

Refusing to Submit

By Crispin Sartwell

Capital Times Advisor

From the Holy Office of the Inquisition to the Khmer Rouge, anonymous denunciation has a glorious history.

Invertebrates throughout history have condemned their neighbors to the authorities without standing behind their accusations publicly.

So popular has this technique grown that some folks at PSH have taken to using it even on relatively trivial matters.

It's hard to tell what they fear, since making their complaints public could not have any serious consequences.

Perhaps they simply believe that saying what they think makes them look like fools.

No doubt you've noticed that Tarnhelm, the campus literary magazine, has been encouraging people to "submit" on posters featuring photographs of scantily-clad dominatrices.

Apparently a number of people have complained about these posters to the Head of the School of Humanities, the SGA, and the

Student Activities Office, which claims the right to approve all posters hung in the halls.

Now it is rather hard to evaluate the arguments of the denouncers, because they refuse to say what their arguments are.

But I gather that the complaints are coming from folks who regard themselves as feminists.

They apparently object that the images treat women as sex objects and that the whips and so on might encourage domestic violence.

The posters were the brainchildren of Patsy Bauer and Katie Eye, both of whom also consider themselves feminists.

And it is important to understand that the sort of feminism that rejects all erotic images and wants to get into women's heads and remake their sexual desires is only one kind of feminism, that the folks complaining about the poster are taking up a position that many, if not most, feminists reject.

When I taught a feminist thought course here a few years ago, I started by asking my 50 students how many of them con-

sidered themselves feminists.

I got two hesitant hands among the younger women in the course.

And the reason that most of the young women rejected feminism was precisely that they regarded feminists as a police force of anti-sex schoolmarms.

Unfortunately the anonymous complainers are confirming that image in spades.

I'm proud to call myself a feminist, but I also want to be clear that these sad little censors do not speak for me.

Feminism is about the liberation of women. When feminism started out, it was intensely exhilarating: it helped many women express their frustrations and transform their oppression.

It held out an ideal of power-free sexual relations that was inspiring. But it turned out to be much harder than those feminists thought to transform people's desires.

Some kinds of feminism have moved on since then and become something much more open and pluralistic. Others are still stuck in 1973.

But meanwhile some feminism has hardened into a dogma that seeks to control people's desires by controlling the images they see.

It argues for censorship on every front. It has become an instrument of oppression that is used precisely against women, and these days it speaks for almost nobody.

It mistrusts women's own ideas and desires, holding them to have been polluted by patriarchy.

It accuses the people for whom it is supposedly speaking of being trapped in "false consciousness," of not knowing what they want.

It is unbelievably condescending toward women. Please (please) remember that the people who made the posters are women.

When you try to figure out why feminism is more or less dead, don't blame Reagan or the backsliders, blame yourselves.

The best feminism wants to encourage women's self-expression, including sexual expression.

The best feminism wants to help women explore their own desires and find their own pleasures.

The best feminism trusts women to understand and find their own freedom.

The best feminism listens to women when they say what their liberation would be.

Anyone who wants to involve themselves in this issue needs to know that s&m is a fully consensual role-playing game that many women and men participate in enthusiastically and which brings them pleasure.

It has absolutely nothing to do with domestic violence. It makes explicit and affirms the fact that sex is a transaction of power.

It plays with that power, reverses it, transforms it into pleasure.

There is also a free speech issue here. I do not think that PSH is within its rights to control the contents of its bulletin boards at all.

That is debatable. But I am as certain as I can be of anything that the posters are constitutionally protected speech and that any statute that said they weren't would be laughed out of court as an obvious violation of the First Amendment.

And to say that the posters violate the University's sexual harassment policy is ridiculous on its face. Who is being harassed by whom and to what end?

Finally I want to say something to anyone who has lodged complaints but refused to comment publicly.

Your arguments deserve a serious response. But you yourself don't deserve a serious response. You're a coward.

Submit to Diversity

By Alice Potteiger Wilkes

from campus.

Beauty is not the only vision in the eye of the beholder. Those of you who're reading an unholy sexuality into these pics must be incredibly naive, in that:

(1.) You are bringing that interpretation to the consciousness of your mind from someplace subconscious.

(2.) You feel shame because somewhere along the line it was drilled into your sheepsheared head that sex is only for procreation, only in the missionary position and without toys or joy, so

(2.5) instead of facing up to your natural sexuality you lash out at people who have forced you to confront the suppressed sexuality within you.

I wonder if frontal lobotomies of these protestors would reveal L-shaped birthmarks on their thick skulls.

Say boys and girls! Let's all parade down Diversity Lane! It'll be so nice and warm and fuzzy! We'll congratulate ourselves about how openminded and accepting we all are of everyone, everyone except those people

who don't think and behave like we know they should.

The complaints about using sex to "sell" Tarnhelm contributions are so trite I wonder where these people have been all their lives. Sex sells because **news-flash** it does. It certainly got your attention.

Plus, what supernatural insight do these complainers have that allows them to be certain that the people and/or body parts shown on these posters are female?

A few years ago I worked with a gay man who was also a transvestite. His legs were more shapely and beautiful than most women's. Hell, I was envious.

To embrace our naturally-driven base instincts along with our higher thinking (which allows us creativity within those base instincts) is surely the ultimate inner connection.

These totally uninformed protestors obviously think that higher education also imparts wisdom.

Violence against women does degrade us all. So does ignorance and a humorless existence.

I laughed in disbelief after walking into the middle of the Tarnhelm controversy last week.

It was the perfect lead-in for my excitement over the effectiveness of the "Better Oral Sex" videotape my husband and I had intently studied the evening before.

I'd comedian-esque-ly say, "But seriously..." here, but I was, and am, totally serious.

The immaturity of adults who cannot face the truth about their own humanity, especially their sexuality and sense of humor (or lack of either), is a sad reflection of this campus community and our culture overall.

I thought the ads were clever and funny, and probably the most effective flyers ever posted at PSH.

So, to Patsy and Katie, I send my utmost admiration for an ad campaign that succeeded way beyond a marketing designer's dreams.

I'd tip my hat to them as well, but if my long, blondish hair fell out from under it in the process someone may see it as sexually suggestive and have me removed

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Advisor: Crispin Sartwell • **Editor:** Matthew McKeown
Business Manager: Serena Silverman • **Sports:** James J. Gadinski

Layout: Jeanine A. Jandecka, Matthew McKeown

Graphic Designer: Alice Potteiger Wilkes

Writers & Contributors:

Nicole Burkholder • Edward Capozzi • Brad Clements
Jesse Gutierrez • Daniel Kane • Bryan Kapschull • Ken Lopez
Justin Anthony Lutz • Paula Marinak • Daniel McClure
Brad Moist • Cathie McCormick Musser