

• Aftermath

of

• a Porn Film

• Festival

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Nicht zuletzt seit der Renaissance gehen Kunst und Erotik eine leidenschaftliche Liaison miteinander ein. Da wird man von der Muse geküsst, voyeuristisch-genüsslich tastet der Blick Bilder ab, etymologisch stammt «Pinzel» von «Penis» ab und Kunstwerke werden geboren. Das Pornographische hingegen gilt als eine Ästhetik, die weder besonders erotisch noch künstlerisch ist, geht es hier doch eher um Formen der vorhersehbaren Hypervisualität mit dem alleinigen Zweck beim Abspritzen Abhilfe zu schaffen. Wenn auf dem Porny Days Film Kunst Festival nun aber queer-feministisch geschulte Blicke Pornographie als Kunstfilme gezeigt werden – was passiert dann hier? Und was geschieht in den vielerlei anderen Kunst-, Workshop- und Veranstaltungsformaten, die wir auf dem Festival besuchen. Wie sprechen wir über Bilder, die mit Sehgewohnheiten und Konventionen von Sexualität brechen? Und was lösen die unterschiedlichen Filme und Veranstaltungen des Festivals (in uns) aus?

Während Porn ja sonst dazu dient, die Hand in den Schritt zu packen, fordern wir auf: Hand auf's Herz und Hand auf's Hirn! Am Sonntagnachmittag, nach der sagenumwobenen Sweat & Glitter Party, nehmen wir uns Zeit, uns über unser Festivalerlebnis auszutauschen und laden dafür zum gemeinsamen

Gespräch mit Expert*innen aus den Bereichen Philosophie, Ästhetik, Tanz und Regie ein. Bei aller analytischen Betrachtung und Diskussion von Inhalten, Perspektiven, (Re-)Präsentationen und Konventionen, soll es aber immer auch um die persönliche und individuelle, vielleicht intime Erfahrung auf dem Festival und deren gemeinsame Reflektion gehen. Es darf auch gefragt oder berichtet werden, was uns an- oder abturnt, wie wir andere Menschen oder die Gemeinschaft auf dem Festival erleben, welche – vielleicht auch konfront- oder transformativen – Erfahrungen wir im Kinosaal oder im Darkroom der Festivalparty gemacht haben, wie das Festival als Ganzes auf allen Erfahrungsebenen funktioniert. Ganz im Sinne der Reihe Critical Fridays auf der Suche nach dem Verzicht auf die verstaubte Trennung von Körper, Geist und Seele.

Ethymologie

Pornographie f. «aufreizende Darstellung sexueller Vorgänge in Wort und Bild (ohne Berücksichtigung psychischer, partnerschaftlicher Beziehungen)», Übernahme (Ende 19. Jh.) von frz. *pornographie*, einer Ableitung von frz. *pornographe*, das 1769 von Rétif de la Bretonne im Sinne von «über die Prostitution Schreibender» als Buchtitel verwendet wird, entlehnt aus griech. *pornográphos*

(πορνογράφος) «von Huren schreibend»; vgl. griech. *pórnē* (πόρνη) «Hure, Dirne» und s. -graph, -graphie. Frz. *pornographie* «Abhandlung über die Prostitution» nimmt im 19. Jh. die Bedeutung «Darstellung von Obszönitäten» an, gelangt ins Dt. und in andere Sprachen und ist heute allgemein in obigem Sinne gebräuchlich. Eine Kurzform *Porno* bildet Zusammensetzungen wie *Pornofilm*, *-foto*, *-literatur* u. dgl., aus denen bei erneuter Kürzung umgangssprachliches *Porno* «Pornographisches» (mit unbestimmtem oder nach dem Grundwort wechselndem Genus) entsteht.

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Weder der Begriff der Inszenierung noch derjenige der ästhetischen Erfahrung implizieren Kriterien, nach denen sich künstlerische Aufführungen grundsätzlich von nicht-künstlerischen unterscheiden lassen. Auch wenn Seel der Meinung ist, daß künstlerische Inszenierungen sich dadurch auszeichnen, daß sie Präsenz nicht allein produzieren, sondern Präsenz präsentieren, so läßt sich dasselbe von Inszenierungen des Sports sagen – um nur ein Gegenbeispiel zu nennen. Auch hier wird Präsenz nicht nur hervorgebracht, sondern darüber hinaus präsentiert, als Präsenz dargeboten. Und was den Begriff der ästhetischen Erfahrung angeht, so hat sich gezeigt, daß er auf künstlerische wie auf nichtkünstlerische Aufführungen Anwendung finden kann. (S. 350)

In den Aufführungen ist es die sie erzeugende autopoietische feedback-Schleife, welche Grenzen in Schwellen verwandelt – wie die Grenzen zwischen Bühne und Zuschauerraum, Akteuren und Zuschauern, Individuum und Gemeinschaft oder Kunst und Leben. Es ist, wie wir gesehen haben, dem Einsatz spezifischer Inszenierungsstrategien geschuldet, daß Grenzen weniger als Grenzen denn als Schwellen wahrgenommen werden. Wenn ich behauptet habe, daß eine Ästhetik des Performativen auf eine Kunst der Grenzüberschreitung zielt, so ist damit in diesem Sinne gemeint, daß sie darauf zielt, Grenzen in Schwellen zu verwandeln, und damit auf die Kunst des Übergangs, des Überquerens von Schwellen.

Damit reflektieren die Aufführungen zugleich auf die ihnen zugrundeliegenden anthropologischen Bedingungen. Der Mensch bedarf, wie Plessner gezeigt hat, in seiner Abständigkeit von sich selbst der Schwelle, die es zu überschreiten gilt, wenn er sich selbst als einen anderen (wieder)finden will. Als mit Bewußtsein begabter lebendiger Organismus, als embodied mind, kann er nur er selbst werden, wenn er sich permanent neu hervorbringt, sich ständig verwandelt, immer wieder Schwellen überschreitet, wie die Aufführung es ihm ermöglicht, ja, ihm abfordert. Die Aufführung ist in dieser Hinsicht, prononciert gesprochen, sowohl als das Leben selbst als auch als sein Modell zu begreifen – als das Leben selbst, insofern sie die Lebenszeit der an ihr Beteiligten, von Akteuren und Zuschauern, real verbraucht und ihnen Gelegenheit gibt, sich ständig neu hervorzubringen; als ein Modell des Lebens, insofern sie diese Prozesse in besonderer Intensität und Auffälligkeit vollzieht, so daß die Aufmerksamkeit der an ihr Beteiligten sich auf sie richtet und sie so ihrer gewahr werden. Es ist unser Leben, das in der Aufführung in Erscheinung tritt, gegenwärtig wird und vergeht. (S. 358–359)

Laura

Mulvey

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ble the fragmented group of readers of a novel. It lies on the other hand in the fact that the filmic spectacle, the object seen, is more radically ignorant of its spectator, since he is not there, than the theatrical spectacle can ever be. A third factor, closely linked to the other two, also plays a part: the *segregation of spaces* that characterises a cinema performance and not a theatrical one. The "stage" and the auditorium are no longer two areas set up in opposition to each other within a single space; the space of the film, represented by the screen, is utterly heterogeneous, it no longer communicates with that of the auditorium: one is real, the other perspective: a stronger break than any line of footlights. For its spectator the film unfolds in that simultaneously very close and definitively inaccessible "elsewhere" in which the child *sees* the amorous play of the parental couple, who are similarly ignorant of it and leave it alone, a pure onlooker whose participation is inconceivable. In this respect the cinematic signifier is not only "psychoanalytic"; it is more precisely Oedipal in type. . . .

film reflects, reveals and plays with the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference

psychoanalytical theory as a weapon ("appropriated" because psychoanalysis or psychotherapy in other contexts is seen as tool to adjust the subject to the norms of society)

LAURA MULVEY VISUAL PLEASURE AND NARRATIVE CINEMA

I. INTRODUCTION

A. A Political Use of Psychoanalysis

This paper intends to use psychoanalysis to discover where and how the fascination of film is reinforced by pre-existing patterns of fascination already at work within the individual subject and the social formations that have moulded him. It takes as starting point the way film reflects, reveals and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle. It is helpful to understand what the cinema has been, how its magic has worked in the past, while attempting a theory and a practice which will challenge this cinema of the past. Psychoanalytic theory is thus appropriate here as a political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form.

