Making Love Alone: Videocentrism and the Case of Modern Pornography

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To understand pornography, one must understand the conflicting compulsions that create it. Pornography is a clue to more fundamental forces of modernity and their consequences. Civilizational expressions reveal the world of a people: what they value, how they think, what they conceive and perceive (Gebser 1985; Gadamer 1975; Giedion 1962; Kepes 1944; Kilpatrick 1961; Sapir 1949; Gibson 1950, 1962; Hall 1966, 1976; Geertz 1973; Kramer 1992a, 1992b). Transactional psychology demonstrates that experience changes how a person "sees," that humans learn how to perceive, as for instance when one learns to see/recognize camouflage and optical distortion, and adjust accordingly (Gibson 1962; Kilpatrick 1961; Berkeley 1708). In this way, pornography is changing our world. Like other civilizational expressions such as architecture, clothing, proxemics, philosophies, sciences, arts and religions, pornography manifests the pre-dominant mode of awareness, the phenomenological attitude of its creator(s) and the community that consumes and resonates with it (Wellek 1963; Barthes 1964; Dufrenne 1964; Poulet 1971; Ingarden 1965; Doubrovsky 1967; Husserl 1970; Heidegger 1971; Gadamer 1975).

There is no sense in claiming that something exists outside of direct, personal experience. Even a suspicion must be directly experienced to be meaningful. The fundamental attitude with which one turns toward a phenomenon will determine its sense. Sense or meaning is identical to perception. Sense perception is the result of orientation in accord with one's prejudices (limitations and abilities), metaphysical and otherwise. Thus, two people may undertake to present explicit sexuality. One may see/ depict pornography, while the other sees/depicts erotica, or something else. The difference between the two modes of expression (and thus their

The phallocentric bias is also evident on shows that have a master of ceremonies in the prime time and late night genres, such as Ed Sullivan on "The Ed Sullivan Show" and "The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson" (which included frequent allusions to ex-wives as a staple source of monologue material and as lib shows). A male is nearly always in charge, even in children's programming and advertising, such as Mister Rogers on "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," Kermit (certainly not Miss Piggy) on "The Muppet Show" and "Sesame Street," Lee Iacocca in Chrysler ads and endless local and national ads staring the male owners of businesses. The patriarch dispenses wisdom, control, guidance. This extends to news anchoring, game and dance show hosting and religious programming as well.

To be a hero, free, wise and strong, is to not change diapers, buy groceries or wash dishes. The hero's very name often equates the character with a semantic correspondence between masculinity and the use of deadly force, as illustrated by Mannix, Peter Gunn, Remington Steele, Cannon, Baretta, Magnum, the Rifleman, Crockett, and so on. A hero's time is much too valuable for domestic concerns. Meanwhile, with very few exceptions, powerful independent women are usually portrayed as lovable freaks in utterly fantastic circumstances, including "I Dream of Jeannie," "Bewitched," "The Flying Nun," "The Girl with Something Extra," "Wonder Woman," "Beauty and the Beast," "Mork and Mindy" and "The Ghost and Mrs. Muir," or as ludicrous buffoons fumbling from one "sassy antic" to another, as on "I Love Lucy," "Rhoda," and "Laverne and Shirley." Women are usually portrayed as rather dim, yet harmless, innocents who must band together for companionship, as on "Green Acres," " Petticoat Junction," "Designing Women," "Golden Girls" and so on. It must be noted that this phallocentric trend spans the entire history of American mass media and includes all genres. All of these (and many other) shows represent great commercial success, with some properly labeled "smash hits," generating the largest audiences in human his-
tory—audiences of both sexes and all ages. Furthermore, the practice of syndication maintains the circulation of this cultural bias for future generations, possibly retarding the social evolution of collective values.

Pornography, as perhaps the most extreme expression of phallocentrism, neglects the possible consequences of sexual relations. The isolated consumer of pornography represents the implosion of ego hypertrophy (ideализm/perfectionism). Pornographic ejaculation via masturbation is efficiently convenient and utterly sterile—far removed from any sacral meaning or reciprocity. As a transcending act, the subject objectifies himself with reference to his penis as a “love tool,” “screw,” “ramrod,” “joy stick,” “gearshift,” and so on. By stark contrast, erotica emphasizes a fruitful relationship with an authentic Other (subject), which is often expressed as magical spirituality (as in the Kamasutra). Romanticism has a spiritual dimension. Pornography is not romantic. Pornography expresses a patriarchal desire for power/domination and also an intense isolation that results from a drive for total control.

