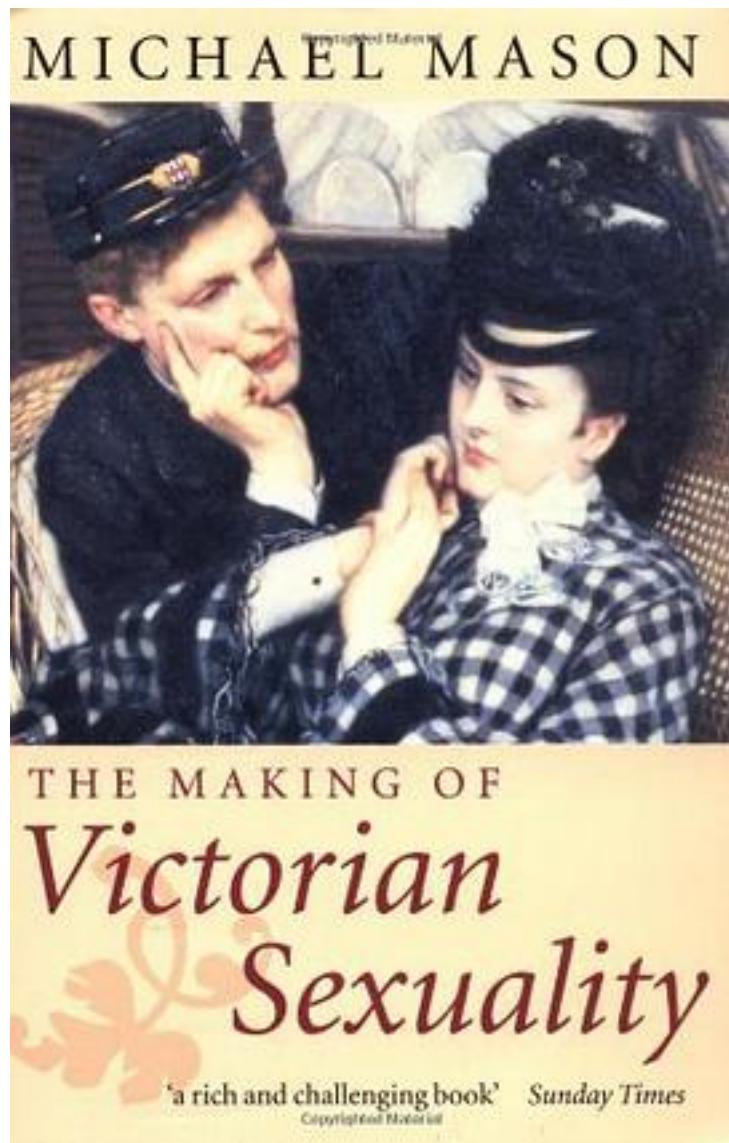


The Making of Victorian Sexuality



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What did the Victorians think about sex? What was the reality of their sexual behaviour? What wider concepts - biological, political, religious - influenced their sexual moralism? The Making of Victorian Sexuality directly confronts one of the most persistent cliches of modern times. Drawing on an exceptionally wide range of evidence about 19th-century behaviour and opinion - from modern demographic analysis to the travel writing of foreign visitors, and from popular medicine to Malthusian polemic - Michael Mason shows how much of our perception of 19th-century sexual culture is simply wrong. Far from being a licence for prudery and hypocrisy, Victorian sexual moralism is shown to be in reality a code intelligently embraced by wealthy and poor alike as part of a human and progressive vision of society's future. The "Average" Victorian man, for example, was not necessarily the church-going, tyrannical, secretly lecherous, bourgeois pater familias of modern-day legend, but often an agnostic, radical-minded, sexually continent citizen, with a deliberately restricted number of children. A lively and fascinating synthesis of a wealth of new research. The Making of Victorian Sexuality is a timely disruption of our present comfortable consensus on nineteenth-century society. Moreover, it persuasively argues that in Victorian sexual moralism there may be much to teach the complacently libertarian 20th century.

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