

## Feuchtgebiet: die englischsprachige Presseschau

1. The Economist: [http://www.economist.co.uk/books/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=10952281](http://www.economist.co.uk/books/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10952281)
2. The Telegraph: <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/foreign/harrydequettville/default.htm/Charlotte%20Roche>
3. Granta.com: <http://www.granta.com/Online-Only/Interview-Charlotte-Roche>
4. The Guardian: <http://books.guardian.co.uk/news/articles/0,,2282145,00.html>.
5. Thedailybedpost.com: <http://dailybedpost.com/2008/05/feuchtgebiete-means-wetlands-o.php#more>
6. Thebookseller.com: <http://www.thebookseller.com/news/59955-page.html>
7. New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/06/world/europe/06taboo.html?hp>
8. lynx-sis.blogspot.com: <http://lynx-sis.blogspot.com/2008/06/cat-blog-day-and-other-pensees.html>
9. literaryrapture.blogspot.com: <http://literaryrapture.blogspot.com/2008/06/let-buzz-begin.html>
10. Salon.com: <http://www.salon.com/mwt/broadsheet/2008/06/06/wetlands/index.html?source=rss&aim=/mwt/broadsheet>
11. International Herald Tribune: <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2008/06/05/europe/taboo.php>
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16. jezebel.com: <http://jezebel.com/5014581/feminism-is-loving-your-fragrant-ladyflower>
17. Coffee shop philosophy: <http://kstrump.blogspot.com/2008/06/charlotte-roche-wetlands.html>
18. bavgirl.com: [http://www.bavgirl.com/2008/06/day\\_46\\_the\\_most\\_bizarre\\_book.html](http://www.bavgirl.com/2008/06/day_46_the_most_bizarre_book.html)
19. Sethedaughter's Weblog: <http://sethedaughter.wordpress.com/2008/06/11/when-do-we-stop-being-girls-and-start-being-women/>
20. The Stranger: <http://www.thestranger.com/seattle/Content?oid=601462>

### 1. The Economist print edition

[http://www.economist.co.uk/books/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=10952281](http://www.economist.co.uk/books/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10952281)

**Amazon worldwide bestseller table: Laid bare: Fiction in German makes it to pole position**

Apr 3rd 2008

FOR the first time since 2004, when the six Amazon websites—in America, Britain, Canada, France, Germany and Japan—began to offer readers of The Economist a monthly snapshot of the books that really fly, the world's biggest-selling novel last month came from Germany.

“Feuchtgebiete” was written by Charlotte Roche, a 30-year-old actress and television presenter, who was born in Wimbledon but grew up in Germany. Miss Roche first made her name working for VIVA, Germany's answer to MTV, taking cameo parts in pop videos and giving readings from other peoples' books and doctoral dissertations.

But it was “Charlotte Roche trifft...” (“Charlotte Roche meets...”), a late-night talk-show in which she gets up-close-and-personal with celebrity guests such as Quentin Tarantino, Uma Thurman and Kylie Minogue, that really turned Miss Roche into Germany's queen of popular television. She particularly likes asking her female guests about their sexual fantasies, believing that women are generally far too coy about expressing themselves on this subject. “Women have no language for their desire,” she riles. “When it comes to their bodies, women are uptight.”

“Feuchtgebiete”, which translates as “wetlands” or “damp parts”, is also about sexual fantasy. Some people have called it pornographic. Miss Roche, who sees herself as a campaigning liberationist on the subject, insists it is a novel. But readers and critics prefer to read it as autobiography. At the Leipzig book fair last month she was chased by hordes of schoolgirls, while her book tour around Germany has been extended well into next month. Clearly sex sells, even if it is in German?

## 2. The Telegraph:

<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/foreign/harrydequetteville/default.htm/Charlotte%20Roche>

### **Wetland: feminist literature or porn?**

Posted by Harry de Quetteville on 15 Apr 2008 at 17:06

Her name is Charlotte Roche and she is a rock chick/TV presenter/actress and now, well some would say, pornographer. She is also British. But it is in Germany that she is famous.

How long her celebrity will be largely limited here is hard to tell, because she appears to blend insouciance, provocation, talent and a crafty eye for opportunity. Her latest thing is the novel game, with a book entitled Feuchtgebiete, or Wetland. And if you think the title refers to some gentle tale set in the Norfolk Broads, think again. I

Indeed, readers of a delicate disposition may want to - as they used to say when broadcasting football scores no the news before Match of the Day - look away now. Because Wetland is a book primarily focused on detailing the comings and goings of women's orifices.

I haven't read it. I'm not allowed to. It's probably in a clause in my contract somewhere. But many, many others have. Hundreds of thousands of copies have been sold.

Internet chat rooms are abuzz with debate. And that debate seems to be - is Wetland a fun, liberating tale in which every woman can find a grain of truth while having a giggle?

Or is it a demeaning load of old tosh, porn masquerading as new feminist literature?

For Charlotte Roche, who moved to Germany when she was eight (which is no doubt how she acquired all the advanced vocab she needed to write the book) the answer is clear.

"Women have no language for their own pleasure," she said. "Women are repressed when it comes to their own bodies. Women don't even have their own sexual fantasies."

If that's true I must have totally misunderstood the TV show Sex and the City.

