



Sex and Pleasure in Western Culture

Gail Hawkes

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Sex and Pleasure in Western Culture provides the first comprehensive overview of desire and pleasure in western sexual culture. It argues that both have always been seen as socially disruptive and morally dangerous and offers an entertaining account of the methods by which these attributes of sex were managed across the centuries from Classical Antiquity to the present day.

The book develops the hypothesis that, while expressed in very different social contexts, sexual pleasure has evoked very similar anxieties. The text draws on historical, cultural, sociological and contemporary sources and is easily accessible for both the general reader and students of gender and sexual culture. In addition to telling a story of its own, Sex and Pleasure in Western Culture examines lesser-known aspects of sexual history that invite further exploration by the interested reader. These range from sexual aestheticism in the 4th century AD and the sexual meaning of medieval church gargoyles, through to sexual training in the 1950s and 21st century sex holidays.

The book will provide a compelling read for both students of sexuality and lay readers who find the complexities of human sexuality a source of fascination.

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Western Pleasure is a western style competition at horse shows that evaluates horses on manners and suitability of the horse for a relaxed but collected gait cadence and relatively slow speed of gait, along with calm and responsive disposition. The horse is to appear to be a "pleasure" to ride and very comfortable, while being very smooth. Most light horse breeds in the United States and Canada may compete in western pleasure classes, either in open competition or at shows limited to a single breed. Cross-cultural researchers and historians point out, however, that culture may have a profound impact on people's perceptions and feelings, and on their ideas as to what is appropriate and permissible in the expression of romantic and passionate feelings. Let us review what these scholars have learned about the nature of passionate love and sexual desire. Women rarely enjoyed sex or experienced orgasm. Women's pleasure in sex was also tempered by their fear of getting pregnant and perhaps dying in childbirth. Although the Western Crusaders, troubadours, and courtiers and the Arab storytellers and slave singers tended to separate falling in love and making love, tenderness and lust, throughout history, for many people, the two were tightly connected.