mother goads the father into confronting his daughter, and he rises from his bed with a groan. “A lot of whiskey has been disappearing lately,” the father remarks near the drink cart. The young woman drinks a glass in one gulp, looking into his eyes. He bombards her with questions, and she simply remains silent. He tells her to go to bed. Defiantly, the young woman takes another drink before storming off and slamming her door. Back in the parents’ bedroom, they complain about their daughter’s behavior. The mother makes a move on the father, who complains, “Not again.” They begin to kiss and fondle each other.



Masturbation – Naked in her bedroom, the young woman looks at herself in the mirror before crawling under the blankets in her bed. After a moment, she slides her arms under the blanket. Under the fabric, we see them drift downward. She begins to touch herself, moaning and spreading her legs. The pace quickens and she gets louder, but suddenly she stops, unable to climax.



Coffee – The young man pours coffee in the kitchen. The young woman asks for milk, and he retrieves a fresh carton from the fridge. After helping her with her coffee, he asks about her compulsion, “Is it always the reason you perform sexual acts?” The young woman talks about the one time she sought out sex for pleasure, when she was thirteen and had a crush on a classmate. “Why did it end?” the young man asks. “He caught me drunk in the park,” she replies, “and he hit me. I got a black eye,” she continues, pointing at her current black eye. “Nobody seemed to care.” “Is that the only time you’ve done it without feeling a compulsion to?” The young man asks. “I think it is,” she replies after a moment of thought.



Outcast – A schoolteacher grasps a rod like his life depends on it. Before him, a classroom full of teens raises their hands, all but one. He walks toward her with the rod gripped in his hands. “Not the slightest recollection of Karl XII’s Russian campaign,” he says, bemused and angry all at once. “I’m guessing Anita’s tired.” The young woman looks up at him, her hands still down, a look of fear in her eyes. The bell rings, her saving grace. Outside, the teacher and a school administrator pace like prison guards while the kids chat with each other during their recess. Anita stands alone, leaning against a tree in her distinctive fur coat. “Outcast,” the teacher mutters. “Thank God for that. It’s the way she



behaves." The two men discuss her sexual promiscuity in veiled terms, the teacher swearing up and down that he has only heard the rumors from a trusted source, having no experience with Anita outside of the classroom.

Party – Young people chat and drink at a party. One couple dances in the background. A young man crosses the room and sits next to Anita, offering her some wine and a cigarette. "What's your name?" he asks. "I'm new in town." Anita tells him her name. He introduces himself as Per. "You're the one who makes glass sculptures, right?" He nods. Anita says she saw him at the glass shop, and he explains how he uses scrap glass to make his art. He comes out and says that he'd like her to be a model for him. Anita agrees, and they leave together.



Modeling – In the artist's dark studio, they look at his sculptures. They are jagged and abstract, and Anita asks if he used models for them. He says he didn't. Without another word, Anita begins stripping. "Admit the model bit was just a scam," she says. "You just want to fuck, right?" The artist smiles and says it was just a trick. "In that case," says Anita, "it's okay. 'Cause I only want to fuck too." She rips off her panties and lies down on the floor. As they have sex, the camera zooms in on Anita's face. While she makes the noises expected of her, sadness, anger, disgust, and discomfort flash across her face.



"Dressed like that" – A maid helps the mother serve breakfast. Anita joins the family, and her mother takes issue with her clothes: "Are you going to school dressed like that?" "Does she ever go to school?" Anita's twin sister quips. "I often have a gap in my schedule," Anita snaps. Her sister grins maliciously, saying, "Right. A gap." The father demands she apologize, and Anita's sister apologizes to her mother for speaking rudely. She then asks a question that seems to impress her father, and he begins a long spiel about Sweden's air force. Suddenly, he turns on Anita, quizzing her about World War II generals and threatening to spank her for not studying. When she refuses to answer, everyone leaves the table. "I'm ashamed of you," her father says before leaving.



Logistics – Eating a banana, the young man says he saw Anita pick up the man at the train station. "You were smart to do it at the station," he says. "You had to, everybody knew you." "It's still difficult," she says. "Even when I find somebody, I don't have anywhere to go." The young man asks if she'd be able to stay with the man if he were nice, and she shakes her head. "That's too bad," he says. "I'll watch myself." This gets a smile from Anita.



