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Dear Sara,

Here is a copy of the interview. I'm sorry it took so long to get to you. I have since interviewed Varda, Susan Cole and will be speaking with Jillian Riddington later this week. I really want to thank you for your time and input, it was very helpful.

I've set the end of September as a target for thesis completion and I'll mail a copy off to you then. Please let me know if you would like to see it before it is finalized as I most probably will be using direct quotes from your interview. You can reach me at home at 254-8511.

I hope all is well with you, thanks again,

Alison Hearn.

Alison Hearn
254 8511

INTERVIEW WITH SARA DIAMOND --MAY, 1986, VANCOUVER, B.C.

A: How did you first get involved with fsm?

S: Well, I guess on a formal organized level I was first interested in fsm when I was very young, about 16 or 17 in Toronto, when the women's movement first started in an organized form. And I used to go to the Toronto Women's Centre which was a house on Dupont. I used to, I dropped out of high school when I was 16, and I was in the peculiar position of going out to high schools and talking to teenagers about gender and women's liberation and all of those issues. I'd go with other people, that was a very exciting time.

A: Did you have a specific political persuasion at that time?

S: Oh, just anarchistic youth probably because it was a time when there were big anti-war mobilizations in Toronto and all of that, and I used to hang out with the draft resisters community to some extent. But what did happen at that time that did have an impact on me, there were a number of things in my life that were important, one was there was a debate going on even at that time within fsm about the relationship between fsm and socialism, and that debate was happening at the centre. I sat in on those meetings and found them very relevant, already at that time. I was also working because I had to support myself, as a clerical worker which I did for quite a few years of my life and my experience in the world was quite different from alot of the women around me who came either from very alternate lifestyle situations, like I lived in one but I didn't work in one, that's for sure, or from middle class families, and so the issues that were being raised around class as an issue, they just rang true for me. By the time I was around 18 I was involved in a group that was only around for a short time. It was a working women's group. We did organizing work with clerical workers in the downtown area and we used to do little plays and theatre and cultural stuff and show films and have speaks and quite a number of women used to come to that and after a while I left town and it faded away but it was a very exciting experiment for me.

A: At the time that you got involved did you have a clear idea in your mind about a specific goal for fsm? Or was that a nebulous thing at the time?

S: Well, some of that was fairly nebulous because I think it was just, I was experiencing such upheaval in my own personal life because, well you just do in that period of your life, my own battles with my family and personal identity and all that. But in part because of some of those debates and in part because of just my own concerns I did see the formation of some kind of really different society, a socialist society, and I did endorse the idea of some kind of massive social change. It was really hard for me, even as a really young person, to see this society being reformed somehow. I rejected those politics very early, and partly because I had been involved with trying to start a free school when I was a kid, I was precocious, and then part of that school being turned over to the Board of Education and seeing it get institutionalized. So that really had a big impact on me. I think the other area that was of concern to me were issues of sexuality and that was another place that I was very confused because I had had some experiences of lesbian desire in my life already. I was mostly heterosexual and alot of the women around me at the time were part of the radical feminist current. I liked those women but I reacted against them because I felt that the kind of images that they were portraying were very stereotyped images too and yet they were talking so ardently about stereotyping. I always liked to dress up and be very flamboyant and, you know, I just didn't want to have to conform to what I perceived to be a fairly male visual identity in order to be acceptable to the fsm community.

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A: So you felt the contradictions then?

S: Yes, but I was very intrigued by lesbianism and probably by 18 started to define myself as bisexual and always did after that point, not that I was very active as a bisexual, I was very heterosexual. But I was always very interested in it, and at a later point in my life became involved with women.

A: I'm trying to pin you on the goal, did you think revolution?

S: Yes, I did absolutely, I thought about revolutionary change. I also thought about change in the way that gender identity was formed, and in fact I found diaries when I was 17 that I was keeping where I was really struggling with that whole issue of masculinity and femininity and not wanting to have to endorse either in terms of who I was. I wanted to see some kind of transformation there, and I'd say that those two factors, economic and social change and the issue of really transforming gender identity are still things that are important to me, I haven't changed that much.

A: When did you first get involved with the issue of porn, what was that experience?

S: Can I just go back? I think that there's a really important stage in there in terms of what happened because there's a process in Canada where a lot of women, fsts, joined left organizations and I was a person who did that. So I think it's important to mention that because certainly a few of the other women who I suppose have the anti-censorship position have come out of the left, others don't. So I became a Marxist and joined the Revolutionary Marxist group and the Revolutionary Workers League, both of which were Trotskyist sort of Neo-Trotskyist organizations and I was very involved there for about five years. That really taught me a lot. It made me very rebellious against authority structures, I should say that, because I left quite disillusioned and angry about Leninism and its various ways of operating, having tried to conform to that. It also made me, inside the organization I was very very involved with making a fight for a much stronger fsm and the integration of fsm with Marxism on a theoretical basis and with the integration of the gay and lesbian liberation theories with those other two currents. I was part of a formal current inside the organization. We all left at the same time and many of us are still in touch, people like Gary Kinsman and Varda, she was really part of the fst mainstream leadership in the organization.

A: Are those sentiments still strong in you now? Is that still a desire on your part, to see the integration?

S: Yes, you mean on a theoretical level?, yes absolutely. I think I was really bathed in the theories at that time, I really read a lot and thought a lot and tried to struggle with the incredible conflict, like the project that I thought would work which was to be part of Revolutionary group that did have some ideology and conscience about ideology of sexism really broke down, and I really tried to deal with what is consciousness in North America? How do people perceive themselves? How does ideology function? How does the media control or not control? How do you make social change happen within, you know, a system that isn't an authoritarian system, well it is, but not overtly. These are still issues that are really important to me and were at the time. So that was really formative. I should also say that we were also linked with an international current of people in England and Holland and so on who were writing and dealing with some of the same issues, and in France. So it wasn't just a little thing happening in the isolation of Canada, the strength of that current was that it did have the view that you could look at international

theory. So I read Foucault, I read all that stuff that alot of other people would say, excepting the intellectual community, well that's not relevant.

