



STEREO-PORNO

*Take me to your room and fuck.
me. There is something indefinable in
your vocabulary, something left to be
desired.*

Philip Dick
The Schizos' Ball

Turning everything into reality
Jimmy Cliff

The *trompe l'oeil* removes a dimension from real space, and this accounts for its seduction. Pornography by contrast adds a dimension to the space of sex, it makes the latter more real than the real – and this accounts for its absence of seduction.

There is no need to search for the phantasies that haunt pornography (fetishisms, perversions, primal scenes, etc.), for they are barred by an excess of “reality.” Perhaps pornography is only an allegory, that is to say, a forcing of signs, a baroque enterprise of over-signification touching on the “grotesque” (literally, “grotesque” garden art added to a rocky nature as pornography adds the vividness of anatomical detail).

The obscenity itself burns and consumes its object. One sees from up close what one has never seen before; to one's good fortune, one has never seen one's genitals function from so close, nor for that matter, from so general a perspective. It is all too

true, too near to be true. And it is this that is fascinating, this excess of reality, this hyperreality of things. The only phantasy in pornography, if there is one, is thus not a phantasy of sex, but of the real, and its absorption into something other than the real, the hyperreal. Pornographic voyeurism is not a sexual voyeurism, but a voyeurism of representation and its perdition, a dizziness born of the loss of the scene and the irruption of the obscene.

Consequent to the anatomical zoom, the dimension of the real is abolished, the distance implied by the gaze gives way to an instantaneous, exacerbated representation, that of sex in its pure state, stripped not just of all seduction, but of its image's very potentiality. Sex so close that it merges with its own representation: the end of perspectival space, and therefore, that of the imaginary and of phantasy – end of the scene, end of an illusion.

Obscenity, however, is not pornography. Traditional obscenity still contains an element of transgression, provocation, or perversion. It plays on repression, with phantasies of violence. With sexual liberation this obscenity disappears: Marcuse's "repressive desublimation" goes this route (and even if it has not passed into general mores, the mythical triumph of release today, like that of repression yesterday, is total). The new obscenity, like the new philosophy (*la nouvelle philosophie*) arises on the burying grounds of the old, and has another meaning. It does not play with violent sex, sex with real stakes, but with sex neutralized by tolerance. Sex here is outrageously "rendered," but it is the rendering of something that has been removed. Pornography is its artificial synthesis, its ceremony but not its celebration. Something *neo* or *retro*, like those green spaces that substitute their chlorophyll effects for a defunct nature, and for this reason, partake of the same obscenity as pornography.

Modern unreality no longer implies the imaginary, it engages more reference, more truth, more exactitude – it consists in having everything pass into the absolute evidence of the real. As in hyperrealist paintings (the paintings of the "magic realists") where one can discern the grain of the face's skin, an unwonted microscopics that lacks even the charm of the uncanny. Hyperrealism is not surrealism, it is a vision that hunts down

seduction by means of visibility. One "gives you more." This is already true of colour in film or television. One gives you so much – colour, lustre, sex, all in high fidelity, and with all the accents (that's life!) – that you have nothing to add, that is to say, nothing to give in exchange. Absolute repression: by giving you *a little too much* one takes away everything. Beware of what has been so well "rendered," when it is being returned to you without you ever having given it!

A bewildering, claustrophobic and obscene image, that of Japanese quadrophonics: an ideally conditioned room, fantastic technique, music in four dimensions, not just the three of the enviroing space, but a fourth, visceral dimension of internal space. The technical delirium of the perfect restitution of music (Bach, Monteverdi, Mozart!) *that has never existed*, that no one has ever heard, and that was not meant to be heard like this. Moreover, one does not "hear" it, for the distance that allows one to *bear* music, at a concert or somewhere else, is abolished. Instead it permeates one from all sides; there is no longer any musical space; it is the simulation of a total environment that dispossesses one of even the minimal analytic perception constitutive of music's *charm*. The Japanese have simple-mindedly, and in complete good faith, confused the real with the greatest number of dimensions possible. If they could construct hexaphonics, they would do it. Now, it is by this fourth dimension which they have added to music, that they castrate you of all *musical* pleasure. Something else fascinates (but no longer seduces) you: technical perfection, "high fidelity," which is just as obsessive and puritanical as the other, conjugal fidelity. This time, however, one no longer even knows what object it is faithful to, for no one knows where the real begins or ends, nor understands, therefore, the fever of perfectibility that persists in the real's reproduction.

Technique in this sense digs its own grave. For at the same time that it perfects the means of synthesis, it deepens the criteria of analysis and definition to such an extent that total faithfulness, exhaustiveness as regards the real becomes forever impossible. The real becomes a vertiginous phantasy of exactitude lost in the infinitesimal.