Pornography is part of a modern Western attempt to cope with eros, to manage it by materially reducing it to brute behavior. Such managerial mentality that marks the post-Renaissance West is, as Nietzsche, Baudelaire and Freud understood, doomed in its attempts to control the powerful forces of the feminine. Consequently, by demonizing and humiliating women, the modern/masculine manages only to suppress this force, so that it emerges as various pathologies, such as graphic pornography. The feminine becomes an enemy to be purged, segregated, beaten and exercised. Pornography offers a female object that is completely powerless. Masturbatory interaction with a video or magazine image is not complicated by the presence of a potentially troublesome Other. Unlike the actual rape of an authentic Other (mind/subject), the image offers absolutely no resistance: potential, physical, legal or any other kind, such as guilt. Pornography completes the process of lobotomization or deminding. The pornographic image has no consciousness (is not a subject), which means that the image is not a “real” person. Therefore, the viewer’s experience is not characterized by any sense of conscience or subjective/personal responsibility. Pornography is uniquely post-Cartesian (modern). The consumer and the content of pornography are simultaneously demonized (objectified). Video images are absolutely (mindlessly) obedient. Pornography is merely a technological expression of this more fundamental modern attitude that motivates the effort of masculine transcendence to overcome feminine resuscitation (Mickunas 1990).

Pornography is an attempt to civilize (technologize) the wilderness—human nature—to grasp, possess and control it. As it is exported and copied around the globe, it manifests a form of cultural imperialism, for with it goes not only a technological imperative to enhance presence, but also a way of seeing the sexed self, sexual relationships, gender relation-

ships, voyeurism and beauty. Pornography reorients fantasies and expectations. The drive for ever greater realism manifests the modern metaphysics of presence (logocentrism) expressed videocentrically (Kramer 1992a; 1992b; 1992c; 1998). Representing something gives control over it. Pornography exemplifies modern perspectivism manifested as visual spatialization/rationalization. Seeing is the new Truth (empiricism). The new Truth is immediate, graphic and powerful. Facts overwhelm knowledge (of their relationships). Facts are “objective”‘; they are not the product of judgment, and, therefore, they are amoral.

Pornography is one of the great discontents of masculinization, perspectival civilization (meaning to be cultivated); it is a technologically enhanced war against Man’s sexual drives and the perceived source of them—Woman. The resulting tension leads to guilt, shame, anxiety and violence (pornography)—not eros. The former is manifested as violent and directed lust (a very selfish emotion), the latter as a nebulous passion that annihilates the self—making “one” invisible within the orgiastic chaos.

The pornographic cultural milieu expresses the strident efforts of individualism to possess the Other as personal property—total conquest and remote control in slow motion, freeze frame, fast forward and reverse. The modern epistemology constitutes a fetish of fixation itself, a permanent present purified of ambiguity, transcendentally removed from space and time. The burning desire of the modern attitude is for eternal youth/beauty, eternal bliss and total privatized, yet value-free, isolation—the hyperreal (Baudrillard 1983).

The abstract realm of the hyperreal is the masturbatory paradise of modern technological alienation. Complex and confusing reality is rejected in favor of total and efficient control—with surround-sound and digital high-definition multidimensionality. The wilderness of space and time is conquered by telecommunications. This is why pornography is so popular; the modern craves it. Pornography expresses the hypertrophic pursuit of immediate gratification, performance (power) on command.

The qualitatively different attitudes expressed by pornography and erotica are self-evident. Pornography isolates, purifies and insulates the viewer from what happens behind the cameras. Its video-centered realism is the great delusion, for videotape leads to the belief that what is seen with the eyes is “natural,” “objective,” “value-free.” The danger of video-centeredness is that it fragments reality, offering only a tiny slice of the world (perspectivism) as fait accompli, and these contextless data are confused with truth.

**MODERN PORNOGRAPHY: DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL TRENDS**

If nothing else, pornography is a commodity that enjoys a huge market demand. In The Beauty Myth, Naomi Wolf reveals that pornography is
the biggest media category (1991, 79). Estimates show that globally pornography generates over $7 billion a year. This amount is more than that generated by the worldwide nonpornographic commercial film and music industries combined. The pornographic motion picture industry (both video and film) grosses close to $400 million a year in the United States alone. Every month over 18 million men in the United States purchase nearly 200 different pornographic magazines, generating about half a billion dollars a year (Wolf 1991, 79). Clearly, pornography is a profitable industry, and the rates of consumption indicate that it is anything but culturally or economically marginal.

The typical age of the “adult” female performer suggests that the Lolita Complex (a fetish for very young females), which permeates practically all commercial media (Wolf 1991), totally dominates pornographic media images. Pornographers often hire performers in their late teens and dress them to look even younger (U.S. Department of Justice 1986, 855). Another aspect of the industry, actual child pornography, is often described by experts as a burgeoning “cottage industry,” where parents sometimes appear in the movies with their own children (U.S. Department of Justice, 1986, 405–25; Rush 1980, 71). The United States is the largest consumer of child pornography in the world (U.S. Department of Justice 1986, 674).

