



Obscenity

OFTEN WONDER about my father.

I wonder if he ever fucked my mom in the ass.

If so, did he pull out and spew his shit-smearred load on her back?

Did he ever eat her pussy?

Did he ever tell her to wash the stinking thing?

Did he ever make her cum?

Did he fuck her while she was pregnant with me?

Did his angry blue-collar cock squish up against my baby head?

And what about mom?

I wonder about her, too.

Did she ever suck dad off and slurp his nuts?

Did she swallow?

Did she ever think about his best friend while he was balling her?

Did she ever fantasize about women?

Did she really want a black guy?

Did she ever play with her clit?

Did she even know she had one?

My mother didn't make any sense. She'd go insane whenever I'd say the word "fuck," and yet she fucked my father in order to bear the foul-mouthed child who would say the evil word. To her, the word was more offensive than the act it signified. But make no mistake—she knew, from personal experience, what the word 'fuck' meant. She just couldn't bear to be reminded about it.

Sometimes, I wonder about myself.

I'm not sure how many spermy tadpoles inhabit the average male jizzload—millions? And I was the only li'l fishie strong enough to make it up to mom's egg. How long did I ferment inside dad's sweaty ball-sac before he launched me into mom's equally repulsive gummy womb? How long did it take me to swim up to her speckled ostrich ovum? And did I really crouch up there for nine months?

You've probably pondered some of the same things, then swiftly swept them out of your mind due to the nauseating implications. But trying to suppress something won't make it untrue. Face it—you were

once a tenant in your father's scrotal condominium. You once swam inside daddy's hairy, low-slung testes. You once shot out of his cock like a human cannonball.

If that's offensive, then so is the story of your birth. So is universal human reality.

As human beings, there are so many things we have in common:

Everyone has an anus, and they all smell.

Everyone has genitals, and most are slimy and deformed-looking.

Everyone has thoughts they might be hesitant to share.

Even you.

I often wonder about you.

And why you think I'm trying to offend you. Sorry, Gumdrop, but you aren't so important in my cosmos that I'd expend any effort trying to bruise your feelings. Hate to break it to you, but you have nothing to do with why I wonder all these things. You could walk out of the room at any time, and I'd keep wondering.

Once and for all: I don't want to offend you. Really. As hard as that might be for you to believe. My life would be a lot easier if you'd just get past being offended.

I understand *what* offends you; I just don't understand *why*.

There is no such thing as right and wrong, only sense and nonsense. And a lot of times, you don't make any sense.

There you are with your Charles Manson T-shirt, gasping at the very idea of date rape.

You contradict yourself. And I consider it my duty to write about such contradictions. I'm very dutiful that way.

The first three issues of *ANSWER Me!* had made me far more popular than I had ever wished or intended. I was tired of being loved for telling people that I hated them. I wanted the alternative underground to finally disown me. I yearned to produce something with an edge sharp enough to prune all the hipsters off the Goad Tree. I desperately sought to winnow down my fan base to the true believers. I desired readers who were able to *feel* the violence and not look away, who didn't merely view it all as some cute postmodern joke to be enjoyed from within their cozy studio apartments.

The kids had gobbled up murder and suicide as if they were peppermint ice cream. Well, what was something they *wouldn't* find cute?

Sexual violence was a good'un.

Ain't nothin' funny 'bout *dat*.

Or is there?

The year was 1994, and the girls weren't playing fair in the

gender war. Lorena Bobbitt cuts her husband's *dick* off, and yet *he's* seen as the abusive one. Neo-fem yeastpit Kathleen Hanna kvetches at 120 decibels about violence toward women, and yet she's allegedly hit more women than I have. Wannabe Warhol-slayer Valerie Solanas's *S.C.U.M. Manifesto*—which seriously advocates the male gender's extinction—was considered politically brave, while my own "Let's Hear it for Violence Toward Women!"—which was intended as a *joke*—would eventually lead to an obscenity trial.

In 1994, feminists were inventing several new reasons to feel comfortable about being a misogynist. It was the year that marked the height of the vagino-moronic "riot grrrl" movement, which mixed bad punk rock with worse politics. Riot grrrl implausibly alleged that if a lot of women acted like screeching cunts, it would somehow disprove the notion that a lot of women acted like screeching cunts.

I grew cynical when belching slabs of female swineflesh insisted that *I* was the pig. I got tired of fat, pasty cows shoving chubby fingers in my face and telling me all the things I supposedly wanted to do to them. I'd had enough of being cornered by some whiskery, jowl-laden blob of a woman shrieking about how I wanted to rape her and keep her down. Yeah, Toots, I'm really emotionally involved in your existence. It's not like you could die tomorrow, and I wouldn't blink or anything.

Y'see, there's nothing inherently *wrong* with obese, crewcut-wearing, lumberjacksque women ramming their grimy fists in each other's woolly snatches, but there's nothing innately *righteous* about it, either. It's just one of the kooky things that human animals do.

But radical feminism had become so howlingly sensitive, it was begging to be lampooned. To me, it's a frickin' laff riot whenever anyone gets upset, especially when their pain and outrage has absolutely no effect on whatever upset them in the first place.

