



British Board of Film Classification 3 Soho Square London W1D 3HD t:020 7440 1570 f:020 7287 0141 <http://www.bbfc.co.uk>

12 March 2007

E Goodman  
Chair of Campaign Against Censorship  
23 Budgen Drive  
Redhill  
Surrey  
RH1 2QB

Dear E Goodman,

Thank you for your letter which David Cooke has asked me to respond to.

As noted in our guidelines, the BBFC will not classify material which it believes to be in breach of the criminal law. One of the UK statutes the BBFC needs to consider when viewing works for classification is The Obscene Publications Act 1959. This legislation makes it illegal to publish or distribute a work which is obscene. A work may be found obscene if, taken as a whole, it has a tendency to deprave and corrupt (that is, make morally bad) a significant proportion of those likely to see it.

Although the Obscene Publications Act does not identify any particular activity as 'obscene' in itself, or provides a legal definition of 'obscenity', the Crown Prosecution Service regards the presence of certain activities in a sex work as firm indicators that a prosecution is likely to be successful. We define a 'sex work' as a work "whose primary purpose is sexual arousal or stimulation". Both urolagnia and coprophagia, when present in a sex work, have been identified as two of these activities.

You may like to know that certain consensual S&M practices and bondage are permitted. However, under UK law, an assault which causes injury which goes beyond 'trifling and transient' is an unlawful activity, even if the injured party consents. Regardless of country of filming, depictions of S&M activities which appear to cause injury which goes beyond 'trifling and transient' are likely to render the work obscene. Such material is also likely to raise harm issues under the Video Recordings Act 1984. Blows which raise weals, burst blood vessels or break the skin are therefore unlikely to be acceptable and neither are shots of knives or flames or similar being held close to the skin. Extra caution is also needed if participants are restrained, even if they have consented to being so.

While you may not agree with the above assessment of such material, I hope you will appreciate the reasons why the BBFC is required to remove it. You may like to know that all BBFC classification decisions, including details of cuts if any, are available on our main website - <http://www.bbfc.co.uk> - by using the 'search' facility. You will also find our statistics available on our main website.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pete Johnson', written over a horizontal line.

Pete Johnson  
**Head of Policy and Business Development**