

SEX

Sex! There, that's got your attention! That's exactly what sex does - it arouses, it stimulates, it penetrates ... But not in the way you're thinking! No, I'm talking about the way sex arouses us to view certain programs or purchase specific products, the way it stimulates authoritative bodies to question the moral standards accepted by society and the way sex penetrates into every possible form of media and advertising in our world today. Yes, sex today is more than just man's primal desire to find a mate and "do the dirty", rather it is the most powerful and influential communication medium on the planet.

Good morning ...

Sex has been a powerful communicative device for centuries. In fact, one of the earliest known references to sex in literature stems all the way back to the third millennium BC in the Epic of Gilgamesh. Preserved on clay tablets and deciphered only last century, this collection of epic poems tells the tale of Gilgamesh, the great king of Uruk and his relationship with Enkidu. Enkidu, who can be related to Adam in the Bible's story of creation, was one of the first victims of sex, as can be seen by this extract:

"After a three days' journey they came to the drinking-hole, and there they sat down; the harlot and the trapper sat facing one another and waited for the game to come ... On the third day, the herds came; they came down to drink and Enkidu was with them ... The trapper spoke to her: "There he is. Now, woman, make your breasts bare, have no shame, do not delay but welcome his love. Let him see you naked, let him possess your body. When he comes near uncover yourself and lie with him; teach him, the savage man, your woman's art ...". She was not ashamed to take him, she made herself naked and welcomed his eagerness; as he lay on her murmuring love she taught him the woman's art. For six days and seven nights they lay together ... when he was satisfied ... his knees gave way ... his swiftness was gone."

Enkidu however was not the only victim of sex in the early days of literature. The men of Ancient Greece, in Aristophanes' play *Lysistrata*, were also victims of sex, or rather lack of it. In the play, the women of Greece are weary of the extended war between Athens and Sparta. In order to take control of the situation, the women go on a sex strike refusing to make love to their husbands until peace is established. It began at a meeting, like this:

"LYSISTRATA: I want to ask you just one little question ... The ~~men~~ of your children - don't you miss them when they're away at war? ... There isn't anyone even to have an affair with - not a sausage! ... we can't even get our six-inch Ladies' Comforters which we used to keep as leather rations for when all else failed ... would you be prepared to join me in stopping the war? ...

CALONICE: If need be, we'll lay down our lives for it.

LYSISTRATA: Very well then. We must give up - sex. ...

CALONICE: I won't do it ... Let the war go on. ...

LYSISTRATA: Weren't you the flatfish who was ready to cut herself in half a moment ago?

CALONICE: I still am! I'll do that, or walk through the fire, or anything - but give up sex, never! Lysistrata, darling, there's just nothing like it ...

LAMPITO: Well - it's a sair thing, the dear knows, for a woman tae sleep wi'oot a prick - but we maun do it, for the sake of peace ...

CALONICE: But look, suppose we did give up - what you said - which may heaven forbid - but if we did, how would that help to end the war?

LYSISTRATA: How? Well, just imagine: we're at home, beautifully made up, wearing our sheerest lawn negligees and nothing underneath, and with our - our triangles carefully plucked; and the men are all like ramrods and can't wait to leap into bed, and then we absolutely refuse - that'll make them make peace soon enough, you'll see ...

CALONICE: Well - if you really think it's a good idea - we agree."

off

Suffering severely, the men would later agree to a peaceful settlement, with their wives .. and with their enemies. However, Lysistrata's battle with the power and influence of sex was not over yet.

You see, sex in the modern world is one of the most powerful and influential mediums used, however it is also one of the most controversial. In 1873, the U.S. Federal Anti-Obscenity Act, also known as the Comstock Law, banned Lysistrata for its "lewd", "indecent", "filthy" and "obscene" material. Later, in the 20th century however, Lysistrata was allowed to be put back on the shelves of bookstores and libraries. Yet, in 1967, it was banned again in Greece - this time for disagreeing with the attitude of the pro-military government of the time.