Florence Rush describes this “Lolita” obsession as an issue of power: “I do not think it is an accident that the idea of femininity is fast becoming the infantilized woman. Men are attracted to a woman who has the helplessness of a child. . . . Today our society either makes the child look like a woman or the woman look like a child” (1980, 70).

The woman-child syndrome is quite expressly at variance with ideals of beauty that were common not long ago, such as Mae West, Marilyn Monroe and Sophia Loren. Nicolas Bornoff compares the classical Asian beauty with her modernized counterpart thus:

Ideally, according to Chinese Tang dynasty canons of beauty, she was plump and also wore make-up. She powdered her face an immaculate full-moon white, rouged her chubby cheeks and colored her lips with a paste made from brilliant red safflower. With two large round dots of charcoal gray just above where her eyebrows would have been she not plucked them out, the rosy and diminutive Heian belle would fare none too well as a modern contestant for Miss Japan. (1991, 119)

The equation of “innocence” and passivity with inexperience (the fetish for the eternal virginal), physically presented as a girlish stature, is embodied by beauty icons. Stuart Ewen (1988) and Judith Williamson (1986) argue that such images generate a “body politic” that has led to an epidemic of anorexia and the overall anxiety about aging.

The message is simple: To be lovely, one must be subservient and controllable, a sex toy, not an equal partner. The feminine in “full bloom,” like the fertility figure of the Venus of Willendorf, seems frightening to the modern male, who attempts to manage eros by containment or banishment (the desire for the prepubescent). Sexual relations with mature women raise the specter of pregnancy and domestic responsibilities (maturity)—the ultimate enemy of the highest value to the modern, individual freedom. Hence, the omnipresent icon of the cowboy-warrior, the social isolate who experiences pleasure strictly at his convenience and with “no strings” attached, is admired and loved (Kramer 1988). This is very different from the presensual man’s role, even in polygamous social arrangements.

In Taiwan, in 1983–84, martial law under the Kuomintang was still in effect. Sexually explicit media content was largely restricted. However, pirate pornography from Japan was very common. Portable book stalls run by street merchants during the day and in the mobile “night markets” appeared to sell only nonpornographic material. Innocuous looking books on computer programming or general fiction would have inserts of photographs of usually young, nude, Caucasian women. Books that had serial photographs of nude women, ostensibly for figure studies in art, were popular with young men. With the lifting of martial law on July 14, 1987, a fledgling pornography industry sprang to life. Since then, several publications mimicking Japanese and American titles such as Playboy have become prevalent, while the movie industry has altered its content to become more explicit, including some nudity.

In Britain, the pornographic magazine industry grosses £500 million (approximately 750 million U.S. dollars) a year (Wolf 1991, 79). Twenty million copies are sold annually at about £2 to £3 (about $3.20 to $4.80) each. In Sweden, half a million men purchase pornographic magazines each week. According to Wolf, by 1985, 13.6 million pornographic magazines were sold by the largest distributors from corner kiosks, and, by 1983, every fourth video rented in Sweden was pornographic (1991, 79). In Canada, the most widely read magazines are Playboy and Penthouse. By comparison, pornography makes up half of all video sales in Italy.

Meanwhile, in countries that typically have more of a collectivistic rather than an individualistic tendency, pornography is quickly taking root along with modernization. Reform, Hungary’s revealing named first tabloid, read by one in ten Hungarians, has a topless or bottomless model on each page. In 1987, Cuba and Bulgaria held beauty contests, and the following year the Republic of China sent a contestant to the Miss Universe pageant. In 1988, the first Miss Moscow competition was held. In 1990, shipments of outdated women’s glamour magazines and copies of Playboy began to flow into the Soviet bloc (Wolf 1991, 89).

Today, Asian pornography reflects trends first established in the United States and Europe. This mimicking is mostly in terms of novel uses of
consumer telecommunications technology, such as VCRs and camcorders, for voyeuristic purposes. More recent examples also include computer and telephone sex, which are not yet heavily promoted in Japan, Thailand, the Philippines or Hong Kong. A recent development in Japanese voyeurism is a service that involves renting a nude model by the minute to pose for amateur videographers.

Furthermore, the sex-slave trade is probably best organized and tolerated in Japan. A post-colonial callousness is manifested, as poor neighboring countries are seen as "nothing other than gigantic brothels" (Bornoff 1991, 857). The slave trade of the 1990s is operated by "talent agencies" that are fronts for crime syndicates in various countries. These syndicates have international agreements with the Japanese yakuza (the infamous criminal organization) to create what Bornoff refers to as a "lucreative priapic co-prosperity sphere" (1991, 354).