The paradox of phallogentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world. An idea of woman stands as lynch pin to the system: it is her lack that produces the phallus as a symbolic presence, it is her desire to make good the lack that the phallus signifies. Recent writing in *Screen* about psychoanalysis and the cinema has not sufficiently brought out the importance of the representation of the female form in a sym-

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clitoris as penis?
Apparently Freud saw the
clitoris as a lesser version
of the penis and as a male
part in the female body,
and women must abandon
clitoral pleasure...

bolic order in which, in the last resort, it speaks castration and nothing else. To summarise briefly: the function of woman in forming the patriarchal unconscious is two-fold, she first symbolises the castration threat by her real absence of a penis and second thereby raises her child into the symbolic. Once this has been achieved, her meaning in the process is at an end, it does not last into the world of law and language except as a memory which oscillates between memory of maternal plenitude and memory of lack. Both are posited on nature (or on anatomy in Freud's famous phrase). Woman's desire is subjected to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound, she can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it. She turns her child into the signifier of her own desire to possess a penis (the condition, she imagines, of entry into the symbolic). Either she must gracefully give way to the word, the Name of the Father and the Law, or else struggle to keep her child down with her in the half-light of the imaginary. Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.

There is an obvious interest in this analysis for feminists, a beauty in its exact rendering of the frustration experienced under the phallogocentric order. It gets us nearer to the roots of our oppression, it brings an articulation of the problem closer, it faces us with the ultimate challenge: how to fight the unconscious structured like a language (formed critically at the moment of arrival of language) while still caught within the language of the patriarchy. There is no way in which we can produce an alternative out of the blue, but we can begin to make a break by examining patriarchy with the tools it provides, of which psychoanalysis is not the only but an important one. We are still separated by a great gap from important issues for the female unconscious which are scarcely relevant to phallogocentric theory: the sexing of the female infant and her relationship to the symbolic, the sexually mature woman as non-mother, maternity outside the signification of the phallus, the vagina. . . . But, at this point, psychoanalytic theory as it now stands can at least advance our understanding of the status quo, of the patriarchal order in which we are caught.

B. Destruction of Pleasure is a Radical Weapon

As an advanced representation system, the cinema poses questions of the ways the unconscious (formed by the domi-

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nant order) structures ways of seeing and pleasure in looking. Cinema has changed over the last few decades. It is no longer the monolithic system based on large capital investment exemplified at its best by Hollywood in the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's. Technological advances (16mm, etc) have changed the economic conditions of cinematic production, which can now be artisanal as well as capitalist. Thus it has been possible for an alternative cinema to develop. However self-conscious and ironic Hollywood managed to be, it always restricted itself to a formal mise-en-scène reflecting the dominant ideological concept of the cinema. The alternative cinema provides a space for a cinema to be born which is radical in both a political and an aesthetic sense and challenges the basic assumptions of the mainstream film. This is not to reject the latter moralistically, but to highlight the ways in which its formal preoccupations reflect the psychological obsessions of the society which produced it, and, further, to stress that the alternative cinema must start specifically by reacting against these obsessions and assumptions. A politically and aesthetically avant-garde cinema is now possible, but it can still only exist as a counterpoint.

the alternative
cinema is
politically and
aesthetically
radical

The magic of the Hollywood style at its best (and of all the cinema which fell within its sphere of influence) arose, not exclusively, but in one important aspect, from its skilled and satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure. Unchallenged, mainstream film coded the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order. In the highly developed Hollywood cinema it was only through these codes that the alienated subject, torn in his imaginary memory by a sense of loss, by the terror of potential lack in phantasy, came near to finding a glimpse of satisfaction: through its formal beauty and its play on his own formative obsessions. This article will discuss the interweaving of that erotic pleasure in film, its meaning, and in particular the central place of the image of woman. It is said that analysing pleasure, or beauty, destroys it. That is the intention of this article. The satisfaction and reinforcement of the ego that represent the high point of film history hitherto must be attacked. Not in favour of a reconstructed new pleasure, which cannot exist in the abstract, nor of intellectualised unpleasure, but to make way for a total negation of the ease and plenitude of the narrative fiction film. The alternative is the thrill that comes from leaving the past behind without rejecting it, transcending outworn or oppressive forms, or daring to break with normal pleasurable expectations in order to conceive a new language of desire.

II PLEASURE IN LOOKING/FASCINATION WITH THE HUMAN FORM

A. The cinema offers a number of possible pleasures. One is scopophilia. There are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in the reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at. Originally, in his *Three Essays on Sexuality*, Freud isolated scopophilia as one of the component instincts of sexuality which exist as drives quite independently of the erotogenic zones. At this point he associated scopophilia with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze. His particular examples centre around the voyeuristic activities of children, their desire to see and make sure of the private and the forbidden (curiosity about other people's genital and bodily functions, about the presence or absence of the penis and, retrospectively, about the primal scene). In this analysis scopophilia is essentially active. (Later, in *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, Freud developed his theory of scopophilia further, attaching it initially to pre-genital auto-eroticism, after which the pleasure of the look is transferred to others by analogy. There is a close working here of the relationship between the active instinct and its further development in a narcissistic form.) Although the instinct is modified by other factors, in particular the constitution of the ego, it continues to exist as the erotic basis for pleasure in looking at another person as object. At the extreme, it can become fixated into a perversion, producing obsessive voyeurs and Peeping Toms, whose only sexual satisfaction can come from watching, in an active controlling sense, an objectified other.

At first glance, the cinema would seem to be remote from the undercover world of the surreptitious observation of an unknowing and unwilling victim. What is seen of the screen is so manifestly shown. But the mass of mainstream film, and the conventions within which it has consciously evolved, portray a hemetically sealed world which unwinds magically, indifferent to the presence of the audience, producing for them a sense of separation and playing on their voyeuristic fantasy. Moreover, the extreme contrast between the darkness in the auditorium (which also isolates the spectators from one another) and the brilliance of the shifting patterns of light and shade on the screen helps to promote the illusion of voyeuristic separation. Although the film is really being shown, is there to be seen, conditions of screening and narrative conventions give the spectator an illusion of looking in on a private world.

Among other things, the position of the spectators in the cinema is blatantly one of repression of their exhibitionism and projection of the repressed desire on to the performer.

B. The cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking, but it also goes further, developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect. The conventions of mainstream film focus attention on the human form. Scale, space, stories are all anthropomorphic. Here, curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world. Jacques Lacan has described how the moment when a child recognises its own image in the mirror is crucial for the constitution of the ego. Several aspects of this analysis are relevant here. The mirror phase occurs at a time when the child's physical ambitions outstrip his motor capacity, with the result that his recognition of himself is joyous in that he imagines his mirror image to be more complete, more perfect than he experiences his own body. Recognition is thus overlaid with mis-recognition: the image recognised is conceived as the reflected body of the self, but its misrecognition as superior projects this body outside itself as an ideal ego, the alienated subject, which, re-introjected as an ego ideal, gives rise to the future generation of identification with others. This mirror-moment predates language for the child.

