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**THE PORNOGRAPHICAL:  
A MIMETIC ETHICS OF BODIES**

Holly Mountain

This thesis is submitted as a partial requirement towards a  
Doctorate of Philosophy at the University of Greenwich

June 2007


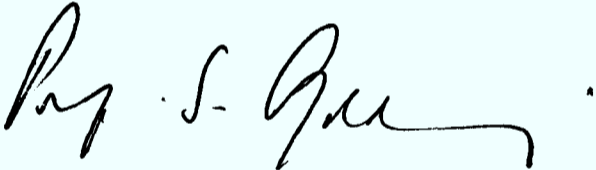
Supervisory Committee

Prof. Johnny Golding  
Dr. Steve Kennedy



## DECLARATION

“I certify that this work has not been accepted in substance for any degree other than that of Doctorate of Philosophy being studied at the University of Greenwich. I also declare that this work is the result of my own investigations except where otherwise identified by references and that I have not plagiarised another’s work.”

Signed:   


## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This thesis is dedicated to my daughter Eva Puddy. I would like to thank Professor Johnny Golding for all of her support, time and energy. I have learnt a lot and none of this would have been possible without you. I would also like to thank Dr. Steve Kennedy for his time and astute comments –he opened a path for the deluge; and my support team during this time of research and writing: James Puddy, my parents, John and Anthea Mountain, my brothers, Nick and David Mountain, Dr. Anne Cormack, Marilyn and Keith Puddy, Andrew Gould, Sarah Purdy, Mark Walker, Andrina Bindon, Marianne Johnson and Morag Cuddeford-Jones.



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INTRODUCTION:  
*The Pornographical.*

Whilst this thesis began through curiosity with the peculiar nature of pornography, or rather pornographies, its main focus is not on the pornography industry and its ideological battles.<sup>1</sup> Rather than providing a detailed analysis of specific genres of pornography and particular examples from within these genres, this thesis sketches out and introduces a concept of “the pornographical” from the ‘root form’ of pornography.<sup>2</sup> The pornographical is put forward as a name for the specific conjuncture between pleasure and the political, one that forms a cultural cartography of the sexual fantasies and fetishes central to a political and sexual account of the forces meshed in the social networks that serve to constitute an ethical reality.<sup>3</sup> These paradoxical communities of the

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<sup>1</sup> Regarding the use of gender specifics, this thesis will be written using she/he; wo/man; her/his etc., unless a quote specifically uses he or she, or unless the above usage changes the meaning of the quote.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of the pornographical arose from discussions with this thesis supervisor, Prof. Golding with regard to the relationship between the adjectival and noun forms of the verb, to pornograph. Prof Golding’s own work puts forward the arts work of something as having a sexual component; one that forms an aesthetics libidinal economies, projected memories and acoustic ruptures, or as she names it a ‘blood poetics’: towards a non-fascist life. S. Golding/johnny de philo (ed), *Eight Technologies of Otherness*. (London: Routledge, 1997). William Haver also ruminates on the subject of a ‘pornographic life’; one that he defines as the task of *poiēsis*, or as the presentation of the non-relation to singularity. He writes: “Pornography is a presentation of the essential stupidity of the sense and the affects. This is what is called obscenity, the supplement of the possibility of interpretation, where cocks are only cocks, cunts are only cunts, assholes only assholes, and a cigar is only ever a cigar. What is obscene about pornography, and what is essentially pornographic in *poiēsis*, is the fact that it presents the impossible non-relation to singularity, the very impossibility of interpretation. Again: through its manifold representation, pornography presents what needs no interpretation or representation; in pornography, the senses are invariably stupid, what you see is what you see.” W. Haver, “*Pornographically man dwells ... towards an irresponsible reading of Heidegger*” in *Issues in Contemporary Culture and Aesthetics, Vol. 12*, edited by S. Golding/ johnny de philo. (Maastricht: Jan Van Eyck Akademie, August 2001), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> In this way pornography, as an industry, discourse and genre is manifested in the specifics of its conjuncture of pleasure to the ethico-political, but that the politics of these dynamics, that the mannerisms and dynamics of a pornographic code is not subsumed or contained to this one genre, subordinating all other genres. Pornography is not something that just people in the industry produce. Through the impact of technology many lovers and acquaintances make pornography in their memories, videos, photos and web pages. ‘The pornographical’ is a site of degrees of paradoxes; a site that locates, through pornography as an industry, genre, name and in the ‘human’ bodily communication of pornographic codes, degrees of social taboos; fetishes; fantasies; sexual, gender and racial identities; repressions; oppressions; prohibitions and proprieties that are central to a sexual and political account of the forces meshed in the social and cultural networks that serve to constitute reality.

pornographical are both public and anonymous, yielding a peculiar cultural 'memory space' or psyche of fantasy sexual identities.

One of the aspects that this thesis examines is the way in which pornography embodies a peculiar singularity, particularly around aesthetics and its ethical relationship to the universal and the personal. Pornography creates a strange community through its technological distance, manner and anonymity. These pornographical communities operate with and permeate a peculiar language structure that belongs paradoxically to the political presence of bodies, of skin. It is argued that the pornographical is a kind of dynamic, an unsayable something that has tonalities and technē to it, one that contours a bodily meaning; one that is bloody, stripped of moral consolation in presenting the unspeakable, in demonstrating the fluidities of sexual roles, the shifting of identities, the complicity of ideologies and the confusion between victims and oppressors. In addressing the body politic, the pornographical is a very different kind of dynamic than the bloodless absolute negativity of Enlightenment and the weight of its contingent necessity.

As a dynamic to thought, the pornographical, is raised as a way of thinking that allows thought to be muscular and sexual rather than driven by a need for administrative efficiency to classify, categorize, and cleanly represent. The pornographical is posited as an economy of identity that does not arise from a castration, a lack, a deep cut, an inbetween or an economy of signs or a politics of equivalences. It is a dynamic to the art and music, to name just a few, of Spencer Tunick; Marlene Dumas; Helen Chadwick; Cindy Sherman; Patricia Piccinini; Throbbing Gristle; Big Black; Benny Benassi; and Michael Collins.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> These artists and musicians comment in their works on the body, its grotesqueness and visceral nature of the skin; of the skins folds, of the physicality and politics of the bodies flesh. Patricia Piccinini's works

This thesis derived the notion of the pornographical not as a general overarching term but from specific defining manners and traits of pornography and the pornographic genres. Pornography is not a timeless entity. Despite its ancient etymology from the Greek word ‘*pornographos*’<sup>5</sup>, defined as the ‘writings of prostitutes’, it is only during the 1800s that the genre, the series of written, engraved and printed products, was given the name: “pornography.”<sup>6</sup> Previous to the seventeenth century it is problematic to chart a history of pornography that would be delimited by the concept ‘pornography’, given that the delimitation itself is a modern invention.<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that there were

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express the nature of responsibility and vulnerabilities of our world and our changing relationship to the technological and the natural world. Her ‘We Are Family’ sculptures are detailed and emotive in their portrayal of the sexual nature of the body and its warmth, detailing the wrinkles and crevices of the skin and the accuracy of the body stances of the differing sculptures and their relationship to each other and even a ‘gameboy’. Piccinini makes the bizarre and unbelievable come to life in a believable and non-sci-fi manner: <http://patriciapiccinini.net/>

Marlene Dumas’ paintings again comment on the political and ever present nature of bodies violating taboos of motherhood; childhood; sexuality; gender; religion and racism. Her painting undermines the moral underpinnings of society and any sense of a universally held belief system. Spencer Tunick presents installations of skin and bodies and emphasises their political presence in these urban landscapes. Cindy Sherman’s works again play with the body and the identifications, fears and fantasies that surround it. Helen Chadwick too challenges sexual and gendered assumptions of identity and the universal systems that uphold them. Her works attempt to approach the body in terms that Chadwick describes as an “exchange of matter and energy beyond power relations”. Helen Chadwick quoted in Eva Martisching, “*Getting into the Artist’s Head*” in *Helen Chadwick*, edited by Mark Sladen. (Ostfildern, Germany: Barbican Art Gallery/ Harje Cantz Publishers, 2004), p. 53.

The moans, groans and ‘dirty talk’ that accompany a Throbbing Gristle track are pornographic, if not pornography. Big Black electronic sexual crescendo’s force one into thinking sex, as does Benny Benassi mixes, especially coupled with the visual displays that are like watching a *Penthouse* spread come to life.

<sup>5</sup> According to Walter Kendrick, ‘*pornographos*’ seems to be a word rarely used in ancient Greece. He locates only one short passage in an ancient text where ‘pornographer’ is fleetingly used, that of the *Deinosophistae* by Atheneaus, as *pornographoi* meaning ‘whorepainters’. W. Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> The term ‘*pornography*’ first emerged in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1857, and most English variations on the word such as *pornographer* and *pornographic* date from the middle or the end of the nineteenth century. In France, according to the *Tresor de la langue francaise*, the word ‘*pornographe*’ appeared slightly earlier in Restif de la Bretonne’s treatise of 1769. This titled *Le Pornographe* as referring to the writings about prostitution. The etymological offshoots of *pornographique*, *pornographe* and *pornographie* date from the 1830s and 1840s, and are referred to as obscene or immoral writings and images. L. Hunt, *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800*. (New York: Zone Books, 1996), pp. 13 -15.

<sup>7</sup> Kendrick locates the invention of the usage of the concept ‘pornography’ to the excavation of erotic Greek and Roman ceremonial artefacts during the 1800s. He argues that this led to the invention of the cultural space of the museum, a ‘secret museum’ with restricted access to an elite category of people ‘of mature age and of proven morality’. More than a hundred objects were placed within this ‘Cabinet of Obscene Objects’. The name given to these objects was that of ‘pornography’. The first systematic catalogue for the regulation of these objects was in 1866 with the ‘Pornographic Collection’ in Victorian England. W. Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture*, p. 32.



no sexually graphic images, paintings, sculptures, throughout a history of ‘human communication’ but that these would perhaps be gathered under differing but related genres such as ceremonial objects, of differing religious practices and fetishes, renaissance art, political satire and criticism of libertinism.<sup>8</sup>

What makes pornography such a volatile and uncomfortable issue is that pornography is just not nice. It is in some cases monstrous. As a genre or set of genres, pornography often offends standards set, not only by family and religious values, but also by one’s aesthetic taste. Pornography could be said to highlight, and often be proactive in a way that is ‘in your face’ to the sensitive and tender areas of any culture and its sexual practices and insecurities. As the ‘bad child’ of culture, pornography possesses a kind of ‘working-class hero’ glamour, taking ‘well-aimed shots’ at all those in high positions within the institutional and notable establishments. No one is too lofty that they cannot be reminded that they too fall under the demands of ones bodily functions, pleasures and needs. It is with this mannerism that pornography’s libertine roots are disclosed.<sup>9</sup>

This thesis suggested that it is a *technē* or technology of comic humour that forms the aesthetics of pornography and is fundamental to the shifting social ground that establishes its meaning.<sup>10</sup> The term aesthetics is itself

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<sup>8</sup> L Hunt, *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800*, pp. 225 - 339.

<sup>9</sup> The sixteenth century French social satirist, Rabelais, whose emphasis on the body and the grotesque, provides the most infamous example of libertinism. Also see the examples of De Sade’s Juliette and Cleland’s Fanny Hill or even Reage’s Story of O where the female protagonist takes sexual licence in part because she is disobeying societal etiquette. See also Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800*, and M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1984).

<sup>10</sup> This thesis draws upon the Heideggerian use of this word, *technē*. Heidegger traces back the origins of man’s scientific modernity to the Greek age, and discovers the belonging of technology to *technē*. As he

historical, complex and intricate. Aesthetics can be broadly defined as that branch of philosophy that deals with the arts on the one hand and with the nature of aesthetic responses and ethical judgements on the other hand.

Pornography tends to be categorised as a lower part cultural expression and as such it fails to be credited with being able to engage an audience in an aesthetic relationship or interaction. Given that pornography is far from being a coherent or stable category to define, what then are the demarcations that distinguish pornography, pornographic culture and the rest of what is known to be culture? What is it that fails to allow pornography to be seen as an expressive cultural form?

What, for example, are the borders that define transvestite pornography as more pornographic than the everyday 'fuck and suck' pornography? Should not transvestite pornography be viewed as an act of self-portraiture, as an aesthetic act of self-definition and creation? If both art and pornography are immersed in commerce, what then differentiates one act of self-portraiture as mass-produced smut from another as art? Could not pornography be said to perform the same service as a site and style of expression of a cultural unconscious? It is these class distinctions that are interwoven in the categorical distinctions between the genres of art and pornography that allow for art to be adorned with the status of being a mode of moral etiquette. These class distinctions are at the heart of pornography's composition and comic humour.

A *technē* or technology of comic humour serves to allow a participant the

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writes: "... *Technē* is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. *Technē* belongs to bringing-forth, to *poiēsis*; it is something poetic." *Technē* is a mode of a kind of poetic truth, that of *alētheia*. As such *technē* is not an instrumental kind of truth concerned with the ordering and causes of things; rather it is a bringing-forth of truth in the sense of revealing what 'does not yet lie here before us'. M. Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated and introduced by William Lovitt. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), p. 13.

distance through which to engage with the pornographic material and at the same time exposes the class distinctions embedded in every cultural psyche and discord.

This thesis suggests that though the pornographical is more of an ‘ana-aesthetic’ than an aesthetic form, and this can be seen through its technē of comic humour; of its usage of data compression and its ‘ana-linguistic’ nature.<sup>11</sup> Laura Kipnis calls pornography an anti-aesthetic, a space of political and social significance that highlights some of the cultural sore spots in, as she writes:

“... Elucidating not only the connection between sex and the social, but between our desires, our “selves”, and the casual everyday brutality of cultural conformity.”<sup>12</sup>

This usage of the term anti-aesthetic is similar to Hal Foster’s concept of an “anti-aesthetic” with which he names the practices as:

“.... Cross-disciplinary in nature, that is sensitive to cultural forms engaged in a politic (e.g., feminist art) or rooted in a vernacular - that is, to forms that deny the idea of a privileged aesthetic realm.”<sup>13</sup>

Foster wished to question the validity of the aesthetic categories in the contemporary cultural practices of art. He sought not to reinvent a form of modernist nihilism or of affirmative negation that seeks a space beyond representation, not a time of pure presence, but rather a critique cultural of

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<sup>11</sup> This thesis utilises Lyotard’s notion of an anesthesia that he outlines in *Heidegger and “the jews”*. In looking at questions of racism, Lyotard sketches out an anesthesia, as a kind of ‘non- forgetting’ that is neither inscribed within a subjective memory, nor as such, is it able to be forgotten. Instead it forms a kind of mimetic, poetic and non-representative witnessing to fight against the reification, abjection and soullessness that come with ‘after Auschwitz’. Lyotard puts anesthesia forward as: “A more “archaic” anxiety, and one that is precisely resistant to the formation of representations. It is this, and only this, extreme resistance that can nourish the resistance of contemporary art and writing to the “everything is possible”. Anesthesia to fight against amnesia.” J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and “the jews”*, translated by Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts. (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 48.

<sup>12</sup> L. Kipnis, *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America*. (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 121.

<sup>13</sup> H. Foster (ed), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. (Washington: Bay Press, 1985), p. xv.

representations and social identities. For Foster art is never outside of its politics.<sup>14</sup> Whilst taking on board these two similar concepts of an anti-aesthetic, my thesis develops and fleshes out in greater detail the anaesthetic impulse of pornography and its dispositif.

Pornography is always linked to and determined by a question of ethics, whether over its sexually explicit nature and the limits to its public expression or over judging what is and what is not pornography. This thesis looks at another dimension to pornography, one revealed through the ethicality and often political realm that is played out through a technē of comic humour: an ethical realm of the pornographical, a peculiar ana-aesthetic event. This thesis posits the pornographical as an unnameable and ungraspable dynamic; as a discursive economy that forms an economic, cultural graph of sexual energies; and as a non-discursive event. In this sense the pornographical is a peculiar and monstrous singularity, an ethical paradox that underscores not only the superfluous role of the mediation of any universal, but also ‘ex-scribes’ a meaning ‘stripped bare’ of any moral consolation and representable referent.

One of the aspects of pornography is that it is difficult to fully categorize or classify. As part of a sexual culture pornography is messy and resists being neatly packaged, cleanly posited and conceptually placed within a social hierarchy. The paradoxical field of pornography has been approached by a diversity of theorists that each allow, in differing ways, for pornography to be misrecognized as being sexually representative. As Linda Williams writes:

“.... The impression exists that the problem posed in our contemporary age of proliferating sexual representations is one of extreme explicitness of representation – the question of where acceptable speech, expression

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<sup>14</sup> H. Foster (ed), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, pp. xiv - xvi.



and practice end and gratuitous filth, 'pure' smut, an irredeemable 'hardcore', begins."<sup>15</sup>

Feminist theorists have engaged with the problematic terrain of pornography in a diversity of ways, those are who concerned with questions of gender identity; those with a position around anti-censorship; those who suggest a politics of sexual radicalism; and those that raise questions around a 'required' censorship amongst others. The three former strands encourage the importance of pornography to be accessible, accessed and produced by women, and in seeing the industry allows for the positing of differing stereotypes for and of women as sexual; the sexual exploration of women's bodies and that they 'cum' and have 'hard-ons'. Joan Nestle, Anne McClintock, Gayle Rubin, Pat Califia, Sue Golding, Lynne Segal, Mary McIntosh, Carol Vance, Kate Millet, Erica Jong, Nadine Strossen, Betty Friedan, Kaja Silverman and Avedon Carol are all feminists who look at the multi-faceted and sexual nature of being 'female' in contemporary cultures.

These women argue for the freedom to express sexual difference and oppose any social hierarchization of those different sexual practices or sexualities. As Gayle Rubin writes:

"The realm of sexuality also has its own internal politics, inequities, and modes of oppression. As with other aspects of human behaviour, the concrete institutional forms of sexuality at any given time and place are products of human activity. They are imbued with conflicts of interest and political maneuvering, both deliberate and incidental. In that sense, sex is always political. But there are also historical periods in which sexuality is more sharply contested and more overtly politicised. In such periods, the domain of erotic life is, in effect, renegotiated."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> L. Williams, "Pornographies on/scene or Diff'rent strokes for diff'rent folks" in *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate*, edited by Lynne Segal and Mary McIntosh. (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993), p. 233.

<sup>16</sup> G. Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality" in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, edited by Carol S. Vance. (London: Pandora Press, 1992), p. 267.

This thesis presents a way of discussing ‘the realm of sexuality’ through the pornographical. This way there is no essence, biological or otherwise, posited to sexuality and sexual practices, and as we shall see, pornography is a historically specific invention, one that has emerged alongside modern technologies and an increase in moral legislation. It is against pornography and the freedom of sexual expression that contemporary cultures are negotiating their sexual, gendered and racial identities.

For the prominent ‘women against pornography’, Andrea Dworkin, Catherine MacKinnon, Robin Morgan, Susan Brownmiller, Diana Russell, Laura Lederer, Susan Griffin, Susanne Kappeler and Adrienne Rich amongst others, consider pornography to be explicit and representative of heterosexual sexual relations, and consequently material that incites and affirms the ‘masculine’ tendency for violence and rape.<sup>17</sup> Dworkin goes as far as to define all penetrative sex as the root cause of sexual violence. Robin Morgan’s famous anti-pornography of ‘pornography is the theory, and rape the practice’ still

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<sup>17</sup> Both MacKinnon and Dworkin define pornography as violent and that the violence of pornography is the sex of pornography. For them there is no sexual arousal that can be possible without inequality, force, dominance and violation. They both assert that the obscenity laws have done little to protect society and the female gender from interpreting this as their sexuality and predilection for sexual arousal too, rather they have often glamorised and clouded the main concerns of the pornographer’s work. It is over the question of social harm and violation of civil rights that comes from allowing the representational practices of sexual coercion that the US anti-pornography feminists, MacKinnon and Dworkin present pornography as entailing, that they drafted the 1983 Minneapolis Ordinances. C. MacKinnon, *Only Words*. (Harvard University Press: Massachusetts, 1996,) and A. Dworkin, *Men Possessing Women*. (London: The Women’s Press, 1992).

MacKinnon summarises the legal definition of pornography, that Dworkin and herself put forward in the 1983 Minneapolis Ordinances, as: “.... The graphic sexually explicit subordination of women, whether in pictures or in words, that also includes one or more of the following: (i) women are presented dehumanized as sexual objects, things or commodities; or (ii) women are presented as sexual objects who enjoy pain and humiliation; or (iii) women are presented as sexual objects who experience sexual pleasure in being raped; or (iv) women are presented as sexual objects tied up or cut up or mutilated or bruised or physically hurt; (v) women are presented in postures of sexual submission, servility or display; or (vi) women’s body parts – including but not limited to vaginas, breasts, and buttocks – are exhibited, such that women are reduced to those parts; or (vii) women are presented as whores by nature; or (viii) women are presented being penetrated by objects or animals; or (ix) women are presented in scenarios of degradation, injury, torture, shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual. Pornography also includes ‘the use of men, children or transsexuals in the place of women.’” C. MacKinnon, “*Not a Moral Issue*” in *Feminism and Pornography*, edited by Drucilla Cornell. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 185 – 186.

reverberates today.<sup>18</sup> One of the difficulties with these arguments is that if male sexually is essentially predetermined to be violent and perverse then what is female sexuality? Asexual and peaceful, uninterested and uninvolved with power relations? Are women to be defined as just the hapless victims of male domination and abuse?

The position of 'required' censorship, in confusing pornography as sexually representative, see the industry of producing and encouraging sexually violent 'hate crimes' against women, rather than analysing it as a fantasy genre, where the sexually violent scenes of fantasy, are consensual, and sometimes according to an s/m fantasy format and 'language-game'. It is difficult to fix a singular and universal meaning to any image, text, film, or piece of music, what may be offensive to one woman may be enjoyable for another, either as a viewer or as a producer of pornography.<sup>19</sup> This is not to dismiss this 'volatile' and important issue in the debates about the genre of pornography, but an attempt to shift the framework in order to perhaps analyse them in a different light.

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<sup>18</sup> R. Morgan, "Theory and Practice: Pornography and Rape" in *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*, edited by Laura Lederer. (London: Bantam Books, 1982), p. 125. As she writes: "There is no subject relevant to women so deliberately distorted as that of rape. This is because rape is the perfected act of male sexuality in a patriarchal culture – it is the ultimate metaphor for domination, violence, subjugation and possession."

Linda Williams, in her book *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"*, in commenting on the popular impact of this slogan notes the Commissioner James Dobson's use of this phrase in his report to the 1986 Attorney General's Commission on Pornography. The Commissioner writes: "Pornography is degrading to women ... It is provided primarily for the lustful pleasure of men and boys who use it to generate excitation. And it is my belief, though evidence is not easily obtained, that a small but dangerous minority will then choose to act aggressively against the nearest available females. Pornography is the theory, rape is the practice." Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, *Final Report*, 2 volumes. (Washington D.C., 1986), Vol. 1, p. 78, quoted in L. Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"*. (London: Pandora Press, 1991), p. 16. This same committee recommended that pornography be separated into two classifications, one for violent and two for degrading.

<sup>19</sup> As Gayle Rubin remarks: "Feminist anti-pornography ideology has always contained an implied, and sometimes overt, indictment of sadomasochism. The pictures of sucking and fucking that compromise the bulk of pornography may be unnerving to those who are not familiar with them. But it is hard to make a convincing case that such images are violent." G. Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality" in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, edited by Carol S. Vance, p. 298.



Pornography, as a genre, has been created as a political site of negotiation, a cultural battle zone for its ever emergent and emerging discourse.<sup>20</sup> In dealing with questions around pornography, my thesis also had to take into consideration the difficulties posed with exploring sexual practices, expressions and identities with their interwoven discourses of misogyny and cultural forms of racism and racial practices. One of the problematics in making a practical assessment of pornography and the contents of the genres arose in forming a decision over what made something pornographic material. The question of this decision raised the complexities of the collectivised, societal, cultural and individual standards that make something be considered pornography.

Through its invention both as a discourse of sexual knowledge, arousal, political satire and subversion, and as one to be catalogued and regulated, pornography has been and is juxtaposed to the term ‘obscene’.<sup>21</sup> The etymology of the word ‘obscene’ is two-fold: derived from both the Latin terms *ob* *ceanum*, meaning ‘from filth’ and *ob scena*, defined as ‘off or to one side of the

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<sup>20</sup> The understanding of pornography as a discourse here is influenced by Michel Foucault’s writings on the historical emergence of modern discourses such as medicine, the prison, madness and sexuality. It is in this way that pornography is to be understood as an invention, as a product of new inventions of forms of regulation, new desires for knowledge and of the inventions of new technologies, of new means of distribution, of massification of a product and communication of/with it. Pornography is deposited as an industry that is sexually representative. As will be argued throughout this chapter, it is an industry that produces only sexual fantasy. This misrecognition perhaps comes from the forms of invention of modern discourses as documentary, as a search for the ‘truth’, for the ‘truth’ of sex. My thesis has suggested that there is no core essence or ‘truth’ to pornography anymore than there is to sex. ‘Truth’ perhaps is more of an invention itself. M. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology on the Human Sciences*. (London: Routledge, 1994); M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith. (London: Routledge, 1995); M. Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*, translated by Charles Ruas. (London: The Athlone Press, 1987), M. Foucault, *This is not a Pipe*, translated and edited by James Harkness. (London: University of California Press, 1983), M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Vol. 1*, translated Robert Hurley. (London: Penguin Books, 1990), M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure, Vol. 2*, translated Robert Hurley. (London: Penguin Books, 1990), and M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Care of the Self, Vol. 3*, translated Robert Hurley. (London: Penguin Books, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> Kendrick argues that although obscenity was invented as a term of distinction between the realms of public and private behaviour something changed, during the nineteenth century, the balance between obscenity and decency, private and public, and pornography emerged as a governmental concern. W. Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture*, p. 31.

stage.’<sup>22</sup> Placed within paradigms of morality and desire, to pornograph is to be obscene, to witness the pornographic is to witness the obscene. The invention of the word ‘pornography’ emerged with the related definition as sexually graphic writings, images and sounds both of and by prostitutes, varying on the wording of the definition. As such it is connected to the taboo topic and activities of prostitution; the sexual enactments of fantasies in exchange for money; sexual promiscuity; sexual perversion; violation of taboos; performed fetishes; and a variety of gendered positions of sexual power. Pornography is defined against the traditional family values of marriage, procreation and monogamy as an immoral taboo.

Pornography is always linked to a question of ethics and liberal approaches to this question attempt, and must according to the logic of a separation of power within the liberal paradigms, to pose pornography as being equivalent to prominent societal moral values. As such pornography is posed as an alternative or improper representation of sexual matters. Equivalence is posited around the terms of accessibility and protection to and from pornography for the viewers and actors, as individuals, according to different categories of regulation, for example, those of age, gender, race, sexuality and sexual practices.

With Hobbes equivalence is given through an ontology of bodies in differential motion.<sup>23</sup> This freedom is limited by a coercion of wills of moral

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<sup>22</sup> I. Tang, *Pornography: The Secret History of Civilization*. (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1999), p. 29.

<sup>23</sup> Hobbes defines two kinds of motions specific to animals, by which he means animals and animal wo/man. The first of these he names *vital motion*, a motion that continues throughout the life span of any animal and any wo/man. Examples that Hobbes provides of such a motion are ones that need aid from the imagination, such as the coursing of one’s blood, one’s breathing, one’s pulse, and the concoction of one’s nutrition and excretion. The second, Hobbes names as *animal or voluntary motion* involves the imagination as the origin of the senses, and their role in moving one’s limbs and speech facilities. As Hobbes writes: “These small beginnings of Motion, within the body of Man, before they appear in

obligation. For Hobbes, in the counterfactual state of nature, humankind is “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short”, living according to the sole interests of self-preservation.<sup>24</sup> Hobbes defines this self-interestedness as a natural right that lacks political authority. For him/her it is a fear of death and a longing for material security and peace that guides mankind to enter into a social contract, whereby each individual gives, of his/her own volition, as an act of will, his/her right to self-governance to the sovereign or Leviathan. The Leviathan has a moral obligation of natural law to represent this counterfactual social contract, for it is the unity of the individual wills that authorizes the Leviathan to represent the people as one body. Appetites of natural lust and sexual pleasures are to be regulated accordingly by the sovereign body.

Locke extends the classical liberal epistemology further through defining every wo/man’s property as that of his/her own person, that of his/her body.<sup>25</sup> He puts forwards a view of natural mankind as being one of a state of equality, whereby the ability to reason enables individuals not to harm the liberty and possessions of another, and able to judge a rightness of punishment for those who transgress against them. For Locke civil society is a natural evolvment that develops from conjugal and kinship origins. Such a society possesses established laws, judicature and adjudicating authorities and is incompatible with an absolute monarchy or authority of a Leviathan.<sup>26</sup> Sexual

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walking, speaking, striking, and other visible actions, are commonly called ENDEAVOUR.” It is these endeavours that Hobbes names appetites and aversions. T. Hobbes, Part I, “*Of Man*”, Ch. 6, *Leviathan*, edited by C.B. Macpherson. (London: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 119.

<sup>24</sup> T. Hobbes, Part I, “*Of Man*”, Ch. 13, *Leviathan*, p. 186.

<sup>25</sup> Locke writes: “Though the Earth, and all inferior Creatures be common to all Men, yet every Man has a *Property* in his own *Person*. This no Body has any Right to but himself. The *Labour* of his Body, and the *Work* of his Hands, we may say, are properly his.” J. Locke, Book II, Ch. 5, “*Of Property*”, § 27, *Two Treatises of Government*, edited by Peter Laslett. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 287 – 288.

pleasures are governed by the state but with the consensual agreement of civil society, for all men are free to establish new governments. Pornography is defined against the traditional family values of marriage, procreation and monogamy as immoral, lacking in the imagination that takes hold of the senses in love.

Rousseau challenges both of these versions of a natural human state.<sup>27</sup>

Whilst still separating a natural state and law from that of the divine, Rousseau contends that natural man is timid, isolated, peaceful and 'self-hooded'. For him society is an invention rather than a natural state to humans, for pity as well as self-preservation and interest is a natural state to being human.<sup>28</sup> Rousseau puts forward the idea that natural humans are 'soft-hearted', capable of reasoned sentiment, and as such able to invent a society in which they can build something better, a higher form of moral goodness.

In this sense political society is like a human body with a will that takes care of its general well being; this will Rousseau names, as the general will.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> J. Locke, Book II, Ch. 7, "Of Political or Civil Society", § 77 - 94, *Two Treatises of Government*, pp. 318 - 330.

<sup>27</sup> J-J. Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, translated by D. A. Cress, and introduced by James Miller. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1992) and *On the Social Contract*, translated by Donald A. Cress, and introduced by Peter Gay. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987).

<sup>28</sup> As Rousseau writes: "It is therefore quite certain that pity is a natural sentiment, which by moderating in each individual the activity of the love of oneself, contributes to the mutual preservation of the entire species. Pity is what carries us without reflection to the aid of those we see suffering. Pity is what, in the state of nature, takes the place of laws, mores, and virtue, with the advantage that no one is tempted to disobey its sweet voice. Pity is what will prevent every robust savage from robbing a weak child or an infirm old man of his hard-earned subsistence, if he himself expects to be able to find his own someplace else. Instead of the sublime maxim of reasoned justice, *Do unto others as you would have them to do unto you*, pity inspires all men with another maxim of natural goodness, much less perfect but perhaps more useful than the preceding one: *Do what is good for you with as little harm as possible to others.*" J-J. Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, p. 38.

<sup>29</sup> Rousseau defines the social compact in the following terms: "Each of us places his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will; and as one we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole.

At once, in the place of the individual person of each contracting party, this act of association produces a moral and collective body composed of as many members as there are voices in the assembly, which receives from the same act its unity, its common *self*, its life and its will. This public person, formed thus by union of all the others formerly took the name *city*, and at present takes the name *republic* or *body politic*, which is called, *state* by its members when it is passive, *sovereign* when it is active, *power* when



Rousseau locates a set of maxims for the general will stating that it must be followed in every action, that every particular will is in accordance with the general will and that the public needs are satisfied. In this way the general will is conceived as being morally legitimate in its sovereignty, for it is always directing itself for the public good and not for the interests of particular groups, for it is not representative of a majority or collective set of wills. For Rousseau the sovereignty of the general will allows people's freedom to be secure rather than limiting it, and the sexual pleasures of lust and pornography amongst others conform to the moral aims of public health.<sup>30</sup>

For Bentham there is no such thing as a social contract, something he dismisses as a useless piece of unhistorical fiction.<sup>31</sup> He envisions a natural human state as anarchical, free from all legal restraint and the creation of governments arises from force or habit rather than natural evolution.<sup>32</sup> Bentham

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compared to others like itself. As to the associates, they collectively take the name *people*; individually they are called *citizens*, insofar as participants in the sovereign authority, and *subjects*, insofar as they are subjected to the laws of the state." J-J. Rousseau, Book I, Chapter VI, "*On the Social Compact*", *On the Social Contract*, pp. 24 – 25.

<sup>30</sup> Rousseau writes on the subject of censorship that: "Just as the declaration of the general will takes place through law, the declaration of the public judgment takes place through the censorship. Public opinion is the sort of law whose censor is the minister, and which he only applies to particular cases, after the example of the prince.

Thus the censorial tribunal, far from being the arbiter of the people's opinion, is merely its spokesman; and as soon as it deviates from this opinion, its decisions are vain and futile." J-J. Rousseau, Book IV, Chapter VII, "*On the Censorship*", *On the Social Contract*, p. 95.

<sup>31</sup> In Bentham's critique of the 1791 Declaration of Rights he declared both the idea of natural rights and the precept that all men are born free and remain equal in right as nonsense. He writes: "How stands the truth of things? That there are no such things as natural rights, no such things anterior to the establishment of government, no such things as natural rights opposed to, in contradistinction to, legal [rights] ....

In proportion to the want of happiness resulting from the want of rights, a reason [exists] for wishing that there were such things as rights. But reasons for wishing there were such things as rights, are not rights; a reason for wishing that a certain right were established is not that right; want is not supply; hunger is not bread.

That which has no existence cannot be destroyed; that which cannot be destroyed cannot require anything to preserve it from being destroyed. Natural rights is simple nonsense: natural and imprescriptable rights, rhetorical nonsense, nonsense upon stilts.....". J. Bentham, Document 4.8, Article II, "*Jeremy Bentham on Natural Right*" in *An Introduction to Political Ideas*, edited by P. M. R. Stirk and D. Weigall. (London: Pinter Publishers, 1995), p. 121.

<sup>32</sup> Bentham defines the principle of utility as one that recognises the subjection of mankind to the two sovereign masters of pleasure and pain, and "... Assumes it for the foundation of that system, the object of which it is to rear the fabric of felicity by the hands of reason and law." J. Bentham, Chapter I, "*Of the Principle of Utility*", § 1, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, edited by J. H.



asserts that the only rights that matter are civil rights, those protected by law, rather than natural rights and that community is the sum of the interests of those who compose it.<sup>33</sup> He maintains that two masters, pleasure and pain govern human behaviour and that a calculus of moral value can be established from this. Under the guidance of these, individuals and groups strive towards the greatest happiness principle and it is a moral quest to maximise pleasure and to avoid pain. Bentham puts forward a positive and capable role for the self, as an individual, within civil society, one that limits state control and maximises one's ability to self-govern.

It is through the liberal utilitarianism of Bentham and John-Stuart Mill that advocates for freedom of expression and consensual sexual practices have fought legal battles for freedom from government and social restraints.<sup>34</sup> Mill takes Bentham's philosophies further and defines two classes of sanctions for

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Burns and H. L. A. Hart, and introduced by F. Rosen. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> As Bentham writes: "4. The interest of the community is one of the most general expressions that can occur in the phraseology of morals: no wonder that the meaning is often lost. When it has a meaning, it is this. The community is a fictitious *body*, composed of the individual persons who are considered as constituting as it were its *members*. The interest of the community then is, what? – The sum of the interests of the several members who compose it.

5. It is vain to talk of the interest of the community, without understanding what is the interest of the individual. A thing is said to promote the interest, or to be *for* the interest, of an individual, when it tends to add to the sum total of his pleasures: or, what comes to the same thing, to diminish the sum total of his pains." J. Bentham, Chapter I, "Of the Principle of Utility", § 4 – 5, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> The feminist groups against censorship, such as the British FAC, the American FFE and the Feminist Against Censorship Taskforce argue that in order to justify the censorship of pornography and other sexually explicit media, then there must be proof that there is a casual connection between exposure to such material and occurrences of sexual violence and sexism. These groups suggest that pornography does not have the corner markets on sexism and violence, that pornography is not entirely suppressible and that if pornography was removed then it is unlikely that sexism and sexual violence would disappear too. These feminist groups rally for the right for women not to be censored in their sexual choices and practices, and for pornography to be a matter for the freedom of expression of personal taste and consensuality.

Larry Flynt, the publisher of the American pornography magazine, *Hustler*, has fought numerous attempts at both public and private suppression and regulation. Laura Kipnis summarises the style that Flynt pursues, through his *Hustler* magazine, as one that: "... Systematically and extravagantly violate, in the most profoundly offensive way possible, each and every deeply held social taboo, norm, and propriety he could identify. The nation responded with its kneejerk response to any perceived insult or injury: the lawsuit." L. Kipnis, *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America*, p. 123. Whatever can be said about Larry Flynt he has managed to expand and maintain the parameters of free and political speech within America. In 1988 Jerry Falwell, an esteemed religious figure in the US, filled a \$45 million lawsuit against Flynt and *Hustler* for an anti – religious pornographic parody of himself. The Rehnquist Supreme Court decided in favour of Flynt, and confirmed pornography's role as political.

promoting the general happiness.<sup>35</sup> Mill names the external motivations as those of one's peers, of one's family and of God. It is these figures that according to Mill one hopes most to please and fear to displease. He puts forward the subjective and internal instinct of duty as the second class of impetus. This driving force of duty is something that Mill delimits as instinctive, developing through one's lifetime in a mix of emotions of childhood recollections, sympathy, religious or spiritual feelings and the one's level of self-worth.

As with Bentham, Mill advocates a minimum level of governmental involvement in one's ethical and moral affairs. He classifies one's sense of duty as arising from emotive pain and remorse that pushes one away from actions and behaviour that is contrary to the promotion of the general happiness. With moral freedom and rationality, Mill proffers, comes creativity and evolvment of social and intellectual progress. As Mill states:

“If the claims of individuality are ever to be asserted, the time is now, while much is still wanting to complete the enforced assimilation. It is only in the early stages that any stand can be successfully made against the encroachment. The demand that all other people shall resemble ourselves, grows by what it feeds on. If resistance waits till life is reduced *nearly* to one uniform type, all deviations from that type will come to be considered impious, immoral, even monstrous and contrary to nature. Mankind speedily become unable to conceive diversity, when they have been for some time unaccustomed to see it.”<sup>36</sup>

Mill defines liberty as the right to do as one wants, free from the interference of others, as long as one does not harm others.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> John Stuart Mill, Chapter III, *Utilitarianism* in *On Liberty and Other Essays*, edited and introduced by John Gray. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 160 – 162.

<sup>36</sup> John Stuart Mill, Chapter III, *On Liberty* in *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 82.

<sup>37</sup> John Stuart Mill puts forward the region of liberty as one that: “.... Compromises, first, the inward domain of consciousness; demanding liberty of conscience, in the most comprehensive sense; liberty of thought and feeling; absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects, practical or speculative,

Juridical regulations of pornography as an obscene genre and the analysis of pornography by the methodological approaches of feminism and liberalism seemed to have allowed for both a “depositing” of the biological essentialism of sex; an ‘abject’ sense of the body; and that pornography as a genre seeks to represent a universal sexual representation of cultural societies.<sup>38</sup>

The pornography industry in all its massifications and complexities does not represent everyday sexual activities. To pose the discourse that pornography offers as one that is sexually representative, that works with or differs from a sexual ‘accepted norm’ would reduce and overlook its salient tectonics.<sup>39</sup>

Pornography is an invention about fantasies, sexually graphic fantasies.<sup>40</sup>

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scientific, moral or theological. The liberty of expressing and publishing opinions may seem to fall under a different principle, since it belongs to that part of the conduct of an individual which concerns other people, but, being almost of as much importance as the liberty of thought itself, and resting in great part on the same reasons, is practically inseparable from it. Secondly, the principle requires liberty of tastes and pursuits; of framing the plan of our life to suit our own character; of doing as we like, subject to such consequences as may follow; without impediment from our fellow creatures, so long as what we do does not harm them, even though they should think our conduct foolish, perverse, or wrong. Thirdly, from this liberty of each individual follows the liberty, within the same limits, of combination among individuals, freedom to unite, for any purpose not involving harm to others; the persons combining being supposed to be of full age, and not forced or deceived.

No society in which these liberties are not, not on the whole, respected is free, whatever may be its form of government; and none is completely free in which they do not exist absolute and unqualified.” John Stuart Mill, Chapter I, *On Liberty* in *On Liberty and Other Essays*, pp. 16 -17.

<sup>38</sup> Within Western liberal democracies the pornography industry subject to regulation through applied laws as obscene. It is judged to have no artistic merit or truth value as such it is deemed filth, trash, and to be excluded to adult-restricted zones, or banned according to censorship laws. Pornography that features gay or/and lesbian fantasy sex is often subject to harsher regulation and censorship as it tends to be complicated by the notion of pornography as being ‘sexually representative’ and fall under both obscene regulation as pornography and as a sexual practice/ a ‘sexuality’. For fantasy ‘gay male sex’ complications occur if there are more than two porn-stars or actors present on set and with varying hard-core regulations over the dilemmas of an erect penis, or ‘fisting’ scenes. For fantasy ‘lesbian sex’ complications occur not under erect clitoris or vulva [only the fantasy genre recognises this, and not always] but under hard-core or penetrative regulations of ‘fisting’, dildos if inserted, and other combinations of fantasy sexual penetration. This in effect censors and denies gay and lesbian pornography from producing other various repetitions of this genre and also viewer’s access to other possible repetitions of this genre. Female viewers are also excluded from their possible input in the pornography industry as viewers or producers, in accessing its repetitions and possible masturbatory exploration of their bodies. A sense of shame is posited with the body and filthy, fantasy as sexually representative complicates the regulation of pornography, and ‘sexualities’ are named as an essence.

<sup>39</sup> The differing analysis of the discourse of pornography by Tang; Hunt; and O’ Toole, despite recognising the political nature inherent in the pluralism of pornography as genres of fantasy sex, still posit it as an alternative sexuality or a non-standard sexual representation or the representation of multiple sexualities and sexual activities. I. Tang, *Pornography: The Secret History of Civilization*; L. Hunt, *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800*; and L. O’ Toole, *Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire*.

<sup>40</sup> Pornography is an industry that produces/stages fantasy sex without the problematic and stressful boundaries or limitations that can accompany the everyday, ‘real’ sexual activities. In the



This is not to say that the genres of the pornography industry are not related to the sexual fantasises and fetishes central to a sexual and political account of the forces meshed in the social networks that serve to constitute an ethical reality. Pornography is related to and can serve as documentary material to the societies from which it emerges. Rather, it is to argue that the pornography multiplex industry mutates itself through these relations according to its promise: what will be offered is a variety of fantasies; a variety of fantasy sexual scenes; fantasy sex fetishes; fantasy sex styles; fantasy sex humour; fantasy sex violence; fantasy body parts; fantasy striptease and other soft-core, hard-core fantasy sex repetitions.

For Golding this is the “joke” that pornography offers in its discourse.<sup>41</sup> In promising to reveal its secret, the products of the pornography industry reveal that what is offered can only ever be fantasy, never reality, never ‘real’ sex or sexual representations.<sup>42</sup> As a sexual entertainment industry pornography gives these “jokes” as gestures of itself and the indeterminate “secret” that is promised to come with these offered pornographic slices is that fantasy can be

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windows/economies that pornography offers there are no complications of dating, of relationships, of contraception, of headaches, of monogamy. The possibilities that fantasy sex offers as entertainment is sexual pleasure without the consequences, the politics and taboos that are involved in ‘real’ sex. For the director Steve Perry: “Sex in porn isn’t like real sex. It’s like a fight in a Stallone movie, which isn’t a real fight.... In porn you to stop and do it again for different angles. You can’t have real sex in a porno movie because it has to be a certain length and take a predicted form.” Quoted in L. O’ Toole, *Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire*, p. 25.

<sup>41</sup> Sue Golding, “Sexual Manners” in *Ethics of Enactment*, Public, Vol. 8, 1993, pp. 161-68, and S. Golding, “Solar Clitoris” in *Bataille*, Parallax, Mar - Apr 1997, pp. 137-47.

<sup>42</sup> Pornography can never offer the whole reality of pleasure, or even capture its own whole physical or pleasurable reality. Produced as a technological event of sexual pleasure it can only be fantasy. It can never be more than that for any pornographer, be it as a viewer, a producer, a star or an actress/actor or all of these. This technological distance does not deny, but rather requires participation from the viewers, and offers them different vantage points and strategies of viewing - fast-forward, pause, rewind or converse, edit, copy, paste, cut, sample and so on. This is perhaps part of pornography’s dialogue or discursive economy. To participate in is always to create pornography, to dabble in ‘porn speak’, to insert, mutate and repeat in its discursive economy. Pornography can only ever offer a glimpse, a slice of its fantasy sex reality, never the wholeness of the industry. Pornography is an invention, an ongoing invention, rather than an essence or an eternal fixed truth.

sexually arousing, sexually pleasurable, masturbatory and sexually social.<sup>43</sup>

Pornography's discursive power is one of sexual fantasy. Sexual fantasy is, in this trajectory, a strategy of technique.

In discussing the pornographical in terms of its *technē* and tonalities, this thesis illustrates the ethical nature of sexual fantasy and its both private and public relationship in shaping, and being shaped by, a belonging within these perverse cultural communities. What this thesis looks at are the super-imposed layers to the data-compressed language of the pornographical. Rather than a sense of language that is established through the genital stage or through a traumatic castration complex, the pornographical is non-discursive, alongside being a discursive economy, and 'ana-linguistic'. As such what is formed is a community of mimetic bodies and a witnessing that takes place in the ana-aesthetic by a peculiar kind of subject, one Deleuze has named the 'fourth person singular', 'drawn into place' and maintained through one's sense of fascination.<sup>44</sup>

The primary mannerism of the noun 'pornography' is its relationality.

The gestures, theatre and performances of the industry's products are secondary

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<sup>43</sup> This reference both uses and plays against Jacques Derrida's concept of a secret. What is maintained of this concept is the indeterminacy of each event of pornography, an indeterminacy that is only ever partially defined both in the specificity of each slice that is offered by the industry in its technological products and in the specificity of the interaction and response that viewers bring to these products. However pornography's promise is not that much of a secret. J. Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, translated by David Wills. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.)

<sup>44</sup> Deleuze writes: "No, singularities are not imprisoned within individuals and persons; and one does not fall into an undifferentiated ground, into a groundless depth, when one undoes the individual and the person. The impersonal and pre-individual are the free nomadic singularities. Deeper than any other ground is the surface and the skin. A new type of esoteric language is formed here which is its own model and reality. Becoming-mad changes shape in its climb to the surface, along the straight line of the Aion, in I, the lost identity, when they cease being buried and begin, on the contrary, to liberate the singularities of the surface. Nonsense and sense enter into co-presence of a static genesis – as the nonsense of the surface and the sense which hovers over it. The tragic and the ironic give way to a new value, that of humor. For if irony is the co-extensiveness of being with the individual, or of the I with representation, humor is the art of surfaces and of doubles, of nomad singularities and of the always displaced aleatory point; it is the "fourth person singular" – with every signification, denotation, and manifestation suspended, all height and depth abolished." G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, translated by Mark Lester with Charles Stivale and edited by Constantin V. Boundas. (London: The Athlone Press, 1990), pp. 140 – 141.

to, or arise from, the specific configurations of this relationality. That pornography is a relational identity or discursivity gives it a kind of “a-radicality” or “a-rootedness” in that it creates the ground or possibilities of its discourse.<sup>45</sup> Pornography is a kind of dynamics that contours and contextualises the “prehensions” of it’s yet to be realised, shifting ground of its ontological surrealism.<sup>46</sup> The pleasures of fantasy sex offer the fabric to the discursivity of a multi-dimensional ‘real’. Through its relationality, pornography is a multi-dimensional identity; name; and noun, connected to both a philosophy of desire and of pleasure. It names paradoxically both the impossibility and possibility of representation, of representing itself, of presenting re-presentings of itself.

Pornography occupies a strange cultural position not only in its occupation with offending aesthetic sensibilities and a class-ridden bed of identity woes and other fetishes, but also in its relationship to both the body and

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<sup>45</sup> This concept or phrasing is being used here as a kind of ‘a priori’, or rather a porous and shifting root of a multiplicity that is indeterminate in its ‘has and not yet been rooted’ as an indeterminate determinacy. The multiple root of an event not yet rooted. Jacques Derrida in “Desistance” has used a notion of “a-radicality” in the introduction to P. Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, translated by Christopher Fynsk. (California: Stanford University Press, 1998,) p. 1. In this piece Derrida attributes an a-radicality to an event as an ineluctable. That the inevitability of an impossible singularity is one of a double bind, a double obligation: “...One must avoid avoiding the event but one cannot avoid avoiding”. The a-radicality of an event is in this way posited as a form or matter, a mattering of a hesitation, a pause, and a gap of an undecidability that is a redoubling of the movement of negation. This is the double movement of an event [a positivity of an absence] that arrives both and neither too early nor too late. An undecidability that is supplementary. In such a way any determinations of the undecidability of an event will always be dislodged from its undecidable as delayed root. Any supplement to the event could never allow for its closure or incorporation in the repetition of its, undecidability, a series of hesitations, of deferrals of a radical undecidability. Sue Golding also uses the phrasing of an “a-radicality” in *The Eight Technologies of Otherness* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 11-27. Golding contours an a-radicality of an event as the a-rootedness of a multiple excess. This excess of a “mutant negation” is an “... ‘Impossible’ concept, existing and not existing at the same time (at a different time) all (or none) of the time in the a-radicality (a-rootedness) of its spatial configurations.” Golding sutures the patchwork wanderings of this ‘impossible negativity’s as micro-strategies of fiction, of identities, of social ensembles, imaginary, political journeys of “supposing that”, an event of curiosity rather than a void or a lack.

<sup>46</sup> Gilles Deleuze uses the term “prehension” in analysing Whitehead’s theory of events. Deleuze posits a prehension as a unity/connection/conjunction of elements, and as having parts and as being a part. He writes that: “... The prehended datum, is itself a prehension of a prehension, and the event thus a “nexus of prehensions”. Each new prehension becomes a datum. It becomes public, but for other prehensions that objectify it; the event is inseparably the objectification of one prehension and the subjectification of another; it is at once public and private, potential and real, participating in the becoming of another event and the subject of it’s own becoming.” Virtualities are actualised in prehensions. G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and The Baroque*, translated and introduced by Tom Conley. (London: The Athlone Press, 1993), p. 78.



to technology. It is this relationship that gives pornography a kind of paradoxical ‘ana-linguistic’ structure. The emergence of libertinism coincided with the increase in printing houses and in commercial opportunities for selling printed material. It was the technology of the printing press that made it possible to copy in large quantities these texts and comic images of sexual satire. The danger and effectiveness of libertine literature arose because it was able to be distributed en masse throughout the social classes. The sexually graphic pamphlets were no longer a pleasure or tool of an elite section of society.<sup>47</sup> The invention of the name and genres of the pornography industry has been closely related and tied to the emergence of new scientific discourses, to the invention of new technologies as well as political criticism.

Every new technology has mutated and allowed the expansion of the pornography industry. As Roland Barthes discovered with photography, technology ceases to be “a medium, to be no longer a sign, but the thing in itself”.<sup>48</sup> Barthes puts forward through his notion of a “punctum” an understanding of photography as an aesthetic field, rather than just a service industry or a documentary medium.<sup>49</sup> He develops the dynamics of a ‘punctum’

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<sup>47</sup> Isabel Tang has estimated that by the end of the ancien regime, two-thirds of all printed pamphlets circulated in France were forbidden and large quantities of these were pornographic. Tang comments on the rise of the ‘underground’ and illegal distribution of these ‘pornographic tracts’ written by ‘*des rousseaux des ruisseaux*’ or ‘gutter philosophers’, produced by printers, smuggled and distributed by ‘street hawkers’. Tang discovered that unlike “the pornography of the ancien regime, which was often expensively bound and circulated among the well-to-do, these tracts were affordable to a significant proportion of the population. Publications became shorter and more accessible. This was not pornography to be enjoyed by the privileged in private but brash texts designed to be shared aloud in public.” I. Tang, *Pornography: The Secret History of Civilization*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>48</sup> R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*. (London: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 45.

<sup>49</sup> R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, pp. 26-27. Barthes names the co-presence of “studium” and “punctum” as the elements which arouse an interest in photographs or a visual field and in doing so establishes a body of information and extends a person’s and socio-cultural discursive fields. Barthes defines the studium as an “application to a thing” and an “enthusiastic commitment but without special acuity”. It is by the studium that the viewer receives the photographs as a political and historical testimony, by participating in the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings and the actions of the images. However it is the co-presence of the punctum that breaks or punctuates the studium. For Barthes the punctum is the accidental punctuation that pricks, bruises and is poignant to the viewer. It is in this sense that the punctum operates as a

as one of a technology. To rephrase this move away from a traditional semiotic field, technologies, in ceasing to be a medium, have mannerisms and characteristics of their own, rather than only documenting the event captured, copied, for example on film, the camera, the photograph mutates the event according to its format or discursivity.

In the photograph the referent, that of the event captured, ‘drops out’ whilst at the same time in remaining related to the photograph, the copy becomes part of the photograph’s self-referentiality, part of the event of the photograph.<sup>50</sup> It is in this way that meaning is added to an event in its movement and mutation. Each new technology has changed the capacity and format, the discursivity of what pornography can deliver to the viewer and how the viewer can receive and participate with the differing products.<sup>51</sup> Technological inventions have not only mutated pornography as an industry and the accessibility of its market, but also its means of regulation, but they themselves have also been a function and given impetus by the pornography market.<sup>52</sup>

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technology or *techne* in forming and adding to a moment of an identity, meaning and body.

