

# Erotica vs pornography: a dilemma

by Susan Bailes

"One person's erotica is another person's pornography." This statement by Varda Burstyn expresses the dilemma faced by feminists in evaluating images of women's sexuality in films.

Burstyn is a course director of women and film at York University. She spoke on Friday, November 13 to a crowd of about 80 people in the Humanities Centre. The lecture was co-sponsored by the Women's Program at the Faculty of Extension and the University Women's Centre.

Burstyn addressed how to criticize certain presentations of sex, avoiding being labelled puritanical. She outlined her method of film criticism. This method draws from the psychoanalytic theories of Reich and Marcuse. She has created an

objective, feminist, framework to evaluate the images of women's sexuality we see in film.

Criteria of sex positive versus sex negative to evaluate the images of women in film were used. She has borrowed and expanded this term from Wilhelm Reich.

A sex positive portrayal of sexuality appears as a natural expression of affection exchanged between equals.

These criteria were applied to the film *Emanuelle*. This film is supposed to be an example of one woman's journey towards sexual liberation. *Emanuelle* is sex-negative. It is a racist film, and the images of sexuality are coercive and brutal.

The increasing division between love and sex and the growing idea of sex as commodity can clearly be seen in this movie, she says.

The second concept in Burstyn's evaluative framework is "repressive desublimation". Repressive desublimation is a process. Puritanical attitudes towards sex are relaxed. At the same time there is a cutting of the relation between sex and love. Sex becomes attached to commodities (clothes, car, etc.).

Repressive desublimation turns peoples' attention away from oppressive social conditions. The disco and singles' bar scenes are examples.

This alienated, anonymous system of sexuality was epitomized in the movie *Saturday Night Fever* Burstyn says.

European films would not be met with more approval from Burstyn. She criticized the German films, *Marriage of Maria Braun* and *Tin Drum*.

In these films, she says, women's sexuality is presented very appealingly. Women watching want to be like the female characters. Yet the attitude towards women's sexuality in the larger society is still negative.

Maria Braun uses her sexuality for economic and social advancement. The women in *The Tin Drum* are defined only by their sexuality. No matter how nice they look, these approaches are too limiting for women says Burstyn.

Burstyn criticized the Hollywood produced women's films. She divides these films into two categories. One category she calls misogynist and sex negative. As an example she cites *Middle Aged Crazy*. A movie about a woman killing her husband with sex. This kind of movie accepts women as sexual beings but also shows women as stupid, fickle and shallow individuals.

The other category of women's films shows more positive images of women's sexuality. Burstyn cites the example of *Change of Seasons*. She criticizes these movies because money is shown as the solution to all problems.

"These movies do not make people look at the social system and see it as oppressive," she says.



photo by Ken Tsai

Varda Burstyn

It's not always easy to distinguish erotica from pornography.

## Gateway Informal Survey Results

We asked: Do you support the UAB's (University Athletic Board) motion to raise fees up to 15 percent per year without obtaining student input?

The information presented below reviews the results by faculty. The percentages represent the percent of each category that voted yes or no.

Faculty	Yes (percent)	No (percent)	SUB-TOTAL
Arts	44 (32.84 percent)	90 (67.2 percent)	134
Agriculture	9 (49.1 percent)	10 (50.9 percent)	19
Commerce	15 (22.1 percent)	53 (77.9 percent)	68
Dentistry	2 (66.7 percent)	1 (33.3 percent)	3
Education	18 (51.4 percent)	17 (48.6 percent)	35
Engineering	28 (36.8 percent)	48 (63.2 percent)	76
Faculty	1 (100 percent)	—	1
Faculty St. Jean	—	4 (100 percent)	4
Graduate Studies	1 (7.7 percent)	12 (92.3 percent)	13
Home Economics	2 (33.3 percent)	4 (66.7 percent)	6
Law	7 (53.8 percent)	6 (46.2 percent)	13
Library Science	—	2 (100 percent)	2
Medicine	7 (33.3 percent)	14 (66.7 percent)	21
No Faculty given	8 (30.8 percent)	18 (69.2 percent)	26
Pharmacy	1 (25 percent)	3 (75 percent)	4
Physical Education and Recreation	17 (57.7 percent)	13 (43.3 percent)	30
Science	22 (25.9 percent)	63 (74.1 percent)	85
Spoiled	—	—	6
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>358 (65.6 percent)</b>	<b>546</b>

The no vote with 65 percent led the yes vote, with 33 percent, by a two to one ration. Our results indicate that students want input into the fee structure of the UAB.

Unfortunately not all of the results are valid. Ballot boxes were stuffed on both sides of the vote.

However, Gateway staff decided to tally all ballots due to the difficulty in isolating the "stuffed ballots".

**BAZ**

per SKEET at Nidrop



## dear floyd

an advice column for the lost



Dear Floyd,

I know how everyone writes to tell you their problems, but I thought you would like to hear from a person who has it made. Back in the 60's, ma and pa decided to add one more to the menagerie. I soon joined my twelve or more relatives in a one room shack on the outskirts of Vegreville.

Living a relatively normal childhood, I gradually advanced through my studies. Never being big on marks, I never did place an emphasis on higher, lower, or even medium education.

Then I saw the light. I no longer had to share a bed with my baker's dozen of siblings. If I applied myself, I could get out of the rat race. It was then I made a killing on the Easter Egg market. The town council even put in an order for a 27X10. Boy was it a sight to find the sucker to lay that egg.

From there, I moved on to bigger and better things. I now attend a university and I am working on a degree in Home Economics. Imagine, all that way from a single bed home in Vegreville.

D. Butaffluent

Dear Doaltish,

A bed! You had a bed!

Dear Floyd,

What can I do?

My boyfriend and I recently broke up. I thought everything was going so well. We never argued. We always enjoyed each others company, and we plain liked each other. I never realized how much I cared for the jerk until the day I saw him with a group of other girls in the library, and it didn't look like they were playing tidly-winks.

The next day I confronted him, and he said, "So what!"

He stunned me. I have never felt so much pain, misery, hurt, sorrow and despair in my life. What can I do?

M. Mortally

Dear Marred,

Put it to music and you would have a hit country and western song.

Dear Floyd,

Am I ever tiffed off. Have you ever had one of those days where nothing goes right?

First I went to my morning classes and met a close acquaintance. She asked if I would like to be treated to a cup of coffee. What could I do but cheerfully accept. In the line-up she discovered she forgot to bring her wallet. I graciously said the treat was on me and then found out I was paying for everyone in the line-up.

Like I said, that was only the morning, and \$10 later. At lunch I was able to pay \$3.50 for a dry sandwich and soggy salad, both prepared in the morning. I suppose I wouldn't complain except for the case of botulism I soon contracted. As I ran into the bathroom to throw up, I found out that the administration had decided to install pay toilets to help pay for research facility maintenance. Regardless to say, I never made my appointment with the toilet, as I had to scramble for a quarter.

To top it off, I had to tip the janitor who cleaned up my mess because of a new union contract.

Floyd, is there any way I can get a refund?  
Mr. C. Lucky

Dear Chancey,

Let me give you some advice I picked up from my oriental guru, philosopher and teacher, Hai-Brow Carlton. He once said, "A fool and his money are good for business."