In comparison with, for example, the *trompe-l'oeil*, which

saves on one dimension, "normal" three-dimensional space is already debased and impoverished *by virtue of an excess of means* (all that is real, or wants to be real, constitutes a debasement of this type). Quadrophonics, hyperstereo, or hifi constitute a conclusive debasement.

Pornography is the quadrophonics of sex. It adds a third and fourth track to the sexual act. It is the hallucination of detail that rules. Science has already habituated us to this microscopics, this excess of the real in its microscopic detail, this voyeurism of exactitude – a close-up of the invisible structures of the cell – to this notion of an inexorable truth that can no longer be measured with reference to the play of appearances, and that can only be revealed by a sophisticated technical apparatus. End of the secret.

What else does pornography do, in its sham vision, than reveal the inexorable, microscopic truth of sex? It is directly descended from a metaphysics that supposes the phantasy of a hidden truth and its revelation, the phantasy of "repressed" energy and its *production* – on the obscene scene of the real. Thus the impasse of enlightened thought when asked, should one censure pornography and choose a well-tempered repression? There can be no definitive response in the affirmative, for pornography has reason on its side; it is part of the devastation of the real, of the insane illusion of the real and its objective "liberation." One cannot liberate the productive forces without wanting to "liberate" sex in its brute function; they are both equally obscene. The realist corruption of sex, the productivist corruption of labour – same symptoms, same combat.

The equivalent of the conveyor belt here, is the Japanese vaginal cyclorama – it outdoes any strip-tease. Prostitutes, their thighs open, sitting on the edge of a platform, Japanese workers in their shirt-sleeves (it is a popular spectacle), permitted to shove their noses up to their eyeballs within the woman's vagina in order to see, to see better – but what? They clamber over each other in order to gain access, and all the while the prostitutes speak to them gently, or rebuke them sharply for the sake of form. The rest of the spectacle, the flagellations, the reciprocal masturbation and traditional strip-tease, pales before this moment of absolute obscenity, this moment of visual voracity that

goes far beyond sexual possession. A sublime pornography: if they could do it, these guys would be swallowed up whole within the prostitute. An exaltation with death? Perhaps, but at the same time they are comparing and commenting on the respective vaginas in mortal seriousness, without ever smiling or breaking out in laughter, and without ever trying to touch – except when playing by the rules. No lewdness, but an extremely serious, infantile act borne of an undivided fascination with the mirror of the female organ, like Narcissus' fascination with his own image. Beyond the conventional idealism of the strip-tease (perhaps there might even be some seduction here), pornography at its most sublime reverses itself into a purified obscenity, an obscenity that is purer, deeper, more visceral. But why stop with nudity, or the genitalia? If the obscene is a matter of representation and not of sex, it must explore the very interior of the body and the viscera. Who knows what profound pleasure is to be found in the visual dismemberment of mucous membranes and smooth muscles? Our pornography still retains a restricted definition. Obscenity has an unlimited future.

But take heed, it is not a matter of the deepening of a drive; what is involved is an *orgy of realism*, an orgy of *production*. A rage (perhaps also a drive, but one that substitutes itself for all the others) to summon everything before the jurisdiction of signs. Let everything be rendered in the light of the sign, in the light of a visible energy. Let all speech be liberated and proclaim desire. We are reveling in this liberalization, which, in fact, simply marks the growing progress of obscenity. All that is hidden and still enjoys a forbidden status, will be unearthed, rendered to speech and made to bow before the facts. The real is growing ever larger, some day the entire universe will be real, and when the real is universal, there will be death.

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Pornographic simulation: nudity is never anything but an extra sign. Nudity veiled by clothing functions as a secret, ambivalent referent. Unveiled, it surfaces as a sign and returns to the circulation of signs: nudity de-sign. The same occurs with hard core and blue porn: the sexual organ, whether erect or

open wide is just another sign in the hypersexual panoply. Phallus-design. The more one advances willy-nilly in sex's veracity, in the exposure of its workings, the more immersed one becomes in the accumulation of signs, and the more enclosed one becomes in the endless over-signification of a real that no longer exists, and of a body that never existed. Our entire body culture, with its concern for the "expression" of the body's "desires," for the stereophonics of desire, is a culture of irredeemable monstrosity and obscenity.

