

Interdisziplinäres Zentrum für Geschlechterforschung (IZG)

Reading Sex: The History of a Popular Medical Manual, 1684–1930

Prof. Mary Fissell is writing a cultural history of Aristotle's Masterpiece, a bestselling popular book about sex and reproduction on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean from the late 17th to the early 20th century. The book isn't by Aristotle, and it's not usually considered a masterpiece, but Fissell argues that the work tells us about how people learned about sex and reproduction before "sex ed" was taught in schools, as well as about reading habits and beliefs about gender and sex.

Prof. Mary E. Fissell

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As a historian, Prof. Mary E. Fissell teaches at the Johns Hopkins Institute of the History of Medicine in Baltimore (Maryland) where she is also the editor of the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*. Her scholarly work focuses on the history of gender, the body, and medicine in the early modern period. Mary Fissell is the author of two books and many scholarly articles. *Vernacular Bodies* (Oxford, 2004) explored ordinary people's ideas about making babies, arguing that such ideas were a way to talk about gender relations in Tudor and Stuart England. Her current project is a cultural history of one popular medical book about reproduction called *Aristotle's Masterpiece*, first published in 1684 and still for sale in sleazy London sex shops in the 1920s.