It wasn't rape *per se* that I found funny. But the spectacle of crusaders and censors and specialists scrambling around the crime scene wearing blindfolds? *That* was a real hootenanny. The stuff of deepest, darkest tragicomedy.

Of course, if they'd been able to get the joke, I wouldn't have been telling jokes about them in the first place. That's the problem with satire: If it's done well enough, its intended targets will mistake it for the real thing. People got their polka-dotted panties wedged fudgily up their hemorrhoidal anuses as to whether *ANSWER Me! #4*, the so-called "Rape Issue," was intended to be dead serious or pure satire. Their simple jellyfish brains could only conceive of a world split neatly

in half as if it were a breakfast grapefruit—it was either supposed to be one big joke or not funny at all. There were no gray areas, and few considered the possibility that it could be simultaneously satirical and serious.

Or that some sections could be satirical while others were serious.

Or that horrifically serious matters could sometimes be terribly funny.

Or that satire could be used to drive home serious points.

And, bless my circumcised wiener, I was making some serious points, whether or not you agreed with them.

My primary point was that latter-day radical feminism had become so lost in theory and drowned in self-righteousness that rape became viewed as more of a political idea than a physical act. Feminism had grown unable to distinguish words from actions to such a degree that the two became switched: Women felt literally “assaulted” and “violated” by sexist language and imagery, whereas actual rape was viewed as an ideological tool of the patriarchy, almost more of a statement than an act.

Such muddying of the physical and theoretical led to several propositions that were so irrational, they bordered on the insane:

That all men are rapists.

That all intercourse is rape.

That rape is worse than murder.

That we live in a “rape culture.”

That rape has nothing to do with sex.

That cultural attitudes, not biological drives, are what leads to rape.

That pornography causes violence toward women.

That even the word “chick” is an expression of woman-hatred, yet the most bilious fulminations of rad-feminism don’t qualify as man-hatred.

[sound of my throat clearing]

You know, when I look down at my hard, throbbing schlong, I see a biological verity rather than a statement about gender politics. And when I look at pornography, I don’t feel like beating women, I feel like beating off. In fact, if it weren’t for their lovely, objectified naked bodies, I’d beat women a lot more than I do.

When someone tells me I want to rape them...and I don’t want to rape them...what am I to make of that? I’ve never had the slightest desire to rape anyone. I’ve never had a male friend tell me he wanted to rape anyone, either. Yet several women have told me they’ve had

fantasies of *being* raped. Therefore, I could only interpret the idea that I’m a natural-born rapist as the rank projection of some homely girl’s deep-seated fantasies.

To allege that rape is worse than murder, or that it has nothing to do with sex, is evidence of a sheltered mindset incapable of grasping the act’s physical components.

Is rape worse than murder?

Sure. And a French kiss is more extreme than a rim job.

Some say it’s worse than murder because the victim must live with the trauma, but what about the victim of crippling violence? Why is it worse to have been forcibly penetrated for five or ten minutes than it is to spend the rest of your life in a wheelchair because someone crushed your kneecaps with a baseball bat?

Because the gender-jagoffs have politicized the issue far beyond the realm of logic, to the point where a raped woman’s body is somehow more sacred than that of a murdered male. That’s why bone-dry feminist authoress Katharine MacKinnon was incensed about Bosnian “rape camps” but made not a peep about all the men and boys being hauled off to mass slaughtering grounds in that war. After all, men started that war. They asked for it.

And, of course, rape has nothing to do with sex.

And that wasn’t a penis he shoved inside you, it was a hand puppet.

Saying that rape is fundamentally nonsexual makes about as much sense as claiming that murder is nonviolent. But since the left has traditionally been pro-sex and anti-violence, they had to find some reason, however convoluted, for why sexual assault wasn’t sexual.

And their “reason” was loopy in the extreme, although it’s gained the half-assed credence of an old wives’ tale: Rape isn’t about sex, it’s about power. The rapist, fueled by hardcore pornography, pervasive cultural messages that rape is groovy, and relentless billboard images of skinny fashion models in frilly undergarments, seeks to psychologically dominate his female victim so she serves him dinner on time and starts shaving her armpits again.

BZZZZT—*wrong!*

Listen very closely:

Animals rape.

Dolphins rape. Orangutans rape. Spider monkeys rape. Scorpionflies rape. Throughout the animal kingdom, living organisms rape one another. I proved it in the “Rape Issue,” using scientific documentation.

And when those critters are out a-rapin’, it has nothing to do with psychological power. The act is one of sexual desperation—the mating

instinct gone awry—facilitated by superior physical prowess.

It isn't about spiritual evil, dummies.

It's about animal force.

Culture and morality are irrelevant to the discussion. Rape doesn't happen because women aren't whiny and self-righteous enough. It isn't caused by the *Sports Illustrated* "swimsuit" issue. The word "chick" doesn't factor into it. Astonishingly, it has nothing to do with anything that the experts think it does.

It isn't even about psychological power.

It's about physical force.

It isn't about morals.

It's about muscles.

Men rape and beat women for the same reason that dogs lick their balls—because they can.

If women were stronger, you can bet your crusty ass they'd be raping and beating men.

Nature, not culture, gave men the ability to do it. So you can blame your precious Goddess for rape and domestic violence.

Goddess. What a hypocritical cunt.

