

## PATRIARCHY AND PLEASURE: THE PORNOGRAPHIC EYE/I

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Pornography is about sex. It is one of the ways men and women are sexualized in our culture. It is both an expression of that sexualization as well as a powerful instrument of its production and reproduction.

The kind of sexuality presumed and promoted in pornography is not significantly different in its essentials from that which is produced in us elsewhere by discourses and practices not normally thought of as pornographic; by those which are not even explicitly concerned with sex as much as by those which are: by and through the discourses of history, religion, law, medicine, philosophy, pedagogy, art and literature etc. etc., as well as by and through the discourses and practices of psychoanalysis, psychotherapy and sexology, the explicitly "erotic" arts and literature, and in modern advertising and the discourse of pleasure which a commodity economy requires. In fact, pornography is nourished by the sexual orthodoxy (and vice-versa) and reinforces its most fundamental "truths", or truth-effects as Foucault would say.<sup>1</sup> Pornography, in this sense, is neither deviant nor perverse nor subversive of an authoritarian repressive sexual régime articulated from elsewhere, as those who deplore or defend it would sometimes have us believe. It is rather just another instrument of that régime, which incites sexuality far more than it represses it,<sup>2</sup> and is a further propagation of its powerful effects.

This régime of sex which dominates our culture is one which both naturalizes sex, on the one hand, by constituting it in discourse (and therefore in practice) as if it were a universal, a spontaneous finality or a unified causal principle of action — an instinct, a drive, a need, Eros or desire; and sexualizes nature, on the other, by tying sexuality as difference, the difference between masculine and feminine, to the difference of the sexual organs.<sup>4</sup> This discourse

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of sex actually constitutes the sexualities it purports to describe, exploit, explain or modify. And, of course, it constitutes male and female sexuality differently. In fact, I would maintain that this is the whole point of it: to mark that difference, "epitomizing a whole system of difference"<sup>5</sup> that is, in my opinion, *the* key political and ideological foundation of our social order.<sup>6</sup> The sexes are separated only "in order to establish the absolute privilege of one over the other".<sup>7</sup> Why insist that there be two sexes if not so that one may be subjected to the other? "Indeed, why differentiate if it is not to form a hierarchy?"<sup>8</sup>

Pornography expresses and reproduces the hierarchical difference between masculine and feminine which is produced (and produced as "natural") simultaneously everywhere else in our culture: in the family, in school, in the market-place, in church, in the universities, the libraries, museums, galleries and concert-halls, in science and medicine, industry and entertainment. Both the form and the content of pornography (the medium and the message inextricably and mutually determining), for example, constitute women as objects available for the use and/or contemplation of a subject which is essentially male. It thus objectifies the feminine and feminizes the object as Woman, while subjectifying the masculine and masculinizing the subject as Man; tying femininity to objectivity and immanence and masculinity to subjectivity and transcendence, just as the philosophers, the artists, the scholars, the scientists and the story-tellers have done for as far back in our history as we have been allowed to remember. What I want to emphasize in this paper, however, is not so much pornography's objectification and sexual passification of women, which has rightly received the critical attention of feminists in recent years, as its *subjectification* and sexual excitement of men. For although pornography is ostensibly about sex objectified in Woman and woman objectified in Sex, the principal protagonist in pornography is, after all, the male-spectator-owner for whom the whole performance has been arranged. "Everything is addressed to him, everything must appear to be the result of his being there".<sup>9</sup> It is men, after all who produce and consume pornography; it is, therefore, their subjectivity rather than ours which is most immediately effected by it. How then shall we characterize this masculine subject as constituted in and by pornography?

Pornography literally means: writing about prostitutes (from the Greek *πῶρνη*, *porne* meaning harlot, and *γράφειν*, *graphein* meaning to write). If we consider those discourses and practices most readily identified as pornography today — magazines, movies, burlesques — we will see that this original etymological sense of the term (extended to include images and visual representations) captures much of what is distinctive about pornography and the way it constructs and "marks" the masculine-feminine distinction, as well as much of what pornography shares with other cultural representations of that distinction. In the first place pornography constructs Man (i.e. masculinity as subjectivity and subjectivity as masculinity) as an *observer* of women; and Woman, correspondingly, (i.e. femininity as objectivity and objectivity as femininity) as the observed of men. In this respect, pornography merely continues a practice immortalized, if not instituted, in the mythology of Ancient Greece — it was, after all the face of Helen that launched a thousand ships —

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and replicated since then in our cultural processes, both sacred and profane.

