



Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America

By Laura Kipnis

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In a book that completely changes the terms of the pornography debate, Laura Kipnis challenges the position that porn perpetuates misogyny and sex crimes. First published in 1996, *Bound and Gagged* opens with the chilling case of Daniel DePew, a man convicted—in the first computer bulletin board entrapment case—of conspiring to make a snuff film and sentenced to thirty-three years in prison for merely trading kinky fantasies with two undercover cops.

Using this textbook example of social hysteria as a springboard, Kipnis argues that criminalizing fantasy—even perverse and unacceptable fantasy—has dire social consequences. Exploring the entire spectrum of pornography, she declares that porn isn't just about gender and that fantasy doesn't necessarily constitute intent. She reveals Larry Flynt's *Hustler* to be one of the most politically outspoken and class-antagonistic magazine in the country and shows how fetishes such as fat admiration challenge our aesthetic prejudices and socially sanctioned disgust. Kipnis demonstrates that the porn industry—whose multibillion-dollar annual revenues rival those of the three major television networks combined—know precisely how to tap into our culture's deepest anxieties and desires, and that this knowledge, more than all the naked bodies, is what guarantees its vast popularity.

Bound and Gagged challenges our most basic assumptions about America's relationship with pornography and questions what the calls to eliminate it are really attempting to protect.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Laura Kipnis, who teaches film at Northwestern University, adopts an unpopular stance: that of speaking for those whose sexual tendencies stray from the acceptable path. As such, she adds a different perspective in the always-raging debate on the role of pornography in America. Among her arguments is that pornography is often overlooked as a class issue, couched instead almost always as a morality matter. Realizing that many of those employed by the sex industry and those who support it are separated by class from those who deem it so unsavory, provides a particular insight into the perspective of those sitting in judgment.

From Publishers Weekly

Kipnis (*Ecstasy Unlimited*) argues in five loosely connected essays that just about everyone—from the religious right to militant feminists—misunderstands and misjudges pornography, which she considers a form of fantasy that is an end in itself and not the cause of something else, such as rape. The individual essays deal with a homosexual sadomasochist who made the mistake of discussing his fantasies on the Internet with an undercover cop and was entrapped and sentenced to 33 years in prison; America's fat phobia and how it is reflected in fat pornography; transvestite pornography, focusing on the revealing photographic self-portraits featured in drag publications; and the rise and fall of Larry Flynt and *Hustler*, with an emphasis on the magazine's populist political philosophy. The disjointed concluding essay, "How to Look at Pornography," tries, unsuccessfully, to pull all this material together, touching along the way on subjects that range from masturbation to Andrea Dworkin's alleged misreading of pornography as a feminist issue to Jeffrey Masson's legal battles with Janet Malcolm and others. Kipnis's individual essays make a stronger case than does her book as a whole, but she is a lively and engaging writer who argues, often convincingly, that we would be better off simply thinking of pornography as just another form of science fiction.

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From Kirkus Reviews

"[Kipnis] provides a succinct, thoughtful, and lively case for porn as a significant contemporary cultural form."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Gina Gregg:

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Charlie Smith:

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