What rad-fems were saying about People With Penises was harsher and more sweepingly negative than any allegedly woman-hatin' comments they could dredge up by men. I have no problems with man-hatred—in fact, I rather enjoy it—but I scoff whenever anyone tries to mask their hatred as something nobly liberating. It wasn't their bile that annoyed me, it was that they weren't playing fair. It feels good to hate, but they weren't allowing men the same pleasure.

I felt that most literary treatments of rape pussyfooted around a sleeping ogre, skipping over the physical act and dealing only with the emotional aftermath.

Trying to understand rape solely from a victim's viewpoint was like trying to understand automobiles strictly from the perspective of the asphalt. I wanted to yank the reader right into it as a participant, experiencing the act from every possible angle, including those of pitcher and catcher. It was method writing, something that would traumatize the reader almost as much as being raped. And yet I didn't see my approach as sensationalistic. To my mind, the sensationalistic ones were those who focused on sensations at the expense of logic, who felt compelled to shellac everything with a sanctimonious glaze. The only difference between me, the tabloids, and the crusaders is that I didn't make a grand display of holding my nose. Otherwise, we were all displaying the same material.

"We're gonna get in trouble for this," Debbie would prophesy while walking past the computer screen as I worked on a layout of a naked man with a giant syringe in place of his penis. The "Rape Issue" was concocted in a sweltering, mold-ridden Hollywood apartment pulsating with the forlorn *angst* of a crumbling marriage. As monster cockroaches slowly scuttled against the hot, dusty, flea-infested carpet, I'd sip oily black coffee and write another five pages about rape. I smeared each page with the most graphic images I could acquire: fucked and bruised children, hacked and dead women, leering and sadistic men. Black eyes, chopped torsos, crushed faces, severed breasts.

At summer's end, I had magically pulled out of my ass what I consider to be the best issue of *ANSWER Me!*, a malevolent *Meisterwerk*.

But I wasn't merely parading a series of mutilated-snatch photos alongside inept sloganeering. I was presenting some ideas with the mutilated-snatch photos and inept sloganeering. And unlike my critics, I allowed the possibility that I could be wrong. It was just that I required proof. But the proof never came. The threats, condemnations, and idiotic allegations regarding my motives came instead.

When the magazine was released late in 1994, it was as if I'd thrown battery acid in my fans' faces. People swiftly reacted as if an acutely unholy event had occurred. They still talk of the Rape Issue as if it was something that never should have happened. For many, it emulated reality too well. It rang too true. People didn't even want to touch it, for fear that some of it might rub off.

And in a sense, it did. The original print job was ink-heavy and smudgy, on cheap grayish paper. Dark and splotchy graphics of nude corpses rendered the whole affair that much uglier.

Prior to the issue's release, I had corresponded with Richard "The Night Stalker" Ramirez a half-dozen or so times. After I sent him the Rape Issue, his letters stopped. One of Ramirez's pen pals later informed me that Ricky had asked him, "Don't you think that issue went a little too far?" This from someone who had slaughtered at least thirteen people and skull-fucked an elderly woman after murdering her and plucking out her eyeball.

Words worse than actions.

Distributors were freaked. One Colorado bookstore owner was reportedly so mortified by the Rape Issue, he *burned* all the copies sent to him lest anyone read it and be corrupted. A Toronto bookseller kept his copies in a car outside the store and only sold it to those who specifically requested it. A Texas distributor shrink-wrapped all 1,000

copies I'd sent them before they decided it was even too toxic with shrink wrap and sent back all their copies to me. A Portland bookstore which boasts of being anti-censorship demanded I remove all copies after only four hours on the shelves. A Seattle bookstore owner ruefully told me, "You're gonna lose a lot of your fans."

"I know," I said, satisfied. Suddenly, I had become as uncool as I had always wanted to be.

Early in January '95 I received a letter from a verbally challenged nineteen-year-old girl named Laura. She gave no return address (coward), but the letter was postmarked Bellingham, Washington. Laura wrote that she had encountered the Rape Issue at a local store called the Newstand [sic] International, and she was very displeased with what she saw.

"I am not in favor of censorship," Laura reassured me, "but..."—B-U-T. What a word, that "but."

"...but this was not free speech, this was violence against women, children, and the developmentally disabled."

So it wasn't a magazine, it was a literal act of sexual assault.

Like many before and since her, Laura compared me to Hitler. "You don't want the blood of another Oskowitz on your hands," she warned me.

I think she meant Auschwitz.

Laura insisted that I retrieve all copies of *ANSWER Me! #4* and basically apologize to the world in order to stave off the inevitable mountain of ripped vaginas and bloody kiddie anuses that would occur were anyone to actually read my mag. "You alone have the responsibility of preventing a child from being violently raped," she counseled.

She didn't say she *felt* I should remove the magazine from circulation and apologize. She *demand*ed it. She dictated the terms of my surrender.

I found the letter mildly amusing and filed it away.

A few days later, I received an answering-machine message from the Bellingham newsstand asking me to call.

The newsstand's female manager told me that a week earlier, Laura had come in the store, insisting that they remove the Rape Issue. When they refused, Laura asked her boyfriend Marcus for advice. Marcus donned his Birkenstocks and marched a copy of the Rape Issue over to the local rape-crisis center.

