



Mongoose Distro
PO Box 220069
Brooklyn, NY 11222

HERSTORY

Part 2
by Dan Baker

Dan Baker 25765-509
FCI Memphis
PO Box 34550
Memphis, TN 38184

It was due to the crusades that we saw the barbaric witch hunts between 1550 and 1650. As a result of men's defeated pride this aggression was deflected onto women. The witch hunts caused widespread cruelty and suffering. Elderly women for the worst of it, facing torture and poverty. They were accused of making sexual deals with the devil.

Jacob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer were two German clerics of the Dominican order who incited violence against women by publishing "Malleus Malificarum: On Witches Who Copulate With Devils". They claimed that all women are stupid, saying that "She is more carnal than a man, as is clear from her many filthy carnal acts." They claimed that "women's intrinsically weaker nature" made them susceptible for demonic possession. These men were in positions of authority with influence over large populations. They believed that women's sexual frustration and repressed desires for power made them vulnerable to the influence of devils.

Women were blamed for men's sins and debauchery, their bodies being described as "dirty and contaminating". This influence continues to the present, inspiring contempt for effeminate men and misogyny. Martin Luther, the German Protestant reformer, promoted marriage and called the home the center of the universe, but the Christian culture of fear surrounding sex continued. He said "The female sex, so very, very weak, joined by nature or rather by God to the other, perishes when cruelly separated." These kinds of statements become self fulfilling prophecies in patriarchal hierarchies, where women must choose to be slaves in a house or die.

The reality of medieval sexual lifestyle is difficult to detail because of the hypocritical nature of the the church. It is known that there was an

abundance of sexual activity in spite of the church's strict rules against most forms of intimacy. There is documentation of priests seducing women during confession, affairs between nuns and priests, homosexual activity among believers, wealthy men keeping mistresses and harems, popular prostitution, common people making love wherever nature provided concealment, and extensive rape. But rape was rarely mentioned in writing, and rarely addressed by authorities. Celibacy was still the professed ideal at this time. This was not conducive to women's happiness at all, then or now. Women were made to be anxious and ashamed of their bodies, which were policed by church and state forces.

It was only at the end of the 17th century that the idea of separating church and state began to take hold. This was due to The Enlightenment's application of rational thought in the search for universal truth. Democracy, freedom and human rights began to be promoted. Several attempts were made to normalize the natural pleasures of sex, if only as a part of reproduction. "Aristotle's Masterpiece", a sexual guide, was published between 1680 and 1735, promoted the idea that women should feel pleasure during sexual intercourse, for the purpose of procreation: "Perform those rights nature and love requires, till you have quenched each other's am'rous fires." Simultaneously Aphra Behn, a British libertine, playwright, novelist and outstanding person of that age, wrote erotic poems which praised women's sexual satisfaction.

In the 18th century the most famous art of the era rebelled against the myth of women's chastity. But at the same time the medias of this age expressed the dangers of male desire. "Pamela" and "Clarissa", written by Samuel Richardson, portrayed women as being subject to danger by men's sexual aggression. There was still a large amount of racism and sexism throughout this time. The genders were seen to be as different as east and west, with the west representing the male civilization and the east

Despite the activities of the ancient Athenians the 19th century continued to insist that desire was depraved and needed to be restrained by guilt. They claimed sex was natural but destructive. Just like the previous era they were very suspicious of any sexual happiness. A conservative season returned, bringing with it bans on premarital sex and unfulfilling sex within marriage, creating the perfect conditions for infidelity and unhappiness. One housewife in 1939 said "My husband accused me of being 'cold' but little knew the passionate longings I experienced if he had made love to me instead of using me... now, at 51, I feel the whole business is nature's great joke of which we are the victims."

Michel Foucault criticized the "Victorian twilight" that repressed natural sexual relationships, and further criticized the church and state for their impotent attempts to police sex- both for attempting to do so at all, and for then failing at that, creating a culture of hypocrisy. Foucault went on to demonstrate that by banning sex the authorities only managed to make it all that much more appealing!

Women who became pregnant outside of marriage, and women accused of prostitution, were still treated harshly at their most desperate hour. At the same time men were imprisoned for homosexuality, due to the mistaken belief that this would undermine civilization. This coming from a civilization based on Athenian aristocracy. The leaders of the time also continued to spread lies about the effects of masturbation. The reality is that negative effects are more likely to come from abstaining from masturbating.

Legally women were seen as being physically unable to experience lust, and fundamentally weak and vulnerable. Unofficially they were blamed for their passions and punished for any attempts at ambition. But the claim continued that women were responsible for men's sexual aggression, both for causing it and for managing it. Many first wave feminists called for chastity in response to these claims. Christabel Pankhurst called for "votes for women and chastity for men" in 1913. She was the leader of the Women's Social and Political Union. She turned this dynamic around, claiming that most men had sexually transmitted diseases.

