



The Story of V: Opening Pandora's Box

Catherine Blackledge

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It is the seat of female sexual pleasure, and the passage for both the creation and the birth of humankind. Yet we know less about the vagina than we do about any other organ of the human body. Why? In this dazzling smorgasbord of facts about female genitalia, Catherine Blackledge explores how the vagina has been conceived and misconceived over the centuries. In the past, medicine has misrepresented female sexual anatomy, reducing its remarkable complexities to the notion of a passive vessel. But, as this book shows, science is at last beginning to reveal the true structure and function of female genitalia, and the dynamic nature of the vagina's role in both sexual pleasure and reproduction. With a wide-ranging perspective that takes in prehistoric art, ancient history, linguistics, mythology, evolutionary theory, reproductive biology and medicine, Catherine Blackledge unveils the hidden marvels of the female form.

The Story of V: Opening Pandora's Box Details

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From Reader Review The Story of V: Opening Pandora's Box for online ebook

Antiloquax says

Extremely thorough book about vaginas. Has pictures!

Hella says

Potente, meraviglioso, bellissimo.
Da leggere assolutamente.

Lynley says

I picked this book up when I saw it at the library because I wondered how it was possible to write such a thick tome all about vaginae. Well, now I've read it and my questions have been answered -- even those questions I never thought I had. This book is an interesting juxtaposition of scientific fact interspersed with David Attenborough type observations and tidbits about the author's own personal life a la Nancy Friday. Until I read this book I didn't know that men have a clitoris, nor had I heard such a detailed summary of the female prostate, and I was put in mind of other feminist books I've read lately in which it is posited that men and women aren't as different as cultural conditioning would have us believe. As a big fan of Cordelia Fine's research, I'm fully on board with that.

One thing that annoyed me a bit about this particular book -- and it's no reflection on the author, of course -- is that some idiot had gone through the library book with a pen, sometimes a pencil, and made his own notes. I say 'him' because the notes left little to the imagination and suggested an elderly gentleman, with a native language of German. (He had corrected one of the frequent German references.) This note scribbler had a scientific bent -- in the chapter on female aroma he'd made a note about pine resin, and when the author broke down the chemical composition of vaginal lubrication he wondered (quite rightly, I suppose) whether she was talking about 1ml or 100ml quantities. At other times the marginalia said, 'Ah, bliss!' (after a description of vaginal muscles gripping a penis) or 'To die for!' (after a description of the author's personal aroma). Fortunately for me, the subsequent reader of this particular library copy, the marginalia grew less frequent, as he obviously gave up underlining the English words he didn't know. Towards the end of the book, all I found were three heavy exclamation marks, beside the world record for clinically observed orgasms in a single hour, in case you're interested. The exclamation marks had been scrawled so heavily that the next three pages were indented with the pressure of the (red) pen.

As you can see, I had this uninvited narrator along for the ride, and I've always wondered what sort of individual writes in library books. I'm of the opinion that if you want to write in a book, buy your own fucking copy. I also wondered about the disheveled state of this book, and why the plastic is coming off in places, despite being a fairly new hardback. Gross. I'd rather not think about where this book has been, and whether or not this former reader washed his hands.

I won't write a spoiler here, though. If you'd like to know how many orgasms it's possible to have in an hour,

I hope you'll read this book yourselves. (Handy hint: buy your own, untattered and hygienic copy.)

Sherrie says

If the every person read this book it would solve many of the world's problems.

Paul says

History and functioning of the vagina.
Not all good

Annah-Marie says

This book is INCREDIBLE so far! I am learning an incredible amount about the history of the vagina...things I would have never thought to ask! If you are a woman, you MUST read this!

Mew says

Interesting...Educational...Daring...Insightful.

Sara Passera says

un libro prezioso, la spiegazione del mistero femminile e di mille altre cose che sicuramente non sai, l'unione perfetta tra spiegazioni biologiche, psicologiche e sociologiche. un libro perfetto da regalare a chi è fortemente interessato a tematiche femminili ma anche a qualcuno che crede che queste argomentazioni non siano abbastanza interessanti. il saggio è lungo, sì, ma scorre con immenso piacere. la ricchezza che lascia a fine lettura è qualcosa di impagabile

Spook Harrison says

I love Blackledge! Her writing is so good! She's thoroughly informative with an academic bent while at the same time giving her works her own personal flavor in a way that the reader is aware of when they are reading scientific fact versus the author's (well informed) conjecture. I'd never before realized how late in the game the male role in fertility was recognized and probably would not have thought about it without the discussion on pg. 40. How language shapes the current feeling toward anything is obvious, but I quiet enjoyed Blackledge's survey of linguistic terms and their origins on pg. 84 and throughout; I am gratified with how she doesn't forget to cite her sources in the Further Reading.
There were so many interesting things I shared with other people I know after reading about the systematic

repression of or the marvel of female biology! The biological facts as well as the past pride and how our current ideas about female sexuality came to be in both Eastern and Western culture, so for myself, remember that pgs. 72, 114, 119, 138, 174, 179, 209, 223, 239, 241, 249, 255, 263, 292, 295 and 297 are especially interesting. While I was surprised that there was not a discussion of rape in human and other animal interactions, as it's possible only humans actually perform that act with malice aforethought, I can understand the exclusion. In such a comprehensive book on the subject that covers every aspect of the vagina from bad Renaissance science to bad 19th Century science, modern science and science in places that are not Western-minded, a book that discusses the diversity of animals from humans to one-celled bacterium, the role of pop culture and pop psychology, from hormones to scent to the vagus nerve, where our heart-shape actually comes from...just know that if you read the introduction and are intrigued, you too will love, love, love this book. That, and never use a product with nonoxynol-9 in it (pg. 172).

Melissa says

More dry than a post-menopausal woman...You'd think a book on this topic would be a little more interesting.

Lyndsay says

An history of the relationship between science and vaginas. From mysterious hole that babies manage to come out of, to inverse penis, to sinful clitori, to any number of hesitant theories about the purpose and utility of the female orgasm and medical administration thereof. Science had no idea what was going on underneath women's skirts, and neither did anybody else!

Paul says

Interesting and irritating. Very informative, fascinating details, history etc but from my recollection it was uneven and did not pursue some aspects as much as one might have liked.

A good start but a better book still to be written on the subject

Lucy says

Vy?erpávající pr?vodce "o ženských genitáliích". Zpracováno na základ? mnohých studií, použité materiály z dalších knih ale i starých text?. Líbil se mi mix starého a nového. Neortodoxní pohled, barvitý, revolu?ní... trocha v?dy, historie, mýt?, folkloru i um?ní.

Kay Baird says

This book's illustrations have anatomical details most other books lack

Uuttu says

Erittäin mielenkiintoinen kirja, jossa käsitellään vaginan mytologiaa, biologisia tietoja sekä myös muita lajeja. Kirjan isoin ongelma oli sen kirjoitustyyli: kirjassa ei ole käytännössä minkäänlaisia lähteitä ja melko vähän viittauksia mihinkään tutkimuksiin, etenään arkeologisella puolella. Muutamissa kohdissa tulee myös olo, että kirjailija ei tiedä itse, mistä kirjoittaa, vaan on vain kopioinut valmista tekstiä tai vain tekee oletuksia ilman varsinaisia perusteluita. Seassa on myös jopa hämmentävästä kirjailijan omia kommentteja ja kritisointeja.

Kokonaisuudessaan hyvä, mutta vaatii lukijalta paljon lähdekritiikkiä.
