The story of Jack Smith’s film *Flaming Creatures* and the “Fortas Film Festival” illustrates the dialectic of obscenity. The obscenity doctrine expresses the conventional wisdom that the First Amendment actually protects art, and protects pornography only by extension. But *Flaming Creatures* and the Fortas Film Festival suggest that obscenity is dialectical. The obscenity doctrine provides the thesis: art protects pornography, by justifying the protection of sexual expression. *Flaming Creatures* and the Fortas Film Festival provide the antithesis: pornography protects art, by normalizing sexual expression. The history of obscenity law provides the synthesis: art and pornography protect each other. In other words, art transgresses and pornography reifies.