

# Some comments by Margaret Kalms

on the Lecture and presentation

## **BLUE IN BLACK AND WHITE**

by Prof Jill Julius Matthews, Australian National University

Professor Jill Julius Matthews gave an extremely interesting history of blue movies in Australia using material from the Australian National Film and Sound Archive on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2008. It was based on her article *Blue Movies in Australia: a Preliminary History* published in NFSJ Journal, Volume 2, Number 3, 2007. Her talk extended over two hours with many short clips to illustrate her ideas. It was well researched, informative and entertaining. The period of study was from 1890s to 1970s and showed many styles of story telling tempered by the limitations and developments in technology.

This erotic history depicted different styles of relationship between the sexes and was an insight to both men's fantasies and women's unequal place in society. Women were often depicted simply as bodies for men's pleasure. It was clear that most of the erotic films were made for male audiences.

Despite this male audience, the erotic history was depicted as fun without any violence, pain, or coercion. There was no scene of any male overpowering a woman. All the women actors looked like they were willing participants. Overall, the film clips were fun images of playful bawdy sexual visual jokes that delighted in the absurdity of sex.

Over the study period, many changes in women's underwear were apparent. It was interesting to see these intimate garments worn and taken off, demonstrating that some were quite complex to wear. Seeing such garments in a museum is lifeless by comparison. Interestingly, very few men's underwear were shown. Below are summaries of several clips that I liked.

1. An interesting clip was done in costume depicting a Musketeer and a serving girl. She was wearing no underwear which may have been common in feudal Europe for country workers. Certainly no panties would have been practical for women while working in the fields. After the usual kisses and fondles on the bodice, he lifts her full skirt to reveal a neat triangle of lush pubic hair. He tickles her vagina and inserts a finger. When it comes out it is covered with blood. He then gazes at his finger, smells the blood and begins to lick it. This man is relishing the touch, sight, smell and taste of this woman. He is relishing everything about her. It was refreshing to see a man expressing such joyous open desire. The woman was flirting, laughing and giggling throughout especially when she was touched on her vulva. The overall impression is that sex play is enjoyable to both the man and the woman.

2. A cartoon clip was shown of a man with very exaggerated genitalia. He noticed a beautiful woman who makes eyes at him, so his penis leads him to her. (Isn't this true!) They kiss and fondle for a while with what looks like mutual enjoyment. There was quite a bit of breast fondling, and he even drank her milk and was squirted with it! She keeps smiling and giving him the eye until he tries to mount her. His penis thrusts but is blocked. He reaches into her vagina and pulls out an object. He tries to enter a second time. He pulls out another object. Finally, they are able to have mutual sex.

After sex, his penis comes out with a crab on it! The penis and balls run off in fright dislodging themselves from the man. The man goes running after them. When he finally catches up, he scoops up his wayward genitalia gives them a tender hug and kiss, then firmly places them back where they belong. He walks away happy.

I laughed at the depiction of the woman who had 'blocks' that stopped her initially from enjoying or even participating in sex. It is certainly true for me and probably many women, that if I am worried about something, I cannot enjoy sex easily. The blocks need to be removed first. Sometimes I can do this myself. I can 'take time out' and relax, do something I enjoy, or talk to a friend. Then when I am relaxed I can put effort into 'setting the scene'. I find when I dress up in sexy lingerie, dance to my favourite music, dim the lights or otherwise set the scene for sex, I can often lift my mood. Sometimes my husband is able to remove blocks for me, like the man in the cartoon. He is more subtle though. His actions that remove my blocks are, listening to my worries, helping with household tasks, snuggling together while watching TV and sometimes we go out to dinner. After these things I'm relaxed and feeling loving for sex.

I also laughed at the man chasing his wayward genitalia. The tenderness of his concern for their potential injury after the encounter with the crab was touching. I think men have a bolder and more caring attitude towards their genitals than women. Generally women have a less playful and more secretive attitude to their genitals. Many women do not regularly even look at their bodies 'down there'. I have not done a survey of this idea, it is simply my opinion. His delight in his body was refreshing.

3. A sex education and health film from 1950s. This clip included a depiction of menstruation. It was very clinical - simply a chart of data. It was a cold, scientific view of menstruation without a mention of how it feels to menstruate, nor what menstruation means for the woman or for society generally. I dislike this clinical view of menstruation and by default, a clinical view of women's bodies. I aim to illustrate ideas, meanings and feelings surrounding menstruation in my photography.