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IN DEFENSE OF BESSIE SMITH

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I want to begin as Susan will with my definition of pornography, <sup>② what it is not + ③</sup> ~~but~~ end this section with an exercise that I believe will point to some of the difficulties in reaching a shared verdict of wherein lies the problem:

1) Pornography is the <sup>visual (media)</sup> representation of sexual practices. All cultures, from the paleolithic to r and b have forms of sexual representation. The commercially produced variant in the dominant form in our culture, but there are subcultures which have long produced images. (gay male)

2) Commercial porn shares some elements with other commercially produced media. (here is where there is a feminist consensus of sorts):

- a) big profits: constantly on the move for new markets
- b) sexist values permeate much of it: extreme variant includes violence vs women and children
- c) men control the industry (mostly)
- d) reinforces (as do ads, news, etc. existing power relations)--it even finds new and amazing ways to express these

50% in Canada  
type # dominant porn genre

leaving consensus →

e) AS WELL: like all media <sup>PORN</sup> is produced, that is humanly constructed and therefore changeable; like all media it is not reality BUT A FANTASY about reality. There are some specific features to porn that distinguish it from other media:

PROB = REALITY

1) It represents a highly regulated and suppressed area of our society: an area that has been regulated by state and church to guarantee the continuation of monogamous marriage, class rule and patriarchal power: a system of dualisms where sexuality outside of the prescribed arena and forms is punishable. ~~the~~ <sup>This ads to</sup> the illicit allure of porn and thus also the ongoing interest of church and state in regulation. The illicit quality (illegal) makes it harder for workers in the industry to exercise rights.

2) SCOPOPHILIA: PLEASURE IN LOOKING--historically constructed to empower the male viewer and pleasure him,

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but in that process women also can find pleasure...nothing inherently male or female (or limited to porn) in pleasure at looking.

≠ II) 1)

But is there something especially ~~harmful~~<sup>dangerous</sup> about sexuality for women and by extension sexual images, as Catherine MacKinnon suggests: "The substantive principle governing the authentic politics of women's personal lives is pervasive powerlessness to men, expressed and constituted daily as sexuality." Are women perpetual victims within an immutable and entrenched sexual system, or is sex like every other arena of our lives (economic oppression and power, political etc.) an arena of struggle--an arena also represented in our conflicted sexual fantasies and experiences???

Is sex so dangerous that we cannot

~~have~~ speak to our own sexuality and conflict?

I know women--and they are hardly the colonized sort--who look at porn, seeking some semblance of their own desire, as well as information. If we define visual pleasure as a male construct we do a disservice to many women who are seeking sexual power.

2)

~~the~~ In that sense wary of concept of "harm". No question that some men include porn in their repertoire of means to humiliate and harm women. <sup>But</sup> Some researches suggest a strong predisposition to violence. ~~Not a~~ textbook for rape. conflicting social science data: some researchers such as <sup>Thelma</sup> McCormick's survey and the Fraser Committee's were unable to substantiate "harm". Cultural studies critique "monkey see monkey do" findings in favour of critical distance and fantasy as FUNCTION--e.g. Burnaby teens. In using social studies to build case for law BEWARE--read all the research not just behaviorists (US).

EXAMPLE:

Ask yourself about fantasies / reality - media resp. + action -

STRATEGY: *customs officers + bros/sisters*

1) Asking ~~lawyers~~ <sup>framework! the law</sup> to look skeptically at what is your <sup>govt/law</sup> major tool: ~~the law~~. Suggest that the state in Canada is anything but neutral on sexual issues, rather profoundly patriarchal--legal reforms are a battleground between the state and social movements. Question to me is whether reforms strengthen the power of the state or weaken it--assume that in women's interests to weaken patriarchal apparatus. Suggest that censorship laws strengthen the most oppressive aspects of the state: its enforcement bodies: police, customs, judiciary; these laws strengthen control over sexuality (women's!); strengthen ability to suppress dissident sexual practices. WHO HAVE BEEN THE VICTIMS OF THESE LAWS? Not commercial porn but artists, lesbians, gays, feminists.

90 hrs history

CANADA CUSTOMS: new regs. 1984--partly in response to sakura (Japanese bondage display) in Penthouse); primary use in vs gay material--anal sex in any form and safe sex materials (sentences deleted). Protest: can be safe sex but not advocate pleasure! Little sisters: \$20000; Glad Day; Lesbian images.