THE EROTIC ATTITUDE: THE FLOATING WORLD

In order to clearly demarcate modern pornography and premodern eroticism, it is necessary to briefly assess the classical world. Premodern Asian eroticism is expressed by such texts as Records of the Bedchamber by the Taoist sage Liu Ching, which details how to harmonize with a woman by rubbing and caressing her organs to get her yin flowing, and Tung Hsuan's Six Ways of Penetration. These are basically medical books concerned with longevity and rejuvenation of vigor. According to these ancient texts, sex is healthy; indeed, done properly, it has healing benefits. Such texts strongly influenced the attitudes of the "idyllic" world of the Heian era in Japan, which copied the world of the Chinese Tang Dynasty (618–906). This era (794–1185), which is comparable to Camelot in the Western imagination, still engenders a nostalgic sense of true affection and a gentle beauty that depicts humans as extensions of cosmic forces. This is, of course, the opposite of the current modern attitude, which characterizes the technological world as an extension of transcending human power.

The predominant classical Japanese aesthetic is signified by an almost untranslatable phrase, monoo na aware, which harbors strong Buddhist existential overtones. Aware expresses a sense of pathos and beauty. It connotes a sort of "gentle melancholy" that results from calm reflection on the beautiful, yet fleeting, nature of the world. Thus, Chinese poets often refer to the plum blossom, while the Japanese favor the annual blossoming of the cherry as metaphors for the brilliant, but fast-fading, splendor of youthful vibrancy and beauty. This attitude is much more "quiet" than the central issue of sublimity in Western romanticism, which expresses power as much as beauty. It is also characterized by indirectness and patience expressed by the use of translucent screens that encourage voyeurism without a direct gaze.

Video centricism and Modern Pornography

Only one example of romantic Heian erotic iconography exists. The Koshidagaki-zoshi scroll painting of sixteen frames depicts the amorous "exertions" of a couple in a very graphic way. But the Heian attitude persisted in the Japanese imagination and was expressed 600 years later in the great woodblock prints depicting the fabled "floating world," the demi-monde in the Yoshi marshlands on Edo's northern boundary. Erotic novels of this floating world, known as ukiyo-zoshi, appeared along with Hishikawa Moronobu's (1618–94) woodblock prints of the pleasure quarters, brothels and teahouses of the ukiyo. Unlike the Western masters, who dwelled on Biblical subjects and idealized neoclassical nudes, the great Heian and Edo artists were not averse to depicting copulating couples, which they saw as perfectly natural.

Among the most famous books that tell the stories of the pleasure quarters, brothel lore and tales of courtesans are Fujimoto Kizan's Great Mirror of the Yoshiwara and Ihara Saikaku's Life of an Amorous Man (1682). These stories, along with the works of the great Tang poets of China (Tu Fu 712–70 and Li Po 701–62), demonstrate that romance is deeply embedded in these cultural traditions. Often the theme is love lost, leading to tragic suicide. These artists' expressions embody a world of "superficial daze and ritualized pleasure" populated with rogues, scheming courtesans, slumming samurai, horny nuns, ludicrous fops and fay spendthrifts. The floating world attracted samurai and monks, who wore commoners' clothing to enter the pleasure quarters forbidden to their class and cloth (Bornoff 1991, 175–76).

The history of Japanese eroticism dates back to prehistoric fertility cults and festivals (which only vanished from rural village life in the mid 1950s, primarily because the youth have moved to urban centers) (Bornoff 1991, 100). This change from a rural to an urban milieu leads to a fragmented and isolationistic life that is very different from village life. Modern corporate feudalism, with its demand for a highly mobile and regimented work force, now dominates Japanese life. However, it is believed that in a few isolated villages, the peasant custom of yobai ("night creeping") is still practiced today, as it was in Yin Dynasty China (as early as 1500 B.C.). Bornoff (1991) refers to this event as a "ritual springtime romp" of which there are several reported versions. One version suggests that after their first menstruation, girls would "often" roam their villages "to offer themselves to local youth" (Bornoff 1991, 125). In rural Japan, women started reproductive activity as soon as possible. In fact, in Heian times, women who remained virgins for very long after puberty were suspected of being possessed by evil spirits.

Another version of yobai has it that all the village bachelors gather at the headman's home for a party (Bornoff 1991, 137). After the party, the youths leave in groups to creep quietly (no carousing allowed) around the dark village. When they arrive outside a house where a young girl lives,
they play *janken-pon* (scissors-paper-rock). The winner then enters the house where the girl has expectantly left her door open, not knowing who will join her. Meanwhile, the rest of the group makes its way to the next house.

This behavior has the tacit sanction of the parents, who may have found their mates in the same way. In the typical Japanese style of saving face by pretending (*tatemae* as opposed to *honne* or the true self or feelings), parents feign ignorance despite the fact that rooms are separated by thin partitions. It must be noted that although marital relationships sometimes emerge from such liaisons, this tradition serves more as a ritual "deflation" than a process of mate selection.