Important for this article is the fact that it is an image that constitutes the matrix of the imaginary, of recognition/misrecognition and identification, and hence of the first articulation of the "I," of subjectivity. This is a moment when an older fascination with looking (at the mother's face, for an obvious example) collides with the initial inklings of self-awareness. Hence it is the birth of the long love affair/despair between image and self-image which has found such intensity of expression in film and such joyous recognition in the cinema audience. Quite apart from the extraneous similarities between screen and mirror (the framing of the human form in its surroundings, for instance), the cinema has structures of fascination strong enough to allow temporary loss of ego while simultaneously reinforcing the ego. The sense of forgetting the world as the ego has subsequently come to perceive it (I forgot who I am and where I was) is nostalgically reminiscent of that pre-subjective moment of image recognition. At the same time the cinema has distinguished itself in the production of ego ideals as expressed in particular in the star system, the stars centring both screen presence and screen story as they act out

Lacan:
mirror
phase

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a complex process of likeness and difference (the glamorous impersonates the ordinary).

C. Sections II. A and B have set out two contradictory aspects of the pleasurable structures of looking in the conventional cinematic situation. The first, scopophilic, arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight. The second, developed through narcissism and the constitution of the ego, comes from identification with the image seen. Thus, in film terms, one implies a separation of the erotic identity of the subject from the object on the screen (active scopophilia), the other demands identification of the ego with the object on the screen through the spectator's fascination with and recognition of his like. The first is a function of the sexual instincts, the second of ego libido. This dichotomy was crucial for Freud. Although he saw the two as interacting and overlaying each other, the tension between instinctual drives and self-preservation continues to be a dramatic polarisation in terms of pleasure. Both are formative structures, mechanisms not meaning. In themselves they have no signification, they have to be attached to an idealisation. Both pursue aims in indifference to perceptual reality, creating the imagised, eroticised concept of the world that forms the perception of the subject and makes a mockery of empirical objectivity.

During its history, the cinema seems to have evolved a particular illusion of reality in which this contradiction between libido and ego has found a beautifully complementary phantasy world. In *reality* the phantasy world of the screen is subject to the law which produces it. Sexual instincts and identification processes have a meaning within the symbolic order which articulates desire. Desire, born with language, allows the possibility of transcending the instinctual and the imaginary, but its point of reference continually returns to the traumatic moment of its birth: the castration complex. Hence the look, pleasurable in form, can be threatening in content, and it is woman as representation/image that crystallises this paradox.

III. Woman as Image, Man as Bearer of the Look

A. In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active male and passive female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional ex-

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hibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Women displayed as sexual object is the leit-motiff of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley, she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire. Mainstream film neatly combined spectacle and narrative. (Note, however, how in the musical song-and-dance numbers break the flow of the diegesis.) The presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation. This alien presence then has to be integrated into cohesion with the narrative. As Budd Boetticher has put it:

What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance.

(A recent tendency in narrative film has been to dispense with this problem altogether; hence the development of what Molly Haskell has called the "buddy movie," in which the active homosexual eroticism of the central male figures can carry the story without distraction.) Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen. For instance, the device of the show-girl allows the two looks to be unified technically without any apparent break in the diegesis. A woman performs within the narrative, the gaze of the spectator and that of the male characters in the film are neatly combined without breaking narrative verisimilitude. For a moment the sexual impact of the performing woman takes the film into a no-man's-land outside its own time and space. Thus Marilyn Monroe's first appearance in *The River of No Return* and Lauren Bacall's songs in *To Have or Have Not*. Similarly, conventional close-ups of legs (Dietrich, for instance) or a face (Garbo) integrate into the narrative a different mode of eroticism. One part of a fragmented body destroys the Renaissance space, the illusion of depth demanded by the narrative, it gives flatness, the quality of a cut-out or icon rather than verisimilitude to the screen.

B. An active/passive heterosexual division of labour has similarly controlled narrative structure. According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like. Hence the split between spectacle and narrative supports the man's role as the active one of forwarding the story, making things happen. The man controls the film phantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look of the spectator, transferring it behind the screen to neutralise the extra-diegetic tendencies represented by woman as spectacle. This is made possible through the processes set in motion by structuring the film around a main controlling figure with whom the spectator can identify. As the spectator identifies with the main male¹ protagonist, he projects his look on to that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence. A male movie star's glamorous characteristics are thus not those of the erotic object of the gaze, but those of the more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego conceived in the original moment of recognition in front of the mirror. The character in the story can make things happen and control events better than the subject/spectator, just as the image in the mirror was more in control of motor coordination. In contrast to woman as icon, the active male figure (the ego ideal of the identification process) demands a three-dimensional space corresponding to that of the mirror-recognition in which the alienated subject internalised his own representation of this imaginary existence. He is a figure in a landscape. Here the function of film is to reproduce as accurately as possible the so-called natural conditions of human perception. Camera technology (as exemplified by deep focus in particular) and camera movements (determined by the action of the protagonist), combined with invisible editing (demanded by realism) all tend to blur the limits of screen space. The male protagonist is free to command the stage, a stage of spatial illusion in which he articulates the look and creates the action.

¹There are films with a woman as main protagonist, of course. To analyse this phenomenon seriously here would take me too far afield. Pam Cook and Claire Johnston's study of *The Revolt of Mamie Stover* in Phil Hardy, ed.: *Raoul Walsh*, Edinburgh 1974, shows in a striking case how the strength of this female protagonist is more apparent than real.

C.1 Sections III. A and B have set out a tension between a mode of representation of woman in film and conventions surrounding the diegesis. Each is associated with a look: that of the spectator in direct scopophilic contact with the female form displayed for his enjoyment (connoting male phantasy) and that of the spectator fascinated with the image of his like set in an illusion of natural space, and through him gaining control and possession of the woman within the diegesis. (This tension and the shift from one pole to the other can structure a single text. Thus both in *Only Angels Have Wings* and in *To Have and Have Not*, the film opens with the woman as object of the combined gaze of spectator and all the male protagonists in the film. She is isolated, glamorous, on display, sexualised. But as the narrative progresses she falls in love with the main male protagonist and becomes his property, losing her outward glamorous characteristics, her generalised sexuality, her show-girl connotations; her eroticism is subjected to the male star alone. By means of identification with him, through participation in his power, the spectator can indirectly possess her too.)

But in psychoanalytic terms, the female figure poses a deeper problem. She also connotes something that the look continually circles around but disavows: her lack of penis, implying a threat of castration and hence unpleasure. Ultimately, the meaning of woman is sexual difference, the absence of the penis as visually ascertainable, the material evidence on which is based the castration complex essential for the organisation of entrance to the symbolic order and the law of the father. Thus the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified. The male unconscious has two avenues of escape from this castration anxiety: preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object (an avenue typified by the concerns of the *film noir*); or else complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous (hence over-valuation, the cult of the female star). This second avenue, fetishistic scopophilia, builds up the physical beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself. The first avenue, voyeurism, on the contrary, has associations with sadism: pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt (immediately associated with castration), asserting control and subjecting the guilty person through punishment or forgive-

ness. This sadistic side fits in well with narrative. Sadism demands a story, depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat, all occurring in a linear time with a beginning and an end. Fetishistic scopophilia, on the other hand, can exist outside linear time as the erotic instinct is focussed on the look alone. These contradictions and ambiguities can be illustrated more simply by using works by Hitchcock and Sternberg, both of whom take the look almost as the content or subject matter of many of their films. Hitchcock is the more complex, as he uses both mechanisms. Sternberg's work, on the other hand, provides many pure examples of fetishistic scopophilia.

