

Erotic Adaptations

Programme

9.00 Registration (HU 1.49)

9.30 – 10.30 Welcome and plenary (HU 2.09)

Keynote plenary speaker:

Linda Ruth Williams (Southampton University):

'Obscene undertakings and Bad Sex: Ken Russell's D. H. Lawrence adaptations'

10.30 – 11.00 Coffee (HU 1.49)

11.00 – 12.30 Panel One (HU 1.49)

Nia Edwards-Behi (Aberystwyth University), "'That's not my Judesie!': *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and Real-Person Fanfiction'

Bethan Jones (Cardiff University), 'Slow evolution: 'First time Fics' and *The X-Files* porn parody'

Helena M. Hoyle (Bristol University), 'Erotica in adaptations of *The Odyssey*: "Keeping It Up"'

12.30 – 1.30 Lunch (HU 3.95)

1.30 – 3.00 Panel Two (HU 2.09)

Natalie Hayton (De Montfort University), '*Hard Candy*: romance, violence, and reversing the cinematic gaze'

Katherine Farrimond (Newcastle University), 'Adapting *The Black Dahlia*: the erotics and (a)politics of vintage'

Beth Johnson (Keele University), 'Perverting the age gap on-screen: eroticism, adaptation and attachment'

1.30 – 3.00 Panel Three (HU 2.31)

Anita Jarczok (University of Limerick), 'Eroticising Nin, eroticising women – Philip Kaufman's *Henry and June*'

Joanne Bishton (University of Derby), 'Passing across a boundary of social division via the frame of vision'

3.00 – 3.30 Coffee (HU 2.30)

3.30 – 5.00 Panel Four (HU 2.09)

Thomas Watson (Northumbria University), 'There's something rotten in the state of Texas: exploitation, adaptation and *The Texas Vibrator Massacre*'

Johnny Walker (De Montfort University), 'The Lust Continent: when British horror and hardcore come together'

Xavier Mendik (Brunel University) 'That's l'amorte: Joe D'Amato and the Sadean art of love'

3.30. – 5.00 Panel Five (HU 2.31)

Vasileios Kantas (London South Bank University), 'Photographic renditions of sexuality drawn from literary sources'

Anthony McKenna (University of the West of England), 'International production, sexual politics and the *Confessions* reboot that never was'

5.00 – 6.00 (HU 2.09) Closing plenary

Abstracts

Joanne Bishton (University of Derby):

'Passing across a boundary of social division via the frame of vision.'

The mainstreaming of marginal, lesbian experience may beg the audience to consider whether aspects of subversion are in danger of being sacrificed for conservative consumerism. In this regard, screen representations of same-sex desire, those that highlight and engage with lesbian erotica, often challenge the notion of the gaze. The subject is often forced to confront and negotiate a balance between making visible sexual experience, whilst resisting the patriarchal signifiers that have been responsible for making them invisible in the first instance. In addition, feminist arguments surrounding the production of pornography become more complex and wide ranging when they are queered. Postmodernism has, in many ways, liberated the female form from such constraints. Yet, it has also to be acknowledged that whilst displays of lesbian subjectivity may connect with a lesbian audience and provide a viable alternative to heteronormativity, implications foreground by such ideas as Barthes' 'Death of the Author' intrinsically have the ability to undermine, rather than safeguard such erotic expressions. This paper will seek to illustrate how the appropriation of Sarah Waters' *Tipping the Velvet* by screenwriter Andrew Davies and director Geoffrey Sax, promotes lesbian erotica to a popular audience, whilst contesting and resisting phallogocentric interpretation.

Katarzyna Bronk (Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań, Poland):

'Porndystopias: Laurence Dunmore's readings of Earl of Rochester's (?) *Sodom, or the Quintessence of Debauchery* (1670)'

John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester brought to light all the dirt, hypocrisy and moral double-facedness of the second half of the seventeenth-century. *Sodom, or the Quintessence of Debauchery* is attributed to him, though somewhat by way of wishful thinking, because of its am/immoral plot, 'in-your-face' sexual imagery and shameless (and shamefully realistic) dramatization of hedonistic pleasures of Restoration bisexual culture. For the same reasons the play was not performed till 2001, though privately read by Rochester's contemporaries.