<sup>50</sup> This ability for any event to be self-referential is discussed in more detail throughout my thesis, including how this self-referentiality can become absorbed and lost, in a certain sense. The main point raised here is that technologies are not just documentary of the ‘world’ and its created political occurrences, but are events themselves, a series of events that effect and mutate other events. Pornography has always mutated its own eventness through technological events. In other words, pornography is always a technological invention. In being related to each other in this manner, both pornography and technology mutate each other, as events that form discursive economies, and accelerate each other’s movement.

<sup>51</sup> Technology is being used in the paradoxical sense of both the scientific advancements of mechanical reproduction to digital reproduction [the printing press; the camera; the moving image camera; the phone; the video; the camcorder; the cd-rom; the dvd; the internet; the virtual reality equipment; the digital cameras, camcorders and printers], and as a *technē* and technique of identity. As O’ Toole has suggested pornography is a compressed delivery service that viewers have to decompress in downloading. This is discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis, “Libidinal Technologies”. L. O’Toole, *Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire*, p. 310.

<sup>52</sup> Catalogues of pornography were made in the nineteenth century as a way of following and regulating pornography. These not only were written accounts of the titles and offences of the pornographic material but also included the offensive photographs. [These catalogues could themselves be gathered into the pornographic genres.] I. Tang, *Pornography: The Secret History of Civilization*, pp. 102 - 109.



Chapter one, “*Evacuating the Body: The Abyssal Logic of a Philosophy of Desire*”, looks at the basic premises of three major philosophers who conjugate identity, pleasure and aesthetics through the metaphysics of desire. This chapter lays the foundation for the ‘anaesthetic’, in order to provide a fuller sense of the nuances regarding the pornographical. This requires, in part, a discussion on certain aspects of the philosophical canon. This undertaking examines how the speculative rationale of Hegel and Kierkegaard fold into an abyssal logic – one which tends to sterilise the body and its needs, mapping those needs into unrequited forms of ‘desire’ or, worse, into dualist preconditions of sexual interest (male v. female, gay v. straight).<sup>53</sup>

Similar problems are reviewed in the work of Heidegger, despite his attempts to challenge and depart from the logic of these former thinkers, he manages to resurrect the older theories of desire, whereby pornography is disregarded as something ‘vacuous’, ‘unnecessary’, ‘superfluous’ or ‘secret’.<sup>54</sup>

Chapter one examines the problematics of these theories in their suggestion that

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<sup>53</sup> This chapter will draw upon these books of Hegel: G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A. V. Miller. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); G.W.F. Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, translated by Bernard Bosanquet. (London: Penguin Books, 1993); G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of the Right*, translated by T. M. Knox (1821). (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952); at <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/pr/preface.htm>., and G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic: Preliminary Conception, Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, translated by A.V. Miller, with additions by Leopold Von Hemming and K.L. Michelet (1970), at <http://www.hegel.org/links.html/#texts> . The main text that this chapter utilizes for this argument is S. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, translated and introduced by Alastair Hannay. (London: Penguin Books, 1985). This book has been chosen as the main focus for this chapter as it deals specifically with a paradox of ethics revealed by the leap of passion, of faith and its reliance on absurdity. *Fear and Trembling* raises questions about what it means to witness a paradox and despite its ability to be translated into the universal. Other books of Kierkegaard that this thesis draws upon are: S. Kierkegaard, *Either/ Or: A Fragment of Life*, by A. Hannay. (London: Penguin Books, 1992); S. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, translated by H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); S. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, translated by A. Hannay. (London: Penguin Books, 1989); and S. Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, edited by H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.)

<sup>54</sup> The main books this thesis employs are: M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*; M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, translated by J. Stambaugh. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969); M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell. (London: Routledge, 1996); M. Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, translated by William McNeill. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996); M. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, translated by J. Glenn Gray. (New York: Harper TorchBooks, 1968.) The main concepts that this thesis utilizes throughout are that of ‘the event of appropriation’ and ‘technē’.

pornography is located in the “borderlands” of desire, between a dialectic of aesthetics and one of ethics.

Chapter two, “*Fascination: The Paradox of a Philosophy of Pleasure*” continues in looking at an overview of the difficulties of Lacan and Žižek in positing language as an origin, or as originating through the genital stage or through the traumatic castration complex.<sup>55</sup> It briefly raises Kristeva’s concept of a pre-genital or ‘semiotic’ language and Marcuse’s notion of the body as a site of a ‘pregenital polymorphous sexuality’, both of which seek to evade the supremacy of the Oedipal and the symbolic as the origin of language and the law, and in doing so raises the pornographical as ‘ana-linguistic’.<sup>56</sup> My thesis introduces this concept in order to revisit the terrain of language and its relationship to the body and a contemporary world of new technologies. Adorno is drawn upon to posit a notion of pluralism, of disintegrating excess that installs/maintains a physical meaning of the body politic, whilst underwriting the political difficulties and fallacy of a notion of modern subjectivity.<sup>57</sup>

In shifting the paradigm from one of a philosophy of desire to that of a

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<sup>55</sup> With regard to Lacan and Žižek the main books used throughout this thesis are: J. Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, translated by Bruce Fink. (New York: W. & W. Norton and Company, 2002); J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, translated by Alan Sheridan and edited by Jacques – Alain Miller. (London: Vintage Books, 1998); J. Lacan, *The Psychoses: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III*, translated by Russell Grigg and edited by Jacques – Alain Miller. (London: Routledge, 2000); J. Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII*, translated Dennis Porter and edited by Jacques – Alain Miller. (London: Routledge, 1999); and S. Žižek, *The Žižek Reader*, edited by Elizabeth and Edmond Wright. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.)

<sup>56</sup> Marcuse outlines his notion of a ‘pregenital polymorphous sexuality’ in H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1987). The two main texts employed for Kristeva with regard to this thesis are: J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, translated by Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), and J. Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, edited by Toril Moi. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992.)

<sup>57</sup> The major works used of Adorno are: T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, translated, edited and introduced by Robert Hullot – Kentor. (London: The Athlone Press, 1999); T.W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, translated by E. B Ashton. (London: Routledge, 1996); T. W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life*, translated by E.F.N. Jephcott. (London: Verso, 2002); T. W. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, translated by John Cumming. (London: Verso, 1995); and T. W. Adorno, *Problems of a Moral Philosophy*, translated by Rodney Livingstone. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.)

philosophy of pleasure, this chapter seeks to demonstrate a reconfiguration of a different route than the pathway created by a philosophy of desire.<sup>58</sup> In posing the pornographical in terms of a paradoxical site of a transitive present, a site that is both related to pleasure *and* desire, it can be understood as simultaneously constituting *both* the impossibilities and the very possibilities of representation. This chapter examines the nuance of fascination as that which gives the pornographical a kind of fluid cohesive, as a non-discursive singularity, that is only graspable at the moment of its multiple crossing of its other, of the immanence transgression.<sup>59</sup> In other words fascination is posed as a pivotal point and anchoring for identities of the pornographical.

Chapter three, *Libidinal Technologies of Comic Pleasure*, continues to lay the groundwork for the ‘ana-aesthetic’, this time by elaborating a concept of the comic and its role in the data compression of the pornographical package/ code. It does this through three strange routes of the Heideggerian Being (Dasein and technē), the Bataillian notion of witnessing, and Freud’s use of *Jokes and the Unconscious* and Bergson’s *An Essay on Comic Laughter*.<sup>60</sup>

Chapter four, *Economies of Witnessing: An Ana-aesthetic Mimetics*, persists in developing this peculiar landscape of the complexities and

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<sup>58</sup> The theorists mainly used to elaborate a philosophy of pleasure are Foucault, Deleuze and Lyotard.

<sup>59</sup> For works used for a notion of fascination as a suturing point of identity see M. Blanchot, *the one who was standing apart from me*, translated by Lydia Davis. (New York: Station Hill, 1993); S. Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), and J-L. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, translated by Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O’Byrne. (California: Stanford University Press, 2000). The main theorists drawn upon with regard to simulacra is Baudrillard, see J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. (Michigan: The University of Michigan, 1996), and Lacan’s work on ‘quilting points’ is also employed here, see J. Lacan, *The Psychoses: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III*.

<sup>60</sup> See S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, translated by James Strachey. (London: Penguin Books, 1991); H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of Comic*, translated by Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell. (Los Angeles: Green Integer Books, 1999), and for the Heideggerian technē see M. Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. The Bataillian notion of witnessing that is elaborated by Lyotard, see J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, translated by Iain H. Grant. (London: The Athlone Press, 1993), and J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and “the jews”*, translated by Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts. (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1995.)



conceptual nuances of the pornographical and the re-configuring of a subjectivity / social agency, that is present as a kind of ‘fourth person singular’ and fascinated, comic witness of the improper body. This chapter looks at the pornographical in terms of its aesthetic and ethical properties as an ‘ana-aesthetic’, as an event (gift/ libidinal band/ differend/ virtual fold), and as a poetics of a forgetting, of a mimetic repetition and virtual folding.<sup>61</sup>

The conclusion, *Privacies and Practices: Virtual Privacy, New Technologies and Democratic Practices*, resumes examining the notion of a comic witness with regards to mimesis and the body. The role of fantasy and anonymity is looked at in establishing the public and brash pornographical communities ‘of those that have nothing in common’.<sup>62</sup> Can there be such a thing as an autonomous body within such a ‘de-individualised’ geography? Bursting forth from the Enlightenment, and entwined between technological developments, practices and the improper body, the pornographical offers a

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For Bataille see G. Bataille, “*The Notion Of Expenditure*” in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927 – 1939*, edited, introduced and translated by Allan Stoekl. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), pp. 116 – 129. It is the excesses of systems, the excreted waste products of laughter, tears, cries, poetry, and bodily excrements that create disequilibrium and expenditure without return of reciprocity or equivalence. For Bataille it is the heterogeneous elements of excess and loss, of chance and impossibility that form the base of a ‘general economy.’ It is these elements that are expressed through acts of sacrifice and bodily mutilation, which in turn rupture and mutilate the homogeneity of self. Bataille locates knowledge in the expenditures of energy and its bursts of self-blindness and heterogeneity. G. Bataille, *The Accursed Share: Volume I*, translated by Robert Hurley. (New York: Zone Books, 1991); G. Bataille, *The Accursed Share: Volumes II and III*, translated by Robert Hurley. (New York: Zone Books, 1993); G. Bataille, *Eroticism*, translated by Mary Dalwood. (London: Marion Boyers Publishers Ltd., 1994) and G. Bataille, *The Tears of Eros*, translated by Peter Connor. (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1989).

<sup>61</sup> For the notion of an event as a gift see J. Derrida, *Given Time: Counterfeit Money*, translated by Peggy Kamuf. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), and J. Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, translated by David Wills. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.) For a virtual fold see G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, translated by Tom Conley. (London: The Athlone Press, 1993), and G. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. (New York: Zone Books, 1997). For libidinal band and differend see J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, and J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and “the jews”*. For a notion of a forgetting without forgetting see M. Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, translated by Susan Hanson. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), and J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and “the jews”*.

<sup>62</sup> The main theorists/texts of dis-community drawn upon are: G. Agamben, *The Coming Community*, translated by Michael Hardt. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); J-L. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*; M. Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, translated by Pierre Joris. (New York: Station Hill Press, 1988); and A. Lingis, *The Community of those that have Nothing in Common*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.)

differing kind of an ethico-political landscape, as an alternative to that of contemporary political forms, such as a liberal democracy.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### *Evacuating the Body: The Abyssal Logic of a Philosophy of Desire*

“Open the so-called body and spread out all of its surfaces: not only the skin with each of its folds, wrinkles, scars, with its great velvety planes, and contiguous to that, the scalp and its mane of hair, the tender pubic fur, nipples, nails, hard transparent skin under the heel, the light frills of the eyelids, set with lashes - but open and spread, expose the labia majora, so also the labia minora with their blue network bathed mucus, dilate the diaphragm of the anal sphincter, longitudinally cut and flatten out the black conduit of the rectum, then the colon, then the caecum, now ribbon with its surface, all striated and polluted with shit; as though your dress-maker’s scissors were opening the leg of an old pair of trousers, go on expose the small intestines’ alleged interior, the jejunum, the ileum, the duodenum, or else, at the other end, undo the mouth at its corners, pull out the tongue at its most distant roots and split it, spread out the bats’ wings of the palate and its damp basements, open the trachea and make it the skeleton of a boat under construction; armed with scalpels and tweezers, dismantle and lay out the bundles and bodies of the encephalon; and then the whole network of veins and arteries, intact, on an immense mattress, and then the lymphatic network, and the fine bony pieces of wrist, the ankle, take them apart and put them end to end with all the layers of nerve tissue which surround the aqueous humours and the cavernous body of the penis, and extract the great muscles, the great dorsal nets, spread them out like smooth sleeping dolphins. Work as the sun does when you’re sunbathing or taking grass.”<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Conceptual enclosures: ideologies, ethical immoralities and suspensions.

One of the aspects that this thesis wishes to examine is the way in which pornography embodies a peculiar singularity, particularly around aesthetics and its ethical relationship to the universal and the personal. Pornography creates strange communities through its technological distance, manner and anonymity. These pornographical communities operate with and permeate a peculiar language structure that belongs paradoxically to the political presence of bodies, of skin. It will be argued that the pornographical is a kind of dynamic, an unsayable something that has tonalities and *technē* to it, one that contours a bodily meaning; one that is bloody, stripped of moral consolation in presenting the unspeakable, in demonstrating the fluidities of sexual roles, the shifting of

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<sup>1</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, translated by Iain H. Grant. (London: The Athlone Press, 1993), p. 1.

identities, the complicity of ideologies and the confusion between victims and oppressors. In addressing the body politic, the pornographical is a very different kind of dynamic than the bloodless absolute negativity of Enlightenment and the weight of its contingent necessity.

This chapter will look at the basic premises of those philosophers who conjugate identity, pleasure, and aesthetics through the metaphysics of desire. This undertaking will look at how the speculative rationale of Hegel and Kierkegaard fold into an abyssal logic – one which tends to sterilise the body and its needs, mapping those needs into unrequited forms of ‘desire’ or, worse, into dualist preconditions of sexual interest (male v. female, gay v. straight). Similar problems will be reviewed in the work of Heidegger, and, despite his attempt to challenge and depart from the logic of these former thinkers, it will show how he manages to resurrect the older theories of desire, whereby pornography is disregarded as something ‘vacuous’, ‘unnecessary’, ‘superfluous’ or ‘secret’. It will examine the problematics of these theories in their suggestion that pornography is located in the “borderlands” of desire, between a dialectics of aesthetics and one of ethics.

In this context, the chapter will go on to suggest that pornography cannot be fully captured in either of the realms substantiated by a dialectical aesthetics or ethics; rather, it is in all its plurality of description and use, the more peculiar ‘singularity’ of identity and pleasure. This a kind of complexity cohesion as a conceptual and discursive reality, fails to be captured either when one elevates the pornographical to an ‘art’, say, as erotica [sensual rather than sexually implicit] or deposes it as immoral/ hate crime towards women and any

particular or relevant ethnic divides.<sup>2</sup> To unravel the nuanced complexity of what is at stake, we will first look at how pornography is slipped into the concept of ‘identity’ whereby identity is construed as a pluralistic relation and ethical paradox based on dialectical synthesis (Hegel and latterly, Kierkegaard). Then we will move toward the way(s) in which latter day thinkers re-stage ethics in terms of a ‘singularity’ and its collapsing horizons – and why that move still marginalizes the body, and evacuates its presence (Heidegger).

### 1.1 Conceptual enclosures of Hegelian idealism.

In turning to Hegel this section will look primarily at the totalising conceptual movement of the Concept alongside the sublation of *Moralität* (the morality of one’s autonomous, individual will) in *Sittlichkeit* (the ethical will of the community).<sup>3</sup> To draw upon Hegel in an effort to discuss pornography may seem a strange move since within the Hegelian epistemology, pornography is clearly immoral, being against family values with no redeeming qualities and no place within the fulfilment or the ‘coming-to-be’ of the ethical state. However Hegel forms the best starting place for looking at the political necessity of a leap from within his dialectical movement of the teleological development of the

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<sup>2</sup> What seems to be needed is a shifting of the epistemological framework in order to delve into how pornography operates at an ideological level – and this is precisely what the second part of this chapter, as well as chapter two will discuss. Supra pp. 28 -81.

<sup>3</sup> This chapter draws upon these books of Hegel: G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A. V. Miller. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); G.W.F. Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, translated by Bernard Bosanquet. (London: Penguin Books, 1993); G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of the Right*, translated by T. M. Knox (1821). (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952); at <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/pr/preface.htm>., and G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic: Preliminary Conception, Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, translated by A.V. Miller, with additions by Leopold Von Hemming and K.L. Michelet (1970), at <http://www.hegel.org/links.html/#texts> For Concept see in particular his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Introduction section, pp. 46 – 262; for *Sittlichkeit* and *Moralität*, see in part his *Philosophy of Right*, Philosophy of Objective Spirit section, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/pr/preface.htm> and *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Spirit section, especially pp. 263 – 410.



sovereignty of a self-reflective subject and state. It is through delving into the logic of the Hegelian speculative structure of consciousness that contemporary thinkers, such as Deleuze and Derrida, named pornography an interval or hesitation, suspended in the cuts of immanent thought.<sup>4</sup> In turning now to Hegel's speculative logic the political necessity of such a leap from his dialectical developments can be looked at in greater detail.

For Hegel, Kant's demarcation of legitimate theoretical and practical knowledge ends up being the demarcation of new areas of ignorance.<sup>5</sup> As Hegel remarks:

“The *thing-in-itself* (and here ‘thing’ embraces God, or the spirit, as well) expresses the ob-ject, inasmuch as *abstraction* is made of all that is for consciousness, of all determinations of feeling, as well as of all determinate thoughts about it. It is easy to see what is left, namely, what is *completely abstract*, or totally *empty*, and determined only as what is ‘beyond’; the *negative* of representation, of feeling, of determinate thinking etc. But it is just as simple to reflect this *caput mortuum* is itself only *the product* of thinking, and precisely of the thinking that has gone to the extreme of pure abstraction, the product of the empty ‘I’ that makes its own empty *self-identity* into its *ob-ject*. The *negative* determination that contains this abstract identity as [its] *ob-ject* is likewise entered among the Kantian categories, and, like that empty identity, it is something quite familiar. – We must be quite surprised, therefore, to read so often that one does not know what the *thing-in-itself* is; for nothing is easier to know than this.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, translated by Mark Lester with Charles Stivale and edited by Constantin V. Boundas. (London: The Athlone Press, 1990), and J. Derrida, “*The Double Session*” and “*Spur: Nietzsche's Styles*” in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, edited by Peggy Kamuf. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.)

<sup>5</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic: Preliminary Conception, Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, translated by A.V. Miller, with additions by Leopold Von Hemming and K.L. Michelet (1970), at <http://www.hegel.org/links.html/#texts>

<sup>6</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic: Preliminary Conception, § 44, B) The Second Position of Thought with Respect to Objectivity, II Critical Philosophy*, in *The Hegel Reader*, edited by Stephen Houlgate, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), p. 156. See also Stace, where he comments the difficulty for Hegel was that: “The thing-in-itself is the reality; it is what really exists apart from the subjective conceptions of our minds. The thing we know as appearance. The thing as it is in reality is not in space and time, has neither quantity, nor quality, nor relation and is (consequently) inconceivable to us”. W. T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel: A Systematic Exposition*. (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1924), p. 42.

With knowledge limited by appearance, and with experience demarking the infinite, the true is unknowable, things- in- themselves are unknowable, the source of the causality of the will is unknowable and the transcendental apperception is unknowable.<sup>7</sup> Hegel points out:

“... The need arises to be cognizant of this identity or the empty *thing-in-itself*. To be cognizant, however, means nothing else but the knowing of the object according to its *determinate* content. A determinate content, however, contains a manifold *connection* within itself and is the basis for connections with many other objects. So, this [Kantian] reason has nothing but the *categories* for its determination of the *thing-in-itself*, or of that infinite; and when it wants to use them for this purpose, it *flies off* (and becomes ‘transcendent’).”<sup>8</sup>

This ‘unknowability’ means that the thing-in-itself is not graspable as an object for knowledge and is therefore not considered to be necessary or important.

Hegel’s dialectical concern lies in his challenge to the Kantian move, whereby in Kant, the unknowability is posited within a transcendental closure of knowledge. In so doing, Hegel views this move as resulting in the unknowability of ourselves both as subjects of experience and as moral agents capable of freedom. Consequently the political and historical determinants of thought remain unknowable and unknown. According to Hegel, this restriction of knowledge to a discursive rather than a fuller conceptual understanding, allows even the finite to be unknowable.<sup>9</sup> Hegel wished to make the case that all of reality (both knowable and unknowable) could not be separated into different logics. This totalising or universalising of Concept into one

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<sup>7</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic: Preliminary Conception*, §60, Part 1, IV: *Second Attribute of Thought to Objectivity*, “Critical Philosophy” in *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, translated by A.V. Miller, with additions by Leopold Von Hemming and K.L. Michelet (1970) at <http://www.hegel.org/links.html/#texts>.

<sup>8</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic: Preliminary Conception*, § 46, B) *The Second Position of Thought with Respect to Objectivity*, II *Critical Philosophy*, in *The Hegel Reader*, p. 158.

<sup>9</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Introduction section, pp. 46 – 262

(dialectical) logic meant, further, that the thing-in-itself must have an essence or a substance, a universal substance, which would further promote the movement of infinity in order for it to be grasped fully by thought – a move that both required and presupposed consciousness as the distinction, and definition of, finite and infinite truth.<sup>10</sup> This move becomes the fatal flaw for positing the pornographical as anything other than marginal to the ethical system.

Hegel remarks on his concerns that:

“In critical philosophy, thinking is interpreted as being *subjective*, and its ultimate, unsurpassable determination is *abstract universality*, or formal identity; thus, thinking is set in opposition to the truth, which is inwardly concrete universality. In this highest determination of thinking, which is reason, the categories are left out of account. – From the opposed standpoint thinking is interpreted as an activity *of the particular*, and in that way, too, it is declared to be incapable of grasping truth.”<sup>11</sup>

Hegel hoped to unify the gap between pure theoretical and practical reason through an architectonics composed of a phenomenology of the Spirit (*Geist*), one that expresses and encapsulated in its very movement the idea of absolute ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*), and that of the logic of the pure concept. Hegel’s architectonics conveys on the one hand the concrete fullness of each related layer of any given ‘sublated and transcended now’; and on the other the hand the concrete substance of an immanent unfolding and unveiling of self-consciousness on both an individual level and at the spiritual level of the ethical community and its self-reflected path on living an ethical life.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Section A, “Consciousness”, pp. 58 – 104.

<sup>11</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic: Preliminary Conception*, § 61, C) *The Third Position of Thought with Respect to Objectivity*, “Immediate Knowing”, in *The Hegel Reader*, p. 163.

<sup>12</sup> For Hegel, the concept of ‘now’ if not sublated or transcended would remain at the level of singularity and would, consequently be banished as ‘abstract’. As discussed later, the recuperation of the notion of ‘singularity’ when lifted away from a dialectical logic bears a whole new set of opportunities, both ethical and creative.

This is the movement of the Hegelian self-differentiating concept or consciousness as it provides context to itself, in being for-itself, as a synthetic unity by means of a negation.<sup>13</sup> Knowledge addresses itself, ready for its future unity. In this way the now is sublated into intuition and transcended to form the synthetic concrete unity of Intuition; in turn Intuition is sublated into sense-certainty and transcended to create the synthetic concrete unity of Sense-Certainty; this concrete fullness of Sense-Certainty is sublated into perception and transcended to generate a concrete synthetic unity of Perception; this concrete synthesis of Perception is sublated into understanding and transcended to fashion a full synthesis of Understanding which in turn is sublated into knowledge and transcended to produce a conceptual fullness of concrete absolute Knowledge. Within the Hegelian epistemology the knowledge pornography creates of and for itself as a conceptual ideology and the identities of its consuming participants is informed and fashioned along such a spherical journey.<sup>14</sup>

The 'This' of the 'Here' and 'Now' is both always immediate in the newness of its occurrence whilst at the same time mediated through the spherical layers of its consciousness of itself. In this way the immediate presence of a thing is always-already im-mediate, i.e. 'not mediated'.<sup>15</sup> The

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<sup>13</sup> Dialectical negation is the 'unsayable' movement of Hegel's logic of absolute thought. It provides the limit for the self-determination of the subject (and the objective world by extension of subjectivity). Negation is affirmative in that it expresses the absolute negativity of the ascending motion of the whole, the mediation its content. G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, translated by A.V. Miller, with additions by Leopold Von Hemming and K.L. Michelet (1970) at <http://www.hegel.org/links.html/#texts>.

<sup>14</sup> See G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* and G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.

<sup>15</sup> Several contemporary philosophers point out this move. See for example, Adorno, "Situation" in *Aesthetic Theory*, translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor. (London: The Athlone Press, 1997); and further, S. Golding, "Curiosity", *Eight Technologies of Otherness*. (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 10 – 26.



‘This’ of the ‘Here’ and ‘Now’ is always-already mediated by the division between the here and the not Here. The terrain of the present, the “is” can only be understood in its necessary relation to the that which it is “not”. The Here passes into the not-Here, the not-Here negates itself in passing into the Here and affirming the identity of the This.<sup>16</sup> It is by means of the mediating Negation that Hegel attempts to demonstrate that nothing exists as an immediate first rather everything is always-already mediated.<sup>17</sup> Negation is Hegel’s tool or unsayable dynamic that allows him to evade giving a context to something that is not yet actualised but is immanently related to and has a place within the wholeness of the spiritual and ethical world.<sup>18</sup>

There is nothing first and independent except for the ontological necessity of the absolute negativity of the ascending motion of the whole, though even this motion cannot exist without its mediated content. This ontological necessity is inferred by the proposition that everything that exists, or finite reality, is posited by *Geist* (God, Spirit), according to Hegel’s dialectical logic of rational necessity. The infinite or absolute is present, but not yet known, neither treated methodologically from the outside as an unknowable, nor an immediate certainty. This “whole” can only become known, as a result of the contradictory/antagonistic experiences of consciousness that gradually realise it,

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<sup>16</sup> Hegel works within the framework of Fichte and Schelling reworkings of Kant’s metaphysics. Fichte in *The Science of Knowledge* developed the idea that the ego or self is active and self-legislating, but that it can only come to have knowledge of itself by positing a non-self as opposed to it. A self-conscious self is produced through the transcendence of self-reflection, which limits absolute activity in its resulting deposit of a self-conscious self and not-self. Schelling took this a step further in his assertion that because the knowing self is active, s/he gains self-knowledge not only through this action, but in the confirmation of her/his existence that this activity produces.

<sup>17</sup> D. Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger and After*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) pp. 38-56.

<sup>18</sup> Bringing to mind the well-known critique by Marx, ‘the point is not just to interpret the world, but to change it.’ K. Marx, “*Theses on Feuerbach*”, in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, edited by David McLellan. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), no. XI, pp. 156 – 158.

by the unfolding motion of the totalising dialectical synthesis.<sup>19</sup> As Hegel

writes:

“Becoming is in this way in a double determination. In one of them, *nothing* is immediate, that is, the determination starts from nothing which relates itself to being, or in other words changes into it; in the other, *being* is immediate, that is, the determination starts from being which changes into nothing: the former is coming-to-be and the latter is ceasing-to-be.

Both are the same, *becoming*, and although they differ so in direction they interpenetrate and paralyse each other. The one is *ceasing-to-be*: being passes over into nothing, but nothing is equally the opposite of itself, transition into being, coming-to-be. This coming-to-be is the other direction: nothing passes over into being, but being equally sublates itself and is rather transition into nothing, is ceasing-to-be. They are not reciprocally sublated – the one does not sublata the other externally – but each sublates itself in itself and is in its own self the opposite of itself.”<sup>20</sup>

It is in this way that Hegel argues for the actuality (subject) of the object, of an objective world.

At the level of sense-certainty “pure being at once splits up into what we have called the two ‘Thises’, one ‘This’ as I, the other ‘This’ as object.”<sup>21</sup>

Through reflection on this difference, Being discovers that neither is only immediately present, but each simultaneously mediated. Through the

determining movement of negation, the ‘I’ has a ‘sense-certainty’ only through the other as object.<sup>22</sup> A distinction is made between instance and essence.

Being is what is there, immediately seen, where as essence is what is not there

present. Geist being the essence of the world is present but veiled as the unseen

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<sup>19</sup> Crucial to Hegel’s teleological/dialectical system was the assumption that the ontological process was ultimately knowable to the human subject, whose rationality partakes of the general rationality permeating the whole.

<sup>20</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic: Doctrine of Being, Section One: Determinateness (Quality), Chapter 1: Being, C) Becoming, 2) “Moments of becoming: Coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be”*, in *The Hegel Reader*, p. 193.

<sup>21</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 59.

<sup>22</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 66-67.

source. As such it is indicated as a negative source.<sup>23</sup> If this could mean that the pornographical and all things bodily related would maintain the materiality of its suffering, then perhaps the Hegelian move would be all that one might require; for in this sense, the pornographical as Negative (source, concept or dynamic simultaneously veiling-unveiling its meaning), could, in an idealist world, sublimate different tonalities without jeopardizing its manner of fashioning its peculiar communal identities.

But for Hegel, negativity is a dynamic of the absolute and a manifestation of purity that is disclosed in the unfolding of the infinite multiplicity of living beings. Hegel's epistemology of the negative provides plurality to any given unity, concept or organisation and a method for isolating and exposing vanishing moments and fragments of an infinite system of multiplicity unfolding its synthetic unity. Hegel posits the individual as one such fragment of a system, or a systemised collective whole of an ethical community, *Sittlichkeit*, that reflects the wholeness of *Geist*. Unfortunately Hegel's notion of an individual and its relation to collective whole of the ethical state is one that becomes totalised and in the purity and mastery of its objective extension divorces itself from its bodily needs and pleasures.

An individual for Hegel is a multiple organisation that is conceived in abstraction from the absolute manifold but is at the same time internally related and connected to the living whole that is excluded from it. He writes:

“The unity is an organisation or an individual. It is self-evident that this life, whose manifold is regarded purely as being related and whose very existence is exactly this relation, can also be regarded as being differentiated within itself, as a mere multiplicity, because the relation

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<sup>23</sup> G. W. F Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 68 -70.

between the separated is not more intrinsic to it than the separation between that which is related. On the other hand, it must also be considered as capable of entering into relation with what is excluded from it, as capable of losing its individuality or being linked with what has been excluded.”<sup>24</sup>

Identity to Hegel is the self-reflexive relation of essence to itself. In negating itself by itself, it affirms its identity as the ground of itself. The ground is identical with what is grounded, whilst maintaining the distinctions that make it fully what it is - a self-differentiating unity whose totality exhausts all the possibilities of the real. For Hegel, reality is the actuality of essence manifesting itself through its negative relation with appearance as substance, that is to say its self-groundedness. Rational necessity is that which has its ground in itself, that of its own reason, for all that is actual is rational and vice versa.

The patterns that constitute the basis of reality demand that the subject's conformity with them is through their own individual choice and particularity. True individual self-determination is limited by the finite set of options available within the architectonics/ structures of the ethical state. The architectonics creates a variety of particular social spaces within which individuals can dwell.

“These particular substantive modes of interaction grow naturally from civil society, expressing natural groupings of self-interest, and they also express the rational divisions of the state.....When an individual chooses his mode of life, he internalises the identity offered by a group. This helps order his desires and impulses from within. Knowing and participating in the articulation of the state, he can will the common good and his own good at the same time.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, “*Fragment of a System*”, in *The Hegel Reader*, p. 34.

<sup>25</sup> D. Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger and After*, p. 104.



If the basis of a political unity is in a deeper shared *logos*, reason or will, which differs from the surface consciousness of the average citizen, how then, does the citizen know that the state is rational and that in her/his free decisions her/his is “willing the universal in the light of the universal” instead of pursuing his/her selfish interest?<sup>26</sup> For Hegel the answer lies in his famous statement, that ‘all that is real is rational’.<sup>27</sup>

It is precisely the expressive actuality, drawn from and rooted relationally in the realm of rational necessity, that allows for the ground to be a groundless ground, capable of movement and change.<sup>28</sup> Though this is to be understood within the Hegelian framework as a synthetic, constitutive unity whose elements are predetermined as homogeneously contained entities, by the movement of the whole, *Geist* of absolute thought. As Hegel writes the difficulty and necessity of the universal is the cognition of God, infinite and indeterminate. For Hegel God:

“... Has to be cognised, i.e., *determined by thinking*. But as opposed to simple *identity*, all determination is for the understanding only a restriction, i.e., a negation as such. Hence, all reality is to be taken only without restriction, i.e.’ as *indeterminate*, and God, as the essential sum of all realities or as the supremely real Essence, becomes the *simple abstraction*; while the only determination that remains available for him is the just as strictly abstract determinacy of *being*. Abstract *identity* (which is what is here also is called ‘concept’) and *being* are the two moments that reason seeks to unify; this unification is the *Ideal* of reason.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> D. Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger and After*, p. 114.

<sup>27</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, “Preface”, *Philosophy of the Right: Preface and Introduction*, in *The Hegel Reader*, p. 325. The exact quote reads, “what is rational is actual; and what is actual is real”.

<sup>28</sup> Following the Enlightenment theorists of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Mill in allowing for the separation of the church and state, meant that identity was necessarily contingent according to the dialectical movement of the synthesis. *Logos* was fixed in the very movement of absolute thought (*Geist*) becoming known to itself, through its expressive actuality.

<sup>29</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic: Preliminary Conception, §49, Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, translated by A.V. Miller, with additions by Leopold Von Hemming and K.L. Michelet (1970), at <http://www.hegel.org/links.html/#texts>.

This unification or ideal of reason expresses objectivity for Hegel through its link with the fullness of one's and the community's subjectivity.

The objective antinomy of time reflects this unification, or idealisation of reason; that is the antinomy between a moment and the "time needed by life".

As Hegel comments:

"The infinite being, filling the immeasurability of space, exists at the same time in a definite space, as is said, for instance, in the verse: "He whom all heaven's heaven ne'er contained, Lies now in Mary's womb."<sup>30</sup>

It is in this fashion that Hegel conceives of the mechanics of space and time. He names space as pure quantity, the immediate determination of nature or rather as the abstract universality of nature's self-externality. The pornographical, and with it pornography, is given no other alternative within the Hegelian speculative logic than marginalisation. The fact that space is 'external' makes a pre-determined essence the identity of any subject and the body in being relegated to 'space' is placed in a hypostatized relation to the more expressive – and free – Time.

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<sup>30</sup>Hegel is quoting a hymn by Martin Luther beginning 'Gelobet seist Du, Jesu Christ.' G.W.F. Hegel, "Fragment of a System", in *The Hegel Reader*, p. 37. It is through this conceptual dispute with Hegel, that Bataille put forward God as a whore. Bataille located the movement of absolute negativity within the sexual profanities of the sacred, within the religious appropriation of the erotic arts. As an individual each person is discontinuous for Bataille, and eroticism provides a path for establishing continuity of being in death. Carnality is a violation of this discontinuity and creates a rich source of anguish, as a regulated method of transgressing taboos that ruptures boundaries and joins human beings together on an intimate level. Bataille notes that eroticism opens up to otherness and forms the very foundations of the sacred. For him communities are fashioned and conjugated through tears, wounds and violation of boundaries.

Bataille locates the basis or origins of the processes of exchange and expenditure in the need to destroy and to lose, rather than that of the need of acquisition and the satisfaction of consumption. G. Bataille, "The Notion Of Expenditure" in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927 – 1939*, edited, introduced and translated by Allan Stoekl. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), pp. 116 – 129. It is the excesses of systems, the excreted waste products of laughter, tears, cries, poetry, and bodily excrements that create disequilibrium and expenditure without return of reciprocity or equivalence. For Bataille it is the heterogeneous elements of excess and loss, of chance and impossibility that form the base of a 'general economy.' It is these elements that are expressed through acts of sacrifice and bodily mutilation, which in turn rupture and mutilate the homogeneity of self. Bataille locates knowledge in the expenditures of energy and its bursts of self-blindness and heterogeneity. G. Bataille, *The Accursed Share: Volume I*, translated by Robert Hurley. (New York: Zone Books, 1991); G. Bataille, *The Accursed Share: Volumes II and III*, translated by Robert Hurley. (New York: Zone Books, 1993); G. Bataille, *Eroticism*, translated by Mary Dalwood. (London: Marion Boyers Publishers Ltd., 1994) and G. Bataille, *The Tears of Eros*, translated by Peter Connor. (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1989).

Within this indifference of space are immediately the three dimensions, diverse but as yet indeterminate. The negation of space begins as a point, an immediate differenceless self-externality, but as it sublates the relation formed of first other-being is itself spatial. In other words the negation of space is itself spatial and forms a line. The truth of other-being becomes concrete in the transcendence of space, whereby the line passes over into the plane of a surface, one that provides a determinateness or qualitative difference of the concept of space. As Hegel writes it is:

“ ... The restoration of the spatial totality which now contains the negative moment within itself, an *enclosing surface* which separates off a *single whole space*.”<sup>31</sup>

The self-externalisation as an enclosed space creates a pre-determined essence for the identity of any subject, and the body in being relegated to an externalised ‘space’ of an enclosed surface is placed in a hypostatised relation to an idealised notion of time. In such a way Hegel forms the basis for a kind of heterogeneous totalising of community without allowing for the marginality of unethical or a-radical forms of morality that transgress social boundaries and bodily proprieties.

For Hegel time is the development of this dialectical determination of space or rather time is the truth of space. Time is, as point, related to space and matures in the spatial determinations of line and plane, but in the sphere of self-externality it is the moment that negativity posits for itself. Hegel conceives of time as the negative unity of self-externality, an abstract and ideal being, which like space is continuous expressing as yet, no real difference. For Hegel, time is

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<sup>31</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, § 256, “*Mechanics: Space and Time*”, in *The Hegel Reader*, p. 265.

becoming directly intuited; any differences are purely momentary and as directly self-sublating they are determined as external, as external to themselves. In this way Hegel names time as the becoming rather than being a receptacle in which things are placed and flow. Or to rephrase this it is not because things are in time that they come-to-be or pass away, but that time itself is the becoming of coming-to-be and passing away.<sup>32</sup>

Hegel conceives of the dimensions of time, the present, future and past as the becoming of externality and its resolutions into differences of being as passing over into nothing and nothing as passing over into being. Hegel specifies the present as *now*, or as the immediate vanishing of these differences into *singularity*. Hegel names singularity as *place*, or as a spatial now of the posited identity of space and time. Such a singularity is exclusive of the other moments whilst being simultaneously continuous in them. A spatial singularity of place is immediately posited as temporal, or as *motion*, and collapses into its contradiction and existent unity of both, that of *matter*. Whilst bringing to life the notion of negation as a vital dynamic that creates surfaces of totalised spaces, placed as matter in motion, i.e. concepts and bodies, Hegel manages to marginalize the fractal singularity of the body and the pornographical only to replace it as ‘matter’.

For Hegel, matter forms the negative unity of the two moments of it’s self-attraction and self-repulsion, and he names this an ideal singularity, one not yet

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<sup>32</sup> As Hegel remarks: “The finite is perishable and *temporal* because, unlike the Notion, it is not in its own self total negativity; true, this negativity is immanent in it as its universal essence, but the finite is not adequate to this essence: it is *one-sided*, and consequently it is related to negativity as to the power that dominates it. The Notion, however, in its freely self-existent identity as  $I = I$ , is in and for itself absolute negativity and freedom. Time, therefore, has no power over the Notion, nor is the Notion in time or temporal; on the contrary, *it* is the power over time, which is this negativity only *qua* externality.” G.W.F. Hegel, § 258, “*Mechanics: Space and Time*”, in *The Hegel Reader*, p. 266.



posited as material but one that provides a centre, that of *gravity*. It is here that Hegel locates the constant striving motion of absolute negativity and the restlessness of striving to reach the centre. He states that:

“Gravity constitutes the substantiality of matter; this itself is the *nisus* [*Streben*], the striving to reach the *centre*; but – and this is the other essential determination of matter – this centre falls *outside it*. It can be said that matter is attracted by the centre, i.e. its existence as a self-external continuum is negated; but if the centre itself is conceived of as material; then the attraction is merely reciprocal, is at the same time a being-attracted, so that the centre again exists in distinction from them both. The centre, however, is not to be taken as material; for the characteristic of the material object is, precisely, to posit its centre *outside itself*. It is not the centre, but the striving to reach it, which is immanent in matter. Gravity is, so to speak, the confession of the nullity of the self-externality of matter in its being-for-itself, of its lack of self-subsistence, of its contradiction.”<sup>33</sup>

*Duration* is the universal of all of these nows, being the sublatedness of the process of things that do not endure, and eternity is the true present for Hegel.<sup>34</sup>

The dialectic posits the question of grounding the truth on the “is” and from this is posited what “ought” to be, or rather what will be-come through the movement of the expressive actualisation of *Geist*. For Hegel, the unity of gravity, the constitutive substance of the subject, is this ought, this striving to reach the centre, this longing and as Hegel writes this:

“... Unhappy *nisus* to which matter is eternally condemned; for this unity does not come to itself or reach itself.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, §262, “*Mechanics: Space and Time*”, in *The Hegel Reader*, p. 271.

<sup>34</sup> Hegel specifically remarks on this point in clarifying that: “The *finite* present is the *Now* fixed as *being* and distinguished as the concrete unity, and hence as the affirmative, from what is *negative*, from the abstract moments of past and future; but this being is itself only abstract, vanishing into nothing. Furthermore, in Nature where time is a *Now*, being does not reach the *existence* of the difference of these dimensions; they are, of necessity, only in subjective imagination, in *remembrance* and *fear* or *hope*. But the past and future of time as *being* in Nature, are space, for space is negated time; just as sublated space is immediately the point, which developed for itself is time.” G.W.F. Hegel, §259, “*Mechanics: Space and Time*”, in *The Hegel Reader*, p. 267.

<sup>35</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, §262, “*Mechanics: Space and Time*”, in *The Hegel Reader*, p. 272.

And yet the question of grounding the truth on the “is” is always-already immanent in/to the movement of absolute negativity or negation. For as the Idea passes into externality and creates an objective external world of nature, so does the subjectiveness of Spirit create a world external to itself. By means of the extension of subjectivity of Spirit, in its self-reflective creation of the ground itself, the “irrationality” of its natural world, its impulses and passions are rationalized.<sup>36</sup>

Hegel asserts that the fullness of the universality of reason expresses the purification of our perceptions and understandings by thinking. Hegel writes:

“*Thinking* of this fullness of being means stripping it of its form of the singularities and contingencies, and grasping it as universal being, necessary in and for itself, one that is self-determining and active in accordance with universal purposes, one that is diverse from that contingent and singular collection: [i.e.,] grasping it as God.”<sup>37</sup>

For Hegel it is the impulses and passions that concretely form the necessarily rational contingency of the self-grounding that establishes the will. In this way the will becomes, or is the fruit of the relational separation of nature and freedom.<sup>38</sup> Hegel’s concept of the will maintains the requirement of radical autonomy, necessary for freedom, in that it deduces the whole content out of itself; its own immanent rationality.

The individual self-will gains its ethical substance and expression within the mediation of the state, *Sittlichkeit*. The family is the first ethical root of the

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<sup>36</sup> Within the Enlightenment framework of Logos, of the centrality of reason, the natural world of passion and sexual activity is understood as irrational. For Kant it was to be suppressed, for Hegel it was to be used, but it will argued throughout this thesis that sex itself has a logic or a kind of harmony to it.

<sup>37</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic: Preliminary Conception, §50, Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, translated by A.V. Miller, with additions by Leopold Von Hemming and K.L. Michelet (1970), at <http://www.hegel.org/links.html/#texts>.

<sup>38</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 211-236.

state and the corporation forms the second.<sup>39</sup> Both are based and develop their substantiality from civil society and find their ethical expression and fulfilment within the state. As being part of the corporation the family has its livelihood or secure resources guaranteed and its capabilities recognised. A person is somebody in belonging to and being a member of a whole community, and in this way one's honour is in one's estate.

Despite being able to form a conceptual journey of representation, pornography always fails to be placed within the higher realms of a spiritual journey of absolute knowing, and is judged as worthless in such respects. Any conceptual representation of pornography within the Hegelian speculative logic must recognise the dishonour that it brings to the relationship between the family and the corporation. As Hegel remarks the disorganization of civil society revolves around “the sanctity of marriage and the honour attaching to the corporation.”<sup>40</sup> In other words sexual disorder, or sexual pleasure outside of the sanctity of marriage, is conceived of here as being connected to the breakdown of public order.

The constitution of *Geist* in the creation of an objective world external to the subject is brought about in the actualisation of the spiritual institutions of law, morality and the state. The state to Hegel is the ethical ground of the absolute *Sittlichkeit*. The state becomes or always-already is the “architectonics of life's rationality”, in that it sets the limits and determines the values given to

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<sup>39</sup> As Hegel writes: “The family, as the *immediate substantiality* of spirit, has as its determination the spirit's *feeling [Empfindung]* of its own unity, which is *love*. Thus, the disposition [appropriate to the family] is to have self-consciousness of one's individuality *within this unity* as essentially which has being in and for itself, so that one is present in it not as an independent person [*eine Person für sich*] but as a *member*.” G.W.F. Hegel, §158, “*Philosophy of Right: Ethical Life*”, in *The Hegel Reader*, p. 359.

<sup>40</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, §255, 2. *Civil Society*, c) *The Police and the Corporation*, “*Philosophy of Right: Ethical Life*”, in *The Hegel Reader*, p. 379.

the different circles of public life and their rights.<sup>41</sup> Morality is only given a concrete content and realisation through the notion of a fuller community.

“‘*Sittlichkeit*’ refers to the moral obligations I have to an on going community of which I am part. These obligations are based on established norms and uses.....The crucial characteristic of *Sittlichkeit* is that it enjoins us to bring about what already is. This is a paradoxical way of putting it, but in fact the common life which is the basis of my *sittlich* obligation is already there in existence. It is in virtue of its being an ongoing affair that I have these obligations; and my fulfilment of these obligations is what sustains it and keeps it in being. Hence in *Sittlichkeit*, there is no gap between what ought to be and what is, between *Sollen* and *Sein*.

With *Moralitat*, the opposite holds. Here we have an obligation to realise something that does not exist. What ought to be contrasts with what is. And connected with this, the obligation holds of me not in virtue of being part of a larger community life, but as an individual rational will.”<sup>42</sup>

In distinguishing between ethics and morality, Hegel runs counter to the moral precepts of liberalism:<sup>43</sup>

“Because the realisation of the Idea requires that man be part of a larger life in society, moral life reaches its highest realisation in *Sittlichkeit*. This highest realisation is an achievement, of course, it is not present throughout history, and there are even periods where public life has been

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<sup>41</sup> Hegel uses an architectonics that expresses the trajectory of the movement in the articulation of life’s “contradictories”, one that can voice the harmony of the ethical state and the phases of public life. An architectonic expresses the ethics of a scientific systematisation of knowledge for modernist thinkers such as Hegel. He defines the ‘architectonics of state’s rationality’ as the social system of “the marked phases of public life, one that forms a ‘supreme science of state architecture’”. Hegel writes in his preface for *Philosophy of the Right*, “Now the Organic connection of the manifold branches of the social system is the architectonics of the state’s rationality, and in this supreme science of state architecture the strength of the whole, is made to depend upon the harmony of all the clearly marked phases of public life, and the stability of every pillar, arch, and buttress of the social edifice.” G. W. F. Hegel, *Preface, The Philosophy of Right*, translated by T. M. Knox (1821), at <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/pr/preface.htm>

<sup>42</sup> C. Taylor, *Hegel*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 376.

<sup>43</sup> The liberalism of Hobbes and Locke, established the notion of individual freedom on an obligation to an external authority of the monarchy or state, which could not guarantee the necessary social cohesion. Rousseau, in attempting to solve this impasse, linked the radical autonomy of the moral will. The common good was consequently based on an arbitrary collection of particular wills. Hegel argued that the general will could only ever be an abstract majority based on a proxy of representation of the true. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 372- 374. The liberal ‘utilitarian’ ethics of Bentham and Mill allowed for the value attributed to objects to be one that must lie outside of themselves, in their use. The ends, or goal that serves to regulate the subject’s actions as one of utility of objects and policies which enabled their possibility of becoming a means for the contingency of human desire.



so emptied of spirit, that *Moralitat* expresses something higher. But the fulfilment of morality comes in a realised *Sittlichkeit*.”<sup>44</sup>

For Hegel the role of community is paramount and one cannot attain the fullness of an ethical life without membership of the community. In differentiating between ethics and morality Hegel looks at the way in which ethics/culture informs one’s moral conduct – in this sense, morality/ the moral code is part of a ‘discourse.’ Or to rephrase this, for Hegel, the moral code and conduct is connected to the individual will and is directly related to the individual’s ‘being-in-itself’, though to be fully ‘for-itself’ the individual must be recognised as a member of the community; by which point he/she let’s go, or ‘gives up’ the ‘selfishness of his/her particular desires in order to be part of the ‘ethical’, ‘greater good’ of the state. This is the fulfilment; and pornography, in this sense has no place to go but downward within social standing, value and prestige.

Civil society and culture remain at the level of abstraction for Hegel.

“Individuals in their independent freedom ....have themselves as their goal - a system of social atoms.”<sup>45</sup>

The difficulty that Hegel has with freedom at the level of civil society is that the individual is still beholden to the contingent content of her/his desires and the external fate generated by the decisions of others on the market. For Hegel: “... The will becomes actual only as subjective and contingent.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 377.

<sup>45</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Part iii: The Philosophy of the Mind*, §523, C) *Moral Life or Social Ethics*, b) *Civil Society*, in *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, translated by A.V. Miller, with additions by Leopold Von Hemming and K.L. Michelet (1970) at <http://www.hegel.org/links.html/#texts>

<sup>46</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Part iii: The Philosophy of Mind*, § 475 - 478, *Mind Subjective, Psychology, Mind, B) Mind Practical*, b) *Impulses and Choices*, in *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, translated by A.V. Miller, with additions by Leopold Von Hemming and K.L. Michelet (1970) at <http://www.hegel.org/links.html/#texts>

Hegel posits that the will is a process of self-withdrawal that affirms the subject's non-identity with any particular item among the subject's desires, needs and impulses. Hegel's conception of freedom is one of self-determination whereby the subject posits a goal. But:

“An impulse is simply a unidirectional urge and thus has no measuring rod in itself, so the determination of its subordination or sacrifice is the contingent decision of the arbitrary will which in deciding, may proceed either by using intelligence to calculate which impulse will give it the most satisfaction, or else in accordance with any other optional consideration.”<sup>47</sup>

There are many possible rules and no way to derive only one of them; the choice remains arbitrary. For true self-determination there has to be something that can serve as a measure. This is provided by the mediating role of the ethical state.

The state is the actuality of the ethical Idea, of the ethical Spirit; its unfolding substantiation moves according to an externalisation of space and a hypostatised relationship to Time. Such an ideological predetermination of a subjective identity is based on a notion of essence and a bloodless, pure sense of body. The pornographical is posited as dishonourable and marginal to this conceptual enclosure and ideological predetermination of the ethical system. The pornographical communities provide an ethical structure that evades or perhaps persists despite state mediation and enclosure. Pornography's dynamic is one that is bloody, stripped of moral consolation in presenting the unspeakable, in demonstrating the fluidities of sexual roles, the shifting of identities, the complicity of ideologies and the confusion between victims and oppressors. The pornographical communities operate through a peculiar 'ana-

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<sup>47</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, §17, *The Philosophy of Right*, translated by T. M. Knox (1821), at <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/pr/preface.htm>

linguistic' language structure that belongs paradoxically to the political presence of bodies, of skin.<sup>48</sup> It forms an 'ana-aesthetic'.<sup>49</sup>

The individual needs to find their place within the (objective) structures of mutual recognition of a rationally structured community, a social whole whose partition into roles and ways of life is itself inherently rational in that it is derived from the motions of the concept.

“True freedom exists as a customary moral life (Sittlichkeit) in which the will does not have subjective or selfish content but universal content for its goals.”<sup>50</sup>

The universal is determinate in and for itself. The content that differentiates and completes the whole is not some limitation from outside the universal but a positive progression within the whole's self-identity.<sup>51</sup>

The category of thought that could provide the necessary totality that Hegel envisioned in the movement of the absolute Idea is that of teleology. This category is one where the fulfilments of ends are external to things. It has its place in the material artefacts and finite goals or activities of the subject. In this category's maintenance of the separation of content and form Hegel's exposition of *Geist* is lost. The inadequate notion is that of external teleology.

“On this view, I stand over against an external world. I have at first a purely subjective goal, and I put it into effect. So External Teleology presupposes at the start a separation between matter and form which is to be fulfilled. And this separation is not really overcome, since the form is

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<sup>48</sup> The notion of the pornographical being 'ana-linguistic', or forming a kind of a-radicality to any linguistic totality is raised in the introduction, supra pp. 1 – 23, and is considered in detail in chapter two, supra pp. 82 -125.

<sup>49</sup> As is introduced in the introduction, supra pp. 1- 23, and is discussed in greater detail in chapter 4, supra, pp. 176 – 221.

<sup>50</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, Part iii: The Philosophy of Mind, § 469, *Mind Subjective, Psychology, Mind, B) Mind Practical in Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, translated by A.V. Miller, with additions by Leopold Von Hemming and K.L. Michelet (1970) at <http://www.hegel.org/links.html/#texts>

<sup>51</sup> D. Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger and After*, pp. 65-69.

just something I impose on pre-existing matter, it does not come from matter itself.”<sup>52</sup>

This is the case with the teleological explanation of things posited in the world to serve the intentions/ embodiment of Geist. The objects are formed from outside and remain indifferent to this form or purpose. It does not arise from the objects themselves. The purpose remains hidden unless Geist comes to be known, for truth is in the knowing. However, with the “cunning of reason”, the cunning of Geist allows for finite beings to follow their own passions and interests. Whatever happens in the history of the ethical state is always-already the fulfilment of the intentions of Geist.