C.2 It is well known that Sternberg once said he would welcome his films being projected upside down so that story and character involvement would not interfere with the spectator's undiluted appreciation of the screen image. This statement is revealing but ingenuous. Ingenuous in that his films do demand that the figure of the woman (Dietrich, in the cycle of films with her, as the ultimate example) should be identifiable. But revealing in that it emphasises the fact that for him the pictorial space enclosed by the frame is paramount rather than narrative or identification processes. While Hitchcock goes into the investigative side of voyeurism, Sternberg produces the ultimate fetish, taking it to the point where the powerful look of the male protagonist (characteristic of traditional narrative film) is broken in favour of the image in direct erotic rapport with the spectator. The beauty of the woman as object and the screen space coalesce; she is no longer the bearer of guilt but a perfect product, whose body, stylised and fragmented by close-ups, is the content of the film, and the direct recipient of the spectator's look. Sternberg plays down the illusion of screen depth; his screen tends to be one-dimensional, as light and shade, lace, steam, foliage, net, streamers, etc, reduce the visual field. There is little or no mediation of the look through the eyes of the main male protagonist. On the contrary, shadowy presences like La Bessière in *Morocco* act as surrogates for the director, detached as they are from audience identification. Despite Sternberg's insistence that his stories are irrelevant, it is significant that they are concerned with situation, not suspense, and cyclical rather than linear time, while plot complications revolve around misunderstanding rather than conflict. The most important absence is that of the controlling male gaze within the screen scene. The high point of emotional drama in the most typical Dietrich films, her supreme moments of erotic meaning, take place in the ab-

sence of the man she loves in the fiction. There are other witnesses, other spectators watching her on the screen, their gaze is one with, not standing in for, that of the audience. At the end of *Morocco*, Tom Brown has already disappeared into the desert when Amy Jolly kicks off her gold sandals and walks after him. At the end of *Dishonoured*, Kranau is indifferent to the fate of Magda. In both cases, the erotic impact, sanctified by death, is displayed as a spectacle for the audience. The male hero misunderstands and, above all, does not see.

In Hitchcock, by contrast, the male hero does see precisely what the audience sees. However, in the films I shall discuss here, he takes fascination with an image through scopophilic eroticism as the subject of the film. Moreover, in these cases the hero portrays the contradictions and tensions experienced by the spectator. In *Vertigo* in particular, but also in *Marnie* and *Rear Window*, the look is central to the plot, oscillating between voyeurism and fetishistic fascination. As a twist, a further manipulation of the normal viewing process which in some sense reveals it, Hitchcock uses the process of identification normally associated with ideological correctness and the recognition of established morality and shows up its perverted side. Hitchcock has never concealed his interest in voyeurism, cinematic and non-cinematic. His heroes are exemplary of the symbolic order and the law—a policeman (*Vertigo*), a dominant male possessing money and power (*Marnie*)—but their erotic drives lead them into compromised situations. The power to subject another person to the will sadistically or to the gaze voyeuristically is turned on to the woman as the object of both. Power is backed by a certainty of legal right and the established guilt of the woman (evoking castration, psychoanalytically speaking). True perversion is barely concealed under a shallow mask of ideological correctness—the man is on the right side of the law, the woman on the wrong. Hitchcock's skilful use of identification processes and liberal use of subjective camera from the point of view of the male protagonist draw the spectators deeply into his position, making them share his uneasy gaze. The audience is absorbed into a voyeuristic situation within the screen scene and diegesis which parodies his own in the cinema. In his analysis of *Rear Window*, Douchet takes the film as a metaphor for the cinema. Jeffries is the audience, the events in the apartment block opposite correspond to the screen. As he watches, an erotic dimension is added to his look, a central image to the drama. His girlfriend Lisa had been of little sexual interest to him, more or less a drag, so long as she remained on the spectator side. When she crosses the barrier between his room and the

block opposite, their relationship is re-born erotically. He does not merely watch her through his lens, as a distant meaningful image, he also sees her as a guilty intruder exposed by a dangerous man threatening her with punishment, and thus finally saves her. Lisa's exhibitionism has already been established by her obsessive interest in dress and style, in being a passive image of visual perfection: Jeffries' voyeurism and activity have also been established through his work as a photo-journalist, a maker of stories and captor of images. However, his enforced inactivity, binding him to his seat as a spectator, puts him squarely in the phantasy position of the cinema audience.

In *Vertigo*, subjective camera predominates. Apart from one flash-back from Judy's point of view, the narrative is woven around what Scottie sees or fails to see. The audience follows the growth of his erotic obsession and subsequent despair precisely from his point of view. Scottie's voyeurism is blatant: he falls in love with a woman he follows and spies on without speaking to. Its sadistic side is equally blatant: he has chosen (and freely chosen, for he had been a successful lawyer) to be a policeman, with all the attendant possibilities of pursuit and investigation. As a result, he follows, watches and falls in love with a perfect image of female beauty and mystery. Once he actually confronts her, his erotic drive is to break her down and force her to tell by persistent cross-questioning. Then, in the second part of the film, he re-enacts his obsessive involvement with the image he loved to watch secretly. He reconstructs Judy as Madeleine, forces her to conform in every detail to the actual physical appearance of his fetish. Her exhibitionism, her masochism, make her an ideal passive counterpart to Scottie's active sadistic voyeurism. She knows her part is to perform, and only by playing it through and then replaying it can she keep Scottie's erotic interest. But in the repetition he does break her down and succeeds in exposing her guilt. His curiosity wins through and she is punished. In *Vertigo*, erotic involvement with the look is disorientating: the spectator's fascination is turned against him as the narrative carries him through and entwines him with the processes that he is himself exercising. The Hitchcock hero here is firmly placed within the symbolic order, in narrative terms. He has all the attributes of the patriarchal super-ego. Hence the spectator, lulled into a false sense of security by the apparent legality of his surrogate, sees through his look and finds himself exposed as complicit, caught in the moral ambiguity of looking. Far from being simply an aside on the perversion of the police, *Vertigo* focuses on the implications of the active/looking, passive/looked-at split in terms of sexual differ-

ence and the power of the male symbolic encapsulated in the hero. Mamie, too, performs for Mark Rutland's gaze and masquerades as the perfect to-be-looked-at image. He, too, is on the side of the law until, drawn in by obsession with her guilt, her secret, he longs to see her in the act of committing a crime, make her confess and thus save her. So he, too, becomes complicit as he acts out the implications of his power. He controls money and words, he can have his cake and eat it.

IV. SUMMARY

The psychoanalytic background that has been discussed in this article is relevant to the pleasure and unpleasure offered by traditional narrative film. The scopophilic instinct (pleasure in looking at another person as an erotic object), and, in contrast, the ego libido (forming identification processes) act as formations, mechanisms, which this cinema has played on. The image of woman as (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man takes the argument a step further into the structure of representation, adding a further layer demanded by the ideology of the patriarchal order as it is worked out in its favourite cinematic form—illusionistic narrative film. The argument turns again to the psychoanalytic background in that woman as representation signifies castration, inducing voyeuristic or fetishistic mechanisms to circumvent her threat. None of these interacting layers is intrinsic to film, but it is only in the film form that they can reach a perfect and beautiful contradiction, thanks to the possibility in the cinema of shifting the emphasis of the look. It is the place of the look that defines cinema, the possibility of varying it and exposing it. This is what makes cinema quite different in its voyeuristic potential from, say, strip-tease, theatre, shows, etc. Going far beyond highlighting a woman's to-be-looked-at-ness, cinema builds the way she is to be looked at into the spectacle itself. Playing on the tension between film as controlling the dimension of time (editing, narrative) and film as controlling the dimension of space (changes in distance, editing), cinematic codes create a gaze, a world, and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of desire. It is these cinematic codes and their relationship to formative external structures that must be broken down before mainstream film and the pleasure it provides can be challenged.