Our current visual environment, for example, is saturated with images of women presented specifically as *sights* for the viewing pleasure of a spectator who is presumed to be male, and is thus constituted as male in the very production and reproduction of these images.<sup>10</sup> Publicity is obviously one of the biggest manufacturers and distributors of these sights. But publicity did not invent Man the observer-subject nor Woman the object-observed. It merely continues an older more respected tradition, that of post-Renaissance oil-painting which also presented sights for the viewing pleasure of the male spectator-owner: sights of what he might possess — commodities, merchandise, objects of exchange, property — including, of course, sights of women's naked bodies conventionalized as nudes.<sup>11</sup> And like the images of modern publicity (and the objects of which they are images)<sup>12</sup> these sights in oil-painting did not so much reveal themselves (i.e. the truth of the objects they represented) as designate and individuate the spectator-owner as a Man — of wealth, stature and power — in short as a man to be envied. The oil-painting presented images of objects but only in order to designate a social relationship: that of the spectator-owner to the real objects of which these images were but representations. Pornography does the same thing. It presents images of women, but only to designate men and the social relationship between them and the object-woman-viewed. Paradoxical as it may seem, pornography does not reveal Woman, though in it Woman reveals all, because Woman does not disclose herself as subject in pornography. On the contrary, it is Man who is revealed in her objectification. For the Woman he observes is the objectification of *his* idea. She is after all Man-made: not a real prostitute, but a product of the masculine imagination, the Word made Flesh and inevitably bearing the mark of her creator.

These same structures of male-subjectification and female-objectification also characterize regular movies. They too designate the spectator-subject as male and the male as spectator-subject and Woman as the object of his petrifying gaze. Feminist film-makers and film-critics have done valuable work exposing this structural relationship in recent years.<sup>13</sup> And Stanley Cavell has explored aspects of the same structure — in his case, the condition of the viewer — from a somewhat different perspective in his book about film *The World Viewed*.<sup>14</sup> He claims there, that the “ontological conditions of the motion picture reveal it as inherently pornographic”,<sup>15</sup> in that it constructs a world from which the spectator-subject is necessarily “screened” and over which, therefore, he can feel he has mastery and control. Given that the “body of a woman is culture’s time-honoured conventional victim” (see Griffin), we are not surprised to hear Cavell go on to describe the history of film as “a history of the firmament of individual women established there”. “Remarkable directors” he suggests “have existed solely to examine the same woman over and over through film. A woman has become the whole excuse and sole justification for the making and preserving of countless films . . .”.<sup>16</sup> He cites Garbo, Davis and Dietrich as examples; but I am sure you will have no trouble bringing his list up to date: Liv Ullman in Bergman’s films, Diane Keaton in Woody Allen’s and Hanna Schygulla in Fassbinder’s come easily

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to mind. As well as these words of Truffaut, uttered in 1958 and reiterated recently in the Manchester Guardian Weekly: "The cinema is the woman's — that is to say the actress's — art. The director's job is to *get pretty women to do pretty things*".<sup>17</sup>

It is certainly no secret that many movies are made today simply and solely as vehicles for displaying particular women to the world: those women with whom the director is "sleeping", as we so coyly put it. In this respect the social relationships immortalized on film — between men and women, spectator-owners and objects of possession respectively — are fundamentally the same as those designated in paintings of the classical nude (sacred) and in the photographs of modern pornography (profane). In each case particular men — a Polanski, a Manet, a Hugh Hefner — put "their" women on display so that other men will recognize their power, their wealth and their social stature — and envy and respect them for it.

