

## What's all this fuss about pornography?

What is it about obscenity, pornography and erotica that excites the humble citizens of sedate and kind-of-romantic towns like Springfield Oregon to mass protest? They raise such a disproportionate ruckus one would think the impetus was more than unclothed human beings engaged in sexual union with other (equally unclothed, and not always in a group greater than two) human beings.

Is skin all that alarming? Does the sight of an embrace, a kiss, a touch, damn the participant through all time? What of an observer — are they also damned? It's a strange price to pay for images that have not only been exploited in magazines, but have inspired works of art.

Perhaps that's it — the extremes of Botticelli's *Venus* and a picture of a woman in tattered spandex need to be defined with the middleground being the form and expression of *American Gothic*.

Then again there are those who shout "God is against it" if a person is depicted undraped. Others cry "thou shalt not commit adultery" and claim a photograph of coitus describes adultery. The cheap newspapers in supermarkets have headlines that scream "Hollywood adultery" to young and old. That's all right — the Hollywood adulterers are clothed and in composite photographs.

The Oxford English Dictionary — the first and last reference — defines obscenity as foul acts and dirty work. Pornography is defined as the expression or suggestion of obscene or unchaste subjects in literature or art. By these definitions of obscenity and pornography Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, as well as Picasso's *Guernica* and Robert Capa's *Death in the Making*, are extremely pornographic.

Pornography is derived from the Greek word *porno*, which means harlot. The OED goes on to define pornocracy as rule by harlots, specifically the government of Rome during the first half of the tenth century. A member of the pornocracy was a pornocrat — bear that in mind the next time a Congressman's paramour publishes a hardbound or softback confessional.

It seems fitting for there to be a corner pornography shoppe in small towns all across America. Isn't this the land of the hypocritical Puritans? But let us take a moment to lament the passing of the days when grizzly bearded old men wearing long black coats would sidle up to boys in the schoolyard, lick their hairy fingers and pull open many-pocketed coats saying so like Gabby Hayes — "Say, Sonny... wanna buy some dirty pictures?" The prices were outrageous even then.

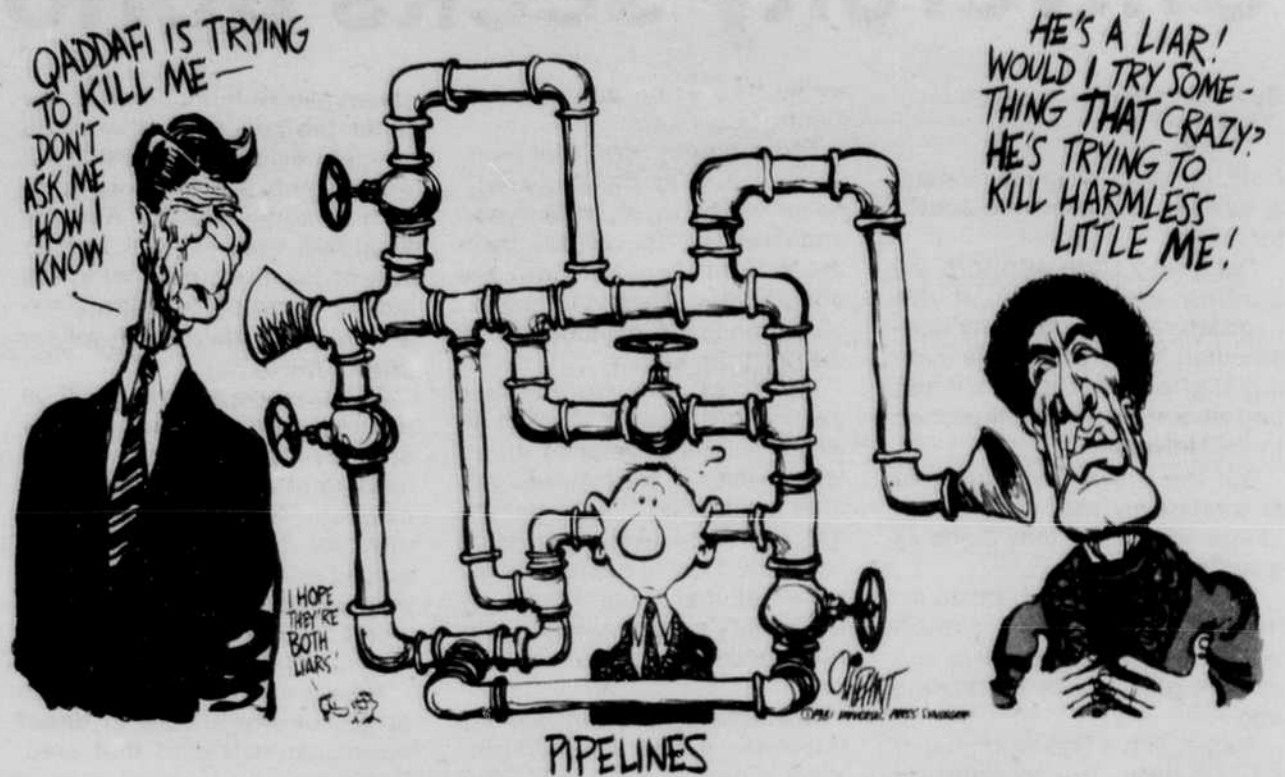
Lenny Bruce said he'd rather take his child to what were at the time called "stag films" than to a Hollywood western. "I've never seen anyone killed in a stag film," he said. And that is still true in nearly all cases except the deviate "snuff films" coming out of Brazil and many of the "specialty" films designated for particular peccadillos.