Such is the power of sex. It can influence and persuade, but it can also offend. Several classic pieces of literature, such as Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, Edouard Manet's Manet, various editions of The Arabian Nights and even the Bible, have been banned for decades in the United States, and in Australia, for being pornographic or sexually explicit in nature. The Bible in fact, is said to contain more than three hundred examples of pornography and obscenities. As you will see here [put up BHT], the Internet has provided details of many modern books and pieces of literature that have also been **2** for what some class as sexually explicit, obscene, vulgar or profane content. Unfortunately, this information is current and most of these titles remain suppressed or censored in various countries, including Australia, still today.

It is therefore of little surprise to discover that the various governments in the world are trying to control the Internet as well. The great information superhighway - which contains an almost infinite number of sexually-oriented sites - is at threat of mass censorship due to the power sex has in stimulating the government to administer some form of moral control. Why? Well, the Internet is virtually unrestricted at present and contains sites such as Bianca's Smut Shack and the Safer Sex Page, to those sites which advertise virtual reality with "real screen penetration capability". Hence, the U.S. Government, acting supposedly with the interest of the population at mind, attempted to pass a Communications Decency Act earlier this year which would stop all pornographic and obscene material from having a home on the World Wide Web. Yet, the act was found to be unconstitutional and so the net continues to use to this day sex as a largely popular, but also powerful and influential medium to distribute its various messages.

What I find most surprising about sex as an enormously powerful communicative device is that while the government looks to censoring and suppressing sex in literature, both electronic and in the good ol' paper form, it seems to turn a blind eye to the magazines with sexual content that litter the shelves of newsagencies. The publishers and advertisers however can rejoice to this fact, as they realised long ago that sex is immensely powerful and influential. Those with the big names and the bucks know that sex sells! I mean, if you were to purchase this afternoon every magazine that had some reference to sex in it, you could walk away with a trolley load of glossy paper. For example, this month's Elle Australia has an article on Australia's sexiest men, New Woman studies the issue of Sex with your ex - is it ever okay?, good ol' Cosmopolitan looks at men who love shoes more than sex but also includes a free calendar with twelve gorgeous guys and their phone numbers and

Australian Women's Forum features articles on how to host your own sex orgy and an instructional guide to do-it-yourself bondage. And that's just in the conservative ladies' section.

For the gentlemen, Celebrity Sex '96 contains 388 big name boobs, 42 famous bums and 1 penis, Penthouse looks at 11 mouth-watering women in graphic detail, Picture Sextra contains a 40-page article on fishnet fantasies entitled Spread em!, as well as 47 pages of monster mazooms, Playboy looks at sex and sports while the latest issue of the Best of Penthouse Forum - otherwise known as the Brendan's Bible - contains the usual hot letters of sexual adventure with the relative full-spread pictures. Is it just me, or is sex around us everywhere? Its as though its bursting out of every form of media available trying to arouse us to buy this magazine, or watch that show, or buy this brand of toilet paper, or that type of cereal.

Undoubtedly, television would have to be the form of media that uses sex as a medium to the extreme. Television advertising features extremely suggestive imaging, (that due to the nature of this catholic institution I can't show you), that persuades consumers to purchase particular products. From condoms to Calvin Kleins, soft drinks to software, every possible perceivable product will at one time be pushed with a sexual theme to its advertising. This works, as stated previously, because marketing has proven that sex sells.

Apart from product advertising, television dramas and sit-coms also use sex to influence us to watch particular programs. Take for example the U.S. smash-hit sit-com, Love and War, where an unlikely couple, Jack and Wally, have an onscreen romance. In purely powerful sexual imaging, Jack and Wally kiss briefly, then she suddenly blurts out "Would you like to have sex?" They proceed to debate the possibility with all the emotional involvement of a discussion of tax policy on Wall Street Week. But that's the way sex is depicted on the screen today - no intimacy, little passion and never any moral restrictions. Sex, as a medium, is undoubtedly used to its full potential in television.

