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Health & Medicine, Sex



5/16/2012 Hum 390 Hum 390 Final Bruce LaBruce's film *Raspberry Reich* is an awkward blending of gay porn and political satire inspired by real-life 1970s radical group the Baader-Meinhof gang of Germany. The *Raspberry Reich* is no more than a terrorist organization bent on destroying bourgeois capitalist ideals through a homosexual revolution. *Raspberry Reich* is purely pornographic. Just like pornography, the movie is interested in fantasy, both sexual and political. At the same time the film is thought provoking because of how LaBruce uses this film to exploit sexuality from all angles, which almost always seems to be affecting politics and making it the politics itself. In *How to Look at Pornography*, Laura Kipnis mentions this when she says "Within the incipient, transgressive space opened by its festival of social infractions is a medium for confronting its audiences with exactly those contents that are exiled from sanctioned speech, from mainstream culture and political discourse" (120). The two major conflicts that are addressed are the counter-cultural assault on homosexist ideology and the exploration of an individual's sexual limit. Clearly the first is an external conflict and the second is an internal conflict. Consequently both conflicts complicate people's ability to make objective, clear-headed decisions where they live. This applies to the way we live now and how sexuality is used against the masses and homosexuality continues its battle to detach the negatives connotations that those with political power have stained it with. The female protagonist of the film Gudrun is the leader of the revolutionary group. Her small entourage, a small group of male followers are not gay themselves. So, in order to be true revolutionary heroes, they must go through the process of becoming gay as a means to make way to for their most buried sexual

desires to rise up. The female protagonist has a lot of sex and during sex she shouts many slogans like " The revolution is your boyfriend!" and " there's no sexual revolution without homosexual revolution!" At the same time, kind of hypocritically, she lives out her sexual fantasies in trying to free others but you cannot tell others to explore something they may not be comfortable with. Similarly Kipnis points out a similar fact when she writes, " Pornography' s ultimate desire is exactly to engage our deepest embarrassments, to mock us for the anxious psychic balancing act we daily perform, straddling between the anarchy of sexual desires and the straightjacket of social responsibilities" (122). Like Kipnis, with Raspberry Reich, LaBruce challenges the dominant hegemonic ideologies that oppress many in society and allows his characters to be so more than just sexual beings. They mock the limits and barriers that Victorian ideals have cut off. John Cameron Mitchell's *Shortbus*, examines the complicated, chaotic lives of young adults living the underground sex scene in New York City. The film's central theme is that sex is an obvious natural function of being alive and that people are all the same inside regardless. The film has a relationship driven plot and carries a theme of struggle throughout the movie. It is noticeable as we watch the main characters struggle to find their sexuality and their own notion of " self" in the world. All of the main characters have a sexual secret or challenge in their lives. What is most striking is the sexual intimacy along with the sexual obsession. This is significant because this is accurately what most people all over the world can relate to. *Shortbus* is a film that is sex-positive. In the sense that it takes a neither non-judgmental nor biased position on how love, sex or lust might sprout up and manifest

themselves amongst people. We see this in the scene where two people of the same sex, two unthinkable partners finally open up to each other. Ceth, the young guy talks to the old man who used to be the mayor of New York about his experience being a gay political official. There is a great sense of sadness seen on the old man's face. This scene manages to capture what happens when there is an instant connection between two people perfectly. I feel like it is still this big elephant in the room that no one wants to neither talk about nor see, when yet it is one of the most natural things in life.

Maybe the strongest character in the film, Sofia, has an emotional depth that pulls the audience into her character and her struggles. Sofia's character opens up the topic that affects many couples in the world; the inability to achieve an orgasm. In the film this affects every aspect of Sofia's personal and professional life. Another important protagonist is Severin. Severin portrays a realistic and sad woman who makes a living by sexually dominating others but she herself is unable to control her own life. The two James portray a gay couple that is seeking for a way to stay in love. All of these characters touch on real life issues that we all face and these characters reinforce just how sexuality is a key role in the lives of human beings. At the same time the film shows the characters overcome their struggles and this can serve as a catalyst for individuals in the real world to get through their own limits in their sexuality. Michael Winterbottom's *9 Songs* and *In the Real of the Senses* by Nagisa Oshima are other real life sex films that share a lot in common with *Shortbus*. All three films through pornography as an art show how sex is just as much a part of our daily lives. These films are all very organic in nature and have sex acted out the way it

truly is in real life. Yet all three films remain very controversial for the sexual content. These films depict the tragic consequences of individual resistance to a culture that denies sexual freedom and limits sexual fulfillment. Both the novel and the film based on the novel *Crash* explore the extremity of society's increasing dependence on technology. Furthermore both the novel and film bring up the idea of linking sex and death. This idea revolves around what the human conscious experiences during sex. Like Oshima's film, sex and death are continuously trying to be linked as they are the two most mysterious and intriguing human experiences. The car crashes in the film are a metaphor to human bodies coming into contact during sex as they bash, ram and thrash during sex. The novel contains passages referring to various bodily fluids mixing in mangled car accidents. Though people do have sex in cars but that is not the point Ballard is trying to argue. As for the actual idea behind the novel, which is people's relationship with technology, it is very debatable. Automobiles as the representative technology in this novel may have been proper for that time period but not in modern society because cars are not a new form of technology now. Nevertheless, technology is a massively prevalent tool of human interaction. Only rather than cars, it is computers and what we now know as smart phones. In addition things like cybersex and 'sexting', which is when people text sexual content to one another, are now the prevalent uses of technology. Cars are a kind of strange metaphor, but the parallel is real because sex is violent and messy in its realest act. Ballard's novel requires the reader to be actively critical and analytical, especially in present day because it was written a while ago. What the reader gets out of the book is the curiosity in analyzing

the extremely important social questions about our relationship with technology and our capacity for alienation.