Hoo-doggie. Rape-crisis workers reading the Rape Issue. That's like a Hadassah knitting circle poring over *Mein Kampf*.

The crisis center's concerned coven of cackling hens waddled over to the District Attorney's office, squealing with outrage.

A detective for the DA's office visited the Newstand and suggested they remove the issue. If not, well, he had a jail cell with their name on it.

I told the store manager that she shouldn't take a bullet on my account—if she wanted to avoid trouble, she should remove the magazine. But she was steadfast. It was the principle of the thing. She didn't appreciate being told what to sell.

She pulled *ANSWER Me!* from sale, wrapped the remaining copies in lock and chain, and made it into a hokey display with some pious quote about free speech. A stalemate developed between the DA and the newsstand. Accompanied by a newfound defense lawyer, the store's owners were called into the DA's office, where the county's chief prosecutor offered to drop charges if they agreed never to sell *ANSWER Me!* or "anything like it" again.

They refused.

The prosecutor's name was David McEachran (pronounced: muh-KECK-rin), and he had been the county DA for something like thirty years. He was a bald, humorless weasel who, like all District Attorneys, pictured himself a gunslinger for righteousness. Mr. McEachran was gonna go out on a limb and take a brave stance against the relentless pro-rape propaganda in this rape culture of ours. He was gonna send a bold message to rapists:

Rape isn't cool.

And sticking table legs up the vaginas of ten-year-old girls is just so immature.

McEachran really couldn't lose. Even if the newsstand owners were found Not Guilty of being smut-peddlers, well, that's what was wrong with ideas such as "rights." He could say he tried his best with limited resources against a high-paid "dream team" of defense lawyers, and the church groups pressuring him from the right and the women's groups nagging him from the left would be happy.

He charged the newsstand owners with Felony Promotion of Pornography, which carried a potential one-year jail sentence. Since I wasn't technically the one who sold the magazine in Bellingham, I wasn't charged.

The day after charges were filed, I awoke in cold drizzly darkness and ate soapy-tasting pancakes at the local Greasy Spoon, opening

The *Oregonian* to read an AP wire story about the case. The phone calls from reporters began at around 7AM and didn't stop until late into the night, totaling fifty-five messages on my caller-ID device. At one point during the early morning, I peered out my Venetian blinds to witness a TV news team piling out of their truck and walking toward my apartment. A portly reporter knocked on my door, but I didn't answer. I figured that anything I said might possibly incriminate the newsstand owners, so I decided to keep my mouth shut all day. After the reporter left, Debbie and I hopped in the car and drove around Portland, smoking weed and dodging the press. As we puffed on a steel pipe while parked on a freeway overpass, I remember looking down at the rush-hour traffic and thinking, "They're all gonna know about me tonight."

As 5PM approached, we rushed over to a morbidly obese junkie's rat-hole apartment to see what the TV news had to say. As the flabby addict and his friends ran Bic lighters under tinfoil and sucked up their bitter-almond-smelling smoky sky candy, I plugged in a beaten old B&W TV. A fuzzy picture emerged, revealing a graphic of the Rape Issue's cover hovering behind the female news anchor's head.

It was the top story on Portland's evening news.

The anchorwoman said that *ANSWER Me!* had ignited "a firestorm of controversy across the Pacific Northwest." The fat male reporter I'd espied through Venetian blinds was shown knocking on my apartment door and then walking away disgustedly. He interviewed a law expert who said the magazine was possibly obscene. He featured a sound bite from the newsstand owners' primary defense lawyer, a John Denver lookalike who said the Rape Issue bravely tackled "a very difficult subject." A dykey, tight-lipped director of a Portland rape-crisis center leafed through Issue 4 on-camera and yelped, "I'm literally sick to my stomach...Is he giving any of the profits to rape victims?"

Profits?

At report's end, the teletubby broadcaster opined that many people thought *ANSWER Me!* was "not much better than fish wrap."

It made sense that the shit would go down in Washington, home of Riot Grrrl and a state legislature that was about 40% female. Bellingham was a cozy little Nordic-Irish hamlet about ten minutes below the Canadian border, supposedly the continental United States' northernmost city. Bellingham is in the same county as Lynden, Washington, where rumor has it that social dancing was finally legalized in the early 1990s.

Word spread in Bellingham that the magazine was a how-to manual for rapists. Horrified townsfolk were convinced that a literary Golem stalked Bellingham, and it had to be killed at all costs. A town meeting was held, and one concerned father said I should be shot.

Much of the hysteria was fanned by the *Bellingham Herald*, a fifth-rate paper staffed with fourth-rate stringers in a third-rate town. The *Herald* burred with headlines such as "Rape Magazine Sparks Furor" and "Publisher of Anti-Women Writing Shrugs off Foes." A local judge's wife wrote a letter to the *Herald* saying it was time for responsible citizens to censor themselves before the government was "forced" to do it for them. Another letter said that *ANSWER Me!* couldn't be compared to satire such as Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" because Swift was a priest—and priests know nothing about rape and molestation. One woman who claimed to have been raped asked a reporter, "What about my rights?"

Uh, what about them?