Finally, music is the last medium that uses sex as a powerful and influential medium. With lyrics like:

"Panties 'round your knees/ With your ass in debris/ Doin' dat grind
with a push and squeeze/ Tied up, tied down, up against the wall..."

from Guns n Roses or this from 2 Live Crew:

"Just nibble on my d like a rat does cheese."

It is impossible to suggest that music today still relates to tales of love - today's musicians sing about sex. Madonna, would have to be the best example of a performer who has used sex, rather than love, to make music. She has found that sex is an extremely powerful and influential medium, as she describes two of her routines from her Girlie Show Tour, featuring numbers from her Erotica album:

"In the Like a Virgin scene in my show, I have these men whom I have emasculated with bras on who are attending to me and offering me sex if I so wish. But in the end, I would rather be alone and masturbate. Until God comes, of course, and frightens me. (Laughs) Then all of a sudden Like a Prayer begins, and you hear the voice of God, and the curtain opens. Figures clothed in black, like priests and nuns, appear on-stage and the cross descends. It's like here comes the Catholic Church saying 'Sex goes here, and spirituality goes there.' And I say--but I say, NO, THEY GO TOGETHER! I am supposed to pray, right? But my praying gets so frenzied and passionate and frenetic that by the end, I am flailing my body all over the place, and it becomes a masturbatorysexualpassionate thing."

From classic literature to the electronic information super highway, common household magazines to the television and music industries, sex is clearly the sole largest communicative device used in the various information and advertising fields. Sex arouses, stimulates and penetrates in more than just a physical sense - it prompts society to realise the fact that everywhere it comes into contact with the media, it will be subjected to sex, the most powerful and influential medium in use today.

Extract from:

EPIC OF GILGAMESH

"After a three days' journey they came to the drinking-hole, and there they sat down; the harlot and the trapper sat facing one another and waited for the game to come ... On the third day, the herds came; they came down to drink and Enkidu was with them ... The trapper spoke to her: "There he is. Now, woman, make your breasts bare, have no shame, do not delay but welcome his love. Let him see you naked, let him possess your body. When he comes near uncover yourself and lie with him; teach him, the savage man, your woman's art ...". She was not ashamed to take him, she made herself naked and welcomed his eagerness; as he lay on her murmuring love she taught him the woman's art. For six days and seven nights they lay together ... when he was satisfied ... his knees gave way ... his swiftness was gone."

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LYSISTRATA

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1994

Carrie - Stephen King.

“objected to the book’s language ... and it’s sexual descriptions”

Manet - Edouard Manet.

“pornographic”, “perverted”, “morbid”

Catcher in the Rye - J.D. Salinger.

“sexual exploits”

In the Night Kitchen - Maurice Sendak.

“the little boy pictured did not have any clothes on and it pictured his private area”

Changing Bodies, Changing Lives - Ruth Bell.

“undermine parental authority and depict sexual relations in explicit and vulgar language”

Daddy’s Roommate - Michael Willhoite.

“skilful presentation to the young child about lesbianism/homosexuality”

I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings - Maya Angleou.

“the book is pornographic, contains profanity, and encourages premarital sex and homosexuality”

“a lurid tale of sexual perversion”

The Graphic Work of M.C. Escher - M.C. Escher.

“pornographic”, “perverted”, “morbid”

1993

The Bible

“obscene and pornographic”

Forever - Judy Blume.

“it’s basically a sexual ‘hot-to-do’ book for junior high students. It glamorises (sex) and puts ideas in their heads”

One Hundred Questions and Answers about AIDS - Michael Thomas Ford

“encourages sexual activity”

The Sound of Waves - Yukio Mishima.

“crude, vulgar, degrading to women, seductive, enticing and suggestive”

The Handmaid’s Tale - Margaret Atwood.

“contains profanity and sex”

Clan of the Cave Bear - Jean Auel.

“hard-core graphic sexual content”

The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies - Vito Russo.

“encourages and condones homosexuality”