To begin with (as an ending), the voyeuristic-scopophilic look that is a crucial part of traditional filmic pleasure can itself be broken down. There are three different looks associated with cinema: that of the camera as it records the pro-filmic event,

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that of the audience as it watches the final product, and that of the characters at each other within the screen illusion. The conventions of narrative film deny the first two and subordinate them to the third, the conscious aim being always to eliminate intrusive camera presence and prevent a distancing awareness in the audience. Without these two absences (the material existence of the recording process, the critical reading of the spectator), fictional drama cannot achieve reality, obviousness and truth. Nevertheless, as this article has argued, the structure of looking in narrative fiction film contains a contradiction in its own premises: the female image as a castration threat constantly endangers the unity of the diegesis and bursts through the world of illusion as an intrusive, static, one-dimensional fetish. Thus the two looks materially present in time and space are obsessively subordinated to the neurotic needs of the male ego. The camera becomes the mechanism for producing an illusion of Renaissance space, flowing movements compatible with the human eye, an ideology of representation that revolves around the perception of the subject; the camera's look is disavowed in order to create a nonvincing world in which the spectator's surrogate can perform with verisimilitude. Simultaneously, the look of the audience is denied an intrinsic force: as soon as fetishistic representation of the female image threatens to break the spell of illusion, and the erotic image on the screen appears directly (without mediation) to the spectator, the fact of fetishisation, concealing as it does castration fear, freezes the look, fixates the spectator and prevents him from achieving any distance from the image in front of him.

This complex interaction of looks is specific to film. The first blow against the monolithic accumulation of traditional film conventions (already undertaken by radical film-makers) is to free the look of the camera into its materiality in time and space and the look of the audience into dialectics, passionate detachment. There is no doubt that this destroys the satisfaction, pleasure and privilege of the 'invisible guest', and highlights how film has depended on voyeuristic active/passive mechanisms. Women, whose image has continually been stolen and used for this end, cannot view the decline of the traditional film form with anything much more than sentimental regret.²

1975

²This article is a reworked version of a paper given in the French Department of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in the Spring of 1973.

Stephen
Mumford

A Porno-
graphic Way
of Seeing

Critical Fridays
Reader Nr.4

'I know it when I see it.'

(Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, 1964,
on pornography)

Sex art

We may sometimes wonder whether we are looking at art or pornography. Suppose I flick through a book of Egon Schiele's works (for example Whitford 1981). The pictures are not just of nudes, which have long been artists' subjects, but of women or men in various states of sexual arousal. Schiele draws himself and others masturbating (for instance Reclining Girl, 1910; Self-portrait Masturbating, 1911). Sometimes he shows us the subject's genitals under lifted clothing (Seated Woman, 1914), putting us in the position of a voyeur. Gustav Klimt also produced sexualized images: for instance Danae (1907) portrays a woman in a state of ecstatic orgasm. Gustave Courbet's L'Origine du monde (1866) is as explicit as any pornographic photo, depicting an uncovered torso, the vagina fully exposed and offered to the viewer's gaze. Before that, Peter Fendi (1796–1842) had produced many explicit paintings and lithographs of sex, including of group sex. Where to draw the line between art and pornography is one issue (Maes 2011). And to tackle it one may also have to consider whether art can contain sexual content and whether pornography can contain artistic content (Kieran 2001). Some have approached the issue by considering what are the essential features of art, erotica and pornography (Scruton 2005, for instance) and then deciding whether those essential features would permit sexual content in art or artistic content in pornography. I reject essentialism about art and about pornography. In this chapter, I try a different approach. I argue that there are separate pornographic and aesthetic ways of seeing. In distinguishing ways of seeing, we allow that the very same image could be viewed either pornographically or aesthetically. This leads to the conclusion that what makes something pornographic or artistic is not solely a matter intrinsic to the image or object. It instead can depend on factors that the 'eye cannot descry', namely the contextual features surrounding the image.

Institutional theories

In place of essentialism, I support an institutional theory of art (Mumford 2011: ch. 4). But one may support the idea of there being an aesthetic way of seeing, and other ways, even if one didn't subscribe to an institutional theory of art. The two are logically separable. Dickie is an institutional theorist who is solidly against the idea of there being a distinct aesthetic mode of perception (Dickie 1964). Yet there is no reason why one couldn't hold both together, especially if one follows Kant (1790: A43) in separating the question of what is art from the aesthetic question of what is beautiful. A sunset can be aesthetically pleasing, for instance, though it is no one's work of art. The institutional theory is an account of what makes something art while the aesthetic perception theory is an account of what makes something aesthetically pleasing to us. Many works of art aim at beauty but not all do. Being

beautiful cannot be what makes something art, therefore, even if some aim at beauty and, when they do so, may be judged on the basis of how well they achieve that goal. I argue for both an institutional theory of art and for their being an aesthetic way of seeing (Mumford 2011: ch. 7). I believe further that both these theories can be applied usefully to the case of pornography. The classification of something as pornography will be an institutional matter and there is a pornographic way of seeing. I do not have the space to construct a conclusive argument in favour of an institutional theory of art but it is useful to outline it and explain some of the considerations that count in its favour so that these can be brought to bear on the case of pornography. What makes Carl Andre's Equivalent VIII art? It is a rectangular arrangement of 120 regular house bricks arranged in two six-by-ten layers and owned by the Tate Gallery. There is no reason in principle why a builder could not leave an indistinguishable pile of bricks just outside the gallery. Why is the pile of bricks in the gallery art when an indistinguishable pile outside the gallery is not? The traditional theories of art struggle to answer this question and for that reason some have been tempted to say that Andre's work is not art. I will not take that option. Andre is indeed an artist. The problem is that Andre's bricks and the indistinguishable pile are alike in their intrinsic properties. What makes one art and the other not must be, as Danto (1964: 580) says, a non-exhibited characteristic or 'something the eye cannot descry'. What that is, according to the institutional theory, is that art is a status that is bestowed upon certain forms of practice by the institutions of art: the galleries, dealers, critics, funding councils, agents, and so on. Andre's work has had such status bestowed upon it, even if controversially, whereas the builder's bricks have not. Andre was consciously working within a form of practice – sculpture – that he knew had the status of art. The builder was not. Such activities no doubt were practised before the notion of art was created. People in caves painted, for instance. The institutions of art grew out of such pre-existing forms of behaviour. But it wasn't until there were such institutions that we started to consider whether painting, sculpture, dance, music and theatre were art. If we follow this anti-essentialist theory of art, should we also opt for an institutional theory of pornography? Not quite. Pornography does not have institutions in exactly this way. It has an industry and this has often historically been underground due to its moral and legal status being frequently challenged. Nothing as organized as the institutions of the artworld has emerged. On the contrary, it is other institutions outside the industry that have largely played the role of classifying things as pornography: film censors, vice squads and judges, for instance, though this is not to deny that the makers of porn may trade on its marketability. There are moral and political implications of something being classed as pornography, which is why it is so often contested ground. Pornography usually has a social stigma attached which art seldom has. If one considers Courbet's *L'Origine du monde*, one sees that it continues to

be controversial. While the painting is regarded as respectable art and hangs in the Musée d'Orsay, reproductions on covers of books have been confiscated as pornographic as recently as 2009 in Portugal. Who is right? Is it art or pornography? Is this just a battle among various institutions over classification? Or can we take a different approach in which it is possibly both?

