

THE MODERN HYPATIA

A Tale of Tampons, Deviance, and
Bodily Discipline in Feminism's
Second Wave



In fourth century Egypt, Hypatia, a philosopher and mathematician, rebuked a predatory student's sexual advances by ripping her menstrual rags from between her legs and hurling them at him. She yelled, "Take a look young man, at what you so much desire, which contains nothing apart from filth!"¹ Repulsed by her bloody, "monstrous cloth," the man forgot his lust and fled.²

Rather than emerging as a feminist rallying cry, Hypatia's story became fodder for Western medical communities and, later, feminine hygiene industries, which framed menstruation as "monstrous" because it detracted from the sexual pleasure of men. In the 1960s, these institutions reified and profited off the link between menstruation and deviance. The medical community and feminine hygiene industries appropriated second-wave white feminist rhetoric to market tools of bodily discipline like the tampon, thereby transforming menstrual secrecy into a status symbol while undermining and invalidating grievances from women's movements. First, I will explore the history of menstrual stigma in Western Europe and the United States, before delving into how scientists like Katharina Dalton perpetuated the link between menstruation and criminality. Finally, I will explore how feminine hygiene companies incorporated bodily discipline and menstrual secrecy into broader narratives of female empowerment.

History of Menstrual Taboo in Western Europe and the United States

Hypatia disobeyed the culture of menstrual secrecy, and, as a result, lost her status as a desirable, feminine, sexual object in the eyes of men. In Western, patriarchal societies, the Judeo-Christian tradition shaped cultural understandings of menstruation. For centuries, the idea of menstrual impurity strongly influenced debates concerning menstruation's impact on women's reproductive and social productivity. From the nineteenth century onward, commentators and employers mobilized culturally embedded biases about menstruation in their responses to women's rights advocacy. Most pressingly, they chal-

¹ Jacques Ferrand, *Erotomania or A Treatise Discoursing of the Essence, Causes, Symptomes, Prognosticks, and Cure of Love, or Erotique Melancholy* (Oxford: 1640), 256.

² Ferrand, *Erotomania*, 256.

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lenged whether women could - or should - fulfill societal functions outside of the private sphere.

Historians can trace the menarche of menstrual secrecy in Western Europe and the United States to the Book of Genesis, when God tells Eve he will “multiply thy sorrow and thy conception” with a monthly curse.³ The Bible formalized the ritual isolation of menstruating women; many biblical stories are parables of how menstruation undermines morality. In one story, Rachel’s period prevents her from fulfilling her pious duties, as she cannot go to church: “I cannot rise before thee; for the custom of women is upon me.”⁴ Leviticus 15:19-33 contains the most references to menstruation in the Bible, admonishing those who would touch a menstruating woman, for “whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the end.”⁵ This Biblical precedent encourages the marginalization of menstruating women, who are depicted as contagiously impure and, therefore, threatening to one’s relationship with God. This excerpt of Leviticus provides guidelines for the isolation of menstruating women:

19. When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. 20. Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. 21. Anyone who touches her bed will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. 22. Anyone who touches anything she sits on will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. 23. Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, they will be unclean till evening. 24. *If a man has sexual relations with her and her monthly flow touches him, he will be unclean for seven days; any bed he lies on will be unclean.*¹

According to the Bible, the threat of menstrual “impurity” interferes with sexual intercourse, therefore diminishing women’s reproductive and sexual value. If menstrual blood comes into contact with male skin, the men also become “ceremonially unclean.”⁶ In order to avoid social ostracism and conform to the gendered politics of respectability, many women felt obliged to hide or subdue menstrual evidence.⁷ Although most women in Europe during the Middle Ages bled through their clothing or wore rags, upper class women wore special undergarments — like diapers or harnesses — to absorb menstrual blood during special occasions. This act of ‘modesty’ enhanced their social standing and exacerbated unfavorable public perceptions of indigent women.⁸ Although menstrual

3 Delaney et al., *The Curse: A Cultural History of Menstruation* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1976), 33.

4 Delaney et al., *The Curse*, 33. In the Biblical canon, Rachel is the wife of Jacob, who is the son of Isaac, one of the patriarchs of the ancient Israelites.