So men are constructed in pornography (as elsewhere) as the spectator-owners of women. What kind of women do men enjoy looking at and possessing? First of all the women observed in pornography are *not real*. Real women appear in pornography, but never as themselves. In fact they are referred to as "models"; an ambiguous term which can mean "something to be copied, pattern; example; small scale reproduction; three dimensional plan", as well as "one who poses for an artist or photographer"; and, most apt of all I think, "one of a series of varying designs of the same type of object".<sup>18</sup> For the real women who appear in pornography are always disguised as objects; usually as exotic objects in improbable settings which emphasise their unreality: surrounded by furs and feathers and satin and lace, for example; or alternatively, whips and chains and knives and leather; hanging like pieces of meat from hooks in the ceiling, or strutting around like "undulating vamps with gigantic cigarette-holders".<sup>19</sup> What men see, therefore, when they look at pornography (or indeed any public image of women) are not women, but women made-over into *artifacts*. They gaze at a man-made object, not a woman; at a body "eviscerated of its substance and history"<sup>20</sup> and not at the living flesh:

abstract, impeccable, clothed with marks \* and thus invulnerable; "made-up" (*faict* and *fainct*) in the profound sense of the expression; cut off from external determinations and the internal reality of its desire, yet offered up in the same turn as an idol . . .<sup>21</sup>

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\*by "marks" Baudrillard means things like lip-stick, jewellery, boots, which mark women as cultural products and appropriate objects of desire.

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For this pornographic woman (i.e. the artificial woman which is the product of pornography) is simultaneously produced as an object of male desire and is addressed to the male spectator precisely to solicit from him some sort of sexual response. She is in fact produced as both idol and idolizer.<sup>22</sup> For her desire is constituted as his desire for her. Indeed, the whole point of her construction is to call forth *his* sexuality and the experience of sexual superiority and control which his penis is supposed to confer upon him "naturally".

Hence the appropriateness of the etymological meaning of pornography: writing about whores. For, from the point of view of the male client, the prostitute, like the pornographic woman, has also only one way of being-in-the-world, and that is as a sexual object for-him, not for-herself. But, of course, it must be difficult for a man to maintain his illusory belief in the objectivity of Woman when he is actually engaged in some sort of sexual activity with a real one, especially if she insists on talking or if she is the one that takes the money and not some other man. This threat of encountering the Other as subject and in particular of encountering Woman as Other as subject (the threat of measuring their penis-power according to the reality principle) can be circumvented in pornography; which substitutes an image of an unreal prostitute for an interaction with a real one, and an exchange between men (money for access to female artifacts) for a relationship between an individual man and a real woman — that most dangerous of all encounters.

Thus pornography offers men a certain kind of security. In the first place, it protects them from "prostitutes" i.e. from Woman as subject of her own sexuality, by killing her off; by petrifying the prostitute in print as other-than-herself and reducing her there entirely and solely to a sight/site of men's sexuality not her own, and men's control. For she now belongs completely to those who buy and sell her. It also establishes the spectator-subject of pornography in the community of men, by allowing him to participate, if only symbolically, in the exchange of women, which, if Lévi-Strauss is to be believed, is at the very foundation of culture: "the fundamental step because of which, by which, but above all in which, the transition from nature to culture is accomplished".<sup>23</sup> Men it seems must exchange women to realize themselves as men i.e. establish their gender-identity as masculine, and earn the recognition and, more importantly, the alliance of other men.

Our modern Pygmalion, who can only desire that which he has made-over as a site/sight of male sexuality, is not so very different from his prototype, who also shunned the society of real women, disgusted as he was by the conduct of the Propoetides. These were "girls", according to F. Guirand who "rashly denied the divinity of Aphrodite. To punish them Aphrodite inspired in them such immodesty that losing all sense of shame, they would prostitute themselves to all comers. In the end, they were turned to stone".<sup>24</sup> It is important to understand who and what these "girls" were rejecting when they denied Aphrodite, in order to appreciate the moral of this tale. According to Homer, Aphrodite, the goddess of love, arose spontaneously out of the foam produced on the sea by the castrated genitals of Uranus. She was, that is, the product of Man, not Woman. The Gods

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were apparently so struck by her beauty when they saw her that each "wished in his heart to take her as a wife and lead her to his abode". Guirand comments that it was "natural" that they should be thus moved "for Aphrodite was the essence of feminine beauty. From her gleaming fair hair to her silvery feet everything about her was pure charm and harmony . . . Aphrodite exuded an aura of seduction. To the perfection of her figure and the purity of her features she added the grace which attracted and conquered". And, finally, quoting Homer, he adds "On her sweet face she always wore an amiable smile".<sup>25</sup>

For her beauty, Aphrodite was rewarded with an apple in the famous Judgment of Paris (archetype of the modern Beauty Contest). She in turn rewarded him by offering him as "his own" the most beautiful of mortal women. He chose Helen, who unfortunately had already been claimed as "his own" by Menelaus. The theft of Helen from her original owner unleashed the famous Trojan Wars; an orgy of blood-shed and devastation more commonly blamed on mortal Helen's beautiful face (as Mankind's original sin is blamed on Eve), than on the men who quarrelled over possession of it or the goddess (of love, let us not forget) who gave Paris rights to it.