Many stories tell of girls who have enjoyed, or endured, more than one nocturnal visitor. Until quite recently, girls who were not thus visited by the "ripe old age of seventeen" were ritually "delflowered" by a Shinto priest wearing a wooden phallus or by an anonymous youth chosen by the parents. The anonymity of such sexual behavior is indicative of the general lack of importance of individualism and personality in this fast vanishing rural world. A sense of cosmic balance, rather than possession (even of self-identity), is an issue here. Such behavior is not an entertainment, but a necessity.

Reminiscent of ancient Greek Bacchanalia, rural Japanese peasants (the vast majority of the population until the Second World War) held orgies and phallic festivals (i.e., the *hibeta matsuri* and *utagaki*), which combined eating, drinking, merrymaking, parades of giant phalluses and sex. Put in proper perspective, the orgy turns out to be very appropriate for rural (more precisely preperceptual) communities, which are often extended families. With regard to this sense of unity, erologist Georges Bataille (1957) expresses what Algis Mickunas (1990) calls the feminine "descendent" (as opposed to the masculine "transcendent") attitude of a collectivistic tribal community where the individual is "obliterated by the group" (Bornoff 1991, 110). Bataille explains:

The orgy is the sacred aspect of eroticism, where human generation progresses beyond isolation to attain its fullest expression. Ultimately, the participants are lost in a confusing mass . . . . It is in fact a complete denial of the individual; it dictates equivalence between its participants . . . . The final significance of eroticism is fusion, the abolition of restrictions . . . . In the orgy, this object [of desire] becomes indistinguishable: sexual excitement herein is triggered by an exacerbated movement running contrary to habitual reserve. (1957, 27)

This is expressive of the preperceptual consciousness (attitude) that is exhibited by the *yobai* ritual (Gebser 1985). This fusion, which is the "essence of eroticism," is distinguished fundamentally from modern perspec-
itself expresses the modern perspectival obsession with making present what is absent—so banish the absent that ultimately leads to meaninglessness, the abolition of difference. Pornographic imaging is obscene in that it allows no ambiguity, no tolerance. It is fascist. Pornography dictates that everything must be violated to extreme, and only youth can exist. Excess to extremes becomes point-like. It is violent in depiction, not just in what is depicted.\[\]

The modern pornographic attitude is expressed well by Kaoru Kuroki (Fragrance Blacktree), the biggest porn star in Japan. Her tapes sell well despite, and also because of, the total lack of inhibitions that she expresses and that the cameras capture. Many Japanese men have complained that they find her "frightening," that her videos are "no good for masturbation" (Bornoff 1991, 423). This may seem strange since Kuroki, like many other arousing Japanese porno actresses, is also typically portrayed as being gang-raped, slapped, and generally humiliated. Her uniqueness is expressed by her "erratic" behavior during intercourse, which recalls the Asian view of women as having demonic tendencies, a belief that compelled the Heian courtiers to blacken their teeth so as to demonstrate their humanness and the Balinese to file off their canine teeth even today. This "demonic" aspect is manifested by her occasional self-assertiveness in her videos. It is this that bothers some of her viewers.

Because she is articulate, she appears on many TV chat shows and commercials and even is a spokesperson for a prestigious department store. Bornoff characterizes Kuroki as "Italy's Cicciliana, America's Doctor Ruth, and France's Brigitte Lahaye all rolled into one: social rebel, sex counselor and porno star turned thinker" (1991, 420). She sees herself as a modernizing liberator from social pressure, a champion of individualism and disinhibition. Although her parents are deeply disturbed by her profession, she rationalizes what she does as a declaration of independence.

Kuroki's attitude about what she does for a living is quite informative, for it illustrates the power of videocentrism (Kramer 1988; 1992a; 1992b) and the fundamental difference between modern pornography and classical erotica. Pornography is a celebration of the individual social isolate and self-indulgence. It also suggests the desensitization of not only the consuming viewers, but the producers as well. This may be an essential trait of industrialization, generally.

Of course, the commodification of lust is not a new thing. What is new, however, are the media used for presentation, which manifest a perspectival attitude. As Zillmann and Bryant point out (without adequate explanation):

The principal reason for the apparent revival of concerns about unregulated pornography is simply the new technology. In the old days, a privileged few could, dependent on one's view, enrich or compromise their erotic imagi-

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nations and experiences by reading about sexual engagements or by perusing drawings or paintings of such engagements. Nowadays, any conceivable sexual activity performed by others can be witnessed in living color and sound. The portrayal has "you-were-there" quality. In fact, video presentations are said to show sex that is "bigger than life" by closing in on the events in ways that go beyond the unarmed eye and ear. However, the social dimension of exposure to such super-otic representations of sex is probably more significant. Pornography has gone truly public. It reaches all people. The proliferation and distribution of pornographic materials are such that more and more children find access. Thanks to the new communication technology, pornography has become an affordable form of entertainment for all. (1989, xi)

