



We Are All Quite Queer

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SUMMARY. This article claims that solo sex could be viewed as queer sex because one loves a person of the same gender, and discusses the history of masturbation and its growing acceptance. The author explains how she became a teacher of solo sex to women who had difficulty reaching orgasm in the early seventies and, through years of teaching masturbation skills, defines solo sex as the kind of erotic meditation that enables more complete and creative forms of sexual expression.

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If you have ever masturbated, you've had gay sex. Come on, it's a same sex activity no matter what you might be fantasizing. So get a grip on your clit or cock and enjoy being as queer as a three dollar bill. Whether you are straight, bi or gay, rejoice in your queerness because diversity is what sexual expression is all about.

As a woman who's been on the front line of liberating masturbation for over thirty years, I have often wondered why parents, clergy and politicians are so terrified that someone somewhere might be touching their own genitals for sexual gratification. Originally I thought the masturbation taboo was primarily created by organized religions. They put pleasuring oneself on their hit list to make us all guilt-ridden sinners in need of forgiveness so a few can control many. Of course those of us who were smart figured a way out—if God didn't want us to play with ourselves, She would have made our arms shorter.

Eventually I realized that there are other factors besides religion that have given the masturbation taboo its long shelf life. Take homophobia for instance. Many manly men feel that having to do their own dicks will make them less of a man so they have to get laid or have a woman "do them." What if he likes jerking off so much he stays home instead of going out to "score"? Maybe he's afraid that the immense pleasure he gets from working the hard shaft and swollen head with deft fingers will turn him into a queer. Or even worse, he'll end up in a gay bathhouse where he takes it up the ass "like a bitch" and there goes his hard earned masculinity down the drain along with his jism.

Homophobia affects men and women differently. Women are far less threatened by being gay or bi than most men. In many ways the image of two women having sex enhances a woman's feminine image while being gay dev-

astates a man's masculine image. To me, a homophobe believes that being a gay man is being weak like a woman. One of the worst things any boy can be called is a sissy, but we think a girl acting like a boy is cute. We smile and say, "She's a tomboy." While most manly men want to fuck a woman up the ass, they refuse to let anyone get near their own.

The big social fear surrounding masturbating women is that once a woman masturbates and learns how to give herself fabulous orgasms, she will stop putting out for two-minute men, guys who ignore the clitoris and men who are threatened by vibrators. She might even prefer women. There are many manly men who don't want women to become sexually knowledgeable because down deep they know it would create a major change in heterosexuality. They would no longer be able to fuck her for a couple of minutes, blow a load, then roll over and go to sleep. Of course the exception to this is all the smart men who welcome a sexually sophisticated partner. They appreciate a woman who knows what she wants and is able to ask for it.

In my opinion heterosexuality is the one sexual preference that has the most difficulty in sharing equal orgasms. However, I recommend all committed couples whether they are straight, bi, or gay to include masturbation in their sexual repertoire. The most common complaint at the top of the list for married couples or domestic partners is living with a person who doesn't want sex as often as the other. When two people are living together it's important that masturbating separately remains part of each person's sex life. Those moments of sexual solitude allow us to focus on our own sensations and to explore our erotic minds without having to be concerned with another person's pleasure.

Still society resists embracing masturbation, teaching sexual skills and honoring sexual pleasures. Religious conservatives continue to view children as asexual and they discourage or condemn all bodily pleasures. For them, adult sexuality is a committed heterosexual relationship in a monogamous marriage. All other forms of sexual expression are seen as perverted and frowned upon by the church and punished by laws. But it wasn't always like this. When we worshipped the Mother Goddess, sexuality was revered and the human body was sacred.

When we take into account the entirety of humankind's recorded history, the masturbation taboo is relatively recent. Touching one's genitals for sexual gratification has been practiced since the Stone Age. Small clay sculptures of masturbating figures dating from that time show acceptance of this human activity. Greek pottery from the fourth and fifth century B.C. depict both women and men joyfully masturbating along with graphic images of dildo use. In ancient Egypt, the most popular creation myth was based on a daily masturbation ritual that took place in the Karnak temples built over 4,000 years ago—information long suppressed by scholars and religious authorities due to the embarrassment it still causes.