ONT. FILM AND VIDEO REVIEW BOARD: Countless suppression of artists' works: In the Dark; John Greyson, British Feminists, equipment seized, Not A Love Story; Working Girls cut--ask: its endless and continuing. OAC opposes at last. And B.C. feminists and REAL women instrumental in implementing a similar process in B.C. (Laurie Meekers TAKE BACK THE NIGHT) restricted "terrorism"

- A Message From Our Sponsor
- NALS
- Poetry in Motion -24 can. poets
- Born In Flames
- Framed Youth
- Polkadots + Moonbeams
- The way we Are
- In the Dark
- Kipling Tribay /

CRIMINAL CODE: Woomers Trial: "disgusting objects"; vibrators: 5 old guys sitting around in a room getting all freaked out about being refundant so they define a vibrator as a "periodical" so it can be banned!

Process of law: defense of self, work (quit assumed) - years; \$

THE NEW LAW: The baby of feminist redrafting: makes lactation and menstruation illegal to represent; no penetration of anything or kind; no masturbation; or "any other form..." will be reintroduced soon in another form.

OBSCENITY  
(NOW PORN)

- egs. of vulnerable
- Loyalties
- My US Cousin
- Smooth Talking

CIVIL ORDINANCE

(Could begin Pt. II) (3)

NWL CONFERENCE: In Defense of Bessie Smith

WHAT IS PORNOGRAPHY? EXERCISE

1) A man follows two women through a department store while they try on make-up and chat. He wears a mask. One of the women leaves her friend at her house: we see the man lurking in the bushes. It is night: the man enters the houses and attacks the woman. He overpowers her--he rips her clothes. We are certain that she will be raped. Suddenly a hot ring out. The man crumples to the ground in slow motion, again and again. The woman's friend enters--she has killed him. The women drag his body into the kitchen--they take out knives--The women are seated at a table. they are naked--they are eating something and toasting each other with blood red wine. The women bring bags of garbage out to a garbage truck and throw them on--it drives away, they wave. FEMINIST REVENGE FANTASY OR NECRPHILIA CULT PORN (BOTH?) TO WHOM IS THE IMAGE HARMFUL?

CECELIA CONDIT SOMEWHERE IN MICHIGAN.

2) Two women are in a bedroom. One lies on the bed, with her robe open--we can see her genitals through the open garment. The other woman, with robe closed stands above her looking at her, towelling her hair.

ERIC FISCHER (ART REPRODUCING SEXIST DISPLAY OR AFFECTIONATE PORTRAYAL OF SISTERS/LOVERS?)

3) The man and woman roll over again and again, changing positions, changing acts, but each position and act taking them deeper and deeper into sex--they cover the spectrum: penetration, mutual masturbation, cunnilingus, fellatio--STEELE AND TOMSZAK IN THE DARK.

(STANDARD HET, PORN OR "EROTICA": A FOR WANTON DEGRADATION

Examples represent works that are by artists <sup>these</sup> are contentious in their reading <sup>these are</sup> works that contradict existing censorship laws, works that above all represent sexuality. → DEFINITIONS OF THE PORNOGRAPHIC ARE INFUSED WITH WHAT IS OFFENSIVE TO ONE PERSON MY EMPOWER ANOTHER: ~~NOT~~ SUBJECTIVITY.

three examples are all works by artists that are highly contested in their meanings by audiences and censors.

specific concept

media literacy

- Maurica: - ≠ despair
- written in greys - film censorship - life in cheese - cheese industries
- ignorance - censors: truth make you flee }  
hide it -
- All Quiet on the Western Front - anti-war film - Banned -
- Vietnam - illusions of militarism -
- reality at odds → censorship -
- if best world - uncontrolled exchange -

like speeding limits  
drinking while you drive

Regulation: set + enforce  
censorship practices →

integrity of work - genres lit. / art →  
vital area of imagination

protection  
of who

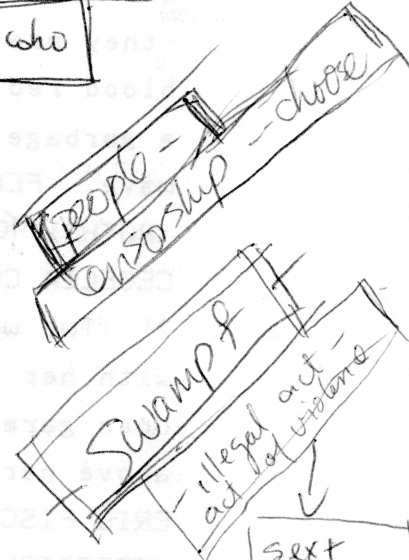
death + mortality  
let it stay secure

summing

protect children - train for world -

CLASSIFICATION AGENCIES

- don't assume adults are children -
- don't treat whole popul. = children -



- who will do the censoring - ABUSE by those who do it -
- cliques created w/ political power = suppression -
- work to advantage

SOCIAL REGULATION - what censored + who - belligerent →

Institutions: critique

education → media literacy -

needs  
Natural  
Rapists  
Killers

Freedom from  
Censorship

Discourse  
manipulates

censorship  
barrier

Man as fallen species  
what of f.