



The Pleasure's All Mine: A History of Perverse Sex

Julie Peakman

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Homosexuals, transvestites, transsexuals, sado-masochists, necrophiliacs – all of these have been, or still are, considered ‘deviants’. Concomitantly there has been almost universal acceptance that unembellished vaginal penetration, performed by one man and one woman, is ‘normal’ sex. This is now contested.

But what is perverse sex and what isn’t? The Pleasure’s All Mine explores the gamut of sexual activity that has been seen as strange, abnormal or deviant over the last 2,000 years. This first comprehensive history of sexual perversion examines an abundance of original sources – letters, diaries, memoirs, court records, erotic books, medical texts and advice manuals – and shows how, for ordinary people, different kinds of sex have always offered myriad different pleasures. There never was a ‘normal’.

Almost all sexual behaviours have travelled to and fro along a continuum of proscription and acceptance. Attitudes have changed towards masturbation, leatherwear, ‘golden showers’ and sado-masochism. From the specialized cultures of pain, necrophilia and bestiality to the social world of plushies and furies, and lovers of life-sized sex dolls, some previously acceptable behaviour now provokes social outrage, while activities as diverse as sodomy and wife-swapping have moved on the spectrum of acceptance from sin to harmless fun. Each ‘perversion’ is explored from the time it was first visible in history, to how it is viewed today, and along the way the book asks why we can be so intolerant of other people’s sexual preferences.

Carefully researched as well as a fascinating read, and featuring a wide array of illustrations, The Pleasure’s All Mine reaches conclusions that are surprising, and sometimes shocking. This is an essential volume for anyone interested in the art, history and culture of sex.

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