These Propoetides then, who were so despised by Pygmalion that he shunned the company of *all* women and so uncompromisingly punished by Aphrodite, that smiling goddess of love, were abjured precisely because they rejected the feminine ideal which Aphrodite represented and which continues to be prescribed for women in the mythology of our time — an ideal, I would remind you, which is entirely Man-made. For, Aphrodite, like that other much favoured goddess Athena, sprang full-grown from Man: she had no mother and owed all she was and could be to him. Since she was neither born nor nurtured by women (as real women are) she had been protected from their influence and could therefore be made completely to the specifications of her male creator: to be the sight/site of smiling beauty, flattering and obsequious, and the passive recipient of the desire such sights called forth in men; in this case, "to take her as a wife and lead her to his abode". (We have yet to determine the nature of the desire called forth by modern pornography — I suspect it may be a little racier than this, though not on that account any less distasteful).

The first Pygmalion was a sculptor "only happy in the silent world of statues which his chisel had created".<sup>26</sup> And although he was disgusted by real women, like the modern pornographer, this did not mean that he wasn't interested in Women, i.e. in turning his gaze upon them — as long as they were artifacts, of course. In fact, he fell in love with an ivory statue he had made; moved, of course, by the extraordinary beauty (he had created there). Aphrodite, goddess of this sort of love, eventually took pity on him and brought his beloved statue to life that she might return his kisses. (We are not so far away from Sexy Suzy with the "movable parts").

What can we learn from this about sex and the differential sexualizing of men and women in our culture? Well, it doesn't tell us much about women's sexuality, other than how it is regarded by men, but it does say rather a lot about men's. Most fundamentally it establishes male sexuality (and male subjectivity

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therefore) as *voyeuristic*, *fetishistic* and *narcissistic*. For it is the *artifact* which is the object of men's desire; the body made-over into a perfect object and "marked" with signs of its cultural appropriation, its colonization:

Tattoos, stretched lips, the bound feet of Chinese women, eyeshadow, rouge, hair removal, mascara, or bracelets, collars, jewellery, accessories: anything will serve to rewrite the cultural order on the body; and it is this that takes on the effect of beauty.<sup>27</sup>

And it is the *sight* of these artifacts (their beauty) that elicits the sexual response in men. And finally, that which is "adored", endowed with magical qualities, and fetishized in pornography, is not at all the object signified, "the body's wildness veiled by make-up", for example, but the *signifier* itself: i.e. the system, the code, the cultural order made manifest in the fetishized object. It is the power of patriarchy, *men's will inscribed on women's bodies*, which excites the pornographer and at the same time refers him to his penis, the biological alibi of his difference and of his membership in the sex class which rules, as well as the symbolic instrument of his domination. Which explains why power is "sexy" for men; for their power refers them directly to the sexual organ which is the only excuse for it. As well as why men's sexual pleasure is so often limited to the "phallic orgasm" since "potency is man's pleasure".<sup>29</sup>

Men take pleasure in looking at women, therefore, only to the extent that women designate them as men. These "marked" women (lip-stick, high-heels, tight clothes) they call "real women".<sup>30</sup> What they really enjoy and at the same time reproduce for themselves and for others in this practice of looking is the system of differences which marks them as men i.e. as dominants in a sexually bifurcated and hierarchized social order. This explains why men whistle at women (suitably inscribed with the culturally determined indicators of sexual submission) to impress other men and not to impress women. The whistle establishes the whistler's membership in the male sex class while exercising and inscribing the power of that class in the continuing reproduction of the patriarchal cultural order.

This fetish-beauty has nothing (any longer) to do with an effect of the soul (the spiritualist vision), a natural grace of movement or countenance; with the transparency of truth (the idealist vision); or with an "inspired genius" of the body, which can be communicated as effectively by expressive ugliness (the romantic vision). What we are talking about is a kind of anti-nature incarnate, bound up in a general stereotype of models of beauty, in a perfectionist vertigo and controlled narcissism . . . It is the final disqualification of the body, its subjection to a discipline, the total circulation of signs.<sup>31</sup>

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It is in this sense that pornography is about power: the power of culture/men over nature/women. As long as men have this power, or feel they do, they don't need pornography. When they don't they do.