When Laurence Dunmore filmed the biography of John Wilmot, *The Libertine* (2004), he imagined the play performed in front of Charles II. In his very short adaptation, constituting only a few minutes of the film, Dunmore made it thoroughly political, offering the viewers the easiest interpretation of the play. Showing *Sodom* as a political comment on the reign of Charles II, he silenced the misogynistic message of the original play. This paper argues that the original vision Rochester's satire unmasked was a sodomian U/Dystopia that unbosomed masculine anxieties concerning female domination, unproductive homosexual sex and the mechanization of bodily pleasures. Furthermore, it aims at showing how the utterly antifeminist reading of the farce would contribute to Dunmore's presentation of Restoration England and the infamous Rochester himself.

Nia Edwards-Behi (Aberystwyth University):

"'That's not my Judesiel!': *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and Real-Person Fanfiction'

1971 saw the release of the first published story that involved the depiction of Holmes and Watson as lovers, in the form of *The Sexual Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Often considered one of the first fandoms, Sherlock Holmes slash fan fiction has been available in abundance, from paper fanzines and more recently in internet communities. I wish to look at the most recent film incarnation of the detective and the doctor, the 2009 film directed by Guy Ritchie. I will explore the interplay between the canon text, the film text, and the slash fan fiction to have arisen from it. Most specifically, however, I wish to examine the real-person fan fiction that has emerged involving the cast of the film, predominantly Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law, and the ways in which the roles assigned given characters within the slash fanfiction has influenced upon the relationships in the real-person fanfiction. Additionally, I wish to examine the possible ways in which the interaction between Downey

Jr. and Law in promoting the film has encouraged a reading of Holmes and Watson as lovers, and in turn how this has impacted upon the real-person fanfiction.

Katherine Farrimond (Newcastle University):

‘Adapting *The Black Dahlia*: the Erotics and (A)politics of Vintage’

The Black Dahlia (2006), Brian De Palma’s adaptation of the James Ellroy novel of the same name, presents a fictionalised version of the investigation of the murder of Elizabeth Short in 1940s Los Angeles. The film is notable for its glossy retro style and the relative absence of gore, despite the brutality of Short’s murder. In this paper, I will outline the implications of the film’s addition of a series of erotic artefacts in the form of black and white movie reels featuring Short before her death, suggesting that this revisioning of history functions as a form of ‘retrovision’ (Cartmell, Hunter and Whelehan, 2001). I argue that the revisionist style of these movie reels serves as an alignment of Short with the aesthetics of the ‘new burlesque’ (Ferreday, 2008). This foregrounding of the black and white footage exoticises Short’s vintage credentials, while sidelining any real markers of misogynistic violence. Drawing on Deborah Jermyn’s analysis of the role of the female corpse in addressing issues of brutality against women in contemporary cinema (2004), I argue that *The Black Dahlia*’s adaptation of both Ellroy’s novel and Short’s death refuses the subversive potential of the female corpse, and instead holds Elizabeth Short up as an apolitical erotic spectacle.

Natalie Hayton (De Montfort University):

‘*Hard Candy*: romance, violence, and reversing the cinematic gaze’

Little Red Riding Hood has long been accepted as a parable of rape with many adaptations focusing on transforming the story into one of positive female sexual expression where the heroine is often equal to the wolf in terms of desire. This paper will explore the erotic construction of Red and the wolf, where both are objects and subjects of conflicting and disturbing sexual ideologies, through a case study of David Slade’s film *Hard Candy* (2005). The production provoked an angry response from male audience members at its premiere at the Sundance Film Festival allegedly due to its castration scene. However, I would argue that in a production where the audience is dared to perceive a minor as sexually knowing, and where the “wolf” is portrayed in a sexually passive and tortured position, there is within this response a more complex erotic problem. In reversing the dynamics of Red and the wolf the film engages with Laura Mulvey’s seminal work on the cinematic gaze which focuses on the to-be-looked-at-ness of the female body and Carol Clover’s work on the tortured eroticised female form in the horror film. The trend to depict Red as the *femme-fatale* has always been popular, and while in some recent productions this predictably articulates a fear of “monstrous” female sexuality, as an unconscious appropriation *Hard Candy* challenges our in/ability to distinguish between eroticism and torture, violence, and romance.