Laura, the girl who started it all, told a *Herald* reporter that she felt "violated" when reading *ANSWER Me!* Then, a few months after initiating the whole spectacle, the typical chickenshit female pulled out, explaining she never wanted the DA to prosecute the newsstand owners.

She wanted them to prosecute ME.

I sat in my apartment staring out the windows at the steely gray rain, wondering when I'd be run out of Portland by a torch mob of lumbering bulldykes.

It became a free-speech case. Again and again the goodniks pondered, "When does free speech go too far?"

Here's the answer: Never. It can't. That's why it's free. It's like asking, "When does a living person become too dead?" You can't abuse something that's absolute. The only ones abusing the First Amendment are those who try to find loopholes around the phrase "Congress shall make NO law abridging freedom of speech, nor of the press," who seek to rope it in with laws about obscenity, treason, and hate speech.

Yes, I realize that those dead white males who crafted the Constitution didn't have "Let's Hear it for Violence Toward Women!" in mind when they drafted the Bill of Rights. But they weren't thinking of *The S.C.U.M. Manifesto*, either. What they were thinking about was keeping the government from interfering in the free exchange of ideas. And there were certainly more ideas bandied about in *ANSWER Me! #4* than in *People* or *Reader's Digest*.

Still, there were those who insisted that I should be grateful that our beneficent, buttery government had granted me the “right” of free speech. Look, it isn’t their right to give, only to take. Rights can’t be given, only stolen. You’re born with all the rights you need. If you’re able to form the words and spit them out of your mouth, then obviously nature has given you the right of free speech. Those who steal rights for a living have fostered the illusion that rights are theirs to give.

The “right” of free speech makes about as much sense as a “right” to free air. While being grateful that the government allows you to speak, make sure to also thank them for letting you breathe.

Oh, thank heaven that the government—you know, that giant cherubic force that siphons off about forty percent of our wages whether we want them to or not—is so fucking generous as to allow us to speak. Sometimes. If they approve of what we’re saying.

I became politically radicalized when I realized that the same pole-smokers who were forcing me to work nearly half of every year to pay for their massive extortion racket weren’t even willing to grant me the meager “rights” which they claimed justified the extortion.

To “prove” that the newsstand owners were guilty of promoting pornography, the DA had to “prove” that *ANSWER Me!* was legally obscene. To do so, he was burdened with the truck-stop-whorelike task of having to “satisfy” each of three “prongs”:

- The magazine must be patently offensive when judged by contemporary community standards;
- It must appeal to a prurient interest in sex;
- Taken as a whole, it must be devoid of redeeming literary, political, religious, or social merit.

I wasn’t even going to challenge the first prong.

ANSWER Me! #4 was offensive not only by community standards, but by those of the most jaded hipsters. It wasn’t just “patently” offensive, it was painfully offensive. Astronomically offensive.

It was offensive even when judged against the standards of those who’d made careers out of being offensive, the so-called “transgressives.” Somehow, Robert Mapplethorpe sticking a bullwhip up his rectum...or Karen Finley’s asshole yams...or Andres Serrano’s crucifix immersed in urine...were much more complex intellectual statements than anything I was trying to say. And none of those so-called “free speech” cases were even about literal censorship and criminal prosecution, they were about the government’s denial of free money to fund so-called “transgressive” art. No one was trying to censor them,

they were merely refusing to pay the bill for their psychodrama.

Nobody who had cried about censorship on behalf of such left-wing palefaced shit-slingers was anywhere to be found in the whole *ANSWER Me!* free-speech circus. Transgression had previously been the domain of naughty leftists, yet I took a big, stinky shit in their pool and sent them all fleeing for a lifeguard. I proved that there were limits to their ideas of transgression. I finally silenced all the lispig sissy-Marys who’d been weeping about censorship since the Reagan era’s dawn.

Apparently, the “transgressives” were only interested in slaughtering a certain *kind* of sacred cow. In fact, they weren’t interested in slaughtering cows at all.

Only bulls. White ones.

Leftists deftly grasp the comic potential in mocking the fears of the pathological racist and the clinical homophobe, yet they’re blind to their own easily pushed buttons. And they have an airplane cockpit’s worth of buttons.

So when people began blaming “right-wing Republican rednecks” for the Bellingham censorship case, I was always quick to point out that it was a leftist who started the proceedings. A dumb little girl schooled in too much college feminism and too little of everything else.

And *ANSWER Me!* had proven offensive to not only her, but everyone else—left, right, and straight down the middle. So no sense arguing about that.

The second “prong,” whether or not *ANSWER Me!* appealed to a prurient interest in sex, was murkier. The Latin root of “prurient” was a word meaning “to itch,” presumably one’s genitalia. And so a very odd question arose like a thick cock laden with earthworm-sized veins: Was the Rape Issue intended to be a turn-on? Well, I was its creator, and I could honestly state that this wasn’t my intent. I know of no one who was aroused by it, either—to the contrary, it was a real weenie-shriveler. I never thought that the issue would give anyone the desire to rape.

And yet the DA did.

So did the radical feminists.

Strange.

What did that say about *their* minds? Why did it have such power for them that they needed to see it banned? Did they feel that if they stared at it long enough, they might fall prey to its seductive allure? The censors didn’t want to read anything that would place them in a rapist’s mind. But why not, if they didn’t feel it could affect them?