A: So at the time and now, you wouldn't put one before the other, you wouldn't put, say your fsm before your socialism?

S: No, because they're very integrated.

A: So when did the issue of porn first become relevant to you?

S: It's been important at various stages of my life. I lived with a man who was very fascinated by various kinds of, I guess, sex trade issues. He used to go to porn movies, he used to read pornography. He used to go to strip shows and that kind of stuff, and I was pretty pissed off about that and I went throught quite a struggle with him around talking about some of those things, and then I actually began to go to some of the movies and that wasn't because he pushed me into it. I have to say that although I absolutely agree that some women are pushed into that position. I found the experience very contradictory, because, this was like the Story of O and Emmanuel and that, there were images there that I responded to sexually and I found interesting, but I did find alot of the material very degrading and the position of women in the images really negative. That was a long long time ago, and that was something I was thinking about then, and then I forgot about it until I became much more involved with being an artist and a video artist and interested in my own censorship process. This was before the debate emèrged, I thought about stuff I wanted to do and how was I going to represent sexuality and explicitness and have those discussions with people just in terms of our own work , well I was more in the student position.

Then what happened was, well the situation in Ontario happened and that's what drew me into it. There was another stage where when I was still in the left I wrote a paper on rape and it was very important actually because it was the first time that the organization that I was in had dealt with violence against women as a political issue, women in the organization demanded that it was more than a personal issue, and that the organization act against men who were batterers and they actually started to. And that brought me into the issue of porn. And way back then I had problems with the kind of behaviourism in some of the arguments. So then it became an issue in terms of censorship, and in part because I thought what was happening in Ontario was terrible I began to really think about well, what is this whole thing about anyhow? And then I really started to think about it and read about it and I was already in some ways also reacting toward some of the radical fst theory because, well I just had tremendous problems with it. I mean I didn't have problems with their anger against men and their behaviour, I still don't, I have alot of that myself. But I really had problems with the 'rape is the practice, porn is the theory' thing. Like I started to, I didn't maybe six or seven years ago. In fact I did a poster based on that, but at some point it just really started to break down for me. It didn't ring true anymore and I really wanted to think about why doesn't this make sense in my own head.

A: Could you tell me about how you got so embroiled in the issue because you seem to be pretty central?

S: Yeah, well it spiraled from there because I started to really think about it and read about it. SO I started to read Laura Lederer and the Take Back the Night Collection and that kind of thing, and the more I read the more uncomfortable I was and the more I felt afraid about what some of the implications were of what some of these women were saying in terms of my own sexuality and my work as an image-maker. I also had been doing therapy for about 2 years and got, because of that, much more interested in Freud, who I'd always rejected, and the Neo-Freudian Fst work, so I've actually been sort of consuming that . But also on the personal level I was just really attuned to my own

contradictions around sexuality and my own behaviour versus the ideals that I wanted in my life and my relationships. I guess all of that just began to churn around in my head at some point and then what gave it form was that I was asked to write something for Parallelogramme which is an artist magazine on the issue of the porn debate. Oh, sorry before that there was the Red Hot Video pickets and by the time that was happening I was already uncomfortable, with the direction the anti-porn movement was going in. I remember having these big fights with friends offine about whether, you know, the bombings were really a great strategy and I was uncomfortable with the bombings and I felt really weird being uncomfortable with that. And I was going on the picket lines and I was uncomfortable being on the picket lines only to the extent that I didn't like the slogans. They were calling for state intervention, I was uncomfortable around that. I remember trying to generate all these sex positive slogans for us to shout as an alternative. I was really uncomfortable that there were nearly almost violent confrontations with men going in there and some women going in there. I just felt like that's not the way to deal with this issue. The men going in were being addressed like they were rapists. Having lived with a guy who had been into porn in a fairly serious way but had been a fabulous really sensitive lover and also we didn't have an abusive relationship, I just felt like there was a problem there.

Anyway, o.k. all of this together lead I guess to me writing this peice were I spent I guess around six weeks, I just wrote it and wrote it andrewrote it and struggled with my positions and thought it out and reread stuff and looked at some of the hate literature debate and some of the problems there and came out of it, I went into it ambiguous, I have to say that on the role of the law I read everything that had been written on that, and I came out anti-censorship. And I came out with quite a different analysis than some of the radical fsts, certainly Jillian Riddington's writing and it surprised me in some ways, because I went through all that stuff and read it but it was just churning around in my head what finally came out. The one thing I felt somewhat open toward was the use of the Dworkin/MacKinnon solution and I was still somewhat open toward some form of hate literature wording as a remedy, something like that. So at one point I was in Toronto with Varda. It's interesting because Varda and I weren't working together on this stuff, it was sort of happening simultaneously. She was doing her work there and I was doing my work here and we weren't even really reading each other. And then at some point I was in Toronto and we exchanged all this stuff and it was really exciting. We had come to really similar conclusions from very different places for example she's not an artist and I am. I guess what we centered on was different but the conclusions were similar, and then we started to actually talk about the legal issues because we both felt very uncomfortable not having a legal remedy. We'd always had, at least at one level of what we thought of as solutions were legal remedies and it made sense because it does represent societies attitudes towards women and away of infringing on the bourgeois patriarchal state and all that kind of stuff. But around this issue, I got into this whole sort of thing that Gramsci talks about of the balance of power as represented within class struggle and the law. And what seemed to me was that there was no way that the law would tip the balance of power in favor of women, that it could only be used to strengthen the state, ^{UCVA} Even hate literature laws around women, tome, because of the wording, it would be around gender or sex, and that it would still leave things very open to fundamentalism and I thought even to men in attacking critical work and images again, and it still came down to what's the problem with the images? And on the Dworkin/MacKinnon stuff, the more I read the wording I became uncomfortable with the ambiguity in the wording and some of the assumptions around heterosexuality itself being the problem and penetration.