Guitar – Per plays a guitar. Anita sits nearby on a couch, listening. When he finishes, she tells him it was beautiful before immediately bolting from the room when he looks at her. "Anita," he says, grabbing her arm. "Sit down." He struggles for words for a moment before saying, "What I wanted to say with my song was much simpler. I like you a hell of a lot... You're simply wonderful. Besides, you seem just as lonely as I am. Anita, stay here with me." Angrily, Anita stands and shouts, "No! Don't you get it! You're as worthless as your damn glass sculptures!" She throws one on the ground before trying to strangle him. Per calls her insane, and she agrees.



Stowaway – At a convenience store, Anita buys a magazine. A loudspeaker blares the arriving and departing train times and destinations. Leaning against a tree, Anita watches the train roll in. A



group of police officers surprise her, and she backs behind the tree to stay out of their view. She watches as they walk down the train, and she quickly scampers aboard. On the door near the conductor, we see she's stowing away on a train to Stockholm. As the train pulls away, the police officers seem confused, wandering the platform slowly.

Liquor store – We see the tent by the construction site. The camera jumps to a liquor store. The young man helping Anita exits, and a man heckles him to purchase booze for him as he's been kicked out of the store. The young man refuses, and the other man knocks his purchase from his hand. It shatters on the ground, and the men chase each other through the streets. The young man collides with Anita just outside her tent, falling and losing the man who knocked his alcohol from his hands. He takes responsibility for hurting her and offers to take her to his house to patch her up.



Music – A little red house overlooks the bay. Inside, Anita receives a bandage from the young man as a group of young women practice and read music, compiling sheet music for different parts and instruments. "It's strange," says the girl with a saxophone, "that all the guys disappear when we have to do this kind of work. In the next room, Anita discusses her sister with the young man: "She thinks she's something special along with the rest of my family." "And your father?" he asks. "He only thinks of his career," Anita continues. "He's due for a promotion any day now." Anita then does an impression of her father.



The compulsion – "What is the compulsion like?" the young man asks. Anita describes it as a craving she can't resist. "But when it's over," she continues, "I don't want to see him again... That's what made it difficult back home. I ran out of men." She crosses to a nearby dresser where she begins brushing her hair. From across the room, the young man asks, "Have you ever considered that your compulsive promiscuity might come from your parents' loveless and degrading behavior towards you?" Putting her hair in a ponytail, Anita smiles, saying she has. "When I feel the compulsion, I can't resist it. So I sleep with a man, suck him off, or jerk him off. It helps for a while, but then I begin to regret it. So I cure that with a new man which makes me feel regret and self-contempt all over again."



Memories and dishes – Back at the breakfast table in the present time, the young man says he aims to help Anita cure her compulsion. He takes the breakfast dishes to the sink and begins cleaning them, mentioning to Anita that they sat there the first time they met. "You tried like hell to get me in bed," he recalls. "But I held out. It's a good thing I'm still around, huh?" Anita agrees. "Who else would bandage me up?" she asks with a smile. After asking her to dry the dishes, he mentions, "But it almost went wrong."



"Think of me as a doctor" – One of the young man's students plays a trumpet. In the bedroom, Anita tries to feel up the young man, but he forcefully stops her. "Think of me as a doctor," he says. "Otherwise, it won't be long before you reject me as well." "Erik," a young woman shouts from another room, "should it really be a viola in the third movement?" The young man moves into the kitchen to help the young ladies with their arrangement. Anita watches the trumpet-playing student march past, practicing. She follows him into another room. There, he continues playing until suddenly he can't hold a tune and makes a terrible blast before falling silent. Another student calls for him to come take a phone call, and it takes a very long time for him to appear.



Erik watches him knowingly. When Anita enters the room after him, the young women at the table give her a judgmental look.

Performance – The first violin stands to play the first movement of Vivaldi's Winter. In the crowd watching are Erik and his music students. Anita nudges the boy next to her before whispering something in his ear. She leads him from the auditorium to the coat room. They hide among the coats. The movement concludes in the auditorium.