Helena M. Hoyle (Bristol University):

‘Erotica in adaptations of *The Odyssey*: ‘Keeping it up’

‘I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.’ These are the words of Molly Bloom in a moment of rapture at the end of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. The reader is enticed into an image of Odysseus and Penelope in their bed during a moment of passion, Odysseus’ homecoming; the climax of the epic. Many modern appropriations of *The Odyssey* contain an element of the erotic, or the explicit: why is this? Why do we want to see Odysseus *in flagrante*? Using examples from fan fiction, the graphic novel *Tank Girl: The Odyssey* and James Joyce’s *Ulysses* I will explore the motivation behind these sexually explicit versions of *The Odyssey* and their effect on its position in the canon. To aid this exploration, I will be drawing heavily on Roland Barthes’ *The Pleasure of the Text*, and its theorization on the eroticism of reading, in order to argue that sexually explicit depictions of Odysseus express our desire to keep him potent, and in an intimate position in the canon.

Russ Hunter (Northumbria University)

'1001 horrifically erotic nights: the political economy of the Italian exploitation film and genre adaptation'

Banned in many countries for long periods of time and playing a central role in the Video Nasties phenomenon in the UK, from the 1970s onwards the Italian horror film has long attracted a great deal of controversy. The controversy surrounding their involvement in a moral panic sedimented their reputation as both trashy *and* potentially dangerous objects, leading them to be linked to popular notions of the potentially dangerous 'effects' of watching high-gore-content horror. Those few articles that have examined the Italian horror film in any detail have tended to use psychoanalysis in order to explore a perceived troublesome underlying gender politics. However, little work has been done in examining the political economy of the late-period Italian horror film. In this sense the adaptation of two commercially successful genres – horror and pornography – into a short-lived horror-porn generic hybrid at the end of the 1970s, most notably encapsulated in Joe D'Amato's *Erotic Nights of the Living Dead*, offers an interesting example of genre adaptation motivated by the logic of exploitation cinema. This paper will therefore examine the ways in which D'Amato's work, in attempting to combine the commercially successful aspects of these two genres, represents the ultimate conclusion of the logic of Italian exploitation cinema – the coupling of high-gore horror with hardcore pornography.

Anita Jarczok (University of Limerick):

'Eroticising Nin, eroticising women – Philip Kaufman's *Henry and June*'

Henry and June directed by Philip Kaufman and released in 1990 is based on Anaïs Nin's unexpurgated diary under the same title. Kaufman's creation was the first film which got NC-17 rating in America. This sparked many controversies, and, as result, the film got extra publicity in the press which hotly debated the change of the rating system. Anaïs Nin and the posthumous publication of the first volume of the unexpurgated diary, *Henry and June*, in 1986, was just as controversial: Nin's carefully shaped image, which she put forward during her lifetime, collapsed. In my paper, rather than asking how faithfully Nin's life is represented in Kaufman's film and how closely the film follows Nin's *Henry and June*, I propose to investigate these three questions: What is the role of the film in constructing Nin's public image?; How does eroticising Nin in the film affect her image as a writer?; and a broader one, Does Kaufman's representation of women and sexual acts reinforce or challenge certain stereotypes connected with femininity and sexuality? In order to answer these questions, I examine some of Kaufman's choices: firstly, his choice to concentrate on this particular period of Nin's life; secondly, the way he creates Anaïs Nin as a character; thirdly, the frequent display of naked female bodies, and finally his construction of sexual scenes.

Beth Johnson (Keele University):

'Perverting the age-gap on-screen: eroticism, adaptation and attachment'

Focusing on the themes of age and perversion, this paper will argue that that the appropriation of eroticism in Cédric Kahn's filmic text *L'ennui* (1998), functions through the perverse representation of age-gap relationships. Adapted from Alberto Moravia's classical text *La noia* (1960) or *The Empty Canvas*, Kahn's text foregrounds age-gap attachments as excruciatingly erotic, elusive and obsessional. Analysing the interrelations between the characters Cécilia (Sophie Guillemin), Martin (Charles Berling), Cécilia's father, (Maurice Antoni) and Meyers (Robert Kraymer), Kahn's adaptation makes visible both the emotional disconnections that can occur in age-gap relationships as well as drawing upon the frisson of age-gap perversity. Exploring age-gap expectations, I argue that while *L'ennui* replicates the coda of eroticism associated with the visual image of young women and older men often found in pornographic texts, Kahn's text situates teenage Cécilia as a mechanised sex-object only in order to pervert the erotic expectations of the audience. Moreover, Kahn seeks to problematise the positioning of erotic desire in an avant garde age of both boredom and excess. Invoking stylistic echoes of *Last Tango in Paris* (Bertolucci, 1972), erotic perversion is remapped through the themes of emotional disconnection and sexual anti-climax.