A: Had you read at that time MacKinnon's articles on Marxism and Fsm and if so do you think that that might have effected your perception of the ordinance?
S: Yes I had, but no, I mean I had some agreement with some of what she had to say there. But what I didn't agree with is, there's a formulation in her writing that's really critical that's sees sex and sexual structures as being the pivotal point of oppression for women and the goes on ~~the~~ define consciousness-raising as being the form of radicalization for fsm and as being central for women in combining the personal and the political. And that's great for some women probably in the U.S. and some women in Canada, and perhaps for some women who come through the particular axis of victimization around sexuality and violence. But I was already teaching in the Labour Studies program, I'd already been involved with union stuff for years, and I've been with alot of working class women and that's not how they radicalize. They radicalized around equal pay or issues that were mass issues and in the process their personal lives got discussed and they began to question, or they didn't, they kept their marriages together and they fought for more equality with the men in their lives. I thought what those women were doing was fine and her statement ~~to~~ me became a kind of indictment in fact of the radicalization of other sectors of women, that made me uncomfortable. But when I read her stuff, I didn't pay alot of attention to it, what I did pay attention to and it was later on was the Dworkin/MacKinnon amendment itself and information that I could get my hands on of how it was being put into place in the States and the issue in the States that was very important and was very important in England was the alliance between the right and sectors of the fst community. That was something that I just felt really uncomfortable with.

A: In my perception of what's going on, and I have to say that I still feel fairly ambiguous, is that I think it is a definitional struggle, a struggle over words. How would you define porn?

S: Well I think I did that in the article I wrote for Women Against Censorship because that's what I was struggling with there. I guess I could just leave that and suggest that you refer to that.

A: O.K. well I have read that and I've also read Mariana Valverde's book, and she discusses both sexuality and pornography as being process not thing and I felt that that was a very crucial point. Would you agree with her position on this?

S: Actually no, I didn't totally agree with it. I thought that some of those points were important ones and that she looks alot at context, of the use of images and I think that's very important as an artist certainly and in the way I would describe pornography and look at it. But I think that the weakness of what she does is that she doesn't look at porn from the point of view of women who use porn as some form of erotic release or for a search for their own eroticism and what she does very well is look at how porn is destructive to women who look at it and how it's difficult and makes us feel bad, and then talks about how to counteract that. Which is fine but I think that one of the problems with this issue is that the issue of fst morality always kicks in and that's in fact where there's increasingly being a big fight, I would say. Does fsm have the right to define some ethics? In a way I say yes it should but does that become a morality? At what point are they general principles of what we want versus a kind of moral code that makes it very difficult in fact for women to continue to explore the areas that are in conflict in their lives. So I think what she does in looking at porn is that she looks at the area of

conflict that's the place of pain and difficulty but she doesn't look at the point of conflict that's the place of sexual experience. I just don't find it dialectical enough. So then what you're left with in doing that is the kind of liberationists who tend to be involved with the women involved with the s/m stuff or defending them, where anything goes as long as it's an exploration...

A: Although she does offer a critique of them..

S: But I'm saying that if you reject, in a way what she does, although she does that part well, then what are you left with? I think it's really important, and what I've tried to do in part of that article is to say it's a sort of dialectical thing, where we might respond to the images, that that's not necessarily all bad, that may have to do with the repression of female desire and that desire beginning to come through and our struggle for forming who we are as sexual beings and the importance of that process. But images themselves have many components and that some of those components perhaps are quite neutral or perhaps have to do with sexuality itself and how it's formed and, like to say that there's a lot of different layers of what's happening in the porn image. I guess my tendency is to try and balance those layers and to say that women read those images in ways that are positive-negative positive-negative and that we have to separate where we respond and where that's o.k. and where we feel shitty and where it's o.k. to feel shitty.

A: So in that formulation would you say that it's up to women collectively to try and do that?

S: Yes but also with a lot of space for an individual process and that's why I've become really uncomfortable with the way the debate's turned and the kind of assumptions written into, I think, some of the radical feminist stuff. There's a kind of assumption that women in general and certainly feminists do not use these images, do not have any kind of relationship to it, and if they do then they're either victims or, well they really don't exist.

A: Something that's always struck me and made me angry is that there's this constant focus on the effect of porn on men and therefore the effects of men on women so that women are these punching bags that get battered around with no consciousness of their own and no ability to determine their fate. Also something that you've mentioned is that they tend to read through the image, they don't consider it as a social construction at all and I think that's the strength of your argument.

S: Yes, well I guess what I'm trying to say is that I think Mariana makes some really good points but I don't think she takes some of them far enough. I do know women who use porn. I respond to sexual images, not so much to mainstream porn because I find it boring. I respond to people making love. There's been a study recently in the States about women who are actually consuming video porn. It's something I would actually like to research more and look at. I'm wondering if maybe women find moving images, because it's more process oriented more easy to respond to than photography which I find very, all my bias coming out as an artist, you know, dead, frozen, still, static, and so you have to read so much onto it and impose so much onto it. Whereas with the moving image you also can do that but it's potentially got a lot of interest in the process happening for women. It's interesting to note these new women porn companies in the States producing all this video stuff.

A: You've been talking about how you think that porn can be a potentially validating thing or useful thing for women ..

S: Some elements I think of porn, like I think the fact that there are sexually explicit representations and that in porn women are at least allowed to be sexual in a society which suppresses female sexuality as a natural active thing can be. Porn has actually really changed, like porn in the 60s was alot more about that than it is now. So I think that there's a reason why women look at the stuff and I just, increasingly in my life do not buy the argument that everyone who isn't a feminist is out there being compelled to do things by men. Women don't endorse feminism as an ideology for all kinds of reasons and some of it has to do with that it will control their life more than liberate it. So for some reason women are looking toward those images and I think it has to do with women really seeking sexual power.

A: Do you still feel, though, that porn contributes something to people's perceptions of women?