Pornography, however, only exacerbates the condition it attempts to remedy — absence of desire, of the pleasure in potency. For it perpetuates an ideal of masculinity which cannot be realized in practice — i.e. with real women in the real world. It thus increases the pornographer's isolation, frustration, deprivation and resentment. Hence the escalation in pornography — both quantitative and qualitative — and the desperation of those of us who would end it if we could. For there is no built-in limit to the pornographer's need, nor to the pornographic imagination it needs must call forth. For both the need and its imaginary satisfaction in pornography are the effects of the very same power structure they attempt to recreate and they are determined elsewhere: in all those apparently non-pornographic discourses and practices of our culture which cooperate in the social construction of an ideal of masculinity which is intrinsically contradictory and therefore necessarily unattainable.

For this masculine subject constituted as observer (of the feminized object and the objectified feminine) is not, of course, original to pornography. He is the traditional subject, Man, of our culture — of its rationalism, humanism and individualism. We can trace his ancestry back at least as far as Plato (and perhaps even further in some respects as my brief reflections on Greek mythology would suggest), who was one of the first to identify subjectivity with rationality, knowledge and thought and these with the abstraction of a (masculine) self from concrete involvement in the lived world. This splitting-off of Man from the material world (of nature) and of his intellect from his personal experience was reaffirmed during the Renaissance, in the philosophy of Descartes and the science of Francis Bacon, for example; and was a necessary condition of possibility of the scientific and industrial revolutions which followed.<sup>32</sup> The same divided subject remains with us still as the model of our education, our science, our government, our arts and our leisure etc.<sup>33</sup> It is perhaps *the* cornerstone of patriarchal power. For, from the very beginning of this tradition, the thinking, knowing, observing and emotionally detached subject was always constituted in discourse and *in practice* as male, and the object known, nature, matter, as female.<sup>34</sup> This "has enabled men, the knowers to falsely abstract themselves from nature, as if they were not themselves historical, material, organic and social beings. This abstraction of men from the rest of nature, and from women, is the root at one and the same time of both their *power*, for they can be ruthless with others with whom they feel no identification, and their alienation from the world, each other, and themselves."<sup>35</sup>

The desire to view, which is incited in the subject-Man from all directions in our "society of the spectacle"<sup>36</sup> not only by pornography and publicity, but also by science for which "objective observation" is absolutely constitutive — is really a desire for the *condition of viewing*<sup>37</sup> i.e. for the "ontological status of separation", of Sovereignty. For the viewer is essentially external to the world-viewed and therefore unaffected by it. The world is present to him and visible, but he, like God, is absent from the world and invisible. He cannot be objectified by the gaze

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of an other subject for he is not part of the world his gaze objectifies. In pornography, he looks at her looking back at him; but she cannot see him. He is Sovereign. The world-viewed appears in response to his will and he has only to close his eyes or turn away and the world-viewed will cease to be. He is judge, spectator-speculator, owner and controller, with no responsibility for or to that which he observes. He conjures it both in and out of existence. He is the one who knows, while he himself is inscrutable and is not known.

Now this condition of viewing (voyeurism) may be a secure one. But it is certainly ideal i.e. false and therefore full of contradictions. For Man, after all, is in and of the same world which is the object of his gaze. The flesh and blood and guts he objectifies on the screen and takes so much pleasure in revealing and reviewing (in print, in the laboratory or on the battlefields of sport and war) always come back to haunt him. For they are his own blood and guts; denied, objectified and projected onto the Other, onto Nature, Woman, the Enemy, but never by that means exorcised.<sup>38</sup> They cannot be for they are the very conditions of his own possibility to be at all. Subjectified, sexualized Man has to work harder and harder to overcome this contradiction which is at the very heart of his project to maintain his illusion of Sovereignty and thus his "holy virility".<sup>39</sup> In fact, I would say that this is the hidden motor of our history, driving men ever onwards in an endless search for that final and unambiguous experience "of freedom" which will confirm their (transcendent) masculinity once and for all.