However the distinction made between *Sittlichkeit* and *Moralität*, allows for the possibility of rethinking morality as open to individual corruption, and ethics as the regulative trajectory, or as the codes and techniques of conduct, capable of differentiating between the moral rules and customs. In this way it is possible to be morally corrupt, whilst being ethically substantial. Pornography could be judged as morally corrupt whilst still being ethically substantial in its architectonic grounding. The problem remains one of judgement.

The problem inherent in Hegel’s logic is its inability to demonstrate the actualisation of the movement of absolute negativity in history, for the terrain of absolute thought is the motor force of history, for Hegel. With Geist immanent in each of the moments of the movement of the whole, it becomes clear that the dialectic itself rests upon a final cause or telos that remains external to it. Only if history has been completed, and *Geist*’ plan for humanity be known, could Hegel dispense with the need to assert a desire for actualisation to make the

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<sup>52</sup> C. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 323.



various developments compulsory for humankind. Politics and the body are refused as a determination of a “pure” history.

### 1.2 A paradox of ethical suspension: Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard unravels the Hegelian architectonics of the state’s rationality in *Fear and Trembling*, and yet, as will be shown, Kierkegaard solves one difficulty but paradoxically brings in a separate issue regarding the body and a concept of sin.<sup>53</sup> Kierkegaard is useful in discussing the pornographical as he raises the idea that ethics forms a paradox, albeit one of pluralism. There is no sense of singularity or of the importance of flesh and sinew, and the invasions of bodily proprieties with Kierkegaard. However, the paradox of ethics that Kierkegaard conceptualises, in this book, places the singular individual higher than the universal and holds the ethical teleology in suspension.<sup>54</sup> Kierkegaard reveals what it means to dwell in the borderlands of faith and its paradoxical ethics. Whilst there is no comparison between faith and pornography, to dwell in the pornographical is to dwell anonymously in a public domain and to witness the anaesthetic, the marginalized sections of cultural predilections that do not quite measure up to the social sensibilities.

In placing the individual higher than the community in its relation to the

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<sup>53</sup> And yet, as will see, even with this ‘unsayable something’, Kierkegaard’s move gets us closer but not yet at a fuller understanding and use of the pornographical. He helps muddy the waters, at the very least. The main text that this chapter utilizes for this argument is S. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, translated and introduced by Alastair Hannay. (London: Penguin Books, 1985). This book has been chosen as the main focus for this chapter as it deals specifically with a paradox of ethics revealed by the leap of passion, of faith and its reliance on absurdity. *Fear and Trembling* raises questions about what it means to witness a paradox and despite its ability to be translated into the universal. Other books of Kierkegaard that this thesis draws upon are: S. Kierkegaard, *Either/ Or: A Fragment of Life*, translated by A. Hannay. (London: Penguin Books, 1992); S. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, translated by H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); S. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, translated by A. Hannay. (London: Penguin Books, 1989); and S. Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, edited by H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.)

<sup>54</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 83 – 95.

absolute, the individual has no ability to express the anguish of faith in the strength of absurdity. Without mediation there can be no relief of speech, as that would translate the individual into the universal. The individual, in such a situation, has to bear the responsibility of his/her secret in silence. It is this silence of his/her trembling distress and anguish that forms the weight of the responsibility of witnessing his/her incommensurability and concealment from the universal. The pornographical is a harsh domain, coloured by a brutal and crude humour of the comic, relying on every stereotype imaginable that might be sexual, aesthetically offensive and crass.<sup>55</sup>

Restaging the theological story of Abraham's sacrifice (or murder) on Mount Moriah of his only and beloved son Isaac, Kierkegaard delves into the murky waters of the passions of faith, showing how the ethical is neither a feature of dogmatic belief or individual will. Kierkegaard writes that in fact 'faith begins where thinking leaves off':<sup>56</sup>

"The ethical expression for what Abraham did is that he was willing to murder Isaac; the religious expression is that he was willing to sacrifice Isaac; but in this contradiction lies the very anguish that can indeed make one sleepless; and yet without that anguish Abraham is not the one he is."<sup>57</sup>

Kierkegaard stresses that it is only through monstrous and paradoxical passion of faith that Abraham's story can be approached.

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<sup>55</sup> As Kipnis remarks: "As with transvestite porn and fat porn, pornography can provide a home for those narratives exiled from sanctioned speech and mainstream political discourse, making pornography, in essence, an oppositional political form." L. Kipnis, *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America*, p. 123.

<sup>56</sup> He writes: "(The) extract from the story of Abraham its dialectical element, in the form of *Problemata*, in order to see how monstrous a paradox faith is, a paradox which gives Isaac back to Abraham, which no thought can grasp because faith begins precisely where thinking leaves off." S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, "Preamble from the Heart", *Fear and Trembling*, p. 82.

<sup>57</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, "Preamble from the Heart", *Fear and Trembling*, p. 60.

For Kierkegaard every movement of infinity occurs only through passion, rather than through the movement of a self-fulfilling substance, for no reflection can bring about such a movement.<sup>58</sup> Kierkegaard makes it clear that there is more to the creation and maintenance of any community than acts that precipitate reflection and recognition from its members. Faith is a passion; no human being is excluded from it; and passion unites all human life.<sup>59</sup> It is the essential ingredient of passion that forms the building blocks of an ethical community and its language structures of taste and individual autonomy. Kierkegaard's suggestion that the movement of infinity is one created through, or rather by a leap of faith, and its movement of a particular kind of resignation in relation to a question of absurdity, allows us to approach the ethical in terms of its paradox.

Whilst Kierkegaard's focus is welded to the plurality of faith and its ethical paradox and it may seem as if this has very little to do with pornography, Kierkegaard serves as a useful method for approaching or rather coming within reach of the grisly singularity that is pornography and the pornographical communities. Both faith and pornography share the same impossible terrain, situated on the margins of a dialectical aesthetics and ethics, of an ethical paradox – without a universal mediation or wholeness. Both share the essential and murky ingredient of bodily passion, whether it is one of faith, lust or humour, which forms the organization of an ethical community and its language

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<sup>58</sup> Kierkegaard is dismissive of Hegel here in explaining everything through mediation and yet omitting the key ingredient to the 'perpetual leap in life' of passion that movement requires. As Kierkegaard writes: "What we lack today is not reflection but passion. For that reason our age is really in a sense too tenacious of life to die, for dying is one of the most remarkable leaps, and a small verse has always greatly attracted me, because having wished himself all the good and simple things in life in five or six lines previously, the poet ends thus: '*ein seliger Sprung in die Ewigkeit*' [a blessed leap into eternity]." S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, "Preamble from the Heart", *Fear and Trembling*, p. 71.

<sup>59</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, "Problema I", *Fear and Trembling*, p. 95.

structures of taste and individual autonomy. No human being is excluded from the pornographical; as such it names thinking as a sexual bodily activity.

Kierkegaard asserts the ability of what he names a ‘knight of faith’, rather than a tragic hero in order to distinguish between the aesthetic and ethical realms of a dialectical journey. He defines a ‘knight of faith, as one who:

“... Is at every moment making the movement of infinity. He drains in infinite resignation the deep sorrow of existence, he knows the bliss of infinity, he has felt the pain of renouncing everything, whatever is most precious in the world, and yet to him finitude tastes as good as to one who had never known anything higher, for his remaining in the finite bore no trace of a stunted, anxious training, and still he has this sense of being secure to take pleasure in it, as though it were the most certain thing of all. And yet, and yet the whole earthly form he presents is new creation on the strength of the absurd. He resigned everything infinitely, and then took everything back on the strength of the absurd.”<sup>60</sup>

He puts forward that a knight of faith is one of the greatest and hardest thing to be; it is no simple matter of performing a duty.

Kierkegaard’s knight of faith needs to be a dancer, to be able to leap in a particular manner that creates a movement of infinity, in order to make the paradoxical movement of a leap of faith.<sup>61</sup> This is a very different way to define what it means to think and is a step away from the Hegelian concept, as well as a move closer to the pornographical. The hero of faith performs the hardest task for all dancers; he/she leaps, as Kierkegaard writes:

“... Straight into a definite position, so that not for a second does he have to catch at the position but stands there in the leap itself”.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, “Preamble from the Heart”, *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 69 - 70.

<sup>61</sup> The question and specific nature of a leap will be addressed further in this chapter and throughout this thesis with Heidegger’s ‘event of appropriation’. With such a framework the principle of identity becomes a leap out of metaphysics or an attitude of representational thinking. Heidegger names this leap as a spring, a spring that springs away from the ground into an abyss, a spring towards the realm of belonging of Being and us, that of the event of appropriation. M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, translated by J. Stambaugh. (Harper & Row Publishers: New York, 1969), pp. 30 – 41.

<sup>62</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, “Preamble from the Heart”, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 70.



This standing there within the leap itself, caught in the rebounding movement of infinity is what this thesis is naming the anaesthetic, it comes closer to approaching the movement of the pornographical. Such a leap requires the focus and concentration of the whole of his/her life's content, without this his/her soul would be disintegrated from the start and the movement could not be made. In this way Kierkegaard contrasts faith to the passions of irony and humour, for these he comments merely:

“... Reflect also upon themselves and belong in the sphere of infinite resignation, they owe their resilience to the individual's incommensurability with reality.”<sup>63</sup>

For faith is no aesthetic emotion; it is no immediate infatuation rather it is the paradox of existence. It is the ‘incommensurability with reality’ that creates a kind of witnessing that comes from a marginalized lifestyle.

Kierkegaard places faith as something higher than the plane of aesthetics because it presupposes resignation. It is a specific kind of resignation that Kierkegaard affirms, one that allows an individual to be resigned to walking his/her path, one that does not facilitate any wavering from the journey at hand. Such a type of resignation lays the ground for a leap, a leap of the dancer that creates a movement of infinity and suspends the ethical teleology within its movement.<sup>64</sup> Kierkegaard comes close to approaching the pornographical here in terms of it's being an ‘ana-aesthetic’.<sup>65</sup> It is important here that Kierkegaard creates a different pathway of the installation of meaning and of thought, one

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<sup>63</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, “Preamble from the Heart”, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 80.

<sup>64</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, “Preamble from the Heart”, *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 70 - 82.

<sup>65</sup> The notion of the pornographical as an ‘ana-aesthetic’ is discussed in greater detail in the introduction, supra pp. 1 -23, and in chapter four, supra pp. 176 - 221.

that draws infinity towards the finite, and reconfigures a relationship of concealing-revealing. In the movement of resignation the knight of faith not only renounces everything, but also leaps to make the courageous movement of faith on the strength of the absurd that in faith he/she receives everything.

As Kierkegaard points out it is through faith that: “Abraham did not renounce his claim on Isaac, through his faith he received Isaac.”<sup>66</sup> It is a question of temporality for Kierkegaard; it pivots upon finitude. It is a kind of finitude that suspends the real in an act of resignation that draws its strength from that of the absurd, and in doing so creates a mark or moment of meaning, one that differs from a conceptual fullness but is nevertheless concrete. He writes:

“I am able by my own strength to renounce everything, and then find peace and repose in the pain; I can put up with everything even if that demon, more horrifying than the skull and bones that put terror into men’s hearts – even if madness itself were to hold up some fool’s costume before my eyes and I could tell from its look that it was I who was to put it on; I can still save my soul as long as it is more important for me that my love of God should triumph in me than my worldly happiness. A man can still, in that last moment, concentrate his whole soul in a single glance towards the heaven from which all good gifts come, and this glance is something both he and the one he seeks understand; it means he has nevertheless remained true to his love.”<sup>67</sup>

It is only on the strength of the absurd that one can receive something that belongs to finitude, for one’s own energy, in such a movement, is always employed in the act of resignation, of renouncing everything. With the pornographical such energy is libidinal.

The plurality of the paradoxical nature of faith and the singularity of pornography, fall outside of a Hegelian dialectical logic of ethics but remain

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<sup>66</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, “Preamble from the Heart”, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 77.

<sup>67</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, “Preamble from the Heart”, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 78.

well within the remit set by Kierkegaard. This is not to make a comparison or even to draw a parallel between faith – a passion, and pornography – a product, but rather to place them as sharing the same impossible terrain of a paradox of ethics, without a universal mediation or wholeness; of a strange leap within and out of a totalising metaphysics. This is supportive too for this discussion in that it enables the possibility of a way in which to rethink the pornographical as a fragment, a singularity that is not abstract despite its lack of incorporation within Hegel’s architectonics and *Sittlichkeit*. These lead to a kind of heterogeneous totalising of community without allowing for the marginality of unethical or a-radical forms of morality that are part of the pornographical and of ‘playing with’ social boundaries around bodily disgust and ‘good’ manners.

The Hegelian dialectic posits aesthetics as the immediacy of unreflective knowledge of the Absolute Mind and religion provides the substance of vision and narrative structure to Absolute Knowledge.<sup>68</sup> For Hegel, philosophy is the highest manifestation of the Absolute Mind, and it is within this movement that the forms of consciousness, of art and religion, manifest themselves and acquire the fullness of their conceptual, rational expression. For Kierkegaard considers an aesthetic life as one committed to immediacy and in dissolving the Hegelian dialectic he places faith as both an aesthetic immediacy, as a life “absolutely committed to relative ends” and as something so much more than an immediate inclination, something at the core of the paradox of existence.<sup>69</sup> Faith lies in a

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<sup>68</sup> These are part of Hegel’s architectonics of life’s rationality. Supra pp. 30 – 48.

<sup>69</sup> Alastair Hannay, in his introduction to *Fear and Trembling*, raises this statement taken from Kierkegaard’s later and major dialectical work, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. He writes that to “treat something aesthetically is to grasp it in terms of the immediate impact it makes, of how it strikes you in the here and now, of its tendency to attract or to repel you. In a more general way it is, in Kierkegaard’s terms, also to treat life itself as a repository of objects of longing or loathing, as well as degrees of lesser affect in between, in short as a pool of goods (of whatever kind) to be secured and the lack of them to be

non-conceptual plane somewhere between aesthetics and ethics. Kierkegaard is beneficial here with the questions he raises over the hegemonic details of Hegel's concept of aesthetics. He raises ways of looking at how aesthetics are posited in the lofty social hierarchies that create an ethical community and ways of thinking. Hegel's narrow vision of aesthetics and the role of the imagination, in the movement of absolute knowledge, cleave out a method of thought that is dominated by a religious idealism and the clean efficiency of reason. It is not only pornography that falls short of such a 'pure' rationality, being grasped as nothing other than immoral, but as Kierkegaard argues, faith itself cannot be approached in such a manner.

The ethical is the universal in Hegel's dialectical becoming of Geist. As a universal, the ethical applies to everyone; it applies at every moment, but for Kierkegaard the problem lies in the teleological unfolding. He comments:

"It rests immanently in itself, has nothing outside of itself that is its *telos* [end, purpose] but is itself the *telos* for everything outside, and when that is taken up into it, it has no further to go. Seen as an immediate, no more than sensate and psychic, being, the single individual is the particular that has its *telos* in the universal, and the individual's ethical task is always to express himself in this, to abrogate his particularity so as to become the universal."<sup>70</sup>

In asserting his/her particularity a single individual would place himself/herself in a position of direct opposition to the universal. A reconciliation with the ethical universal could consequently only be brought about by the individual recognising his /her behaviour as a sin.<sup>71</sup>

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avoided." As Hannay remarks for Kierkegaard to posit faith as an aesthetic immediacy is of vital importance to his challenge of the Hegelian dialectic. A. Hannay in S. Kierkegaard, "Introduction", *Fear and Trembling*, p. 9.

<sup>70</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, "Problema I: Is there a teleological suspension of the ethical?", *Fear and Trembling*, p. 83.

<sup>71</sup> Kierkegaard states: "Whenever, having entered the universal, the single individual feels an urge to assert



It is here that Kierkegaard locates the paradox of faith that Hegel leaves under-explored, for faith is such a paradoxical relation, in which the particular is higher than the universal. For Kierkegaard a paradox remains ‘inaccessible to thought’ and such lingers as incommunicable; it cannot be recuperated into a heterogeneous totalised concept or mutually self-reflective community. Kierkegaard introduces a concept of witnessing that cannot be communicated; what is witnessed is ‘unutterable’. This concept enables for the liberal notion of individual to be rethought, for if it’s ethical relationship to the universal is superfluous and the individual’s relationship to the absolute remains unutterable, then the privacy and the autonomy of an individual intensely persist as peculiar and incommunicable. This enables the pornographical as an anaesthetic to be approached with respect to its own peculiar inhabitation and acts of witnessing by ‘de-individualised’ subjects.<sup>72</sup> To Kierkegaard this paradox of faith is more than a state of temptation for Abraham acts on the strength of the absurd, and it is exactly an act of absurdity and the energetic strength of such an act that places a single individual higher than the ethical plane of the universal.<sup>73</sup>

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his particularity, he is in a state of temptation, from which he can extricate himself only by surrendering his particularity to the universal in repentance. If that is the highest that can be said of man and his existence, then the ethical and a person’s eternal blessedness, which is his *telos* in all eternity and at every moment, are identical; for in that case would be a contradiction to say that one surrendered the *telos* (i.e. suspended it *teleologically*) since by suspending the *telos* one would be forfeiting it, while what is said to be suspended in this sense is not forfeited but preserved in something higher, the latter being precisely its *telos*.” S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, “*Problema I: Is there a teleological suspension of the ethical?*”, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 83.

<sup>72</sup> This sense of an individual/ subject as ‘fourth person singular’ is discussed in greater detail in the introduction, supra pp. 1 – 23; in chapter two through, the nuances of the ‘ana-linguistic’ nature of pornography; through fascination and through a philosophy of pleasure, supra pp. 82 - 125, in chapter four as an ana-aesthetic, supra pp. 176- 221; and in chapter through the notion of mimesis and mimetic bodies and their communal creations of fantasy and fetish, supra pp. 222 - 237.

<sup>73</sup> For such a paradox of ethics to be mediated Abraham would have to admit that he was in a state of temptation and not sacrifice Isaac or he would have to repent such a sacrificial act and return to the universal seeking redemption.

If such a task could be defined as a temptation then it would be a temptation of the ethical itself. However an ethical duty is the expression of God's will, and as such it makes little sense to claim that in doing his ethical duty Abraham resisted the temptation of fulfilling God's will. Abraham's action bears no relation to the universal; his sacrifice of Isaac was done for God, out of his love and duty to God. He strove at all times to even maintain Isaac's faith in God. His actions were not those of a tragic hero but of a knight of faith committed to his own private understanding; his own unmediated relationship to the absolute.

In order to begin to approach the grisly and singular, ideological entity of pornography and the pornographical communities this chapter has looked at a selection of the works of these two metaphysical thinkers and the marginality of pornography. The plurality of faith and its ethical paradox, and the singularity of pornography, lie in the murky borderlands of a realm that is uncapturable by neither the architectonics of Hegel's aesthetics nor *Sittlichkeit*. Yet it is the essential ingredient of bodily passion, whether it is faith, lust or humour, which forms the building blocks of an ethical community and its language structures of taste and individual autonomy.

Kierkegaard is fascinated by how Abraham can exist in such extremities at the particular in suspended opposition to the universal. Such a man cannot be wept over; cannot be pitied. Kierkegaard finds Abraham both admirable and appalling; a lonely figure to be approached with a kind of holy terror. Abraham gives up the universal in order to grasp something higher still that is not the universal; he teleologically suspends the ethical. Abraham had faith. As Kierkegaard comments:

“That is the paradox that keeps him at the extremity and which he cannot make himself as the single individual in an absolute relation to the absolute. Is he justified? His justification is, once again, the paradox; for if he is the paradox it is not by virtue of being anything universal but of being the particular.”<sup>74</sup>

To dwell in the extremities of the boundary lands between aesthetics and ethics is dwell in the paradox of faith; it is to dwell without relief of the distress, the agony and the fear of the paradox. For Kierkegaard it is precisely this lack of relief, this endurance that makes a leap of greatness. With regards to the pornographical, it is the brutality of such of dwelling that is ‘incommensurable with reality’, that creates its ‘ana-aesthetic’, alongside its employment of crass, comic humour and gestures that accompany the witnessing of the pornographical.

One of the important aspects of Abraham’s journey to Kierkegaard is this endurance that is needed to make a leap of faith. Abraham’s journey is incommunicable to his community; he must remain involved with his peers, with Sarah and with Isaac, whilst being infinitely distanced from them through his secret knowledge of his deeds to come. Kierkegaard defines the paradox of faith as an incommensurability between a new interiority and the exterior. It is this that provides the inexpressibility of a paradoxical faith, of a movement of infinity. For faith to remain unmediated by the universal the single individual must be unable to make him/herself intelligible to anyone.<sup>75</sup> The fear, the trembling of the anguish that Abraham endures in the paradox means he is

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<sup>74</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, “*Problema I: Is there a teleological suspension of the ethical?*”, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 90.

<sup>75</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, “*Problema II: Is there an absolute duty to God?*”, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 99.

utterly incapable of making himself understood. He must sacrifice his only son, Isaac who he loves most in the world. Abraham must do this in such a way so that Isaac keeps his faith and love of God. He does this for his love of God, on the strength of the absurd hope that he will get Isaac back.

The passion of Abraham's concentration must have been intense.

Kierkegaard notes that:

“He knows it is beautiful to be born to the particular with the universal as his friendly abode, which receives him straightaway with open arms when he wishes to stay there. But he also knows that higher up there winds a lonely path, narrow and steep; he knows it is terrible to be born in solitude outside the universal, to walk without meeting a single traveller. He knows very well where he is, and how he is related to men. Humanly speaking he is insane and cannot make himself understood to anyone. And yet ‘insane’ is the mildest expression for him.”<sup>76</sup>

Abraham was a witness, exiled from human discourse, assigned to the solitude of his trembling, his faith an affront to humanity. Kierkegaard notes that:

“The true knight of faith is a witness, never a teacher, and in this lies the deep humanity in him which is worth more than this foolish concern for others' weal and woe which is honoured under the name of sympathy, but which is really nothing but vanity. A person who wants only to be a witness confesses thereby that no one, not even the least, needs another person's sympathy, or is to be put down so another can raise himself up.”<sup>77</sup>

It is through a notion of witnessing that Kierkegaard delves into the act of concealment and disclosure. Recognition and concealment are crucial dynamics in the establishment of any meaning throughout the ages and provides a vital ingredient for the dramatic arts and of cultural narrative structures. Kierkegaard notes that in Greek tragedies the dramatic epic springs from an obscure and

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<sup>76</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, “*Problema II: Is there an absolute duty to God?*”, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 103.

<sup>77</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, “*Problema II: Is there an absolute duty to God?*”, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 107.



hidden origin of Fate, whereas in modern reflective tragedies fate has been incorporated within a dramatic consciousness that observes itself. Modernity has bestowed the acts of concealment (tension) and disclosure (relaxation) as the hero's responsibility and free act.

The pornographical is 'brought forth' and witnessed through the comportment of a *technē* of comic humour.<sup>78</sup> Kierkegaard locates the key for the formulation of modern comedy within the act of concealment and disclosure. In highlighting the difference between the paradox of ethics and aesthetic concealment, he remarks that:

“If a person doing the hiding, i.e. the one who puts the dramatic yeast into play, hides something nonsensical, we have comedy. But if the concealer is related to the idea, he may come close to being a tragic hero.”<sup>79</sup>

Modernity's relationship to comedy makes an essential comment for Kierkegaard and reveals what he names as a turning point in human affairs. A turning point that he places within the category of crisis in noting that modernity has fallen victim to the comic.<sup>80</sup> For Kierkegaard what has been lost is the anguish and horror of the dark passions that lie concealed within every human life and alongside this the courage to believe in the spirit, rather than abjection.

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<sup>78</sup> This is looked at in more depth in chapter three, supra pp. 126- 175.

<sup>79</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, “*Problema III: Was it ethically defensible of Abraham to conceal his purpose from Sarah, from Eleazar, from Isaac?*”, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 111. This thesis develops this notion of revealing the concealing of something nonsensical as comedy in naming the pornographical *technē* as one of comic humour. See the introduction, supra pp. 1 – 23, and chapter three, supra pp. 126 – 175.

<sup>80</sup> Kierkegaard laments that: “Just as a demonic person always reveals himself without understanding himself, our age betrays its own defects in a kind of clairvoyance, for it always calling for the comical.... Does this age really need a ridiculous *Erscheinung* [appearance, show] of an enthusiast in order to have something to laugh at? Or does it not rather need such an enthusiastic figure in reality to remind it of what it has forgotten?” S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, “*Problema III: Was it ethically defensible of Abraham to conceal his purpose from Sarah, from Eleazar, from Isaac?*”, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 127.

A sense of disgust and shame with the body seems historically to have arisen with the rise of individualism and a concept of privacy. A predominant and recognisable trait of pornography is to offensively tease and highlight any cultural sensitive areas over bodily proprieties and sensibilities. Pornography is a modern concept and product of the Enlightenment and a response to this by presenting the improper body.<sup>81</sup> The conceptual invention of the pornography industry has always been closely related and tied to the emergence of new scientific discourses, to the invention of new technologies as well as political criticism. It was the technology of the printing press that made it possible to copy in large quantities the libertine texts and comic images of sexual satire. The danger and effectiveness of libertine literature arose in that it was able to be distributed en masse throughout the social classes. The sexually graphic pamphlets were no longer a pleasure or tool of an elite section of society.

Technological inventions have not only mutated the pornography industry and the accessibility of its market as well as the means of its regulation, but they themselves have also been a function and have been given impetus by the pornography market. Pornography is part of this technological age that has meant a turning point in human affairs. Its thrust comes in the compressed

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<sup>81</sup> Kipnis traces the emergence of bodily disgust to the increased regulation of carnivals and the sanitisation of the 'out-of-control' and unmannerly body. She writes: "An increasingly heightened sense of disgust at the bodies and bodily functions of others emerged, and simultaneous with this process of privatization came a corresponding sense of shame about one's own body and its functions. Certain once common behaviors become socially frowned on: spitting, scratching, farting, wiping your mouth on the tablecloth, or blowing your nose on your sleeve were replaced by increasingly detailed rules devoted to restraining the conduct of the body (and even how it might be spoken of) in public." L. Kipnis, *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America*, p. 135.

In looking at the role that Larry Flynt has played, through his magazine, *Hustler*, in the U.S. battles over freedom of expression, Kipnis charts the entwining relationships between aesthetics, manners and bodily disgust as the basis of social, class distinction. She finds that 'our' cultural psyches are threatened by any transgressions of these cultural codes of manners and the social body. These social structures are deeply embedded and essential to a sense of identity. See also I. Tang, *Pornography: The Secret History of Civilization*; L. Hunt, *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800*; and L. O' Toole, *Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire*.

package of bawdy sexual humour that enables a viewer the emotional and physical distance to indulge in the dark passions of bodily lust, horror and satire. To witness pornography, to dwell in the pornographical is to partake in a cultural 'ana-aesthetic', at the borders of a dialectical ethics and aesthetics. Pornography names a crucial part of this time period, something that previous epistemologies cannot grasp, due in part to the elusiveness of its singularity and its ephemeral and gestural nature. Whether or not pornography brings a viewer the courage to believe in the depth of life and spirit, it does not dwell entirely in abjection of the body and self either.

Kierkegaard asks what it must have been like for Abraham to dwell in the suspension of the ethical; as a witness to the secret he concealed dialectically from both the aesthetic and ethical spheres. For a paradox of ethics is very different from that of aesthetic concealment; a leap of faith on the strength of the absurd is necessary in order to endure the weight and barrenness of keeping a secret, of concealing a secret from ethics and suspending its teleological unfolding. Abraham incurred a secret on his own responsibility. With the case of the tragic hero Kierkegaard finds that aesthetics can reward concealment, for to keep silent at an aesthetic level of immediacy can perhaps save or aid someone, whereas the ethical level demands disclosure in order for the state/community to play a mediating role. Faith has no reward for keeping 'faithful', rather it is more of a case of an impossible witnessing: one that is observable, but the observation cannot be communicated both because it 'cannot' and 'should not' be. Abraham could not speak; he remained silent and unable to be understood, thwarting any translation into the universal.

Abraham was no aesthetic hero for his silence is not to save Isaac. His aesthetic concealment “was on the strength of his accidental particularity” and as Kierkegaard points out he was no tragic hero:

“The genuine tragic hero sacrifices himself and everything he has for the universal; his action, every emotion in him belongs to the universal, he is revealed, and in disclosure he is the beloved son of ethics. This does not apply to Abraham. He does nothing for the universal and he is concealed.

We are now at the paradox. Either the individual can stand in particular relation to the absolute, and he is done for, he is neither a tragic hero nor an aesthetic hero.”<sup>82</sup>

Abraham is silent, not from a decision or choice but because he cannot speak. Herein lies his distress and anguish; he must bear the terrible responsibility of solitude.

Abraham discloses the incommensurability of subjectivity with reality and even to its having the right to deceive.<sup>83</sup> Kierkegaard puts forward irony as a tool of primitive strength for a paradox of ethics, an implement of a particular kind of silence, fortitude, and ethical deception.<sup>84</sup> Kierkegaard attributes the last decisive actions, of speech, a certain kind of silent speech, which are made by Abraham and indeed Socrates, as ironic. Abraham cannot speak, he says nothing of his intentions to his family and community. In the final moments

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<sup>82</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, “*Problema III: Was it ethically defensible of Abraham to conceal his purpose from Sarah, from Eleazar, from Isaac?*”, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 137.

<sup>83</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, “*Problema III: Was it ethically defensible of Abraham to conceal his purpose from Sarah, from Eleazar, from Isaac?*”, *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 142 - 143.

<sup>84</sup> Kierkegaard provides an example of an ironist as someone: “... Whose sharp eye has taken radical measure of the ludicrous of life, who through a secret understanding with the forces of life ascertains what the patient needs. He knows he commands the power of laughter; should he wish to wield it he would be sure of victory and, what is even better, of his happiness. He knows some voice is going to raise itself against him, but also that he himself is the stronger; he knows people can still be brought for a moment to appear serious – but also that, privately, they long to laugh with him: he knows that it is still possible to bring a woman for a moment to hold up her fan before her eyes when she speaks, but he also knows that behind her fan she is laughing, he knows the fan is not completely opaque, he knows one can make invisible inscriptions on it, he knows that when a woman strikes at him with the fan it is because she has understood him, he knows infallibly how laughter creeps into a person and dwells there secretly, and how once lodged there it lies in ambush and waits.” S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, “*Problema III: Was it ethically defensible of Abraham to conceal his purpose from Sarah, from Eleazar, from Isaac?*”, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 132.



Isaac asks his father what is happening and Abraham replies; he utters no untruth.<sup>85</sup> Abraham remains true to his love of God. Either there is a paradox and the individual, as the particular, stands in an absolute relation to the absolute, or as Kierkegaard concludes, 'Abraham is done for'.

In this way Kierkegaard prioritises the individual over the community and argues for a sense of community based on a paradox of ethics; one that allows for concealment, that provides space for secrets and their weighty responsibility, for Abraham stood in a relationship with the absolute without mediation of, or need to sacrifice everything to, the universal. The paradox of ethics reveals a community that is formed neither through an aesthetic judgement of taste nor through recognition of the universal, but in the silence of a terrible witnessing. What sort of community is this? Kierkegaard is helpful to this thesis in pointing out a direction that looks towards the peculiar nature of the pornographical communities.

## 2. Abyssal Logic: Heidegger .

A new ontology is required; a kind of 'groundless ontology', one that allows for difference to be rethought in such a way that offered, or seemed to offer, a promise to provide for its paradoxical nature. Such a difference, rather than being reduced to a mere distinction between things, is in excess of a

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<sup>85</sup> As Kierkegaard notes: "His answer has the form of irony for it is always irony to say something and yet not say it. Isaac asks Abraham because he assumes that Abraham knows. Now if Abraham had replied, 'I know nothing', he would have uttered an untruth. He cannot say anything since he knows he cannot say. So he replies, 'My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.' Here one sees the double movement in Abraham's soul as it has been described in the foregoing. Had Abraham simply renounced his claim on Isaac, and he knows that precisely at this moment he himself is ready to sacrifice him. So, after having made this movement Abraham has at every instant been performing the next, making the movement on the strength of the absurd. To the extent he utters no untruth for on the strength of the absurd it is after all possible that God might do something quite different. He utters no untruth then, but neither does he say anything, for he speaks in a foreign tongue." S. Kierkegaard, *Problemata*, "Problema III: Was it ethically defensible of Abraham to conceal his purpose from Sarah, from Eleazar, from Isaac?", *Fear and Trembling*, p. 144.

dialectical mediation whilst at the same time able to produce a mimetic copy of and through its own excessive movement. For this kind of difference, a move that is not available in either Hegel or Kierkegaard is required. As we will see below, and also in chapter three, this Heideggerian move enables a different way in which to approach questions around the installation of meaning in relation to the ‘event’, pornography and the pornographical.<sup>86</sup>

### 2.1 Identity as the originary difference of an event of appropriation: the Heideggerian move.

For Heidegger such a difference or rather the thought of such a difference requires leaping from the speculative thinking of Hegel and any such resembling systems of thought, including the pluralism offered by Kierkegaard’s paradox of ethics. Heidegger purports that identity is a singularity, formed through an originary relation of “belonging-together”, and posits an alternative path that gathers meaning as belonging rather than as a fixed and totalised, heterogeneous unity. He writes:

“If the element of *together* in belonging-together is emphasized, we have the metaphysical concept of identity which orders the manifold into a unity mediated by synthesis. This unity forms a synthetic totality of the world with God or Being as the ground, as the first cause and as the highest being. But if the element of *belonging* in belonging together is emphasized, we have, thinking and Being held apart and at the same time held together (not fitted together) in the Same. To come to an understanding of the *belonging* together of man and Being, we must leave metaphysical thinking which thinks Being exclusively as the cause of beings and thinks beings primarily as what is caused. We must simply

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<sup>86</sup> See chapter three, supra pp. 126 – 175. The main books this thesis employs are: M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated and introduced by William Lovitt. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977); M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, translated by J. Stambaugh. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969); M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell. (London: Routledge, 1996); M. Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, translated by William McNeill. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996); M. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, translated by J. Glenn Gray. (New York: Harper TorchBooks, 1968.) The main concepts that this thesis utilizes throughout are that of ‘the event of appropriation’ and ‘technē’.

leap out of it. Thus the principle of (Satz) of identity becomes a leap (Satz) out of metaphysics.”<sup>87</sup>

To Heidegger what is original or primary in a constitution of meaning is the relation of belonging, rather than what is related. He prefers to place the emphasis on ‘how’ something is taking place rather than the ‘why’ of its occurrence. For him the ‘reality’, or ‘presencings’, that takes place is manifold and layered with subtle shifts and gatherings of meaning that are continuously occurring in the movements and interactions of things. Such a shift in emphasis grasps meaning from that which lies closest to hand; that which lies before one. It is in the ‘is’ that Being is uttered, and it is in such a shift that pornography can be approached as difference, rather than a dishonourable and marginalized concept. However Heidegger allows for the body, for bodies to be passed over and sealed in an abyssal crypt of the presence or presencing of the present, as we shall see.

The epochal truth of the belonging-together of being and Being is revealed to man but in a manner that comes upon him veiled. In other words for Heidegger truth is an unconcealment that is simultaneously a concealment. Heidegger traces back the origins of man’s scientific modernity to the Greek age, and discovers the belonging of technology to *technē*. As he writes:

“... *Technē* is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. *Technē* belongs to bringing-forth, to *poiēsis*; it is something poetic.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> J. Stambaugh, “Introduction” in M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, pp. 12 - 13.

<sup>88</sup> M. Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 13.

Technē is a mode of a kind of poetic truth, that of *alētheia*. As such technē is not an instrumental kind of truth concerned with the ordering and causes of things; rather it is a bringing-forth of truth in the sense of revealing what ‘does not yet lie here before us’. Although Heidegger would stop short of the pornographical, this thesis is posing this as a movement of dynamic that has a technē to it, one that contours a bloody and complicit, bodily meaning.<sup>89</sup>

One can form a sense of objectivity from the how or technē of this relation, but one can never predict what is to be related. There is no static essence of a subjective man here.<sup>90</sup> Man is the da-sein, the Being-there or rather the there of Being.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Chapter three of this thesis focuses specifically on technē as being libidinal in its bringing –forth; and looks at comic humour as a technē of pornography and the pornographical communities. Supra pp. 126 - 175.

<sup>90</sup> Heidegger charts the notion of modern man as a self-conscious subject back to Descartes, whereby his *ego cogito [ergo] sum* established man as a subject that finds self-certainty or security within himself, and as such became the shaper and guarantor of all that comes from beyond himself. As Lovitt summarises: “Man’s thinking (*cogitare*), which Heidegger says was also a “driving together” (*co-agitare*), was found to contain within itself the needed sureness. Man could *represent* reality to himself, that is he could set it up over against himself, as it *appeared* to him, as an *object* of thought. In so doing, he felt assured at once of his own existence and of the existence of the reality thus conceived.” W. Lovitt, “Introduction” in *The Question Concerning Technology* in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. xxv, and see also M. Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture” in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 131.

<sup>91</sup> As noted earlier, Hegel placed the history of philosophy and philosophy itself in an external relation. This externality is not a crude form of indifference or of superficiality, rather as that “outside dimension in which all history and every real course of events have their place in comparison to the movement of the absolute Idea.” M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 44. The externality of history develops as a result of the Idea’s self-externalisation. If Hegel thinks of Being as the Being of beings, speculative-historically, then Heidegger wished to approach thinking about the relationship of the belonging of thought and Being in the same fashion. In this way, within the sameness, difference can be seen more persistently, whereas within the identical it disappears.

For Heidegger time has meaning in its temporality and as such time is Dasein; the Being of Dasein is historicity itself. Dasein expresses ‘my’ authentic and inauthentic possibilities through the hermeneutic principles, as Heidegger writes: “The possibility of access to history is grounded in the possibility according to which any specific present understands how to be futural.” M. Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, translated by William McNeill. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p. 20E. Heidegger designates the temporality of Dasein as an ‘ecstatical’ standing out which allows him to rethink the paradoxes of time as futural rather than either a continuum of infinite moments that stretch behind and in front of oneself or according to a ‘clock’ measurement of time; a measurement of the present as now, the past as no-longer-present and irretrievable, and the future as not-yet-present and indeterminate. Heidegger remarks that: “Dasein is authentically alongside itself, it is truly existent, whenever it maintains itself in this running ahead. *This running ahead* is nothing other than *the authentic and singular future of one’s own Dasein*. In running ahead Dasein *is* its future, in such a way that this being futural it comes back to its past and present.” M. Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, p. 13E.



“Man is essentially this relationship of responding to Being, and he is only this. This “only” does not mean a limitation, but rather an excess. A belonging to Being prevails within man, a belonging which listens to Being because it is appropriated to Being.”<sup>92</sup>

This move that discloses identity is a leap away from representational thinking that considers Being to be the ground of beings, and as such it is also a leap away from Being in the sense of ‘a spring’. In springing away from the ground this is not necessarily a spring into an abyss, this would only be the case if viewed from a horizon of metaphysical thinking.<sup>93</sup> This spring takes us to the realm that we have access to: the belonging to Being. Being also belongs to us; for Being can only become present as Being through us. This spring springs into *the event of appropriation*.<sup>94</sup>

“The spring is the abrupt entry into the realm from which man and Being have already reached each other in their active nature, since both are mutually appropriated, extended as a gift, one to the other. Only the entry into the realm of this mutual appropriation determines and defines the experience of thinking.”<sup>95</sup>

The event of appropriation is the neutral expression of the pornographical. Heidegger cannot get beyond this as we shall see, but this thesis is using this as the movement and dynamic of a discursive economy.

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<sup>92</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 31.

<sup>93</sup> There are a variety of scholars that fall into the trap of accepting either a negation or an ethical suspension of the moral, or/and an abyssal logic of desire, some of whose work we will consider in a bit more detail later in the thesis; for example, Butler, Agamben, Derrida, Badou, Žižek, Irigaray, and Kristeva amongst others.

<sup>103</sup> For the event of appropriation Heidegger uses *Ereignis*, a word that is used in everyday language to mean ‘events’, but Heidegger’s usage of this term is both more abstract and concrete. Abstract in that it is being, as Heidegger writes, that is “...Infinitely removed from everyday events and yet of being that which is so close to us that we cannot see it.” Concrete in that its use of the very roots of the word *er-eignen*. *Eigen* can be translated as to own and to thus come into one’s own, or to come to where one belongs and *er-äugnen* as to catch sight of, to see with the mind’s eye, or to see face-to-face. J. Stambaugh, “Introduction” in M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 14.

<sup>95</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 33.

Heidegger asserts that it is this contemporary age of technology that forms a prelude to such an occurrence as an event of appropriation and the possibility of a fuller relationship between man and Being than there has been before.<sup>96</sup> For Heidegger, technology is not about technicality anymore than it is simply a product of man. Heidegger puts forward technology as something that man 'is' right now. The emphasis here is again on a move away from paradigm of thought that places man as a subjective rational animal. This is not an order of thought centred on a concept of logos, existentialism or humanism. Pornography's identity is entwined with technological invention and impetus, and is as much a part of what mankind is right now. The pornographical presents a commentary on contemporary mankind and its relationship between technology and the body.

The ethics conceived of a technological world and all its political manifestations reduce everything down to man and whether he will become the servant of or remain the master of technology. Heidegger suggests that:

“... We confirm our own opinion that technology is of man's making alone. We fail to hear the claim of Being which speaks in the essence of technology.”<sup>97</sup>

The manner of this paradigm shift, or the manner in which man and Being belong to each other in the technological world, is one that Heidegger names the framework, or the Enframing, *Ge-Stell*.<sup>98</sup> It is this claim that is made in the

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<sup>96</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 36. As Stambaugh writes: “The framework is far more real than all the atomic energy and all machines. But it is nothing necessarily ultimate. It could be a prelude to what Heidegger calls the event of appropriation. The event of appropriation is the very realm in which man and Being reach each other in their very core. They lose the determinations placed upon them by metaphysics.” J. Stambaugh “Introduction” in M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 14.

<sup>97</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 34.

<sup>98</sup> Stambaugh advises the translation of *Ge-Stell* as one that expresses the chain or group of activities of the

gathering of the mutual challenge between man and Being as they face each other by turns that is Enframing. With the Enframing or the Framework, Heidegger puts forward a diverse step towards understanding a concept of identity as something other than a transcendently mediated unity that subsumes all the particulars beneath it.

To rephrase this, Heidegger designates the essence of modern technology as a ‘challenging revealing’, that has a character of ‘setting –upon’. This particular revealing sets a kind of challenge and setting of the boundaries that form identities. This leads one to assume that marginal or minority concepts such as ‘pornography’ would have some bearing or place within the Heideggerian logic. Heidegger states:

“That challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew. Unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about are ways of revealing. But the revealing never simply comes to an end. Neither does it run off into the indeterminate. The revealing reveals to itself its own manifoldly interlocking paths, through regulating their course. This regulating itself is, for its part, everywhere secured. Regulating and securing even become the chief characteristics of the challenging revealing.

What kind of unconcealment is it, then, that is peculiar to that which comes to stand forth through this setting – upon that challenges? Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it standing reserve [*Bestand*].”<sup>99</sup>

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verb *Stellen*, to place, put, or set. The chain consists of: *vor-stellen*, to represent, or think; *stellen*, to challenge; *ent-stellen*, to disfigure; *nach-stellen*, to be after someone, or to pursue him/her stealthily; and *sicher-stellen*, to make certain of something. J. Stambaugh “Introduction” in M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 14.

<sup>99</sup> M. Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 16.

Man is gathered to order everything as standing-reserve creating an undifferentiated supply of the available.<sup>100</sup> For Heidegger, such an ordering of everything as standing-reserve is a manner of self-revealing of the 'real' and a manifestation of destining of Being and man. For Heidegger the threat lies not to the devastation of beings but to the abandonment and failure to hear Being.

Whilst such language has religious overtures, in regarding Being as an event, Heidegger is positing Being as something other than an eternal object, as something that is time specific and historical. History in this sense is a practice that is both present-at-hand and passes by in front of 'us', in the running ahead of itself of Dasein. History for Heidegger is not a natural continuum or a series of changes but a happening, one in which 'our' fate and destining are bound in how Being is sent to 'us'. Being is thrown to 'us' and Heidegger poses history as something that 'we' are thrown into and from which 'we' project into the future. Time is the temporality of Dasein for Heidegger, the hermeneutic paradox of this is that time is futural. Heidegger allows for the body, for bodies to be passed over and sealed in an abyssal crypt of the presence or presencing of the present, however he argues that the temporality of Dasein throws mankind the opportunity to hear the 'call' of Being, and as such preserves it's authentic belongings that forge a sense of community.

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<sup>100</sup> Richard Polt illuminates Heidegger here by looking at contemporary discourses and their references to a multiplicity of things as resources; humans are human resources, books and art are information resources, time is a time resource and writing is word processing. Everything and anything is a resource of data to be manipulated, processed and reprocessed. Heidegger conceives of this as an age whereby we are caught in the 'compulsion to grip things'. Polt uses Heidegger's chilling comment on a technological worldview to further illustrate this: "Agriculture is now a motorized food industry, essentially the same as the manufacture of corpses in gas chambers and extermination camps, the same as the blockade and starvation of countries, the same as the manufacture of hydrogen bombs." R. Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction*. (London: UCL Press, 1999), pp. 171 – 172, and M. Heidegger, "Das Ge-Stell" in *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, GA 79, p.27.



It is in this way that Heidegger conceives of the Enframing of technological mankind as both a saving power as well as a possible danger. Part of the manifestation of the destining of Being and man in the standing-reserve of Enframing is man's estrangement from himself/herself. Heidegger believes that man is summoned and claimed in the challenging revealing of Enframing, and what is paramount in this age is for man to know that he is so claimed. For Heidegger the need is for man to recognise this essential relation to Being and to the world, for as long as man does not know himself/herself then he/she cannot be open to Being and tends to become trapped within two vain approaches to a technological 'world picture': being the master and controller of technology or being dominated by technological implements.

Heidegger locates the danger for contemporary man in the oblivion that blinds the self-manifestation of Being. To him man needs to know that he/she belongs to a destining, to recognize it as a destining and to discern the 'how' of this belonging. As Lovitt summarises:

"A destining of Being is never a blind fate that simply compels man from beyond himself. It is, rather an opening way in which man is called upon to move to bring about that which is taking place. For man to know himself as the one so called upon is for him to be free. For Heidegger freedom is not a matter of man's willing or not willing particular things. Freedom is man's opening himself – his submitting himself in attentive awareness – to the summons addressed to him and to the way on which he is already being sent. It is to apprehend and accept the dominion of Being already holding sway, and so to be "taken into a freeing claim".<sup>101</sup>

The dilemma for man, Heidegger suggests, with Enframing, is not only that man's relationship to himself/herself is banished, by this destining of a technological age (alongside his/her relationship to everything that is), but also

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<sup>101</sup> W. Lovitt, "Introduction" in M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, pp. xxxiii – xxxiv.

and most importantly this destining expels man into one specific way of revealing; that of ordering. Man is challenged ‘more originally’ into the process of ordering and evades becoming merely ‘standing-reserve’, and since man drives forward technological advancement and transformations, he/she forms an active role in the ordering unconcealment/ revealing, though the unconcealment itself is never a deed of mankind.

As Heidegger warns:

“Where Enframing holds sway, regulating and securing of the standing – reserve mark all revealing. They no longer even let their own fundamental characteristic appear, namely, this revealing as such.

Thus the challenging Enframing not only conceals a former way of revealing, bring – forth, but it conceals revealing itself and with it That wherein unconcealment, i.e., truth, comes to pass.”<sup>102</sup>

It is here that Heidegger locates the twofold meaning of the ‘turning’ within Enframing as the danger that also bears within itself the saving power for the estranged relationship of Being and man. The entrapping of the truth of Being by way of oblivion is its concealment at the very instance of its revealing.<sup>103</sup>

Heidegger puts forward this instant turning about of unconcealing concealing as an ‘in-flashing’ the self-revealing turning within Being of

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<sup>102</sup> M. Heidegger, “*The Question Concerning Technology*” in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 27. Heidegger connects the possible saving power of Enframing to the former way of revealing that of the *poiēsis* of the fine arts and bringing – forth of the true: *technē*. More will be discussed on this in chapter three, libidinal technologies, supra pp. 126 - 175.

<sup>103</sup> Heidegger writes, “When this *entrapping-with-oblivion* does come expressly to pass, then oblivion as such turns in and abides. Thus rescued through this abiding from falling away out of remembrance, it is no longer oblivion. With such in-turning, the oblivion relating to Being’s safekeeping is no longer the oblivion of Being; but rather, turning in thus, it turns about into the safekeeping of Being. When the danger is as the danger, with the turning about of oblivion, the safekeeping of Being comes to pass; world comes to pass. That world comes to pass as world, that the thing things, this is the distant advent of the coming to presence of being itself.

The self-denying of the truth of Being, which entraps itself with oblivion, harbors the favor as yet ungranted, that this self-entrapping will turn about; that, in turning, oblivion will turn and become the safekeeping belonging to the coming to presence of Being, instead of allowing that coming to presence to fall into disguise. In the coming to presence and dwells a favor, namely the favor of the turning about of the oblivion of Being into the truth of Being. In the coming to presence of the danger, where it *is* as the danger, is the turning about into the safekeeping, is this safekeeping itself, is the saving power of Being.” M. Heidegger, “*The Turning*” in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, pp. 43 – 44.

*Ereignis*, the event of appropriation. From what is cleared and lit –up in the ‘in-flashing’, ‘we’ witness a letting -belong that gathers the belonging together of man and Being.<sup>104</sup> Heidegger puts forward:

“... In all the disguising belonging to Enframing, the bright open-space of world lights up, the truth of Being flashes. At the instant, that is, when Enframing lights up, in its coming to presence as the danger, i.e., as the saving power. In Enframing, moreover, as a destining of the coming to presence of Being, there comes to presence a light from the flashing of Being. Enframing is, though veiled, still glance, and no blind destiny in the sense of a completely ordained fate.

Insight into that which is - thus do we name the sudden flash of the truth of Being into truthless Being.

When insight comes disclosingly to pass, then men are the ones who are struck in their essence by the flashing of Being. In insight, men are the ones who are caught sight of.

Only when man, in the disclosing coming-to-pass of the insight by which he himself is beheld, renounces human self-will and projects himself toward that insight, away from himself, does he correspond in his essence to the claim of that insight. In thus corresponding man is gathered into his own [*ge-eignet*].”<sup>105</sup>

Heidegger looks for difference between Being and beings as difference, as the ontological difference, rather than Being as the ground of beings. He questions that which had yet to be thought, the oblivion of that difference, given that for him, oblivion belongs inherently to difference. This is more than a simple forgetting of difference by man. Instead of inserting this difference between beings and Being ahead of time and progressing towards an all-inclusive conceptual totality, the step back heeds ontological difference as difference.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, pp. 38 - 39.

<sup>105</sup> M. Heidegger, “*The Turning*” in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 47. Lovitt comments that Heidegger discusses Enframing as “the photographic negative” of that disclosing (Sem. 42). In enframing, Being and man confront each other, but they meet in estrangement. In the unique disclosing that brings them into their own, they meet in the very same relationship; but now, *instead of and yet within* the skeletal darkness of Enframing, their flashes *also* the light of that disclosing which brings them to belong together, which grants them what is truly their own. W. Lovitt, “*Introduction*” in M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. xxxvii.

<sup>106</sup> Joan Stambaugh comments: “... Thinking for Heidegger attempts to move *forward* by the step *back* into the realm of the essence of truth which has never yet come to light. This step back allows Being as

Here Heidegger, despite his turning, remains steadfast in his commitment to removing the presence of the present, except as a memorial, a remembering, and a futural encounter that is projected backwards.<sup>107</sup> The pornographical is a different kind of an ‘insistent eksistent’ dynamic, one that is bloody and stripped of the moral consolation in presenting the unspeakable of the improper body and the complicit confusion between victims and oppressors, one that Heidegger, ignores and places in an abyssal crypt, alongside the spatiality of time.

Instead of thinking unfolding towards an all-inclusive totality of absolute knowledge or self-reflective community, Heidegger looks at a direction of thought that moves forward with a step back, a step back that brings-forth Being as difference, rather than as different elements of that difference, or as the ground of beings. This difference between Being and beings, Heidegger characterises as the difference between Overwhelming and Arrival. Stambaugh translates *Überkommnis*, overwhelming as the:

“... Manner in which Being reaches beings. It preserves the meaning of sur-prise (over-taking) and thus of incalculability” and arrival or *Ankunft* as “the “place” (in beings) in which Being arrives.”<sup>108</sup>

The Heideggerian concept of difference provides a between in which the overwhelming of Being and the arrival in beings are held toward each other and yet simultaneously apart. Heidegger names this between, perdurance, and

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difference to come before thinking without being its object. The step back, which is actually a direction and a manner of thinking and not an isolated step of thought, leads out of metaphysics into the essential origin of metaphysics.” J. Stambaugh, “Introduction” in M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 16.

<sup>107</sup> This is discussed in more detail with regards to the pornographical being an ‘ana-aesthetic’, in chapter four, supra pp. 176 – 221.

<sup>108</sup> J. Stambaugh, “Introduction” in M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 17.



whilst perdurance provides the naming for a kind of intensity, this is not 'enough' to name the fractal aspect or singularity of the body.<sup>109</sup>

The distance of a step back brings the matter of thinking closer; and it emphasises that 'thinking' is not merely a 'contemplative' activity; but it does so by a step back that providing a direction to the essential origin of difference: the perdurance of overwhelming and arrival, of the two in unconcealing keeping in concealment.<sup>110</sup> In the perdurance of the difference of Overwhelming and Arrival there reigns clearing, which is a Heideggerian presupposition for revealing and securing, for anything to be or happen at all.<sup>111</sup> Or as Heidegger phrases it:

“... Within this perdurance there prevails a clearing of what veils and closes off - and this its prevalence bestows the being apart, and the being toward each other, of overwhelming and arrival.”<sup>112</sup>

For Heidegger the nearness of the historic is only attained in that sudden moment of a recall in thinking. In Heidegger's step back out of the oblivion of difference he rethinks the difference as the perdurance of unconcealing overcoming (transition or transcendence) and of self-keeping arrival (presence).<sup>113</sup> One comes over the other whilst one arrives in the other.<sup>114</sup> Being becomes present in the manner of a transition to beings. As Heidegger states:

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<sup>109</sup> The perdurance (*Austrag*) is the carrying out of the relation of beings and Being, a relation that is 'endured with an intensity that never lets up.'