S: Oh I do. O.K. so on one hand I think there's that area and on the other hand I think we're bombarded with really really sexist media images constantly and porn is consistently one of the worst. So it's not like it's neutral and I think what it does is that it does really reinforce attitudes toward women and also toward sex. Like some porn is very anti-sex cause there's so much punishment and moral retribution built into being sexual for the men as well as for the women that it reinforces all those virgin/whore kinds of attitudes and sexuality is bad kind of attitudes and so on. So obviously I think that's an area where there has to be alot of change and alot of work and I think that some pornography is particularly atrocious because it does give form to really violent fantasies and those fantasies come out of somewhere. For some men, it would be interesting to do this kind of study too, to look at how many of the men who act out, quote unquote fantasies they see in porno actually have a history of battering or rape or whatever, but I think for those men porn acts as a kind of formal reinforcer of 'this is how you do what you want to do'. But you can't legislate for that group, you have to deal with the general social impact and to me it's a social impact that's both negative and reinforcing and also positive in allowing some space for sexual representation. So we have to work with that contradiction.

A: What would be some alternatives to state regulation?

S: O.K. I still think that there's a really valid place for community action and I say that with some concern because you don't have control over who the community is and I think what feminists have to do is go into that process of organizing with a very clear political agenda about what their demands are. And I think that that would really apply to places that were selling violent, gross, really a certain kind of imagery, as an educational campaign, to say why is this material here, more like a kind of propaganda action actually. There's a group in the States, I can't remember their name. but they do great stuff. They actually do, like fashion shows with ripped up porn magazines. They're more performance artists actually than anti-porn crusaders. They're very anti-morality and they do all these great actions in cigar stores and book stores that sell violent porn, that are very humorous and very consciousness raising, and they get alot of media coverage. That's the kind of thing that I think we should be moving towards, stuff that has an educational impact. So on the level of organizing I think there's still alot of work that needs to be done. The other area of organizing that I think is really important is to fight for resources for women to make images, and not only explicit sexual images but images, I mean on one hand you need to not have censorship laws in place so that women don't get hit by the law when they're producing stuff, but you also need to have the support within the feminist community for women to produce material. So that a film like *Entre Nous* let's say, or *My Beautiful Laundrette*, I mean both those films deal with sexuality within a context

and it's really within a narrative that has very little to do with sex but has everything to do with sex. I think that that kind of stuff when it's skillfully done really starts to redefine how we look at sexuality and desire. I also think there's a place for material that's explicit and women haven't really been doing that. Lisa Steele has in Canada and she's one of the few that has the guts to actually do that in the same media that porn uses. I think we have to do more of that, and I think that we have to find ways of marketing it and making it available because I think that we have to compete on the level of ideas and images and really fight to do that. A number of governments in Canada are saying now that they see the film and video industry as being the growing industries, certainly on the West Coast. I wish that we organize fsts to put more energy into fighting for some of that money to go to women even a percentage or something rather than censorship laws.

A: How do you feel about people like Candida Royale ex-porn star now a porn producer? What are your impressions about that kind of attempt? She really feels that she's making videos for women?

S: I think they're quite interesting and in fact we're trying to get some of her stuff into Canada because you know I have problems with women going, well with the whole commercial industry. But I also think that it's quite neat that she's trying to intervene here and from what I understand about some of her work, and this is from some people in the States and they're people who aren't into the various sexual subcultures and stuff, but that her work is really interesting for women. It's very funny, she really does try and empower women within it. It's worth looking at that attempt and there's also more peripheral stuff happening in San Fransisco dealing with lesbian images that is also supposed to be very interesting work. I think it's important and I think that one thing that video artists have tried to do is to get some of their work into more commercial venues and into the homemarket. I think that's viable and that's part of why we don't really want to see a law that says that art spaces are protected but the commercial venues are prohibited.

A: So you feel it's possible to develop alternatives to mainstream porn and that it's important to do that?

S: It's one area. I also think it's really important to fight for sex education. I was really encouraged to hear that the B.C. Nurses Union at their convention one of their major resolutions is that they're demanding that the B.C. government implement sex education in the B.C. school system. B.C.T.F. has been fighting for that for years. I think one thing that those of us who have this position could do is work more closely with those people and see how we could facilitate that process.

A: Have you then totally abandoned the idea of any kind of legislation around this issue?

S: Yes. Part of me might consider an option like the Dworkin/MacKinnon thing if it were correctly worded, but I think that is unlikely.

A: Ann Scales, who spoke at the Law and Society Conference, seemed to construct a good argument that the ordinance wouldn't be subject to the 'slippery slope' if it were adopted. What do you think?

S: Well, obviously I don't agree with that. That's what I find quite strange in the B.C. context. Given Canadian past practice around images, it's like I don't understand how you could look at Canada custom legislation and what they do and what they have been doing and then say that you can put a law in place and that it won't be used within the same kind of framework and that the other laws that exist won't be used in part to interpret that law. I think what would happen

in Canada, this is something that I heard from other people at the conference, is that what the lobbying in B.C. is more about is not trying to get a kind of civil remedy because it doesn't exist in Canada, but actually trying to have it written into provincial law that would be administered somehow by the A.G. department except that we just want to make sure the wording is o.k.. So to me immediately is like, oh my god so what's being posed is Brian Smith has his legislation and the fst community has theirs and we'll just battle it out and maybe he'll include some of that wording into the legislation and so on..

A: How would you define sexuality?

S: I guess I see sexuality as being the socially constructed, fantasy and acting out of desire, and in that it being a really important component of people's identities, in the 20th century. I guess I believe that there are basic biological needs and desires that people have, but those are totally socially determined, that isn't a 'natural' state. I guess I think that people have physical desires that they experience but that it's shaped from birth into particular forms. Actually one thing I have done which I did when I was in university is I did a major paper on the history of sexuality and sexual formation. It was on early societies Greece and early Christianity, sort of comparison, I looked at the formation of desire through the impact of judaeo-christianity. It was very interesting, I learned alot, and that was before I had ever read Foucault or any of the more recent stuff, but through it I realized that people were really different in the way that they acted out desire and in the way they defined sexuality and the importance of sexuality. That really effected my understanding. I guess there are components of it that are consistent because patriarchy has been a consistent factor.