5 Delaney et al., *The Curse*, 34.

6 Delaney et al., *The Curse*, 113.

7 Nancy Friedman, *Everything You Must Know about Tampons* (New York: Berkley Books, 1981), 78.

8 Sara Read, “Thy Righteousness Is but a Menstrual Clout’: Sanitary Practices and Prejudice in Early Modern England,” *Early Modern Women* 3 (2008): 4.

secrecy was a status symbol, only prostitutes used methods of internal absorption, which some historians regard as the earliest tampons in European history. By the late 17th century, internal absorption was so common among prostitutes that, John Wilmont — the Earl of Rochester — even wrote a poem praising women who hid their menstruation. He proclaims, “Fair nasty Nymph, be clean and kind / And all my joys restore / By using Paper still behind / And Sponges for before.”⁹ Here, the woman is physically dirty from menstrual blood, but also cruel for inhibiting his experience of sexual pleasure. Only when she hides her menstruation — by sticking paper in her vagina — will she be able to restore her status.

Early European societies also used menstrual metaphors to lower the status of marginalized groups, thereby capitalizing on the link between deviance and menstruation. During the Spanish Inquisition, government officials accused Jewish men of menstruation. The myth of Jewish male menstruation emasculated and morally denigrated Jewish men, which in turn justified Spain’s punitive policies towards religious minorities.¹⁰ This mythos also contributed to a cultural and political precedent of using menstruation to lower the status of already-marginalized people. In conjunction with — and in response to — women’s increasing calls for social, political, and educational inclusion, the Victorian era saw a return to the ritualization of female isolation. Women were kept inside because doctors worried contact with cold air would damage their reproductive organs and stop them from menstruating. They were also kept inside because men felt threatened by the idea of women leaving domestic spaces and joining the public sphere as independent actors, not as helpmates to men. Indeed, doctors’ comments about women in the public sphere reflect tensions about gendered roles and expectations. According to one Victorian doctor, menstruation in public spaces could lead women down a “path of imperfect development and lifelong invalidism.”¹¹ At the onset of menstruation, a young woman’s doctor watched her more closely for signs of “moral insanity.”¹² Menarche was the first stage of female deviance, and doctors expected their female patients to become “irreligious, selfish, slanderous, false, malicious, devoid of affection ... self-willed and quarrelsome.”¹³ Of course, any number of these labels could be applied to discredit and pathologize any woman who dared to defy the will of a man.

Pathologizing and Medicalizing Menstruation

Susan Sontag’s *Illness as Metaphor* provides a useful framework to critically evaluate the scientific community’s medicalization of menstruation. Sontag argued that “dis-

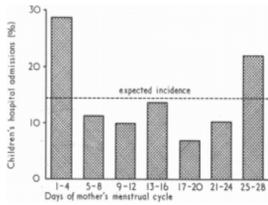
9 Read, “Thy Righteousness Is but a Menstrual Clout,” 8.

10 John L. Beusterien, “Jewish Male Menstruation in Seventeenth-Century Spain,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 73, no. 3 (1999): 447.

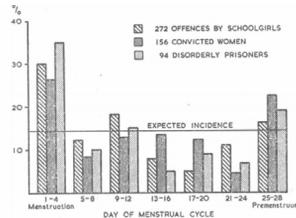
11 Louise Lander, *Images of Bleeding: Menstruation as Ideology* (New York: Orlando Press, 1988), 44.

12 Lander, *Images of Bleeding*, 44.

13 Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830–1980* (London: Time Warner Books UK, 1987), 56.



Children's hospital admissions and mother's menstrual cycle.



Times of offences during menstrual cycle.

ease expresses character, which is invariably extended to assert that character causes disease.¹⁴ For centuries, menstrual blood served as a metaphor for a lack of righteousness, uncleanness, and deviance. Burgeoning medical literature during the second wave of feminism reasserted the idea that menstruation was a form of deviance because it detracted from a woman's duties, particularly sexual intercourse. However, detractors problematized lower class women's menstruation more than that of other groups.