Vasileios Kantas (London South Bank University)
'Photographic renditions of sexuality drawn from literary sources'

My paper aspires to present some photography-based works that deal with subjects drawn from sexuality-driven literature. Starting with my own practice, I will refer to my endeavour to visualize some personages mentioned by Michel Foucault in his work upon *The History of Sexuality*. As he suggests, a disciplinary power which society exerted over its members caused repression of the corporeal needs and desires. Specific mechanisms of knowledge and power centering on sex, as the hysterization of women's bodies, the pedagogization of children's sex, the socialization of procreative behaviour, and the psychiatrization of perverse pleasure, produced specific identity types. These human types, stigmatized for their abnormal sexuality, are protagonists in my series and are refashioned and relocated in contemporary era. The paper will discuss directorial strategies of rendering visible characters that have been initially shaped on a written form.

Anthony McKenna (University of the West of England):
'International production, sexual politics and the *Confessions* reboot that never was'

The *Confessions* series of the 1970s was a hugely successful British sex-comedy franchise. The books were written by Christopher Wood, published under the pseudonym Timothy Lea, and spawned a series of four films which, in turn, inspired many rip-offs and cash-ins. Though hugely successful at the time, the films were critically derided upon release and are still often used by film scholars and historians to represent the low water mark of British cinema in the difficult 1970s. In the 1980s, Michael Klinger – executive producer of the original films – unsuccessfully sought to revive the franchise, and the attempt to adapt the *Confessions* series to fit the morals and mores of the 1980s is the subject of this paper. The original *Confessions* series, though funded and distributed by a major American studio – Columbia – sought to appeal to a peculiarly British sensibility. By contrast, the 1980s attempted reboot sought to internationalise their appeal by making the protagonist American and setting the film in Australia. Also, correspondence related to the project shows that the producers wanted the new adaptations to reflect not only a post-feminist world, but also contemporary concerns about HIV/AIDS by following the widespread industry practice of privileging romantic love over sexual adventures. With research drawn from extensive consultation of Michael Klinger's personal papers, the paper will investigate the difficulties of attempting to re-adapt bawdy British comedies for an international audience at a time when sexual behaviour on-screen was subject to controversy and considerable self-censorship.

Xavier Mendik (Brunel University):
'That's l'amorte: Joe D'Amato and the Sadean art of love'

Up until his death in 1999, Joe D'Amato (AKA Aristide Massaccesi), remained one of Italy's most controversial bad-boys of cult cinema. Despite working in a variety of genres from horror to pornography, post-apocalypse science fiction to neo-noir/soft-core thriller, an unsettling eroticisation of death and decay remained the consistent theme throughout the director's work. At his most controversial, D'Amato pioneered a series of bizarre 'sex and death' genre-hybrids such as *Le Notti Erotiche Dei Morti Viventi* (*Erotic Nights of the Living Dead* [1979]) and *Holocausto Porno* (*Porno Holocaust* [1980]), in which a European woman is forced to have anal sex with a third-world zombie. Although Joe D'Amato's later hard-core productions of the 1980s and 1990s (such as *X-Hamlet* [1994], *Barone Von Masoch* [1994] and *Tarzan-X: Shame Of Jane* [1994]), seem to share little connection with the director's earlier, controversial output, this paper uses recent re-readings of Sade to explore an essential continuity between D'Amato's controversial 1970s works and these later pornographic epics, exploring the extent to which they share a controversial continuity via an emphasis on horrific regimes of punishment, suffering and male sexual exhibitionism. By analysing the two D'Amato films *120 Days of the Anal* and *The Marquis De Sade* (both 1995), it shall be argued that these later films not only use the motif of the sexual libertine as a narrative agent, but retain stylistic and repetitive structures that also draw parity with both D'Amato's earlier controversial works and Sade's fiction. Adapting recent re-readings of the politics of sexual difference depicted in Sade's work, I shall also argue that D'Amato movies also disrupt totalised and empowered visions of

masculinity, which shall be considered through an analysis of D'Amato's use of the Italian porn icon Rocco Siffredi.