A: So you reject any kind of essentialism ?

S: Yes, although I understand why it's comforting and I have taken comfort in it myself. Like saying 'men, well of course, of course they're going to be hung up around this'. And I like to think I more nurturing than most men I know, that appeals to me.

A: Well if sexuality is thoroughly a social construction, then who or what constructs it?

S: Well this is again where there's issues about the balance of power, so to speak. Have you read Jeffrey Weeks' book? It's quite good. He and others, like Foucault, present the notion that there's the state and the various factors, for example in the 19th and 20th centuries psychiatry and the study of the mind, and deviance, economic and social conditions, all construct it but that people are not passively constructed in that there's a very, very important role for the different layers where we exist and interact as individuals and as parts of communities in asserting our own power and our own desire within that. So we are socialized but we also have the ability to think and act consciously. We're not slaves to our conditioning to our socialization. People do make choices within the limits that are there for them, and some of those choices are to organize resistance and to consciously try and take power in forming, not just sexuality, but in all parts of our lives. So the whole development of the fst movement and the gay and lesbian movement, I think, have been really crucial in acting on society to change norms. It's not just individuals lifestyles but to actually have an impact back into the way sexuality is constructed. I think within fsm it's interesting to see that there's really different (ways) in how women see sexuality and I see that as being partly a result of people's conditioning and their socialization and their class positions and their actual real world experiences around sexuality and around violence and so on. But one sort of position doesn't make the other position wrong, especially around sexuality.

A: So it's basically your position that there can be no value judgements placed on sexual practices

S: Yes, although I think you can say that some forms of behaviour are destructive.

A: Well if you can say that, what's the criteria for deciding that?

S: I think that, and this is something I'm still thinking about, is partly the issue of consent and that can be a real red herring with women who don't have power in their lives. But to me, in terms of violent behaviour, the issue I see there is where men act out real violence against real women, that's physically destructive or psychologically destructive. This is part of the power structure and the reinforcement of the power structure. I think the repression of strikes is destructive in my morality, and they're very similar. So when groups that have power in this society act out that power in violent and destructive ways I don't think that's acceptable. We see images of that all the time but that's a different thing.

A: Having just read an interview with Susan Cole in Fuse magazine and speaking of this, what would be your position and opinion of male homosexual s/m practices and male homosexual pedophilia?

S: Well I don't think they're the same thing, so let's deal with them separately. I guess gay male s/m, again I think that's where the issue of consent comes in. But I think we should not just accept it but we should look at why it's become so attractive within certain subcultures because there is a lesbian s/m subculture too. I think it's in Powers of Desire an article on s/m-- the master and slave dialectic. Personally I know a lot of women who have s/m and rape fantasies just in my own little circle, and it's very interesting to try and analyze why those fantasies happen, because, you know they're fantasies, they're not the acting out, but some people I know have acted some of that stuff out, and they're very contradictory it's not just sort of all these people wanting to be abused because they feel powerless. Some of these people have those fantasies are people who have a lot of control and power in their lives, but they have tremendous problems letting go and some of it has to do with letting go around sexuality and being made love to and I think Mariana makes a really important point about dividing power fantasies from pain fantasies too, and looking at sexual intensity and what that means and how suppressed sexuality is in this culture and how far you have to push yourself to feel and how numbed we get by our lives. So to me the s/m thing is a very very complex issue. It's not one that can just be looked at and said 'oh well it's a mirror or an allegory for what goes on in our lives'. The youth/adult sexuality thing is not totally clearcut, but for me I think there's a problem with the existing age of consent laws. I think they're too high and I think they should be lowered. But I do think that kids don't have the same kind of power in the world that adult men do, or adult women for that matter., and that they deserve the right to be empowered under the law to not have to experience abuse and coercion by adults within this society. Because the reality is that they're not empowered in any other way. If we lived in a society where kids had their own forms of organization, you know right now I think some of those laws should be strengthened and kids should have more recourse to defense. I believe in sexual abuse as a real issue, I think that it's being used very hysterically right now, and that the Right is beginning to mobilize around it in ways that really frighten me in B.C. and in other places. But I don't feel very laissez-faire about men sleeping with kids, even male children. And I don't buy the argument that 'well the child is sexually active and seeks it out' because then what role does the adult play? The adult has a role to play there in saying 'ya well that's great honey, but in this society it doesn't work like that and you're really going to lose a lot of power in your life if you do this' and whatever. So I see them as very

different issues.

A: Do you feel there's difference between male and female sexuality?

S: Yes, but I think that there's a continuum in both, and this is something I've written about and thought about alot recently. It goes back to all that stuff that I was talking about when I was 17 and trying to figure all this stuff out and kind of feeling like 'but I'm really masculine, oh no, but this part of me is feminine' is that within the female body, within the mind, there's this huge continuum of who we are as sexual beings and what gets reinforced is a sexual stereotype. But who we actually are does not always fit so neatly into that at all. So I really think there are big areas, where some women do incorporate 'masculine' elements to their personalities which I think is quite positive actually, and men feminine, and increasingly as gender socialization has broken down I think that's been more and more true. The stereotype still exists and I think there was a certain point when they were expanding which is good, but now I think we're at a point where they're contracting again, but there's alot of resistance to that process happening actually.

A: Well, my next question was do you think there will always be a difference? I mean in your utopia?