In the early 1960s, Katharina Dalton — a British doctor popularly referred to as a “pioneer” in menstrual care — coined the term “Premenstrual Syndrome.”¹⁵ Dalton's work eventually led to the classification of PMS as an official psychiatric disorder, when the American Psychiatric Association listed it in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual in the 1970s.¹⁶ Dalton's ideas built on the research of women like Mary Chadwick, a Freudian psychoanalyst, who theorized how menstruation turned a woman into “an actual menace to her neighbors.”¹⁷ Crime theorists Cesare Lombroso and Vincent Ferraro believed women were inherently “revengeful, jealous, inclined to vengeance of a refined cruelty” and that these symptoms peaked during menstruation.¹⁸ Building on Lombroso and Ferraro, Dalton insulated traditional constructs of femininity from the perceived dangers of the women's movement. She did everything in her power to fortify “American homes” from menstrual “chaos”; to Dalton, grievances from the women's movement in the 1960s were merely psychological responses to menstruation.¹⁹ Since medicalizing menstruation during the mid-twentieth century, doctors have identified 150 PMS symptoms and recommended 327 different treatments, though most lack evidence of clinical effectiveness.²⁰ Dalton regularly prescribed SSRIs (antidepressants) to women during paramenstruum to

14 Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors* (New York: Picador, 2001), 46.

15 Delaney et al., *The Curse*, 52.

16 M. S. Zeedyk et al., “Biology in the Courtroom: PMS in Legal Defences,” *Psychology, Evolution & Gender* 1, no. 2 (August 1999): 126.

17 Lander, *Images of Bleeding*, 94.

18 Bernadette McSherry, “The Return of Raging Hormones Theory: Premenstrual Syndrome, Postpartum Disorders, and Criminal Responsibility,” *Sydney Law Review* 15 (1989): 298.

19 Lander, *Images of Bleeding*, 87.

20 Chris Bobel and Judith Lorber, *New Blood: Third-Wave Feminism and the Politics of Menstruation* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 40.

alleviate their symptoms - and make them more "amenable to discipline."²¹ Dalton's work revived the ritualistic discipline of female bodies, cultivating "docility" in a generation of 'mentally imbalanced' renegades.²² While clinically unsound, her research was critical in invalidating the contemporaneous women's movement.

In one paper called "Menstruation and Crime," Dalton argued women were more likely to commit crimes during menstruation than at any other point in their cycle. Here, we see a direct link between bodily function, which detracted from women's 'productivity' (e.g. pleasing a man, being attractive, being passive), and deviance. In a sample of 522 women, Dalton constructed a probability distribution in which nearly half of all "female" crimes (49%) were committed by women during their periods. Dalton claimed that "the hormonal changes of menstruation probably make the individual less amenable to discipline" as a plausible biological connection between menstruation and crime.²³ In another paper, "Children's Hospital Admissions and Mother's Menstruation," Dalton created a probability distribution demonstrating how children were more likely to suffer from illnesses or have accidents during their mothers' paramenstruum. Again, Dalton reified societal fears of menstruating women, linking bodily function with deviance. Dalton also alleged menstruation caused women to forsake their duties to their children, recounting the story of a young girl who "contracted" asthma because her mother's PMS created an unstable home environment and drove away the father.²⁴ Not only had PMS driven away her husband, it also rendered the woman an unreliable mother. Women who menstruated were "accident prone," "negligent," "unreliable," "impatient," and "violent."²⁵ In her book, *Once a Month*, Dalton recounts how she was able to reunite a husband and his wife, just by prescribing the woman progesterone tablets and antidepressants. The woman reached out to Dalton via letter, begging her for a 'cure' to PMS. The woman lamented how, "our marriage is breaking up, our children are suffering and after five years of trouble my poor husband can take no more."²⁶ Allegedly, 'curing' the woman's deviant PMS would solve all of their marital problems. Much of Dalton's treatment for PMS involved SSRIs, progesterone, and PMS clinics. Although progesterone tablets and antidepressants genuinely help some women with menstrual discomfort, Dalton saw these tools as a way to cultivate passivity and femininity in women. These tools of bodily discipline allowed a woman to reclaim her 'femininity,' restore her status as a sexual object, and 'free' herself from PMS's 'reign of terror.' This focus on women's pathology absolved men of any blame for marital tension and endeavored to delegitimize women's demands for better treatment.