Hegel: "Just as when speaking of the exteriority of the human body, we said that its entire surface, in contrast to that of the animal world, reveals the presence and pulsation of the heart, we say of art that it has as its task to create in such a way that at all points of its surface the phenomenal, the appearance becomes an eye, the seat of the soul, rendering itself visible to the spirit." There is, therefore, never any nudity, never any nude body that is simply nude; there is never just a body. It is like the Indian said when the white man asked him why he ran around naked: "For me, it is all face." In a non-fetishistic culture (one that does not fetishize nudity as objective truth) the body is not, as in our own, opposed to the face, conceived as alone rich in expression and endowed with "eyes": it is itself a face, and looks at you. It is therefore not obscene, that is to say, made to be seen nude. It *cannot* be seen nude, no more than the face can for us, for the body is – and is only – a symbolic veil; and it is by way of this play of veils, which, literally, abolishes the body "as such," that seduction occurs. This is where seduction is at play and not in the tearing away of the veil in the name of some manifestation of truth or desire.

The indistinction of face and body in a total culture of appearances – the distinction between face and body in a culture of meaning (the body here becomes monstrously *visible*, it becomes the sign of a monster called desire) – then the total triumph in pornography of the obscene body, to the point where the face is effaced. The erotic models are faceless, the actors are neither beautiful, ugly, or expressive; functional nudity effaces everything in the "spectacularity" of sex. Certain films are no more than visceral sound-effects of a coital close-up; even the body disappears, dispersed amongst oversize, par-

tial objects. Whatever the face, it remains inappropriate, for it breaks the obscenity and reintroduces meaning where everything aspires to abolish it in sexual excess and a nihilistic vertigo.

At the end of this terrorist debasement, where the body (and its "desire") are made to yield to the evidence, appearances no longer have any secret. A culture of the desublimation of appearances: everything is materialized in accord with the most objective categories. A pornographic culture *par excellence*; one that pursues the workings of the real at all times and in all places. A pornographic culture with its ideology of the concrete, of facticity and use, and its concern with the preeminence of use value, the material infrastructure of things, and the body as the material infrastructure of desire. A one-dimensional culture that exalts everything in the "concreteness of production" or of pleasure – unlimited mechanical labour or copulation. What is obscene about this world is that nothing is left to appearances, or to chance. Everything is a visible, necessary sign. Like those dolls, adorned with genitalia, that talk, pee, and will one day make love. And the little girl's reaction: "My little sister, she knows how to do that too. Can't you give me a real one?"



From the discourse of labour to the discourse of sex, from the discourse of productive forces to that of drives, one finds the same ultimatum, that of *pro-duction* in the literal sense of the term. Its original meaning, in fact, was not to fabricate, but to render visible or make appear. Sex is produced like one produces a document, or as one says of an actor that he performs (*se produit*) on stage.

To produce is to materialize by force what belongs to another order, that of the secret and of seduction. Seduction is, at all times and in all places, opposed to production. Seduction removes something from the order of the visible, while production constructs everything in full view, be it an object, a number or concept.

Everything is to be produced, everything is to be legible, everything is to become real, visible, accountable; everything is to be transcribed in relations of force, systems of concepts

or measurable energy; everything is to be said, accumulated, indexed and recorded. This is sex as it exists in pornography, but more generally, this is the enterprise of our entire culture, whose natural condition is obscene: a culture of monstration, of demonstration, of productive monstrosity.

No seduction here, nor in pornography, given the abrupt production of sexual acts, and the ferocity of pleasure in its immediacy. There is nothing seductive about bodies traversed by a gaze literally sucked in by a vacuum of transparency; nor can there be even a hint of seduction within the universe of production, where a principle of transparency governs the forces belonging to the world of visible, calculable phenomena – objects, machines, sexual acts, or the gross national product.



The insoluble equivocalness of pornography: it puts an end to all seduction *via sex*, but at the same time it puts an end to *sex* via the accumulation of the signs of sex. Both triumphant parody and simulated agony – there lies its ambiguity. In a sense, pornography is true: it owes its truth to a system of sexual dissuasion by hallucination, dissuasion of the real by the hyper-real, and of the body by its forced materialization.

Pornography is usually faulted for two reasons – for manipulating sex in order to defuse the class struggle (always the old “mystified consciousness”) and for corrupting sex (the good, true sex, the sex to be liberated, the sex to be considered amongst our natural rights) by its commodification. Pornography, then, is said to mask either the truth of capital and the infrastructure, or that of sex and desire. But in fact pornography does not mask anything (yes, that is indeed the case). It is not an ideology, i.e., it does not hide some truth; it is a simulacrum, i.e., it is a truth effect that hides the truth’s non-existence.

Pornography says: there must be good sex somewhere, for I am its caricature. In its grotesque obscenity, it attempts to save sex’s truth and provide the faltering sexual model with some credibility. Now, the whole question is whether good sex exists, or whether, quite simply, sex exists, somewhere – sex as

the body's ideal use value, sex as possible pleasures which can and must be "liberated." It is the same question demanded of political economy: is there "good" value, an ideal use value beyond exchange value understood as the inhuman abstraction of capital – an ideal value of goods or social relations which can and must be "liberated"?