Gender, Pleasure and Control

Rachel Thomson & Ester McGeeney

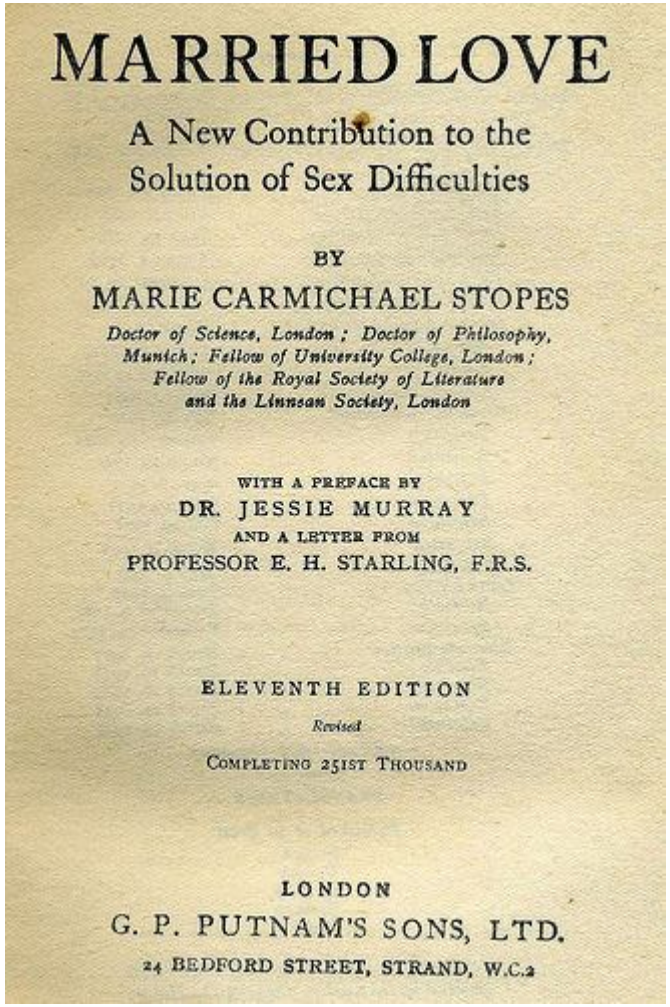
The Open University

www.brook.org.uk

Speaking out about pleasure

3 moments in popular culture

Marie Stopes, 1918



MARRIED LOVE

A New Contribution to the Solution of Sex Difficulties

BY

MARIE CARMICHAEL STOPES

Doctor of Science, London; Doctor of Philosophy, Munich; Fellow of University College, London; Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and the Linnean Society, London

WITH A PREFACE BY

DR. JESSIE MURRAY

AND A LETTER FROM

PROFESSOR E. H. STARLING, F.R.S.

ELEVENTH EDITION

Revised

COMPLETING 251ST THOUSAND

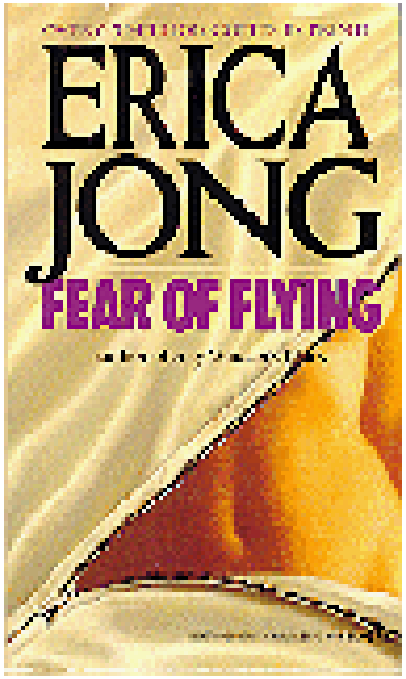
LONDON

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS, LTD.

