



## Pornocopia: Porn, Sex, Technology, and Desire

**Laurence O'Toole**

Serpent's Tail (June 1998)

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"Porn is sex without secrecy...but its users are secret," anthropologist Bernard Arcand maintains. With this hushed realism fueling British author O'Toole's take on pornography in *Pornocopia*, O'Toole argues that with the onset of technological advancement, porn is being rapidly (and rightfully) goaded from the shadows.

O'Toole effectively sidesteps the pitfall of the obvious slant-*Pornocopia* is not an exploitative glimpse into the seedy underpinnings of an industry anchored in controversy. In fact, O'Toole's fledgling literary effort's most seductive asset is its slickly mod cover; the content itself rarely strays from the rigid confines of a cultural study.

*Pornocopia* examines at length both the American and British pornography scene and their political and cultural climate. What was once reserved for the "raincoat crowd," or exclusively heterosexual men at best, pornography is viewed here as a current and diversely engaging cultural ingredient-users include women fetishists and couples of all sexual orientations. O'Toole asserts that with the boundaries of technology ever expanding with the Internet (also video and cable television) the status of porn and its societal role is reaching a new plateau of acceptance.

Chapters are broken into often brief essays addressing such topics as the internal struggle over porn within feminist circles, and allegations in which literary style lends the book direction, and helps counter its rather text-bookish feel.

O'Toole arms his first book with diverse features of porn producers and actresses, law officials, activists and general opinion taken via internet surveys, though admittedly focuses primarily on heterosexual views.

Academic, yet with frank terminology, *Pornocopia* is perhaps best suited for study of the porn phenomenon. *Pornocopia* examines a growing industry seeking acceptance and fair judicial treatment, as it bats a heavy-lidded eye at the 21st century.

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