21 Paramenstruum is a part of the menstrual cycle consisting of the last four days before menstruation and the first four days of menstruation. Katharina Dalton, "Menstruation And Crime," *The British Medical Journal* 2, no. 5269 (1961): 1753.

22 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 25.

23 Dalton, "Menstruation And Crime," 1753.

24 Katharina Dalton, "Children's Hospital Admissions and Mother's Menstruation," *British Medical Journal* 2, no. 5700 (April 4, 1970): 28.

25 Dalton, "Children's Hospital Admissions and Mother's Menstruation," 28.

26 Elizabeth Arveda Kissling, *Capitalizing on the Curse: The Business of Menstruation* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 43.

Although Dalton argued all menstruating women had a proclivity towards violence, much of her research centered around individuals who were already social outcasts such as incarcerated women, women of color, low-income women, single mothers, women with disabilities, and “naughty” school girls.²⁷ As Dalton’s various solutions to premenstrual syndrome were financially inaccessible, only women with higher incomes could evade menstrual blood’s moral and physical stain. Through the othering of women who visibly menstruated, methods of bodily discipline — like Dalton’s progesterone tablets and the tampon — became a status symbol. The label of menstrual insanity compounded the oppression of women who already held marginalized identities, undermining their credibility and further relegating their issues to what political theorist Brigitte Bargetz refers to as the “private sphere.”²⁸ Dalton framed menstruating women as dangers to society and inexorable victims of their biology who become villains by demanding more from the world.

As scientists pathologized menstruation and the feminine hygiene industry devised products to rectify this “womanly offense,” menstrual insanity as a legal defense grew in popularity.²⁹ Dalton was the expert witness in many of these cases, using ‘biology’ to reify the criminality of the menses.³⁰ In the 1980s, Sadie Smith stabbed her coworker to death but only received three years of probation because her violent outburst happened to occur at the same time as her period. A year later, Smith threatened to kill a police officer, but again received a light sentence because her physician — Dalton — argued Smith was menstruating at the time and thus had no control over her actions. Around the same time, Christine English killed her boyfriend after they got into an argument. However, the conviction was reduced from murder to manslaughter because the defense argued she was suffering from PMS.³¹ “PMS as temporary insanity” seemed so reasonable to the prosecution that they did not even attempt to undermine this argument, especially since the medical community had such a long, established history of linking menstruation with deviance.

Dalton was the primary expert on issues related to menstruation and PMS, and acted as a counterpoint to feminists who openly questioned menstrual secrecy. By medicalizing and pathologizing menstruation, Dalton constructed the female existence as a malady. In the scientific and popular imagination, menstruation was a menace, detracting from women’s sexual appeal and further lowering the status of historically marginalized communities. When situated in a broader narrative of gender, power, and feminism, tools of bodily discipline — like tampons — had the ability to neutralize or subdue the “inherently” female characteristics of crime and hysteria.

27 Katharina Dalton, “Schoolgirls’ Behaviour And Menstruation,” *The British Medical Journal* 2, no. 5213 (1960): 1649.

28 Brigitte Bargetz, “The Politics of the Everyday: A Feminist Revision of the Public/Private Frame,” *Reconciling the Irreconcilable*, ed. I (Papkova, Vienna: IWM Junior Visiting Fellows’ Conferences, Vol. 24, 2009).

29 Zonite Products Corp., “A Modern Mother Won’t Fail To Tell Her Daughter These Intimate Physical Facts,” *Duke Digital Collections: Ad** Access, <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/adaccess/BH0219>, 1950.