Ways of seeing

I will argue that the same image could be seen either aesthetically or pornographically. If seen in the former way, this might play a role in us seeing something artistically – as an artistic object – though, as I have already indicated, there is not a strict correlation between something being art and being seen aesthetically. I support the idea that there can be distinct ways of seeing (Berger 1972). This can first be illustrated in the case of art and then applied to the case of pornography. Suppose visitors to an art gallery see a tin can in the centre of the room. They look at it, move around it to gain different angles, contemplate the colours and shapes that they find, and spend some time doing so. After a while, a guard comes and, to the visitor's surprise, removes the tin can, telling them it was discarded litter. What was happening when our visitors viewed the object? It seems they had been taking aesthetic pleasure in what they saw. The guard could see the very same thing and we can assume that they had virtually identical views on it. But did they really see the same thing? Did one have an aesthetic perception of the can and the other a non-aesthetic – we might say purposive – perception of the same thing? There are at least two different responses to this puzzle. The first can be called the accompaniment theory. This would be the idea that the guard and the visitors see exactly the same as each other but those perceptions are accompanied by different beliefs, desires, attitudes or experiences. The visitors believe it is a work of art that they are viewing

and something that they ought to be appreciating. The guard, on the contrary, believes the object is just discarded rubbish. The accompanying beliefs vary, therefore, but on this account the two see near enough the same thing. Bartel (2010) has an account like this in which either aesthetic or pornographic attitudes can be taken as to what is seen. But he does not doubt that the art and sex appreciator see the same image. Opposed to this would be the perception theory, which claims that these two people literally see different things. The visitor's perception is an aesthetic one. The tin can looks interesting, elegant, economically designed, balanced or intriguing to him or her. The guard looks at the same thing but sees it in a different way. The visitor sees the can just as rubbish and there is no aesthetic experience in it for him or her. Prima facie, the perception theory might seem the more ambitious thesis, which consequently would need more work to defend it. This is indeed the case but I claim that it is nevertheless the perception theory that should be defended. Perception theory might be thought implausible because our guard and art appreciator are looking at the same thing and, we may assume, have virtually identical

retinal images. But, to use an old saying, there is more to seeing than meets the eye (Hanson 1958: 1). Even if two people look at the same thing they might not see it the same because seeing has not occurred until there is some cognitive processing of the stimuli provided to the senses. This idea has support in psychology (Gregory 1966), philosophy (Dennett 1991) and art theory (Berger 1972), though it is far from uncontroversial. In particular, the account suggests a rejection of sense-data theory, which tells us that what we see in perception is our own mental idea of an external object. Instead, seeing is depicted more as an activity than something in which we are passive. Seeing is what we do and our beliefs and desires shape how we do it. Consider, for instance, a simple Necker cube. Two people looking at the same image can nevertheless see it differently, either with the higher face at the front or the lower face at the front. The sense-data theory does not seem to explain these two different ways of seeing the same object. The mental representation of the cube presumably looks just like the Necker cube on paper that we are viewing. So that sense-datum of the Necker cube could be viewed in either of the two ways also, which shows that the sense-datum doesn't explain anything of the case. And when we ourselves switch between the two ways of seeing the cube, it is very far from clear that we phenomenologically see a different sense-datum than, as I interpret it, we see the same thing in a different way. There are theories of perception that can make sense of the notion of ways of seeing: for instance, adverbialism (such as in Lowe 1995: ch. 1). But the exact details of perception can be taken up elsewhere.

I concede that this is far from a conclusive case in favour of a perception theory over an accompaniment theory. The aim however is merely to set up enough theoretical background for the account to be applied to the case of pornography. Once it is so applied, it is hoped that the case for the perception theory will have been strengthened as the instance of pornography provides an exemplary corroboration.

Seeing pornographically

How does one see an image, film or object pornographically? I will suggest an answer below and, by way of contrast, say also what it is to view something non-pornographically, as we do when we view art or other images. To view something pornographically is to see it sexually for the purposes of sexual excitement. And it is to do so at the expense of all else. Hence, one forgets that those depicted naked or having sex are models or actors – possibly exploited ones – and instead one engages in the sexual pretence for one's own sexual enjoyment. In particular, one sets aside any moral qualms and allows sexuality free reign. The connection between morality and sexuality is an important and complex one, which I will consider more thoroughly in the next section. There is clearly an interesting and peculiar feature of watching sex. When we see sex pornographically we usually have an immediate and irresistible urge for the same. I do not mean that one wants to do exactly what one sees depicted: heterosexual

men sometimes enjoy lesbian porn, for instance (Parkhill 2010). But one does have an urge for the same level of sexual excitement. Sex might not be unique in having this feature. When we see others eating it can have the effect of making us feel hungry, and when we see a yawn we often yawn too. In contrast, if one watches sport one might be inspired to take up sport at some later point, but one does not feel the immediate and irresistible urge to do the same as that which one sees. When someone watches the high jump, for example, they do not have an overwhelming urge to invade the track and jump over the bar. Or if one enjoys a work of literature, one does not have to throw down the book and write one's own novel. If one watches sex, and does so pornographically, however, one does want to participate immediately in the same kind of sexual feelings. The explanation of this need will reside partly in our human nature to react but also partly in features of the images. We are disposed to react in this way to certain kinds of stimuli. And certain depictions – subtle or not – are disposed to stimulate this reaction within us. I use the word 'dispose' very deliberately as no image necessitates sexual arousal even if it might tend towards it (for details of the dispositional modality, see Mumford and Anjum 2011: ch. 8). Similarly, not every person will react the same way to the same images. Perhaps there are even gender differences in this respect. I say we have such feelings when we watch sex pornographically. It is possible that we see sex but do not see it in the way described. To an extent, one chooses when to see something in this sexual way, setting aside other matters such as morality. There are two ways in which one can make such a choice. In the first place, one can choose simply not to look at sexual images. Many choose not to view pornography and this is not necessarily because they don't believe it would 'work' for them. Perhaps they know it would indeed. But their choice could be based on conscience, whether this be shyness or because of a conscious moral verdict. Their conscience might not allow them to forget a belief that the actors are being exploited or a view that pornography is degrading to women, for instance, and for that reason they do not want to take any sexual pleasure from the material. The second way in which one could choose not to see something pornographically is perhaps the more interesting philosophically. This would be a case where one does indeed view the material but doesn't see it pornographically or sexually. In such cases, one abstains from taking a pornographic perception. Anyone may choose to do this but there are some examples that are particularly pertinent and illuminating. Film censors or police vice-squad members may often be in a position of viewing pornographic material, but their job is not to view it pornographically. We would think that they were failing in their duty if they became sexually aroused while viewing it. They should be able to abstain from viewing the images pornographically while at the same time recognizing it as pornography. The judgement would be that this was material that invited a use for sexual pleasure and the context would show this. The context shows, in contrast, that Courbet's