Zillmann and Bryant wrongly reduce the availability, concerns about and affordability of pornography to sheer quantity. Demand develops before production can be sustained. Although they mention the qualitative difference between modern chemical (filmic) and electronic (video) representations from media of the "old days," they utterly fail to understand that this is not "simply" a technological change. There was a motive and an interest in developing such media before they came into existence. Telecommunications technologies are not naturally occurring phenomena. They are the consequences of the videocentric drive to presentate and stimulate. Zillmann and Bryant only touch on the fundamental issue when they recognize the new "super-otic," "bigger than life," "you-were-there," "living color" quality, missing the point that it is precisely this issue that central to any explanation of the explosive growth in pornography production/consumption worldwide. Deficient perspectival (pornographic) Man admits no limits to self-satisfaction. Thus, he is insatiable. He wants to see/consume everything and believes he has a transcendental right to do so. In order to justify this desire, deficient perspectival Man attempts a pseudo-rationalization via dialectical jurisprudence and the democratic tradition. This explains the widespread support for large quantities of high-quality product. "Quality" means exaggerated presencing—videocentric reduction of the world to physical stimuli and their magnification.

At issue is why there has been a shift from an erotic attitude to a pornographic one and what this fundamental change in attitude means. The fundamental nature of this change in attitude pervades all manner of life, not just graphic depictions of sexual behavior. A pornographic world is distinguished from an erotic existence by a cosmic separation (and therefore invention) of the subject from everything else. Perspectival modernity is essentially a world of the viewer, where everything else becomes a view for consumption, a disengaged drama.\[\] The modern looks upon the world as a play. Modern technologies are desired (rigorously pursued in research and consumption) because they enhance this distance, this purity. One can
watch without being touched. Responsibility and reciprocity are not a part of this vicarious world.

Concurrent with the explosive rise in demand for pornographic expression is a concern about a correspondent increase in violent content and its effects (Zillmann & Bryant 1984; Malamuth & Spiner 1980; Smith 1976). But the quality of the new pornographic vision is itself exaggerated and exaggerating (obscene). Separation of content from form wrongly presumes that the mode of presentation itself does not harbor any interest, motive or meaning. Videocentricism, the drive for ever greater visual (spatial) intrusion, such as measurement and other graphic simulations, manifests an essential characteristic (obsession) of the modern and his will to power (truth). Progress, for instance, can never achieve a goal, or it will self-contradict. Hence, it is by definition insatiable and beyond judgment, for there is no goal except continued progress itself (Kramer 1992a).

Everything in a pornographic world is overdetermined, exaggerated and obscene. An example is the propensity of the modern mentality, exhibited many times, to hunt another species to absolute extinction. Another example is the creation of ever more destructive weapons systems and their seemingly insatiable duplication. Yet another is the intolerant presupposition that endless economic expansion (development) is desirable. The singular reason for unbridled obscenity is the aggrandizement of the hypertrophic ego, which essentially distinguishes the modern perspectival human from other pre-, un- and aperspectival peoples (Gebser 1965). It even impacts on what it means to be "human." Egocentrism defines modernity and colors all physical and relational experience.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, production follows demand, and realistic renditions of sexual behavior have proven to be far more desirable than drawings and paintings. The new "highly motivated" iconography (with its emphasis on spatiality) panders to a logoscentric prejudice that is rapidly spreading worldwide along with the technologies that enhance the metaphysics of presence. This is not mere simulation as in classical mimesis, for simulation implies a strict demarcation between fantasy/unreality and the Real. Rather, the images in pornography are pathetic and signalic, not symbiotic (Jakobson 1958). At the pathetic (emotional or perhaps even instinctual-biological) level, there is no separation between the symbol and some reality for which it stands. A symbolic expression manifests a mode of being that is instrumental, that is to stand in for, to re-present or to simulate in a "secondary" manner a separate "primary" reality (Ong 1982, 26). Such symbolic expressions manifest a transcending consciousness, which is essentially patriarchal and signified by purity, ideality of law, detachment, vision, science and metaphysics.

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These new technologies manifest the fundamental value of the modern attitude to simulate natural processes as graphically as possible. As more energy and time are spent living with simulations, building the technologies and producing and consuming the simulations, the simulacrum (the total simulation of the physical world) becomes our reality. The consequent hyperreality is preferred because of its total manageability. Man becomes transcendent god, at once king of his new self-made domain (culture) and hopelessly alienated from anything not simulation. The simulacrum—a total replication—heralds the final defeat of nature at the hands of culture. Indeed, "nature" becomes a cultural concept that is defined as a binary opposite of artificial (Kramer 1992a). Everything, including "nature," is under transcendent control—domesticated. This is the universalis mathesis dreamed of by Bacon, Galileo and Descartes. This is the era of domesticated "wild" sex and prepackaged fantasy/fix. The wilderness of eros is brought under scrutiny by sharp focus, zoom and a host of "experts." Fantasy without mess on a cheap fifty-five-minute videocassette. What a marvel! What a modern convenience! Eros on demand and at several speeds, including slow motion and freeze frame! Pornography is a celebration of individuation and power, not eros, which submerges the individual in the surrender to ekstasis. Inherent in this process is the sense that the truth of the event is captured and rendered totally privatized, absolutely possessed.