Since masculinity — the ontological condition of viewing — requires the objectification of the world which it imagines is "external" to its seeing eye/I, we should not be surprised, therefore, at the violence which is perpetrated in its name (in the name of God, Reason, Freedom, Progress, History, Humanity, Science, Art or, as in the case of pornography, in the name of Sex). For you can only objectify the living by taking away its life; by killing it either in fact or fantasy. And the latter is just as violent as the former. For fantasy "is precisely what reality can be confused with. It is through fantasy that our conviction of the worth of reality is established . . ." <sup>40</sup>; it teaches us how to see the world. We act according to our desires, and we desire according to what we see.<sup>41</sup> The hoardings on the street, the newspaper stands and corner stores, the movies, the television, our stories and our art show men sights of women against which they are encouraged to measure their subjectivity and their sexuality — since male gender-identity leans on sexuality; on the penis as the mark of their difference and their power. "The sight of it as an object stimulates the use of it as an object"<sup>42</sup>: fragmentation, separation, manipulation, abstraction, mutilation, possession, consumption, elimination and so forth. Little wonder Peter Sutcliffe, the "Yorkshire Ripper" who killed 13 women before he was apprehended in 1981, thought he had a divine mission to kill prostitutes. As pornography makes clear, sex and violence go hand-in-hand in our culture and the desire to kill women is virtually built-into men's sexuality.<sup>43</sup>

A subjectivity which is external to its world, as the observer-subject is, deprives itself of the nourishment which only the world can supply; and as a result becomes increasingly impoverished and isolated, and estranged from

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itself, from others and from the reality of the world it aspires to know and control merely by looking. Sights, appearances pried away from their meanings (their contexts and their history) are silent. Dead objects are mute. In the world of the voyeur, therefore, there is no dialogue, no relationship, no speech and no response, and therefore no understanding, neither of self nor of the objects "known". For only that which narrates can make us understand and the voyeur's world is that of the eternal present.<sup>44</sup> "The world complete without me is the world of my immortality"<sup>45</sup> and, therefore, an unreal world. For we are all mortal, and so visible and present to each other and the world outside the defined space of the pornographic spectacle; beyond the covers of the magazine, the doors of the darkened booth, the exotica of the night-club, which screen the spectator-subject from that which is made visible to him. "As in Plato's cave" however, "reality is *behind* you. It will become visible when you have made yourself visible to it, presented yourself."<sup>46</sup>

We will not fight pornography by censoring it, therefore; nor by flooding the market with alternative sexual imagery as is often argued by those who oppose present pornography and the traditional discourse of sex in the name of "sexual freedom", desire and the right of individuals to "take their pleasure and make their own lives".<sup>47</sup> For it is precisely the politics of "taking one's pleasure" and "making one's own life" (of rational individualism) which is at issue here. Objectification and abstraction, emotional detachment, isolation and estrangement from the Other belong to the *voyeur-subject* of sexuality itself i.e. to the "ontological condition of viewing" and not to the world-viewed. Tinkering with the latter does nothing to challenge the sexual régime articulated through the former. Censorship merely suppresses the voyeur-subject in some of its ugliest manifestations; while the introduction of alternative sexual imagery actually generalizes and diversifies its incitement. Neither strategy challenges the sexual régime itself: its form, its logic, its code, its mode of production of truth, knowledge, pleasure, need, people, practices and sexuality, as a "complex political technology"<sup>48</sup> administering life (of both individuals and the species) through the subjugation of bodies (under the sign of sex) and the control of population.<sup>49</sup>

Patriarchy requires such a régime and thrives on sexual incitement: on the identification of self with sex, sex with pleasure and pleasure with potency (dominance and submission). For sex, the possession of a penis, is patriarchy's only excuse; the sign and symptom of men's domination of women. It must therefore be constantly called-forth as evidence of the régime and of the legitimacy, by right or by might, of its rule. The real penis, however, is hardly a symbol of power. It is fragile and vulnerable, and compared with the sex organs of women which bring forth new life and feed it, scarcely an indicator of strength or superiority. So the real penis (like real women) does not feature in the mythology of Man. It is not the penis which is objectified and fetishized in our culture, but the phallus, symbol of the power which possession of the penis confers on men. The real penis does not appear in the world-viewed lest its truth be revealed and the alibi of male-supremacy be disclosed for the fraud that it is.