L'Origine du monde, sitting on the wall of the Musée d'Orsay, is not to be used for that purpose. Those who attempt definitions of pornography in terms of its content sometimes speak in terms of explicitness and objectification. But a second example shows that this is inadequate. Consider the case of a gynaecologist or a gynaecology text book. The gynaecologist sees the most explicit things but it would be entirely inappropriate to see them pornographically, even where all is well. The patient does not expose herself for her doctor's sexual enjoyment. Similarly, when the student looks through the gynaecology text book, it is inappropriate for him or her to gain sexual pleasure by doing so in any instance. The illustrations we assume to be found there are as explicit as any could be, but the student does not view them pornographically. This case is important for a number of reasons. As claimed above, it shows that explicitness is insufficient to make something pornographic. Second, the case adds plausibility to the kind of contextualism that is recommended: for at least some of those very same text-book images could be in a different context and used pornographically (I accept that images depicting disorders are less likely to be used that way). We are able in almost every case to discriminate those contexts in which one is licensed and encouraged to see something pornographically, and indulge one's sexual feelings, from contexts in which one is not. Few mistakes are made about this, though it can happen. Third, the gynaecology case is interesting because one may doubt that there is a specific pornographic way of seeing an image but instead argue that the way of seeing amounts to nothing more than attending only to certain aspects or parts of the image. But the example counts against that. The argument would be that when one views a nude portrait artistically, one views the whole image, but to view it sexually is to concentrate just on certain aspects and areas: looking at the breasts and genitals for instance. But in the case of the gynaecology text book the medical student can look at the very same places that someone looks at sexually, but can choose not to see them sexually. Two viewers could focus on the clitoris, for example, but the student sees it medically and the other sees it sexually. It does not seem to be a matter of which parts of the image one looks at, therefore, but how one looks at them. The question is whether one uses the images to indulge one's sexual feelings or not. The context will usually show us whether we are licensed to indulge those feelings or not. The cases discussed above – the censor, the vice squad and the gynaecologist – are cases where a choice is made not to see something pornographically that easily could be seen as such. Are there cases of the opposite? Could one see anything pornographically, even if it didn't have an explicit sexual content? Although it is harder to do so, it is obviously a possibility. A shoe fetishist, for instance, may be able to see a shoe in a sexual way – and there are many other possible examples one could use of a similar ilk. Similarly, one might indulge one's aesthetic perception in contexts where it is not usually deployed. There is nothing to stop someone pulling out an electrical plug from its socket and spending

moments contemplating its shape, textures, colours and so on. One could become lost in aesthetic contemplation even though it is not a work of art. And it seems clear that some people are capable of using many varied images and situations for sexual gratification. The individual's formative history might explain why shoes, stockings or whatever it may be are things they can use for sexual excitement; or perhaps more general cultural cues provide the explanation. Clearly people are not simply responding empathically to some excitement that they see: for the shoe is not itself sexually excited. The shoe may nevertheless be something individuals associate with sexually exciting experiences. However, it should not be denied that in many cases pornography gives very obvious cues that it is meant to be viewed pornographically. There is an understood range of visual codes that the film-maker knows can be found suggestive and arousing (Woolley 2010: 84f.). Hence, some types of image will naturally tend to be viewed pornographically more than others. Art is of course another area in which we are not licensed to indulge our sexual feelings, even in the case of nude art. I should not use the images for sexual pleasure when appreciating it as art. The context dictates this and we are good at recognizing it. The galleries do not have to worry about visitors masturbating as they look at works of Klimt, Courbet, Fendi or Mapplethorpe, despite their sexual content. Instead we know that the works are to be viewed aesthetically and as works of art. This does not mean that those very same images could not be in a context in which they were indeed seen sexually, for instance if they were reproduced in a glossy magazine. The visitor to the gallery could even at a later time recall the images for sexual pleasure. I accept that I have said little on what it is to see something aesthetically but there is discussion of the aesthetic perception elsewhere (Mumford 2011: ch. 7). The academic study of pornography is also an arena in which we are not licensed to indulge our sexual feelings. Reading the chapters in this book, including the present one, is not supposed to be sexually arousing. But this is not because of the content, which includes explicit sexual references. Rather, the academic context of that content is what shows it to be inappropriate to view it sexually.

Sexuality and morality

The connection between sexuality and morality cannot be ignored when it comes to the topic of pornography. The term originated as a morally laden one, derived from the Greek *pornē*, meaning prostitute or harlot (graphically depicted). It immediately had a pejorative moral content as something we would only enjoy if we left behind our moral conscience. Whether this negative association still exists is debatable: some see pornography as a good thing. And sexuality, aside from pornography, is of course something we have come to see as a positive part of our natures. For anyone who does have moral qualms about viewing pornography, however, it seems that a sexual suspension of the ethical is a pre-requisite for seeing it pornographically. But this is also what makes the enjoyment of

pornography such a contentious matter (see Itzin 1992, for instance). Even more than that, at least part of the sexual pleasure could come precisely from that setting aside: allowing sexuality free reign in defiance of conscience. The claim is that knowing that one has set morality aside can for at least some be itself a source of pleasure. To know that the sexual has triumphed over the moral could add to the sense of sexual liberation. One is indulging one's sexuality and taking additional pleasure in the illicit triumph of sexuality over conscience. As minded creatures, we are able to be free of those moral constraints self-consciously and evidently to enjoy that realization. Other animals may of course at times be sexual beings but lack an ability to reflect on the free reign of their sexuality. It might then be possible to explain why the defiance of conventional sexual morality and taboo is found exciting by many: it gives them a glimpse of freedom. This somewhat metaphysical thesis might have some empirical confirmation in the sorts of pornography that have sold well. Some of the most popular porn films in terms of sales clearly trade on the casting aside of morality in favour of a triumph of sexuality. They can depict sexual situations that in ordinary reality we would find morally questionable, dubious, unacceptable or even reprehensible. Some successful films of the 1970s and 1980s, when sales were at their peak before the advent of the internet, included the depiction of underage sex (*Babyface*, Alex De Renzy, 1977), non-consensual sex (*Pretty Peaches*, Alex De Renzy, 1978) and incest (*Taboo*, Kirdey Stevens, 1980). Though verifiable figures are hard to find in this industry, because of its often underground nature, the latter is alleged to be one of the biggest-selling pornographic films of all time. We need not suggest that these films were popular because their viewers approved of any of those activities or because they wanted to engage in any of them. Rather, the fantasy of sexual desire overcoming some of the biggest taboos brings into the sharpest focus the triumph of morality by sexuality. To achieve the heightened state of excitement that they seek, the viewer must believe that the depicted acts are indeed wrong and taboo. And seeing on screen that they are still done despite that allows the viewer to fantasize about what it would be like if sexuality had unconstrained freedom and was bound by no conscience at all. There is no doubt a limit as to how far people are prepared to indulge in that fantasy, however. There may be immoral acts that viewers would in no circumstances wish to fantasize about committing. This account of what it is to see pornographically does not state whether we should or shouldn't indulge our sexuality in this way. There would thus be no inconsistency, on this proposal, in someone declining to view pornography (or to view it pornographically) on moral grounds while acknowledging that it could be sexually exciting to do so. One could simply decide that the immorality of pornography was of greater consideration than any personal sexual pleasure to be gained from it.