<sup>110</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 65.

<sup>111</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 17.

<sup>112</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 65.

<sup>113</sup> See the last section of chapter two of this thesis on the notion of fascination and self-hoodedness or keeping. *Supra* pp. 82 – 125.

<sup>114</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, pp. 67 - 69.

“Being transits (that), comes unconcealingly over (that) which arrives as something of itself unconcealed only by that coming-over. Arrival means: to keep concealed in unconcealedness - to abide present in this keeping - to be a being.”<sup>115</sup>

Being for Heidegger is an event, an event of appropriation, and it essentially unfolds in such a way as the appropriative event of the grounding of the there. Heidegger does not posit Being as universal or as eternal but as sent to ‘us’. Heidegger puts forward that it is appropriation that gives Being and time. In owning an event it becomes related to oneself, the ‘there’ is founded and one can leap into the fullness of Being-there, of Dasein. Heidegger posits language as a mode of appropriation through which Dasein can remain steadfast in the realm that is opened up. Pornography’s discourse and the pornographical dynamic, however vibrate with the presence of impurities and communal displacements and ‘inauthentic’ belongings.

In the self-vibrating realm of the event of appropriation, vibrates the active or transitional nature of what speaks as language. For Heidegger thought receives its tools for this “self-suspended structure” of an event of appropriation from language. As he puts it:

“(Language is) the most susceptible vibration holding everything within the suspended structure of appropriation. We dwell in the appropriation inasmuch as our active nature is given over to language.”<sup>116</sup>

Language as such for Heidegger is the house of Being, or to rephrase this, language is that which founds rather than that which is founded. So identity, as the event of appropriation, can be defined as a demand for an abyssal spring that

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<sup>115</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 64.

<sup>116</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 38.

steps back to the belonging together of Being and man in an effort to attain the essential light of appropriation. Heidegger leaves his readers with the question:

“... Do our Western languages have an intrinsic metaphysical structure so that they are forever destined to be onto-theo-logical in their nature or do they harbor other possibilities of thinking?”<sup>117</sup>

Pornography is not necessarily concerned with appropriation and yet it still creates pornographical communities that manoeuvre and permeate a peculiar ‘ana-linguistic’ language structure that belongs paradoxically to the political presence of bodies, of skin.

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<sup>117</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 18.

**CHAPTER TWO:**

*Fascination: The Paradox of a Philosophy of Pleasure.*

1: Fascination as ‘ana-linguistic’: Dilemmas of sexuality in linguistic captivity.

Theories of sexuality tend to posit a linguistic captivation at the genital stage during the Oedipus complex, creating an originary and traumatic foundation to both language and sexual difference. Freud, Lacan, Irigaray, Žižek, Kristeva, Butler and J. Rose all posit a sense of constitutive subjectivity in their differing ways of approaching questions of sexual difference in terms of castration, the symbolic law and abyssal ‘real’. These theories tend to double into an abyssal logic – one which tends to sterilise the body and its needs, mapping those needs into unrequited forms of ‘desire’ or, worse, into dualist preconditions of sexual interest (male v. female, gay v. straight, presence v. lack /absence, and passive v. active). As a dynamic to thought, the pornographical is raised as a way of thinking that allows thought to be muscular and sexual, rather than driven by a need for administrative efficiency to classify, categorize, and cleanly represent. The pornographical is posited as an economy of identity that does not arise from a castration, a lack, a deep cut, an inbetween or an economy of signs or a politics of equivalences.

1.1 Problematics of a Philosophy of Phallic Desire. (Freud and Lacan)

Freud’s psychoanalytic theory of the castration complex and its mark on sexuality forms the basis for Lacan’s reworkings of the Oedipal and castration complexes. Freud names three stages to the sexual development of a child that psychoanalysis attaches importance to, these ‘experiences’ are thought to



prepare the child for the loss of highly valued body parts.<sup>1</sup> The first of these are the oral stage in which the child has to separate from the mother's breast and the second is the anal stage of 'gift giving' whereby the child has to donate the content's of his/her bowel on a daily demand. The third stage is that of the genital (phallic) organization stage which coincides with the Oedipus complex, and dissolves, or is repressed by the ego, with the threat of castration. The phallic phase takes places differently for girls and boys and effectively creates the webbing the child's future gender and sexual preferences.

Freud puts forward that a boy is offered two choices of satisfaction during the Oedipus complex, either he can accept the 'masculine' role and sexually desire his mother, or the 'feminine' role and desire to be sexually loved by his father. With the former choice the father is a problematic rival for the mother, and with the latter his mother is 'superfluous'. It is only through the sight of the female genitalia [without penis, castrated] that a boy comes to realize that the threat of castration is real and possible, and as such has to choose between his narcissistic relationship with his genitals and the 'libidinal – cathexis' with his parental objects. As Freud writes:

“The object – cathexes are given up and replaced by identifications. The authority of the father or the parents is introjected into the ego, and there it forms the nucleus of the super-ego, which takes over the severity of the father and perpetuates his prohibition against incest, and so secures the ego from the return of the libidinal object-cathexis. The libidinal trends belonging to a Oedipus complex are in part desexualized and sublimated (a thing which probably happens with every transformation into an identification) and in part inhibited in their aim and changed impulses into affection.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The main works of Freud that this particular section draws upon are: <sup>1</sup> S. Freud, *On Sexuality*, translated by James Strachey. (London: Penguin, 1991); S. Freud, *On Metapsychology*, translated by James Strachey. (London: Penguin, 1991); S. Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, translated by James Strachey. (London: Penguin Books, 1991); S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, translated by David McLintock. (London: Penguin Books, 2002); S. Freud, *Origins of Religion*, translated by James Strachey. (London: Penguin Books, 1990), S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism, An Outline of Psycho-analysis and Other Works*, translated by James Strachey. (London: Vintage, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> S. Freud, “Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex” in *On Sexuality*, translated by James Strachey. (London:

The female child also develops an Oedipus complex, a phallic organisation, a castration complex, a latency period and a super-ego, though as she is already in a state of castration [being always without a penis], the girl loses the strong motive to create a super-ego and separate from the infantile genital organisation. However in accepting castration as an 'accomplished fact' Freud argues that the girl feels both wronged and inferior.<sup>3</sup> The girl is left with a desire for a penis, which Freud states she places in a 'symbolic equation' with a wish for a baby. It is in these terms that the little girl takes her father as the love object and her mother as a rival, after deferring from masculinity and 'masculine masturbation'.<sup>4</sup> Pornography deals with sexuality in terms of sexual exchanges, rather than a complexity of possible causes and chains of substitutions, that have been issued in the place of such a traumatic occurrence.

In looking at the levels of repression and guilt installed in individuals, Freud asks the question how much repression is necessary for civilisation? Whilst he concludes that repression is a necessary factor in being social, too much repression can have the opposite effect and prove dangerous and

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Penguin Books, 1991), p. 319.

<sup>3</sup> Freud names this heady mixture of a sense of anger, penis envy and inferiority a scar, one that a woman develops through her wounded narcissism. Freud argues that if the girls accept this state of castration as a universal one, then they too begin to share the same attitude as the boys, with regard to women. He describes this as either one of "horror of the mutilated creature or triumphant contempt for her." S. Freud, "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" in *On Sexuality*, pp. 336 - 337.

<sup>4</sup> Freud puts forward that the castration complex and the divided attitude it leaves in the female provides three lines of development for any female child. He writes: "The first leads to a general revulsion from sexuality. The little girl, frightened by the comparison with boys, grows dissatisfied with her clitoris, and gives up her phallic activity and with it her masculinity in other fields. The second line leads her to cling with defiant self-assertiveness to her threatened masculinity. To an incredibly late age she clings to the hope of getting a penis some time. That hope becomes her life's main aim; and the phantasy of being a man in spite of everything often persists as a formative factor over long periods. This 'masculine complex' in women can result in a manifest homosexual choice of object. Only if her development follows the third, very circuitous, path does she reach the final normal female attitude, in which she takes her father as her object and so finds her way to the feminine form of the Oedipus complex. S. Freud, "Female Sexuality" in *On Sexuality*, p. 376.

regressive for human societies.<sup>5</sup> If sexual repression were to be lessened on a global scale accordingly with the fashion of each culture, would pornography still exist or even have the same impact?

The more contemporary philosophic scholarship on this kind of genital ‘event’ comes from two different but intertwined paths: psychoanalysis and structuralism, the proponents of whom are best exemplified for purposes of this discussion in the work of Lacan and Žižek.<sup>6</sup> These theorists rework subjectivity and sexuality through looking at language as a system of differences that decentre and unhinge the human being. Part of the complexity in presenting language as the house of Being is that the very being of language reveals the disappearance of the subject, as we shall see. This chapter proposes to provide a brief overview of Lacan and Žižek’s work, on the relationship between castration and language and the political implications of this. The pornographical and pornography offer more than a site of castration and lack, more than a phallogentric logic and its echoed jouissance, an ‘ana-linguistic’ trace of such an excessive and erased subjectivity. This chapter purports to discuss Žižek’s political ideology in the final section which looks specifically at the nature of this erased subjectivity and its Lacanian ‘quilting points’, alongside fascination as a way of gathering and straddling the instant of the crossing or folding an identification and its other.

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<sup>5</sup> See S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

<sup>6</sup> With regard to Lacan and Žižek the main books used throughout this thesis are: J. Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, translated by Bruce Fink; J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, translated by Alan Sheridan and edited by Jacques – Alain Miller; J. Lacan, *The Psychoses: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III*, translated by Russell Grigg and edited by Jacques – Alain Miller; J. Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII*, translated Dennis Porter and edited by Jacques – Alain Miller; and S. Žižek, *The Žižek Reader*, edited by Elizabeth and Edmond Wright. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.)

But also see for example, J Rose, Irigaray (despite her fall and utter dismissal of Lacanianism), Butler, Agamben, Derrida, Badou and Žižek – some of whose work we will consider in a bit more detail later in the thesis, supra pp. 82 – 125.

1.2 Identity: Castration and the Master Signifier: Lacan.

For Lacan the decentring of identity begins at an early age in human development, somewhere between 6 to 24 months, with the “Mirror Stage”. This stage names a fundamental alienating tension at the crux of human identity and emphasises the importance of the visual and specular relationship in the baby’s raptness with it’s own image in the mirror. It is the fascination of the baby with its own image that tempts a hoped for unity of identity within the imaginary, however the real lack of muscular coordination of the infant’s motor functions cannot be erased. The infant’s ego is established through this discordance as an alienated ego, that of an alter ego. The image through which the infant recognises him/herself is always an alienating identification of the reality of his/her fragmented and uncoordinated body and nervous system.<sup>7</sup>

The fragmented body forms, for Lacan, the underbelly of the (alter) ego that crystallizes in the ensuing castration of the Oedipal conflict. Anika Lemaire in her book, *Jacques Lacan*, raises the mirror stage as an advent for a kind of “coenaesthetic subjectivity”, one that precedes the sense of the fragmentation of one’s body and names the dualism of the relationship of identity that dramatically occurs during this stage.<sup>8</sup> In keeping with Freud, Lacan here posits the ego as a bodily ego, one that is fragmented, and dislocated

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<sup>7</sup> Lacan writes that: “For the total form of his body, by which the subject anticipates the maturation of his power in a mirage, is given to him only as a gestalt, that is, in an exteriority in which, to be sure, this form is more constitutive than constituted, but in which, above all, it appears to him as the contour of his stature that freezes it and in a symmetry that reverses it, in opposition to the turbulent movements with which the subject feels he animates it. Through these two aspects of its appearance, this gestalt – whose power [*prégnance*] should be linked to the species, though its motor style is as yet unrecognisable – symbolizes the *I*’s mental permanence, at the same time as it prefigures its alienating destination. This gestalt is also replete with the correspondences that unite the *I* with the statue onto which man projects himself, the phantoms that dominate him, and the automaton with which the world of his own making tends to achieve fruition in an ambiguous relation.” J. Lacan, “*The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function, as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience*”, in *Écrits: A Selection*, translated by Bruce Fink. (W.W. Norton & Company: New York), pp. 4 –5.

<sup>8</sup> A. Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan*, translated by David Macey. (Routledge: London, 1979), p. 81. The notion of the pornographical as an ‘ana-aesthetic’ will be looked at in greater detail in chapter four, supra pp. 176



from itself, in the wake of the formation of the super-ego during dissolution/repression of the Oedipal complex.<sup>9</sup> What is formed here is an identity in the moment that it is numb sensationally to its own alienating bodily fragmentation. If the reflection of the body is one of unity for the infant whilst his/her narcissistic identification is alienated, then for Lemaire, the subject's consciousness gives way to its double without maintaining its distance from it.

As Lacan writes:

“There is a sort of structural crossroads here to which we must accommodate our thinking if we are to understand the nature of aggressiveness in man and in relation to the formalism of his ego and objects. It is in this erotic relationship, in which the human individual fixates on an image that alienates him from himself, that we find the energy and the form from which the organization of the ego originates.”<sup>10</sup>

This abyssal and alienating dualism is reincorporated, and re-erotised, within the relationship between the imaginary and the symbolic.<sup>11</sup> The subject enters the symbolic through the developmental stage of the Oedipus complex, which for Lacan is the site of castration and symbolisation of the child's

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– 221.

<sup>9</sup> Freud defines the ego as a ‘bodily ego’, one that is ‘the projection of a surface’, rather than being merely a surface entity. He notes: “The ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body.” S. Freud, “*The Ego and the Id*” in *On Metapsychology*, pp. 364 – 365.

<sup>10</sup> J. Lacan, “Aggressiveness in *Psychoanalysis*”, in *Ecrits: A Selection*, pp. 20 – 21.

<sup>11</sup> It is this relationship that gives Lacan's thought strength in its anthropological dimension. Lacan does not define mankind through an innate desire that springs from it's animal inheritance, rather as a community that is shaped through it's relationship to the imaginary and symbolic, and is shaped in accordance with his structuralist and psychoanalytic methodology. As Lacan states: “But if the ego seems to be marked right from the outset, by this aggressive relativity – which minds starved for objectivity might equate with an animal's emotional erections when it is distracted by a desire in the course of its experimental conditioning – how can we escape the conclusion that each great instinctual metamorphosis, punctuating the individual's life, throws its great delimitation back into question, composed as it is of the conjunction of the subject's history with the unthinkable innateness of desire?”

This is why man's ego is never reducible to his lived identity, except at the limit that even the greatest geniuses have never been able to approach; and why, in the depressive disruptions constituted by reversals experienced due to a sense of inferiority, the ego essentially engenders deadly negations that freeze it in its formalism. “What happens to me has nothing to do with what I am. There's nothing about you that is worthwhile.” J. Lacan, “Aggressiveness in *Psychoanalysis*”, in *Ecrits: A Selection*, p. 21.

simultaneous separation from the mother and entry into language.<sup>12</sup> Within the imaginary the child fails to see the lack of reality in the symbolic, and as such the imaginary is the realm of illusion, one that Lacan asserts is a necessary one. Lacan argues that it is at this level of primary narcissism that the child attempts, unconsciously, to be all that the mother desires and adopts identification with her desired object: her absent phallus. During this period of imaginary possession the child has no register within the symbolic circuit of exchange; having no symbolic substitute for him/herself the child lacks individuality, sexuality and a place within the social schemata.<sup>13</sup>

Occurring during the Oedipus complex the father's intervention in the relationship between the mother and child is prohibitive, and marks both the end of the imaginary [loss/prohibition of the mother] and the promise of the phallic order.<sup>14</sup> If the subject is to emerge through language then the symbolic Law must be imposed, recognised and accepted. For Lacan the symbolic order is the realm of the father and he puts forward that the 'Name- of- the- Father' is the representative agent of the Law. This is not the real and actually existing father but a signifier that interrupts the imaginary with the prohibition of incest. As Lacan writes:

"The Oedipus complex means that the imaginary, in itself an incestuous and conflictual relation, is doomed to conflict and ruin. In order for the human being to be able to establish the most natural of relations, that between male and female, a third party has to intervene, one that is the model of something successful, the model of some harmony. This does not go far enough – there has to be a law, a chain, a symbolic order, the intervention of the order of speech, that is, of the father. Not the natural

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<sup>12</sup> J. Lacan, "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis" and "The Signification of the Phallus", in *Ecrits: A Selection*, pp. 31- 106 and pp. 271 - 280.

<sup>13</sup> See Chris Fynsk, *Infant Figures: The Death of the 'Infans' and Other Scenes of Origin*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.) Fynsk draws on two scenes from the works of Blanchot and Lacan in order to reflect on the mortal exposure that marks the limits of language.

<sup>14</sup> J. Lacan, *The Psychoses: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III*.

father, but what is called the father. The order that prevents the collision and explosion of the situation as a whole is founded on the existence of this name of the father.”<sup>15</sup>

For Lacan a subject becomes a competent, language -speaking member of the social community once he/she has accepted the resolution of the Oedipal complex, that of castration and the Law of the Father. Any linguistic difficulties and ruptures can be traced to this point, and tend to reveal a subject suffering from psychosis.

Lacan gives language, and its constitutive subjective memory, a privileged place within the symbolic order, for the symbolic is always a substitute for what is absent from its place. In other words a symbol or word always entails, for Lacan, the absence of the referent or object; of that which is real. The order of the ‘real’ is, to Lacan, abyssal in that it is always missing from its place and cannot be symbolised and formalised.<sup>16</sup> To rephrase this one’s subjectivity is constituted as a ‘lack’, through an acceptance of the symbolic signifier alongside the sacrifice and exclusion of the signified, the essence of, or that which one is seeking within, the symbolic realm.<sup>17</sup> In this way Lacan evades a totalisation of the symbolic, whilst offering the simultaneous relationship of the signifier, one that gives a universal representation of language whilst remaining incapable of representing the singularity of the body and the subject; the signified is missing.

Here is the kernel of desire, Lacan’s abyssal logic places the constitutive subjective identity as that of a failed one: identity continues to be desirable as it

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<sup>15</sup> J. Lacan, *The Psychoses: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III*, p. 96.

<sup>16</sup> J. Lacan, “*Seminar on the Purloined Letter*”, translated by J. Melhman, in J. Muller and W. Richardson, (eds), *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida and Psychoanalytic Reading*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1988), p. 51.

<sup>17</sup> See J. Lacan, “*The Signifier, as such, Signifies Nothing*”, Chapter XIV, in *The Psychoses: The Seminar*

is ultimately an impossibility to create and maintain a stable, continuous and universal identity. Lacan's subject is always a divided subject formed through the interplay of the desire for identification and its ultimate failure, alienation and lack.<sup>18</sup> The enunciation, or linguistic articulation, of the subject, presupposes a certain loss or sacrifice of the maternal object. Nothing can ever restore this sacrifice again, and one is driven to identify again and again in the longing for the impossible, and out of reach, promised gift. Lacan proposes that this sacrifice or exclusion is brought about through an act of decision, a decision made in accepting the symbolic and fleeing from the immanent threat of castration.

Such an act of decision forms a proliferation of non-identifications, or at best unstable ones, and whilst this evades a totalised form of identity, Lacan's posits the singularity of the subject as one permanently marked by with a dimension of alienation: any unmediated access to the body, or to the 'real' as anything other than a symbolic construct, is lost. Under the symbolic Law the pornographical is 'lost', its cohesion never reached. In proposing that the pornographical has an 'ana-linguistic' nature to it or an a-radicality (without root) to it, allows for a different kind of thinking, one that allows for the body and also embodies and mediates the body, as we shall see.

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of Jacques Lacan, *Book III*, pp. 183 –195.

<sup>18</sup> Yannis Stavrakakis suggests that within this abyssal relationship the signifier expresses an immortal sense of representation and the objective universality of language, whilst also refusing the singularity of the subject, presupposing the subject's death. As Stavrakakis writes: "Entering the order of the signifier entails a certain mortification. Insofar as life has meaning only within a symbolic universe then life presupposes a continuous death: *Media vita, in morte sumus*. The subject is petrified and alienated exactly in the place where it seeks the birth of itself." Y. Stavrakakis, *Lacan and the Political*. (London:



1.3 Pregenital Language: Perverse Bodies and the Mother (Enveloping Slits):

Irigaray, Kristeva and Marcuse.

In moving towards approaching the ‘ana-linguistic’ nature of the pornographical, we will now look at the pregenital and pre-symbolic theoretical attempts to recast the relationship of sexuality, language and the body in different but still problematic ways. Irigaray argues that Lacan condemns not just the body into a sealed abyss of the ‘real’ but also death and woman (the feminine, the castrated). She suggests that Lacan merely reinforces the social and cultural status quo of language and institutional practices. If Lacan has posed woman as a castrated man, lacking the phallus and access to both the ‘real’ body and to the symbolic order, then for Irigaray the only way that women can speak or communicate is to gain the phallus they lack, by speaking and acting sexually ‘like a man’. For Irigaray women are in a state of ‘dereliction’ (abandonment) through their lack of mediation of the symbolic order; men are in a position to objectify themselves and women, whereas women are a ‘sex which is not one’, a gender that is not whole, excluded from the fullness of being and dependent.<sup>19</sup>

Irigaray looks back towards the origin of language whereby the child, the son, accepts the master signifier of the ‘Name- of -the -Father’ and retreats from the immanent threat of castration, and reveals the difficulties of Lacanianism in presenting the symbolisation of the mother-daughter relationship. The daughter has the potential for motherhood but has little access to language and the tools

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Routledge, 1999), p. 28. See also C. Fynsk, *Infant Figures: The Death of the ‘Infans’ and Other Scenes of Origin*.

<sup>19</sup> See L. Irigaray, *The Sex Which is Not One*, translated by Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988); L. Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, translated by Gillian C. Gill. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1987); and L. Irigaray, “Sexual Difference” in *The Irigaray Reader*, edited by Margaret Whitford. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991).

with which to symbolise herself, Irigaray states the greater likelihood of suffering from melancholia and psychosis. The daughter's language, according to Irigaray's research on delirium, tends to be dominated by the drives. In searching for a way of creating, or attempting to build, a feminine *jouissance*, a symbolisation of woman by women and securing for them an access to the symbolic order as women, Irigaray warns that the mother must not be killed.

She writes:

“We have to be careful about one thing: we must not once more kill the mother who was sacrificed to the origins of our culture. We must give her new life, new life to that mother, to our mother within us and between us. We must refuse to let her desire be annihilated by the law of the father. We must give her the right to pleasure, to *jouissance*, to passion, restore her right to speech, and sometimes cries and anger.”<sup>20</sup>

In protecting and recognizing the mother as sexual and desiring, Irigaray hopes to provide the daughter, and mother, with a differentiated relationship that allows each to ‘house’ and create ‘envelopes’ for themselves both as women as well as, as mothers.<sup>21</sup> She states that:

“...This ethical question is played out in the realms of *nudity* and *perversity*. Woman is to be nude, since she cannot be located, cannot remain in her place. She attempts to envelop herself in clothes, make-up and jewellery. She cannot use the envelope that she *is*, and so she must create artificial ones.”<sup>22</sup>

In order to evade a fatal immediacy whereby the daughter devours the mother's insides, her membranes, her mucous, her body, to create her own protective skin, and so removing the figure of a desiring sexual woman with whom the daughter can return to and identify with, Irigaray asserts the need for women to

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<sup>20</sup> L. Irigaray, “*The Bodily Encounter With the Mother*” in *The Irigaray Reader*, p. 43.

<sup>21</sup> Irigaray utilises the term ‘house’ by making specific reference to Heidegger's ‘house of language’ and ‘dwelling’. See L. Irigaray, *The Sex Which is Not One*, and L. Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*.

<sup>22</sup> L. Irigaray, “*Ethics and Subjectivity: Towards the Future*” in *The Irigaray Reader*, p. 170.

form their own divinity to measure themselves against qualitatively rather than quantitatively against each other.<sup>23</sup> Irigaray gives psychoanalysis the task of creating boundaries, which allow the separation between mother and daughter, in a manner un-fuelled by hatred, mastery, rejection and jealous, bitter competition.

Whilst Irigaray falls into the trap of gendering negativity, albeit not in the effort of producing an essence to woman but to bring a symbolization of woman into being that is not deficient to 'women', and maintaining the logic of desire, it's subjective lack and intervals that provide the inconsistencies of identity and the chase for its illusive trail, she draws on the language of both the mystical and the pornographical in order to so. Irigaray writes in a poetic fashion, in an effort to point to some other language that evades the mimetic appropriation of the Oedipal; she appeals to a feminine ideal or God figure and draws into her work the eastern mystical properties of earth, wind, fire, water and breath.<sup>24</sup> For Irigaray the 'ethical gesture' is one that discloses a spiritual and 'sexuate' respect for the body. Her writings all draw on the pornographical in order to express this gesture, of the ethical breath of the body.<sup>25</sup> With Irigaray bodies

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<sup>23</sup> See L. Irigaray, *The Sex Which is Not One*.

<sup>24</sup> See L. Irigaray, "Women-Mothers, the Silent Substratum of the Social Order", "Volume without Contours", "The Limits of Transference", "Sexual Difference", "Questions to Emmanuel Levinas", "Woman-Amongst-Themselves: Creating a Woman-to-Woman Sociality" in *The Irigaray Reader*; L. Irigaray, *The Sex Which is Not One*; and L. Irigaray, *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community*, translated by S. Pluháček. (New Delhi, India: New Age Books, 2005).

<sup>25</sup> Annie Sprinkle defines the separation of the sexy goddess and the slut as one of the art of breath. Her sexy goddess videos and books advocate the re-birthing breathing of tantra sex as a transformation of sexual energy. She states: "Through the slut, through the animal, through the body you can go into the goddess or spiritual, or you can go through the goddess into the intensely physical.

The goddess part of the workshop is a real erotic and sensual atmosphere. We do some ritual, we do a lot of breathing because breathing moves sexual energy up from the bottom out of the top of your head. You start building a sweet energy, with the breathing. We get very high. A lot of women have orgasms just from the breathing." Annie Sprinkle, "Whore Interview with Annie Sprinkle" in S. Bell, *Whore Carnival*. (New York: Automedia, 1993). See also A. Sprinkle, *Annie Sprinkle: Post Porn Modernist*. (New York: Torch Books, 1991).

Irigaray names sexual difference as one that is a difference in relation to breath. She writes: "What attracts man and woman to one another is not a simple sexual instinct, which could be satisfied by

envelop, are volumic, the two lips touch, mucous membranes are exposed, alongside breasts, clitoris, vulva, labia, pubis, vagina, uterus, womb; her bodies are fluidities. As she maintains:

“Now, the/a woman who does not have *one* sex [*sexe*] – which will usually have been interpreted as meaning no sex – cannot subsume it/herself under *one* term, generic or specific. Body, breasts, pubis, clitoris, labia, vulva, vagina, neck of the uterus, womb ... and this *nothing* which already makes them take pleasure in/from their apartness [*jouir dans / de leur écart*] thwarts their reduction to any proper name, any specific meaning, any concept. Women’s sexuality therefore cannot be inscribed *as such* in any theory, unless it is standardized to male parameters. Within the fortune of the clitoris was that it was not thought of in pleasure of apartness [*un écart*], and from other pleasures too.<sup>26</sup>

For Irigaray the ethical gesture comes in the material encounter of the self and the exteriority of self as other, as we shall see.

Irigaray not only genders negativity but she sexualises it too, or rather she names it a dynamic of the sexual, as something other than a genital sexuality, divorced and alienated from its skin. In challenging the status quo of psychoanalysis and her mentor, Lacan, Irigaray paid a high price and was dismissed from her post in the Department of Psychoanalysis at Vincennes, on the publication of her book, *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Whilst not naming the pornographical, Irigaray demonstrates the cultural ‘sore-spots’ that it highlights and their political entanglements. ‘Codes’ of identity and bodily proprieties are deeply embedded within every culture; transgressions of these are dangerous and are taken as physically threatening to people and institutions alike.

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a passage to the act. We also regress to this stage because man and woman forget the mystery of their difference, they reduce it to a corporeal particularity useful for the production of an orgasm and of a child.

What is at stake in the attraction between the sexes thus disappears. All sorts of stimulants and drugs become necessary in order to arouse desire, a desire that will retain its hunger because it does not involve the entire being..... In fact, what attracts man and woman to each other, beyond a simple corporeal difference, is a difference of subjectivity, and notably a difference of relation to the breath.” L. Irigaray, *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community*, p. 84.



Kristeva turns to the realm of the pre-Oedipal phase in order to create a theory of language and an ethical subject that bridges the antagonist relationship between semiotics and the symbolic.<sup>27</sup> Kristeva puts forward the semiotic as the pre-Oedipal and pre-symbolic stage of the pre-linguistic subject. She argues that within the semiotic the infant possesses no identity of itself separate from its mother, and its existence is regulated by physical drives, pulsations and impulses that are socially structured by the mother, not just biologically at this phase. Kristeva asserts that in organising the infant's food, the mother commands what enters and leaves the child's body, and she inscribes the oral and anal drives. For Kristeva it is this pattern that the mother arranges that will be re-organised later in the infant's entry into the symbolic linguistic frame.

She writes:

“What I call ‘the semiotic’ is a state of disintegration in which patterns appear but which do not have any stable identity: they are blurred and fluctuating. The processes which are at work here are those Freud calls ‘primary’: processes of transfer. We have an example of this if we refer once again to the again to melodies and babblings of infants which are a sound image of their bodily instability.”<sup>28</sup>

Kristeva puts forward the social dimension that the mother brings to the infant's drives as musical and spatial. For Kristeva the child's drives have already been structured according to the rhythms and gestures of the mother's

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<sup>26</sup> L. Irigaray, “Volume without Contours” in *The Irigaray Reader*, pp. 59 – 60.

<sup>27</sup> The main texts this chapter will draw upon of Kristeva's are those directly discussing her assertions around the semiotic, the chora, the thetic and the abject body: J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, translated by Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); J. Kristeva, “Revolution in Poetic Language” in *The Kristeva Reader*, edited by Toril Moi. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992) and J. Kristeva, “A Question of Subjectivity- An Interview” in *Postmodernism*, edited by R. Rice and P. Waugh. (London: Edward Arnold, 1989).

<sup>28</sup> J. Kristeva, “A Question of Subjectivity – An Interview” in *Postmodernism*, p. 129. Kristeva defines the etymology of the semiotic as implying distinctiveness in the signifying process. She writes: We understand the term ‘semiotic’ in its Greek sense... Distinctive mark, trace, index, precursory sign, proof, engraved or written sign, imprint, trace, figuration.” J. Kristeva, “Revolution in Poetic Language” in *The Kristeva Reader*, p. 93.

voice and flesh, whilst in the mother's womb. As Diana Coole writes:

“...There is already a maternal prohibition and identification operative prior to language, a bio-logic, a maternal law that ‘logically and chronologically’ precedes the paternal law and which is the register of the semiotic. Here there is a literal singing of the flesh, where ‘meaning’ (*signifiante*) and matter, sign and desire, are not (yet) severed but where negativity does entail a certain rhythmic lawfulness that lends to energy flows an economy of libidinal/sadistic patterning and to pre-linguistic life, a musical cadence.”<sup>29</sup>

Kristeva formulates that the drives, energy charges and psychological marks organised in the semiotic, articulate a *chora*, whereby the drives generate a ‘non-expressive totality’, one that is mobilised as it is regulated.

Originally Plato, in the *Timaeus*, uses the term of the *chora* to designate a vessel whose deity is absent, consequently this receptacle remains without unification and identity; a container of the maternal and nourishing mother, imprint bearer, and wet-nurse.<sup>30</sup> Kristeva posits the singularity and event of thought with the *chora*. Kristeva argues that the *chora* is a ‘nominability’ of rhythm of an infinitely repeated separation, or rather that the *chora* as an infinitely repeatable separation is ontologized when a ‘name or a word replaces it, making it intelligible.’ She writes:

“The *chora* is not yet a position that represents something for someone (i.e., it is not a sign); nor is it a position that represents someone for another position (i.e., it is not yet a signifier either); it is, however, generated in order to attain to this signifying position. Neither model nor copy, the *chora* precedes and underlies figuration and thus

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<sup>29</sup> D. Coole, *Negativity and Politics: Dionysus and dialectics from Kant to poststructuralism*. (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 206.

<sup>30</sup> J. Kristeva, “*Revolution in Poetic Language*” in *The Kristeva Reader*, p. 94. Kristeva writes: “Plato emphasises that the receptacle ... , which is also called space ... vis-à-vis reason, is necessary – but not divine since it is unstable, uncertain, ever changing and becoming; it is even unnameable, improbable, bastard: ‘Space, which is everlasting, not admitting destruction; providing a situation for all things that come into being but itself apprehended without the senses by a sort of bastard reasoning, and hardly an object of belief. This, indeed, is that which we look upon as in a dream and say that anything that is must needs be in some place and occupy some room...’. (*Timaeus*, tr. Francis M. Cornford, 52a – 52b). Is the receptacle a ‘thing’ or a mode of language? Plato’s hesitation between the two gives the receptacle an even more uncertain status. It is one of the elements that antedate not only the *universe* but also *names* and even *syllables*.” J. Kristeva, “*Revolution in Poetic Language*” in *The Kristeva Reader*, p. 126.

specularization, and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm. We must restore this mobility's gestural and vocal play (to mention only the aspect relevant to language) on the level of the socialized body in order to remove motility from ontology and amorphousness where Plato confines it in an apparent attempt to conceal it from Democritean rhythm."<sup>31</sup>

Kristeva argues that the 'physical marks' or semiotic of the mother-infant relationship orders and creates a kind of mediated assemblage for the articulation of the *chora*, one that precedes the establishment of the sign and symbolic order.

Kristeva puts forward that within the symbolic order, the symbolic networks of signifiers and signs do not supersede the semiotic; the two arrangements combine 'within the signifying process of the subject.' She notes that different modes of discourse are generated by the hesitant relationship between the symbolic and the semiotic, for instance the symbolic dominates scientific discursive formations with the semiotic remaining repressed, and within poetic discourse and dream logic the semiotic is hegemonic. Kristeva formulates:

"It may be hypothesized that certain semiotic articulations are transmitted through the biological code or physiological 'memory' and thus form the inborn bases of the symbolic function. Indeed, one branch of generative linguistics asserts the principle of innate language universals. As it will become apparent, however, the symbolic – and therefore syntax and all linguistic categories – is a social effect of the relation to the other, established through the objective constraints of biological (including sexual) differences and concrete, historical family structures. Genetic programmings are necessarily semiotic: they include the primary processes such as displacement and condensation, absorption and repulsion, rejection and stasis, all of which function as innate preconditions, 'memorable' by the species, for language acquisition."<sup>32</sup>

Kristeva also puts forwards Mallarmé's notion of semiotic rhythm within

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<sup>31</sup> J. Kristeva, "Revolution in Poetic Language" in *The Kristeva Reader*, p. 94.

<sup>32</sup> J. Kristeva, "Revolution in Poetic Language" in *The Kristeva Reader*, p. 96.

language, in order to illustrate her conception of the semiotic *chora*; one that creates discontinuities ‘temporarily articulating them’, and beginning again afresh, and again. At the same time, by putting the semiotic *chora* forward as a ‘psychosomatic modality’ of language, Kristeva differentiates it again from the symbolic, as an assemblage/ receptacle that also effectuates a continuum in generating links between the sphincters, both ‘glottal and anal’, within vocal modulations.

Kristeva argues that the distinctive rupture of the thetic phase forms the break and establishes the boundaries between the two heterogeneous realms of the semiotic *chora* and the symbolic orderings, occurring between the mirror and the Oedipal stages. She poses the receptacle of the semiotic *chora* as a kind of site of primary processes that bear the social subject and the realm of meaning, and thetic phase as one in which this subject attains the secondary processes that allow partial self-denial and the entry into selfhood with the positing of signification. The thetic phase, for Kristeva is the positing of the imaged ego of the mirror and castration stages and the positing of the semiotic motility; it is the place of the Other and the precondition for the positing of language.<sup>33</sup>

For Kristeva the break of the thetic, as the threshold for language, yields the subject to a frozen oppositional structure in the scission between subject and object, and the signifier and signified. She writes:

“Not only is the symbolic, thetic unity divided (into signifier and

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<sup>33</sup> Kristeva states: “The sign can be conceived as the voice that is projected from the agitated body (from the semiotic *chora*) on to the facing *imago* or on to the object, which simultaneously detach from the surrounding continuity. Indeed, a child’s first holophrastic utterances occur at this time, within what are considered the boundaries of the mirror stage (six to eighteen months). On the basis of this positing, which constitutes a *break*, signification becomes established as a digital system with a double articulation combining discrete elements. Language-learning can therefore be thought of as an acute and dramatic confrontation between positing-separating-identifying and the motility of the semiotic *chora*.” J. Kristeva, “*Revolution in Poetic Language*” in *The Kristeva Reader*, p. 100.



signified), but this division is itself the result of a break that put a heterogeneous functioning in the position of the signifier. This functioning is the instinctual semiotic, preceding meaning and signification, mobile, amorphous, but already regulated, which we have attempted to represent through references to child psychoanalysis (particularly at the pre-Oedipal stage) and the theory of drives. In the speaking subject, fantasies articulate this irruption of drives within the realm of the signifier; they disrupt the signifier and shift the metonymy of desire, which acts within the place of the Other, or on to a *jouissance* that divests the object and turns back towards the auto-erotic body. That language is a defensive construction reveals its ambiguity – the death drive underlying it. If language, constituted as symbolic through narcissistic, specular, imaginary investment, protects the body can signify itself through positions; and if, therefore, language, in the service of the death drive, is a pocket of narcissism towards which this drive may be directed, then fantasies remind us, if we have forgotten, of the insistent presence of drive heterogeneity.”<sup>34</sup>

Kristeva posits a semiotic negativity in which the porous and traversable boundary of the thetic ceaselessly challenges the limits of the symbolic in a kind of subjective internal dialectic. Kristeva offers a variety of routes for the transgression of the boundaries of the symbolic Law.

Two of these transgressive possibilities, that Kristeva names, are those of rejection and abjection; both processes arise from further divisions to the subject during the pre-Oedipal phase. She points out that during the anal phase, a process of rejection arises whilst the infant expels the waste matter from its body and discovers pleasure in excretion when its sphincters are erotised during the bodily discharge.<sup>35</sup> Kristeva puts forward rejection as a possible means for interrupting the symbolic with a reminder of the promise of pleasure. With abjection Kristeva provides a more primitive and archaic dimension to the pre-Oedipal splitting of the subject. She writes:

“We are no longer within the sphere of the unconscious but at the limit of primal repression that, nevertheless, has discovered an intrinsically

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<sup>34</sup> J. Kristeva, “*Revolution in Poetic Language*” in *The Kristeva Reader*, pp. 102 - 103.

<sup>35</sup> J. Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 147.

corporeal and already signifying brand, symptom, and sign: repugnance, disgust, abjection. There is an effervescence of object and sign – not of desire but of intolerable significance; they tumble over into non-sense or the impossible real, but they appear even so in spite of “myself”(which is not) as abjection.”<sup>36</sup>

Kristeva names this primordial ‘well of memory’ something that is both unapproachable and intimate, neither subject nor object it lies at the horizon as a fascinating repulsion that pulls one ‘toward the place where meaning collapses’, where one is confronted with the bodily vulnerability and eroticism strays onto the terrain of the *animal*.<sup>37</sup> Kristeva points out that it is not the improper, excessive body, or decaying health or un-cleanliness that causes the abject; rather it is what disturbs identity, the symbolic system and the Law. She puts forward the abject as that positionless point of the ‘deject’ whereby death infuses life and things disintegrate into a ‘heterogeneous flux’. Kristeva writes:

“What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a savior ... Any crime, because it draws attention to the fragility of the law, is abject, but premeditated crime, cunning murder, hypocritical revenge are even more so because they heighten the display of such fragility. He who denies morality is not abject; there can be grandeur in amorality and even in crime that flaunts its disrespect for the law – rebellious, liberating, and suicidal crime. Abjection, on the other hand, is immoral, sinister,

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<sup>36</sup> J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 11. She describes abjection as a state of immemorial violence through the separation of the fragmented body. Kristeva writes: “ But when I *seek* (myself), *lose* (myself), or experience *jouissance* – then “I” is *heterogeneous*. Discomfort, unease, dizziness stemming from an ambiguity that, through the violence of revolt *against*, demarcates a space out of which signs and objects arise. Thus braided, woven, ambivalent, a heterogeneous flux marks out a territory that I can call my own because the Other, having dwelt in me as *alter ego*, points it out to me through loathing.” J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 10. It is in this way that Kristeva gives significance to the human body.

<sup>37</sup> J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, pp. 1 – 18. Kristeva introduces a notion of fascination as a kind of drawing point for the abyss of the abject well of fear. She writes: “ Loathing an item of food, a piece of filth, waste, or dung. The spasms and vomiting that protect me. The repugnance, the retching that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage, and muck. The shame of compromise, of being in the middle of treachery. The fascinated start that leads me toward and separates me from them.” J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 2. The pornographical whilst sometimes being met with abjection in its disruption of identity and concentration on bodies and their various possibilities for fantasy sexual exchanges, also operates by compressing data through a *technē* of comic humour. This allows for an emotional distance for the participants of the pornographical in order to be able to engage with the material or surface that is created, as we shall see. *Supra* chapter three, pp. 126 – 175.

scheming, and shady: a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you...”<sup>38</sup>

One of the difficulties with the abject is its threat of annihilation, the abject subject neither belongs nor refuses and remains caught inbetween exclusion and the entrapping of the symbolic.

Kristeva locates the promise of the semiotic negativity through Freud’s processes of the unconscious, alongside those of condensation and displacement; Kristeva develops the ‘intertextuality’ of transposition, the passage from one sign system to another. She offers transposition as a process that is effectuated by both condensation and displacement but includes the altering of the thetic position, through the generation of a new one- a new articulation of the thetic and its denotative and enunciative positionality. She states:

“Poetic mimesis maintains and transgresses thetic unicity by making it undergo a kind of anamnesis, by introducing into the thetic position the stream of semiotic drives and making it signify. This telescoping of the symbolic and the semiotic pluralizes signification or denotation: it pluralizes the thetic doxy. Mimesis and poetic language do not therefore disavow the thetic, instead they go through its truth (signification, denotation) to ‘tell’ the truth about it”<sup>39</sup>

Kristeva designates the semiotic *chora* as both analog and digital finding it able to take on the role of a linguistic signifier, and representing an object for the ego.

In this way she constitutes both as thetic and able to represent the subject through poetic mimesis and the mechanisms of fetish, and able to breach Freud’s ‘primal repression’ and return to the animalistic heritage of humankind.

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<sup>38</sup> J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 6.

She discusses:

“Making the analog digital is thus not enough to ensure our bodily survival, because it cannot check the drives’ endless facilitations. An *alteration* and the totality called the *ecosystem*. This alteration makes it possible to gather together the analog and digital ‘code’ and, through a break prepared by the mirror stage posit it as unified, mastered, dominated and in another space – imaginary, representational, symbolic. Through this alteration, the ‘code’ leaves the place of the body and the ecosystem and, freed from their constraints, acquires the variability characteristic of a system of ‘arbitrary’ signs – human language – the later development of which forms the immense edifice of signifying practices.”<sup>40</sup>

A signifier formed in this manner, Kristeva argues is indebted to return to the semiotic and in one of the contrary movements the thetic can be displaced. She posits the textual experience as one that grounds the social and provides the signifying subject the manner in which to explore his/her constitutive process. Kristeva introduces two textual registers within language of the ‘genotext’ and the ‘phenotext’, the latent/mimetic and the manifest/classifying. These are Kristeva’s method for allowing the materiality of the body to beat the rhythms of desire and rejection.

Unfortunately Kristeva posits the semiotic in a way that can be argued to be pre-discursive or pre-Oedipal.<sup>41</sup> Her use of the term *chora* is problematic through its history of association with the feminine mother and wet-nurse; Kristeva posits an essentializing of negativity, one that maintains the body as abject or rejected or in a state of abyssal desire. The pornographical rather

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<sup>39</sup> J. Kristeva, “*Revolution in Poetic Language*” in *The Kristeva Reader*, p.112.

<sup>40</sup> J. Kristeva, “*Revolution in Poetic Language*” in *The Kristeva Reader*, p.117.

<sup>41</sup> Judith Butler critiques Kristeva’s use of the semiotic *chora* as one that creates a ‘prediscursive libidinal economy’, established before language through the biological telos of the maternal body. Butler asserts that neither Lacan’s nor Kristeva’s theoretical premises of the role of the maternal body and the feminine lack have been substantiated as correct, and are just another suggestion of cultural operatives. Butler also defines Kristeva’s theory as self-defeating in the semiotics’ inability to sustain itself as a source of cultural subversion, often leading to the annihilation and of the subject. See J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Power of Identity*. (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 80, J. Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*. (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 71, and J. Derrida, *Positions*, translated and



fascinates and provides a gathering point for its bodily surface, but in a manner that is ana-linguistic, or rather it has an a-rootedness to its surface; a surface that is both non-discursive and discursive, as we shall see.<sup>42</sup>

Marcuse also delves into the Freudian realm of the pregenital in order to search for a way to liberate sexuality from its 'chokeholds' within technological and capitalist societies.<sup>43</sup> Marcuse looks at the performance principle and its generative levels of 'surplus-repression', to discover the conditions under which it may be liberated, alongside Eros as a form of libidinous morality. Under specific conditions Marcuse argues it is possible for sexuality to create a civilised society; this is not the release of a suppressed sexuality or that of a genital sexuality, but a sexuality that reactivates the erogenous zones of the body in the formation of a 'pregenital polymorphous sexuality'.

For Freud the history of mankind and civilisation is one of repression; 'natural' humankind is governed by two instincts, those of Eros and Thanatos (the death, destructive instinct), which if uncontrolled are incompatible with any communal association and preservation of longevity.<sup>44</sup> In life the death instinct, and sexuality, is subjected to the life instinct and any

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annotated by Alan Bass. (London: Continuum, 2002), pp. 17 – 36.

<sup>42</sup> This chapter proposes to discuss the pornographical's ana-linguistic nature and its relationship to fascination as the ability to create an identity, or form a discursive coherence without relying on notions of temporality and an 'undecidable'.

<sup>43</sup> This thesis draws mainly upon: H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1987.) This book is particularly relevant to this debate on the 'ana-linguistic' nature of the pornographical, in that Marcuse delves into the pregenital and pre-Oedipal realms of sexuality in order to discover the possibilities of a society that alters its levels of repression and the kind of community that could grow from such a vision of sexuality and pleasure. Is there a pregenital language and sexuality? How would such a discovery impact at an individual and communal level? See also H. Marcuse, *One – Dimensional Man*, Introduced by Douglas Kellner. (London: Routledge, 1991), H. Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), H. Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), H. Marcuse, *Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics and Utopia*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), and H. Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. (New York: Humanity Books, 1999).

<sup>44</sup> H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, pp. 11 –54; and S. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, pp. 36 – 59. See also S. Freud, Chapter IV, "The Ego and the Id", in *On*

destructive or sexual energy is channelled into ‘socially useful aggression’; the last refuge of the individual is dissipated, the individual must now control his/her inner impulses and engage only in socially productive activities, such as work or procreative genital sex.<sup>45</sup> Whilst ‘stopping short’ of the pornographical, Marcuse looks for some kind of autonomy for the individual within the pregenital phase, before the human appetite for pleasure is thwarted and the body is dominated by a masterful super-ego that creates a socially ‘one-dimensional man’, as we shall see.

Freud names three principles that govern the social functioning of these instincts within people; these are the pleasure principle (the quest for satisfaction), the nirvana principle (the pursuit for diminution of excitation) and the reality principle (the transformation of sexual energy into socially useful goal-directed behaviour necessitated by the quest for civilisation). He puts forward that civilisation is based upon the conversion of the pleasure principle into the reality principle, since an unmediated thirst for pleasure is incompatible with the scarcity (Ananke) of the human and natural environment; pleasure requires ‘restraint, renunciation, delay’.<sup>46</sup> Freud writes:

“The sexually mature individual finds that his choice of object is restricted to the opposite sex, and that most extra-genital gratifications are forbidden perversions. The demand for a uniform sexual life for all, which is proclaimed in all these prohibitions, disregards all the disparities, innate and acquired, in the sexual constitution of human beings, thereby depriving fairly large numbers of sexual enjoyment and becoming a source of grave injustice. .... But what is not outlawed – heterosexual genital love – is still limited by legitimacy and monogamy.”<sup>47</sup>

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*Metapsychology*, pp. 380 – 388.

<sup>45</sup> H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, pp. 23- 27; and S. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, pp. 12 – 44. See also S. Freud, “*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*” in *On Metapsychology*, pp. 271 – 338.

<sup>46</sup> S. Freud, “*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*” in *On Metapsychology*, pp. 271 – 338; H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, pp. 11 –54; and S. Freud, *Civilization and Discontents*, pp. 3- 53.

Sexuality as a font of pleasure is prohibited and channelled into re-productive functionally and aim-inhibited libidinal friendships. The pornographical is marginalized, repressed and labelled morally repugnant.

Freud considers 'being civilized' as equivalent to being efficient and orderly; squalor, bodily waste, excess, grossness, decay, flab and a lack of cleanliness are intolerable, morally offensive and physically disgusting.<sup>48</sup> The bodily offensive and unpalatable aspects of the improper body drive the 'anaesthetic' of the pornographical, as we shall see.<sup>49</sup> Freud points out the cultural frustration that stems from continued renunciation of the pleasure principle, by suppression, repression, or a variety of methods of sublimation, as the cause of hostility that tends to dominate aspects of interpersonal relationships. This hostility and the aim-inhibited libido are, for Freud, the ingredients that bind a libidinal community together. As he writes:

"It is clearly not easy for people to forgo the satisfaction of their tendency to aggression. To do so makes them feel uneasy. One should not belittle the advantage that is enjoyed by a fairly small cultural circle, which is that it allows the aggressive drive an outlet in the form of hostility to outsiders. It is always possible to bind quite large numbers of people together in love, provided that others are left out as targets for aggression."<sup>50</sup>

In order to look at the difficulties posed by the levels of aggression produced through the transformation of the pleasure principle into that of the

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<sup>47</sup> S. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 40.

<sup>48</sup> S. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 30.

<sup>49</sup> *Supra*, Chapter four, pp. 176 - 221.

<sup>50</sup> S. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 50. Freud had originally named this phenomenon 'the narcissism of small differences', but within *Civilization and its Discontents*, he argues that this term does little to delve into the psychological aspects of racism and acts of genocide. Freud states his concern that these lethal aspects of civilization defy reform. He writes: "In addition to the tasks involved in restricting the drives – for which we are prepared – we are faced with the danger of a condition that we may call 'the psychological misery of the mass'. This danger is most threatening where social bonding is produced mainly by the participants' identification with one another, while individuals of leadership calibre do not acquire the importance that should be accorded to them in the formation of the mass." S. Freud,

reality principle, Marcuse introduces two new terms into the Freudian cartography, those of surplus-repression and the performance principle. Surplus-repression is a term that Marcuse uses to denote that whilst society may require a certain amount of basic repression, the amount demonstrated within the prevailing historical conditions of the contemporary world is surplus to this actual requirement. In this way Marcuse develops Freud's categories and analyses the accumulative and quantitative impact of the repression of political institutions, economics and social relations that constitute the social body of the reality principle.<sup>51</sup> It is this social body that that the pornographical so blatantly flouts with its demonstrative exchange of bodily fluids and codes improper bodily decorum.

What Marcuse discovers is that there has been a 'transubstantiation of pleasure itself', with gratification being converted into a by-product of the organisation of labour and the actual change of the reality principle into the prevailing historical form of the performance principle, organised by the rule of exchange and instrumental reason. As he writes:

"The performance principle, which is that of an acquisitive and antagonist society in the process of constant expansion, presupposes a long development during which domination has been increasingly rationalized: control over social labor now reproduces society on an enlarged scale and under improving conditions. For a long way, the interests of domination and the interests of the whole coincide: the profitable utilization of the productive apparatus fulfils the needs and faculties of individuals. For the vast majority of the population, the scope and mode of satisfaction are determined by their own labor; but their labor is work for an apparatus which they do not control, which operates as an independent power to which individuals must submit if they want to live. And it becomes the more alien the more specialized the division of labor becomes. Men do not live their own lives but perform pre-established functions".<sup>52</sup>

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*Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 52.

<sup>51</sup> H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, pp. 35 - 44.



The hierarchical distribution of scarcity and labour has intensified the instinctual constraints of the human psyche in the contemporary epoch.

Marcuse argues that the performance principle leads to surplus-repression.

Under the performance principle Marcuse argues the world's population spends most of its time in alienated labour, with the libido diverted ever increasingly for socially useful purposes. He puts forward that the more these constraints are rationalised, the more universal they become in their permeation of the social body. For Marcuse in order to rebel against the domination of the performance principle, a person would have draw on the pleasure principle and reject the strong sense of guilt that accompanies sexual repression, revealing that fantasy is an area kept free from the performance principle. As Marcuse states:

“Phantasy plays a constitutive role in the perverse manifestations of sexuality; as artistic imagination, it also links the perversions with images of integral freedom and gratification... Against a society which employs sexuality as a means for a useful end, the perversions uphold a sexuality as an end in itself; they thus place themselves outside the dominion of the performance principle and challenge its very formulation.”<sup>53</sup>

Such perverse sexual activities, Marcuse finds, leave open the possibility of the submission of Eros to the death instinct and the regression of the pleasure principle to the nirvana principle. According to both Freud and Marcuse this can lead to the formation of a severe and punitive super-ego.