But these films are not erotic in nature — they are violent and aimed to trigger sadistic impulses. Such aberrant behavior is more detrimental to society and less justifiable than mainstream pornography. It's hardly the liberal's cup of tea to admit that such extreme examples make a strong case to not completely decriminalize pornography, as the restrictions imposed provide viable perimeters of who to allow access, and community standards. If some aspect of pornography needs restriction it is in the cases of violence being depicted as sexual. Although, how often has the mainstream, so-called aboveground media, used a situation of rape as plot or set-up for a sexual sequence in a book, movie, or a play?

The arguments that pornography tends to depict women as willfully servile and somehow enjoying of sexual humiliation are valid in much of the sleazier pornography. Pornography is male dominated in production and orientation.

Pornography, obscenity and erotica raises such ticklish questions. Why do people react so vigorously against it? Is it because it runs counter to all they were taught (regardless of consent) in church and their homes? Is it because it depicts by word or image an act of sexual congress between two people? Do people still believe the fallacy that reading or watching pornography causes scortatorial madness and sets the reader off on a rampage of masturbation and rape?

Pornography and such has been with us since the times people scrawled a phallus on the wall of their cave above the couch. Every culture has its own type of pornography — in fact, dirty pictures on pots are now cherished as art works from antiquity. The question remains unanswered — if all those people are damned, why hasn't the seventh circle of hell overflowed?



## letters

### Propaganda

"Think like we do or else!" is implied by (1) University Professor Carl Hosticka, Lane County Democratic Campaign Chairman and (2) Oregon's news reporters.

Hosticka intends to label "mainstream" democratic candidates by issuing pre-primary endorsements and political reporters will cover only "serious" candidates!

The U.S. Constitution's First Amendment goal of freedom of speech is to achieve "the widest

possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources." 436 US 775.

Jefferson said "Truth is great and will prevail if left to herself; that she is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error, and has nothing to fear from the conflict unless by human interposition disarmed of her natural weapons, free argument and debate: errors ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them."

Call it what you will, Fascism or Communism, every totalitarian movement has controlling

political party and public thought as its hallmark. It has meant the establishment of government by decree, by bureaucratic planning, by concentrated and irresponsible power.

Indeed, who has the right to say what a party stands for until a candidate's issues are accepted or rejected by an informed public's primary vote? And what news reporter has the right to judge one candidate's issues "serious" and another's not?

John M. Reed  
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### editor's note

"We're not going to let them forget Vietnam."

Ron Phillips sat in the dim EMU Fishbowl two years ago, vowing with a soft, emotional voice and strong words to fight for recognition of Vietnam veterans and against war. He said he felt like he was finally "at home" in Eugene and with the University Veterans Association.

"We're going to keep *fucking* screaming about Vietnam until they hear it," muttered fellow veteran Russ Linebarger, a tense, lean man who went to Vietnam as a patriotic 17-year-old aching to fight like John Wayne and returned as an angry young man with emotions bunched inside him like a clenched fist.

And there was John Lawrence, the veteran who spent time in Vietnam as a medic.

There were other veterans as well. Charlie. Jesse. And Dave Isenberg, the one who spent hours reading government documents trying to second guess military moves toward the draft and war.

Members of the UVA were a small tight group that, for two years, was one of the most active on campus. They arranged rallies against the draft and war, scheduled speeches, memorials, rap groups, marches and hosted — for two years — a regional conference on the problems of Vietnam veterans.

"There's a sense of community and support in the UVA," an outside observer commented. "They're willing to scrap through and take a chance. That takes a lot of courage."

That was also two years ago. Since then, jobs, school, the new downtown vet center and disagreements with the direction of Dave's current one-man UVA have sucked the organization dry.

Ron still spends time in the now-bright Fishbowl, but he's mostly alone. Russ moved to Portland, then Hawaii. John is working full time in Eugene. Jesse is working for the city of Coos Bay. Charlie is busy with school and other things.

Ron — who is back in town after a six-month leave — doesn't know how long he will hang around. He is left with the shell of a house he once called home. "I've given myself six weeks before I make a decision."

Dave has asked the Incidental Fee Committee not to fund the UVA next year, saying the group is at the end of its usefulness. He has asked the ASUO to give the UVA office space — still cluttered with two-year-old posters, stickers and leaflets — to Students for a Nuclear Free Future.

Maybe Dave, as some have charged, scared off other veterans with his command of the UVA. Maybe the veterans just got tired of fighting the past and trying to predict the future. Maybe economic concerns overshadow anti-war rallies. Maybe they're tired of talking about a war nobody wants to remember.

So, the UVA crumbles. Memories fade. Friends see less of each other. War wounds scab over, leaving scars. But John, Russ, Ron, Charlie and other vets will never forget Vietnam.

Neither should we.