Complaints – Back at Erik's house, the students gather at the kitchen table. "I'm sick of her being around here," the saxophone player complains. "We can't rehearse. She ruins everything." "What has she done?" Erik asks. "Ask the guys," the young woman replies. The two young men who've slept with Anita look at one another with matching black eyes and a smirk. Erik rebuffs the students, ending with, "She's in hell. She's a rare, authentic nymphomaniac... She's damaged and needs all the understanding we can give her." Nearby, Anita closes a door; she's been listening. One of Erik's students approaches Anita a bit later and says, "Erik might be right, but leave Leif alone." She slaps Anita, giving her the cut and black eye we saw earlier. After bandaging her up, Erik says the black eye proves she's worth something: "The boys are so crazy about you, they forgot both Hayden and Vivaldi." A sad smile crosses Anita's face, and she says, "I hadn't thought of that."



Posters – Back in the present time, Erik and Anita finish tidying up after their breakfast. The camera moves outside of Erik's red house and pans around Stockholm. In a university, Erik sets up a poster. He meets Anita outside, and they find another board to post another poster. A bit later, now in a car, Erik asks Anita how many spots remain on their list. She says just three. "Can't we forget about this for a while?" Anita asks, mentioning that she's hungry. "I'm starving," Erik agrees, starting the car and driving away.



Picnic – A bus drives through swampy woodlands. "This picnic was a great idea," says one of Erik's students. The bus driver looks over his shoulder at the passengers for a moment, saying, "You're all musicians. Can't you sing a little?" They all reply negatively, Erik saying, "We're off today!" They stop the bus at a little hill, and the first movement of Vivaldi's Spring begins to play. One of the students picks flowers on the hillside, smelling the little blooms. Returning to the group, she shows them to the students, a couple of whom chide her for picking endangered plants. Erik asks the students to finish setting up the picnic while he has a talk with Anita, leading her away from the others. The movement keeps playing as Erik and Anita walk through nature. We don't hear what they say, but Anita looks happy for the first time.



More formal diagnosis – An ensemble tunes their instruments with a scale inside of Erik's red house. One of Erik's students is having a bad day and taking it out on everyone around her. Erik ignores this, discussing his research into nymphomania with Anita. "There are many different kinds of nymphomania," he says, saying further that the word is often misused. "People use it for almost any woman who has a healthy sex life. The only thing that indicates a true case of nymphomania is compulsive promiscuity." One of the students states that she's sick of hearing about it, and Erik tells her to stop paying attention if she doesn't care to listen. "One common cause of nymphomania," he continues, "is the inability to have an orgasm." Hearing Anita admit this, the other girls give her shocked looks that fade into pity. "Your nymphomania is a rebellion against your parents," Erik says to Anita. "It only worsens your relationship with your parents, gives you additional remorse, and creates further compulsions..." Anita wishes to be cured, and Erik promises to try and help



her. He gives her an assignment: "One way or another, as soon as possible, you have to have an orgasm."

Homework – We see Anita walking along Stockholm's busy streets. She stops outside a store window and looks at the sex toys on display before heading inside to purchase one. We see her masturbating in bed later that day, using the vibrator. Frustrated, she throws it to the floor, where it skitters around, still vibrating. She picks up a decorative crystal from nearby and smashes the vibrator to pieces.



Squatters – A group of homeless men sit in an abandoned apartment. Some light pipes, others measure drugs, and one plays a harmonica. A door swings open, and the drug-dealing men scramble to hide their drugs and scales before dimming the lamp. Another man enters with Anita at his side. "I found a beautiful girl this afternoon," he says in Italian. "Her name is Anita. And she'll do it all for free." Anita steps into the lamplight and slowly removes her clothes, while the squatters either do the same or gawk with open mouths. Anita lies back on a nearby cot and spreads her legs.



Parental decision – Anita's mother brushes her hair at her bedside. "This is the fifth night she's been gone," she says loudly to her husband, who bathes in the bathroom. "She's spending the night with one of her boyfriends, of course," he says. Anita's mother rises and crosses to the bathroom, where she caresses her husband's shoulders. "She can stay there," she says before kissing him. "I hope Erika never gives us any problems."