Zillmann and Bryant (1982) have demonstrated that people repeatedly exposed to pornography exhibit a tendency labeled "depersonalization" or "callousness." Zillmann (1986, 155) reinforces this position by summarizing the available research about the consumption of pornography, stating that " Habitual male consumers of common pornography appear to be at greater risk of becoming sexually callous and sexually violent toward women than occasional male consumers." Pornography is a violation of eros and its attendant behavioral manifestations. As industrial societies manufacture and export these technologically high-quality pornographic materials, they also export an attitude that proclaims the new vision (the hyperreal) to be good, entertaining, desirable, practical, efficient, even necessary and, more important, in line with the pseudo-religious dogma of "development" and "progress." The attitude behind pornographic software springs from the same logoscentric obsession that drives the development and spread of new electronics hardware.

Magic identity is enhanced through modern technologies of presentation. When the viewer identifies with the perspective of a rapist, which predominates pornographic depictions, what results is a magical/subjective unity of excitement and motivation. Pornography is a catalyst for fantasy and anomia (Green & Mosher 1985; Pilotta 1992). The fantasy is no less real than physical sex, but it is essentially different. Pornography is not a marginal simulation. Pornography is excitatory on the level of magical
identity. In pornographic depictions, qualities—both quantitative physical (enlarged body parts, youthfulness, numbers of partners) and qualitative relational (subservient, incestuous)—are pushed to exaggerated levels as a constant infusion of animus to the fantasy work. Exaggeration is the essence of “obscenity.” With the emergence of photography and the electronic media, “vulgarity” is manifested by the sharpness and bluntness of imaging that outruns the imagination.

The mass consumption of such material magic (technologically facilitated identification) exposes a vast uniformity of impulse and motive. Identification and solitary interaction (with images) manifest the prerational power of seduction—the seduction of power. This is the essential force of the hyperreal videoconcentric prejudice (machine magic). The Other is first split into subjective mind (independent will) and behavioral object and then the subjective fragment is denied existence. This facilitates the denial of the Other's feelings and one's own responsibility vis-à-vis those feelings. Since only visual (behavioral/material) phenomena are granted the status of reality, ethics are avoided. Excitation is precisely what makes pornography popular, what drives demand for ever more individual control over the pleasure-producing experience. Pornography panders to the demand for control. To the modern mentality, control is pleasure. However, in the process of achieving total control, the authoritarian mind completely banishes the authenticity of the Other as an autonomously acting (possibly resisting) subject. Isolation is the final consequence.

NOTES

1. Already in 1707 and 1708, Berkeley was formulating his response to Descartes's *Dioptrics* (1637). In his famous work *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*, Berkeley borrows an argument from William Molyneux's work, which like Descartes's book is entitled *Dioptrics* (1692). This argument, which Berkeley used to refute Descartes's geometric explanation of sight, claims that distance, depth of field, cannot itself be seen. Elaborating on Molyneux's argument, Berkeley puts forth the theory that depth perception is constituted via the active mind's integration of all the senses. Depth is a synthetic phenomenon. The problem of depth perception is still debated. For instance, in many of his works, the preeminent neurologist-psychologist Karl Pribram has explored how a distorted (because the retina is actually a half-sphere, rather than a flat surface) two-dimensional image is perceived as having complex depth. The brain seems to integrate sensory data from all receptors to generate depth, or what Gibson calls visual (phenomenological) world, as distinguished from visual (retinal geometric) field. Memory from past experience (transactions with the world) also seems to play a role.

2. This compulsion to avoid maturity and domesticity is central to the modern phallocentric narrative. This narrative is expressed in countless television and film icons. In all of these narratives, women are portrayed as castrating enemies of freedom.

Videocentrism and Modern Pornography

3. I wish to thank Richiko Ikeda, Annette Sun-chee Aw and Yayoi Yoshizawa for helping me to acquire samples of Asian pornography used in the preparation of this chapter.