The following text was taken from a wall at Karnak: "In the beginning there was chaos. Chaos was darkness, the waters of the abyss. The first God, Amon,

arose from the waters using nothing but his own strength to give form to his body. Amon existed alone. All was his. Yesterday and tomorrow was his. Alone he took his penis in his hand. He made love to his fist. He made his exquisite joy with his fingers, and from the flame of the fiery blast which he kindled with his hand, the universe was formed.”

At dawn every morning, priests and priestesses passed through the processional hallways that linked the three temples, arriving at the last room that held the shrine of Amon Ra. There they reenacted the original creation of divine masturbation to raise the sun god for another glorious day. These ancient Egyptians self-created the source of their own spiritual power on a daily basis with divine masturbation—quite a departure from the majority of other religions that profane the human body and all forms of sexual pleasure.

While I realize the Egyptian creation myth doesn't mention a woman's phallus, her clitoris, and the fact that divine masturbation was practiced only by the male priestly caste, I have my own version. The last room is lit with scented candles. All the celebrants sit in a sacred circle passing a water pipe inhaling the sweet smoke from cannabis buds. While Amon is having a go with his dick, the priests and priestesses join in for a morning circle masturbation ritual that ends in orgasms, singing, dancing, playing tambourines and sipping cold Egyptian beer.

In ancient Ireland, the Gaelic word for masturbation was “self-love,” but with the arrival of Christianity it was changed overnight into “self-abuse.” Religious leaders had successfully turned a natural human activity into a sin for which God would punish them. The Biblical story of Onan, who spilled his seed upon the ground and was struck dead by God, was interpreted as an act of masturbation. However, later scholars reinterpreted the story of Onan and concluded that his crime was disobeying God's order to fulfill his duty by getting his brother's wife with child. Actually, masturbation is never mentioned in any of the old or new testaments of the bible.

In his book, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation*, Mr. Thomas Laqueur, a professor of history at the University of California at Berkeley, tackles the masturbation taboo by asking, “Why did masturbation, an activity regarded with benign indifference for millennia, provoke such sweeping moral and medical panic around 1700?” He traces it to an anonymous diatribe that appeared in England bearing the ponderous title: *Onania; or, the Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution, and All Its Frightful Consequences, in Both SEXES, Considered, with Spiritual and Physical Advice to Those Who Have Already Injur'd Themselves by This Abominable Practice*. With a ridiculous title like that, you'd think people would question the author's sanity.

This nasty little book was full of bad news. “Willful self-abuse” was epidemic, its author announced, and without the aid of commercially available medical remedies, the prognosis for its victims was dire. Mr. Laqueur speculates the tract was the work of an English quack surgeon named John Marten. Although he was a crude medical huckster, his book spawned many disciples.

During the Age of Reason, masturbation's dangers had become an obsession. Voltaire denounced it as "perverted self-love." Rousseau condemned it as "the equivalent of self-enslavement."

As witchcraft gradually lost its reputation as the major cause of madness, the medical professionals jumped in to take control by establishing masturbation as the next symptom of insanity. Naturally the new priests of medical science had the only remedy. Cruel restraining devices, electrical shocks and alarms, penis cases, sleeping mitts, bed cradles to keep the sheets off the genitals, hobbles to keep girls from spreading their legs, deadly injections, along with male and female circumcision were used to stop children and adults from touching their own genitals for gratification.

In Mr. Laqueur's explanation for this prolonged bout of cultural hysteria over masturbation, he points out that eighteenth-century society was in the throes of drastic change. There was a new commercial economy dedicated to the satisfaction of individual desire. The expanding middle class put a new emphasis on private life including reading novels that took place in solitude giving free rein to the imagination. There was now an alarming new creature whose existence was beyond the reach and control of the church and state. Masturbation was "the sexuality of the modern self" which represented the "dark side" of social transformation.