Erotica

The morally pejorative and illicit aspect of pornography is in part constitutive of its apprehension, it has been argued. But what of erotica, about which nothing has thus far been said? Does the pejorative connotation extend to erotica? Might this be a basis for drawing a real distinction between pornography and erotica? Or is the erotic just pornography for the middle classes: a quasi-political effort to escape its pejorative connotation (see for example Dworkin 1979:10)? What of the distinction between art and erotica or between erotic art and art generally? Clearly the erotic shares with pornography a sexual purpose. Erotic art would thus have some sexually stimulating content, whether it is explicit or implicit. A texture or shape of a sculpture might be sexually stimulating even if it doesn't graphically depict sex or sexual organs. Might it then be possible to distinguish erotica and pornography on the basis of explicitness, the latter being the more explicit? Or is it possible to draw the distinction by saying that erotica has artistic pretensions that porn does not? The latter seems more credible, though as Kieran (2001) has argued, there is no reason why pornography should not itself contain artistic elements and have artistic aspirations. In that case, it seems we might allow that the erotic/artistic could be an aspect of some pornography. Some films and pictures merely concentrate on the biological and mechanical parts of sex and thus have an emphasis on explicitness. The goal seems to be to show the sexual act in as much detail as possible with close-up shots of intimate body parts. This is adequate for some to provoke their biological reactions in response to seeing sex: the kind of automatic response some have when they want the same excitement that is portrayed. Erotic elements in pornography, however, engage us as rational embodied beings. There can be a plot, a situation depicted, sexual tension can be built and held so that the eventual release is all the more pleasing. Here, the mind and body of the viewer are in cooperation, fantasy aiding the biological reactions. One example of a work of pornography that contains such elements is the film *Autobiography of a Flea* (Mitchell Brothers, 1976), which is based on an anonymous 1810 novel. It seems undoubted that it should be classed as pornography. There is a clear intention that it be used for sexual stimulation and it contains all three taboo elements mentioned above. But it does so with clear artistic elements. There is a plot that develops in such a way as to build the sexual interest, the acts depicted becoming increasingly depraved. However, by the standards of much contemporary pornography, the film is not very explicit. There are no close-ups of genitalia or penetrations though the sexual act is indeed shown, without the extreme intimate intrusion that some films now show. The putative artistic pretensions of erotica are to be found here, in terms of plot, dialogue and filmic qualities, but they serve to make it more effective porn rather than it ceasing to be porn at all. By engaging the mind, they allow the viewer to get a more exciting and deeper sexual experience than porn that does not. By speaking of rational engagement with such films,

I do not of course mean that it is rational to watch them: only that part of their effective arousal is achieved by engaging thought and imagination. There seems no reason in principle why pornography cannot have artistic elements, therefore, and why it must always be explicit, though perhaps there is some other ground on which erotica can be distinguished. Scruton (2005) attempts to establish such a distinction on the basis that erotica's interest is in the sexual subject, whereas pornography's interest is only in the sexual object. An objectified person or body part can be substituted with another similar one, on Scruton's view, whereas subjects cannot (ibid.: 12). 'Normal desire' is person to person, while pornography objectifies and is thus transferable to any other similar body. Erotica, in contrast, 'invites us into the subjectivity of another person' (ibid.: 13) and is presumably for that reason preferable. This certainly is a distinction but is it the one we have in mind when we speak of the pornographic and the erotic? Erotic stories could still objectify others, it seems. Consider, for instance, a story of a man on a crowded underground train being touched by a stranger's hand. The hand is entirely objectified – it could be anyone's hand – yet there might be an erotic story about it. In that case, it looks as if the issue of objectification or its opposite can cut across the pornography/erotica distinction rather than being the basis for it. This claim would of course be subject to the exact details of how the notion of objectification is defined. Pornography can contain erotic elements where I am taking this to mean the more aesthetically valuable categories that engage cognitive faculties rather than merely biological ones. A credible plot and situation will make the content of pornography more effective to embodied thinking agents. Considered on this basis, there seems some grounds to conclude that the distinction between erotica and pornography is a vague one that is not firmly established and, furthermore, there is no reason why one cannot contain the other. Again, other definitions of pornography and erotica may be a basis for a sharper distinction.

Art and pornography

The account has led us full circle. If pornography can contain artistic elements, such as by including aesthetic value, then how should we separate art and pornography? I gave an answer in terms of there being distinct pornographic and non-pornographic ways of seeing, where one non-pornographic way would be the aesthetic seeing that we deploy in viewing art. But it has now been claimed that some pornography causes sexual arousal through its erotic/aesthetic elements. Can something then be seen both pornographically and aesthetically at the same time? I argue that it can. While some ways of seeing are incompatible, such as purist and partisan ways of watching sport (Mumford 2011), others are compatible. According to the account just given, seeing aesthetic values in pornography can make it work as pornography. One must primarily be seeing as pornography, for use of sexual excitement, though to see aesthetic qualities is one of the things that allows one to see pornographically in this sense.

This has been denied, by Bartel (2010: 163, for instance), but I hope the plausibility of the case has been made here. Part of Bartel's reason for separating aesthetic and pornographic experience so sharply is that he thinks that in taking a pornographic attitude to what one sees one is imagining 'oneself in some way participating in a sexually fulfilling action with the depicted subject' (ibid.: 158) and that this is incompatible with taking an aesthetic attitude in which one must dwell on features of the image (following Levinson 2005). But this is first of all not a plausible account of how people watch pornography: many men like to watch lesbian porn (see Parkhill 2010) and would certainly not want to imagine themselves involved in what they see, for then it would cease being lesbian porn – the very thing they want to see. But also, if Levinson is right that we need to dwell on features of the image to see aesthetically, then there seems no reason that doing so could not enhance it as a sexual experience. A well-filmed scene might work better than a badly filmed one, for instance. This still permits one to see something aesthetically rather than pornographically. If one looks at a nude work of Schiele to evaluate it as a work of art one may concentrate on its aesthetic qualities to the exclusion of its stimulatory powers. One may have no aim at all to gain sexual excitement in making the artistic evaluation. And just as aesthetic values can make a work of pornography a better work so, in theory, sexual content could make something better as a work of art. A novel may contain a sex scene that needs to be convincing even though the book remains art rather than pornography. The photographer Dawn Woolley uses erotic imagery and traditional pornographic cues, though this is to assist her artistic and philosophical endeavour rather than to arouse the viewers (Woolley 2010). I have explored some of the more complex cases in which different ways of seeing relate, combine and can be subsumed. Nevertheless, the basic distinction has the validity of its being possible to see exactly the same thing, image or film in either pornographic or non-pornographic ways. Courbet's *L'Origine du monde* is as good an example as any. When seen in an art gallery, the viewer takes the cue that he or she is there to see it aesthetically and that sexual excitement would be inappropriate. The same image could then appear in the context of a magazine which contextually invites its use for sexual stimulation. There is thus no automatic contradiction, on this account, between the work both being in a respectable art gallery and reproductions of it appearing in contexts in which it is classified as pornographic. There is also the possibility that we allow the same viewer to switch rapidly between different ways of seeing, just as one can switch deliberately between the two different ways of seeing the Necker cube. Suppose someone is watching a pornographic movie in the way described above but then has a sudden pang of guilt and starts to worry as to whether it is degrading to women. At that moment, they would cease seeing the film pornographically and start seeing it in another way: as a social concern, for instance. But then they may forget their conscience again and revert to the pornographic

way of seeing. It is possible, therefore, that someone can switch between seeing something as art and seeing it as pornography, as in the case of Courbet's, Fendi's or Schiele's work.

Conclusion

I have argued that there is no essential difference between art and pornography but, rather, that there are artistic and pornographic ways of seeing. There are plausible cases in which the same image can be seen in both ways by different viewers or by the same viewer at different times. To see something artistically would be to see it aesthetically or some other artistic way (for not all art aims to please aesthetically). To see it pornographically would be to see it sexually and inviting use for sexual stimulation. It was further argued that to see something pornographically is to allow sexuality free reign, liberated from other concerns such as moral constraint and taboo. But there are some considerations that assist the pornographic perception rather than constrain it and we should, in those cases, not see the pornographic way of seeing as incompatible with those considerations. It is hoped that the foregoing account casts a new light on the difficult issue of attempting to distinguish art and pornography. More than that, however, I have attempted to explain something about our sexual natures more widely, not just about watching sex and pornography but also about the indulgence of our sexuality more generally.

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