

Polonius. What do you read, my Lord?
Hamlet. Words, words, words.

Hamlet. Act II, sc. 2, line 195

Words, words, words, have in the last few years been the subject of irate parents and nery school boards. The result has been a critical scrutiny of contemporary books and a reexamination of classical literature. The purpose behind the zealots ire over passages and outright banning of books is to protect the present generation and generations in the future from the nefarious influence of *certain* words and scenes.

cort fernald

sidelong glances

The most recent casualty of the literary prudes was Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The satirical novel of the mores of the south was initially ordered removed from the curriculum of Mark Twain Intermediate School in Fairfax County, Va. — and then conditionally reinstated. The novel was attacked as racist, specifically for the frequent use of the derogatory term "nigger" for blacks.

Other authors and books currently under attack are John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-five*, Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer*, J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, P.L. Travers' *Mary Poppins*, and *American Heritage Dictionary*.

Presumably, the reason these works are being banned is for their use of the "wrong" words to describe events or people. But words are the chronicles of human sensation — they can't always be made shining to convey the truth of experience.

"There is a weird power in a spoken word . . . And a word carries far — very far — deals destruction through time as the bullets go flying through space."

Joseph Conrad. *Lord Jim*. chap. 15

Much of the power of words are in the eyes and minds of the receivers. The difference between the "right" word and a "good" word is much like the difference between love and lust. Both motivate, yet one cheapens the meaning of the other. "Right" words are imperative. That's not rightness in a socially acceptable vein — that's rightness for context and style.

Approximation of words tend to become amusing. Norman Mailer, in *Naked and the Dead*, and Tennessee Williams, in *Streetcar Named Desire* were forced to use *frig* and *rut* rather than the more appropriate term.

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

Proverbs. XXV, 11

Probably the ultimate in the fearsome words subject to latter-day bowdlerism (after Thomas *Bowdler*, 1754-1825, Eng. editor who in 1818 published an expurgated Shakespeare) is the German *ficken*.

Eric Partridge's *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English 1961* defines that word in this way:

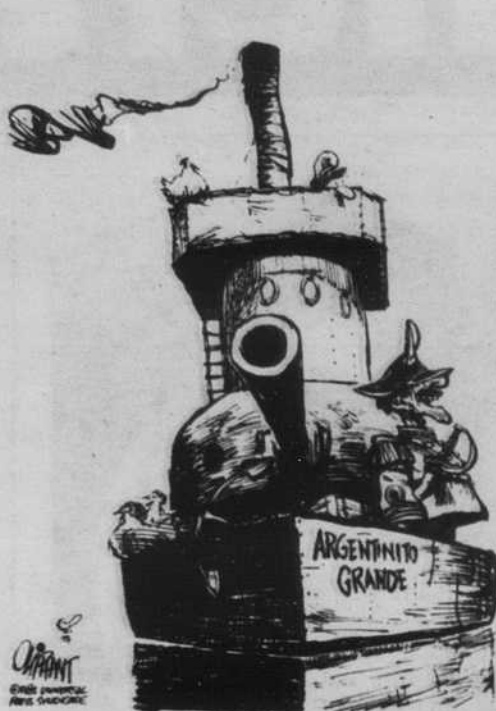
F*CK, v.t. and i. To have sexual connexion. The earliest and latest dictionaries to record it are Florio (s.v. *fottore*) and Grose, the O.E.D., S.O.D., E.D.D. all 'banning' it (cf. note at c**t): the efforts of James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence have not restored it to its orig. dignified status. Either ex greek, L. *futuere*, Fr. *foutre*, the medial c. and the abridged form being due to a Teutonic radical and an A.S. tendency, or more prob., as A.W. Read (after Kluge) convincingly maintains, ex Ger. *ficken*, lit. to strike, hence to copulate with.

I always thought f*ck came from the Puritans who put wantons in the stocks for unlawful carnal knowledge. If you see Kay, tell her I fucked up and was wrong.