30 Zeedyk et al., “Biology in the Courtroom,” 130.

31 Zeedyk et al., “Biology in the Courtroom,” 130.

Feminine Hygiene Technology

Hypatia drove away her male suitor because he discovered she was “nothing but filth.” She lost her appeal because the cultural imagination dictates a woman’s body cannot function without satiating a man’s sexual appetite. In her article “Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power,” Bartky remarks that “the sense that women’s bodies are deficient makes them practice discipline on their bodies compulsively and ritualistically.”³² Johnson & Johnson became one of the earliest companies to profit from the ritualistic discipline of female bodies when they began to commercially produce tampons in 1933.³³ Three years later, the company began to appropriate rhetoric from the recently successful suffrage movement. An advertisement in *New York Women’s Weekly* declared the “whole world” was talking of tampons’ “emancipation of women,” which allowed for “daintiness” to be “possible at all times.”³⁴ To the male-dominated public sphere, freeing women meant allowing them to fulfill gender roles with greater ease. The emancipated woman wasn’t Hypatia, but a woman who could hide her issues. The emancipated woman was one who could be feminine without being overwhelmingly female. Other advertisements from the late 1930s labeled the tampon as a symbol for modernity and progress, with “college girls leading the way in discovering” this “revolutionary product.”³⁵

Despite these advertising campaigns, tampons did not gain popularity until later in the 20th century. Many religious groups were staunch opponents of the tampon because they believed inserting anything into the vagina was a form of masturbation.³⁶ These religious groups strongly advocated against tampons for unmarried women. Religious detractors were particularly concerned the tampon would break women’s hymens, causing them to lose their virginity before marriage.³⁷

32 Sandra Lee Bartky, “Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power.” In *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, edited by Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988, 100.

33 Johnson & Johnson is a company that produces medical devices and pharmaceutical goods.

34 Kissling, *Capitalizing on the Curse*, 14.

35 Kissling, *Capitalizing on the Curse*, 52.

36 Sharra Vostral, *Under Wraps: A History of Menstrual Hygiene Technology* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011),

37 Delaney et al., *The Curse*, 117.



Non-religious detractors of the tampon were concerned women would no longer want to have sex with their husbands if methods of internal absorption — like the tampon — made the wives orgasm. Thus, from the very beginning, feminine hygiene products were in dialogue with preserving men's pleasure, while guarding against men's sexual anxieties. To ease men's fear of female tampon masturbation, manufacturers designed tampons with a telescoping applicator so women could insert them without touching themselves.³⁸ Tampon companies were more worried about mollifying men's fears of sexual irrelevance than ensuring women's safety, as demonstrated by the discovery of Toxic-Shock Syndrome and subsequent deaths of several women towards the end of the 20th century.³⁹

By the 1960s, more women accepted tampons for their invisibility, disposability, and the “greater freedom” they allowed.⁴⁰ In one Tampax advertisement, a white, bathing suit-clad woman looks happily off into the distance under the headline, “Glorious Freedom Now With Tampax!”⁴¹ Thanks to a “dainty applicator,” women's hands “need not even touch” their vaginas. Freedom was the ability to wear a swimsuit with “no bulge, wrinkle, or even the faintest line.”⁴² With products like “Carefree” and “Stayfree,” Johnson & Johnson commoditized second-wave feminism. One tampon advertisement features a woman in a bathing suit laughing by the pool, with the subheading, “For freedom unlimited on difficult days ... Enjoy company with confidence.”⁴³

Many of Johnson & Johnson's tampon advertisements employed pseudo-empowering feminist rhetoric to sell menstrual secrecy. Clad in bathing suits and skimpy dresses, the predominantly white women in these advertisements were ‘free’ because their bodily functions did not reduce their ability to be sexual objects. True freedom was “rebellion,” not against the patriarchy, but against pads and their “embarrassing disposal problem”⁴⁴ Quest's 1965 sanitary pad deodorant advertisement in *Good Housekeeping* declared that “Women's problems are insidious.”⁴⁵ This encouraged the erasure of both menstrual and

38 Ashley Fetters, “The Tampon: A History,” *The Atlantic*, June 1, 2015.

39 Fetters, “The Tampon: A History.”

40 Susan Magarey, *Dangerous Ideas: Women's Liberation - Women's Studies - around the World* (Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press, 2014), 150.

41 Tampax Inc. “Vacation Discovery! Glorious Freedom Now with Tampax!” Duke Digital Collections: Ad* Access, <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/adaccess/BH0167.1941>. Accessed December 17, 2018.

42 Tampax Inc. “Vacation Discovery! Glorious Freedom Now with Tampax!”

43 Magarey, *Dangerous Ideas*, 150.

44 Tampax Inc. “Women Are Becoming Rebels-Easy to See How...” Duke Digital Collections: Ad* Access, <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/adaccess/BH0177.1944>. Accessed December 18, 2018.