S: No, I mean that was part of the plan for the utopia was to really break down the differences and to increasingly create a world where there was more and more choice for men and women. So at one point what was held up for me was the sort of Freudian childhood vision of bisexuality or polymorphous perversity or whatever, and for the longest time I sort of thought that. Now I don't think that so simply because I think that even within a say post-revolutionary society many years down the road that there won't be a sort of homogeneity of how people are socialized and what their experiences are, therefore sexuality will continue to be different and there will be different forms and different kinds of desire and that we don't want to have the state legislate bisexuality either as the norm. When I think about sexuality changing I see the material structures around sexuality as being what has to, in a way, be the precondition for the real change. Like I think you could fight for the change and fight for it in your own life and perfigure it, but you really need basic stuff, like child care and men being part of parenting and that whole structure to me is critical for those changes to be able to happen.

A: Do you feel power plays a role in sexual relations?

S: Yes I do and that's an issue that has again emerged within the fst debate is the issue of power. Power has been identified with maleness by alot of fsts and as being bad. I think there's an essentialist current which sees it as being all that is not female. But in fact I think power is implicit in sexuality, it's a component of it and it's part of what makes it interesting. Some of the writing that's been done recently has described sexuality as the exchange of power. There's a book called Lesbian Sex I don't know if you've seen it, it's a really good book, the woman who wrote it deals alot with power as an issue in really positive terms and the way that we give up power in more negative terms to each other and the problems of lesbian relationships and all that and I think Mariana does that too. I think it's really exciting that fsts are increasingly beginning to engage with that issue and not put such a negative judgement on it. It does in some ways I think go back to some of the Marxist vs. Fst debates where the Marxists have always been saying 'well we want state power, we want to redefine what the state is, but we want to take power and want to acknowledge that there is power and that ^{these} ~~they're~~ are power relationships within the fst community' and where there's been an idealization of another form, a very collective 'intergrative' fsm. And my experience within the fst community is that there's incredible power relations and power struggles and part of the problem has been that that stuff doesn't get

acknowledged and then dealt with accordingly. All forms of power inequality are seen as bad instead of being something that we can share or learn from or whatever.

A: Could you define fsm and would you compare it with other social movements?

S: Well, my definition of fsm I suppose is fairly crude. I tried to do it for a presentation that I did the other day. Fsm as a philosophy, it's a philosophy that asserts the right of women to full equality within society, but beyond that argues for a society that is based on a transformation of the relations between men and women, where men and women were equal and where gender wasn't a factor in decisions around who has power and who doesn't. Fsm is also a social movement, so as a social movement I would see it as an alliance of different groups of women, and sometimes a very shaky alliance, who on various levels want to promote equality for women and that encompasses many different philosophies, different socio-economics, different racial and sexual positions.

A: What would you see to be the current priorities for fsm right at the moment?

S: Well I actually think that fsm has been in crisis for a very long time. I remember feeling that at the second to last B.C. Federation of Women Conference. And I think that there's a real inability to deal with some of the changes happening within the society. The end of government funding to the women's organizations, the institutionalization of the women's movement, the inability to reach out to different social layers of women and the increasing development of what I would call the fst community and not the fst movement, so a very internalized group of women who have known each other for a period of time and have institutionalized differences who live an alternative lifestyle essentially. That stuff I find really scary, and I think that stuff has continued and has become almost endemic. Now where, so then what began to happen as I went looking for issues is that I saw a lot of fragmentation and what was emerging as a major issue was violence against women and particularly pornography, this was about '81 '82 and to me I saw that in a way as a signal of not good health for the women's movement, a sort of lowest common denominator thing in part but also as a very reactive movement, looking at something that was so obvious and that you could get reactions off of but also that had that kind of ability to mobilize women's fear and fear of victimization and sense of weakness, more than a sense of strength. All that I remember as a result of 'Not A Love Story' being shown was incredible feeling of vulnerability, of women feeling really terrible about themselves and terrible about the world they lived in, a lot of anger came out of that. So that's been ongoing, I would say another very strong current has been the immersion of a layer of women into basic trade union and working class organizations and that those women are very invisible and the women's movement as an organized force in Vancouver has tended to make those women invisible because earlier on we had them in a fst union and when it fragmented and dissolved it became just like any other union which happens, then it was like unionism sort of disappeared. But in fact there's a lot of women I know who come from very different places within the fst community who have had to become workers who are now very involved with union stuff but who are now very invisible. There's also more of a sort of cultural fst movement that's also very strong and those are women who essentially lead an alternate lifestyle. I mean they are based around various institutions, they have different perspectives on fsm and they just live out fsm, or some version of it. There's also been a regrowth of a kind of anarcho-fsm, particularly amongst younger women.

A: I'm 25 and I have been involved with fsm since I was 17, I'm not an activist, I'm more of a bookworm. When I interviewed Megan Ellis and asked for her definition of fsm, she described it as a lifestyle, always putting women first, it wasn't an ideology or philosophy, it is a way of being. I know women who are my age who won't affiliate themselves with fsm for the reason that they feel that they have to give away their present lifestyle, and give away their sense of humanity and sense of humour for 'the movement'. People like Megan Ellis who are 'activists' present this sense of fsm and frighten younger women off. I think most people have these preconceptions of fsts and fsm that aren't very positive.

S: When I think about it I think about the whole process of post-war communism and the way that that got represented. Because what happened in part was a conscious campaign to discredit it by McCarthyism and American media, but there was also a process happening where I think that the communist parties on a global level because of the whole authoritarian Stalinist tradition of murders of people in the 30s and the Khrushchev revelations, discredited themselves as well. So there was this kind of dialectic, and yet the ideas in terms of what was in there was still valuable. I wouldn't say that about WAVAW and Megan because I think they've done a tremendous amount of really really important work, but I think that there is a kernel in the part of the movement that they represent that does subvert the ability of fsm to be a broad based movement because it's very politically correct and it doesn't have a lot of space.