Police – Wearing only panties, Anita makes coffee for the squatters. A pounding comes on the door. She moves to answer, demanding, "What do you want?" Policemen push her back into the kitchen and hold her there as they raid the squat. "No! Stop!" she shouts as the police round up the men and haul them away. "Damn pig!" she shouts. They push her into the sleeping quarters and throw some clothes at her, demanding she dress.



Advice from his teacher – A man laughs in an office, saying it's no surprise how "six Spaniards and Italians" were also drug dealers. Erik sits in the room with him, looking frustrated. It's his psychology professor. "Society condemns anyone who is sexually different," Erik says. "Society discriminates against anyone who deviates from the norm," expands his professor. He asks if Erik has considered using Anita as his dissertation topic. Erik dodges the question, asking if Anita is healthy enough to live with him. With a smirk and a laugh, his professor says she likely is.



Mistaken identity – Erik looks around town for Anita. He tries at the bus station, where he sees her distinctive coat in a crowd. However, when he approaches the woman, she isn't Anita, and her friends get angry at Erik. "Go to hell," one shouts.



Social worker – Anita cries in the arms of a social worker who tries to calm her. Suddenly, Anita begins to fondle the social worker, pinching her nipples. "I'm so unhappy," the girl says, tears staining her cheeks. "Kiss me." The social worker does, but she's interrupted by the intercom. She reports to her boss before turning back to Anita, who unbuttons her sweater. "Not here," the woman says to Anita. "You should have



something to eat." At the social worker's house, they get to know each other better over wine and food. In a drawn-out scene, they kiss and touch one another before heading to the bedroom. "I'm ashamed, Anita," says the social worker. "You're giving me an orgasm. It should be the other way around. You need the release. Can you tell that I like you? I want to make love to you."

Shower – Erik walks the city streets, prowling Anita's favored spots to hunt men. Meanwhile, she and the social worker take a shower together. The social worker asks why she calls herself Anita when her paperwork calls her Anna. Drying herself, Anita simply answers, "That's what my parents wanted to call me."



Cabaret – Erik makes his way down a street lined with cabarets and sex shows. Inside one advertising lesbian shows, a group of women dance in the nude on a stage: if you squint, you can see one is Anita. The song comes to an end, and the main performer signals for the lights to dim before the women scamper from the stage to applause. They make their way into the dressing rooms. In the dressing rooms, Anita tells some of her story, saying, "Erik understood the whole truth. He realized I couldn't help it." In an extended moment, one of the performers tells a dirty joke to the other girls, making them laugh. Anita continues telling her story to another performer, saying she liked Erik but couldn't stay with him. When the other performer comments that a compulsive like her should do full-service work, Anita says she doesn't want to, realizing her compulsion is gone.



Floor show – Showing Anita the ropes, another performer lets her into a floor show where one of the more popular performers is doing her act, stripping and walking among the men, harassing and goading them for their inability to touch her. They shower her in bills, laughter, and applause. After watching for a while, Anita says, "What's deadly serious for me is just a game to her."



Somebody waiting – Back in the dressing rooms, a performer says that someone is waiting for Anita. To her surprise, Erik is seated in the dressing room. They kiss and embrace, Anita reporting that her compulsions are gone and Erik saying she can stay with him. "I love you," he says, pushing her down to a nearby chair. "You're crazy!" Anita giggles. "Not here!" The two leave the cabaret and rush to Erik's car.



First time – "What terrible weather," Erik says as they enter his home, pulling off their wet jackets. "It's a flood out there," says Anita. "Only the ark is missing," Erik jokes. They go to Erik's bedroom, Anita hesitating at first, and sit on the bed. "Strange," Erik says. "I've waited for this so long, and now I barely dare to." "It's the first time," Anita says, saying this moment is almost virginal. Erik moves to pull up Anita's sweater, and she stops him for a moment, nervous. Soon, however, they are holding, kissing, and stroking one another passionately. Soon, Anita squirms on the bed, soaked in sweat and moaning in true pleasure like we've never seen her before. Erik collapses beside her, asking, "Are you happy?" She nods breathlessly, kissing him. "I love you," he says as they kiss again.