Their reaction was almost, “Get it out of my face—it’s turning me ON!” It was akin to homophobic panic—“I must destroy the evil that threatens to seduce me!”

Of course, the censor always acts as if she’s trying to protect someone else.

Oh, sure.

Yet I couldn’t be certain that twelve normal-looking jury members wouldn’t secretly get an erotic charge from the Rape Issue, so I was willing to surrender that prong, too.

Which left only the third prong on which to hang the newsstand owners’ fate—whether or not *ANSWER Me! #4* had any redeeming value. How exactly do you “prove” that something has redeeming value? That’s like trying to prove someone’s attractive. Why should some sexless prig who takes the Bible literally stand in judgment of my literary gifts? Or twelve overweight mall rats who haven’t read a book in years? After all, I don’t tell them what sort of sweat suits to buy.

Nevertheless, they were to stand as literary critics, and if I got a bad review, people went to jail.

Never mind that the First Amendment makes no mention of socially redeeming value. What if you object to the very notion of society and don’t believe that socially redeeming value is desirable? What if you sincerely believe that concepts such as right and wrong are not only outmoded, but that they seriously cloud an understanding of the world? Shouldn’t you be allowed to express such opinions?

Not the way they saw it. Or more accurately, the way they wanted to see it. The way they wished it to be.

To a censor, “good” literature is that which promises life after death, which neatly ties up all the loose ends, which assures the reader that *you’re* on the right side and *they’re* on the wrong side. It justifies any murders or robberies or lies or rapes—literal and figurative—which your side may have committed. It doesn’t ask any difficult questions. Better yet, it depicts such questions—and such inquisitiveness—as inherently evil. In effect, “It has socially redeeming value” is a nicer way of saying “It supports the status quo.” They want a literature of denial, of verbal anesthesia, of perfumed reality. And if that’s what they want, there’s plenty of it out there. I’m not trying to censor it.

And I’ve never pretended that I’m liberating any individual or redeeming society. Nor am I pretending that the truth is necessarily redemptive. The truth is at least as likely of enslaving you as it is to set you free.

So I didn’t act as if *ANSWER Me! #4* was good for society, except

in a very narrow sense—I felt it was well-written, thoughtfully executed, and discussed serious issues intelligently. Amid a society that was snowboarding headlong into abject illiteracy, I felt that was reason enough to justify its existence. Or at least enough to acquit the newsstand owners on grounds of literary merit.

In the year it took for the case to get to trial, I compiled about thirty different written opinions from published authors, a professional librarian, an English professor, and the occasional layperson as to why the magazine was something more than a depraved smut rag.

A few weeks before trial, as wet snowflakes softly fell in Portland, I sat in my cold basement and gave a telephone deposition to McEachran. While explaining why I published the Rape Issue, it struck me that the prosecutor was entirely unconversant with the feminist authors whose ideas I was challenging and that maybe it was dawning on him that I might be a slightly more complex animal than the bloodthirsty cretin whom he thought was saying rape is cool.

Maybe. Or maybe he was truly as stupid as he seemed.

McEachran was certain that my intent in publishing the Rape Issue was to rally male youth to go out and rape women. He blithely skipped over everything in the issue that could have been construed as anti-rape: the opening disclaimer; Debbie’s “He Tried to Fuck Me”; Molly Kiely’s cartoon; Donny the Punk’s story; and the intro to “RAPE-WORLD,” where I explicitly stated that not only hadn’t I raped anyone, but I never even fantasized about it. As “proof” that I was egging on potential rapists, he focused on the five “RAPEWORLD” articles which addressed the reader as if he was a perpetrator. Naturally, he ignored the thirteen essays which addressed the reader as a victim.

The Rape Issue wasn’t intended to be read by rapists, it was targeted at anti-rape activists. Jesus Christ, that seemed so fucking obvious.

To me, at least.

Sexual predators don’t seek encouragement from literature. People don’t beat or rape women based on what they read. Rape is essentially an act for loners—what would be the incentive for proselytizing? What would be the motivation for someone to encourage others to abuse women? What would they gain from it?

No one could answer me.

What could be worse than an opponent of the magazine who didn’t understand it?

A supporter who didn’t understand it.

“Dude, like, by saying rape is cool, you were just trying to show

how uncool it is.”

Shut your mouth and bend over.

The pinnacle of absurdity in the whole debacle was the ironic specter of free-speech wags waxing righteous about one of the most vile publications ever hatched. Imagine the hilarious sight of people getting sanctimonious about what a great thing the Rape Issue was, with “Let’s Hear it for Violence Toward Women!” in the vanguard of civil liberties.

Everyone was positive the magazine was something that it wasn’t. Like jungle natives encountering television for the first time, both my supporters and detractors were poking around at something they didn’t understand. Both sides, apparently, grasped what I was trying to say better than I did. Considering that the Rape Issue was an extended argument against sanctimony, it was galling to watch each side jockey to appear more sanctimonious. It became a war of dueling sanctimony. The prosecution contended that I was saying rape is a very good thing. The defense, without ever consulting me, argued that I was using shock tactics to frighten the reader into believing that rape is a very bad thing. And the defense pissed me off more, because at least I expected the prosecution to get it wrong. It was frustrating to have my ideas tossed around by people who didn’t comprehend my ideas. The Rape Issue’s meaning seemed to have slipped from my hands, and I felt powerless.