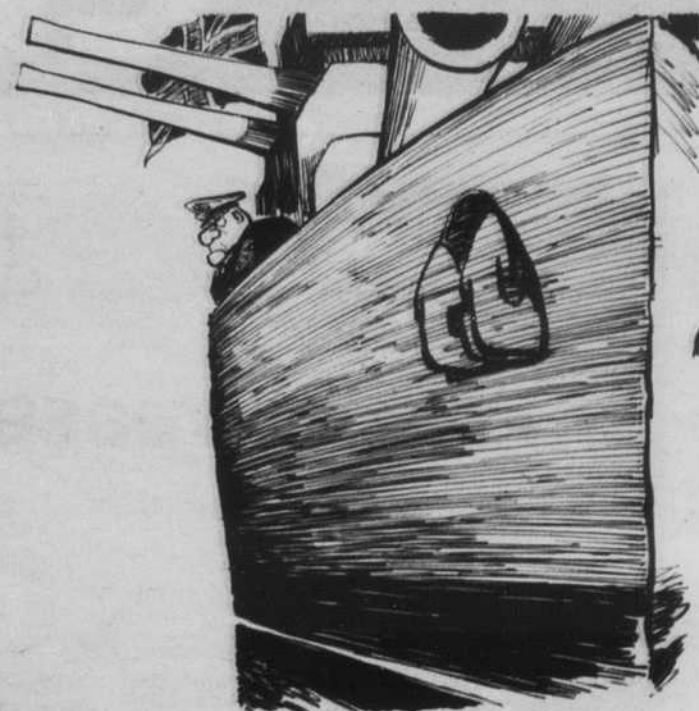
The language is already being destroyed by illiteracy — it's unimaginable that intelligent people would allow the language to be limited further.

But words are things, and a small drop of ink,
Falling like dew upon a thought, produces
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think.

Lord Byron. *Don Juan*. Canto III stanza 88



'HOW NICE TO MEET YOU, SEÑOR — I BELIEVE WE HAVE A MUTUAL FRIEND, RONALD REAGAN...'



letters

Woman(kind)

Imagine that when I say "Womankind" the term would include you and all men. Pretend that this is a custom and men have always been included in the term "Womankind." What effect might this have on your sense of identity? And what would this suggest about your status in society.

Calling "people" "human beings" enhances one's grammar and one's ethics.

Janet Brown
Senior, fine arts

Scapegeeks

All right already. Haven't we heard enough snide bullying of the Greek system? I admit, it provides a handy scapegoat; its members scream and yell during rush, put obnoxious messages in the Emerald, and too often include a rather sheltered portion of the white upper class. The system's critics certainly see an ugly minority — loud, pretentious people always draw attention first. Therefore, it's convenient for observers — those too prejudiced to examine further — to accept that minority as the norm. However, the Emerald has printed so many of those trite reprimands that they seem almost cliched.

What about the other side of the story? I came to the University an ardent non-conformist who scorned the Greek system loudly. To avoid hypocrisy, I became involved to find out exactly what I criticized. What I criticized has led me, directly and indirectly, to many bright, sensitive, intellectual friends

(Greek and independent), invaluable experience with several ASUO programs, increased political awareness and, ironically, a feeling of personal independence. I'm not saying these would not have happened otherwise, but life does continue normally within the system.

I don't think I'm a stereotypical Greek. However, if that stereotype includes those who have worked for the ERA, the nuclear arms freeze, rallied against U.S. assistance to El Salvador, and condemn elitism and white, male supremacy, than perhaps I do represent the stereotype, because there are many other Greeks who fight for the same goals as I. Yes, it's true. *Geeks* are people too.

Juliet Hyams
Junior, journalism

Ripped-off

Recently, I moved from an apartment managed by a well-known University area management company. I had a security deposit which was totally refundable. A little over a month later (after I moved) I received a check for less than half the amount of the deposit. I was quite upset since I had cleaned the apartment thoroughly.

How many off-campus students get ripped-off by the campus area management companies and do nothing about it? If you could care less about the deposit (usually \$150 to \$200) you could trash the place, but most college students could use the deposit money.

I strongly object to these management companies wrongfully withholding deposit money. I've had friends hassle with this same problem. I, myself, got some legal assistance and received the remainder of my deposit back. These companies don't want legal hassles, so they will comply when threatened.

I just want to make off-campus students aware of the fact that management companies will take advantage of the renters deposit upon departure. The Better Business of the city of Eugene and other legal advice can be attained through the university. If you feel you've been or are being ripped-off get legal advice and confront these companies.

Leslie Fournier
Junior, music

letters policy

The Emerald will accept and attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on issues, ideas and topics of interest to the University community.

The letters **must** be limited to 250 words, signed, and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in to The Emerald offices, EMU 300.

The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length, style, or content. Publication is dependent on the space available.

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