What I kind of left out before was after that protracted crisis in '83, when the legislation came down from the Social government and Women against the Budget was formed, to me it was so exciting because it was a bringing together of all these disparate groups of women, some of whom had worked together before and hadn't been talking to each other for 5 years and some of whom were really really new, and what looked like the capacity to really mobilize a mass women's movement in Vancouver and B.C.. And some of those divisions began to break down and people tried to stretch their opinions. But part of what happened is that some of that stuff is so strong and ingrained internalized differences so strong that people couldn't transcend. Within that, people like Megan and people like me, (socialist fsts) we worked together the best, because there was an understanding there that it was possible to reach out because those women do a lot of work with women who are new to fsm. But it was an awful experience to watch that massive outreach, our first meetings were two to three hundred women, disintegrate down to 40 or 50 people who were all old guard by that point. Part of that happened because it's hard for people to be involved in continuous struggles and part of it happened because the Federation of Labour, once they saw the divisions asserting themselves and once some women said very gross anti-union things, well they pulled out. But part of it was because of the inability of some women in the community who are very active people to drop their bullshit, to change, to give a bit and that's been part of the institutionalization process. So what's happened now is that we're fragmented again.

One of the things that I'm excited about in terms of people trying to do 'pro-sex' work is that there has been in my experience both in The Coalition for the Right To View, which is this very small group of mostly all women who are anti-censorship and in organizing the Heat is ON people have just been really up. It hasn't been depressing, it's been exciting, a real exchange of ideas. It's just that we have a lot of fun together which is what early fsm was like for me. Somewhere in between they just got really dragged down.

A: Could you outline briefly the positions that you see as having emerged out of the debate around porn?

S: Sure, although I did outline them in my keynote address, but I'll try to recap. I think that there's an anti-censorship first position, that basically is socialist oriented but it certainly is much broader than that. It does call for social change and it is pro-sex.

A: I get the sense, well I have problems with the radical pro-sex position that I have read about in Signs and some of the stuff that I heard in The Heat is On.

S: Yes I do too.

A: The thing that I feel that position does is that it tends to depoliticize, it levels everything, so that you have nowhere left to make a judgement. In Valverde's attempt to talk about a first ethics, I think that's an interesting way to recover that position. I think there's a distinction to be made between this kind of 'libertarianism'.

S: Yes, that's an old position that's been recuperated by some first. It says that sex is part of human nature that's been repressed by society and the goal of liberation is to free sexuality, and that all sexual expression in the face of authoritarianism is positive and to be reinforced and supported. That's an extreme. But I think that what we would argue for at this point is a moratorium on criticizing women's sexual behaviour. Just, to me on a really gut level, it seems like this is not the place to go after women or the time to go after what women do in the bedroom or wherever they do it. But it's a place to talk about that and to try and then analyze it. To me analyzing and moralizing are really different things. To try and understand and to help others understand and eventually make some choices there is quite different from creating a confessional situation where you confess and you have to be absolved.

A: There's an implicit morality in the pro-sex position, like terms like vanilla sex and bambi sex they're loaded, they're derogatory.

S: Yes I think those positions are as problematic as any anti-porn position. You see what happened I think is that because the first movement as a whole did not deal with sex and sexuality enough, essentially we dropped it. So the people who opened the debate, there were two groups, one was the anti-porn movement who dealt essentially with male sexuality and then the others were the s/m lesbians who wanted to create some kind of space for their sexuality and the reaction against it. And those were the people more than anybody who talked about sex. There were a few people, like Varda's been talking about sex for years. I find her perspective to be very rational, although I do think there's weaknesses, like I don't think she looks enough at homosexuality and lesbianism. But she does try and validate women's sexual desires and feelings and experiences and see it as important, she looks at fear and at the social structures and gives a lot of space for exploration and the recovery of our sexuality. Because I don't think that it's just a thing of saying 'well this is what turns me on so I have to go do what turns me on because now I've figured out what turns me on and I never knew what turned me on' it's more like 'this is what turns me on, hmmm why?' you know?

A: In my mind it seems silly to throw out all of your ambitions, all of your goals and make due with what exists now. I feel, as Valverde has said and you have said that it has to be a dialectic between experience and theory.

S: I agree and I find that kind of just accepting very scary because I'm part

of the art'scene' and have been in various cities, there's always this layer of it which is people who do, the fast life, very sexualized culture. Not that people have sex, but they project sex alot, and there's a kind of voyeurism and passivity to it that I find really fascist in fact and very open to fascism and very open to accepting real abuse. I find it really unattractive and really antithetical to fsm. I agree it has to be, it's a real hard line to walk.

A: You've named two positions do you feel there are others?

S: Sure, there are. There's a radical feminist position which is the anti-porn position and I think in the favour of those women is a critique of the bourgeois patriarchal state, and on that we don't completely share their critique. I think that they've actually softened their critique, not necessarily here but in the States in order to really push this amendment because of the climate in the U.S. They are trying to create a civil remedy which is in their favour and I think that what's been good about what they've done, even though I have big problems with them, is that they have raised the issue of porn and male attitudes about sexuality as a problem. I think the problem is that what's accompanied that is a vision of a feminist morality crusade, which is unfortunate because it creates a reaction that closes peoples' ears I think, particularly women who might be involved in either the production of pornography or consumers of porn. There's also an anti-porn position which the women in North Vancouver in the Anti-Porn Coalition have which is much more liberal position as opposed to the radical feminist point of view. They don't really have a critique of the state, they just think about creating laws to strengthen women's position and this is just one area to do that.

A: Varda once wrote somewhere that porn is a bourgeois issue and that alot of these women have an implicit trust in the law to represent them.

S: Yes they really do, I find that in some of Jillian Riddington's writing as well. And also an overwhelming sense of women as victims and also the sense of being able to prescribe women's sexuality in very narrow terms 'equal, consensual, loving relationship between two adults'. And then I think there's another position which is the one that I'm in and I find it really confusing and I have to describe it in very simple language. It's a very strong reaction against censorship, pro-sex isn't the way to do it, positive sex is what Varda used to say but that's a problem as well. In favour of the exploration of female sexuality, yes, the assertion of it, yes and also in favour of structural change. The structural change issue is one that's shared with the radical feminist position at least in general. And then the pro-sex and gay liberationist.

A: Where do you feel the differences of opinion really happen in this debate?