You might even say I felt violated.

I arrived for the trial with a fat cold sore on my big mouth.

Bellingham was frosted in ice and snow. Defense lawyers pre-interviewed me and thought I was...insane. They were freaked that I found the whole affair ridiculous—one was never to question the state’s wisdom in filing charges. They felt that my lack of reverence for the judicial process, coupled with their discovery that I really hadn’t been trying to say what *they* were trying to say I was trying to say, wouldn’t play well with a jury. And they were probably right on that account. But since I was still on the docket as a potential witness, I wasn’t allowed to see the trial. Instead, I served as the defense’s rickshaw boy, taxiing witnesses to and from the courthouse. People stopped me outside the courtroom to tell me what a brave, wonderful statement I’d made with my magazine. I thanked them and tried not to laugh.

The courtroom was stuffed with people pretending they never masturbated nor pinched a loaf. Tellingly, no rape victims testified for the

prosecution, only for the defense. Molly Kiely, whom defense lawyers said had an “honest face,” was encouraged to talk about being anally raped and how *ANSWER Me!* had supposedly helped her get over it. Annalee Newitz, a Berkeley English professor who had cited *ANSWER Me!* in one of her classes as an example of “narrative trauma,” testified as a literary expert. Reluctantly, she also spoke of having been molested and how the Rape Issue eased her pain. McEachran grilled Donny the Punk—one of the only dignified victims I’ve ever met—about having edited something called *The Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*. Apparently, McEachran was trying to infer that Donny had somehow asked for it, or at least enjoyed being raped again and again and again and again and again. McEachran attacked our rape victims because they weren’t dealing with their trauma correctly. The prosecutor—who had never been raped—chided actual rape victims because they weren’t handling their victimization properly, thus rendering the holy work of the DA’s office and the rape-crisis center irrelevant.

The prosecutor seemed to have problems with...reality. He originally was said to have thought Donny the Punk’s story was fictional, while apparently believing Peter Sotos’s was real. He kept lamenting the “poor ten-year-old girl” in *Quality Time*, not realizing that fictional characters don’t really feel pain. As a star witness, he trotted out a supposed expert on sexual predators, a man whose professional life allegedly consisted of hooking men’s genitals to electrodes and then screening porno films for them.

And they had the audacity to contend that *I* was the pervert.

If Dave McEachran had less personality, he would’ve been a table lamp. His astonishing lack of courtroom flash, especially in a case that demanded drama, made me wonder how he’d ever reached such an exalted position in the county. Was it possible that every other Bellingham prosecutor was even duller than he was?

During his crashingly boring closing arguments, McEachran used an overhead projector to blast giant lurid layouts from *ANSWER Me! #4* onto a huge white courtroom wall. “The author [is]...telling how to sexually abuse everybody,” he stated, as if it were a fact. Yawns filled the stuporous air. The judge seemed ready to fall asleep.

The jury returned with a verdict of Not Guilty, but it wasn’t an endorsement of *ANSWER Me!* The defendants were acquitted on a technicality—most jurors seemed to think the mag was obscene, but they weren’t sure the newsstand owners *knew* it was obscene when they sold it.

Two days after the verdict, the newsstand owners held a victory party. The Goads were not invited. Free speech was one thing;

creeps who publish rape mags were another.

About a year later, the newsstand owners sued the county in federal court for Malicious Prosecution. They were awarded \$1.3 million, the largest civil-rights judgment in Washington state history.

I didn't see a penny of it.

Of course, the "state" didn't pay a cent for the DA's quixotic boobishness. The taxpayers did. This version of "free" speech carried a price tag of more than a million dollars. It wasn't a victory for the First Amendment. It was yet another bill for ordinary citizens.

The money could have been spent prosecuting actual rapists. It could have paid for another police officer or two. It could have funded women's self-defense classes for a long, long time, It even could have paid the salaries of the idiots at the local rape-crisis center.

How much money did lawyers make in all this?

Lots.

And how many rapes did they prevent?

None.

It's almost obscene.

Still, the Rape Issue was a success in that no one ever disproved—or even attempted to disprove—its basic premises. It also showed that I was right about how hysterical, reactionary, and controlling its targets were. Their reaction to something that was ink on paper—not flesh on flesh—proved that everything I said was true. There was to be no debate. No questioning of their platform. Shut your mouth, or we'll throw you in jail.

As far as I had been able to determine, rape is more an aberration of the sex drive than it is about control.

But let's temporarily appease them and say it's all about a drive for power and control.

They seem quite familiar with such desires.

In demanding total compliance about how the gender debate was to be conducted, what was a permissible opinion and what wasn't, the censors' drive for utter control was not unlike what they were saying about rapists. Rape can be viewed as a very specific metaphor of the power equation endemic to all human and animal relationships. It is simply the ugliest, most immediate symbol of the human will to control others. The censors' ideological M.O.—insisting on total capitulation—was indistinguishable from the rapist's physical M.O. Both the leftoid radical twats and the rightie fundamentalists are sexually repressed control freaks who insist—under penalty of damnation

and/or jail time—that everyone else submit to their version of reality. The leftist ideologue, like the Christian bible-thumper, is entirely evangelical—she will not be satisfied until everyone who doesn't think like she does is either converted or jailed under hate-crime legislation.

