

"erotica and  
pornography" by  
gloria steinem essay  
sample



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## **“ Erotica and Pornography” by Gloria Steinem Essay Sample**

What is the difference between erotica and pornography? Gloria Steinem tackles this question in “ Erotica and Pornography”. Most people picture Pornography as being hardcore, more likely to be sold in specialty adult bookstores or in sealed plastic at the newsstand. Erotica, on the other hand, includes foreplay, intimacy, and a mutually- satisfying experience. However, Steinem believes that the main differences between pornography and erotica are that individuals involved in pornography are just looking for anything to satisfy their sexual needs, while individuals involved in erotica have a particular someone in mind. Gloria Steinem states that erotica is “ in the idea of positive choice, free will, the yearning for a particular person” (130).

Erotica is a depiction of a love-making experience rather than just having sex. Steinem states that pornography is when the “ subject is not mutual love, or love at all, but domination and violence against women” (130). In pornography, one individual is a dominant force, and erotica is when both individuals are on equal standing. 8 mile and Monsters ball are both featured on “ Playboy’s Top 10 Film Sex Scenes”. Monsters Ball, starring Billy Bob Thornton and Halle Berry, exemplifies Gloria Steinem’s view of pornography, while 8 Mile, starring Eminem and Brittney Murphy, corresponds to Steinem’s view of erotica.

In “ Monsters Ball”, Billy Bob Thornton plays a white corrections officer named Hank working on death row who oversees Lawrence Musgrove’s

death. Hank doesn't get along with his son or father (both of whom live with him) and eventually quits his job after a death in the family. He then becomes involved with Leticia, has sex with her, and changes his racist ways. Leticia (Halle Berry) plays Lawrence Musgrove's (Sean Combs) wife and then widow who smokes, drinks and ends up falling for Hank (with whom she has sex), initially unaware of their fateful connection.

Gloria Steinem would consider this scene pornographic because both characters are used as objects. During Halle Berry and Billy Bob Thornton's sex scene, Leticia (Halle Berry) makes some comments about wanting Hank to make her feel better and feel good, and then removes her tank top, revealing her bare breasts. Leticia telling Hank to make her feel good shows that she just wants someone to have sex with and that she is looking at Hank as an object. The director shows a lot more nude shots of Leticia, which makes her an object. She then partially straddles him while making more comments about making her feel good. We see more views of her bare breasts and he then pulls off her bottom. He's behind her when she takes off her thong underwear and we then see him having sex from behind her. We then see him between her legs as she sits on the edge of the sofa and they continue having sex.

This goes on for quite a while as we see more shots of them having sex with him on top of her on the sofa (with sight nudity of his bare butt and her bare breasts). We then see her on top of him on the floor, with more of the same and his hands on her bare butt, all of which amounts to a very steamy scene.

In the scene Halle Berry is fully nude, while Billy Bob Thornton is partially nude. The director in the movie tends to show a lot of Halle Berry, which <https://assignbuster.com/erotica-and-pornography-by-gloria-steinem-essay-sample/>

shows that there not on equally ground. Gloria Steinem states " It may be much more subtle: A physical attitude of conqueror and victim, the use of race and class difference to imply the same thing, perhaps a very unequal nudity , with one person exposed and vulnerable while the other is clothed. In either case there is no sense of equal choice or equal power."

Billy Bob Thornton is a more dominant force than Halle Berry in this scene. Hank, Billy Bob Thornton's character is a racist death row corrections officer. The fact that Leticia is a poor black widow, and Hank is a racist corrections officer who executes her husband, proves that Hank has a lot more power than Leticia. She works at a diner that Hank frequently dines and also picks her up on the side of the road. Hank comes into this relationship with a lot more power than Leticia.

Unlike *Monsters Ball*, *8 mile* is a great depiction of Gloria Steinem's view of Erotica. In *8 mile* Eminem plays a young rapper named Rabbit who leaves his girlfriend because she says she's pregnant, gets into several fights, shoots a police car with a paintball gun, commits arson (with his friends), and has sex with Alex (Brittney Murphy). Yet, he's also very caring for his younger sister and finally becomes a good worker at the plant and wants to better himself. Brittney Murphy plays a young woman who drifts into Rabbit's world and has sex with him.

Gloria Steinem would categorize *8 mile* as an erotic scene. Alex comes to Rabbit's job at the factory in search of him. Rabbit takes Alex (Brittney Murphy) off into a deserted part of the factory where the two passionately make out while standing and clothed. Her coat is opened and we see her in

her panties and bra (that shows cleavage). His pants then come down and her bare thigh is up along his side. They have sex while standing with movement, sounds and groping (he feels her bra-covered breasts) in shots that alternate between a head and shoulders view of them as well as a close-up of their crotch areas. This scene would be viewed by Gloria Steinem as Erotic because both individuals in the scene have about equal amounts of clothing on and there is no dominant force in the scene. The director does not show more of Eminem or Britney Murphy, and he rather shows both at the same time. Gloria Steinem would consider this scene erotic. Alex comes in search of Rabbit, which means that they both had each other in mind upon doing this. This also means that there is not domination considering that she approaches him.

Halle Barry won the Oscar for best actress that year for her performance in *Monsters ball*. That same year Denzel Washington won best actor for *Training day*, which was a very violent rated R movie, which only proves one thing: the American public is interested in sex and violence. Gloria Steinem states that " until we untangle the lethal confusion of sex with violence, there will be more pornography and less erotica. There will be little murders in our beds and very little love."

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