

Porn and erotica, and their importance.

(Wally Holland: 5 September 2005)

Erotica shows what is *possible*.

Pornography can do this to a limited degree, *at first*. Hence the excitement teenage boys feel when they discover porn for the first time: before it can foreclose on erotic possibilities, porn enables them.

But *pornographic culture* - and I mean that phrase in a number of ways all at once - can only show us what is *expected*. It kills mystery. It raises expectations without communicating demands. The presumptive viewing subject of a porn film is not a lover and is not expected to be, but free reign is given to his expectations. Imagination plays no part.

A pornographic culture is one with a diminished appreciation for the *erotic*, which is to say the generative. It is a society in which lovers are all too rare. (Do I need to make the obvious joke? They are replaced by *fuckers*.)

Americans too often develop a sexual vocabulary without also developing an erotic or *sensual* one.

Love, to be love (as we know it), must remain a mystery. Lovers must embrace that mystery and *serve* it. Love is created and maintained.

Pornography is about satisfaction, which is to say, completion. Porn is ending. Love is *dwelling*.

(Hence the lover's perverse love of heartache, the ultimate dwelling place because denial of returned-love feeds and nurtures itself.)

(Hence also the brutality and boredom of lengthy pornographic entertainments, from *Debbie Does Dallas* to *Titus Andronicus* and back.)

Entertainment of all kinds can of course be pornographic.

Erotica can both provoke and evoke. Porn - whether peddling flesh in a peep show, flogging hurricane deaths on the Weather Channel, or offering the visceral thrill of *Grand Theft Auto* - forecloses on the erotic possibilities of past and future.

Ours is, in general, a pornographic culture.

The *erotic* or *lover's discourse* is, for whatever reason, a hard sell (though a useful tool for *selling*).

It hasn't always been so, and needn't always be.

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