Freud names the super-ego as one that is formed as an ego –ideal during the Oedipal complex that forms genital sexuality.<sup>54</sup> He defines the role of the super-ego as one that helps to secure the unity of the ego under the transition

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<sup>52</sup> H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, p. 45.

<sup>53</sup> H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, p. 50.

<sup>54</sup> S. Freud, *Civilisation and its Discontents*, pp. 60 – 82, S. Freud, “The Ego and the Id”, in *On Metapsychology*, pp. 350 – 401, and H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into*

from the pleasure to the reality principle, operating in the service of Eros.

However the difficulty that Freud and Marcuse point out comes from the part of the super-ego that is formed utilising Thanatos, in setting the ego against the id and eradicating this unity of the ego, causing the 'splitting' of the personality against itself and the life instinct. This self-directed aggression produces the moral kernel of the mature adult.<sup>55</sup> If the aggressive instincts of the super-ego are liberated then Freud found that both the ego and the morality formed by the super-ego are prone to disintegration. Both theorists discover that the dialectic of civilisation produces the release of increasingly destructive forces, and locate a possible danger for civilisation if the death instincts were to hold Eros in submission.

Freud and Marcuse locate the danger of civilisation here with the increased unleashing of aggressive tendencies and repression of the bodily ego, especially given the rise of dictatorship governments and their accompanied rhetoric of racial hatred and genocide. If the ego could be dominated by the super-ego and be open to disintegration, what possibilities are left for such a thing as the individual, or for the potential of autonomous thought? Whilst Marcuse does not himself mention pornography, his work on the liberation of the pregenital polymorphous perverse and creation of a libidinal morality enables this thesis to approach the site of the pornographical in a number of ways. On the one hand it becomes possible to view the liberatory aspects of the pornographical, as we shall see, and on the other hand Marcuse highlights the sensitivity of the cultural

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*Freud*, pp. 52 -54.

<sup>55</sup> The danger that Freud locates comes from a continued severity of aggression directed towards the personality, which threatens the balance of the psyche. He writes: "The more a man checks his aggressive tendencies toward others the more tyrannical, that is aggressive, he becomes in his ego-ideal ... The more intense become the aggressive tendencies of his-ego-ideal against his ego." S. Freud, "*The Ego and the Id*", in *On Metapsychology*, p. 395, and H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into*

psyche towards bodily by-products and activities. The social boundaries of decorum and identity offer little flexibility and often result in actual psychological revulsion, so deeply are they entwined with kernel of one's discursive and psychological being.

Marcuse highlights the difficulties for the contemporary genus human as one of the dissolution of the individual and an unconscious sense of guilt alongside the unconscious need for punishment. For both Freud and Marcuse individual psychology is the psychology of the genus, of the mass. As Marcuse writes:

“It is in the child that the reality principle completes its work, with such thoroughness and severity that the mature individual's behavior is hardly more than a repetitive pattern of childhood experiences and reactions. But the childhood experiences which become traumatic under the impact of reality are *pre-individual, generic*: with individual variations, the protracted dependence of the human infant, the Oedipus situation, and pregenital sexuality all belong to the genus man.”<sup>56</sup>

Freud asserts that the civilised genus is determined by its *archaic heritage* that transmits ideational contents, dispositions and the ‘memory – traces’ of previous generations.<sup>57</sup> Marcuse argues that Freud discloses the power of the

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Freud, p. 53.

<sup>56</sup> H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, p. 55. Freud theorises that the human race exhibits a sexual life that develops and ends at approximately the fifth year of life and is followed by a period of latency that lasts until puberty, when undergoes a retrogression. He writes: “This theory is confirmed by the anatomical investigation of the growth of the internal genitalia; it leads us to suppose that the human race is descended from a species of animal which reached sexual maturity in five years and rouses a suspicion that the postponement of sexual life its diphasic onset [in two waves] are intimately connected with the history of hominization. Human beings appear to be the only animal organisms with a latency period and sexual retardation of this kind. ... It cannot be a matter of indifference psychologically that the period of infantile amnesia coincides with this early period of sexuality. It may be that this state of things provides the true determinant for the possibility of neurosis, which is in a sense a human prerogative and from this point of view appears as a vestige – a survival- of primeaval times like certain portions of our bodily anatomy.” S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXIII*, p. 75

<sup>57</sup> S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXIII*, pp. 99 – 100, and H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, pp. 56 - 57. Such an assertion challenges the religious doctrines of all faiths and places human beings on a par with the animal kingdom in sharing Darwin's theory of evolution. Freud argues that the archaic heritage contains the guilt of former generations and puts forward an earlier period of wo/mankind as one of domination, domination by the father. In this primal horde the father monopolised the woman

universal in and over individuals.

In using Freud's logic in order to find a way to break with it and create a vision of a plausible non-repressive order, Marcuse argues that the performance principle provides the conditions for its own negation as the technological development of industry undermines the historical necessity of repression. He puts forward that automation of machinery means that much employment of alienating labour is unnecessary and the body is free for something other than being a tool of production. Marcuse finds that the technical need for sexual repression can be contested. With regard to the elimination of all 'surplus-repression' Marcuse writes:

“...The emergence of a non-repressive reality principle involving instinctual liberation would regress behind the attained level of civilized rationality. This regression would be psychical as well as social: it would reactivate early stages of the libido which were surpassed in the development of the reality ego, and it would dissolve the institutions of society in which the reality ego exists. In terms of these institutions, instinctual liberation is a relapse into barbarism. However, occurring at the height of civilization, as a consequence not of defeat but of victory in the struggle for existence, and supported by a free society, such liberation might have very different results. It would still be a reversal of the process of civilization, a subversion of culture – but *after* culture had done its work and created the mankind and the world that could be free. It would still be “regression” – but in the light of mature consciousness and guided by a new rationality.”<sup>58</sup>

Marcuse argues that under changing societal conditions brought about by the eradication of surplus-repression, the sexual instincts can generate lasting erotic relationships between adults, in forming a libidinal rationality and morality. He

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and the font of pleasure, and his sons suffered. Eventually the sons were exiled and in rebellion they collectively killed and devoured the father, setting up the bother clan. Freud and Marcuse argue that it is the taboos and social restraints that this clan established that form the guilt and punitive sense of social morality of contemporary society. S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXIII*, pp. 132 – 137, and H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, pp. 55 – 105. See also, S. Freud, “*Totem and Taboo*” in *Origins of Religion*.

<sup>58</sup> H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, p. 198.



foresees that the libido released under these circumstances would be a transformed libido that is capable of erotising the whole personality.

With the reactivation of all erogenous zones, Marcuse asserts there are a recovery of pregenital polymorphous sexuality and a refusal of genital superiority; the body becomes an implement of pleasure and imaginative play, rather than repressed toil. He states:

“The erotic aim of sustaining the entire body as subject-object of pleasure calls for the continual refinement of the organism, the intensification of its receptivity, the growth of its sensuousness. The aim generates its own projects of realization: the abolition of toil, the amelioration of the environment, the conquest of disease and decay, the creation of luxury. All of these activities flow directly from the pleasure principle, and, at the same time, they constitute *work* which associates individuals to “greater unities”; no longer confined within the mutilating dominion of the performance principle, they modify the impulse without deflecting it from its aim. There is sublimation and, consequently, culture; but this sublimation proceeds in a system of expanding and enduring libidinal relations, which are in themselves work relations.”<sup>59</sup>

Marcuse puts forward that since the nirvana principle aims at a state of minimum tension; a state without want, it can stifle the death instinct and strive to minimise its destructive manifestations. The conflict between life and death would be reduced through a state of gratification and a strengthened Eros can ‘absorb the objective of the death instinct.’ Whilst still ‘falling into the traps’ of positing a pre-discursive essence to sexuality and to ‘being human’ he allows us to re-think the necessary or required limits of social and sexual repression, alongside some of the ethical and social costs of maintaining surplus levels of repression.

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<sup>59</sup> H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, p. 212.

## 2: The Paradox of the Philosophy of Pleasure.

In shifting the paradigm to that of a philosophy of pleasure, this chapter seeks to demonstrate a reconfiguration of a different route than the pathway created by a philosophy of desire. In posing the pornographical in terms of a paradoxical site of a transitive present, a site that is both related to pleasure *and* desire, it can be understood as simultaneously constituting *both* the impossibilities and the very possibilities of representation. This chapter proposes to approach the pornographical as a paradox of a philosophy of pleasure (and desire) through three ethical routes that all pursue the ethical in terms of its relationship to the body: that of Adorno's aesthetic comportment of the shuddering physical; Foucault's network of micro-powers; and fascination as 'the immanence transgression' (Lacan's 'quilting point', Nancy's 'clinamen' and Foucault/ Klossowski/ Baudrillard's use of simulacrum) - the pornographical is only graspable at the moment of its multiple other crossing; the immanence transgression.

For Michel Foucault the term pleasure was crucial in that it:

"... Escapes the medical and naturalistic connotations inherent in the notion of desire. That notion has been used as a tool, as a grid of intelligibility, a calibration in terms of normality: "Tell me what your desire is and I will tell you who you are, whether you are normal or not, and then I can validate or invalidate your desire."... Desire is not an event but a permanent feature of the subject: it provides a basis onto which all that psychological-medical armature can attach itself. The term "pleasure" on the other hand is virgin territory, unused, almost devoid of meaning. There is no "pathology" of pleasure, no "abnormal" pleasure. It is an event "outside of the subject", taking place in that something which is neither of the body nor of the soul, which is neither inside nor outside - in short, a notion neither assignable nor unassignable."<sup>60</sup>

An event installs and gathers meaning through dispersion and intersection,

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<sup>60</sup> Michel Foucault in "Le Gai Savoir" (II), p. 32. Quoted from D. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards A Gay Hagiography* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1995), pp. 93-94.

whereas a telos of desire takes on a secret position of an unfolding of meaning towards and given with a goal. For Foucault, an event of pleasure can interrupt, disintegrate and disperse a telos of desire, a trajectory of needs that give rise to a desire for satisfaction and fulfilment. Such an event can spill into other, new events of pleasure, which in turn give rise to and scatter other trajectories of desire; intense experiences of pleasure serve to decentre a subject and fragment personal identities, as such they take place at the “limit of the subject”.

The pornographical’s identity/ expression is uncapturable by any philosophy whose framework is based only upon desire; this is not to say however that the pornographical is not an actuality, the common noun, name, industry and genres of pornography are not being posed as a metaphor or as an empty void that can have no meaning at all, but that a system of desire can never grasp its object or subject. Philosophies of desire cannot deal with the ‘trans’ of an impossible present time or a space-time that is present that is in transit, in flux, they can never meet their desired objects; their subjects can never meet their desired objects/identities – themselves, they must always be held in suspension, or in hesitation, or anaesthetised. If what is impossible about a presence of a present space-time is configured neither as an excess, an inbetween nor a lack as such, but rather as something that is in its singularity or eventness, in its co-existence with other singularities, translocating, dispersing, intersecting and installing a porous meaning in the flux of its movement; then meaning is possible through the dimensions of pleasure, through a surface. The pornographical is proposed as a singularity that is both bodily and a surface.

## 2.1 The Aesthetic Comportment of the Surface: Suffering Physical (Adorno).

For Adorno, in his critique of metaphysical systems of thought, identity finds its ground in the excess that is configured as negation.<sup>61</sup> Adorno puts forward that pluralism seen as an excessive difference provides another content and necessity: that of a ‘logic of disintegration’; identity is always in the process of disintegrating and in this way difference is not reduced to a unitary base. Identity whether put forward as essentialist or contingent is a precondition for meaning, politics, ethics and thinking as such, these paradigms invoke a relationship with time that is trans-historical [that is always placed in a position of trans-lating what has gone before], and one that reifies space and the body. In giving primacy to the importance of the object and the physicality of the body, Adorno is drawn upon here in order to begin to shift the epistemological framework away from semiotics and linguistics and their psychoanalytical dimension. The aim is to ‘side-step’ and move away from questions of the lack and essentializing forms of sexual identities and practices, in order to look at the formation of a singularity as a surface, generated through the relationship between pleasure and the body: the site of the pornographical.

Adorno states that ‘objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder’.<sup>62</sup> There is a gap between the concept and its corresponding object; there is an excess value and the object is non-identical to its excessive identity. Adorno asserts that the difficulty with concepts of identity is that they produce a reified process of thinking: they make unlike things alike. He puts forward non-identity thinking (or negative dialectics) as a method, though not a model, that

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<sup>61</sup> T. W. Adorno, “*Logic of Disintegration*” in *Negative Dialectics*, translated by E. B. Ashton. (London: Routledge, 1973), p. 144.

<sup>62</sup> T.W. Adorno, “*Dialectics not a Standpoint*” in *Negative Dialectics*, p. 5.



identifies, but in a way that it seeks to say what something is, as opposed to under what category or sign or representative tool, something falls.<sup>63</sup>

Adorno hopes to remain loyal and give the primacy to the object in order for the subject to be strengthened and ‘break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity’.<sup>64</sup> In this way the objective truth or untruth can be judged, and a sense of ethicality that takes account of the bodily presence and conditions of the subject/ object as crucial to a just form of politics. For the pornographical there is the surface and its repetitions, as we shall see. He writes:

“The judgement that a man is free refers to the concept of freedom; but this concept in turn is more than is predicted of the man, and by other definitions the man is more than the concept of his freedom. The concept says not only that it can be applied to all men as defined as free; it feeds on the idea of a condition in which individuals would have qualities not to be ascribed to anyone here and now.”<sup>65</sup>

If the object were to be equivalent to its concept, then it would have a rational identity. (Its utopian possibility.) Adorno places no absolute in negative dialectics, nor any universal expression or mediating communal identity, only the expression of immanence, a discontinuous dynamic unfolding in history: a mimetic comportment of the bodily shudder.<sup>66</sup>

Adorno’s hope is that critical theory is able to assess the cleavage between ideas and reality by confronting what is existent. Negative dialectics is non-identity thinking; immanent criticism, and seeks to be the self-consciousness context of ideology. Adorno hopes that negativity in this way does not escape this context but breaks out of it from within. Negative dialectics is not true for

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<sup>63</sup> T.W. Adorno, “*On the Dialectics of Identity*” in *Negative Dialectics*, p. 149.

<sup>64</sup> T.W. Adorno, “*Preface*” in *Negative Dialectics*, p. xxi..

<sup>65</sup> T.W. Adorno, “*Cogitative Self-Reflection*” in *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 149- 150.

<sup>66</sup> T. W. Adorno, “*Semblance and Expression*” in *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 111.

all time. Adorno seeks to avoid the dangers of positing an original origin, and with it a temporal sequence and accompanied, representational narrative structure: negative dialectics is not another first principle. It hopes to undermine all systems that claim completeness and to preserve the uniqueness of the particular. Adorno writes:

“It is the critique of the fact that critique itself, contrary to its own tendency must remain within the concept .... It lies in the definition of negative dialectics that it will not come to rest in itself, as if it were total. This is its form of hope.”<sup>67</sup>

Held defines ‘negative dialectics’ as a critical practice, rather than an epistemology, because its object “resists complete interpretation and itself drives thought to dialectics.”<sup>68</sup> Each time the object must be thought afresh. Nor is it simply a reality, for it recasts the real in the process of reflection, as the cognitive confrontation of concept and thing. To understand and express this contradiction is to contradict reality. To contradict reality is not to leave everything as it is. With Adorno, negative dialectics is the ‘truth’ of an unreconciled reality, awaiting its decline in a redeemed world. “After Auschwitz” as a suggestion of negative dialectic has its identity in difference found in a fractured impossible dimensionality of space-time, it is non-identity, in suffering. For Adorno it is “the need to let suffering speak that is the condition of all truth.” Suffering demands redemption, and is for Adorno the unmediated sense that cannot be conceptualised into a framework of good and evil, and cannot be given this or that constructed meaning. As Adorno puts it: “Suffering

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<sup>67</sup> T. W. Adorno, “*Self-Reflection of Dialectics*” in *Negative Dialectics*, p. 406.

<sup>68</sup> D. Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas*. (London: Hutchinson Publishing Group, 1980), p. 221.

speaks: Go away.”<sup>69</sup> The corporeality of the body cannot and must not be dismissed.

Adorno posits an ethical terrain whose objectivity can never be static. It is always in the position of recruiting its meaning within and in terms of process of synthesis, whose identity, subjectivity is established in terms of its dialectical-teleological negativity. Negation-as-excess, as an excess that cannot be represented, it is always in the process of exceeding the framework through which it could be graspable. An impurity is always-already attached to the possibility of any representation. Adorno puts forward the “seriousness of unswerving negation lies in its refusal to lend itself to sanctioning things as they are.”<sup>70</sup> Ethically we are always in the trajectory of questioning what is “immanently” present. The promise of a fluid objective judgement is for Adorno one of an aesthetic comportment, a comportment that as a shudder escapes the domination of the super-ego, and is both embodied and mediating. He writes:

“... Life in the subject is nothing but what shudders, the reaction to the total spell that transcends the spell. Consciousness without shudder is reified consciousness. That shudder in which subjectivity stirs without yet being subjectivity is the act of being touched by the other. Aesthetic comportment assimilates itself to that other rather than subordinating it. Such a constitutive relation of subject to objectivity in aesthetic comportment joins eros and knowledge.”<sup>71</sup>

It is through the ethics that Adorno posits in the aesthetic comportment of the corporeal shudder that allows us to approach the pornographical as ‘ana-

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<sup>69</sup> Adorno uses a battery of techniques to stir the creative imagination of the listener. His constellations are juxtaposed rather than an integrated cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator or first principle. Through these metaphors it is possible to decipher the object. This involves the mimetic capacity and thus the remembering of the forgotten. Mimesis is the capacity for the modes of behaviour, which are receptive, expressive and communicative in a sensuous fashion. Mimesis identifies with: ‘ it lets the object be.’

<sup>70</sup> T. W. Adorno, “*Critique of Positive Negation*” in *Negative Dialectics*, p. 159.

linguistic'. The aesthetic comportment that the surface of the pornographical, registers will be looked at in chapter three as a *technē* of comic humour and data compression.

## 2.2 Power: Pleasure and Micro-Ethical Strategies of the Surface (Foucault).

As a singularity that is co-extensive with other singularities, the pornographical is being put forward as a discursive economy, an 'unsayable' negativity, a way of thinking that recasts sexuality in terms of non-essentialising practices of fantasy and pleasure, as a dynamic to specific artworks and musical endeavours, as an assemblage of surface, and as being an event. As such it is enmeshed in a micro-relation of power networks that form a sense of ethics without relying on universalism. In writing on the ethics of power and its relationship to sexuality and bodily pleasures, Butler has suggested that there is no subjectivity without a passionate and psychically attached subordination to those by whom the subject is complicity dominated.<sup>72</sup> In looking at the abuse of love in cases of child abuse, Butler writes:

"The child does not know to what he/she attaches; yet the infant as well as the child must attach in order to persist in and as itself. No subject, in the course of its formation, can ever afford fully to "see" it. The attachment in its primary forms must both *come to be* and *be denied*, its coming to be must consist in its partial denial, for the subject to emerge."<sup>73</sup>

Butler puts forward the persistence of the subject as one that must continuously foil its own desire, for it is the endeavour of desire to 'unravel' the subject. In other words for Butler the persistence of one's survival, as a subject requires the embrace of one's subordination. As she states:

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<sup>71</sup> T. W. Adorno, "Theories on the Origin of Art" in *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 331.

<sup>72</sup> J. Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 7 – 10.



“The utterance concedes the possibility it denies, establishing the “I” as predicted upon that foreclosure, grounded in and by that firmly imagined impossibility. The “I” is thus fundamentally threatened by the spectre of this (impossible) love’s reappearance and remains condemned to reenact that love unconsciously, repeatedly reliving and displacing that scandal, that impossibility, orchestrating that threat to one’s sense of “I”. ... The traumatic repetition of what has been foreclosed from contemporary life threatens the “I”. Through that neurotic repetition the subject pursues its own dissolution, its own unravelling, a pursuit that marks an agency, but not the *subject’s* agency – rather, the agency of a desire that aims at the dissolution of the subject, where the subject stands as a bar to that desire.”<sup>74</sup>

Foucault’s understanding of power is one of a network of micro-powers, and rather than accepting things as they are, it refuses to sanction them. Power is everywhere but it is *not* everything. He describes power as something that both forms and flows through a relational nexus. He writes:

“... A moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable”.<sup>75</sup>

Repetitive mechanisms of repressive power are constituted as “the over-all effects that emerges from all these motilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and in turn seeks to arrest their movement.”<sup>76</sup> Power, for Foucault, is never in simple opposition to freedom, for inscribed within its relationality, as part of its relational nature, is a plurality of sites of resistance.<sup>77</sup> In any actual state of affairs, the questions raised should be what power relations are being

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<sup>73</sup> J. Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, p. 8.

<sup>74</sup> J. Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, p. 9.

<sup>75</sup> M. Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley. (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 93.

<sup>76</sup> M. Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>77</sup> “This means that in relations of power, there is necessarily the possibility of resistance, for if there were no possibility of resistance - of violent resistance, of escape, of ruse, of strategies that reverse the situation - there would be no relations of power.” Michel Foucault, in “*The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom*”, *The Final Foucault*, edited by James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (London: The MIT Press, 1988), p. 12.

presupposed, and how these micro-relations can form a singularity and make possible certain kinds and aspects of subjects, objects and discourses, which in turn may support or destabilise them. The macro or large scales forms of power are neither the sum of these relations, nor simply other to them. He writes:

“There is no discontinuity between them, as if one were dealing with two different levels (one microscopic and the other macroscopic); but neither is there homogeneity (as if one were only the enlarged projection or miniaturisation of the other); rather, one must conceive of the double strategy by the specificity of possible tactics, and of tactics by the strategic envelope that makes them work.”<sup>78</sup>

It is through a composition of micro-forces that is in no way a mere aggregation or totalisation that “far reaching, but never completely stable effects of domination are produced.”<sup>79</sup> Foucault opposes this relational discursivity of power to juridical-discursive theories that reduce power to restriction, including psychoanalytical discourses in which the law constitutes the very desire it prohibits.<sup>80</sup> He asserts:

“Between techniques of knowledge and strategies of power, there is no exteriority, even if they have specific roles and are linked together on the basis of their difference”.<sup>81</sup>

Resistance occurs not in a point for point relation of resistance to disciplinary powers, but in the “openings” or discontinuities of these force relations at the

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<sup>78</sup> M. Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>79</sup> M. Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, p. 102.

<sup>80</sup> The model of Law, even in an inverted form, as put forward by psychoanalysis, retains a metaphysical understanding of synthesis, at the expense of other possibilities. Foucault is not proposing that the subject and object has meaning through these power relations as identities enforced against resistance. Rather he draws a distinction between power and a will to power/ a searching for a ‘core’ truth. Disciplinary power has, for Foucault, succeeded in producing all but a “normalised” and “disciplined” self, in producing a scattering of subject positions and discourses that have subsequently been organised as forms of deviance. Both the “will to power” and the “will to truth” have produced difference and dispersion but as an expression of power relations, not the relations themselves. See M. Foucault, Michel *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* and M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

<sup>81</sup> M. Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, p. 98.

“limits of the subject”.<sup>82</sup> A point for point relation is meant here as the degree to which there are oppositional effects there is also a non-correspondence that occurs between the objects, and discourses of knowledge and the sites of their production. For Foucault it is pleasure, in its potential for breaking the subjects relationship with her/himself, that can interrupt, scatter and recompose difference in these force relations.<sup>83</sup> The gaps, openings and breaks that constitute an impossible and indeterminate site of a transitive present/subjective space-time, is composed of the flux of power relations and as such has potential non-coincidental strategic edges.

Philosophies of desire express the unity of a subject’s individuality and history, where as pleasure is de-subjectivating, a unity in dispersion. Pleasure has the potential to shatter a subject’s identity, subjectivity, in dissolving the subject and breaking its relationship with itself however fleeting, into the sensorial continuum of the body, into the unconscious dreaming of the mind.<sup>84</sup> Part of the ethics of the pornographical is the creation of the self-to-self relation and the non-reflecting communal practice that it develops, as we shall see. There is no self-reflexive subject here; there is no production of a superior subjectivity and objectivity by extension. For Foucault this is precisely the promise that pleasure holds - the potential for shattering the self-reflexivity of

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<sup>82</sup> An historical method of discontinuity makes it impossible to view history as one of sequential events which serve as repeatable self-serving regularities. Rather epochs seen as multiplicities and difference is seen as a pure event. An emphasis on discontinuity and breaks complements a continuist view, but in holding change in suspension transformations are revealed at different levels.

<sup>83</sup> Foucault’s work in the discursive archives establishes that human subjects and historical events are not fixed but discrete identities that are fragmented and changing sites across which the flow of power moves. An impossible site of a transitive present space-time is one full of a multi-positionality and techniques of power. The archive poses a series of questions that undermine the familiarity of ‘our’ present, in establishing “that we are difference, that our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the history of difference, ourselves the difference of masks.” M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by Alan Sheridan (Routledge: London, 1995), p 131.

<sup>84</sup> D. M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards A Gay Hagiography*, p. 95. This ethical break with the self will be looked at in greater detail through the pornographical technē of comic humour. Supra chapter

the subject.

### 2.3 Fascination: The Immanence Transgression.

Whilst fascination is a much under-used theoretical tool, it is being proposed as the ‘gathering point’ most appropriate for the pornographical. The pornographical fascinates; the corporeality and immorality fascinates; there is nothing nice about the pornographical; and it fascinates. The mimetic bodily shudders pulsate across the surface of the pornographical and it fascinates. The pornographical is being posited as a surface, one that is ‘ana-linguistic’ (without root) but that is given coherence/ identity through the feature (drawing point) of fascination, without bringing in a sense of temporality or an ‘undecidable’- for the pornographical is only graspable at the moment of its multiple other crossing; the immanence transgression.

Lacan symbolic register takes hold for the subject, or the desiring lack, through a ‘quilting point’, that of the Father, the phallic signifier.<sup>85</sup> For Lacan, the quilting point forms a *point de caption*, which serves to halt the endless play of the chains formed between signifiers. The quilting point attaches and fixes a chain of signifiers to a signifying knot, rather than to the object itself. However, for Lacan this quilting kernel is that of the master (a kind of transcendental still) signifier – that of the Name- of- the -Father. He writes:

“The quilting point is the word *fear*, with all these trans-significant connotations. Everything radiates out from and is organised around this signifier, similar to these little lines of force that an upholstery button forms on the surface of the material. It’s the point of convergence that enables everything that happens in this discourse to be situated retroactively and prospectively.”<sup>86</sup>

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three, pp. 126 – 175.

<sup>85</sup> See J. Lacan, *The Psychoses*, pp. 258 – 270.

<sup>86</sup> J. Lacan, *The Psychoses*, p. 268.



A postmodern 'read' of Lacan's quilting point would be Nancy's use of the term 'clinamen' and Baudrillard's 'simulacra'. J-L. Nancy in his, *Being Singular Plural*, introduces the term clinamen in order to look at how meaning increments, or is in excess or increases at the ex-posed and dis-placed origin. Nancy uses it discuss the singular plurality of the 'co-presence' of an identity, be it communal or just a community of selves. He writes:

"In the atomist model, there are atoms plus the clinamen. But the clinamen is not something else, another element outside of the atoms; it is not in addition to them; it is the "more" of their exposition."<sup>87</sup>

Both Foucault and Baudrillard draw on the term simulacra in order to bring movement and coherence to a discursive formation/ nodal point of identity. Plato introduces the term of simulacrum in the *Republic* in order to distinguish the false copy from the icon /good copy. The false copy /simulacrum repeats only the external appearance of the icon without participating in the idea that founds it. The simulacrum is merely a copy of a copy, or an external relation of similitude.<sup>88</sup>

A postmodern use of this term draws on the notion of simulacrum as a copy, a 'copy without an original', and as such the simulacrum is both paradoxically removed from its origin and at the same time infinitely proximate to its point of origin. Durham defines an encounter with the simulacrum as one close to memory and fantasy. He writes:

"Through the simulacrum one recalls, or imagines what is virtual or unactualized in the very object that one sees."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> J-L. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, translated by R. R. Richardson and Anne E. Byrne. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 39.

<sup>88</sup> Supra chapter three, pp. 126 – 175, where Lyotard and Augustine are discussed with relation to the tensorial sign and the semiotic sign.

For Baudrillard signs are endlessly circulated and are in actuality more real than reality, simulacra are just simulations. Baudrillard points out that the contemporary age is part of the 'hyperreal', whereby signs have no connection to reality: life mimics art.<sup>90</sup> The pornographical, as an assemblage, a surface and a singularity, maintains a connection to the bodily object, but this surface is, at the same time, connected to neither an essence of the pornographical nor to an essence of the object; it is a copy of itself and its discursive and non-discursive relationality. The fetish, within this frame can be seen as a copy of a copy, a simulation, no longer 'standing-in' castration fear or penis envy, but for the pleasure of and out of its co-existence signification.

Foucault looks at Magritte's art and Klossowski delves into the narrative of Diana, and both locate a 'corrosive effect' within the narrative efforts to master the spatial and temporal orderings; Magritte's paintings open up the identity between words and things, suspending their identities 'between and across its repetitions'.<sup>91</sup> Klossowski's narration of the search for Diana the hunter's identity demonstrates this 'corrosive effect'; in attempting to capture the identity of the hunter, Klossowski discovers he himself turns into the hunted within the movement of capture; he finds himself transformed. In the divergence of the same an endless movement is born – fascination – the pornographical is only graspable at the moment of its multiple other crossing, 'the immanence transgression'.

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<sup>89</sup> S. Durham, *Phantom Communities: The Simulacrum and the Limits of Postmodernism*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 17 – 18.

<sup>90</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1996.)

<sup>91</sup> See M. Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe*, translated and edited by James Harkness. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

CHAPTER THREE:  
*Libidinal Technologies of Comic Pleasure.*

1. Comic Gesture: Data compression and the pornographical.

As has been argued up to this point, pornography is no simple product/ expression. The meaning of its paradoxical discourse cannot be easily reduced to being a mode of power that seeks to oppress and exploit women and children through the use of obscene sexual representations.<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, pornography cannot be streamlined and neatly packaged into a violent economy that utilises abusive images that serve to dehumanise and degrade the human body for the pleasure of a voyeuristic ‘male gaze’.<sup>2</sup> The notion of the desiring and abyssal subjectivity/ social agency incorporated within the psychoanalytic and linguistics epistemologies (e.g. Lacan, Žižek, Irigaray, Kristeva and Butler) does not quite expose the complexity of the pornographical and its ‘ana-aesthetic’.<sup>3</sup>

In order to continue to redress the imbalance and absence of conceptual acuity respecting the world of the pornographical, it is crucial to underscore the discrete, heterogeneous tropes/traces that constitute the concept. In this chapter we look at primarily the technology of comic humour that all pornographic genres incorporate and to further look at the libidinality of such a technology and its ability to create that which Susan Sontag has named a ‘psychic dislocation’.<sup>4</sup> Bringing in the comic as a means of data compression that packages sexual arousal will not only shed light on a different sense of meaning

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<sup>1</sup> Supra introduction, pp. 7 - 20.

<sup>2</sup> Supra introduction, pp. 7 – 20.

<sup>3</sup> Supra chapter two, pp. 81 – 125.

<sup>4</sup> S. Sontag, “*The Pornographic Imagination*” in Georges Bataille’s *Story of the Eye*. (London: Penguin

for sexually explicit material, but will also put into question Deleuze and other theorists claims that pornography is the expression of the hesistant (pornology) and Derrida who attributes the language game itself to the breaking of the hymen.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter proposes to establish the groundwork for the ‘ana-aesthetic’, the a-rootedness of the pornographical aesthetic which will be discussed in further detail in chapter four, by three comic routes. Relying on a rather strange landscape this chapter will develop the concept of the comic in relationship to the pornographical and its role in the data compression of the pornographical package/ code. It proposes to this through drawing upon the Heideggerian Being (Dasein and technē), the Bataillian notion of witnessing, whereby the pornographic is only graspable at the moment of its multiple other crossing; the immanence transgression (elaborated here through the use of J-F Lyotard’s *Libidinal Economy*), and Freud’s use of *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* and Bergson’s *An Essay on Comic Laughter*.<sup>6</sup>

To put this slightly differently, pornography occupies a strange cultural position not only in its occupation with offending aesthetic sensibilities and a class-ridden bed of identity woes and other fetishes, but also in its relationship to both the body and to technology. It is this relationship that gives pornography its paradoxical ana-linguistic structure. One of the characteristics that make pornography uniquely definable is its utilisation of comic humour.

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Books, 1982), p. 94.

<sup>5</sup> G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, pp. 288- 294, and J. Derrida, *Dissemination*, translated and introduced by Barbara Johnson. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). This thesis will develop the notion of the ethical materiality of pornography further in the following chapter by using Lyotard’s notions of an ‘anaesthetic’ and a ‘differend’. See J-F, Lyotard, *Heidegger and “the jews”*.

<sup>6</sup> That the pornographic is only graspable at the moment of its multiple other crossing; the immanence transgression is outlined and discussed in terms of the pornographical’s ana-linguistic nature and the gathering or crossing point of fascination. Supra chapter two, pp. 81 – 125.



Whether intentional or not the professed aim or hope and effect of pornography is to sexually excite its audiences.<sup>7</sup> Here lies the shame and moral repugnance of pornography, and yet this is no simple thing for pornography entails a very practical application of data compression.<sup>8</sup> The data compression (or the compressing of information by the sender in order to transfer it and the decompressing and interpretation of it by the receiver) of pornography (an economy of meaning/ package/ expression of sexual fantasies) is a complex operation that packages sexual arousal and transmits this information across a wide variety of technological mediums. Unlike acts of striptease or prostitution, pornography has to take into account the technological distance imposed on the viewers.

Linda Williams's research into the transition of the genre of pornography from stag films into hardcore pornographic films provides an example of data compression of the pornographical and the perceived need to create intimacy despite the distance created by the technology of film.<sup>9</sup> She finds that films in

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<sup>7</sup> Sontag compares this to 'aim to excite' demonstrated by the literary genre of pornography and its usages of sexual obsessions, to that of the literary subject of religious obsessions. Sontag relates this 'aim to excite' as a feature of the ability of a wide range of genres, including that of pornography, to compress and package information, in the hope that audiences will be fascinated enough to interact with the material and create its meaning. I would like to develop this further using Freud's notion of condensation that he develops in relation to 'the joke'. She writes that when compared to this subject then "the familiar fact of pornography's definite, aggressive impact upon its readers looks somewhat different. Its celebrated intention of sexually stimulating readers is really a species of proselytizing. Pornography that is serious literature aims to "excite" in the same way that books which render an extreme form of religious experience aim to "convert". S. Sontag, "The Pornographic Imagination" in Georges Bataille's *Story of the Eye*, pp. 94- 95.

<sup>8</sup> In writing on the digital age and the merits of digitalization, Negroponte puts forward that two of the positive aspects are those of data compression and error correction. He writes: "The relationship between bandwidth and computing is subtle. The trade-off between bandwidth and computing is evident today in video telephones and more expensive video conferencing systems. Because you compute at both ends of the line, you can ship fewer bits back and forth. By spending some money processing the digital video at each end, compressing and decompressing it, you use less channel capacity and save money in transmission." N. Negroponte, *Being Digital*. (London: Coronet Books, 1995), p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> Linda Williams in her analysis of hard-core film pornography defines the impetus of pornography as that of "the confession of previously invisible truths of the bodies and pleasures in an unprecedented "frenzy of the visible"". L. Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the "Frenzy of the Visible"*, p. 7, and Comolli, "Machines of the visible" in *The Cinematic Apparatus*, edited by Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath. (New York: St. Martins Press, 1980), pp. 122 - 123. It is from this materialist historian that Williams borrows her usage of the phrases "frenzy of the visible" and "machines of the visible". Comolli

the 1970s explored new ways of creating narrative structures based on sexual action with the integration of sound technology. Williams puts forward that thirty years after the rest of cinema had utilised sound, the stag films still relied upon the power of visual images alone, accompanied with the “exquisite embarrassment of silence”.<sup>10</sup> Williams documents the mostly inarticulate moans of pleasure dominated the aural sound of hardcore films, coupled with the mis-matched voice dubbing whereby the moving lips fail to complement the sounds being spoken. She notes that the ‘oohs’ and ‘aahs’ tended mostly to be from female higher pitched voices, punctuated with an odd masculine groan or two. Other popular sound effects, that Williams takes account of as relied upon in the ‘porn’ industry vocabulary are those of bedsprings; the smack of a kiss or a slap; the slurp of fellatio of cunnilingus; and the woosh of penetrational engulfment. She puts forward that dialogue tends to be short consisting mostly of clichéd phrases such as “fuck me harder” and “I’m going to come”. These techniques are still used within the video and Internet ‘porn’ creations, whether homemade or studio produced.<sup>11</sup>

Williams points out that the use of sound effects for porn films were non-

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wrote that the second half of the nineteenth century, which ends in the birth of the cinema, “lives in a sort of frenzy of the visible ... of the social multiplication of images: ever wider distribution of illustrated papers, waves of prints, caricatures, etc ... of geographical extension of the field of the visible and representable ... The whole world becomes visible at the same time it becomes appropriately.” See Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the “Frenzy of the Visible”*, p. 285 and pp. 282 - 285. This impetus of pornography is considered through other pornographic mediums in William’s following work *Porn Studies*. (London: Duke University Press, 2004.)

<sup>10</sup> L. Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the “Frenzy of the Visible”*, p. 122. See also L. O’ Toole, *Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire*, pp. 61 -114.

<sup>11</sup> Tang notes that the change of technological medium from film to video impacted on the data compression techniques of pornography. The birth of video technology meant that the porn producers no longer had to concern themselves with audience demands and anxieties. Anyone could watch and of course make pornography from their homes and a one-on-one market was easy to please. Video impacted with a non-narrative format far removed from the porn film industries limits of a straight market and a gay market. As Isabel Tang writes: “Video porn ‘expands the market where you have bisexual porn, transsexual porn, lesbian porn, foot-fetish porn’ says Jay Lorenz, AVN magazine, which reviews tape by genre, also lists Fat/Pregnant, Tickling, Amateur, Catfights, Old Babes, Spanking and even Anal as separate categories. In particular the popularity of anal sex is a creation of the video market.” I. Tang, *Pornography: The Secret History of Civilization*, p. 154.

synchronous, especially in the sexual numbers sequences. This seems to be almost a formal procedure in shooting these scenes.

“The effect of non-synchronous sound is to detract from the spatial realism of synchronous sound. Pre-recorded (or post recorded) sound is achieved, unlike sound recording done on set, by placing microphones close to the body.”<sup>12</sup>

Williams remarks that both hardcore pornography and musical films tend to seek an effect of closeness and intimacy, rather than spatial reality.

There is no pre-programmed response for how a pornographic prose, image, sound or series of sounds may be received. There are an endless variety of viewer responses that may be elicited, as each viewer filters, rearranges and converts the cultural signals in a way that makes sense for themselves. The ‘porn’ director, Henri Pachard names this the ‘80/20 rule’ whereby the producer has to present the 80 per cent in the hope of the product providing pleasure and the audience or audiences has to furnish the remaining 20 per cent. As Laurence O’ Toole points out the efforts needed by the porn consumers can quite often be more than 20 per cent.<sup>13</sup>

Pornographic products run the risk of offending or upsetting some consumers and just not working at all for others. Any pornography is a parcel of compressed information that requires the engagement of a viewer or audience in order to be decompressed through the potentiality of their sexual fantasies. O’ Toole dubs this the viewers ‘art-work’. As one of the few writers that delves into the mysteries of the porn industry by taking it seriously and not simply dismissing it out of hand, O’ Toole touches upon this ability of pornography to

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<sup>12</sup> L. Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the “Frenzy of the Visible”*, p. 123.

<sup>13</sup> L. O’ Toole, *Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire*, p. 16.

be a small parcel of compressed data that the audience makes big.<sup>14</sup>

O' Toole points out the importance of fantasy, not just the context of fantasies but the creativity and autonomy in the very act of fantasizing.<sup>15</sup> An act of fantasy is both discursively social and solitary in its act and line of flight. A sexually explicit piece of prose, image or sound may trigger a viewer to be able to fantasize. Roland Barthes, in *Camera Lucida*, names such a trigger, a 'punctum' as the accidental punctuation that pricks, bruises and becomes poignant to the viewer.<sup>16</sup> It is in this sense that the punctum operates as a technology or technē in forming and adding to a moment of an identity, meaning and body.<sup>17</sup> A viewer's 'art-work' or 'technologies of self' can vary according to a whole realm of things, such as his or her momentary mood, personal lifestyle, history, values, preferences and energy level.

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<sup>14</sup> L. O' Toole, *Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire*, p. 16. Laura Kipnis and Robert Stoller whilst not looking at pornography in terms of data compression do comment on the industry's aesthetic codes. Both refer to the intricate relationship and shared commonalities between art and pornography, and pose both cultural activities as libidinal and perverse, with perversions entailing their own aesthetic codes. The major difference between pornography and art appears to that of class status. As a discursive industry, the pornographic genres tend to utilise aesthetics in order to send both them and this class distinction of the loins up. In 1965 Bob Guccione founded the magazine, *Penthouse*, featuring photographs of its models as impressionist paintings. The photographs were speckled and in colour; the models were shot in poses where they were looking away or into a mirror. There was always something between the viewer and the model, in looking one penetrated the privacy of the models. It was not until April 1970 that *Penthouse* took the radical step of revealing pubic hair on its centrefold. In doing so it broke the market in becoming one of the first 'on-the-counter-shelves' magazines to broach the boundaries of the obscene. See L. Kipnis, *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America*, p. 83, and, R. Stoller, *Observing the Erotic Imagination*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 44- 69.

<sup>15</sup> L. O' Toole, *Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire*, pp. 331-332.

<sup>16</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, pp. 26-27. Barthes names the co-presence of "studium" and "punctum" as the elements which arouse an interest in photographs or a visual field and in doing so establishes a body of information and extends a person's and socio-cultural discursive fields. Barthes defines the studium as an "application to a thing" and an "enthusiastic commitment but without special acuity". It is by the studium that the viewer, as a political and historical testimony, receives photographs, by participating in the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings and the actions of the images. However it is the co-presence of the punctum that breaks or punctuates the studium. For Barthes the punctum is a quirk within the aesthetic play of the photograph, one that can both disturb and attract a person. It is an addition, something that whether or it is triggered, is uncoded: it is something that a viewer adds to the photograph and something that is already part of it. R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 55. Also supra chapter two, pp. 126 – 175.

<sup>17</sup> Supra chapter two, pp. 126 – 175. Marcel Mauss was one of the first thinkers to put forward bodily techniques as a "technology without an instrument." M. Mauss, "Techniques of the Body", translated by Ben Brewster in *Economy and Society*, 2, 1 (1973), pp. 70- 88. Michel Foucault's work on technologies of the self follows in this vein. See M. Foucault, *Technologies of the Self; Discipline and Punish* and the three volumes of *A History of Sexuality*.



In remarking on information compression, O' Toole draws upon the work of cultural anthropologist Sandy Stone. Stone writes on the cultural implications of virtual systems on the conceptual understandings of space, time, proximity and agency, and how communication technologies serve to mediate and create interactions of social spaces, groups and communities. She considers the relationship that the communication technologies have to the bodies and selves in three ways: an apparatus for the production of community; an apparatus for the production of the body; and as interfaces mediating between bodies and selves, whether or not they are within physical proximity of each other.<sup>18</sup>

In posing a history of communication technologies as one that reveals how social groups search for ways of enacting and stabilizing a sense of presence and connection in an increasingly diffuse and distributed global networks and fields of power, Stone is curious about the effects of distortion and narrow bandwidth on the construction of sexual pleasure, or as she terms it, erotic desire, during phone sex.<sup>19</sup> Stone comments on observing the phone sex operations of a small community of women in the San Francisco Bay area. She found that:

“The phone-sex women were collecting the five senses, the full auditory package. In order to convey so much in such small packages, the words used by phone sex operators, the sighs, pauses, delays, giggles, amount to a highly sophisticated code, a compendium of erotic communication for the dialler to receive and decompress by adding themselves, their own detailed experiences, fantasies and predilections to the mix. ‘The sex workers took an extremely complex, highly detailed set of behaviours, translated them into a single sense.’ And then, ‘at the other end of the line the recipient ... reconstituted ... a fully detailed set of images and interactions in multiple sensory mode.’ From this combination emerges a very elaborate, individual erotic occurrence.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> A.S. Stone, *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age*. (MIT Press: Massachusetts, 1996), pp. 88 – 89.

<sup>19</sup> A.S. Stone, *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age*, pp. 88 – 95.

<sup>20</sup> L. O' Toole, *Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire*, pp. 309 – 310, and Stone, *The War of*

Her research demonstrated that the human auditory system has an exceptionally wide patience for both distortion and bandwidth limitation in voice communication.<sup>21</sup>

Phone-sex can be taken as part of the pornographical in its application of information compression and transfer, through sound, pitch and tone, of a fantasy sex package or as Stone terms the 'erotic' code of sexual pleasure.<sup>22</sup>

The physical sensations produced in the audiences of the various mediums of pornography are no simple or mechanical effect. Susan Sontag in *The Pornographic Imagination*, points out the importance of an emotionally flat landscape for the pornographic genres. She writes that:

“...Pornography is one of the branches of literature – science fiction is

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*Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age*, pp. 80–97.

<sup>21</sup> A.S. Stone, *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age*, p. 94.

<sup>22</sup> Another example of the data compression package of the pornographic genres is provided by Williams' analysis of the transition of stag films into hardcore pornographic films of the 1970s. She contends that it is the features, both technical and marked within the performances that allowed the viewer to 'get into' the stag films. In seeing more genital action the audience is compensated for the technical distance installed between the performers and the audience. Williams notes that another difference or rather feature that was noticeably missing from the stag genre of pornographic films, is that of the 'money shot'. She finds that the vision of external ejaculation was never present in a stag film with any regularity and was unseen in the earlier stag movies - the money shot tends to occur as a narrative trait of the feature-length porn movie. Williams puts forward that in the feature length pornographic films the sexual numbers had a greater coherence and tended to form complete dramas of arousal, excitement, climax and satisfaction; after having been brought into the film, the viewers are provided with the means to withdraw satisfied.

In contrast, Williams finds, the stag films endings were abrupt, and came after a barrage of inserted close-ups that formed the hardcore sexual sequences. The spectator was meant to be aroused but not satisfied. As Williams writes: “(They must) ... Seek satisfaction outside the purely visual terms of the film - whether in masturbation, in actual sexual relations, or by channelling sexual arousal into communal wisecracking or verbal ejaculation of the “homosocial” variety.” L. Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the “Frenzy of the Visible”*, p. 74. She notes that often stag films in Europe were shown in brothels where it served an economic purpose to only arouse the clients, as other means of satisfaction were on hand.

Williams draws upon Scott MacDonald and his in his article, “*Confessions of a Feminist Porn Watcher*”, in which he wrote of his own experiences in frequenting the arcade booths. He describes these as a more modern, colour version of the stag films, whereby the arcades sold magazines, tapes and other sexual paraphernalia and often had several solitary booths showing Super 8mm films, spliced together in loops and projected onto the wall. MacDonald comments that every half-minute at no particular point, the films stopped until more tokens are put into the machine, and viewers began watching the films at random points varying on where the last viewer left off. For MacDonald the social experience of these arcades was one of 'shared embarrassment' that consisted of avoided eye contact and masturbation in the booth as the climax of the visit. L. Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the “Frenzy of the Visible”*, p. 76.

another – aiming at disorientation, at psychic dislocation.”<sup>23</sup> “...Only in the absence of directly stated emotions can the reader of pornography find room for his own responses. When the event narrated comes already festooned with the author’s explicitly avowed sentiments, by which the reader may be stirred, it then becomes harder to be stirred by the event itself.”<sup>24</sup>

A paramount feature and technē of pornography is that of comic humour, as we shall see. From the roots of libertinism, pornography’s heritage is one that welds the farce and satire of the sexual and the vulnerability of the human body to political commentary and entertainment. It is through its usage of comic humour that pornography manages to create both an emotional distance and at the same time a degree of intimacy with such a difficult and psychically offensive terrain. Any chance of sexual arousal in the actors and audiences depends upon both the emotional flatness and playfulness that pornography manages to generate. Comic humour is entwined within the data compression of pornography and is also being suggested as the key to its unravelling, and decompression.

A technē of comic humour enables a viewer to decompress the superimposition of space-time that is encapsulated within pornography’s data compression. Gaston Bachelard argues that verbal and visual times are superimposed and it is only in dreams that they are independent of each other.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> S. Sontag, “*The Pornographic Imagination*” in Georges Bataille’s *Story of the Eye*, p. 94.

<sup>24</sup> S. Sontag, “*The Pornographic Imagination*” in Georges Bataille’s *Story of the Eye*, pp. 100 – 101. Whilst agreeing with Sontag’s thoughts on the requirement of comedy and jokes for pornography’s ‘artistry’, this thesis hopes to take this premise far further and to develop it in greater detail as part iii of this chapter hopes to demonstrate.

<sup>25</sup> The pornographic works of Shannon Bell and Annie Sprinkle use comic humour in creating visual and aural presentations of female ejaculation. S. Bell, *Reading, Writing and Rewriting the Prostitute Body*. (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), S. Bell, *Whore Carnival*, and <http://www.anniesprinkle.org/>

See also Lizbeth Goodman, “*Comic Subversions: Comedy as Strategy in Feminist Theatre*” in *The Polity Reader in Cultural Theory*, edited by Anthony Giddens. (London: Polity Press, 1993), pp. 242 – 247, and Lizbeth Goodman, “*Gender and Humour in Contemporary British Culture*” in *The British Studies Newsletter – Morocco*, Issue No. 1, Autumn 1997.

This is a trait of absurdity that the comic and dream-works share, and can be attributed to a part of the pleasure and fantasy of pornography. Freud notes that dream logic undergoes a form of compression and transfer, in the dream work of the primary processes of condensation and displacement.<sup>26</sup> He notes that dreams tend to be short and brief in comparison to the wide range of dream thoughts, and they have clearly gone through a process of extensive condensation during the formation of the dream. He writes:

“It thus seems plausible to suppose that in a dream-work a psychical force is operating which on the one hand strips the elements which have a high psychical value of their intensity, and on the other hand, *by means of their overdetermination*, creates from elements of low physical value new values, which afterwards find their way into the dream-content. If that is so, *transference and displacement of psychical intensities* occurs in the process of dream-formation, and it is as a result of these that the difference of dream-thoughts comes about. The process which we are presuming is nothing less than the essential portion of the dream-work; and it deserves to be described as ‘dream-displacement’. *Dream-displacement and dream-condensation* are the two governing factors to whose activity we may in essence ascribe the form assumed by dreams.”<sup>27</sup>

Freud puts forward dream-displacement as the prime method for achieving dream-distortion of the unconscious dream-wish. He asserts that during the dream-work psychical intensities are displaced from one idea to another whereby some images are substituted metonymically along the associative chain of significations and images stand in for each other, images and their affects become mismatched. Displacement furnishes condensation with the means to compress several images into one providing them with an increased multi-dimensionality and intensity. Freud gives the condition for dream-thoughts finding their way into the dream as that they must evade the censorship of

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<sup>26</sup> S. Freud, *The Interpretation Of Dreams*, translated by James Strachey. (London: Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 381 – 651.

<sup>27</sup> S. Freud, *The Interpretation Of Dreams*, p. 417.



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Freud asserts that on the question of absurdity in dreams, dream-thoughts are not absurd, rather it is the dream-work that generates absurd dreams and dreams featuring absurd elements when faced with the need to represent any ‘criticism, ridicule or derision, that is present in the dream-thoughts.’<sup>28</sup> He states:

“Absurdity in a dream, however, is not to be translated by a simple ‘no’; it is intended to reproduce the *mood* of the dream-thoughts, which combines derision or laughter with the contradiction. It is only with such an aim in view that the dream-work produces anything ridiculous. Here once again *it is giving a manifest form to a portion of the latent content.*”<sup>29</sup>

This thesis is suggesting that the neologism of dream logic and that of the data compression of the pornographical are similar strategies, both seek release from emotional tension and the creativity of the absurd in order to effectuate identities as something other than a desiring lack, a pure ideology, a predetermined essence, a symbolic law or any kind of sexual/social practice based on fear of castration or penis envy.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> S. Freud, *The Interpretation Of Dreams*, p. 576.

<sup>29</sup> S. Freud, *The Interpretation Of Dreams*, p. 564.

<sup>30</sup> Part of the ‘ana-aesthetic’ of the pornographical seeks to ‘send up’ and find release from the rigorous bodily controls of culture ideals of the body and their entwining class/ moral status. For example a slender bodily form demonstrates a well-managed and controlled self, whereas a flabby or fat bodily form is seen as brazen disrespect for the self. Kipnis comments: “Fat seems to carry a certain imaginary narrative with it, an origins tale of how the fat person got to be that way, the shameful revelation of clandestine (or overt) gluttony and overconsumption. But in class terms this has to be seen as something of a displacement: it assigns responsibility for overconsumption and gluttony to the social class by far the least culpable of overconsuming. Researchers studying the psychology of body image report that fat is associated with a range of fears: from loss of control to a reversion to infantile desires, to failure, self-loathing, sloth, and passivity. Substitute “welfare class” for “fat” here and you start to see that the phobia of fat and the phobia of the poor are heavily cross-coded, and that perhaps the fear of an out-of-control body is not unrelated to the fear of out-of-control masses with their voracious demands and insatiable appetites – not just for food, but for social resources and entitlement programs.” L. Kipnis, *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America*, p. 101. See also L. Gamman and M. Makinen, *Female Fetishism: A New Look*. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1994), pp. 122- 170, where they name Bulimia as the fourth fetish.

Within the pornographical there is room and the ability for women and men of all sizes and shapes, and ages to create sexual fantasies, within the industry or with loved ones or friends or all of the combinations. Jo Brand in a stand -up performance devised the term ‘the kit-kat shuffle’ for female masturbation. See also Goodman et al, *Women’s Comedy: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Gender and Humour*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002,) and L. Goodman and J. de Gay, *The Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance*. (London: Routledge, 1999.)