Johnny Walker (De Montfort University):

'The Lust Continent: when British horror and hardcore come together'

A now famous essay written by Julian Petley (1986) shed light on an area of British cinema that had, up until then, been ignored by most film critics. This "repressed side of British cinema", what Petley would refer to as 'the lost continent', constituted "a dark, disdained thread [...] crossing authorial and generic boundaries" that was "always received critically with fear and disapproval." Since the 1990s, however, a lot of time has been spent within the academy 'rediscovering' these films, with large volumes such as Rigby's *English Gothic* (2002) and Steve Chibnall's *Quota Quickies* (2009) stressing the vibrancy and richness of this previously repressed terrain. However, it remains a truism today that 'other' contemporary British cinemas (that even Petley didn't acknowledge) which came to prominence in the 90s, such as the amateur film and – what this paper will be focussing on – pornography, remain marginal to (and in many cases void from) any academic discussion on British National Cinema. With this in mind, and by using the British hard-core parodies of *Dracula* – *Cathula* and *Cathula II* – as case studies, the present paper will interrogate the following questions. Firstly, how does a 'rediscovered' genre of British cinema – in our case, the horror film – fluidly interact with the still repressed genre of hard-core pornography, and what implications does this have on current academic discussion surrounding horror cinema, the arena of porn studies and issues of genre? Secondly, how do the *Cathula* films utilise narrative, when pornography is traditionally said to be devoid of such form and structure? Lastly, can the *Cathula* movies be considered as part of a British National Cinema, and if so, in what ways do they convey 'Britishness' onscreen and throughout their promotional material? My paper will show how horror and pornography (genres that are closely related due to their demands of the spectator) attain a particular resonance indebted to alleged British traditions of Gothic horror and the sex film. As such, via an analysis of editing and narrative, I will argue that the *Cathula* films might be seen to challenge pornography's disrepute and present hard-core features as part of a national institution of cinematic practice.

Thomas Watson (Northumbria University):

'There's something rotten in the state of Texas: exploitation, adaptation and *The Texas Vibrator Massacre*'

Although it is not necessarily a new phenomenon to address, the cinematic amalgamation of both Exploitation, Horror and Hardcore Pornography is an interesting one to examine in terms of representation and appropriation of specific generic conventions and iconography. In this instance, my paper will commence with an initial analysis of those films which came to surface amidst the American Exploitation surge within the 1970's, this perceivable era of 'Grindhouse Sleaze and Excess' producing some increasingly interesting examples of what can only be identified as Exploitative, Horror-Porn crossovers. Here, I will be thinking of the psychedelic occult porn movie *Hardcore* (Hugo, 1974), and the rather obscure (and increasingly graphic) films of Shaun Costello (*Forced Entry*, 1972 and *Waterpower*, 1974). Although these films will not form the principle basis for analysis, they are important in locating the emergence of graphic representations of Hardcore Sex and increasingly violent exploitation, issues which I believe to be addressed within *The Texas Vibrator Massacre*. Using the theories of Jay McRoy in his article 'Parts is Parts': Pornography, Splatter Films and the Politics of Corporeal Disintegration, I aim to examine the ways in which both the Hardcore Porn film and relevant examples from within the Horror and Exploitation sub-genres locate the cinematic body as being in a constant state of flux and fragmentation. In McRoy's terms, these films seem to 'reveal the body's corporeal and ontological boundaries as imaginary', the body itself susceptible to great levels of intrusion and ultimately destruction. However, these ideas posit these two distinctive (albeit increasingly conflating) genres as separate cinematic entities, grouping them together yet never fully realising their intertextual potential. The question I aim to address is what exactly is at stake when a text emerges that so efficiently merges these two genres together, moving outside normative generic definition and into issues of problematic representation. Does this perhaps present a doubling of

corporeal threat, the body violated through increasingly violent hardcore sex and then ultimately exposed to further degradation and brutal murder? Utilising and amalgamation of the respective theories of Linda Williams (in terms of pornographic representation) and Linda Hutcheon (with regards to adaptation), I aim to examine *The Texas Vibrator Massacre* as a cinematic appropriation of what has been regarded as a staple of cult exploitation (Hooper's original ultimately garnering this accolade over time). I aim to discuss a certain tension that comes to emerge whereby a film produced within an era of excessive exploitation (although in which no real violence or excess is explicitly represented) is exploited within itself.