The censor tries to control the dark patches she fears within herself, the elements of her own personality she's spent a lifetime avoiding. She has a hunger to ban things, an infantile craving to close her eyes and pretend she can make the naughtiness disappear. She wants to slay the demons that haunt her dreams. She tries to create a world without any of the bad stuff. And she isn't above using force to do it. Like the Christian crusader, the leftist censor needs evil enemies who deserve to suffer.

This closeted sadism had its most transparent manifestation in the oft-stated sentiment that if I thought sexual violence was so nifty, maybe I should get raped. Hey, I thought rape was wrong! Do two wrongs make a right, or are you finally showing your true pervy colors? And why not rape me yourself? Why sublimate your fantasies and force someone else to do your dirty work?

The government which prosecuted the Newstand International came to power by raping and murdering everything in its path before erecting its noble courts of law. As Union soldiers plowed through the South, they raped the shit out of the slave women they were supposedly freeing. From both eastern and western fronts, the conquerors of evil Nazis raped powerless German women raw. If, as they say, rape goes hand-in-hand with power, then the government is a smidge hypocritical when it fingers the lone-dog rapist as a control freak.

Funny—I probably have less desire to control others than anyone who's ever tried to silence me. Never in my life have I dictated how anyone else should feel or think. I couldn't give an unlubed fuck if someone's opinions differ from mine. I have no interest in controlling the cavernous expanses between someone else's ears. I only have a desire not to be controlled. Silly me, expecting the same in return.

My attitude is that if I can handle it, then it's everyone else's obligation to aspire to my level of sophistication. I'm sick of having to dumb-down everything. Let the slaggards catch up to me for a change.

Being raised Catholic gave me a fascination for the taboo and why it held people in its thrall. I never understood why certain things were unmentionable. If they exist, why not talk about them? The taboo never made any sense then, and it doesn't now. Peel away the layers of inhibition and illogic, and there's nothing left. No solid reason

exists for getting offended by anything.

If an idea can destroy your mind, then your mind is weak and deserved being destroyed. You can only be a sinner if you believe in sin. You can only be a transgressive if you believe in the boundaries. You can only get offended if you're offended by something within yourself. Depictions of genitalia should only be offensive if you have problems with your own. Obscenity is such an antiquated concept. The idea of uncrossable boundaries only exists to assuage someone's fears about unpalatable truths.

I've never seen, read, or experienced anything that I felt went too far. People have called for me to be murdered and raped, and it only amuses me. In the way that *they* get offended, in the sense of "that shouldn't be said" or "that's over the line," I can't get offended. I'm offense-proof.

But there are several things which *bother* me. I'm bothered by this culture's celebration of the lowest common denominator. I'm bothered by its rampaging warthog illiteracy and its suspicion of almost all forms of intelligence. I'm bothered by the incessant shrieking of loud-mouthed, self-righteous cunts. I'm bothered by the scary idea that people would pass laws to prevent themselves from getting offended, that they'd weave an insane web of civil lawsuits and demand millions in cash because their piddling feelings were hurt.

I'm bothered by dumb ideas. Like the idea that Jesus rose from the dead. Or the belief that the term "happy ending" isn't oxymoronic. Or the silly ideological construct called "justice," a thing which has never been achieved anywhere on the globe at any point in time. Or the primitive faith in nonexistent phantasms such as good and evil. Or the falsehood known as society, which proposes that people won't actually trample over one another to get off a sinking boat. I'm bothered by all of life's empty promises. Almost without exception, I'm bothered by precisely those things which give others hope. And in a small way, I'm given hope (or at least gladdened) by almost everything which causes others to despair.

A lot of times, the fact that you're alive bothers me. What if you find nearly everything about human existence bothersome? Jesus Christ, waking up in the morning sometimes bothers me. And yet I'm still able to put on my shoes and go for a walk. Imagine that. I'm still able, somehow, to prevent myself from being reduced to tears by it all. How the fuck do I manage it?

There are truckloads of things that bother me, yet I wouldn't censor any of them. I find a lot of anti-rape literature to be fairly tasteless

and poorly executed, but I wouldn't ban it. I still don't wish to stop subliterate circus clowns from expressing themselves. As disgusting and stupid and irrational as most people are to me, I still don't seek their elimination.

That's because they exist, so they must be part of the plan. Nothing is unnatural. If it occurs within this universe, it is bound by natural laws and properties. If a fifty-year-old man is able to impregnate a twelve-year-old girl, even against her sacred will, then nature approves of their union, even if the law doesn't.

Rape is natural. Child molestation is natural. Serial killing is natural. Fist-fucking is natural. And so are all the variegated hysterical responses to these things.

Yes, even feminists are natural.

So is arguing with them.

And winning.

But offensiveness only exists as an emotional salve for those too weak to handle reality. Only a dirty mind believes in obscenity. Nothing's obscene. Everything's fair game. As St. Paul said, "To the pure, all things are pure."

Or as the Negroes say, "It's all good."