Bergson attributes both the play of the comic and dreams in granting relief from intellectual and emotional tension. Bergson notes how the comic too infuses its own effects into the logic of the absurd, in remarking on the definite kind of absurdity that the comic tends to infuse. He writes:

“...In seeking to mold things on an idea of one’s own, instead of molding one’s ideas on things – seeing before us what we are thinking of, instead of thinking of what we see. Good sense would have us leave all our memories in their proper rank and file; then the appropriate memory will every time answer the summons of the situation of the moment and serve only to interpret it.”<sup>31</sup>

A comic character will wander astray through an obstinate automatism of disposition or of mind, through absentmindedness. Bergson notes that a comic scene can be reduced to this simple type of absurdity, whereby a character becomes comic in refusing to veer away from his/her own idea, and constantly returning to it in spite of incessant interruptions. He puts forward comic absurdity as ‘of the same nature as that of dreams’, as a sane type of madness; the comic absurdity of the pornographical – compulsive, obsessional, perverse, demonstrating infantile desires for those no longer infantile.

This thesis is proposing that the pornographical, rather than being a symbolic network of significations and their entailed deferred (abyssal) meaning, forms a surface, a gesture/fragment (of its-non-essential-self) a comportment or manner/ stylistics, that is a neologism and ana-linguistic. The pornographical surface/ gesture gathers its coherence through points of fascination; its surface is one of compressed data, a maddening dream logic, obsessive, repetitive and belligerent, transferred, decompressed and compressed through a *technē* of comic humour, as we shall see.

## 1.2 Comic Gesture: Comic humour as a technē.

Aristotle's thinking on the matter of the Greek word technē is that it expresses what he considered to be the human capacity to act not just from instinct and acquired habit but also from understanding.<sup>32</sup> Not only do human beings know what to do in a specific situation but they also know why they do it. Technē can be traditionally translated as meaning an art, craft or skill; Aristotle refines this in terms of human rationale as a productive capacity informed by an understanding of its intrinsic rationale.<sup>33</sup> Aristotle suggests, though by no means does he assert that it is essential, that an understanding of something's technē can provide a person with immense pleasure. For example pleasure can be found in studying painting if one has an understanding of the reasons as to why it was the right way to depict the subject. This is analogous to the study of animals and nature for Aristotle; technical knowledge can be a source of pleasure.<sup>34</sup>

Heidegger also looked to technē and its relation to truth, not truth as the instrumental *causa*, or as the correctness of an idea, of *veritas*, but that of *alētheia*, truth as revealing.<sup>35</sup> Technology, asserts Heidegger is no mere means,

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<sup>31</sup> H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, p. 165.

<sup>32</sup> Throughout this thesis the German version of the word technē has been used, since it is the Heideggerian use of this philosophic term that is being employed. However in discussing Aristotle's version of the term technē, then the Greek spelling of the word is utilized.

<sup>33</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by H. Rackham. (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1996), 1140a20f. Aristotle does not deem technē as necessary to producing great poetry or tragedies, chance, trial and error often produced as great results as those produced through a use of technē.<sup>33</sup> Natural gifts or aptitudes for certain endeavours could not be taught. Aristotle in commenting on the art of creating bewitching poetry, states that in order to be able to project themselves emotionally into the state of others, what poets really required is natural talent and a touch of insanity. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 55a30-4.

<sup>34</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, 645a8-15.

<sup>35</sup> Heidegger charts the notion of instrumental truth as *causa*, or the four causes, back to Aristotle. They are: *causa materialis*, the matter or material out of which something is made; *causa formalis*, the form or shape into which the material enters; *causa finalis*, the end, for example "the sacrificial rite in relation to which the chalice required is determined as to its form and matter"; and *causa efficiens*, which "brings about the effect that is the finished, actual chalice, in this instance, the silversmith". M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 6.

it is more importantly a way of revealing. He writes:

“(The word technology) ....Stems from the Greek word *Technikon* means that which belongs to *technē*. We must observe two things with respect to the meaning of this word. One is that *technē* is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. *Technē* belongs to bringing-forth, to *poiēsis*; it is something poetic.”<sup>36</sup>

But *technē* is a particular kind of something poetic, in being distinguished by Aristotle from *epistēmē* as being a mode of *alētheuein*. In other words Heidegger uses the term *technē* to generate a creative and poetic truth, rather than a causal and temporal chain of sequenced happenings. Technology is nothing technical here, rather *technē* is a method that effectuates a ‘surface’, or a leap of thought, that relates the subject/ object to the abyss of the event of appropriation, providing a kind of substance and comportment in the way in which one draws ‘that which does not yet lie before us’ to oneself, the poetics of the enframing, of the event of appropriation.<sup>37</sup>

*Technē*, for Heidegger, ‘reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us’, as history that is yet to happen, to be yet brought forth into the openness of the ‘clearing’. This Heideggerian notion of *technē* links it with freedom, a specific kind of freedom that is neither connected to the will nor to the causality of human willing. Heidegger states:

"Freedom governs the open in the sense of the cleared and lighted up, i.e., of the revealed. .... But that which frees - the mystery - is concealed and always concealing itself. All revealing comes out of the open, goes into the open, and brings into the open. The freedom of the open consists neither in unfettered arbitrariness nor in the constraint of mere laws. Freedom is that which conceals in a way that opens to light, in whose clearing there shimmers that veil that covers what comes to presence of all truth and lets the veil appear as what veils. Freedom is the realm of the

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<sup>36</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 13.

<sup>37</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference* and M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Supra chapter one, pp. 68 – 80.



destining that at any given time starts a revealing on its way."<sup>38</sup>

The essence of technology and the essence of art are bound together in this age's grasp of freedom, of an appropriation of that which reveals the concealing of itself.<sup>39</sup>

The possibility of access to history is grounded in the possibility according to which any specific present understands how to be futural. Heidegger uncovers the structures of the metaphysical tradition and reads that logic against itself. A "leap" out of thought metaphysics becomes possible, whereby this leap/ spring towards the event of appropriation, for Heidegger, forms a negative dynamic that is simultaneously unveiling - veiling in the active spring of thought and the distance of the step back of difference/perdurance.<sup>40</sup> Whilst Heidegger uses the notion of perdurance to provide the naming for a kind of intensity, this is not 'enough' to name the fractal aspect or singularity of the body and in positing an ontology rooted in and on difference, the present is rethought as equivalent to a transcendent temporality.<sup>41</sup>

"Metaphysics does not heed the ontological difference *as* difference. It looks at the ontological elements of that difference. It sees the difference between Being and beings, but it is concerned primarily with Being as the *ground* of beings and thus never sees the difference as the difference between Overwhelming and Arrival. The difference grants a "Between"

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<sup>38</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 25.

<sup>39</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, pp. 34 - 35. Heidegger establishes the difficulties of representation in arguing that the phenomenon of time is future. He writes: "In moving ahead Dasein is its future, in such a way that this being futural it comes back to its past and present." M. Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, p. 13E. In being futural Dasein is its past; it comes back to the 'how'. One manner of its coming back is the call of conscience. Heidegger asserts: "Conscience calls Dasein back to its thrownness by calling forth to the possibility of assuming this thrownness." M. Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, p. 18E. Dasein, in its own anxiety calls itself and it is Dasein that must hear its own call and this means want to hear it. This is the hermeneutic circle. Supra chapter one, pp. 68 -80.

<sup>40</sup> Supra chapter one, pp. 68 -80.

<sup>41</sup> Heidegger, in later works, uses the medieval word of "Beyng" as a name for the ontological difference - the difference between Being and being - that dominates any given epoch in the history of Being. M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings from 'Being and Time' (1927) to 'The Task of Thinking' (1964)*, p. 114.

in which the Overwhelming of Being and the arrival in beings are held toward each other and yet held apart. The Between is perdurance. In the perdurance of the difference of Overwhelming (the surprise and incalculability of the manner in which Being reaches being) and Arrival (presence) reigns a clearing”<sup>42</sup>

For truth is unfolded in the sheltering that clears, for Heidegger, though it is a clearing that whilst it is neither inside nor outside of mankind, in terms of being theological or psychoanalytic, but is instead related to perdurance, a kind of enduring persistent intensity, and is a Heideggerian presupposition for revealing and securing, for anything to be or to happen at all. Or as Heidegger phrases it:

“... Within this perdurance there prevails a clearing of what veils and closes off - and this its prevalence bestows the being apart, and the being toward each other, of overwhelming and arrival.”<sup>43</sup>

Heidegger’s event of appropriation forms an assemblage or nexus for the gathering of identity, that is formed in the leap towards it and which is given resonance in the intense perdurance of oblivion. The battle for truth is situated outside of man and is at the same time man. In other words truth is like a surface, an expression/ outcome/ attachment of the very thing that, in so being, gives the surface its shape (the surface is the shape of the object, or, in this case, of ‘truth’).

Pornography’s identity is entwined with technological invention and impetus, and is as much a part of what wo/mankind is right now. The pornographical presents a commentary on contemporary wo/mankind and its relationship between technology and the body. Although Heidegger would stop short of the pornographical, this thesis is posing this as a movement of dynamic

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<sup>42</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 17. Supra chapter one, pp. 68 –80.

that has a *technē* to it, a *technē* of comic humour, one that contours a bloody and complicit, bodily meaning. It is this *technē* of comic humour that creates substance for the bodily and the surface without lapsing into an essentialist logistics or an abyssal logic or lack, in generating a gesture and comportment of the surface data compression.

Pornography's *technē*, or building of comportment, or manner of revealing the veil, is one of comic humour.<sup>44</sup> A postmodern reading of *technē* draws upon both the Aristotelian and Heideggerian strands of thought. *Technē* names a movement of grasping, a movement that brings something towards oneself in a manner or comportment that contours an identity of that specific relationship. For Heidegger this would be a movement of appropriation, for the postmodern thinkers this is more of an installation of libidinal rhythms, in a style that offers a slice or gesture of a fluid objectivity of that particular relationship.

In other words a *technē* or technology reveals the veil of the poesis or arts work of relation of identity that is paradoxically a non-relation to a singularity. It produces degrees of distance and proximity within this, a presentation of what exceeds any possible representation. As Bill Haver states:

“The presentation of the non-relation to singularity, the task of art's work, is therefore essentially erotic - indeed, pornographic. Pornography, the

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<sup>43</sup> M. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 65. Supra chapter one, pp. 68 – 80.

<sup>44</sup> Lacoue-Labarthe critiques Heidegger's work and Rectoral Address for its silences and refusal to apologize for his continued membership of the German National Socialist Party before and during World War II. Even Heidegger's discourse after his withdrawal and settling of accounts with National Socialism remains silent over breaking Nazism and even more telling that of the events and systematic murders of the Holocaust. Lacoue-Labarthe remained puzzled and saddened at Heidegger's refusal to acknowledge 'Auschwitz' as the "caesura of our times." Rather, Lacoue-Labarthe noted how this discourse as with those previous and those that followed, revolved around the theme of *technē*. Although there were some theoretical changes, in that *technē* was no longer connected to *energeia*, 'being-at-work', but was firmly entrenched in a relationship to art in its essence as the 'setting -to-work' of *alētheia*. Heidegger had shifted from a notion of work to that of the work or *oeuvre* and "in the very same process, it seems to me, in the innermost 'political' recesses of that discourse, National Socialism has been supplanted by what I shall call a national-aestheticism." P. Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, translated by C. Turner. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1990.) pp. 46 - 53.

pornography that genet's writing is, in - but also surpassing it's every representation - is a presentation of the essential stupidity of the senses and the affects. This is what is called obscenity, the supplement of the possibility of interpretation, where cocks are only cocks, cunts are only cunts, assholes only assholes, and a cigar is only ever a cigar. What is obscene about pornography, and what pornographic in art's work, is the fact that it presents the impossible non-relation to singularity, the very impossibility of interpretation. Again: through its manifold representations pornography presents what needs no interpretation or representation; in pornography, the senses are inevitably stupid, what you see is what you see. Here, now, there is an unexampled astonishment at the fact of not being dead, the fact of existence, the fact of singularity."<sup>45</sup>

This thesis is proposing that that whilst there is nothing nice about the pornographical, there is something that is liberatory about it and something creative about the act of sexual fantasy on both a personal and communal level. As we shall see, this thesis is suggesting that part of this 'liberatoriness,' and the expression of sexual fantasy that the pornographical entails, are bound up with the comedic packaging of its data compression.

Heidegger defines *technē* as knowledge in relation to 'hearing the call' of *Dasein* and with it ones authentic possibilities; he also posits death, wo/man's (and *Dasein*'s) finitude as part of this hermeneutic magnet of existence (and of time in this heterogeneous sense). In this way Heidegger rethinks the notion of negation as excess, by introducing "impurity" as one of original anxiety. Original anxiety is the prime disclosive disposition as it reveals our temporal finitude in the temporal existence of the nothing. According to Heidegger's abyssal logic, joy cannot be seen as a prime disclosive disposition.<sup>46</sup> There is no subjectivity here. It is the fleeting moment when we are 'individualised' and as such face our authentic (and inauthentic) possibilities of Being (of *Dasein*).

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<sup>45</sup> B. Haver, "Pornographically man dwells" and "Art's work (or fragments for a preface to the genet commentaries)" in *Issues in Contemporary Culture and Aesthetics: Volume 12*, edited by S. Golding / johnny de philo, p. 109.

<sup>46</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, and *What is Called Thinking?*.



Wo/man is essentially aware of her/his/our finitude and as such s/he/us ventures to master her/his/our being in technē. In pushing Dasein into the world it is bound in history through the undertaking of technē.<sup>47</sup>

Critchley in looking to salvage something affirmative about comedy and its philosophic relationship to finitude looks at Lacan's ethics of psychoanalysis with its references to the role of tragedy and comedy.<sup>48</sup> Lacan draws on the Heideggerian 'being- towards-death' that triumphs in the dimension of tragedy, through the relation of ethical action and desire. He writes:

“Actions are inscribed in the space of tragedy, and it is with relation to this space, too, that we are led to take our bearings in the sphere of values. Moreover, this is also true of the space of comedy, and when I started to talk to you about the formations of the unconscious, it was, as you know, the comic that I had in mind.

Let us say by way of the preliminary sounding that the relationship between action and the desire which inhabits it is in the space of tragedy functions in the direction of a triumph of being-for-death that is formulated in Oedipus's ..., a phase in which one finds that ..., the negation that is identical to the entrance of the signifier. There lies the fundamental action of all tragic action.

A preliminary sounding of the space of comedy shows it is less a question of a triumph than a futile or derisory play of vision. However little time I have thus far devoted to the comic here, you have been able to see that there, too, it is a question of the relationship between action and desire, and of the former's fundamental failure to catch up with the latter.

The sphere of comedy is created by the presence at its center of a hidden signifier, but that in the Old Comedy is there in person, namely,

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<sup>47</sup> The paradox here is that the artist must understand the event that first gives things their “look” and to men their “outlook” on themselves; just as the preserver (essential for letting the work come into being) must have a knowing that is a willing that is “the opening up of human being; out of captivity in beings to the openness of Being.” M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings from 'Being and Time' (1927) to 'The Task of Thinking' (1964)*, p. 192. Art is the repetition of truth, whereby truth opens in a sphere opened by the work of art. Dasein is thrown into the freedom of undertaking technē, a creative project that offers a site to Being, by the opening of Being in the thrown pull of the nothing. The creative project, for example a work of art, traces and sets forth and composes the differentiation between world and earth as limits, the abyssal finitude of man marks the work. The work of art later brings Dasein (now-as-preserver) before its own limit by the pulling thrust of the work. Art therefore manifests an open foundation as it brings the limits of human activity to appear as limits. Does this open foundation either gather the forms of human production into a space of the same (unified) or is it the condition of their discontinuity and their essential multiplicity? C. Fynsk, *Heidegger: Thought and Historicity*. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 130. Heidegger's use of Dasein lends coherence to his assemblage of an event of appropriation and to the multiplicity of this relationship of Being and being, without introducing transcendentalism.

<sup>48</sup> See S. Critchley, Chapter 10, “Comedy and Finitude: Displacing the Tragic- Heroic Paradigm in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis” in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas and Contemporary French Thought*. (London: Verso, 1999), pp. 217 – 238, and J. Lacan, Chapter XXIV, “The Paradoxes of Ethics or Have You Acted in Conformity with Your Desire?” in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 311 – 325.

the phallus. Who cares if it is subsequently whisked away? One must simply remember that the element in comedy that satisfies us, the element that makes us laugh, that makes us appreciate it in its full human dimension, not excluding the unconscious, is not so much the triumph of life as its flight, the fact that life slips away, runs off, escapes all those barriers that oppose it, including precisely those that are the most essential, those that are constituted by the agency of the signifier.

The phallus is nothing more than a signifier, the signifier of this flight. Life goes by, life triumphs, whatever happens. If the comic trips up and lands in the soup, the little fellow nevertheless survives.

The pathetic side of this dimension is, you see, exactly the opposite, the counterpart of tragedy. They are not incompatible, since tragic-comedy exists. That is where the experience of human action resides. And it is because we know better than those who went before how to recognize the nature of desire, which is at the heart of this experience, that a reconsideration of ethics is possible, of a kind that gives this question the force of a Last Judgment: Have you acted in conformity with the desire that is within you?"<sup>49</sup>

Critchley argues that Lacan's ethic of psychoanalysis is one that through an Aristotelian notion of Catharism (*katharsis*) the ethical act is not to give way to one's desires, but to find a purification of one's desires through a 'being-towards-death'. Critchley locates within Lacan's brief mention of the comic that comedy demonstrates the inability to 'keep up' with desire, and from this he defines comedy as the collapse of heroism into 'anti-heroic mirth'. He writes:

"Comedy is the permanent suspension, postponement or parody of catharsis,.....Comedy is the eruption of materiality into the spiritual purity of tragic action and desire."<sup>50</sup>

He places the fallibility of the body as the site of the comic, and asserts that comedy exposes a different relation to finitude through the opening of jokes in the comic. Through discussing the comic play of the Marx Brothers, Critchley discovers that laughter's complicity conceals an ethical dimension and relation to *das Ding*, which raises 'an identification that annihilates identity'. Critchley

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<sup>49</sup> J. Lacan, Chapter XXIV, "The Paradoxes of Ethics or Have You Acted in Conformity with Your Desire?" in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 313 - 314.

<sup>50</sup> S. Critchley, Chapter 10, "Comedy and Finitude: Displacing the Tragic-Heroic Paradigm in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis" in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas and Contemporary*

concludes that laughter reminds one of one's finitude and has an ethical dimension as a 'convulsive', 'contagious' and 'solidaristic' movement. He writes:

"...A site resistance to the alleged total administration of society, a node of non-identity in the idealizing rage of commodification that returns us not to a fully integrated and harmonious *Lebenswelt* but lights up the comic feebleness of our embodiment. Laughter might here be approached as a form of resistance, of critique, of the sudden feeling of solidarity that follows the eruption of laughter in a bus queue, watching a party political broadcast in a pub, or when someone farts in a lift."<sup>51</sup>

Critchley's emphasis on the fallibility of the body as the site of the comic, and its relationship both to pleasure and desire, allows us to approach the pornographical in relation a *technē* of comic humour.

## 2. Comic Humour: The 'ready-made' surface. (Freud and Bergson).

In his book *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, Sigmund Freud defines the pleasure found in jokes, in comic pleasure and in humour.<sup>52</sup> He defines the pleasure arising from jokes as that of a psychical '*economy in expenditure upon inhibition*'; the pleasure in the comic as that of '*an economy in expenditure upon ideation (upon cathexis)*'; and the pleasure found in humour as one of '*an economy upon feeling*'.<sup>53</sup> In looking at Freud and Bergson

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*French Thought*, p. 230.

<sup>51</sup> S. Critchley, Chapter 10, "Comedy and Finitude: Displacing the Tragic-Heroic Paradigm in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis" in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas and Contemporary French Thought*, p. 235.

<sup>52</sup> I will mostly be using the works of Sigmund Freud and Henri Bergson as these two thinkers have written on the comic in a manner that distinguishes it from jokes and looks at the technical details as to how comic humour operates socially. Not many philosophers or intellectual thinkers have concerned themselves much with the topic of humour. Comedy, even in Aristotle's poetics, has most often been unvalued and seen in a debased position as something that is part of a way of life for the lower classes, bawdy and crude with little aesthetic value. Jacques Lacan, Simon Critchley, Jean Paul (Richter), Theodor Vischer, Kuno Fischer and Theodor Lipps all touch upon the subject of the comic. The comic tends to be analysed in terms of caricatures and jokes as remarks, and as playful subjective judgments that reveal something that has been previously hidden or concealed.

<sup>53</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 302.

and melding their work on the pleasure of comic humour with Heidegger's notion of *technē* and comportment, then not only is the comic better understood in its plurality, but the very notion of data compression is differently cast, giving more substance (without an ethical mediation of the universal or linguistic trail) to the pornographical.

Freud comments on the specific considerations of the comic of sexuality and obscenity through the technique of exposure, for both Freud and Bergson the spheres of sexuality and obscenity offer a variety of occasions to yield a source of comic pleasure alongside sexual excitement. Freud notes what is offered through the sexuality and obscenity is the comic pleasure of degradation, in exposing human dependency on bodily pleasure and that of unmasking, in disclosing the 'physical demands' behind the assertion of mental love.

He asserts that every exposure we are the audience of is equivalent to the third person being made comic, in the case of jokes Freud notes their task of being able to open, again, access to a lost source of comic pleasure. He remarks:

"... Witnessing an exposure is not a case of the comic for the witness, because his own effort in doing so does away with the determining condition of comic pleasure: nothing is left but the sexual pleasure of what is seen. If the witness gives an account to someone else, the person who has been witnessed becomes comic once more, because there is a predominant sense that the latter has omitted the expenditure which would have been in place for concealing his secret"<sup>54</sup>

The comic as a *technē* of pornography allows for any witness to become intimately involved with its vice, the emotional release, and the witnessing leaves only sexual pleasure. Any participation with the pornographical's

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<sup>54</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 286.



discursive economy places one as complicit to the joke, sharing in the comic pleasure. In this way the data compression of pornography allows for the comic feature to provide a hinge for the pornographical, as we shall see. A technē of comic humour allows the audience to enter the textual and diegetic spaces of pornography and participate with fascination despite/because of the sexually explicit and crude technological pleasures.

Freud discovered that socially the comic behaved differently from that of jokes and humour, for humour is content with one person, and the comic with two: one who finds what is comic and a second in whom it is found. Freud discovers that although informing and involving a third person in the comic intensifies the process, nothing new is added to it. This relationship of two that the comic requires makes it an ideal voice for pornography in enabling a viewer both the possibility of privacy and anonymity and a means to engage and connect with the material despite the technological distance.

Another difference that helps Freud to delimit the comic further is that a joke is made, whereas the comic is found, usually, or if not it must appear as if it is, an unintended discovery in people. He notes it is derived from human social relations, in their movements, forms, actions, and character traits, either physical ones or sometimes the physical expression of mental character traits.<sup>55</sup> The comic is non-essential and non-personal, able to be detached from the person that seems comic. Rather it is a series of traits or conditions under which someone is comic. The comic is found amongst the surface traits of life; the

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<sup>55</sup> Henri Bergson states: "...Comic does not exist outside the pale of what is strictly *human*. A landscape may be beautiful, charming and sublime, or significant and ugly; it will never be laughable. You may laugh at an animal, but only because you have detected in it some human attitude or expression. You may laugh at a hat, but what you are making fun of, in this case, is not the piece of felt or straw, but the shape that men have given it - the human caprice whose mold it has assumed." H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, translated by C. Brereton and F. Rothwell. (Los Angeles: Green Integer Books, 1999), p. 9.

pornographical surface is a readymade source of sexual excitement, bodily pleasures, exposures, unmasking and mimicry.

Highly developed techniques make it possible to make someone else comic and of course oneself, opening the way for 'an undreamt-of yield of comic pleasure'. Freud names these techniques or methods as: "putting them in a comic situation, mimicry, disguise, unmasking, caricature, parody, travesty, and so on."<sup>56</sup> He asserts that the comic is something spontaneous, even when rehearsed. Socially it can serve to humiliate someone, or oneself, and can be used for hostile or aggressive purposes, but such underlying intentions are not always the case.

Bergson defines the comic as that which obeys the logic of imagination rather than that of reason; it is 'something mechanical encrusted onto living'.

He writes:

"The attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine."<sup>57</sup>

Bergson points out that an unmasking of a disguise, of a person, of society or of nature can be comic in its break with continuity, or as a diversion, for example any episode that calls attention to the physical in a person, when it is the moral aspects causing concern. Anything that is seen to be inert or stereotyped, or "simply readymade, on the surface of living society" can be comic. He asserts:

"Everyone knows how easily the comic spirit exercises its ingenuity on social relations of a stereotyped nature, from an ordinary prize distribution to the solemn sitting of a court of justice. Any form or formula is a ready-made frame into which the comic element may be fitted."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 249.

<sup>57</sup> H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, p. 32.

<sup>58</sup> H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, p. 45.

The spinal column of pornography's discursive economy and industry is made of such stuff. The comic proceeds by way of gestures, offering slices of fun, of compressed, deeply -rooted yet superficial human bodily matter.

Bergson terms the comic manner as one that offers a gesture of meaning rather than the whole concept. To him, any gesture, if it is performed repeatedly tends to become established as habit, both imitable and funny in that it has become expected. He puts forward: "It is automatism established in life and imitating it. It belongs to the comic."<sup>59</sup> Rather than conscious actions, comedy directs our attention towards gestures; people become imitable when they cease to be themselves. Bergson notes that a gesture slips out unawares; unlike action it is unintentional and explosive. Gestures are those attitudes and movements that are automatic and absentminded. Bergson offers examples of the comic readymade as unsociability or social rigidity and inattention to the self. He writes: "The chief cause of rigidity is the neglect to look around - and more especially within oneself."<sup>60</sup>

The pornographical is a surface, a gesture of data compression, a-rooted and readymade. Sexual and bodily pleasures are automatic, repetitive, stereotypical and absentminded, ideal comic ground. A comic series of gestures can offer several different types of the same model or readymades, placing stereotypes in their multiples, reiterated and recombined, generating new ones. To deal with anything more than surface level would risk producing emotion, in an audience, in the participants and witnesses, which is incompatible to both comedy and the pornographical. Bergson asserts that the comic demands a "momentary anesthesia of the heart," for the comic to occur it must not arouse

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<sup>59</sup> H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, p. 34.

our intellect or emotions. He defines the art of the comic as one that lulls the human sensibility to sleep, providing it with dreams.<sup>61</sup> The condensed, compressed and displaced neologism of dreams, absurdity and the fragmentation of the pornographical and its ana-linguistic comic gestures.

Bergson defines the comic as a dream logic that partakes from the language of the unconscious. Comic obsessions, repetitions and compulsions are similar those of dreams and their absurdity. Bergson asserts that a journey towards the absurd produces on the dreamer the sensation of 'blankness' whereby reason and propriety have no meaning. He puts forward comic logic as that of dreams as it lacks tension, and allows for the relaxation of reasoning, of intellectual tension. In laughing, one relaxes and becomes absent to oneself - the impulse is to join in the game, to abandon the strain of thinking and join in the comic impertinence. Laughter, Bergson asserts, reveals a revolt on the surface of social life. It is through comic pleasure that pornography creates a 'psychic dislocation' and enables the participants and witnesses of the pornographical to become intimately involved with its pleasurable vice, despite the technical distance, and the brash, immoral crudeness of the sexually explicit.

Bergson, as well as Critchley, puts forward an ethical dimension to the comic in raising laughter as a social corrective, to the comic rigidity that it acknowledges; it is neither kind, nor sympathetic, nor does justice motivate it. He comments that it is laughter's function is to 'intimidate by humiliating'.<sup>62</sup> Although, laughter does not always 'hit its target', he argues it can serve as a useful barometer in emphasizing and registering the social elements that are

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<sup>60</sup> H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, p. 133.

<sup>61</sup> H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, p. 126.

<sup>62</sup> H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, p. 177.



disturbing. The glamour of the pornographic genres lies in their demonstrations of the comic methods of exposure and inversion that serve to energetically violate most social conventions, figures, cultural aesthetics and sensibilities.<sup>63</sup>

To Bergson then laughter dwells both in the aesthetic realm and a utilitarian province as it pursues an unconscious aim of general cultural improvement. For him the comic has aesthetic qualities and coincided culturally with new social freedoms from self-preservation, when ‘individuals’ began to regard themselves as works of art. Pornography too is a contemporary product of a modern age, occupying a relationship both to the body and to technology. On the pornographical surface technology serves as wo/ mankind’s prosthesis of sexual fantasy – distanced, anonymous, and yet communal in the shared eruptive convulsions of shared humour and laughter that the comic sexual data generates in its decompression. The pornographical effectuates a non-essential barrage of fantasy sex practices and stereotypes, readymade formulas, obsessional and repetitious and mimetic.

Bergson proposes different techniques to the comic. He asserts that any identification does not need to be complete in order to ensure a comic effect; a series of graduated hints, or partial fragments of information can be enough. He writes:

“By a certain arrangement of rhythm, rhyme and resonance, it is possible to lull the imagination, to rock it to and fro between like and like with a regular see-saw motion, and thus prepare it submissively to accept the vision suggested.”<sup>64</sup>

Bergson suggests three methods by which a series of graduations can become

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<sup>63</sup> Supra chapter four, 176 – 221. This will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter through the notion of an ‘ana-aesthetic’.

<sup>64</sup> H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, p. 59.

comic: repetition, inversion and reciprocal interference. Repetition, for Bergson, is a bit like a spring, there is repression followed by expression, to be followed by repression. He writes:

“In a comic repetition of words we generally find two terms: a repressed feeling which goes off like a spring, and an idea that delights in repressing the feeling anew.”<sup>65</sup>

Part of the data compression of the pornographical operates in such a manner, re-igniting its own explosion of neologism and fascination.

Comedies of situation and of character are considered to be classic arts of comedy that revolve around the creation of types, models and readymades that are endlessly repeated or inversely repeated. With the techniques of repetition and inversion a comedy formula or formulae can be re-echoed and re-produced.

As Bergson notes:

“When a comic scene has been reproduced a number of times, it reaches the stage of being a classical type or model. It becomes amusing in itself, quite apart from the causes that render it amusing.”<sup>66</sup>

It can become self-referencing and supplemental within a discursive arrangement, serving as a ‘trigger’ trait, image, and word for a condensed and compressed package of information.

### 2.1 The Comic Hinge (and Becoming Unhinged).

Bergson points out that the bulk of the comic proceeds according to a reciprocal interference of two series. He writes:

“...The word ‘interference’ has here the meaning given to it in optics, where it indicates the partial superimposition and neutralisation, by each other, of two series of light waves.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, p. 69.

<sup>66</sup> H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, p. 89.

<sup>67</sup> H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, pp. 90 and 171.

Bergson extends this in stating that something can become comic if it is part of two independent series of events at the same time, and is capable of being interpreted by two or more entirely different meanings simultaneously. This sets up an equivocal situation in allowing two different series to develop at the same time and to coincide in our imaginations. Pornography's audiences do not simply witness and decompress information on male domination and the exploitation of a 'male gaze'.

Another method that Bergson suggests is one whereby the comic is achieved when an absurd idea is fitted into a well-established phrase form. Inversion and reciprocal interference are a playful way of jostling with readymade formulae and words, whereas the 'comic in transposition' is much more far-reaching. For Bergson, comic invention is obtainable in "transposing the natural expression of an idea into another key."<sup>68</sup> The beauty of the grotesque and bawdiness is celebrated through pornography's comic hinge: 'bodies piss, shit and fart'.<sup>69</sup> The comic puns of the pornographical are hinged to the corporeality of bodies.<sup>70</sup>

Bergson points out that there is a vast ocean of language into which the comic is capable of travelling, given the richness of language games, their usage

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<sup>68</sup> H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, p. 113.

<sup>69</sup> Derrida writes on the notion of the hinge [*brisure*] as the marking of the impossibility that a sign, as the unity of signifier and signified can be effectuated in the fullness of the present and an absolute presence. See "Of Grammatology" in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, edited by Peggy Kamuf. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 41. Derrida uses the term 'difference' as the hinge between speech and writing. The verb, *différer*, means both to defer and to differ; as such Derrida's notion of 'difference' plays between difference based on a deferral from one's self or relation to a deferred origin. There is always an original delay, and the original is always a copy, as Derrida argues, the original presentation never took place. See J. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory Signs*, edited and translated with an introduction by David B. Allison. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973)

<sup>70</sup> Harking back to the Libertine and Rabelaisian roots, the discourse of porn celebrates the body and all aspects of its corporeality, grotesque and sexualised. Tang raises a delightful example of the cover of a TTV compilation tape, *Really Gross Anals*, on which a porn star exhibits her fascinating ability to turn her

and grammar. There are the farthest away from each other keys, of for example the solemn and the familiar. If these two keys were used together then the effect would be one of comic parody. Exaggeration and degradation take place in a similar vein, when a moral structure is revealed to immorality, or when physicality has the accent over morality. Irony and humour can be defined according to keys of transposition, but if the interval between the keys is gradually narrowed,

"...The contrast between the terms obtained will be less and less violent and the varieties of comic transposition more and more subtle."<sup>71</sup>

Freud differs here slightly with Bergson, or rather he adds more substance to his points. It is not just the presentation to the anaesthetised senses of two contrasting series nor is it simply the oscillation of attention backwards and forwards between the two, rather the comparison between two independent series must be able to result in a psychical economy in expenditure that is capable of being discharged in laughter.<sup>72</sup> He writes:

"...On the one hand the psychical expenditure while we are having a certain idea and on the other hand the content of the thing that we are having the idea of."<sup>73</sup>

This psychical comparison is achieved through mimesis. An impulsion to imitate is present in the perceptions of movements and through repeated use one learns a standard with which to measure these movements in ones 'innervatory expenditure.'

"Instead of imitating the movement with my muscles, I have an idea of it

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anus inside out. I. Tang, *Pornography: The Secret History of Civilization*, p. 155.

<sup>71</sup> H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, p. 116.

<sup>72</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, pp. 244 - 247.

<sup>73</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 250. More will be discussed on this with regards to mimesis and its relation to the 'ana-aesthetic' of the pornographical, in chapter 4 and the conclusion. Supra pp. 176 - 221.



through the medium of my memory-traces of expenditures on similar movements. Ideation or 'thinking' differs from acting or performing above all in the fact that it displaces far smaller cathectic energies and holds back the main expenditure from discharge."<sup>74</sup>

For Freud, the origin of comic pleasure can be found in a comparison based on ideational mimetics, of the difference between two expenditures. Or as Freud states:

"Comic pleasure and the effect by which it is known - laughter - can only come about if this difference is unutilizable and capable of discharge."<sup>75</sup>

Freud's later piece on humour looks at the ethical role that humour plays, in relation to the self and to others, by supporting, consoling and protecting the ego from suffering, through the use of 'gallows humour'. He comments:

"The grandeur in it clearly lies in triumph of narcissism, the victorious assertion of the ego's invulnerability. The ego refuses to be distressed by the provocations of reality, to let itself be compelled to suffer. It insists that it cannot be affected by the traumas of the external world; it shows in fact that such traumas are no more than occasions for it to gain pleasure. .... Humour is not resigned; it is rebellious. It signifies not only the triumph of the ego but also of the pleasure principle, which is able here to assert itself against the unkindness of the real circumstances."<sup>76</sup>

Freud thus defines jokes as '*the contribution made to the comic by the unconscious*' and humour as '*the contribution made to the comic through the super-ego*'.<sup>77</sup> This is the most positive role that Freud attributes to the usually authoritarian and 'guilt – inspiring' super-ego. As with Bergson, Freud too sees the creative role that comic pleasure plays in fashioning the self as a 'work of art'; it is through fantasy and imaginative play that participants of the

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<sup>74</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 251.

<sup>75</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 281.

<sup>76</sup> S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents and Other Works*, translated by James Strachey. (London: Vintage Books, 2001), pp. 162 – 163.

<sup>77</sup> S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents and Other Works*, p. 165.

pornographical de-compress the ‘data compressed sexual meaning’.<sup>78</sup>

The pornographical is offered as an ‘unsayable’ negative dynamic, a singularity, an assemblage or surface, one that ex-poses and ex-scribes meaning through its symbiosis. Through technē this bodily surface is given substance in the active movement of the grasping of thought, of the muscular thought that moves towards the assemblage, the event of appropriation, the pornographical, and in so doing creates a surface gesture of its substance, its movement; a surface gesture of the ready-made. The ethical gesture of comic humour lies here; rather than Kierkegaard’s self-elevatory and masterful irony – suited to the solitary individual and the ‘I’ of its representation, the comic neologism of the pornographical binds, repeats, proliferates, connects, allowing for a ‘rhizomatic’ surface, as we shall see.<sup>79</sup> Deleuze posits humour as the ‘co-extensiveness of sense and nonsense’.<sup>80</sup> He writes:

“Humour, on the other hand, claims kinship with a minority, with a minority-becoming. It is humour which makes a language stammer, which imposes on it a minor usage, or which constitutes a complete bilingual system within the same language.”<sup>81</sup>

## 2.2 From Comic to Libidinal Technologies: A Comic Witnessing (Lyotard).

In elucidating the three/four comic routes (gesture of data compression; surface gesture of the ready-mades; humour and hinge/ unhinged) one can get a sense of the way in which the pornographical is both circumscribing an event and at the same time, ‘being event’. In putting the pornographical forward as a

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<sup>78</sup> Supra Bergson in this chapter, p. 27; and O’ Toole on de-compression and the role of fantasy in constructing the sexual self, pp. 5-7.

<sup>79</sup> See R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), S. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, and S. Kierkegaard, “The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates” in *The Essential Kierkegaard*.

<sup>80</sup> G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 141; Supra introduction, p. 20, fn 44.

<sup>81</sup> G. Deleuze and C. Parnet, *Dialogues*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. (London:

singularity and a discursive economy this section will be drawing upon the work of Lyotard amongst others in order to look at how a *technē*, the surface and the skin are libidinal. As shown in chapter two, any event of appropriation always exceeds interpretation, producing in its wake an excess, whilst simultaneously gathering ‘that which is yet to lie to hand’, or in a word: the is. Lyotard attempts in *Libidinal Economy* to bring into being the fabric of a libidinal philosophy which views society and its political developments in terms of an economy of libidinal energies and intensities; he creates a philosophy focused upon an ontology of unpredictable happenings and events, rather than the structured regularities of dialectical or semiotic totalities.

As shown in the initial, long quote where Lyotard graphically depicts the dissection of the libidinal surface, or as he calls it, this “cruel dissection”, the immense membrane of a discourse and of the human body becomes more than the boxed-in three-dimensional body of phenomenology.<sup>82</sup> There are no divisions here between body and consciousness and between inside or outside. There is no outside; the libidinal body forms a surface that twists in such a way that it forms a moebius strip joined from end to end. A line traced along one side of the strip will end up on the other side without breaking contact with the surface.

For Lyotard libidinal intensities and affects are events or refer to events that impact on and can create material entities on the fabric of the libidinal band or skin, as Lyotard sometimes names it. He writes:

“Intensities are unbound excitations of force which are characterized by their displaceability, their instantaneity and their resistance to the temporal

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The Athlone Press, 1987), p. 69. Supra chapter four, pp. 176 – 221.

<sup>82</sup> Supra introduction, p. 1.

syntheses of memory.”<sup>83</sup>

An affect could be a sound, a colour, a smile, a touch, or anything that has the power to move one and to induce feelings and desires. As Woodward summarises:

“Affects are structured and interpreted in systems made up of dispositifs, libidinal dispositions that compete to exploit the energies of libidinal events.”<sup>84</sup>

These set-ups conduct energies into other, perhaps more stable or durable, systems and structures. Political institutions often use political manipulation to channel fervour to dissent and change society away from violent and disruptive eruptions towards more acceptable and calmer paths of action. In such a way systems can be said to direct libidinal intensities into more moderate and stable activities. Pornography is a regulated allowance of this.

Communities are formed and stabilized through the allowed allotment or direction of libidinal energy into spectator sports and leisure activities. Lyotard himself channels the cynicism of *Libidinal Economy* towards these systems that are themselves originated and formed through libidinal intensities. These systems include theory as well as politics and economics. The most successful of these systems tend to become hegemonic in their right or choice of direction for exploiting or interpreting libidinal intensities, whilst simultaneously denying through their rhetoric or theoretical premises their own libidinal origins.

Lyotard asserts:

“It is necessary to alter the course of the destiny that pushes thought towards the concept, otherwise one will manufacture a libidinal economy

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<sup>83</sup> I.H. Grant in Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. xiii.

<sup>84</sup> A. Woodward, University of Queensland, 2006. “Lyotard” in *The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. Available at: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>.



which will resemble a trivial political economy, that is an ideology with pretensions to order, incapable of grasping the duplicity of the said economic moments. It is necessary to let the alleged theoretical field be swept by the tumult of intensities, even the most difficult to accept "theoretically". No one can say that they are up to such a task, everyone seeks to flee these intensities and their undesirability in the direction of the system and its binary ideal."<sup>85</sup>

Lyotard reveals the dissimulation that also occurs within any such systems. In placing libidinal intensity and the skin it forms as an originary starting point, he manages to open up not just the libidinal skin but languages, political, economic and theoretical systems. In this way, Lyotard neither creates an outside space-time for nor does he champion affects, singularities, intensities and libidinal energy over systems, theory, structures, concepts and representation. If systems can hide or dissimulate affects then affects can also dissimulate systems. It is plausible following this libidinal logic that a stable system can be destabilised and disrupted through an intense investment.

A traditional definition of a *dispositif* would be as a heterogeneous body of discourses, propositions, laws and scientific statements. It is the network that binds these together, forming a grid of intelligibility that governs the way that they interact. Lyotard uses this term in his attempts to affirm the positivity of the negative and libidinal deposits, rather than mapping the exclusions and disparities produced. He writes:

"It is the production of new libidinal operators that is positive. The *positif* is also a positing, an investment, the 'dispositif' a disposition to invest, a cathexis. As such, the 'dispositif' is subject to economic movements and displacements, an aspect which the retention of the French term, by combining the dis-place with the dis-pose, movement with expenditure helps to convey."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 179.

<sup>86</sup> I.H. Grant in J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. x.

Lyotard devises an imaginative libidinal fiction in order to conjure a vivid image for his theoretical premises and fictions. This begins on the very first page with the dissection of the libidinal body, as previously quoted within this chapter, being cut open and spread out to form a flat, band-like surface. This libidinal band creates a region on which bursts of libidinal intensity of an event or events to take place and run into the dispositifs that channel and form a grid of intelligibility for their energy. The image of a libidinal band enables us to approach the pornographical surface, bodily and libidinally invested.

This libidinal band, or pornographical surface, forms a material, a skin-like material, but not yet an organised body but a figure of dismemberment, without a fixed referent, as yet.<sup>87</sup> When in motion this libidinal band circulates, in an aleatory fashion, so fast that it glows red with heat. Libidinal energy is not yet invested at this point. As the skin rotates, full of drifting affects, it begins to slow and cool down, in doing so it forms the *disjunctive bar*, a movement of displaceability on the spot; the time of this disjunctive bar whirling in its libidinal journey; a strange witnessing. He notes:

“... Being singular, produces no memory, this segment only ever being where it is in an ungraspable time, a *tense*, and therefore what was ‘previously’ journeyed through does not exist: acephalia, time of the unconscious.”<sup>88</sup>

As this bar slows it invests in whatever region is available. In becoming disjunctive, this bar ‘separates the this from the not-this’. This is the commencement of the libidinal band transforming into regions of rational and representative thought. The bar eventually comes to a standstill and forms a stable disjunction. As this disjunctive bar turns on its own axis it produces a

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<sup>87</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, pp. 1-3.

theatrical volume.<sup>89</sup> This specific dispositif on the libidinal skin is the one that creates a theatrical space for theory and representation. Lyotard writes:

“The bar becomes a frontier, not to be crossed on pain of confusion, sin against the concept, transgression, stupidity, madness, primitive thought. The bar becomes a boundary, the boundary of a stage: over there the not-this, here the this. End of dissimulation, beginning of value, and of ambivalence. For to go from the not-this to the this, it will now be necessary to pay: it will cost a great deal to have the not-this over there. To pay to enter the over there, to get on stage. To have: the manner of being what one is not, prosthesis which supposes negation. And *time* also begins with synthesis of the now, of the no longer, of the already more, always to be renewed since the temporal poles are 'from now on' held in exteriority, in relation to each other, at the same time that they are composed, composed on either side of what separates them. Montage and the stage and narrative time.”<sup>90</sup>

This theatrical space, a region or dispositif on the libidinal band that has no inside nor outside, has an inside and an outside, a clearly marked disjunction between this and the not-this. The comic neologism of the pornographical surface, sutures this disjunction, weaving, unthreading with careless humour, reiterating the corporeality of the body.

Lyotard's objective is to reveal the fictive nature of the theoretical closure of the political economy; to re-describe space, objects and labour in terms that are resistant to the closed economy of rule of capital. The key to the way in which he accomplishes this is by disclosing the way in which thought is restricted to the conceptual through the enclosure within this 'theatre of representation'. This theatre consists of three spaces that correspond to, what he terms, the backstage, the stage and the auditorium. These three enclosed spaces are located in opposition to a fourth open space that constitutes the space of the world outside of the theatre.

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<sup>88</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 16.

<sup>89</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, pp. 16 - 25.

According to this representational system the viewing subject is located inside of it and the impact is one of seduction rather than illusion.<sup>91</sup> As Lyotard remarks:

“I should say seduction rather than illusion because the subject who looks into [Brunellesch’s] box, if he is not mad, knows very well that he is looking at the Baptistry itself. For those who sit in the theatre it is the same.... This representation is not trompe l’œil and it is not even illusion, it is seduction in the proper sense of the term: one is divided from one’s self, there is scission.”<sup>92</sup>

A technē of comic humour is invaluable for the pornographical discourses and industries. It is this libidinal set-up that enables a viewer to become fascinated and seduced by the flavours of fantasy that they can bring to pornography; fascinated by technologies of self.

Lyotard attempts to illustrate the designation of the space of the political as theatrical representation by drawing a parallel with the disposition of the Greek polis. The polis is constructed upon a first and outer limit that serves to distinguish the city from the outside. The stage is designed as a circle with an empty centre. The limit between stage and auditorium is this empty circle, which one enters to speak. A third and final limit distinguishes the backstage apparatus and determines who can speak and how they may do this. Lyotard provides the example:

“Women never speak in the centre and therefore they never say anything. Not everyone gets on stage. And then you have the process of effacement: wealth, friendship, pressure groups, rhetoric, which are ways of getting to speak in the centre, backstage elements, which have to be effaced so that the political stage can be constituted.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 24.

<sup>91</sup> See chapter two of this thesis where fascination is raised as the condition of an event, or as that which keeps one fastened onto the libidinal skin as it turns. Supra chapter two, pp. 82 – 125.

<sup>92</sup> J-F Lyotard, *Dispositifs Pulsionnels*. (Paris: Union Generale, 1973), p. 256.



This analysis of the representational space shows that the democratic right to free speech in the centre is distinguished by a number of surrounding limits and restraints. There is also a recognition that any attempts to breakdown the limit between the stage and backstage does not destroy the theatre of representation which is maintained by the continued existence of the outer limit between the auditorium and the outside. The unbleached outer limit has the effect of creating a barrier which puts aside affects and establishes concepts as ‘extraterritorial’; as Lyotard puts it, it is ‘the setting aside of intensities and their weakening by the means of their staging.’<sup>94</sup> The pornographical surface can be posed as representing immoral concerns, but in doing so its comic hinge is missed.

In order to stage one must establish a representation within the limits of the theatre as opposed to the reality of the outside that the theatre must represent. However part of this process of staging the representation of reality requires the imposition of its rules upon it and so culminates in the reduction of ‘reality’ to that which can be represented, and according to the hegemonic rules in play – bring to surface how the notion of representation in Lyotard’s work, is ‘outside of language’. The ‘real’ becomes the representable and is reduced to an absent object of representation. Lyotard refers to this as the placing of the outside on the inside.<sup>95</sup> As Woodward remarks:

“Lyotard’s image of theory as theatre is based on the etymological relationship between the two terms; they are both derived from the Greek *theasthai*, meaning to look at, contemplate, or behold. The theorist is like a spectator who views the representation of the world (outside the theatre) on the stage (inside the theatre).”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Dispositifs Pulsionnels*, p. 257.

<sup>94</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Dispositifs Pulsionnels*, p. 260.

<sup>95</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Dispositifs Pulsionnels*, p. 291.

The theatre of representation creates a de-realisation that makes everything within it a product of conceptual representation; in doing so it excludes the outside reality that it seeks to represent, and it appears in the theatre as the absent original of representation. In resistance to the seduction of the rule of representation, Lyotard argues for a figural affirmation of the singularity of the event that is irreducible to the theatre of representation. He writes:

“Certainly not a libidinal theatre then, no density, intensities running here and there, setting up, escaping, without ever being imprisoned in the volume of the stage and auditorium. Theatricality and representation, far from being taken as libidinal givens, a fortiori metaphysical, results from a certain labour on the labyrinthine and moebian band, a labour which prints those particular folds and twists, the effect of which is a box closed upon itself, filtering impulses and allowing only those to appear on the stage what will come to be known as the exterior, satisfying the conditions of interiority. The representative chamber is an energetic dispositif. To describe and follow its functioning that’s what needs to be done. No need to do a critique of metaphysics (or of political economy, which is the same thing), since critique presupposes and ceaselessly creates this very theatricality; rather be inside and forget it.”<sup>97</sup>

In proposing the pornographical as an ‘ana-aesthetic’, as we shall see in chapter four, its surface is one that is simultaneously aesthetic and non-aesthetic, according to the differing permutations of libidinal intensities; this kind of singularity or surface yields an ethics without recourse to universalism, but one of a rhizomatic or ana-linguistic neologism of comic humour. Lyotard is helpful in looking at the ‘how’ of libidinal intensities and their operation in the establishment of communal meanings. His notions of the Great and concentratory zeros critique the semiotic and linguistic schools of language, in their ability to reduce and erase the presence of skin. The pornographical is

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<sup>96</sup> A. Woodward, University of Queensland, 2006. “Lyotard” in *The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. Available at: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>.

both the libidinal band and the tensor events it generates, as we shall see.

It is through his image of the libidinal band that Lyotard endeavours to highlight that which representation excludes and simultaneously that which it affirms from the intense singularities on the band. In conjuring the visual images of how this band operates, Lyotard introduces a point of maximum intensity in the figure of the tensor, set against a back-drop of a variety of apparatus of de-intensification, in the form of the bar, the great and the concentratory zeros. As previously discussed it is the bar that provides the means of de-intensification of the intensities on the libidinal surface. It is the turning and slowing of the bar that gives signification to the intensities. It creates exclusion in its conceptual representation to be re-introduced the band by twisting in the process of producing a theatrical volume. This de-intensification of the band allows the great and the concentratory zeros to come into play on the libidinal surface.

These two zeros are two of the many and unlimited dispositifs formed instantaneously on the libidinal skin. This occurs with the de-intensification of the turning of the bar, when the libidinal surface is folded back in the creation of the theatrical volume that creates the division of an inside and an outside. The inside is shaped by what is viewed as happening on the outside. This outside of the great Zero Lyotard uses as a kind of general term that refers to God[s], the phallus, the Platonic world of forms, and other authentic modes of production.

He writes:

“All these instances ... are effects of the slowing down of the bar, referring the intensities running through the band to an elsewhere which they appear to lack once they have been confined to the interiority of a volume. The great Zero is thus an empty centre which reduces the present complexity of what happens instantaneously on the band to a 'chamber of

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<sup>97</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 3.

presence and absence.”<sup>98</sup>

Lyotard makes clear the nihilism inherent in all forms of signification.

Lyotard defines the two dispositifs of zero as being part of the ‘same monster’.

The two zeros are posed in a relationship to each other, not one based on opposition, for they are “unclear and indistinct like the principal pulsions of Eros and Thanatos, life and death”, they dissimulate each other.<sup>99</sup> Lyotard remarks:

“...The same monster’s looting hind-quarters, ‘puts the system of reproduction at risk’ by jealously looting every over-excited intensity in order to plug them into the same circuits as established by the first zero, to the point of immobilizing the (in)organic body the zero produces, intensifying the concentratory process to the point of becoming fatal to the stability it serves.”<sup>100</sup>

Alongside this complex and intense operation of reproducing the same

Lyotard introduces the simulacrum, the exorbitant and the tensor. The simulacrum is the name that Lyotard provides for the exchangeable based on equivalence. The ancient thought of Plato is often used as a starting point for any discussion of the term simulacrum. For Plato the objective authenticity of any truth can be deduced from the distance and nature of the relationship of the copy to its original and Ideal Form. In this way Plato distinguishes between a good and a bad copy. A good copy or icon is one that inwardly through its essence participates the Idea that has founded it and as such can be said to bear an essential resemblance to this Ideal. A false copy or simulacrum, however, only repeats the external appearance of the icon without essentially participating in the Ideal Form that has founded it. A simulacrum is an imitative copy that

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<sup>98</sup> I.H. Grant in J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. xiii.

<sup>99</sup> I.H. Grant in J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. xv.



provides only an external relation of similitude.

These crudely sketched Platonic ideas of mimesis, truth and simulacrum will be discussed in greater detail throughout the following chapters in this thesis, along with the difficulties they raise with regards to what could be considered a politically dangerous establishing of a fixed and static measurability of truth and identity as essence, based upon an authentic relationship that reflects the purity of God in its closeness to the Ideal Forms rather than human imperfection. The pornographical surface will be looked at in terms of being a mimetic copy, for which there is no ideal or pure first/origin. As Lyotard indicates, here is a theory that provides a fixed and universal truth based on a representation of something that is outside of the theatrical volume, and therefore absent within.