45 Kim Chuppa-Cornell, “Filling a Vacuum: Women's Health Information in *Good Housekeeping's* Articles and Advertisements, 1920–1965,” *The Historian* 67, no. 3 (2005): 469.

societal issues while calling for women's continual retreat to the private sphere.⁴⁶ As time went on, tampons became smaller and smaller, with many advertisers exclaiming “small enough to flush down a toilet! So no one will know about your little monthly secret.”⁴⁷

Freedom persisted as a common theme in feminine hygiene advertisements. In the 1970s, when Johnson & Johnson named their beltless pads “Stayfree,” Kotex followed suit with a new brand of pads called “New Freedom.”⁴⁸ The name “Stayfree” implies the movement for women’s liberation was transitory; therefore, the only way to preserve their newly earned rights was through compromising bodily autonomy. “New Freedom” implies that the feminine hygiene companies were responsible for liberating women. One “New Freedom” advertisement reads, “Whee! They’re flushable! Welcome to the beltless, pinless, fuss-less generation!”⁴⁹ Simple technological developments in sanitary protection, like the removal of belts from pads, were enough to fill women with a level of glee to actually exclaim “Whee!” and usher in a new “generation” of freedom. Later on, manufacturers began to make menstrual pads with wings.⁵⁰ This development allowed advertisers to better market menstrual discipline as a form of emancipation, “empowering” women to transcend their issues and “fly.”

In the 1960s, more feminine hygiene companies began selling products to hide ‘menstrual odor.’ Companies sold douches and germicides to reduce the horrors of feminine odor and continued appropriating feminist language to market their products. Zonite — a douching company — capitalized on the rhetoric of female empowerment through advertisements such as this one: “Isn’t it reassuring in this age of outspokenness that mother and daughter can be pals and talk freely about intimate physical facts?”⁵¹ Zonite also profited from the link between menstruation and criminality, frequently referring to menstrual odor as a “womanly offense.”⁵² One of their advertisements features a husband refusing to have sex with his wife when he learns she is on her period, echoing earlier commentaries on the relationship between productivity, sex and menstruation. With the help of Zonite, however, menstruating women could restore their sexual ‘charm’ and ‘health.’ Sanitary protection left women with a “refreshed dainty feeling — knowing that you will not offend.”⁵³ Rather than embrace women’s empowerment, these advertisements promoted women’s insecurity and sought to profit from socially obligatory beauty ritu-



46 Chuppa-Cornell, “Filling a Vacuum,” 468.

47 Kissling, *Capitalizing on the Curse*, 49.

48 Kissling, *Capitalizing on the Curse*, 14.

49 Bobel, *New Blood*, 46.

50 Wings are adhesive straps to a keep a pad in place so it doesn't shift.

51 Zonite Products Corp., “A Modern Mother Won't Fail To Tell Her Daughter These Intimate Physical Facts.”

52 Zonite Products Corp., “A Modern Mother Won't Fail To Tell Her Daughter These Intimate Physical Facts.”

53 Tampax Inc. “Vacation Discovery! Glorious Freedom Now with Tampax!”

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Conclusion

By linking menstruation with criminality and menstrual secrecy with emancipation, feminine hygiene companies and the scientific community undermined the movement from which they profited. The culture of menstrual secrecy came to represent modernity, cleanliness, and feminism, which othered women who could not afford — or objected to the underlying gendered politics — new products and portrayed them as menstrually insane. The sanitary protection industry created a dichotomy between the “dainty,” yet emancipated woman, and the deviant woman who committed criminal and “womanly offenses.” In a society that constantly renders women’s bodies as sexual objects, it is ludicrous to think that we are still compelled to hide their biological functioning. Ludicrous and appalling, yet ultimately unsurprising. Tampons are literally and metaphorically a way for women to internalize societal expectations. They continue to symbolize cleanliness and “freedom” for menstruating women despite their risks and the more universal applicability of sanitary pads. Menstrual secrecy remains more important than women’s comfort, making it difficult for the modern Hypatia to be heard and respected without conforming to a finite set of acceptable, non-‘deviant’ behaviors.

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