4. Another business exploitative of poor women is the booming sex-tour business, whereby Japanese salaried men qua business samurai take holidays appropriate for the current overworked and, by many accounts, sexually frustrated corporate warriors. Their R&F takes the form of kiusaeng tours. *Kiusaeng* is the Korean equivalent of the Japanese geisha. These "professional unmarried ladies" were part of the spoils of the Japanese colonization of the Korean peninsula at the end of the nineteenth century. Many Korean women were enslaved and shuttled between Japanese brothels in Southeast Asian ports. Today, the word *kiusaeng* is used by special tours to the various fleshpits of Asia. These tours are operated by the yakuza, Japan's infamous criminal organization. During the rise in economic power of the Japanese in the mid-1960s, these tours frequented the former colonial holdings of Seoul and Taipei. During the 1970s, prices in these places had risen, so the tours now favor the destitute destinations of Bangkok and Manila. Salaried men flock to these destinations for anywhere from three days to a week of cheap sex and booze. The general tenor of the situation is post-colonial arrogance, expressed by the phrase "raping foreign women with their money" (reporter for an Asahi newspaper quoted by Bornoif 1991, 350). Ever concerned for outward appearance, many Japanese are troubled by news documentaries in which these vacationers are described by the women, who are forced out of economic necessity to service them, as "sexual predators," "pigs," and "monsters" that act worse than Vietnam-era GIs. Some Japanese have attacked this business as a "sex invasion," stressing the analogy of warfare and the post-colonial mentality widely exhibited by brutish salaried men "without shame." Similar to clubs in Manila and Bangkok, there are establishments in Hawaii, Los Angeles and San Francisco that cater only to Japanese salariedmen. It is likely that these are owned and operated by either yakuza personnel or local criminal organizations in cooperation with the yakuza.

5. Mickunas (1990) offers an extensive tracing of the phenomenon of the dangerous "she-demon," which is "dirty" and beguiling; leading unsuspecting suitors into an intoxicating dissolution of the self. In Chinese tradition, the "she-demon" has the power to change into a fox, bewitch men and ghastly devour them. This ingestion implicates a resonant dissolution back into the feminine origin.

6. Mickunas (1990, 10) describes decendence thus:

The striving toward the release from selfhood is reflected in melting reverie, and various functions are regarded as means for the attainment of this dissolution, this melting: wine, dance, song; it is no accident that Dionysus is a divinity of wine, eroticism, and orgiastic reveries. The excitement brought about by wine and dance has a disruptive effect, leading to melting and indeed dissolution... In the grip of ekstasis the word rises to chant and the step to dance. The eros of Dionysus originates with dance, music, and reverie, and has an accepted reflective power of dissolution of personality, breakdown of cohesion. At the erotic level, every sign flows, breaks up, and leads on.

7. This is why the metaphor of dramatistics has now been elevated to the level of academic terminology by such scholars as Goffman and Garfinkle. The idea of
a participant observer, so much touted in ethnographic literature, and the related
opposition of emic versus etic perspectives articulated by Pike indicate a hopeless
confusion concerning the fundamentally incompatible attitudes manifested by each
antagonistic position—an antagonism that is a constant source of animus in the
human "sciences" today. To be a participant observer is to live a contradiction. It
also indicates the mistaken turn taken by the Schutzians away from the Husserlian
solution, which is to bracket such metaphysical gamesmanship in favor of the re-
alization that observation and participation are essentially integrated. Perspective
is a result of the attitude of the participant. There are no nonparticipants or non-
observers, only differing attitudes. The idea of a privileged perspective that casts
all the world as a drama, with the self as the sole audience member not following
a "script," is purely Cartesian. As Nietzsche succinctly put it, there is no truth only
perspectives.

8. Increasingly liberalized community standards have led to a shift in focus away
from nudity per se to behavior. Concern has focused on aggression, violence and
the use of animals and children in sexually explicit contents. Detective magazines
and "crime magazines," according to Dietz, Harry and Hazelwood (1986), gen-
erate monthly sales of over 1 million copies. These, plus more violent "adult only"
films, videos and magazines, frequently portray women being intimidated into sub-
missive roles by men threatening or enacting physical violence toward them. Like-
wise, Malamuth and Spiner (1980) found that many of the cartoons published in
Playboy and Penthouse depict sexual violence against women. In the introduction to
Take Back the Night, Laura Lederer (1980, 18) points out that until 1978 Hustler
magazine published a cartoon featuring "Chester the Molester," who regularly
moles a different young girl "using techniques like licking, kidnapping, and
assault."

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IDEALS OF FEMININE BEAUTY
Philosophical, Social, and Cultural Dimensions

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Contributions in Women's Studies,
Number 141

GREENWOOD PRESS
Westport, Connecticut • London
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ideals of feminine beauty : philosophical, social, and cultural dimensions / edited by Karen A. Callaghan.
  p. cm.—(Contributions in women’s studies, ISSN 0147-104X ; no. 141)
  Includes bibliographical references and index.
  ISBN 0-313-26136-9 (alk. paper)
  1. Feminine beauty (Aesthetics)  2. Femininity (Psychology)
  HQ1219F53  1994
  305.42—dc20         93-39353

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 93-39353
ISBN: 0-313-26136-9
ISSN: 0147-104X

First published in 1994

Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881
An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.

Printed in the United States of America

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The paper used in this book complies with the
Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1