Lyotard bases his analysis of the simulacrum on Augustine's theological theory of language. He writes:

“Thus his analysis of Augustine's theory of simulacra establishes the generalized equivalence and exchangeability of signs for things due to the participation of the latter in a relation of similarity that subsists amongst all beings, such unity being guaranteed by (and guaranteeing) God's unity with natural things and the mirrorial unity of simulacra insofar as language, second-hand (or third-hand for Plato) and representative, is used to display these relations. Exchangeability, then, is premised on similarity.”<sup>101</sup>

To digress, though not far, Wittgenstein also raises a similar concern with Augustine's theory in his introduction to his book, *Philosophical Investigations*.

He begins with a quotation from Augustine's *Confessions* (I, 8):

“When they (my elders) named some object, and accordingly moved towards something I saw this and I grasped that the thing was called by the sound they uttered when they meant to point it out. Their intention

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<sup>100</sup> I.H. Grant in J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. xv.

<sup>101</sup> I.H. Grant in J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. xv.

was shewn by their bodily movements, as it were the natural language of all peoples: the expression the face, the play of the eyes, the movement of other parts of the body, and the tone of the body, and the tone of the voice which expresses our state of mind in seeking, having, rejecting, or avoiding something. Thus, as I heard words repeatedly used in their proper places in various sentences, I gradually learnt to understand what objects they signified; and after I had trained my mouth to form these signs, I used them to express my own desires.”<sup>102</sup>

This quotation reveals a specific picture on Augustine’s thoughts on the essence of human language. Here every word has a meaning that is precise and not open to misinterpretation. The meaning is correlated to the word as it stands for a particular object. He remarks:

“Augustine does not speak of there being any difference between kinds of word. If you describe the learning of language in this way you are, I believe, thinking primarily of nouns like “table”, “chair”, “bread”, and of people’s names, and only secondarily of certain actions and properties, and of remaining kinds of word as something that will take care of itself.”<sup>103</sup>

For both Wittgenstein and Lyotard, Augustine has an over-simplified idea of language and its use that whilst it does describe a system of communication, not everything that we call language is this system. Wittgenstein provides the example of a game:

“It is as if someone were to say: “A game consists in moving objects about on a surface according to certain rules...” - and we replied: You seem to be thinking of board games, but there are others. You can make your definition correct by expressly restricting it to those games.”<sup>104</sup>

The process of learning and using a language are far more complex than merely learning to repeat a word and being able to learn its corresponding object.

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<sup>102</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p. 2e.

<sup>103</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 2e.

<sup>104</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 3e.

Wittgenstein would define these as processes resembling language.<sup>105</sup> For Wittgenstein these processes are what he would name a 'language-game'.

Wittgenstein would call the process of naming things and repeating words after someone else a language-game, along with the using words in learning a song such as ring-a-ring-a-roses and a primitive language can be a language-game. "I shall call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the 'language-game'."<sup>106</sup>

Lyotard also draws upon Wittgenstein's notion of language-games and uses them to look at incommensurable differences between discourses or language -games and the questions of justice that this raises. For example, msysogony forms a discourse or language-game with its rules of engagement and humour, entwining with other language-games and being-part of the hegemonic make-up of these. Both Wittgenstein and Lyotard assert their concerns over Augustine's lack of emphasis on the differences between things. Any language or language-game is complicated through the use and actions of language and its users. For Augustine speech mirrors or represents one soul and can be taken literally. It is God who illuminates truth and provides knowledge through the soul that is reborn whereas the body, an illusionary simulacrum, as so often is the case, is regulated to the lower depths of the physical, and therefore less worthy and false, world. This is achieved through what Lyotard names as Augustine's 'hierarchy of similitude', which he establishes in his polemic against the Roman pagans, *The City of God*.<sup>107</sup>

Lyotard names both Plato's and Augustine's notions of the simulacrum as

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<sup>105</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 5e.

<sup>106</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 5e.

<sup>107</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, pp. 67- 70

the beginning of the ‘ghettoization of art and artists’, well before the bourgeoisie claimed the right of aesthetic judgement.<sup>108</sup> To Plato, art such as poetry, narration and theatre are based on the art of mimesis, by which he means imitation. Such arts are for Plato false and therefore simulacrum, as they only imitate the appearance of things and not the fullness of their essence or being. They are far away in their resemblance to the truth of things, to their Ideal Form. Lyotard asserts:

“...Divine citizenship” in his works. Augustine wishes to rescue and maintain the theology of the natural, discursive and philosophical at the expense of the mythic, theatrical, gestural, poetic and the civic, political theologies.<sup>109</sup>

He does this through his theory of the simulacrum, which for Lyotard is a theory of ‘generalised similitude’, in that it forms the basis of semiotics. He notes:

“...Each thing resembles another thing, and given this there must be a Resemblance, a *Similitudo*, by participation in which similar things similar.”<sup>110</sup>

According to Lyotard Augustine’s simulacrum is the word or the son as the relationship between the holy trinity. He writes:

“...The image or simulacrum relationship between two terms has to be one not only of *similitudo*, but of engenderment: the son, exactly like the father is also what emanates from him. All things are therefore in a relation of resemblance if they are not all images of another; and of course a hierarchy of things is established which depends on the contents of the *similitudo* (and correctively those of *dissimilitudo*) in their interrelations.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 68. This will be looked at in greater detail in chapter four, supra pp. 176 – 221.

<sup>109</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 67.

<sup>110</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 69.



And what of dissimilitude Lyotard asks. He asserts that following Augustine's logic what would be the most dissimilar, the most de-simulated and bearing the least resemblance to the simulacrum, would be the body, the surface where all events take place.

Within this hierarchy of generalised similitude, the *truth* of being is replaced or recovered as a sign.

“...Turns out to be situated *outside* the sign, and even, since Augustine conceives of the sign under the category of the metaphor, *above* it. This being *signifies something other* than what it is; it signifies that of which it is the simulacrum, but, because it is not what it signifies, it also signifies the distance which keeps them apart, dissimilitude, the lack of being (*manqué d'être*) which separates them.”<sup>112</sup>

And even lack slips into this deferral of meaning. Lyotard again charts the disappearance of the pulsional and pornographical body in a discourse of denial where the present intensities of bodies are almost erased. He writes:

“...Where the concept of conscious time, ceaselessly referring the event from the instance to instance in the to-ing and fro-ing of the future and the past, will demand that the entire network of absences be hung on a Presence, on a Present omni temporally real, but itself is absent, where with this tissue of referrals the semiotic machine is henceforth in position ready to close every intensity up in a sign, as a value standing for something absent.”<sup>113</sup>

It is this aspect of any such representational theory that Lyotard would term as nihilistic in its denial that it is itself libidinal. All representational theories are libidinal dispositifs for Lyotard, and signs are inscribed and ex-scribed onto skins. It is bodies that are marked or that bear the traces of libidinal intensities.

Lyotard wishes to open up the road towards *libidinal currency* by force. A sign to Lyotard may well be considered an essential ingredient to any theory of

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<sup>111</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 69.

<sup>112</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 70.

communication, in that a sign replaces something for someone. He writes:

“...A thing is posited as a message, that is, as a medium enriched with a sequence of coded elements, and that its addressee, himself in possession of the code, is capable, through decoding the message, of retrieving the *information* that the sender meant him to receive.”<sup>114</sup>

The thing is immediately “hollowed out” and in being so becomes a *substitute* and replaces that information for the addressee.<sup>115</sup> Lyotard suggests that this can be regarded in two different ways: on the one hand the sign replaces what it signifies. Lyotard makes reference to the Platonic theory of Ideas in providing an example of how “the sign at the same time screens and calls up what it announces and conceals”.<sup>116</sup>

On the other hand if the sign’s process of substitution is thought of metonymically rather than metaphorically under the name of exchange, then the signifier is postponed, and a reiteration of this postponement is set up. He writes:

“... Is no longer signification (what is encoded), then, which the sign substitutes - the trick is invented: that signification itself is constituted by signs alone, that it carries on endlessly, that we never have anything but references, that signification is always deferred, meaning is never present in flesh and blood.”<sup>117</sup>

In his endeavours to combat the nihilistic aspects of the semiotic sign, Lyotard proposes a reinterpretation of the sign as the *tensor*. The tensor is a duplicitous sign: one of its potentialities is the semiotic sign, which is able to be inscribed in existing structures of meaning or networks of significations which

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<sup>113</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 69.

<sup>114</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 43.

<sup>115</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 43.

<sup>116</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 43.

<sup>117</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 43.

are unremitting metonymic referrals. The other potentiality of the tensor contains the residual possibilities for other meanings or for the Deleuzian actualisation of virtualities. This side of the tensor disrupts and exceeds the system, dissimulating and flowing into new systems and structures.<sup>118</sup> The tensor is a singularity, a libidinal incommensurability within any ephemeral language or language-games: the ready-made comic terrain of the pornographical.

Lyotard asserts the importance of the occurrence of dematerialization whenever there is a semiotic potentiality of the sign. He states:

“See what you have done: the material is immediately annihilated. Where there is a message, there is no material. Adorno said this admirably of Schoenberg: the material, he explained, in serialism does not count as such, but only as a relation between terms. And in Boulez there will be nothing but relations, not only between pitches, but also between intensities, timbres, durations. Dematerialization.”<sup>119</sup>

This dematerialization occurs in simultaneity as the signs inscription or perhaps ex-scription into a structural meaning and as a result offers the libido “new opportunities for intensification, the fabrication of signs through ‘dematerialisation’ providing material for the extension of tensors”.<sup>120</sup>

‘A dance includes suspense, as music includes silence’, within reason there is passion and with tension there is dissimulation. That structural meanings such as the semiotic, referred signs, act, as a cover is both their secret and their dissimulation.<sup>121</sup> He remarks:

“...The opening up of diachronic, which is only a drawing out of the tense

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<sup>118</sup> See chapter four and the conclusion of this thesis for a more detailed discussion of Deleuze and a micro-ethics of the virtual.

<sup>119</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 44.

<sup>120</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 44.

<sup>121</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 52.

of the compact immobile tensor into an *always past* and a *still to come*, an *even now* and a *not yet*, into the game of de-presence”.<sup>122</sup>

What then happens to the someone, the subject for whom the message, that has replaced the thing and displaced its libidinal energy, is for? This ‘I’ can be amidst the dissimulation and dissimilitude of things, and this ‘I’ can be a nexus of interwoven textures and texts, each one pulling the term towards itself.<sup>123</sup>

Lyotard writes:

“The I is constituted in this relation of the sign as both addressee... and the decoder and inventor of codes.”<sup>124</sup>

But this ‘I’ can never be in possession of the code, a peculiar witnessing of the sexual comic gesture, of the pornographical.

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<sup>122</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 46.

<sup>123</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 49.

<sup>124</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p. 48.



**CHAPTER FOUR:**

*Economies of Witnessing: An 'Ana-Aesthetic' Mimetics.*

1. The Pornographical's Aesthetics.

This chapter proposes to explore how, and the degree to which, a *technē* of comic humour forms the aesthetics of the pornographical, and forms an integral part of the shifting/porous socio-political surface of the pornographical, and its relationship to pleasure, that establishes its meaning. The term aesthetics is itself historical, complex and intricate, broadly definable as that branch of philosophy that deals with the arts on the one hand, and with the nature of aesthetic responses and ethical judgements on the other hand. The pornographical tends to be categorised as a lower part of cultural expression, and as such it fails to be credited with being able to engage its participants in an aesthetic relationship or interaction.<sup>1</sup> Given that pornography is far from being a coherent or stable cultural category/ discourse to define, what are the demarcations that distinguish pornography, pornographic culture and the rest of what is to be regarded as culturally valuable, that pornography is refused the context of being an expressive cultural and aesthetic form.

During the previous century defining the category of 'art' became less reliant on ideas of authorship, originality, uniqueness and Benjamin's concept of an aura.<sup>2</sup> The erosions of the class-based classification systems in the arts have disclosed a rapport between pornography and art. Pornography could be posed

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<sup>1</sup> See Raymond Williams work on the difficulties and the political problematics of dividing culture into categories of 'high' and 'low'. See R. Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. (London: Fontana Press, 1988), and R. Williams, *Culture and Materialism*. (London: Verso Books, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> See W. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*, edited and introduced by Hannah Arendt. (London: Fontana Press, 1992.) For Benjamin a work of art is one that is original, marked with a ritualistic value of its place and time. He hesitates but his thoughts lead him in the direction that in an age where objects, including art objects can be so readily reproducible, through photography and cinema, then it makes little sense to discuss art in terms of having an aura. Benjamin begins to rethink the now of time when 'blasted' out of an historical continuum.

as a site of expression of a cultural, sexual unconscious, exposing the specific obsessional repetitions that find their formation within the unconscious – unresolved conflicts, traumas, torments and dream neologisms that are repeatedly expressed, returned to and repeated afresh throughout the artistic and literary, and musical genres. Kipnis argues that both art and perversion share a similar point of origin; their respective differences lie in the way that art rechannels the same perverse impulsive and energetic elements of sexual excitation, into the more socially acceptable and elevated ‘package’ of aesthetic language.<sup>3</sup> Kipnis suggests from her research that the degree of sublimation involved in an aesthetic response requires ‘distance rather than engagement’, and is dependent on educational capital, which is itself a mechanism for enforcing class distinctions.

Aesthetics are important to how ‘we’ define ourselves discursively as a culture and as a myriad of identities. Pornography signifies in its meaning, a body of consistent work marked with the familiar traces of repetition and the obsession of specific themes, one that utilises aesthetic devices in order to expose and ‘send up’ the realm of aesthetics - taste, delicacy, beauty, manners, social and moral conventions - all of which pornography sets itself the task of energetically violating. This is a pivotal trademark of the pornographical. Historically specific, class bound, radicalised, the realm of aesthetics is cruel to those outside of its discourse. Kipnis defines pornography as a ‘working-class hero’ and locates its glamour in its devotion to thwarting and challenging

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<sup>3</sup> L. Kipnis, *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America*, p. 89, L. O’Toole, *Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology and Desire*, and B. Haver, “Pornographically man dwells” and “Art’s work (or fragments for a preface to the genet commentaries)” in *Issues in Contemporary Culture and Aesthetics: Volume 12*, edited by S. Golding / johnny de philo. (Jan van Eyck Akademie: Maastricht, 2001), pp. 8 - 13 and 108 - 111.

aesthetic conventions, in an effort to disrupt our precious sensibilities at every turn. She writes:

“... It produces a body of images that are too *blatantly* out of the unconscious, too *unaesthetically* written in the language of obsession, compulsion, perversion, infantile desires, rage, fear, pain and misogyny.”<sup>4</sup>

It is in this sense that Kipnis dubs pornography an anti-aesthetic, a space of political and social significance which highlights some of the cultural sore spots in ‘elucidating not only the connection between sex and the social, but between our desires, our “selves”, and the casual everyday brutality of cultural conformity.’<sup>5</sup> This usage of the term anti-aesthetic is similar to Hal Foster’s concept of an “anti-aesthetic” with which he names specific cross-cultural practices. He writes:

“...Cross-disciplinary in nature, that is sensitive to cultural forms engaged in a politic (e.g., feminist art) or rooted in a vernacular - that is, to forms that deny the idea of a privileged aesthetic realm.”<sup>6</sup>

Foster wished to question the validity of the aesthetic categories in the contemporary cultural practices of art. He sought not to reinvent a form of modernist nihilism or of affirmative negation that seeks a space beyond representation, a time of pure presence, but rather a critique cultural representations and social identities. Art, for Foster is never outside of its politics.<sup>7</sup> Whilst taking on board these two similar concepts of an anti-aesthetic, this thesis is putting forward the pornographical as an ‘ana-aesthetic’, both an aesthetic and an anti-aesthetic, a political and ethical surface that is not merely

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<sup>4</sup> L. Kipnis, *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America*, p. 85.

<sup>5</sup> L. Kipnis, *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America*, p. 121.

<sup>6</sup> H. Foster (ed), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. (Bay Press: Washington, 1985), p. xv.

<sup>7</sup> H. Foster (ed), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, pp. xiv - xvi.

counter-cultural, but is culture itself. The pornographical is being proposed as establishing a kind of bodily ethics, generated through its political relationship to pleasure; one that does not present an attached universalism or series of deep-rooted essentialisms, neither does it privilege temporality, and pose an ethical meaning in terms of being 'in suspension' or 'undecidable'. This chapter is putting forward the pornographical as a kind of 'rhizomatic' surface that allows for a fractal ethical meaning of a 'mimetic shudder', a comic gesture, and a form of judgement as a discursive economy to any specific culture.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.1. The Ethicality of Mimetic Pleasure.

The pleasure gained from the mimetic art of the comic differs from that of tragedy. Aristotle defines a tragedy as "an imitation ... of events that evoke fear and pity."<sup>9</sup> This is the aim of any tragic plot: to excite a response of fear and pity. In placing the primacy of any successful tragedy, and the audience's emotional response to it, with that of the plot, Aristotle details two key variables that need to fluctuate within the series of events of the tragic plot. He writes:

"One is the direction of change (from good fortune to bad, or from bad to good); the other is the moral status of the person or persons involved in the change (virtuous or wicked)."<sup>10</sup>

In a successful tragedy characters or the plot lines must demonstrate *hamartia*, error. *Hamartia* to the Greeks was not necessarily an error of moral content rather the type of errors made in ignorance or misjudgement, not through a

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<sup>8</sup> This draws upon Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a 'rhizome', a process whereby plants, animals, and humans intersect roots of things, and merge with them. See G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, "Introduction: Rhizome" in *A Thousand Plateaus* translated by Brian Massumi. (London: The Athlone Press, 1996), pp. 3 – 25.

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, translated and introduced by M. Heath. (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 52a2f.

<sup>10</sup> M. Heath in Aristotle, *Poetics*, p. xxxi.



sense of wickedness or evil-doing. This way no sense of outrage or disgust arises to interfere with the audience's ability to emote fear and pity. For this to be achieved Aristotle recommends a broadly prescribed plot.

An ethical pleasure that arises from a responsive tragedy is one of *katharsis*. *Katharsis* brings a sense of pleasure from the relief or purification of the excess of the emotions of fear and pity. For Aristotle and his Greek contemporaries there is an intimate link between emotion and virtue. He asserts:

“ (Emotions)...Are not irrational impulses. They are grounded in our understanding, since an emotional response to a situation presupposes an interpretation of it (as fear implies an assessment of the situation as one that threatens pain or injury); and since such responses can be more or less appropriate to the situation, they are open to ethical evaluation.”<sup>11</sup>

Aristotle asserts that a beneficial and ethical effect of tragic plots is the regulation of people's emotions through a *katharsis* of pity and fear.

Comic pleasure requires a different kind of approach. As Bergson phrases it, comic pleasure demands a "momentary anesthesia of the heart".<sup>12</sup> Emotional indifference is a natural environment for comic pleasure to thrive, for emotional states disrupt the possibilities for laughter. Bergson states that the bulk of comic scenarios are created through a series of reciprocal interference. Freud develops this formula for the comic further by defining comic pleasure as arising from a comparison of difference between two expenditures. Now *katharsis* and cathexis are different methods of movement and regulation of the psyche or ethical state of being. From Aristotle, *katharsis* is used with regards

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<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by H. Rackham. (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1996), 1106b18-23.

<sup>12</sup> H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, pp. 10 - 11. Supra chapter three, pp. 126 - 175.

to a purification or cleansing of one's emotional states whereas Freud's use of cathexis indicates a process whereby a quantity of psychical, libidinal energy becomes attached to, and therefore invested in, an object or to an idea. The comic and its accompanying pleasurable feelings are one means of dispersing or rather discharging and displacing libidinal cathexis, maintaining movement in the psychical, and therefore bodily, mechanisms of identities. However, a difficulty lies in ensuring the comic and its release of cathectic energy. Freud notes:

“Comic pleasure and the effect by which it is known - laughter - can only come about if this difference is unutilizable and capable of discharge. We obtain no pleasurable effect but at most a transient sense of pleasure in which the characteristic of being comic does not emerge, if the difference is put to another use as soon as it is recognised.”<sup>13</sup>

As Freud points out that there are cases whereby the comic appears out of habit, others out of circumstances and even from an observer's point of view. There are also times where the comic occurs amidst the most unfavourable of conditions. Freud locates two favourable conditions in a toxic mood of cheerfulness, in which everything seems comic, and an attunement through the expectation of the comic, often through habitual situations.<sup>14</sup> An unfavourable condition for comic pleasure to arise is that of a person's preoccupation with a mental work of intellectual or imaginative activity. He writes:

“... Work that pursues serious aims interferes with the capacity of the cathexes for discharge - cathexes which the work requires for its displacements - so that the only unexpectedly large differences in expenditure are able to break through to comic pleasure.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 281.

<sup>14</sup> Freud provides an example of comic attunement in attending the theatre. One laughs as one recollects having laughed on such an occasion before. As Freud comments it is "in the expectation of laughing that he laughs when he sees a comic actor come on to the stage, before the latter can have made any attempt at making him laugh. For that reason, too, one admits to feeling ashamed afterwards over what one was able to laugh at in the theatre." S. Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, pp 282 - 283.

However if the mode of preoccupying thought is interrupted then there is a chance for a burst of comic pleasure to take place.

Another unfavourable condition for the cathartic discharge of comic pleasure is the attention is directed to the comparison from which the comic may emerge. Rather like jokes, the comic process must precede in its journey quite unobserved. In agreement with Bergson, Freud argues that the comparison of expenditures must remain automatic if it is to produce comic pleasure. Freud places the comic process as forming part of the preconscious. He states:

“...Such processes, which run their course in the preconscious but lack the cathexis of attention with which consciousness is linked, may aptly be given the name of 'automatic'.”<sup>16</sup>

The next and perhaps most intense unfavourable condition for the comic process, Freud names as the generation of affect, whereby the comic is interfered with if the situation from which it may extend effectuates at the same time a release of a strong affect. He puts forward that in each particular case the affects, disposition and attitude of the individual 'format' the comic in a way that it emerges and vanishes according to the standpoint of each particular person; an absolute comic exists only in exceptional instances.

The contingency of the comic is greater than of a joke, for the comic is found and a joke is made. Although an indifferent attitude is best disposed to being overcome with comic pleasure it is possible to laugh in the midst of stormy or strained emotions. Freud notes:

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<sup>15</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, p 283.

<sup>16</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, p 284.

"...Where there is a release of affect one can observe a particularly strong difference in expenditure bring about the automatism of release."<sup>17</sup>

Finally Freud notes that comic pleasure can be generated by any other pleasurable accompanying circumstances, and offers pleasure as some sort of 'contagious effect.' The spheres of sexuality and obscenity offer the most likely opportunities for comic pleasure. Freud writes:

"...The amplest occasions for obtaining comic pleasure alongside pleasurable sexual excitement; for they can show human beings in their dependence on bodily needs (degradation) or they can reveal the physical demands lying behind the claim of mental love (unmasking)."<sup>18</sup>

In suggesting that the pornographical is a tensor sign, allows for its surface to be placed as a 'prehension' or rhizomatic assemblage that is simultaneously able to contour its own and other discursive economies. The pornographical is able to create an economy of witnessing cultural memories of sexual fantasies, fetishes and taboos. The ability to produce comic pleasure is an integral part of pornography's 'ana -aesthetics' in that it allows for an exposure of and indeed thinly conceals this witnessing and collaboration both at a cultural and at a personal level.

As a tensor sign and an economy, pornography is able to provide and point to spaces within the representational systems, rather than beyond them. In this way a movement both other to itself but paradoxically integral to itself is set on its path. This movement that, through a *technē* of comic humour, releases, or rather discharges a psychical expenditure that displaces its libidinal movement in copying and exceeding its non-relation -relational nexus. There is no rational possession of a pornographic 'code', but a kind of mimetic comportment that

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<sup>17</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, p 284.

<sup>18</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, p 286.



comes through the intersubjective dimension that comic pleasure lends to the pornographical. Isabelle Stengers suggests that subjectivity is the name of mimesis, which happens in an objective world, or in a world that is objective.<sup>19</sup> Both subjectivity and objectivity occur as an event, the terrain of which is virtual. It is the mimetic rhythms and movement of an event that make it real, or the process by which it is realised. As shown so far, the mimetic movement is and must, as an ethical requirement, be realised in a body, in bodies. This is not to suggest that a body is realised, but that “what is realised in the body is currently perceived in the soul” (or within the residues of a mimetic bodily comportment).<sup>20</sup> The reality of the body is the realisation of the ‘virtual actualisation’ of the mimetic movement in the body, as we shall see.

Bodies are important in the world, a requirement to be in the world; a requirement for both appearance and essence and, as this thesis is moving away from such a paradigm, for the realisation and embodiment of the virtual actualisation of the mimetic movements in a body and other bodies. The relationships that bodies have in the world to the political are as a discursive necessity, ethical. In this way the ethics of pornography are about what a body, or bodies, can do through techniques of fantasy sex and fantasy sexual identities.<sup>21</sup>

“The “constructionist” view of the body - that the body is not an anatomical constant but a historical variable, a social construction - ought by rights to be serene. If the body consists only in and through its representations, across all the discourses in which it is invoked (medical, aesthetic, erotic, sartorial, legal, historical), if it truly evaporates into representation, becoming weightless, losing its old opacity and density,

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<sup>19</sup> I. Stengers, *Power and Invention: Situating Science*, translated by Paul Bains (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 3-20.

<sup>20</sup> G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and The Baroque*, p. 120.

<sup>21</sup> G. Deleuze, and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 257.

then in a sense the body should cease to be any kind of problem, for anyone. Entirely subsumed into the sphere of cultural work, indeed apparently becoming the principal arena of cultural activity, it sheds at last its primitive character and is fully assimilated and civilised."<sup>22</sup>

Pain is the one thing that manages to penetrate these myriads of representations that eat away at the actuality, and the constructionist view, of the body.

For Wittgenstein pain is at the limits of my language games, at the limits of my world. The body establishes itself as discourse's impassable limit: the material density of the body, its psychical drives and pulsions, its convulsions of pain and pleasure and the thickness of its enjoyment.<sup>23</sup> Bryson summarises this in stating that:

"When meaning is identified with cultural convention, when it arises only in the interactive space between persons and is no longer to be located in anyone's head, paradoxically the body returns with an urgency it never before possessed. For pain marks the threshold at which the signifying contract and the language games that compose social reality come up against some kind of absolute limit: there is no *sign* i can exchange for my pain, it cannot be channelled into words, (only cries), it exists beyond my powers to represent it before others. Others, in turn, who know of me only through what i can do and be within the world of representation i share with them, are unable to know this pain of mine, which belongs to me alone and cannot be converted into signifying currency of any kind."<sup>24</sup>

Part of the pornography's cultural impact is its presentation of bodies, their sexualness, polymorphous perversities and libidinal fantasies. As a discursive economy the pornographical draws upon the 'lower' cultural tools of the body and of comic humour, in 'sending up' and utilising cultural aesthetics and representations of the body. This *technē* is being posed as the generating the presence and substance the pornographical surface; one that brings a kind of

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<sup>22</sup> N. Bryson, "House of Wax" in *Cindy Sherman: 1975-1993*, text by R. Krauss. (New York: Rizzoli Press: 1993), p. 218.

<sup>23</sup> N. Bryson, "House of Wax" in *Cindy Sherman: 1975-1993*, p 222.

<sup>24</sup> N. Bryson, "House of Wax" in *Cindy Sherman: 1975-1993*, p 219.

non-universalising ethics, and does not privilege temporality or an abyssal logics. By turning now to Lyotard's development of a 'differend' and Derrida's notion of a 'passe-partout', this kind of ethics and its witnessing will be approached in more detail.

### 1.2. Identity as 'Lost Time': A Witnessing of the Immemorial.

Lyotard approaches these questions by creating what he would term a libidinal philosophy that goes beyond a representational theory. Using Sigmund Freud's work Lyotard, in his *Heidegger and "the jews"*, looks at the possibilities of a disturbance that is unable to be registered by psychic mechanisms. Such a possibility would create a taking place of a witnessing that cannot be portrayed as either inside nor outside, nor can it be located at any particular point on a linear time scale, nor can it be termed as an abyss or an absence. He writes:

"This excitation need not be "forgotten", repressed according to representational procedures, nor through *acting out*. Its "excess" (of quantity, of intensity) exceeds the excess that gives rise (presence, place, and time) to the unconscious and the preconscious. It is "in excess" like air and earth are in excess for the life of a fish... We are confronted with a silence that does not make itself heard as silence."<sup>25</sup>

A double blow is deposited. Lyotard continues:

"The shock, the unconscious affect, to be like a cloud of energy particles that are not subject to serial laws, that are not organized into sets that can be thought in terms of words or images, that do not experience any attraction at all."<sup>26</sup>

This double blow comprises a first blow, the first excitation, is not registered as it upsets the apparatus with such "force". Lyotard compares it to a whistle that

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<sup>25</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews"*, translated by A. Michel and M. S. Roberts, p. 12.

<sup>26</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews"*, p. 15.

is inaudible to humans but not to dogs, or like infrared or ultraviolet light.<sup>27</sup> The force of this excitation cannot be bound or placed within accordance with other forces. It is an 'unsayable something', a chance dynamic that may be traumatic or quite banal.<sup>28</sup> Lyotard writes:

"The deposit left behind by "excessive" excitation, outside of the scene and obscene, is not a localizable object in the topology of the soul. This deposit is dissipated, widely dispersed like a thermal state of the system, which, remaining undetermined, is not workable."<sup>29</sup>

It must not be subsumed under forms of secondary repression, and be understood as something to be excluded according to various figures of representation. It is for this reason that Lyotard distinguishes anti-Semitism from xenophobia. The latter seeks to place otherness 'outside', an exclusion that is a dialectical impossibility. Lyotard asserts:

"(The former)...Is one of the means of the apparatus of its culture to bind and represent as much as possible - to protect against - the originary terror, actively to forget it. It is the defensive side of its attack mechanisms."<sup>30</sup>

These manoeuvres attempt to signify "the jews", or the nomadic, unrepresentable difference that Lyotard names the differend, as the name of control over space and time that constitutes the possibilities of representation, and then to forget the cruelty it concomitantly performs. This is the operation that makes dialectics possible.

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<sup>27</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews"*, p. 15.

<sup>28</sup> "This event is not 'sensational'. Under the guise of the sensational, it is forgotten." J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews"*, p 51. Geoffrey Bennington, in commenting on Lyotard's analysis of the death of Pierre Overney during a demonstration outside of a Renault factory, writes: "Overney's death is an 'event' not because of its causes or effects, but because of its senselessness or *inanity*: despite the efforts of the Renault company's narrative, and even of the demonstration's organizers, Overney's death is an event insofar as it refuses to be absorbed into the *order* of a classical narrative, brought to a book in a narrative *account*, its tension exchanged for other tensions." G. Bennington, *Lyotard: Writing the Event*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 109.

<sup>29</sup> G. Bennington, *Lyotard: Writing the Event*, p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> G. Bennington, *Lyotard: Writing the Event*, p. 23.



Lyotard defines the differend as an absolute difference that cannot be reconciled. It is a difference that is neither inside nor outside, one that surpasses time and space without being marked within them as a beyond. In this way it remains a non-recuperable difference, a surplus that cannot be reduced to an opposition to what it surpasses. With the second blow there takes place an affect but without the shock, in comparison to the non-observable affects of the first. Lyotard provides the example of purchasing something in a shop when suddenly anxiety takes over. He writes:

“...Anxiety crushes me, I flee, but nothing had really happened. The energy dispersed in the affective cloud condenses, gets organized, brings on an action, commands a flight without a “real” motive. And it is this flight, the feeling that accompanies it, which informs consciousness *that* there is something, without being able to tell *what* it is. It indicates the *quod* not the *quid*. The essence of the event: that *there is* “comes before” *what* there is. This “before” of the *quod* is also an after of the *quid*.”<sup>31</sup>

The difference is an Otherness in that it problematizes the relation of self and other, of identity and difference. Its identity is one that differs from itself. Such a singular difference escapes the logic of a universal and a particular, it cannot be conceptualised. It differs from a ‘virtual’ difference which is unidentifiable but real; or an ‘absolute’, or a ‘multiple’ negation that negates the positive/ negative dichotomy, or an excessive ‘event’ that takes place in between past, present or the future of space-time.<sup>32</sup> Such an event is forgotten, not by being lost in time, but by being ‘lost time.’ It is forgotten by virtue of being left out, but never simply excluded or left behind.

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<sup>31</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and “the jews”*, p. 16.

<sup>32</sup> This term is one put forward and used by Sue Golding / johnny de philo. It is a negativity in a negative dialectic, one that as a neither / nor exceeds any reduction to an oppositional either / or. It is negation as multiplicity since it cannot be seen as producing or simply giving rise to a multiplicity that might be separate from it. See S. Golding, “Curiosity” in her *The Eight Technologies of Otherness*, pp. 10 -27.

To push this difference into a symbolic logic would be to do violence to its nature. For the first blow comes too early for a system that cannot catalogue it, the second blow comes too late, and the psychic reaction and representation miss their mark. But this peculiar singularity cannot be reduced to a mere absence anymore than it can be represented. Lyotard notes:

“It follows that psychoanalysis, the search for lost time, can only be interminable, like literature and like true history (i.e., the one that is not historicism but anamnesis): the kind of history that does not forget that forgetting is not a breakdown of memory but the immemorial always ‘present’ but never here-now, always torn apart in the time of consciousness, of chronology, between a too early and too late -- the too early of a first blow dealt to the apparatus that it does not feel, and the too late of a second blow where something intolerable is felt. A soul struck without striking a blow.”<sup>33</sup>

This double refusal of incorporation or dismissal is political by definition.

Lyotard asserts:

“The differend, transcribed as ‘tendency’, as ‘faction’ gives rise to negotiations, lies, maneuvers, concessions, denunciations ..... If this is horrifying, then one ‘cannot engage in politics’. One has others do it.”<sup>34</sup> Politics for Lyotard is always the strategic approach by which the difference which exceeds the mechanisms of procedural justice, representation and discursive structures is engaged.<sup>35</sup>

In critiquing the modernist, systems theory of thinkers such as Luhmann, which places the emphasis of legitimation on concepts of performativity and efficiency, Lyotard raises the point that rather than achieving greater control and amplified performativity through an increase in knowledge, what is actually

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<sup>33</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and “the jews”*, p 20.

<sup>34</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and “the jews”*, p 57.

<sup>35</sup> “If politics is conceived of as a genre, Lyotard offers no political ‘solution’ at all. But if politics (or perhaps, though Lyotard does not make this distinction in these terms, ‘the political’) is taken as a name for that heterogeneity and that incommensurability ... then the determination of the political is the problem, and the resistance to that determination is the (dis)solution. Lyotard accepts the proposition that ‘everything is political’ if the political is described as above, but refuses the apparent corollary (politics is everything’) insofar as that suggests a genre containing or subordinating all other genres”. G. Bennington, *Lyotard: Writing the Event*, p. 158.

augmented through an increase in knowledge is uncertainty. Lyotard focuses upon the scientific works of a more postmodern paradigm, such as those of Heisenberg and Thom. These emphasise unpredictability, uncertainty, catastrophe, chaos, paralogy and dissensus.

Dissensus challenges the existing rules of the game, or language games, for paralogy becomes impossible if recognition is denied and legitimacy withheld for new moves in the game. The differend is the name that Lyotard gives to the silencing of a player in the language games. It exists when there are no available procedures or power with which to present their grievance within or through the current discursive domains. Silencing or eliminating a player from the game is equivalent to a terrorist act for Lyotard. He illustrates this with the example of the revisionist historian's refusal to acknowledge the Nazi gas chambers unless a victim of the chambers came forth to offer their valid witness testimonials. However according to such logic, to be considered a valid witness and victim of the gas chambers, one would have had, to have died in them.<sup>36</sup>

Lyotard's thoughts develop his concerns over the Holocaust and the crypts left by Heidegger's abyssal philosophy and silent political views. Any effort to represent the mass exterminations and endurances entailed by those in the camps, whilst guaranteeing that the horror will not be forgotten, invariably domesticate the event. In recounting the dehumanisation of the camps victims and their abusive treatment, "it is not as men, women, and children that they are

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<sup>36</sup> Lyotard puts forward that Faurisson's case is in part possible due to the conflation of the historical genre with the cognitive genre. A genre of discourse must be invoked to identify a phrase regime and this conflation enabled Faurisson to make a case that what is knowable in history is determined only through cognitive phrasing. Just as science as a genre is inescapable from conditions of proof so the rules for establishing the reality of the referent determine the "universe of cognitive phrases where truth and falsity are at stake". J-F. Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, translated by G. ven den Abeele. (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1983), p. 35. The possibility of subverting the cognitive creates a differend that marks the silence of an impossibility of phrasing an injustice.

exterminated but as the name of what is evil - "jews"- that the Occident has given to the unconscious anxiety."<sup>37</sup>

Similar problems occur when sifting through the actions of the Nazi Party themselves. It is not just that there is no reason to see "the jews" as enemies, and therefore the insanity of the attempted genocide. They were not treated as enemies in the first place: "They have not been declared the enemy. They have no claim to the spotlight of confrontation on stage."<sup>38</sup> Consequently the exterminations must take place off-stage, managed so as to leave no trace.

Any subsequent political reassertion of human rights and toleration, whilst to be applauded, presents only a ruse of respect for the alterity of this Otherness. Even a revolutionary politics shares this collusion, as the call for the new is the slogan of the general economy that governs by implementing the rule of forgetting and as such turning the 'spirit exclusively, foreclosing, toward the future.' In each case the silent voice of the differend is lost. One must therefore not remember the Holocaust directly. Lyotard writes:

"Here, to fight against forgetting means to fight to remember that one forgets as soon as one believes, draws conclusions, and holds for certain. It means to fight against forgetting the precariousness of what has been established, of a re-established past; it is a fight for the sickness whose recovery is simulated."<sup>39</sup>

One can only approach the Holocaust through strategies that betray their own attempts at representation. Certain forms of literature present a method of this, as does aesthetics. For Lyotard, it is particular types of art, such as Barnett Newman, that best accomplish this in bearing witness to the always-returning

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<sup>37</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews"*, p. 27.

<sup>38</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews"*, p. 29.

<sup>39</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews"*, p. 10.



aporia of the sublime. Lyotard asserts that it must be sufficient to remember that one remembers. He writes:

“...It must be sufficient that one remembers that one does not remind oneself of it anymore; it must be sufficient to save the interminable and the waiting. Ordinary memory accomplishes forgetting, covers up the promise. But the promise is not gone, it is always there.”<sup>40</sup>

As Lyotard argues the hope lies in anesthesia to fight against amnesia. The pornographical offers a different pathway for an ethical consideration other than the ‘immemorial’ for the body. The pornographical surface, through its *technē* of comic humour, is embodied and mediates the body, creating substantiality and a mimetic economy of witnessing.

Derrida's re-conceptualisation of the sublime attempts to deconstruct the totality of self-reflexivity of the subject, in looking at the self-reflexivity of the subject, of the 'I' of consciousness, and of the loftier branch of aesthetics formed by art and literature. In order to analyse the relationship between art and theory, the borders must first be fixed and held in place as to what is specific to the predeterminations of each. In commenting on Emmanuel Lévinas, Derrida writes:

“...To attempt a breakthrough toward the beyond of philosophical discourse, you cannot possibly succeed *within language* ... except by *formally and thematically posing the question of the relations between belonging and breaking out, the question of closure*”.<sup>41</sup>

For Derrida such a question as what is art must be asked through the stipulations of its borders and the effects of other forces from other discursive and non-discursive formations, outside of these borders. These forces often muddy the

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<sup>40</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and “the jews”*, pp. 37 - 38.

<sup>41</sup> J. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, translated and introduced by A. Bass. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 110.

waters with questions of art's integrity, self-knowledge and self-representations. These borders should be continually "questioned, mobilized, and reinscribed if art is to have a critical, transformative effect on theory."<sup>42</sup> In this way Derrida hoped to locate what are the conditions of these borders and frameworks that must be exceeded, displaced and undone in order to open up the aesthetic and philosophical closure of the heritage of the great and grand philosophies of art.<sup>43</sup>

He writes:

"In accepting the art object as a work - that is, as unified, completed, integral - theory relegates itself to a specific place outside and determines its relation to art as that of an outside to an inside. The question that Derrida pursues in his essays on art is how to break out of the enclosure determined by this inside/outside opposition - not in order to destroy as notions of aesthetic specificity, but to conceive of specificity in some other manner; not in order to diminish<sup>44</sup> the status of theory, but to make it more critical and effective, less dogmatic."

Derrida chooses to focus his critique on the effective closures around the boundaries of art by drawing upon the example of the *parergon* in Kant's *The Critique of Judgment*, in order to complicate the notion of a frame and the ease with which one can take a position or rather with which one is deposed.

Derrida defines Kant's usage of the *parergon* as one that provides a frame through a combination of outside and inside in that an outside is drawn inside the inside in order to constitute it inside.<sup>45</sup> For Derrida there is no *ergon* without the *parergon*:

"What constitutes them as *parerga* is not simply their exteriority or surplus nature, it is the internal structural relation that attaches them to the

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<sup>42</sup> D. Carroll, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida*. (New York: Methuen Books, 1987), p. 132.

<sup>43</sup> J. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, translated by G. Bennington and I. McLeod. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 1 - 13.

<sup>44</sup> D. Carroll, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida*, p. 135.

<sup>45</sup> J. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, p. 74.

interior lack of the *ergon*. Without this lack, the *ergon* would have no need of a *parergon*."<sup>46</sup>

The dilemma lies in what belongs to the inside and what to the outside - how does one take up a position based on the terms of an exteriority that is necessary to the interior integrity of the artwork.

In the Kantian *Third Critique*, Derrida argues that the question of form cannot be divided from that of the frame. The *Third Critique* is caught within this same parergonal logic that it applies to art. For a judgment to be a judgment of taste then under the schema for the Kantian analytics, these judgments must be formal and distinguished from those of content and matter.

Derrida asserts:

"...Formality as the space of aesthetics in general, of a 'formalism' that instead of representing a determined system is indistinguishable from the history of art and aesthetics itself. And the effect of formality is always linked to the possibility of a system of framing that is at the same time imposed and erased."<sup>47</sup>

It becomes a question of differentiating the good frame from the bad one or rather knowing when to evoke the frame, when to ignore it and when to refute it. As Carroll states, in writing on Derrida:

"A too visible frame detracts from the work and destroys its integrity; a frame that is not visible enough produces a lack of differentiation between inside and outside, thereby having the same effect. Thus, working the frame and making the frame work constitute a critical approach to art that originates neither inside nor outside art, that is neither of theory or of art alone - for it consists in moving constantly from one to the other."<sup>48</sup>

For Derrida there are insuperable difficulties in attempting to locate and obtain a pure aesthetics or an autonomous one. To achieve this would be only to

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<sup>46</sup> J. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, p. 69.

<sup>47</sup> J. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, p. 79.

<sup>48</sup> D. Carroll, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida*, p. 139.

constitute a limit or a frame. An aesthetic space is one that is never completely contained by the frame, one that is always in excess of its frame and thus never completely unto itself.

It is through the use of the notion of the *parergon* that Derrida points to the *determined* nature of the frame in Kant's approach to the aesthetic. He argues that this is due to Kant's humanism, for his specific definition or notion of man plays an essential role in determining the frame of the aesthetic for Kant. Derrida locates a dual relationship between the limiting effects of both Kant's humanism and formalism; one implies the other. With the definition of the beautiful as a "finality without end" or "purposiveness without purpose", the 'internal' form of the object is delayed and raised up as the only finality; one with no exterior purpose; one that is self-contained and self-sufficient.<sup>49</sup>

Derrida summarises this as:

“Finality, an oriented movement, is necessary, for without it there would be no beauty, but equally necessary is that the orientor (the end that originates) be missing. Without finality, no beauty. But none either if the end were to determine this beauty.”<sup>50</sup>

Derrida summarises beautiful forms as those forms that are finalized in such a way that they immediately exhibit their lack of attachment to an end, as the 'pure cut' that divides them from all other possible ends and purpose is evident in their frame. What is most important here is this frame or border that is established in finalizing these finality of forms without end, at which simultaneously cuts it from its end, and which in doing so keeps us from knowing its end and from knowing it.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> J. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, p. 139.

<sup>50</sup> J. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, p. 99.



Derrida returns to discuss the frame, this peculiar frame that forms the equivalent to Deleuze's concept of a screen; Lyotard's notion of a libidinal skin; and Golding's use of surfaces.

“Thus it is the finality-without-end that is *said* to be beautiful ... Thus it is the *without* that counts for beauty: neither finality nor end, neither the purpose that it is lacking nor the lack of purpose, but the border in the *without* of the pure cut, the *without* of the finality-without-end.”<sup>52</sup>

Or as Carroll phrases this the without “out of which the frame is made is both the guarantee of the integrity of the inside and the point of passage from the inside to out.”<sup>53</sup>

Derrida places Kant's humanism or placing of man as the subject of aesthetic judgments as one that doubles in being both absent and present. Man is present in occupying a privileged place in nature as the only ideal of beauty and ‘yet absent as an anthropologically defined unity or end in the judgment of pure, free beauty.’ Despite the disinterestedness of aesthetic judgments, theories of history, society, culture and art reappear with the presence of man in nature and as the subject of aesthetic judgments. For man is the only being that Kant grants as being able to determine his/her own ends. As Carroll writes:

“Present and absent, these anthropologically determined theories of society and culture weigh on the frame that excludes them and reappear inside in another form. Exclusion, here, is really a form of displacement; the excluded term does not disappear, but, rather takes on a different form and place “inside” by being forced “outside”.”<sup>54</sup>

In locating and shifting away from the limitations of aesthetic judgments and their basic component of the frame or *parergon*, Derrida turns to the un-

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<sup>51</sup> D. Carroll, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida*, p. 140.

<sup>52</sup> J. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, p. 101.

<sup>53</sup> D. Carroll, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida*, p. 140.

<sup>54</sup> D. Carroll, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida*, p. 141.

boundedness and excessive nature of the sublime. The question of the sublime for Derrida is a question of how to present the unrepresentable, or rather the almost unrepresentable. He writes:

"A concept can be too great, *almost too* great for presentation. *Colossal (kolossalisch)*, therefore, qualifies presentation, the staging or making present, or rather making visible of something that is not a thing because it is a concept. And the presentation of this concept inasmuch as it is not presentable; but not simply unrepresentable: *almost unrepresentable....* How is it possible to conceive, in the presence of a presentation, the holding-oneself-erect-there (Darstellen) of an excess of size that remains only *almost excessive*, on the border of a delimiting trait barely crossed? .... The *almost -too- much* forms the singular originality, with neither border nor simple overflow of border [débordement] of the colossal?"<sup>55</sup>

Derrida reveals how the infinite, the absolute and unboundedness of the sublime can only be measured and set off in terms of a border which it exceeds.

The sublime constitutes for Derrida a difference within the aesthetic, or as J.L. Nancy states, it is "always a distance within the aesthetic or from the aesthetic ... In the sublime, art itself is disturbed, given still another destiny; it has its destiny in some sense outside itself".<sup>56</sup> Carroll comments that the frame of the aesthetic can be said to provide a contradictory role in both separating the aesthetic from the non-aesthetic and opening it up to what it is not. The aesthetic already contains the 'sublime "within in" in the form(lessness) of everything that cannot be contained or given form within its frame, starting with the frame itself."<sup>57</sup>

Rather than providing a resolution for the paradoxes within the placement and displacement of the frame of art, the sublime can be said to drive art and the theory of art outside of the specifically determined aesthetic realm to the non-

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<sup>55</sup> J. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, p. 143.

<sup>56</sup> J. L. Nancy, *L'Offrande Sublime*, pp.76-77.

<sup>57</sup> D. Carroll, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida*, p. 142.

determined dimensions of historical, political and ethical thought. The sublime can be seen as a radical path of approach to ‘working the frame of art and opening the aesthetic up to the paraesthetic elements constituting, and at the same time, deconstituting its specificity.’<sup>58</sup> Derrida defines the sublime not in terms of the absence of a frame but as the movement that passes from one side of the frame to the other. He writes:

"The size of the colossal is neither culture nor nature but at the same time the one and the other. It is, perhaps, between the presentable and the unrepresentable, the passage from one to the other as much as the irreducibility of one and the other: size, border, the boundaries of the cut, what passes and happens, without passing from one to the other."<sup>59</sup>

Derrida's notion of *passage* or *passe-partout* enables him to put forward aesthetic questions as critical rather than for the aestheticists, “when the question of aesthetic specificity is made a means of passage “outside” rather than a blockage “inside”.”<sup>60</sup> Derrida puts forward a *passe-partout* as a:

“...Structure with a moveable base; but although it lets something appear, it does not form a frame in the strict sense, rather a frame within a frame. Without ceasing [that goes without saying] to space itself out, it plays its card or its cardboard *between* the frame, in what is properly speaking its internal edge, and the external edge of what it gives us to see, lets or makes appear in its empty enclosure: the picture, the painting, the figure, the form, the system of strokes [traits] and of colours.”<sup>61</sup>

The passage of a suspended cut, an event, an instant of superimposed layers, an aesthetically full instant, in its spacing and folding; a passage that provides an edge, screen, surface or gesture of its surface. It is this passage that is pornographical, and that at the same time provides the terrifyingly groundless -

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<sup>58</sup> D. Carroll, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida*, p. 143.

<sup>59</sup> J. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, pp. 164-165.

<sup>60</sup> D. Carroll, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida*, p. 143.

<sup>61</sup> J. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, p. 12.

ground of the discursive identity of pornographical. A violence of the 'laying bare' of the surface.

A technē cannot arrive or end at its completion as it allows for anything to become present at all. As a means for relaying and producing information that can give rise to multiple enframings, the technē of an event is a passe-partout, which for pornography is that of comic humour. It is this technē that enables the anesthesia of an aesthetically full instant and provision of its gesture.

## 2. The Ethical Gesture: A History of Mimesis or Rather a Mimetic History.

Mimesis has a complex history one that requires discursive specification at each historical shift of its meaning and theoretical use. As Gebauer and Wulf point out the concept of mimesis has figured prominently in all scholarly fields concerning human thought and action, be it in ideas, speech, writing or reading.

As they comment:

“...A spectrum of meaning has been unfolded over the course of its historical development, including the act of resembling, of presenting the self, and expression as well as mimicry, *imitatio*, representation and nonsensuous similarity. The accent may lie on similarity in sensuous terms, on a nonsensuous correspondence, or on an intentional construction of a correlation. Some writers have emphasized the intermediary character of mimesis; they locate it in medial images, which occupy the space between the inner and outer worlds.”<sup>62</sup>

Gebauer and Wulf provide a condensation of the most important qualities attributed to the concept of mimesis, which have served to establish the breadth of the ground for its theoretical use over time. Their list of four points begins with that of identification of a person or persons with another or others. As they note as a means of identification mimesis establishes a more complex

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<sup>62</sup> G. Gebauer and C. Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture - Art - Society*, translated by D. Reneau. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 1.



relationship of identity; one based on a mental, and imaginative, as well as physical connection. As such mimesis can be distinguished from a practice of mimicry. This usage of mimesis involves a complementary and sensuous adequation in which “people identify themselves by means of their mimetic abilities when they see themselves in the Other and perceive a state of mutual equality.”<sup>63</sup>

Secondly Gebauer and Wulf comment on the dual components of mimesis. It has both active and cognitive aspects and forms a knowledge of practical action. Thirdly is the oral history of mimesis and fourthly that of its written form. Mimesis was originally developed as a gesture of physical action, rather than as a concept in oral cultures. As they point out:

“Even as purely linguistic mimesis, it remains an “indicative speaking”. The pointing is perceived by the recipient such that he or she is called on to see certain things or procedures as something. in this reciprocity lies one component of mimesis, one that renders into a spectacle that which is indicated or represented.”<sup>64</sup>

This physical side to mimesis is its performative aspect, one that is often combined with action-oriented speaking and into the realm of the written form of mimesis. As Gebauer and Wulf suggest the performative aspect of mimesis as “a presentation of what has been mimetically indicated” tends towards condensed symbols and for example rituals and images.

Mimesis can be traced as conceptually bound to freedom; as a means of assimilation or even untruth it resists any clear-cut division between the subject and object as well as what is and what will be. As an impure concept to rational thought mimesis states, as Lacoue- Labarthe defines it, a law of impropriety:

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<sup>63</sup> G. Gebauer and C. Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture - Art - Society*, p. 5.

<sup>64</sup> G. Gebauer and C. Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture - Art - Society*, p. 5.

“In order to do everything, to imitate everything - in order to (re)present or (re)produce everything, in the strongest sense of these terms - one must oneself be nothing, have nothing *proper* to oneself except an “equal aptitude” for all sorts of things, roles, characters, functions, and so on. The paradox states a *law of impropriety*, which is also the very law of mimesis: only the “man without qualities”, the being without properties or specificity, the subjectless subject (absent from himself distracted from himself, deprived of self) is able to present or produce in general.”<sup>65</sup>

A history of the conflicts surrounding mimesis tends to be charted from the philosophical writings of Plato. Pre-Plato mimesis was welded to oral traditions and the re-creation of the actions and utterances of both people and animals. "Characteristics of other beings were re-created in the form of a "do-as-if", woven into music, organized as rhythm, and preformed in public."<sup>66</sup> Plato points out several facets of mimesis: firstly there is the overwhelming of the senses by the recitation, the instance of seduction involved in the practice and the effects employed on the audience.

Alongside these more immediate features of mimesis Plato also remarks on the emergence of the rhapsodist as a pedagogue and whether claims that what is said in these mimetic practices can be judged to be right and true. He finds that mimesis demonstrates a tendency towards proliferation and is apt to go astray from the path of truth and head into a world of illusion and shallow appearances. Consequently mimesis provides simulacrum or false copy and provides no objective basis for either an adequation of truth or a pedagogical competence.

Whilst ghettoising art and aesthetics as mimetic, and therefore false in their immense distance from the divine and eternal Forms, Plato does open up this

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<sup>65</sup> P. Lacoue - Labarthe, *Typography*, translated by C. Fynsk and introduced by J. Derrida. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 259.