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The real penis is not present to the world which men rule in its name despite the fact that the whole world designates in its absence. Masculinity therefore is not constructed on the basis of men's *real* identity and difference as located in the real penis but on an *ideal* difference constituted most essentially in the cultural differentiation of Man from his Other; from that which lacks the (elusive) penis and is on that account declared to be "ontologically lacking". Masculinity, under patriarchy, needs an Other from which a Man can distinguish himself; for masculinity resides completely in what *she*, femininity, is not. Since real women do not designate Man and his genitals as their "natural" superior, Man is obliged to construct an Other that does. The sexual régime, what Gayle Rubin has called the sex-gender system,<sup>50</sup> by which male and female are differentiated by sex and *identified* with that sexual differentiation in both discourse and practice, is the mechanism by which patriarchy i.e. male-subjectivity creates its Other precisely to designate itself as its superior: its creator-spectator-owner-judge.

We must not think therefore that by saying yes to sex we say no to power. For it is just this "agency of sex we must break from":<sup>51</sup>

If everyone is led, by this controlled structuration to confuse himself with his own sexual status, it is only to resign his sex the more easily (that is, the erogenous differentiation of his own body) to the sexual segregation that is one of the political and ideological foundations of the social order.<sup>52</sup>

The idea of sex, like the idea of Reason or Science, makes it possible for us to evade what gives power power i.e. the very hegemony of a discourse: "the way it passes for truth and . . . the way its premises and logic are taken for granted".<sup>53</sup> We should aim at *desexualization* of pleasure, bodies, persons, relations, needs and not at sexual specificity. "If female sexuality is now inhibited" as some have argued who oppose Woman Against Pornography because they seem to be also against "sex", "male sexuality is driven and cannot serve as a model".<sup>54</sup> Repression is surely a relative term which presumes some norm both of what constitutes sex and what constitutes a "healthy" frequency or quality of sexual activity. Repression must, therefore, be demonstrated, not assumed, and should certainly not be measured against the yard-stick of male-sexuality, past or present, which like male-rationality and male-science is more an indicator of Man's/compulsive drive for power than an expression of his freedom.

No man is immune to the sexualization depicted in pornography; for pornography only makes explicit the differential structure of masculine-feminine produced elsewhere in our culture. Every man embodies the power celebrated and reproduced in pornography by which masculinity subjugates women; even he who chooses not to exercise it. For the woman walking behind you in the street does not know that; she fears and mistrusts you as much as she does the pornophile or the rapist you might well be. Sexual liberation, therefore, does not consist in the liberation *of* that sexuality which has been induced in us by the various mechanisms of patriarchal power, but our liberation *from* it. We must refuse the sexual codification of our identity, our pleasures, our

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frustrations and our freedoms; stop looking and appraising each other like commodities, "objects" of "desire"; and start presenting ourselves to the world and others in all our ambivalence and ambiguity. Rebellion, freedom, consists in the rejection of the code, "the austere monarchy of sex",<sup>55</sup> not its appropriation; in the upsurge of particular, localized *speech* — truths and knowledges "incapable of unanimity" — and not more public discourse combining the "absolutely explicit with the completely unspecific".<sup>56</sup> "When it comes to abolishing patriarchy the problem for men is not for them to create 'a new man', but on the contrary, to destroy that 'man' from whom, as males, we have *all* been created, and who, in one way or another, we have *all* reproduced."<sup>57</sup> Real men do need pornography, unfortunately; just as patriarchy needs real men. Our rejection of one, therefore, necessarily entails a rejection of the other two; they stand or fall together.

C.E.G.E.P. de l'Outaouais

### Notes

1. "Sexuality is a set of effects produced in bodies, behaviours and social relations by a certain deployment deriving from a complex political technology". Foucault 1980(a), p. 127. For a detailed discussion of discourse as an instrument of power, productive and constitutive of its objects, see the writings of Michel Foucault generally and Foucault 1980 (a) and (b) as this relates to sexuality.
2. Foucault 1980(a), p. 46.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
4. Baudrillard 1980, p. 99.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 93
6. Here I strengthen Baudrillard's suggestion that sexual segregation is "one of the key political and ideological foundations of our social order". Baudrillard 1980, p. 99.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
8. Reynaud, 1980, p. 10.
9. Berger speaking of the classical nude. Berger 1972, p. 54.
10. See Berger for a discussion of the criteria and conventions by which women have been judged as sights in the context of European oil painting. Berger 1971, p. 47.
11. See Berger 1971 for a discussion of oil-painting as the celebration of wealth and status.
12. See Baudrillard 1981 on the "object-become-a-sign".
13. See E. A. Kaplan 1983; as well as the work of Christian Metz, Laura Mulvey, Annette Michelson, Claire Johnston and Julia Kristeva in *Screen, Cahiers du Cinéma, Edinburgh Magazine* and other journals and collections.
14. Cavell 1979.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