Early morning – A car zips down a highway in the early morning. Erik and Anita step out of the car outside her parents' house. They head inside, but finding that the lock has been changed, Anita changes her mind, saying, "I'm free" and flinging her key in the air.



Old church – Outside the sleepy little town, Erik’s car pauses at a railway crossing where a goods train rumbles past. “Did you see the church?” he asks. “It’s beautiful,” Anita says. When the train passes, Erik maneuvers the car down the old country roads toward it. Inside the church, Erik and Anita look at the figures painted on the ceilings and walls, talking about the fate of Mary Magdalene. Erik says, “She was gathered into the bounty of the Lord.” The couple kisses, and a man seated at the organ sees it. Perhaps jokingly, he begins playing the bridal march. Laughing, Erik and Anita rise, walking toward the altar hand in hand. The camera looks at the church from outside as a jazzy version of the bridal march takes over and the credits roll.



THEMES

Sexuality

Multiple partners The idea of multiple sexual partners takes on a more sinister edge in Anita than in other films about similar topics. Because Anita has a lot of sex, she is compared to a sex worker. However, because she doesn’t charge, she is devalued. Because Anita has sex with so many men, she is made a pariah in her community and again in Erik’s house when she sleeps with the boys among his students.

Illustrative moment While the whole film serves as an example as Anita sleeps with dozens of men, we see this theme most obviously toward the end of the film. Unable to make herself climax, Anita turns back to her old ways, seeking out a group of drug dealers before stripping down in their squat. It’s implied that she had sex with all six men for the entire night.



Dysfunction We’re shown many obvious moments of sexual dysfunction. A few are played off for subtle humor, like some of the men who only last a few moments, but most are troubling. Anita is unable to reach a sexual climax. Erik tells her this is one of the key causes of her nymphomania, a deep desire for sensation. While the main focus is on sexual dysfunction, particularly Anita’s, we see familial and societal dysfunction as well. Anita’s parents play clear favorites, giving more love and attention to Anita’s sister. Similarly, Anita’s teachers and community all seek to punish her, often physically, threatening to beat her or shoving her around. A more functional family or society would have pushed to see Anita treated so she could live a happy life rather than focus on how they could further hurt a mentally ill girl.

Illustrative moment The clearest moment of dysfunction—both sexual and familial—comes early in the film. Anita and her sister perform a duet for their father’s military co-workers who politely applaud them. Anita interrupts their applause before beginning a strip tease. As she throws her clothes away, her mother and father do nothing to stop her, concerned with the scandal Anita’s actions cause but unconcerned with what allowing the girl to continue without even an effort to stop her says about them as parents.



Lesbianism We see one instance of overt lesbian sexuality at the end of the film. Scared, desperate, and perhaps learning something about herself after so many unsatisfactory sexual encounters with men, Anita makes a pass at her social worker. The woman responds positively, kissing Anita before taking her home and having sex with her. It’s during this moment that it’s implied Anita has her first orgasm. This encounter puts Anita on the path to escaping the cycle nymphomania has put her in. It also leads her to get a job at a lesbian sex show.

Illustrative moment An intriguing moment of non-sexual lesbianism appears toward the end of the film when Anita and the social worker shower together. In a calm domestic moment, the two women help each



other bathe before the social worker asks why Anita goes by that name, as her legal name is Anna. Cryptically, Anita responds it's what her parents "wanted to call her." In this moment, we see a less-sensationalized view of lesbian relationships, unusual in the exploitation genre.

Love A bit of a minor theme, love (or a lack of love) comes up at several points in the film. It's a lack of love and care from Anita's parents that helps to drive her nymphomania. In an attempt to rationalize her parent's lacking love, she tries to push them away by creating scandals and sleeping with random men. It's not until the film's end that we see love come up again. First, we see the social worker say she loves Anita, giving her the direct sexual attention she desires, and helping her to escape the cycle of her nymphomania by giving her an orgasm. We see Erik admit his love before taking Anita home and having sex with her. Anita calls this time virginal, as it's the first time she is having sex out of love. At the film's end, it's implied they get married at the old church.