24 BEDFORD STREET, STRAND, W.C.2

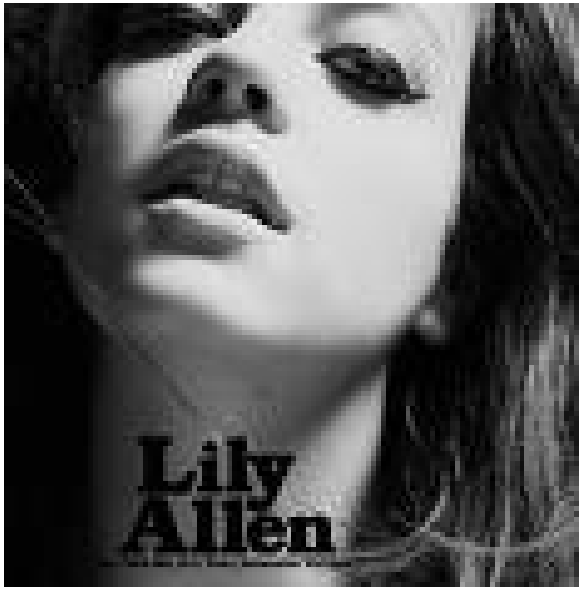
When two who are mated in every respect burn with the fire of the innumerable forces within them, which set their bodies longing towards each other with the desire to interpenetrate and to encompass one another, the fusion of joy and rapture is not purely physical … From their mutual penetration into the realms of supreme joy the two lovers bring back with them a spark of that light which we call life. And unto them a child is born. This is the supreme purpose of nature in all her enticing weft of complex factors luring the two lovers into each others arms.

Erica Jong,1973



The zipless fuck is absolutely pure. It is free from ulterior motives. There is no power game. The man is not ‘taking’ and the woman is not ‘giving’. No one is attempting to cuckold a husband or humiliate a wife. No one is trying to prove anything or get anything out of anyone. The zipless fuck is the purest thing there is. And it is rarer than the unicorn. And I have never had one.

Lily Allen, 2009



well I lie here in the wet patch in the middle of the bed
I'm feeling pretty damn hard done by, I spent ages giving head
then I remember all the nice things that you've ever said to me
maybe I'm just overreacting, maybe you're the one for me

it's not fair and I think you're really mean
I think you're really mean
yes I think you're really mean

oh you're supposed to care but you never make me scream
you never make me scream

oh it's not fair and it's really not ok
it's really not ok
it's really not ok

oh you're supposed to care but all you do is take
all you do is take

Time Travel

Pleasure and control in the 1990s

Angela: challenging female sexual passivity

- I believe in equality, like a woman has a need as much as a man’
- ‘we’re entitled to it.
- ‘I didn’t want to be known as a prick tease’
- ‘they’d feel dead insulted being asked to use a condom’

Sarah: policing monogamy

- ‘Its like the whole thing of the 60’s, that sex is free for all. More of it available to more men. I hadn’t realised that you had to decide, not just go along with it.’
- ‘I let myself get into a situation where I wasn’t on control..’
- ‘it was like such a reversal of positions.. I was like the experienced one..I used to love talking about it, and he was actually doing that and it was working it out within ourselves’