So men and women were still very suspicious of love, if it was real at all. Romantic love was more and more associated with sex, and sexual passion was now viewed as the foundation of social life. In "Psychopathia Sexualis" Richard Krafft-Ebing wrote that "love unbridled is a volcano that burns down and lays waste all around it; it is an abyss that devours all—honor, substance and health." We now know that healthy, consensual sex is a very healthy exercise among adults with basic education and contraception.

19th century academics who studied sex considered love to be directly related to the sexual instinct for reproduction. But they contradicted themselves by documenting all kinds of non-reproductive sexual activity, insisting they were perverted, but focusing on them nonetheless. They claimed that anyone's fundamental character could be determined by their sexual preferences, whether it was a fetish, homosexuality, masochism, transsexuality, or whatever. They said "Since upon the nature of sexual sensitivity the mental individuality in greater part depends." It seems they just wanted an excuse to study sex in a society which generally forbids it.

symbolizing primitive women, according to post colonial theorist Gayatri Spivak. This can still be seen in the orientalizing of the so-called exotic feminine.

At this time the idea that women were manipulative liars continued along with the returned focus on pleasure. They were seen as seductive and wily, and this idea continues today when women are called 'tricks'. The reality was that women were forced into prostitution by poverty. The "luckier" women could become privileged courtesans to wealthy men. These sex symbols were highly visible in 18th century society. Their desperate lives depended on the whims of rich men. The descriptions of male fantasies, like John Cleland's "Fanny Hill: Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure" do not reflect the reality. The name of the popular novel itself shows the male focus, on women's backsides and the idea of a hill, or hierarchy. In this novel a young woman claws her way up the patriarchal pyramid with her seductive prowess.

Despite its warts the Enlightenment did create the space for a more open discussion of sex. Despite being intentionally ignored by history, women contributed immensely to intellectual progress as writers, often with male pseudonyms, as discovered by feminist historians Barbara Taylor and Sarah Knott. In England Mary Wollstonecraft provoked passionate discussion with her "Vindication of the Rights of Women" in 1792. She called out men who ruined women's lives by refusing to provide equal levels of education for them. She targeted Jean-Jacques Rousseau's philosophy of assuming it was "natural" for boys and girls to have different educations. In this system girls were taught to stay at home, modestly submit to their husbands and be perfect housewives. Wollstonecraft saw that this would only "degrade one half of the human species, and render women pleasing at the expense of every solid virtue". Women at this time were still men's property and subjected to sexual conquest by men who

simultaneously demanded sexual labor and chastity.

At the end of the 18th century conservative forces again made sex taboo as populations began to visibly grow. This mindset continues today with the perpetuation of the Malthusian myth of overpopulation as an excuse for eco-fascism, ironically from the moralizing conservatives who ban abortion care for women. With the Industrial Revolution, and somewhat developed medical technology, mortality began to fall as fertility rose. The populations of England and Wales doubled near the beginning of the 19th century. Once again influential church leaders promoted repressive policies towards women when Thomas Malthus claimed that population growth would cause the end of civilization as we know it in his essay in 1798. Malthus called for even more chastity, moral restraint and self-denial, specifically for working class women, whom he saw as fundamentally inferior. He also advocated abolishing aid for the poor in order to kill them off.

All across Europe the policing of women's bodies and sex continued into the 19th century. "Aristotle's Masterpiece" and other erotic guides were banned. Social purity societies went to work to put an end to vices and 'rescue' prostitutes- mostly by making them into housewives, not by reforming the men who continue to demand sex work and chastity.

Laws designed to punish only women, such as the "Contagious Diseases Act", passed in 1864, excused men but required the arrest of any women who was accused of being a prostitute. All such accused women were forced to submit to invasive examinations for venereal diseases- but not men. At this time masturbation was also condemned, and this culture of shame continues to cause repressed sexual tension to manifest itself in affairs and sex crimes. Birth control information was outlawed and all

women were denied access to any sex education, leading to all kinds of mistakes and socially compromising situations. Alexandre Mayer of France, a leading physician at the time, claimed that women were mostly devoid of sexual sensations. He was not alone in this opinion, leading one to wonder if the sexual performance of so-called leading men is inversely proportional to their wealth and status. Men like this reduced women of this age to procreating machines. More recently Ben Shapiro broke the internet when he claimed that his wife didn't get wet, and that women who did must have some kind of medical problem, in his response to Cardi B and Meghan Thee Stallion's Wet Ass Pussy song. I imagine Mrs. Shapiro didn't appreciate that unwanted publicity.

According to Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur the 19th century was the first time that men and women were seen as opposites. Previously there was seen to be very little difference, with more in common, which is actually the case for genders and all peoples worldwide. Women were still seen as weaker versions of the male body at this time. In "Aristotle's Masterpiece" it said: "For those that have the strictest searchers been, find women are but men turn'd outside in: and men, if they but cast their eyes about, may find they're women with their inside out."

But a change was finally coming.

While the sex lives of people were still policed the control officially came from the hands of the state and male scientists instead of the church. But these erudite men claimed that women were totally controlled by their menstruating bodies. Laqueur said "In a world in which science was increasingly viewed as providing insight into the fundamental truths of human creation... a biology of incommensurability became the means by which differences could be authoritatively represented."