Illustrative moment Toward the end of the film, Erik searches the city for Anita. He eventually tracks her down at the cabaret and waits for her in her dressing room. There, they happily embrace and kiss, telling each other that they can be together now. "I love you," Erik says several times as he holds and kisses Anita.



Sex work Whereas some media would sensationalize sex work, Anita merely shows us it and the strip club performers in their downtime, telling jokes and swapping gossip or sharing tricks of the trade. In many ways, the sex work we see in this film is not unlike a film taking place in a shop or restaurant. At the end of the day, for these women it's just labor. We do see an interesting distinction: In Anita, sex workers are given more respect than Anita, as a nymphomaniac. Men joke that she doesn't even make them pay, and they see her as lesser for it.

Illustrative moment A long part of the end of the film takes place in a sex show. Anita decides to work at a lesbian show after sleeping with the social worker. Here she performs nude on stage, talks with other performers, and views a popular girl do a straight floor show.



Masturbation We see masturbation come up a few times in Anita. First, she does so after her father tells her to go to bed. She is unable to reach a climax. Later, Erik tells her she must reach orgasm to help rid herself of her nymphomania. In order to do so, Anita seeks the assistance of a sex toy, purchasing a vibrator. We see her use the device, but once again she is unable to reach climax. In frustration, she throws the vibrator to the floor and crushes it with a decorative crystal.

Illustrative moment At the near midpoint of the film, we see a moment where Anita masturbates in her bedroom. She grows louder and moves more as she touches herself, but she is unable to reach a climax. The camera zooms in on her face and shows us her frustration, keying the viewer in to a potential cause of her nymphomania.



Society

Gender We see some gender exploration in Anita, though it is a surprisingly minor theme. Anita's sister stands as a foil to her: self-reliant, intelligent, quiet, and polite. Anita is unable to measure up to her sister in those ways, and the negative attention she receives from her parents drives her to act out, which leads to her nymphomania. The film's gaze and the nature of exploitation films present a highly sexualized view of women. This is interesting, as it gives us a more honest and less sensational view of sex work and female sexuality than some other films of the time.

Illustrative moment Early in the film, we see Anita and her sister preparing for their day. In unison, they touch up their hair, straighten their clothes, and say goodbye to their parents. In this moment, we see an idealized and controlled version of the societal ideal of teenage girls: Punctual, quiet, obedient, self-reliant, and desexualized. Anita's nymphomania causes her to push against all of those norms at some point.



Education The educational system is portrayed in a regressive and fascist light in Anita. Both her parents and teachers seem overly concerned with learning about war and generals, and where her parents are disconnected from her life, her teachers seek to control her. The educational system seems more interested in giving Anita social and physical punishments for her sexual dysfunction and mental health issues. "Outcast," one of her teachers says. "Thank God for that." The education we see in Anita is more concerned with control than education. We're given glimpses of Erik's college education and the practice of the music students, but these are mere moments of set-dressing compared to what we see at Anita's school.

Illustrative moment We see little of actual education in the film, but what we do glimpse is oddly threatening. Because it's from Anita's perspective, we see the threat of corporal punishment as, when she is unable to remember facts about a military campaign, her teacher marches toward her with a rod in his hands. His manner of dress and movements are reminiscent of a Nazi officer, adding further to the threatening visage.



Relationship

Parenthood The only parenting we see in Anita is poor parenting. Though they live a life of relative luxury and privilege, Anita's parents are stingy with their affection and attention. They pour it over Anita's sister, but they neglect Anita. Such neglect causes her to start acting out, causing her parents to (frankly, immaturely) push her further away. Many times we see them shirk parental responsibilities, seen most clearly when they don't put an end to Anita's strip tease at her father's party.

Illustrative moment Often we see Anita's parents avoiding their parental responsibilities or misusing their authority. This pattern is very clear when, after Anita has been gone for nearly a week, they agree to change the lock and disown her. Her mother and father kiss deeply and passionately after washing their hands of her.