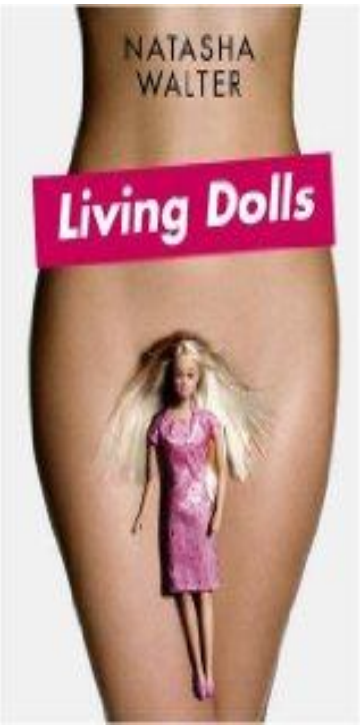
Tina: empowerment

- ‘most women don’t know what they should feel. It was very much on the receiving side, doing something to please someone else. Not pleasure for themselves.’
- ‘In a blackmail situation where a boys got an erection and he wants to have sexual intercourse with me, I don’t. Then I’ll talk about it and start laughing.. get them to actually think about what they’re doing’.
- Safe sex is as pleasurable an experience as actual penetration. Oral sex, just things like touching somebody else’s body in a gentle way. Kissing. Appreciating one another’s bodies. I think its just as much fun, if not more. You concentrate on each other’s needs a lot more, you’re more aware of each others bodies. Instead of twenty minutes of bang, bang, bang, you’ve got a whole night: you watch the dawn come up and you’re still there.

Time Travel

Pleasure and control in 2010

The sexualisation agenda



This new culture of shags and three-somes, orgies and stranger fucks, seems to be replacing the culture in which sex was associated with the flowering of intimacy. (Walter 2010)

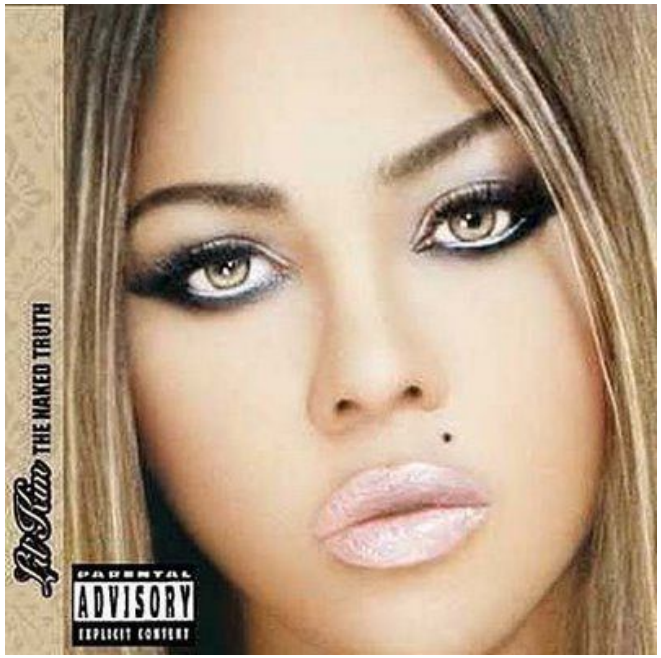
Raunch culture isn't about opening our minds up to the possibilities and mysteries of sexuality. It's about endlessly reiterating one particular – and particularly commercial - shorthand for sexiness.' (Levy 2005)

Sexualisation devalues women and girls sending out a disturbing message that they are always sexually available. It creates false expectations for girls trying to live up to unrealistic 'ideals', and for boys in terms of how they think a girl should be treated. It increases self-objectification and limits the aspirations and choices that girls feel are open to them. (Papadopolous 2010)

The Pleasure Project

A discourse of erotics would involve the acknowledgement that all young people, whatever their gender and sexual identity (transgender, intersex, female, male, lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual or something else), are sexual subjects who have a right to experience sexual pleasure and desire. Including this discourse within programmes is about creating spaces in which young people’s sexual desire and pleasure can be legitimated, positively integrated and deemed common place (Allen 2004).

Lil Kim ‘Not tonight’



The moral of the story is this
You aint lickin' this, you aint stickin' this
And I got witnesses, ask any nigga I been with
They aint hit shit till they stuck they tongue in this
I aint with that frontin' shit
I got my own Benz, I got my own ends, immediate friends
Me and my girls rock worlds, some big niggas
Fuck for car keys, and double digit figures
Good dick I cherish, I could be blunt
I treat it like it's precious, I aint gonna front
For limp dick niggas, that's frontin' like they willy
Suck my pussy till they kill me, you feel me?