He is so right on. A massive number of individuals having independent orgasms completely upsets every authoritarian apple cart. What would happen to marital sex and procreation if people started masturbating? A society of self-polluters would destroy the sacred family, motherhood, and what about all the innocent little children? What would become of Christianity if everyone slept late on Sundays with plenty of time to enjoy masturbation? What would happen to all the holidays that bring families together once people discover they'd rather stay home and pet the kitty or spank the monkey? And most importantly, what would happen to a consumer society when people figure out that they can have more fun enjoying cost-free orgasms rather than going out and spending money?

Now here comes a shocking reversal. By the late 1800s, some doctors began performing genital massage to orgasm on "hysterical" women as an ongoing part of their medical practice. Hysteria was seen as a chronic condition in women—the result of sexual deprivation. Since marital sex was solely a penis penetrating a vagina which didn't produce orgasm in most women and masturbation was forbidden, medical authorities were able to justify this clinical practice. Due to a demand from physicians, the first electric vibrator was invented as a medical instrument. These machines reduced the time it took to give a woman an orgasm from around an hour to ten minutes, making doctors' practices more lucrative. Let's hear a round of applause for good old capitalism.

Eventually women were able to buy electric vibrators for home use. They were advertised in women's magazines and sold in catalogs as rejuvenators of youthfulness. But when vibrators showed up in pornographic films in the

1920s, they were no longer available to the general public due to their blatant association with sex. From then on, electric vibrators were sold as massage machines to stimulate men's scalps to keep them from going bald and to soothe sore muscles.

In 1965, my first post marital lover was getting his scalp massaged by his barber with an electric vibrator when he thought, "This would be great for clitoral stimulation!" That same day he went to a barbershop supply store and bought one. The next evening he introduced me to the Oster electric vibrator that looked a bit like a miniature cement mixer. After warming me up manually with massage oil, he calmly strapped the vibrator's rows of metal coils onto the back of his hand. At first I wasn't sure about having a machine in bed with us, but his fingers were doing the vibrating. It was still skin on skin so I figured it was probably okay. The orgasm I had was absolutely amazing and I gradually accepted the vibrator as a sexual toy to be played with from time to time.

In the early seventies, I had the honor of being the first recognized feminist to publicly reintroduce electric vibrators to women solely for their orgasmic benefits. It began with my second one woman exhibition that had a larger than life drawing of a woman using the same Oster vibrator with a finger on either side of her erect clit. I had also drawn a beautiful black man with his head thrown back about to shoot a load as he gripped his stiff eight inch dick. That exhibition ended my relationship with the gallery. Nothing sold and there was a media blackout. Voila, I'd discovered the bottom line of sexual repression.

That's when I became the unofficial spokeswoman for the benefits of masturbation. In my opinion, the acceptance of this sexual activity would be one of the cornerstones of women's sexual liberation. I began writing straightforward articles for magazines on the importance of masturbation for non-orgasmic women and started running workshops to teach women how to harness the energy of these electric pleasure machines.

Many people became concerned that masturbating women would become addicted to vibrators or even worse, we would all become lesbians. While that was definitely true for some, a better term for "vibrator addiction" would be "sexual preference." And instead of all of us becoming lesbian, a more accurate label would be "bisexual" because many of us still liked to fuck with men. We just wanted to have sex on our own terms that included some form of direct clitoral stimulation during intercourse. For those of us who wanted to bring our vibrators to bed for a hot threesome, we needed to find vibrator friendly men.

This next fact belongs in Ripley's *Believe It or Not*—it wasn't until 1972 that the American Medical Association declared masturbation a normal sexual activity. In 1974, I came out publicly as a masturbating heterosexual-bisexual-lesbian in my self-published book *Liberating Masturbation* which later became *Sex for One*. Stringing all those sex labels together was so confusing that no one ever questioned my sexual preference to my face. But behind my

back, lesbian-feminists rejected me, many straight women avoided me, and the bisexual community didn't exist at the time. Back then, a bisexual was a person who couldn't make up their mind so we upset both sides of the opposing camps, gay and straight—so much for sexual diversity.

