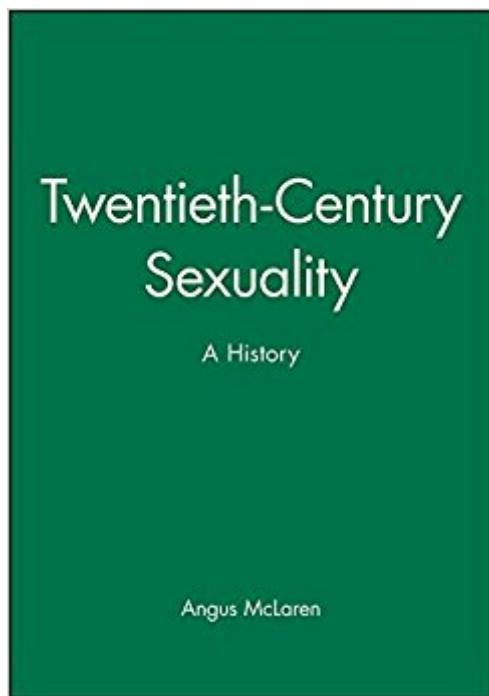


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Twentieth-Century Sexuality: A History



Synopsis

This book provides a fascinating history of sexuality in twentieth-century Europe and North America. Angus McLaren draws upon legal, medical and literary sources to demonstrate how modern sexuality has been shaped by race, class, gender and generational preoccupations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In the past three decades, historians and sociologists have increasingly used sex and sexuality as a vehicle to explain and interpret society, politics and human behavior. McLaren's ambitious book surveys nearly 100 years of sexual practices, attitudes and social policies in an attempt to construct a cohesive history of the ebb and flow of periods of relative sexual freedom followed by the backlash of repression. Using this model of "sexual panics," he discusses such issues as masturbation, race eugenics, the invention of psychoanalysis, sexology and the rise of feminism; the influence of marriage manuals, and of Kinsey's sexual research; the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s and the response of the media and government to AIDS; feminist debates about pornography and the rise of a politics of "family values." Writing in clear, well-organized prose, he is mindful of the influences of popular culture and media on sexual attitudes, and draws widely and informatively upon such diverse sources as Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*, Antonioni's 1966 film *Blowup* and the television show *Ellen*. The book succeeds best as a broad-ranging survey of Western European and Anglo-American attitudes. But while his narrative of the dialectic between freedom and repression is very convincing, his survey of sexual and political trends in nearly 10 countries over 100 years misses volumes of specific detail that could have made this chronicle more gripping. Copyright 1999

"This highly informative text is comprehensive, clearly written, and relies on the most up-to-date scholarship in its field. McLaren's interpretive outlook is unfailingly tolerant and invariably insightful." Robert A. Nye, Oregon State University "McLaren's book is to be highly recommended as a general textbook which illuminates the evolving debates and practices concerned with twentieth-century sexuality. Both undergraduates and professional historians will find it useful as it lays out the evidence and provides copious footnotes to help with further exploration of the topic." History "A valuable, fluently-written and very well-documented history of sexuality ... a most impressive work." Contemporary British History "... the book is stuffed full of goodies ... written in McLaren's usual readable style." American Historical Review "In Twentieth Century Sexuality: A History, Angus McLaren succeeds in accomplishing exactly what his title promises; to provide a history of twentieth century sexuality. And in the process of reaching this ambitious goal, he gives us vast stimulation and food for thought. "McLaren has therefore written a very important book and one that crackles with insights while being as comprehensive as can be imagined. As such, the work is quite unique." Journal of Social History "Angus McLaren's ability to provide an overview of as complex a topic as sexuality in the mercurial twentieth-century is truly outstanding. In this book, he summarizes - with wit as well as historical accuracy - many of the key issues that have shaped sexual identity throughout the last century." Medical History "Writing in clear, well-organized prose, he is mindful of the influences of popular culture and media on sexual attitudes. The book succeeds best as a broad-ranging survey of Western European and Anglo-American attitudes." Publishers Weekly "Twentieth-Century Sexuality: A History ...seeks to explore its topic in its quintessential complexity." Journal of Family Studies

I found McLaren's main message that nearly all attempts at restricting recreational sex were in fact replaced by new modes of restraint. These restraints only appear to be more liberal in nature. McLaren's pace at which he presents his evidence is brisk but not excessive, and the examples that he gives from the primary sources from the past century will make you either laugh in disbelief or cringe at America and Europe's attempt to construct a "healthy" "normal" society.

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