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16. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
17. *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 11.09.83 (Le Monde section). My emphasis.
18. *The Penguin English Dictionary* 1965, p. 455.
19. Paraphrase of Barthes 1973, p. 84.
20. Baudrillard 1981, p. 93.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
22. "Professor Higgins is the Frankenstein of modelers, creating not an idol but an idolizer". Cavell 1979, p. 235.
23. Lévi-Strauss 1969. p. 24.
24. In Graves 1974, p. 131.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 130-131.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Baudrillard 1981. p. 94.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Reynaud 1981, p. 66.
30. "It is not very difficult to borrow the accessories of femininity; clothes, shoes, wigs, make-up, hair removers, and even padded bras, hormones, silicone, electrolysis or plastic surgery; man only has to use the same means as woman to become a 'real woman' . . . In fact the problem of the transvestite who does not want to be recognized as such, is not how to transform himself into a woman, but how to avoid overdoing it." Reynaud 1981, p. 27-28.
31. Baudrillard 1981, p. 94. See also Reynaud 1981, p. 21: " . . . when a woman takes off her pinafore she must be 'beautiful'; it is out of the question for her to be natural — she is supposed to be natural enough as it is. She must wear make-up, be deodorized, perfumed, shave her legs and armpits, put on stockings, high-heels, show her legs, emphasize her breasts, pull in her stomach, paint her nails, dye her hair, tame her hairstyle, pierce her ears, reduce her appetite and, without making a single clumsy gesture, or uttering one word too many, she must seem happy, dainty and original."
32. See Finn 1982(a), 1982(b).
33. See Small 1977 for an excellent discussion of how this objectifying attitude conditions our music as well as our pedagogy.
34. Finn 1982 (a), 1982(b).
35. Finn 1982(b), p. 165.
36. See Debord 1977.
37. Cavell 1979, p. 102.
38. See Griffin 1981.
39. See Reynaud 1981.
40. Cavell 1979, p. 85.
41. "I can only choose within the world I can *see* in the moral sense of 'see' which implies that clear vision is a result of moral imagination and moral effort." Murdoch 1970, p. 37. "As moral agents we have to try to see justly, to overcome prejudice, to avoid temptation and curb imagination, to direct reflection." (p. 40) Murdoch is the only ethical theorist I know in the philosophical pantheon to make *selfless attention to particular realities* central to the moral life and a necessary

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condition of goodness, knowledge and truth: the indispensable antidote to the natural enemies of goodness, "the fat relentless ego" and "personal fantasy". Murdoch goes so far as to providing us with that "ethics of seeing" which Susan Sontag calls for in her *On Photography*, Sontag 1973.

42. Berger 1971, p. 54.
  43. See Hollway 1981, who analyses the newspaper reports of Peter Sutcliffe's trial to show "men's collaboration with other men in the oppression of women", in that the trial "refused to recognize the way in which Sutcliffe's acts were an expression . . . of the construction of an aggressive masculine sexuality and of women as its objects. This 'cover-up' exonerates men in general even when one man is found guilty". (p. 33).
  44. See Sontag 1973 for a discussion of these structures as they relate to photography.
  45. Cavell 1979, p. 160.
  46. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
  47. Snito 1983, p. 41.
  48. Foucault 1980(a), p. 127.
  49. *Ibid.*, p. 139 ff.
  50. Rubin 1975.
  51. Foucault 1980(a), p. 157.
  52. Baudrillard 1981, p. 99.
  53. Hollway 1981, p. 33.
  54. Person 1980, p. 605.
  55. Foucault 1980(a), p. 159.
  56. Cavell's characterization of pornography. Cavell 1979, p. 55.
  57. Reynaud 1981, p. 15.
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