Today, whenever I see the letters GLBT, I think it's great that Gay Pride has finally included bisexual and transgendered people. Sexual diversity among queers has not always existed. There are still pockets of separatism, but for the most part, our community is an example of open-minded acceptance and that's a reason for everyone to celebrate Gay Pride. That includes my postmenopausal women friends who prefer masturbation to partnersex and my Webmaster whose sexual preference is masturbating while looking at pictures of "split beaver."

After more than three decades of teaching women about orgasms, I've learned that most women want some form of clitoral stimulation to continue throughout the entire act of intercourse whether it's a penis attached to a man or it's a strap-on dildo attached to her girlfriend's harness. Freud's idea that the clitoris produces infantile orgasms is a good example of another authoritarian manly man creating more bullshit about what women want. And if a man wants to learn ejaculatory control so he can be a smooth, long-lasting ride worth taking, he's going to do that through the practice of conscious masturbation.

The final level of sexual control comes from peer pressure by our well-meaning friends who warn us not to be too enthusiastic or vocal about enjoying our solitary pleasures. It's best to do it privately and not discuss it openly. So for the most part, we live in a world of closeted masturbators all isolated and alone with our dirty little secret. I agree with Mr. Laqueur when he says that very few people today are willing to publicly defend masturbation as "a morally innocent and socially benign sexual practice." He believes "this solitary pleasure is unlikely to be viewed as an unmitigated social good." In other words, if you do defend masturbation, you will not be taken seriously in academia, or have your book about masturbation reviewed in the *New York Times*.

As a person who dares to speak out about the benefits of self-sexuality and the personal power gained in owning our sexual bodies, I must say it's been a great adventure. While I can't brag about laughing all the way to the bank, I can say that my masturbation book has been in print since 1974. That's thirty years! It's also printed in twelve foreign languages. That means we have the beginning of a global acceptance of J.O. (jacking and jilling off). People in the UK, Mexico, Spain, Italy, Germany, Czech Republic, Denmark, Norway, Greece, Slovenia, Taiwan, Japan and Korea are reading my book at this very moment. One Japanese woman has opened a sex shop for women where she sells my book, vibrators and other sex toys.

There's a lot of satisfaction in knowing that I've helped to make the world a better place with my art, workshops, books, videos, private sessions and

Website devoted to the fine art of masturbation. Two days a week, I freely answer people's questions at <www.bettydodson.com>. Every day I rejoice when I think of all the men and women who have let go of sexual guilt over masturbation and are now enjoying passionate love affairs with themselves as well as their partners.

The following is a statement of purpose on my Website: "I believe masturbation is our first natural sexual activity. Masturbation is the ongoing love affair that each of us has with ourselves throughout our lifetime. Masturbation is an erotic meditation. Masturbation inspires creativity. Masturbation is a way to gain sexual self-knowledge. Cultural denial of masturbation is the basis of sexual repression. Sharing masturbation with a lover enhances sexual intimacy. Taking responsibility for our own orgasm gives us a choice when it comes to partnersex. Selfloving allows us to design a sexlife like an ongoing work of art. Self-sexuality is our daily bread, partnersex is an evening of dining out, and group sex is a grand banquet.

"I propose organizing a sex positive movement with millions of activists joining me on the barricades against sexual ignorance. If you're a friend of sex who would like to take a stand, start today by enjoying your own selfloving sessions without any guilt or apology. Go public by telling a few friends about your favorite masturbation techniques with a description of one of your better orgasms. Finally, sharing masturbation with a friend or lover qualifies you as an activist in the twenty-first century."

As I head into my fourth decade teaching and advocating the advancement of masturbation, way too many Christians, Jews and Muslims are once again on the warpath. So let's celebrate masturbation and sexual diversity with all we've got. Now more than ever, we need an abundance of sexual pleasure to counter all the violence in the world. Let's agree to dedicate an orgasm a week to world peace.

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