<sup>66</sup> G. Gebauer and C. Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture - Art - Society*, translated by D. Reneau, p. 310.

area of aesthetics and make use of its mimetic processes in his re-creation of the Socratic dialogues. Aristotle however transforms such a notion of mimesis into a technical concept that plays an organising principle in artworks. He places both painting and poetry as forms of mimesis. As Malcolm Heath points out in his introduction to *The Poetics* mimesis with Aristotle tends to be translated as either imitation, his preference, or as representation.<sup>67</sup>

Aristotle's technical concept of mimesis can be found as a building block in his philosophical system of thought in terms of the representation of the possible and general.<sup>68</sup> Now the term representation, as Heath notes, does not fully cover the kind of similarity that Aristotle envisioned in his use of mimesis. For example, a symbol on a map can be used to represent an airport but for Aristotle this would not be a mimesis of an airport, for that would entail a scaled outline of its runways and other component parts. It is for this reason that Heath chooses to use imitation rather than representation. With imitation a likeness of melody and rhythm can be created of character and emotion.<sup>69</sup>

Imitation can then be used to more aptly encompass Aristotle's range of mimetic activities from those artistic endeavours of poetry, painting and music alongside other forms of pursuits such as the mimicry of animal noises and other sounds, and not forgetting that of children's play-acting.<sup>70</sup> The pleasure that can be attained from what he regards as a human instinct for mimesis is paramount for Aristotle. Heath asserts that for Aristotle human beings are naturally:

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<sup>67</sup> M. Heath, "Introduction" in Aristotle's *The Poetics*, pp. xii - xiv.

<sup>68</sup> G. Gebauer and C. Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture - Art - Society*, translated by D. Reneau, p. 310.

<sup>69</sup> M. Heath, "Introduction" in Aristotle's *The Poetics*, pp. xii - xiv.

<sup>70</sup> M. Heath, "Introduction" in Aristotle's *The Poetics*, p. xiii and 47a20, and also Aristotle, *The Politics*, translated by T. A. Sinclair. (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 1336a32-34 and 1340a18-23.

"...Prone to engage in the creation of likenesses, and to respond to likenesses with pleasure, and he explains this instinct by reference to their innate desire for knowledge. A likeness is (by definition) a likeness of something; to take part in the activity of making and responding to likenesses we must recognize the relationship between the likeness and its object."<sup>71</sup>

There are no class or intellectual distinctions here as mimesis is rooted in the basic human instincts, and is shared by even the least intellectually sophisticated people.<sup>72</sup> To Aristotle, poetry and painting as mimetic arts are pleasurable expressions of an elementary human desire for knowledge. He looks in depth in *The Poetics* at poetry's development from techniques of primitive improvisation to more complex and sophisticated forms.

A final point to take note of with Aristotle's technical concept of mimesis is that an imitation need not be an exact copy of the object imitated, nor need it be a likeness of an object which actually exists. Imitation is entwined with imaginative play rather than factual documentation of actual events. For example in chapter nine *The Poetics*, Aristotle points out that poems are not necessarily historiographical texts and do not need to conform or remain faithful to actual occurrences. Rather, poetry is like fiction, for Aristotle, and is able to depict what might or would happen, or what is possible in accordance with probability or necessity. It is instinctual, imaginative and strategic play.

Aristotle argues that poetry relies on imitation as part of its medium in its rhythmical language, with or without melodic accompaniment. "The pleasure that human beings take in rhythm and melody makes it natural that their instinct for imitation should be expressed in verse or song."<sup>73</sup> As a more sophisticated

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<sup>71</sup> M. Heath, "Introduction" in Aristotle's *The Poetics*, translated and introduced by M. Heath, pp.xiii.

<sup>72</sup> M. Heath, "Introduction" in Aristotle's *The Poetics*, p.iv.



form of poetry, Aristotle concentrates most of his analysis in *The Poetics* to that of tragedy.<sup>74</sup> He defines a tragedy as poetic imitation in the dramatic mode.

Aristotle places the primacy of a tragic imitation on the plot but also gives credence to its other constituent parts of character and reasoning, or a character's moral disposition and interpretations of his or her actions. Its medium is that of rhythmical language and its further constituents are those of diction and lyric poetry.<sup>75</sup>

Tragedy is a form of imitation that is designed to be acted out on stage, where its action can be seen. In this sense a tragedy includes spectacle rather than performance for Aristotle, as a tragedy is specifically a poem and not a performance. Whether or not a tragedy is performed or whether it is performed well or not does not change that it is and can also be defined as a tragedy. Consequently although a tragedy is potentially performable, its component aspect is that of spectacle or its visibility rather than that of performance.<sup>76</sup>

The route configured by Freud in, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, and the notion of ideational mimetics that he establishes as the means of communicating or expressing the ideational emotional contents of a certain expenditure of energy, will now be looked at in order to provide more detail to the mimetic comportment of the pornographical surface and its rhizomatic 'ana-aesthetic' ethical pleasures of the comic. This thesis is naming 'the pornographical' as a site of paradoxes that is formed through specific

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<sup>73</sup> M. Heath, "Introduction" in Aristotle's *The Poetics*, p. xvi.

<sup>74</sup> Aristotle also writes on the nature of the important ingredients of a good epic but he considers this to be a less developed form of poetic play. Despite promising to look at comedy in the same light, he never really delves into the topic, suggesting to many translators that *The Poetics* is an unfinished or incomplete work. M. Heath, "Introduction" in Aristotle's *The Poetics*, p xviii.

<sup>75</sup> M. Heath, "Introduction" in Aristotle's *The Poetics*, pp xviii - xix.

<sup>76</sup> M. Heath, "Introduction" in Aristotle's *The Poetics*, pp xix - xx.

conjunctures of the relationship between pleasure and the political. This has been suggested as a site that locates, through pornography as an industry, genre, discursive economy, mimetic event, and name and in the 'human' bodily communication of pornographic 'codes'. Aristotle is important to this matter in having laid the foundations for a basis of a different kind of knowledge than that of a pure concept or a logo-centric rationality; one that opens an ethical evaluation rather than a moral standpoint or categorical imperative.

In basing his sense of knowledge and understanding on mimesis, Aristotle observed "imitation is naturally pleasurable to human beings, and explains this with reference to the process of recognition which it involves".<sup>77</sup> In looking at the imitative pleasures and those of *katharsis* that Aristotle pinpoints as characteristics of tragedy, he demonstrates a view of human emotions that are more than irrational impulses and are intimately linked to virtue. Emotions are grounded in and enable 'us' to develop our understanding and knowledge. Aristotle remarks that an emotional response to a situation presupposes an interpretation of it and is open ethical evaluation. He writes in *The*

*Nicomachean Ethics*:

“For example, fear, confidence, desire, anger, pity and in general pleasure and distress can be experienced in greater or lesser degree, and in both cases wrongly. To feel them at the right time, in response to the right things, with regard to right people, for the right reason and in the right way- that is the mean and the optimum, which is the characteristic of virtue.”<sup>78</sup>

Both deficiency and excess of emotion are considered deviant from an ethical ideal.

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<sup>77</sup> M. Heath, "Introduction" in Aristotle's *The Poetics*, p. xxxvi.

<sup>78</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106b18-23, p 40.

Aristotle raises an observation that tragedies "should excite emotions in a way that does not do ethical harm to its audiences".<sup>79</sup> By this Aristotle is referring to the pleasures that *katharsis* induces by purging excess emotions and leaving an audience's emotional state in a more balanced and well-adjusted condition. This is not to say that Aristotle considered the pleasurable relief of *katharsis* to be technically fundamental to or characteristic of tragedies, rather that an ethical and beneficial effect that any tragedy could and should have on some of the members of its audience.

### 2.1 Ideational Mimetics and Economies in Expenditure.

Freud approaches this topic of his research by looking at the peculiar position between jokes and the comic occupied by the naive. He remarks that although the naive, in speech, corresponds with jokes in wording, content and ushering in a misuse of words, pieces of nonsense or pieces of smut, an oddity is produced in that the psychological process in the first person, which produces the joke is completely absent. He writes:

"None of the characteristics of the naive exist except in the apprehension of the person who hears it - a person coincides with the third person in jokes. Moreover the person who produces it does so without any effort. The complicated technique, which in jokes is designed to paralyse the inhibition arising from rational criticism, is absent in him; he does not process this inhibition as yet, so he can produce nonsense and smut directly and without compromise."<sup>80</sup>

In this way the naive can be delimited as a marginal case of jokes, for Freud suggested a condition for the effectiveness of a joke relies on both parties being

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<sup>79</sup> M. Heath, "Introduction" in Aristotle's *The Poetics*, p. xli.

<sup>80</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, pp. 243 - 244.

subject to the same inhibitions and internal resistances.<sup>81</sup> Whereas a condition for the naive is that one person possesses the inhibitions that the other is without. As Freud states, "the apprehension of the naive lies with the person provided with inhibitions, and he alone obtains the yield of pleasure which the naive brings about."<sup>82</sup>

The 'internal kinship' of the naive and jokes is that of a core of verbal pleasure, pleasure from nonsense and pleasure from the lifting of inhibitions or "in the relief of psychical expenditure". However only a portion of the pleasure shaped by the naive can be explained in this way. Freud provides an example of hearing a naive piece of smut in which the listener is spared from feeling indignation through recognising the naivety of the producing person, or through observing that the internal inhibition is absent in he/she. Only then can the listener laugh. Freud states that we laugh in discharging an economy of expenditure that is fashioned from both a lifting of our internal inhibitions and through a process of empathy and comparison between the producing person's psychical state and our own.

It is this extra element of an empathic and comparative process that Freud dubs the spring of comic pleasure. As such he can now summarise his two co-appearing definitions of the naive of naive smut and naive jokes as:

"...A species in the comic in so far as its pleasure springs from the difference in expenditure which arises in trying to understand someone else; and it would approach the joke in being subject to the condition that the expenditure economized in the comparison must be an inhibitory expenditure."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, pp. 204 and 244.

<sup>82</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 244.

<sup>83</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 247.



It is this quantitative difference in the psychical process and economy of expenditure, that if it is not used for some other purpose becomes capable of discharge, Freud locates as specifically pleasure arising from the comic.<sup>84</sup>

Freud argues that the comic evolves from an accidental discovery derived from human relations. It is revealed in the movements, forms, actions, and character traits of people. When the conditions under which a person seems comic are recognisable the comic is capable of being detached from people. He writes:

"...One has it in one's power to make someone else comic opens up the way to an un-dreamt-of yield of comic pleasure and is the origin of a highly developed technique. One can make oneself comic too."<sup>85</sup>

Freud illustrates this with examples of comic methods such as placing oneself or someone else in a comic situation, mimicry, disguise, unmasking, caricature, parody and travesty.

As with Bergson, Freud notes that comic techniques can be used for hostile and aggressive purposes. Both thinkers remark on the social nature of humiliation that forms an underlying tendency of comic humour. This was discussed in greater detail in chapter three of this thesis, *libidinal technologies*. However Freud wishes to delve into the realm of what is spontaneously comic. To do this he begins by looking at the comic of movement as a primitive stage of performance and method of making an audience laugh. He provides the examples of pantomime and the circus clown's act.

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<sup>84</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 247. Strachey points out that Freud's choice of the German word *differenz* is a term used in mathematics for a quantitative rather than a qualitative difference. Freud himself draws upon the works of Jean-Paul and Bergson here. Jean-Paul introduced a notion of psychological contrast gained in comparing someone else's mental processes with one's own as a comic lending and Bergson located one formula for inducing comic pleasure as *a reciprocal interference of series*, whereby "a situation is invariably comic when it belongs simultaneously to two altogether independent series of events and is capable of being interpreted in two entirely different meanings at the same time." H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, p. 90.

<sup>85</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 248.

As Freud remarks what we are laughing at in these examples is an unnecessary expenditure that is too large. A clown's and a child's movements are comic in their extravagance, unintended exaggeration and inexpedience. Indeed Freud locates the branching of from this comic of movement to that of the "comic of bodily shapes and facial features".<sup>86</sup> However what is it that makes 'us' laugh when we recognise a person's or indeed our own movements as exaggerated and inexpedient? It is this extra element of an empathic and comparative process that Freud names the spring of comic pleasure. It is this quantitative difference in the psychological process and economy of expenditure, that arises from comparing on the one hand the psychological expenditure whilst "we are having a certain idea and on the other hand the content of the thing that we are having the idea of."<sup>87</sup> An idea of something large "demands more expenditure than the idea of something small" and because of this Freud suggests that the comparison is based on an idea of large movements that provide a quantitative rather than a qualitative difference.

This comparison of these two things must be measured by a standard, which Freud suggests as one of an expenditure of innervation. As he writes:

"I perceive a movement like this of greater or lesser size in someone else, the surest way to an understanding (an apperception) of it will be for me to carry it out by imitation, and I can then decide from the comparison on which of the movements my expenditure was the greater. **An impulsion of this kind to imitation is undoubtedly present in perceptions of movements.**" (My emphasis)<sup>88</sup>

Instead of actually imitating the movements through our muscles, Freud points out that we tend to use an idea that we already have established of it, or if not

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<sup>86</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 250.

<sup>87</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 250.

<sup>88</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 251.

then we tend to form an idea of it, using our memory-traces of expenditures of similar movements.<sup>89</sup>

Freud suggests that it is in this way that the main expenditure is held back for discharge as "ideation or 'thinking' differs from acting or performing above all in the fact that it displaces far smaller cathectic energies and holds back the main expenditure from discharge".<sup>90</sup> This quantitative factor is given expression in the content of the ideas by the means of "a varying expenditure in a kind of *ideational mimetics*".<sup>91</sup> With the comic of movement a specific movement is perceived and an "impulsion is given to forming an idea of it by means of a certain expenditure of energy."<sup>92</sup> Freud continues his elaboration of this that in trying to understand and apperceive this movement:

"I make a certain expenditure, and in this portion of the mental process I behave exactly as though I were putting myself in the place of the person I was observing. But at the same moment, probably, I bear in mind the aim of this movement, and by my earlier experience enables me to estimate the scale of expenditure required for reaching this aim. In doing so I disregard the person whom I am observing and behave as though I myself wanted to reach the aim of the movement."<sup>93</sup>

These possibilities created by my imagination form a comparison between the observed movement and my own.

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<sup>89</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 251. Freud states that it is the memory of this innervatory expenditure that remains as an integral part of any of our ideas of this movement and at times there will be modes of thinking in which the idea is represented by nothing other than this expenditure. In other circumstances he suggests that this element may be replaced by another such as a visual or verbal image of the aim of the movement.

<sup>90</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 251. The conditions, that Freud raises, governing the discharge of this surplus into one of comic pleasure was looked at in chapters three, supra pp. 126 – 175.

<sup>91</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 252. Freud seems to be in agreement with Aristotle on the organic nature of mimetics and mimesis. He puts forward mimetics as part of the sense organs and innervatory features, allowing for the release of pleasure and differing degrees of tension and intensity.

<sup>92</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 254.

<sup>93</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 254.

When the other person's movement is an exaggerated and extravagant one then my increased expenditure is inhibited in the act of being mobilised. It is free to be discharged elsewhere. As discussed in the previous two chapters if the conditions are favourable, and this is all part of the comic technē, then this surplus expenditure can be discharged as comic pleasure. For pleasure in a comic movement is generated when "an innervatory expenditure which has become an unusable surplus when a comparison is made with a movement of one's own."<sup>94</sup>

Freud takes his theory and investigation further in order to see if other cases of the comic can be treated in the same fashion as the comic of movement.<sup>95</sup> To recap the comic effect, for Freud, depends on the quantitative difference between two cathectic expenditures, one's own and the other person's, or singularly through only one's own mental processes or only empathy of those with someone else, estimated by 'empathy'. It is the comic that can be produced from someone else's intellectual and mental characteristics when the other person has spared him or herself expenditure that is considered indispensable.<sup>96</sup>

Following in this vein of comparison if a person generates too great an expenditure on his or her bodily functions and too little on his or her mental ones then the comic laughter that ensues expresses a pleasurable sense of superiority.<sup>97</sup> However if this relationship of expenditure is reversed and the other person's physical expenditure is discovered to be less than ours or that his

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<sup>94</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 254.

<sup>95</sup> Whilst looking at other examples of comic pleasure and how it can be achieved, Freud remarks on examples of nonsense and stupidity which whilst they can sometimes produce a comic effect, this is not always the case and often instead of comic what is created is contempt and spiteful hatred. S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, pp. 254 - 255.

<sup>96</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 255.

<sup>97</sup> Freud always reminds us of "the fundamental independence of the comic from the feeling of superiority". S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 260.



or her mental expenditure is higher than the well of comic pleasure becomes inhibited and we are left with expressing astonishment and admiration.<sup>98</sup>

When a cathectic comparison is made concerning only the other person and not our own self then the pleasurable difference in cathectic expenditure is brought about by external influences. An example of this would be the comic of situation in which the movements and characteristics of the person involved do not play a governing role for "we laugh even if we have to confess that *we* should have had to do the same in that situation."<sup>99</sup>

In the comic of situation the other person's mental powers are interrupted by the demands of the 'external' world, compromising social conventions, necessities and their own bodily needs. Freud provides an example of someone's mental processes being interrupted by a pain or an excretory need.

He writes:

"...The contrast which, through empathy, offers us the comic difference is that between the high degree of interest taken by him *before* the interruption and the minimal one that he has left over for his mental activity when the interruption has occurred."<sup>100</sup>

The person who offered us this difference becomes comic due to his or her inferiority, which springs not from a comparison this time with oneself, for it is unlikely that I would have acted differently in such a situation, but with his or her earlier self.<sup>101</sup> The other source of comic pleasure arises out of transformations in *our own cathexes* and lies in our relationship with the future;

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<sup>98</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 256.

<sup>99</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 257.

<sup>100</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 257.

<sup>101</sup> It is worthwhile to note that for Freud comic pleasure from a position of inferiority can only come about where there is empathy that is where someone else is concerned. He states: "if we ourselves were in similar straits we should be conscious only of distressing feelings. It is probably only by keeping such feeling away from ourselves that we are able to enjoy pleasure from the difference arising out of a comparison of changing cathexes." S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 257.

with our anticipations and expectant ideas.<sup>102</sup> A quantitatively definite expenditure underlies our ideas, one that increases with expectation and decreases in the event of disappointment. The comic expenditure on expectation, and that of disappointment, is created from an array of components including the expenditure of an ideational mimetics; whether what happens is perceptually greater or smaller than what is expected. Alongside this is the expenditure on tightening my attention; whether what happens is worthy of the interest which I had expended the expectation of its occurrence and in other cases that of the expenditure of abstraction.<sup>103</sup>

This expenditure of an ideational mimetics is mobilised alongside the cathectic energy produced through the body's physical preparation in the case of expectation. Freud provides the example of a body's movements when someone is expecting to catch a ball. He or she puts his or her body into tensions which will enable it to meet the impact of the ball; and if when the ball is caught it turns out to be too light, then his or her superfluous movements make him or her comic to the spectators.<sup>104</sup>

Any of these 'naturally' discovered methods can be and are often used to serve to make things comic. It is a simpler matter to make oneself comic than to make others comic, for example my making oneself clumsy or stupid. The

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<sup>102</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 259. Immanuel Kant defines laughter as "affection arising from a strained expectation being suddenly reduced to nothing." See I. Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, translated by J. C Meredith. (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1952), Part I, Section I, 54, p 199. Freud dismissively mentions Theodor Lipps' reworking of this in basing his thoughts on the origin of comic pleasure "quite generally from expectation". See S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, translated and edited by J. Strachey, p 259 and T. Lipps, *Komik and Humour*. (Hamburg and Leipzig, 1898), 50ff.

<sup>103</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 259.

<sup>104</sup> Freud remarks that expenditures of abstraction can be "traced back to that of large and small, since what is more interesting, more sublime and even more abstract are only special cases, with particular qualities, of what is larger". Again Freud remarks on Theodor Lipps' work on the derivations of comic pleasure to that of a quantitative rather than a qualitative contrast. S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, pp. 257 - 259.

principal method for making other people comic is by placing them in a situation whereby they become comic through their human dependence on external and social events.<sup>105</sup> The comic situation may be a real one in the sense of a practical joke, for example tripping someone up or placing a bucket of water on top of an ajar door; or it may be stimulated by speech and play, for example an attempt to convince someone of something nonsensical. He writes:

"The aggressiveness, to which making a person comic usually ministers, is much assisted by the fact that the comic pleasure is independent of the reality of the comic situation, so that everyone is in fact exposed, without any defence, to being made comic."<sup>106</sup>

Mimicry, caricature, parody and travesty are other techniques of making things comic. Mimicry provides "extraordinary pleasure to the hearer" and its arts can make almost any object comic.<sup>107</sup> The pornographical draws upon these different methods of inducing comic pleasure, and often the stars and performers of pornography mimic many a politician or celebrity, or indeed a whole well known film, book, story or plot- formula, in order to create the intimacy and relaxation of laughter and consequently the emotional distance to be 'turned on'.

Caricature, unmasking, parody and travesty are even easier ways to make someone, even oneself comic, especially when directed "against people and objects which lay claim to authority and respect, which in are in some sense *sublime*" or socially exalted.<sup>108</sup> With a caricature one's speech and mannerisms

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<sup>105</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 260.

<sup>106</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 260.

<sup>107</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 261.

<sup>108</sup> Strachey notes that the English translation for the German word, *erhaben*, in aesthetics is sublime. Where necessary, in the case of people, he has used the word exalted instead. S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 261.

are exaggerated and become larger than life, therefore the sublime here "is something large in the figurative, physical sense"; "somatically large" and represented by an increased expenditure.<sup>109</sup> To this increased expenditure corresponds a difference of innervation in one's ideational mimetics brought about through a comparison between the ideational states, and able to be discharged in comic pleasure and laughter.<sup>110</sup> Freud writes that caricatures create degradation by emphasizing in the impression:

"...Given by the exalted object a single trait which is comic in itself but was bound to be overlooked so long as it was perceivable in the general picture. By isolating this, a comic effect can be attained which extends our memory over the whole object. This is subject to the condition that the actual presence of the exalted object does not keep us in a reverential attitude."<sup>111</sup>

Even if a particular comic trait does not in fact exist to be embellished then a falsification of a caricature trait does not lessen the comic effect or pleasure produced. Alternatively the techniques of parody and travesty operate in a manner that creates degradation. He writes:

"...By destroying the unity that exists between people's characters as we know them and their speeches and actions, by replacing either the exalted figures or their utterances by inferior ones."<sup>112</sup>

Whilst operating differently from the method of caricature, all three processes share the same mechanism of their production of comic pleasure; as does the means of unmasking. However unmasking applies as a method "when someone

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<sup>109</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 261.

<sup>110</sup> Freud provides the examples of the increased expenditure induced when entering into a formal meeting or presentation with someone in a socially exalted or dignified position, such as a monarch or prince of science. Such an occasion requires that a person place himself or herself under a solemn restraint. A similar comparison is achieved in the reverse situation whereby rather than the usual and habitual attitude of restraint one is unexpectedly allowed to relax. Both of these allow for a ideational comparison that can be discharged by comic laughter. S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, pp.261 - 262.

<sup>111</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 262.

<sup>112</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 262.



has seized dignity and authority by deception and these have to be taken from him in reality."<sup>113</sup>

Such procedures for degrading the dignity and social standing of specific members of the public, works by "directing attention to the frailties which they share with all humanity, but in particular the dependence of their mental functions on bodily needs."<sup>114</sup> With unmasking, parody and travesty are numerous means of disclosing the "monotonous psychical automatism that lies behind the wealth and apparent freedom of psychical functions".<sup>115</sup> Mimicry is entwined with that of caricature and often involves techniques of degradation, but we also laugh at the "*faithfulness* of a piece of mimicry", again the uncovering of a physical automatism. Here Bergson and Freud are in agreement, in that "everything in a living person that makes one think of an inanimate mechanism has a comic effect."<sup>116</sup>

Bergson extends this further by writing that "what is living should never, according to our expectation, be repeated exactly the same. When we find such a repetition we always suspect some mechanism lying behind the living thing".<sup>117</sup> In short Bergson attributes the comic effects of mimicry to both the divergence of the living to the inanimate and the degradation involved in this comparison. For Freud such a comparison is brought about through an expenditure of expectation, this is not only the case for comic mimicry but also

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<sup>113</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 262.

<sup>114</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 263. In this way even people with a lofty position of public admiration are pointed out to be only human just like you or me. Marie-Antoinette was an early popular figure in pornographic unmaskings as recently was Bill Clinton. Many celebrities have found themselves to be the target of a bodily unmasking in many a porn magazine, comic video romp and the internet if rife with possible naked celebrity photos and sex tapes that they did not want you to see.

<sup>115</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 264.

<sup>116</sup> H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, pp. 32-39.

<sup>117</sup> H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, p. 35, and S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 271.

for those cases that Bergson considers to be of comic rigidity, "of professional customs, fixed ideas, and turns of speech repeated on every possible occasion."<sup>118</sup>

All of these cases provide a comic comparison between "the expenditure on expectation and the expenditure actually required for an understanding of something that has remained the same, and the larger amount needed for expectation would be based on observation of the multiplicity and plasticity of living things."<sup>119</sup> As a source of comic pleasure, mimicry arises from a comparative expenditure of expectation, rather than one of situation. In defining comic pleasure as arising from economies in expenditure of ideation (upon cathexis), Freud picks up on Bergson's notion that the comic effects of automatism can be traced to the recollected pleasures of children's toys, such as a jack-in-the-box. Bergson ponders that perhaps "we too often fail to recognize how much of childishness, so to speak, there still is in most of our joyful emotions."<sup>120</sup> Remember that for Bergson comedy is a game that imitates life and produces something mechanical in something living.

Freud argues that it is not simply recollected pleasure of one's childhood that yields the comic variations, inversions and repetitions, but a comparison of comic difference and expenditure between a child's behaviour and one's own.

He writes:

"...The excessive expenditure on movement as well as the small intellectual expenditure, the domination of the mental functions by the bodily ones, and other features. A child only produces a comic effect on

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<sup>118</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 271.

<sup>119</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, pp. 271 - 272.

<sup>120</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 287 and H. Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, p. 64.

us, when he conducts himself not as a child but as a serious adult, and he produces it then in the same way as other people disguise themselves."<sup>121</sup>

This, as Freud points out, is not so much gaining "the 'comic' feeling for the lost one", but rather the laughter that arises is applicable to "the comparison between the adult's ego and the child's ego."<sup>122</sup>

There is no uniformity to a comic comparison and its involved expenditure and to reiterate, the conditions governing the discharge of a comic expenditure and its surplus cathexis are not those of a conscious attitude or any comportment that would ensue the release of distressing affects. Whatever isolates a psychical act encourages the discharge of comic pleasure and this tends to occur only when the cathexis is preconscious. The production of comic pleasure must "lack the cathexis of attention to which consciousness is linked" and "may aptly be given the name of 'automatic'. The process of comparing expenditures must remain automatic if it is to produce comic pleasure."<sup>123</sup>

In relying on the role of ideational mimetics for the comparative and automatic expenditures of comic pleasure, Freud emphasises the importance of imagination and day-dreaming, rather than solely either the unconscious or conceptual processes. Comic pleasure in this way can be distinguished from its counterparts of jokes, which are related to the realm of the unconscious and arise from an economy of expenditure upon inhibition, and humour, which despite also being automatic and preconscious materialises from an economy in expenditure upon feeling, those distressingly emotional expenditures that are so perilous to a comic effect.

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<sup>121</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 287.

<sup>122</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 289.

<sup>123</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 284.

Freud's work on the nature and operations of the ego and its relationship to the dimensions of the human psyche, the id and superego, have opened up questions around the very possibilities of self-identity and awareness. However it is through humour that Freud sketches out a way in which the harshness of the superego's role and the ego's relationship to its ideal can be softened and aided in its growth.<sup>124</sup> All three expenditures of raising laughter; those of humour, jokes and comic pleasure, are discursively formed and as such culturally specific according to each particular epoch. Jokes can provide a culture or discursive community with an outlet for inhibitions and repressions; whilst comic pleasure can offer a mimetic expression of a cultural ideation of cathexis and provide the release of sexual energy and a bodily intimacy.<sup>125</sup>

With a technē of comic pleasure pornography as a discourse, or discursive economy generates a proliferation of a series of its meanings, and the entwining relationships of its own history, combined with other discourses of the specific time period and their various dimensions, as a code, a pornographic cultural code. Such a code generates not just through a physical mimetics but that of an ideational mimetics that communicates and expresses the ideational and emotional contents of a certain expenditure of energy, that is the expression of specific conjunctions of pleasure to the political and the discursive economies present, and presenting. The pornographical can never offer the whole reality of pleasure, or even capture its own whole physical or pleasurable reality.

Produced as a technological event of sexual pleasure it can only be fantasy, it can never be more than for any pornographer, whether as a viewer, or a

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<sup>124</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, pp. 296 - 300.

<sup>125</sup> S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, pp. 239- 302. This differs from Carl Jung's concept of a universal collective unconscious, containing universal archetypes and fixed symbols, rather than the fluidity of repressed wishes, disappointments, traumas and desires. See C. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, 1912 and *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 1963.



producer, or a star (or an actress/actor), or a combination of all of these roles/positions. This technological distance does not deny, but rather requires participation from the viewers, and offers them different vantage points and strategies of viewing - fast-forward, pause, rewind or converse, edit, copy, paste, cut, sample and so on. This is part of pornography's dialogue or discursive economy.

Whether intentional or not the professed aim or hope and effect of pornography is to sexually excite its audiences.<sup>126</sup> This is no simple thing. Pornography entails a very practical application of data compression. It is a complex operation that packages sexual arousal and transmits this information across a wide variety of technological mediums. To participate in is always to create pornography, to dabble in 'porn speak', to insert, mutate and repeat in its discursive economy. Pornography can only ever offer a glimpse, a slice of a fantasy sex- reality, never the wholeness of the industry. Pornography, as well as sexuality, is an invention, an ongoing discursive invention, rather than an essence or an eternal fixed truth. It transmits through its coded meaning bodily techniques and sexual practice specific to every epoch and culture.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Sontag compares this to 'aim to excite' demonstrated by the literary genre of pornography and its usages of sexual obsessions, to that of the literary subject of religious obsessions. She writes that when compared to this subject then "the familiar fact of pornography's definite, aggressive impact upon its readers looks somewhat different. Its celebrated intention of sexually stimulating readers is really a species of proselytizing. Pornography that is serious literature aims to "excite" in the same way that books which render an extreme form of religious experience aim to "convert". S. Sontag, "The Pornographic Imagination" in Georges Bataille's *Story of the Eye*, pp. 94 - 95.

<sup>127</sup> Marcel Mauss was one of the first thinkers to put forward bodily techniques as a "technology without an instrument." See M. Mauss, "Techniques of the Body" (1935), translated by Ben Brewster in *Economy and Society*, 2, 1 (1973), pp. 70- 88. Michel Foucault's work on technologies of the self follows in this vein. See M. Foucault, *Technologies of the Self; Discipline and Punish* and the three volumes of *A History of Sexuality*.

**CONCLUSION:**

*Privacies and Practices:*

*Virtual Privacy, New Technologies and Democratic Practices.*

1. Micro-Ethics of Virtual Indeterminacy: An Importance of Bodies.

This thesis is offering the specific conjuncture between pleasure and the ethico-political, that pornography names, as ‘the pornographical’. In this way, pornography, as an industry, discourse and genre is manifested, in the particular epoch and cultural aspects of it’s relationship to pleasure and to the ethico-political, whilst the politics of these dynamics, the mannerisms and dynamics of a pornographic code, is not subsumed or contained to this one genre, subordinating all other genres.<sup>1</sup>

‘The pornographical’ is a site of degrees of paradoxes; a site that locates, through pornography as an industry, genre, name and in the ‘human’ bodily communication of pornographic codes, degrees of social taboos; fetishes; fantasies; sexual, gender and racial identities; repressions; oppressions; prohibitions and proprieties that are central to a sexual and political account of the forces meshed in the social and cultural networks that serve to constitute reality. G. Deleuze’s reworking of Leibniz expresses an event as a fold, one that puts forward a dimensionless point as a site of difference. The fold makes possible the fusion and interconnectedness of a crossing or meeting point as the primary material for an idea of continuous space, but in doing so destroys any such spatial smoothness. As Deleuze writes:

“A fold is always folded within a fold, like a cavern in a cavern. The unit of matter, the smallest element of the labyrinth, is the fold, not the point which is never a part, but a simple extremity of the line.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pornography is not something that just people in the industry produce. Through the impact of technology many lovers and acquaintances make pornography in their memories, videos, photos and web pages.

With such a philosophy, there are no points or moments that are enclosed unto themselves; they are not reduced to a relationship of equivalence established through their difference to other points or forces. Each is nothing other than a quantitative difference from related moments, forces or points and any continuity is littered with immanent wraps and pleats:

“The irrational number implies the descent of a circular arc on the straight line of rational points, and expresses the latter as a false infinity, a simple indefinite that includes that includes an infinity of lacunae; that is why the continuous is a labyrinth that cannot be represented by a straight line. The straight line has to be intermingled with curves.”<sup>3</sup>

The fold is a dispersion that does not extend anywhere. It is a "leap which would not amount to throwing oneself *elsewhere* (as if another world would open up) but rather leaping in place. Folding, leaping in place, and thus distorting or displacing the ground (the foundation, or its un-founding)."<sup>4</sup>

As Deleuze states:

"The arc of a circle resembles a branch of inflection, an element of the labyrinth, that from an irrational number, at the meeting of the curved and straight lines, produces a point-fold.....there will always be an inflection that makes a fold from variation, and brings the fold or the variation to infinity."<sup>5</sup>

In place of the Euclidean conception, the fold is a repetitive inflection, one that is not a return to self but rather one that always relates to difference.

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<sup>2</sup> G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> J-L., Nancy, "The Deleuzian Fold in Thought" in P. Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*. (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 109.

<sup>5</sup> G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, p. 18.

The fold is power and force is an act of the fold. The art of pornography is one of folding, accomplished through its technē of comic humour. The object here is not essentialising, it becomes an event, and it is manneristic.<sup>6</sup>

“Moving from the branch of inflection, we distinguish a point that is no longer what runs along inflection, nor is it the point of inflection itself; it is the one in which the lines perpendicular to tangents meet in a state of variation. It is not exactly a point but a place, a position, a site, a “linear focus”, a line emanating from lines. To the degree it represents variation or inflection, it can be called *point of view*.”<sup>7</sup>

There is no pre-given or defined subject here rather the subject becomes what comes to be the point of view or rather what remains in the point of view.

Every point of view is a point of view on variation.<sup>8</sup>

Deleuze moves from inflection to inclusion:

"What is folded is the included, the inherent. It can be stated that what is folded is only virtual and currently exists only in an envelope, in something that envelops it."<sup>9</sup>

To move from the virtual to the real the fold must become a site of focus, to become extended in the body, the body that occupies the point of view on variation. Deleuze states that there must be a body.<sup>10</sup> The body is a requirement for a clear zone of expression, for what ‘I’ clearly express is what happens to ‘my’ body.<sup>11</sup>

The question remains is one of how is the virtual actualised or to put it another way how are the folds unfolded? Deleuze often presents actualisation

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<sup>6</sup> G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>7</sup> G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, pp. 19 -20.

<sup>9</sup> G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, p. 85.

<sup>11</sup> G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, p. 99.



in terms of problem and solution. The virtual is an open, problematic structure of singularities, which sets the transcendental horizon of its actualisations and solutions. Solutions, in turn, never do away with the problematic that gives them meaning, and the latter inheres within them as what generates, exceeds and subverts them.<sup>12</sup>

Sometimes Deleuze portrays actualisation as a dramatization.<sup>13</sup> The actual is a simulation, or a copy without an original, or a coming into being whose origin is constituted as an effect of its movement. The recipe for actualisation is the disjunctive synthesis; the unfolding of folds is itself a macro-fold. If a 'thing', understood as a formed unity, is constituted through the interrelation of heterogeneous forces, then the organisational principle of things is exactly that which relates this plurality through an irreducible difference, that of the virtual. This confuses any understanding of actuality based upon resemblance, correspondence, identity or representation.

Actualisation is, then, a contraction, of microscopic, virtual singularities, which is not continuous with the virtual. The virtual inheres within this actual dispersion as that which constitutes it and into which it dissolves. The relation between virtual and actual is in no way one of negation or opposition. The virtual in no way lacks actuality; nor is the actual an incomplete structure

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<sup>12</sup> See G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, translated by Paul Patton. (London: The Athlone Press, 1994), pp. 216-221. Deleuze looks at the structural elements of the Marxism of Althusser in particular, in commenting on the previous understanding developed by structuralist theories of the time, of virtual multiplicities posed in terms of problems, ideas and structures. In this way, both economically and linguistically, society can be seen as composed of "purely formal elements defined by the reciprocal relations between their component elements. In the case of language, the ultimate signifying units or phonemes are defined by their reciprocal relations to other phonemes. It is the structure of these relations, prior to their actualisation in a given series of sounds or inscriptions, which defines a given language." P. Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*. (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 37.

<sup>13</sup> See G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 168-221 and G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, pp. 52-57.

understood in terms of identity: "the unfolded surface is never the opposite of the fold, but rather the movement that goes from some to the others."<sup>14</sup>

Deleuze provides the example of the embryological egg for the process of actualisation and the implied inherent prior ideal and relational structure embedded in its genetic structure.<sup>15</sup> The process of actualisation is always a means of differentiation for Deleuze. Differentiation is the practice by which ideas become actualised in spatio-temporal events and states of affairs; the agents of which are spatio-temporal intensities or dynamisms that are internal to any given fields of ideational or material intensity.<sup>16</sup> As Patton remarks:

"This account of the relation between virtual structures and spatio-temporal events and states of affairs is the means by which Deleuze circumvents the philosophy of representations: bodies and states of affairs do not resemble the structures or ideal events of which they are the expression. in this sense, he argues, 'actualisation or differentiation is always a genuine creation'".<sup>17</sup>

In looking at the works of Henri Bergson, Deleuze emphasises his equal treatment of pure memory, duration and the *élan vital* as virtual realities, which implies a method of actualisation or differentiation. He puts forward that the "characteristic of virtuality is to exist in such a way that it is actualised by being differentiated and is forced to differentiate itself, to create its lines of differentiation in order to be actualised."<sup>18</sup>

Bergson's notion of memory is drawn upon here, in that pure being to Bergson is "a recollection that is pure, virtual and impassive, inactive *in itself*."

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<sup>14</sup> G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, p. 93.

<sup>15</sup> G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 214.

<sup>16</sup> P. Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> P. Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, p. 38 and also see G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 212.

<sup>18</sup> G. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 97.

"<sup>19</sup> The creative movement of actualisation or differentiation from the past unity of memory to the present multiplicity takes place only in duration.<sup>20</sup> With Bergson it is duration that differs with itself and matter that repeats itself. Pure duration presents an internal multiplicity or difference in kind, one that is a virtual and continuous multiplicity. *Élan vital* is a "case of a virtuality in the process of being actualised, a simplicity in the process of differentiating, a totality in the process of dividing. Proceeding "by dissociation and division, by 'dichotomy', is the essence of life."<sup>21</sup>

Lyotard would dub this the "paradox of the immemorial". As Lyotard writes:

"...Past located at this side of the forgotten, much closer to the present moment than any past, at the same time that it is incapable of being solicited by voluntary and conscious memory - a past Deleuze says that is not past but always there."<sup>22</sup>

As previously discussed in chapter two of this thesis, Bergson and Deleuze base the process of differentiation of this paradox of the immemorial, on the relationship between the actual and the virtual rather than the couplet of the possible and the real.

Deleuze comments that whilst "the real is the image and likeness of the possible that it realises, the actual, on the other hand does *not* resemble the virtuality that it embodies."<sup>23</sup> The difference between the virtual and the actual

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<sup>19</sup> G. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 71 and also see M. Hardt, *An Apprenticeship in Philosophy: Gilles Deleuze*, p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> M. Hardt, *An Apprenticeship in Philosophy: Gilles Deleuze*, pp. 16- 17.

<sup>21</sup> G. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 94.

<sup>22</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews"*, p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> G. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 97.

is what requires the process of differentiation or actualisation is a creation.<sup>24</sup>

There are differences between the virtual point of departure and the actual outcome and the various lines along which actualisation can take place.

Without a preformed order or blueprint to dictate its form, the actualisation creates an original arrangement or multiplicity of organisation that is always indeterminate. "Without the blueprint of order, the creative process of organisation is always an art."<sup>25</sup>

The creative process is formed through a *technē*, which provides something's art and stylistics. In moving away from paradigms of the divergence between essence and appearance, into which pornography is always placed, this thesis is analysing the pornographical as a name; an event; a dynamical movement and a discursive economy. There is no essence to the pornographical, nor is there any essence to the viewers; regulators; protesters; stars; directors; producers; actors and actresses that participate in and create the pornographical surface.

The pornographical gathers its name and identity as an event, as a system and an rhizomatic economy that is 'ana-linguistic' through the drawing movement and point of fascination. Its sexual meaning is a series of non-coincidental events that are gathered through this shifting relationship between an outside law and its own, anonymous, indeterminate meaning. In this way the pornographical gathers itself, its name, through the effects of the discursive systems and in doing so simultaneously re-gathers on itself and asserts its own

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<sup>24</sup> M. Hardt, *An Apprenticeship in Philosophy: Gilles Deleuze*, p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> M. Hardt, *An Apprenticeship in Philosophy: Gilles Deleuze*, p 18.



presence. Ethics are produced in this mimetic process and this process itself is ethical.

The ethical indeterminacy of the common noun, pornography, is not being raised or posited as a metaphor; a symbol; an allegory: or as a substitute and ‘stand-in’ for something else. The pornographical is a multi-dimensional name, a paradoxical singularity, a discursive economy rather than a void, lack, castration, negation, or empty signifier.<sup>26</sup> As a singularity that is multiple, pornography cannot be reduced to either a lack of or to one fixed starting point; it is not pre-figurative. The actuality of the common noun is one of a “virtual”<sup>27</sup> dynamics. In this sense a virtual reality is not an outside or an ‘inbetween’, rather it is a reality, a stimulus. Gilles Deleuze’s conceptions of a virtual event is being drawn upon here since they allow for an event to be non-recuperable, un-localisable and untimely in providing a contour for actual relations of difference.

Pornography, as a virtual dynamics, moves in terms of a paradox, a rhythmic movement that is paradoxically in excess of itself exactly when it is a mimetic copy of this movement, of these moves. Virtual dynamics is the post-modern language term for the installation and flux of a mimetic copy. A mimetic copy is the residue created in this movement; a virtual actuality; a simulacrum; a prehension or a non-sequential series of these elements. It is in this sensuous, shifting dynamics that pornography, as an event, functions in

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<sup>26</sup> Pornography can be seen to be an empty signifier, but I feel that this allows for a misconception of pornography, rather this thesis is approaching pornography as both a series of strong signifiers and of empty signifiers. E. Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso Books, 1996), pp. 36-46.

<sup>27</sup> Gilles Deleuze develops his conception of a virtual presence in many of his solo works and in his collaborations with Felix Guattari. Primarily three of his works will be drawn upon in demonstrating the dynamics of the virtual. G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and The Baroque*; G. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, and G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*.

installing its own legitimisations, in its relationship between itself [as movement and as residue] and an outside law [viewers, regulation, political interpretation].

If pornography constitutes the possibilities of representation, it is the presenting of its own re-presentations of itself as a virtual actuality. In Deleuzian terms the pornographical, as a surface, structures itself as a rhythmic movement of dispersion, one that is a passage from a virtual field of forces into actual relations of difference. Actualisation is a creative process of dispersion irreducible to the virtual itself, so that the virtual remains heterogeneous. In this way the virtual also differs from the possible. The realisation of the possible is rather a process of resemblance. Realisation is a coming into existence, and existence is understood to resemble the possible that it realises.<sup>28</sup>

The virtual operates as an immanent causality; with the telos being permanently dispersed, one that is not transcendent and cannot be abstracted from its actualisations. It rather inheres within them as something different. There is nothing prior to the actualisations of a virtual event, either temporally or logically. As a concentration of heterogeneous forces, a virtual event can only be subsequently ascribed to the actual relations as that which fix the residue of their positions. Hence, within the dynamics a residue can form a ground, originality and referentiality according to varying degrees of permeability. The ground of an event cannot be called into being prior to what it grounds, the durability of which is a question of the impact of these concentration of forces and their differing dispersions and repetitions.

A virtual actuality or event remains indeterminate and infinite, after the specificities of its occurrence. Its movement of eternal differentiation assures

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<sup>28</sup> G. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, pp. 51-72 and p. 97; and Deleuze, Gilles, *The Fold: Leibniz and The Baroque*, pp. 105-120.

non-closure of a virtual presence; one that does not correspond to or resemble the actuality it underlies. One can move from virtual forces to an actual state of affairs, but “if we go back up in the opposite direction, from states of affairs to the virtual, the line is not the same because it is not the same virtual.”<sup>29</sup> The process of realisation is guided according of a structure of mimesis as imitation; and is consequently judged through frameworks of resemblance and limitation. The process of actualisation, breaks and re-invents a structure of mimesis as a repeating movement of creative differentiation; one that is not limited by or that involves a copying of the ideal in the real. The truth of a name is not reducible to an operation of adequation.

A virtual presence does not have an existence or a reality added to it; there is no ideal image or form for it to resemble.<sup>30</sup> For the virtual to become actual, it must create its own terms of actualisation. It is precisely because a virtual event operates as an economy that it ends up creating the texture and terms of its own actualisation. This occurs in the relationality of a singular event, as a concentration of heterogeneous forces, and in the rhythms of its dynamical movement of gathering and dispersion. This movement of an event simultaneously actualises an exact copy that remains as a residue of its relationality and movement, and at the same time exceeds itself; disperses itself in an infinite flux as a movement in space-time occurs. For Deleuze, the virtual must create its own terms of actualisation, since the actual does not resemble the virtuality that it embodies.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> G. Deleuze, and F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 156.

<sup>30</sup> G. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 97.

<sup>31</sup> G. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 97.

The reality of the body is the realisation of the virtual actualisation of the mimetic movement in the body. Bodies are important in the world, a requirement to be in the world; a requirement for both appearance and essence and, as this thesis is moving away from such a paradigm, for the realisation and embodiment of the virtual actualisation of the mimetic movements in a body and other bodies. The relationships that bodies have in the world to the political are as a discursive necessity, ethical. In this way the ethics of the pornographical are about what a body, bodies can do through techniques of fantasy sex and fantasy sexual identities.<sup>32</sup>

So far, this concluding chapter has looked at how a concept of a virtual event and its rhythmic mimetic movements are crucial for an understanding of the noun pornography as having meaning, a discursive meaning that is installed in a non-dialectical, non-essentialist, and non-universalistic manner. This different methodological approach of a discursive economy contours and textures a constitutive meaning as both real and virtual; produces a surface of meaning according to the movement of its economy as an event; a kind of 'a priori' which does not bring in universal moralisms and an all encompassing universal notion of ethics, but one that also refuses to step outside of the political terrain of ethics. This methodological approach elicits a micro-ethics, an array of indeterminate and malleable trajectories of an ethical 'ought' from a singular, paradoxical instance, of an event, of a surface.

The discursive economies of pornography name a specific and paradoxical relationship between pleasure and the ethico-political.<sup>33</sup> The pornographical is

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<sup>32</sup> G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 257.

<sup>33</sup> The relationship of the ethico-political is about founding meaning without presenting an essence.



a paradoxical industry, discursive economy, and genre; the name and common noun pornography is compiled of complex layers of paradoxical meanings that are and are installed in the discursive movement of a pornographic code that is both virtual and real. Pornography's discourse articulates many different series of paradoxes; its discourse is intertwined, through the specific configurations of its relationality, with other discourses, for example, those of mysogony; class; racisms and homophobia.

'The pornographical' is a site of degrees of paradoxes; a site that locates, through pornography as an industry, genre, name and in the 'human' bodily communication of pornographic codes, degrees of social taboos; fetishes; fantasies; sexual, gender and racial identities; repressions; oppressions; prohibitions and proprieties that are central to a sexual and political account of the forces meshed in the social and cultural networks that serve to constitute reality.

Pornography is being looked at within this thesis in terms of an excessive mimetic movement, as a paradoxical event, one that is impossible to capture at the moment when it is fully itself. Traditional notions of time as a linear progression of cause and effect, of an immanent causality and space as a distance between subjects and objects, are insufficient for discussing the paradoxical movement that enables two or more objects to occupy the same space-time. Whilst a mimetic copy or residue of pornography is localised in a particular space and time it is nonetheless also somewhere and sometime else, and, yet this other space and time stands at no distance to the localised here and now of a mimetic residue, rather it is gathered or folded into it, into them, through its being used in the world, through human bodily communication.

If the excessive mimetic movement of pornography as a virtual event, a name of and a paradoxical discourse and industry is best expressed in the form of the infinitive verb, 'to pornograph', then in this expression of the name and discourse, the referent, the common noun of pornography, that of the event captured 'drops out' and is replaced or substituted by the adjective form, a substantial instance of self-referentiality, whilst at the same time remaining related to the noun, the adjective, 'pornographic', becomes part of the noun's, 'pornography', self-referentiality, part of the event of the noun. In this way meaning is added to the common noun and discursive name of 'pornography' in the excessive mimetic movement and mutation of the adjective, 'pornographic'.

What is being alluded to here is that pornography, as a name of an industry, a discourse and a movement/rhythms simultaneously produces its meaning, and has its meaning produced in terms of strategies of substitution. What is substituted in this texturing process, of pornography's discursive economy, is layers of overlapping adjectives of self-referentiality. The meaning of the event of the name, pornography, is complied through dimensional layers of adjectives. It is in this way that a pornographic code is set up and depending on the varying degrees of permeability of meanings installed by the movement of the virtual event of pornography, how the name, the pornographical, and its related pornographic code is multiplied and 'massified'. In this way, the paradoxical community of 'the pornographical' is one that both exists and does not exist, it is both private and public, (or private in its virtual state) in naming a peculiar cultural 'memory space' or psyche of fantasy sexual identities.

It is the libidinal technè of pornography's comic humour that both forms and is formed in what Deleuze would call the folding through or folding across of an instant. For Derrida this is a passe-partout; for Lyotard a paradox of the immemorial or lost time; and for Deleuze a perplication or cross-folding.<sup>34</sup>

These introduce a creative distantiation into the midst of things. Such a disparation is the distance holding apart a space “that opens in it the chance of a “complex” repetition (not restricted to the imitation of a given model, origin, or end) or a “free” difference or divergence (not subordinated to fixed analogies or categorical identities).”<sup>35</sup> Therefore, perplings provide a trace of the diagonal lines in a fabric that cut across it so as to fold it again. They can be defined as the weaving together of a multiplicity that gives a groundless depth of an intensive space in the extensive one that includes or frames it.

Rajchman marks out perplings as:

“... The foldings that expose an extensive multiple complexity in the fabric of things rather than a contradictory framed one; they unearth “within “a space the complications that take the space “outside” of itself, or its frame, and fold it again.”<sup>36</sup>

Deleuze dubs the depth of such groundless complexities virtual. Disparations are always virtualities in space for Deleuze; they provide a kind of chance for free self-complication. Rajchman suggests the intensity of a disparation as a kind of nondynamic energy, in that the virtual-actual couplet cannot be reduced to either a *dynamis* or an *energeia*, for this would allow for the meaning to be trimmed to the unity of a pre-given set of origins and ends. Virtuality occurs in the intervals of things as actuality springs from the midst. He writes:

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<sup>34</sup> G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 324 - 330 and 359 - 360.

<sup>35</sup> J. Rajchman, *Constructions*. (London: The MIT Press, 1997), p. 18.

<sup>36</sup> J. Rajchman, *Constructions*, p. 18.

“Thus the virtual space that a line of actuality exposes in a fabric is not at all a possibility or a design to be integrally realized within a fixed frame, but rather the movement of a question that opens onto new uncharted directions.”<sup>37</sup>

As such Rajchman suggests that periplications, or times and timings that hold a space apart are not the re-instantiation of eternal and ideal Forms nor the continuation of traditional customs, “but the “untimely” moments that redistribute what has gone before while opening up what may yet come”.<sup>38</sup> I would like to proffer that the periplications of pornography as an event, allow such untimely moments to redistribute what has gone before while opening up what may yet come. Periplications are mimetic and it is the mimetic rhythms and movement of an event that make it real, or the process by which it is realised.

This thesis is situated across the fields of contemporary political philosophy, critical theory and feminist/gender studies. It argues that the notion of an ‘ana-aesthetic’ is required in order to provide a fuller sense of the conceptual nuances regarding pornography and its ‘peculiar mix’ of corrosiveness, comedy, cruelty, fascination, fear, and, rather coldly: data compression. As is explained at the outset of *The Pornographical: An Ethics of Mimetic Bodies*, the ‘ana-aesthetic’ becomes both the ground and surface economy for this ‘unsayable something’, this ‘peculiar mix’ so much a part of the everyday common senses of contemporary life and art. Distinct from the ‘anti-aesthetic’, the ‘ana-aesthetic’ utilises a discursive methodology, which provides the conceptual tools to highlight the complexities of ethics, aesthetics,

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<sup>37</sup> J. Rajchman, *Constructions*, p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> J. Rajchman, *Constructions*, p. 19. This also references to Nietzsche’s work *Untimely Mediations*.



identity, as well as sexual and sensuous play often over-looked in most scholarship on pornography. In sidestepping the usual moral traps found in attempts to analyse sexually explicit and often misogynistic pornographies, this thesis consequently shows how the ‘ana-aesthetic’ surface of ‘the pornographical’ generates a mimetic and bodily ethics. This is its most original contribution.

‘The pornographical’ is discussed in terms of its *technē* of comic humour, as a way of creating substance without lapsing into abyssal logics or lack; and the manner in which sexual meaning of fantasy is pleasurable, forming compressed data. The comic is suggested as something that is found, a cultural ‘ready-made’ gesture, of pleasure, produced through an economic expenditure of ideational mimetics (upon cathexis). This thesis suggests that through the comic, ‘the pornographical’ creates mimetic economies of witnessing. *The Pornographical: An Ethics of Mimetic Bodies*, offers ‘the pornographical’ as an ‘ana-aesthetic’, an ethico-political surface that is not merely counter-cultural but is culture itself.

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