

Bader, Michael J.
AROUSAL: The Secret Logic of Sexual Fantasies
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An "insider's" look at what goes on behind the scenes of our desires.

While concurring with Dr. Bader's reasoning that "Sex begins in the mind and then travels downward," and epitomizing Shirley MacLaine's bon mot assessment that "Sex is hardly ever about sex," the Babel of psychoanalytical theories has done little in the past century to moderate our shame or illuminate the meaning of our sexual feelings. Drawing upon more than twenty years' experience as a psychoanalyst and therapist, Dr. Michael J. Bader attempts to provide a useful guide for both the lay person and clinician regarding the meaning and purpose of our erotic daydreams and sexual fantasies, the "theatrical" setting for arousal. Noting the high number of Americans who purport to be dissatisfied in the bedroom and citing his patients' case histories, he contends that despite the relative permissiveness and hedonism of our culture, guilt and worry still hold sway. The cornerstone of Dr. Bader's theory is his contention that the primary concern of our unconscious minds is our physical and psychological safety. In this context, one's fantasy life becomes a sort of "canary in the mine" indicating either a healthy or oppressive atmosphere. Sexual fantasies, which he equates with sexual preferences, set and maintain these safe conditions, thereby permitting arousal. The real source of problems both in and out of the bedroom, as Bader sees it, are the pathogenic beliefs we hold and act upon. These comprise our views of reality seen through the distorting lens of childhood shame, rejection, and helplessness, which lead to sexual inhibitions and the whole array of self-defeating behavior. Approached in this manner, bondage, group sex, voyeurism, fetishism, gang rape, asphyxiation, and the many other consensual "roles" Dr. Bader touches upon, become the imaginary means to a pleasurable end. Sexual fantasy becomes "a sign of health, a way to solve problems," so-called "kinky" scenarios simply implying a more convoluted route to safety.

While "logical" may be overstating his case, Dr. Bader's treatise does cast light into the murky and largely unexamined corners of *why* sexual fantasies turn us on.