Psychology

Alienation Another more minor theme, alienation forces Anita to take more risk as the plot progresses. Her parents want to disown her, her teachers want to embarrass and alienate her, and her town wants her gone because of her frequent sleeping around. When she leaves for Stockholm, she's on her own, setting up a tent near a construction site to have sex with random men and sleep in. Even when Erik tries to bring her in, she faces the same forces again from the music students complaining about her sleeping with the guys. Erik stands up for her, however, and makes a space where she can recover and reintegrate.

Illustrative moment Visually and textually, the clearest moment of alienation comes when Anita's class goes out for a recess period. Anita stands alone, leaning on a tree, while the other students mill about and chat. The teachers watching them keep their attention on Anita, strangely reveling in her exclusion from the group. We see part of what makes Anita's dysfunction is the way people treat her.



Shame While we don't see it overtly often, shame is one of the major focuses of Anita. Specifically, we see society's enforcement of shame towards a woman with a sexual appetite. Many tertiary characters are concerned with making Anita feel outcast and harassed, even her teachers. Anita lives partially without shame as a defense mechanism: she can't sate her urges and have shame at the same time. This leads her to try work as a performer at a strip club and even take off her clothes in front of her father's co-workers in an attempt to embarrass him.

Illustrative moment The clearest moment of shame comes when Anita is harassed outside a sausage shop. Sick of Anita's sleeping around, they want to intimidate her. Slapping the sausage out of her hand and insulting her, we see shock, terror, and shame cross Anita's face before she runs home.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Anita

We don't know a lot about Anita outside of her nymphomania. She is the daughter of a military officer. She has a sister her parents favor, and this helps to cause Anita's dysfunction.

Bored A big part of Anita's character is her boredom. She is driven to find new, exciting experiences, in part because of her nymphomania and in part to try and get one over on her parents.

Spontaneous Spontaneity is key to Anita's dysfunction. She cannot resist the urge when it comes up, leading her to make poor decisions such as sleeping with a bunch of drug dealers. Her nymphomania started as a spontaneous action of rebellion against her parents, seeking to deepen their disapproval to make her academic failures seem lesser by comparison. On a whim (and apparently in the nick of time, since it seems the police were after her in her home town), Anita stows away on board a train to Stockholm because, in her words, she "ran out of men."

Dissatisfied Anita's dissatisfaction with her life leads her to her self-destructive tendencies. She is unhappy with her parents' treatment and sister's mockery. Anita fails to excel at school and has trouble making friends. The combination of these factors, along with her inability to achieve orgasm, creates an ideal environment for her to develop sexual compulsions, such as nymphomania. When she finds some satisfaction with her life and achieves orgasm, she is able to get out of the cycle that makes her such a pariah in her town.

Erik

Erik is a young psychology and music student. Upon finding Anita in the streets, he takes her home and starts helping her with her nymphomania. "Think of me as a doctor," he says when Anita tries to sleep with him, though in the end their relationship becomes much more than professional.

Helpful We see Erik helping people with all sorts of things throughout the film. When the students are unsure about an arrangement of a piece for a smaller ensemble, he is quick to step in and compare musical charts. Similarly, he quickly offers Anita assistance during their first meeting, taking responsibility for giving her a scrape and offering to bandage it and let her stay when he realizes she's homeless.

Social Erik might be the most social character in the film. He is always surrounded by people, his house filled with music students. He organizes picnics, concert visits, and arrangements for ensembles for these students, and they seem to live at the house at times. It's his sociable attitude that helps him to first bond with Anita and eventually help her understand her nymphomania. He even steps to her defense when there are overwhelming complaints and insults about her.

Sensitive Erik's sensitivity helps him to give Anita the support and knowledge she needs to overcome her nymphomania. When he first sees her picking up a random man at the train station, his face is a mask of

concern. Other men his age look on Anita with disgust or amusement, but he sees a woman who needs help. Through listening to Anita, setting boundaries, and psychology research, Erik is able to identify Anita's disorder and educate her on what must be done to end the cycle of self-destruction.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Does the asynchronous storytelling help or hinder the plot? Explain.
2. Compare and contrast Anita with Parts 1 and 2 of *Nymphomaniac*. Which one has a more compassionate portrayal of nymphomania? Which is more realistic?
3. What does this film have to say about sex work?
4. How does neglect play into Anita's sexual dysfunction?