S: Well I don't think there's one place. It's on the nature of the state. That's the big one. The second one I would see is on the nature of sexuality and the relationship between images and activity, ideology, debates on ideology.

A: What are your impressions of this debate, how do you feel about what's gone on?

S: There's some really bad things and some good things as a result of it. The bad things are that it's been very divisive inside the women's movement. It's felt like it's drawn lines that are maybe impenetrable and created sides that are a bit viscious sometimes. I mean particularly the stuff that's going on in Broadside right now between Varda and Catherine MacKinnon

so there's that kind of stuff which is really scary, especially in the States where it's really polarized. Up to this point it hasn't been that gross in Canada and I have a feeling that it's about to get really awful and I really hope it doesn't. I have a lot of respect for the women that I disagree with, some of them, especially for the radical fsts .

A: Do you feel that there's potential for it to get vitriolic?

S: Well I don't know that that would happen in Vancouver, although I suppose it could because I think that some of the characterizations of people get quite herendous and I've engaged in some of that myself too, I suppose, in some of what I've said, but so I think it potentially could although I hope it doesn't. It's a big division in the women's movement and it has real impact. Like if there is censorship legislation in B.C. and fst work does start getting ~~ceased~~^{stopped} and women are trying to resist that process, or fst and gay work let's say, and a big sector of the women's community as they used to do in Ontario says 'we're not going to support you because we think that

porn is more important', then it's going to get really bloody. And for me it's always a really important issue of trying to figure out where my alliances are and not making alliances that I can't politically agree with. Like I don't want Red Hot Video to come out and support me if my tape gets busted, you know? So the positive stuff is that I think that it's been really high profile and that it's raised a lot of important issues and that it's gotten a lot of media coverage, increasingly as a debate and that it's really engaged a lot of people in thinking out some really important stuff. It's made more space for women to start to think and act around their sexuality. There's been a whole range of sexuality conferences around a lot of those issues in Toronto in Vancouver on the Prairies and I think that's been really good. So that what's come out of that reaction to the anti-porn movement has been an attempt to look at women's sexuality and to define it and to make it a living issue, which I think is really important. I think it's going to spawn a lot of work by women artists and filmmakers and so on. I think it could, as things proceed, develop into a real fight for money and so on, to get resources. It could result in positive stuff.

A: Has the debate contributed to your feeling about fsm?

S: Well it's really made me do a lot of work and thinking about this issue and the impact of this issue. I think it's solidified some of the areas where I've in the last few years increasingly had problems with the fst movement. So it's made me to some extent look outside the fst community for a support base and resources and for where I work. Increasingly that has been the case for me. I teach out there in the world and I work in an artist centre that has a lot of strong fst women involved with it but it's not exclusively women. And I like that, I really like being able to put my ideas out to people who are not yet convinced that I'm right.

A: Do you think that the debate has effected other women's perception of fsm?

S: Profoundly, just profoundly. I think it's made people rethink the way they look at men as 'the enemy'. I think it's really made women look at their own sexuality. I think it's created real frustration with some of the moralism and political correctness that's been a problem within fsm as it's gotten more and more narrow. I think it's made some fsts more able to talk to women who are not fsts, like some women I know for example have been able to for the first time talk to their mothers about their sexuality because they're not

sitting there so actively in judgement of their mothers.

A: So what I'm hearing is a kind of moving beyond , a moving beyond anger and pinpointing where oppression exists to an opening up of feelings and perceptions about the world.

S: Yes, I think fsm has to try and become a mobilizing force again because I think the stuff that's going on right now and in B.C. is very scary stuff and it's really important for us to really mobilize, and to do that I think we have to really pull back from being really harshly critical and judgemental. Like the whole period of the New Left and that component and of fsm which was given birth to in part by the New Left and other social movements , well I think we're in a different period and I don't think, well I think purity of political thought right now is just not what's going to make it. I think the capacity to organize successfully and to really galvanize people to feel their anger or pain or whatever, or their feelings of power in particular, is what's going to make it.

A: Do you know anyone who's abandoned calling themselves fst?

S: Yes, I do but not here, like the women I know who've done that are basically sex liberationists and I've had real fights with them around that because it really bugs me. I think that on a really fundamental level they still have a fst analysis, they don't necessarily apply it to , they wouldn't define themselves as having a fst analysis around sexuality. They tend to somehow separate gender from sexuality. It's very structuralist, the way they work, they apply different rules to different parts of experience.

A: I sometimes feel a need to construct or write about my experience of the world that I don't see getting addressed by fsm. I often think it would be good to rename the movement 'post-fst' or 'new fsm' to somehow signal that we were, as Varda has said, 'moving beyond despair'. I think there are a lot of women my age who are having difficulty making fsm relevant for them.

S: I had or witnessed an interesting experience around that which was at the Learned Societies Conference, not this year but the year before. I went to a panel with Angela Miles chaired and , essentially I would describe it as intergrationist fsm, they were and very essentialist in what was being said. And I personally really reacted against what they were saying because it was a kind of, they were arguing to re-embrace the traditions of womanhood and this whole thing about why there's a gap between right-wing women and fsm and how we can narrow the gap, and a real strong argument about how we can create one unitary ideology for fsm, which I don't think we can do and shouldn't try and do at this point. We should agree to disagree and to debate each other and so on. Anyhow what happened there is , well a number of us were quite resistant, but all the younger women there, they just flipped. It was amazing, it was like woman after woman stood up, and these are women in their early 20s who are in university environments and they just said 'look this won't fly, this isn't the fsm that we're part of anymore, this is the past, this an attempt to resolve the past, and we don't want it and we're not going to let it happen and...' and they got really excited .

A: Yes, well that's my feeling, and my feeling about writers like Griffin and Daly, who I have a certain amount of respect for but they appeal to me emotionally but I just can't deal with them rationally. I can't lead my life through my gut all the time.

S: Yes, which is what you're being asked to do

A: Right, but it's not what I want to do, and not what I care to do, and I