But I would like to hear from those who know better than me, whether Charlotte Roche and Wetland is fraud, feminist or just a savvy operator whose success should be applauded regardless of her ideology.

Tags: pornography, Charlotte Roche, Wetland

#### COMMENTS:

Henry Cave Devine 15 Apr 2008 17:32

Interesting topic.

Maybe I will go buy a copy or two and give one to a randy mate. Does anyone remember the "Harrad Experiment" which was sex galore under the guise of co-educational experimentation? Was very interesting and wonderfully pretentious in its theoretical pleadings... early 1960's with a movie and one sequel.

Ian B 15 Apr 2008 19:34

And why, pray tell..

...can it not be both a good book and porn? What law of the cosmos declares these things to be mutually exclusive?

And don't you feel just a bit daft commenting on a book you haven't even read? Echoes of the cliched "I haven't seen this film but I demand it be banned because I've heard it's disgusting."

Monk of great renown 15 Apr 2008 20:16

Ian B

Ian, if you had children, would you allow them to read/view porn, if you hadn't seen it to make a judgment? How would your children know it was porn, without seeing it first?

This is why parents are sensible to label material as pornographic, on hearsay only.

meditek 15 Apr 2008 21:01

Most peculiar

"I haven't read it - I'm not allowed to." Please explain why you are allowed to comment then? Better still, maybe you could risk the wrath of the NUJ or whoever and tell us precisely why you are not allowed to read a book without permission? This would be a 1000x more fascinating than your silly blog.

meditek 16 Apr 2008 17:29

Harry De Quitwell

Sorry but your photo reminds me of Bliar for some strange treason.

Anyway, maybe you could tighten your crutch by actually answering my 'Most Peculiar' post.

You see, if you do not wish to remain remote from credibility while blogging, you should, at the very least, exhibit some form of intellectual honesty or just go away and save us from your cowardly genes.

Kaltuxi 17 Apr 2008 00:21

it is disgusting!

I did read it and no I wouldn't recommend it. If youve got a basic grasp of german this should be enough to not wanna read the book:

Charlotte talking about the book with old viva chum Stefan Raab:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnMugmjqm68&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fc70xz-A3zo&feature=related>

Charlotte talking about the book with Kerner (yes on old ladys favourite show)(Kerners face when she gets graphic will stay for me for a long time):

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4VgNAvaB\\_E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4VgNAvaB_E)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEbjGkCimHY>

Charlotte on NDR Late Night about the book:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGGQLv3DNII>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTEPRteMsj0>

And because its so unforgettable, Charlotte loosing her teeth at Harlad Schmidt:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6R7LWc3To9A>

And I asked myself wheres the connection between Roger Williamson and Roche (Williamson is the guy who has written the book cover review).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2BpLGASxt0Q>

Steph 17 Apr 2008 09:36

Sense of humour, Meditek,??

Hey Meditek

Don't you have any sense of humor? Did you seriously think Mr. de Quetteville was not allowed to read the book?? On which planet are you living?

And don't you guys understand it's not a book critic but just a 'thought' about C. Roche and her literature style...

Don't take everything so seriously and remember that blogs are not articles, they can also be fun!!

Harry de Quetteville 17 Apr 2008 09:57

Hi Meditek

Sorry for the delay in getting back to you - absolutely welcome your comments, but i was only joking.

Of course i am allowed to read the book.

meditek 17 Apr 2008 20:58

Hrrmph

The difficulty with the 'joke' is that, in the present climate of repression, it (the fact he hadn't been allowed to read it) did not seem at all surprising!

Have to go, there's a neighbour checking my 'green' bin.

It's not disgusting

teufelskerl 24 May 2008 06:50

If you understand some German it's actually a blast to read. Very, very witty. I think Charlotte is a gas. Many women are intrigued by her and most men are freaked out (i.e. Stefan Raab) by the fact that women have hair "untenrum vorne und hinten". Sure, it could be called pornographic. Then again, so could the Tin Drum, right? The movie was actually illegal in some parts of Canada, when it first came out. God, we're so Anglo Saxon, aren't we... Or, dare I say, even American?

I think Charlotte is boldly starting a discussion that has been on everybody's lips but nobody has wanted start.

**3. Granta.com:** <http://www.granta.com/Online-Only/Interview-Charlotte-Roche>

**Interview: Charlotte Roche**

Philip Oltermann

10 May 2008

There's a theory about German culture that goes something like this: Germans are very good at all sorts of things – making films, making cars, making beer – but in order to be truly popular with a people that like to consider themselves intellectuals, you have to write a book.

Thirty-year-old Charlotte Roche, born in High Wycombe but raised in Germany, has been a recognizable face in her adopted home country since she started working as a presenter on Viva, the German equivalent of MTV, in the mid-1990s. She went on to write and present programmes and late-night talk shows for Arte and ZDF, and won the highly respected Grimme Prize for television in 2004. But only now that she has written her first book are people ready to take her seriously.

Feuchtgebiete, which translates roughly as 'wetlands' or 'moist patches', was published by Cologne's Dumont Verlag earlier this year. It is narrated by eighteen-year-old Helen Memel, an outspoken teenager whose childlike stubbornness is paired with a premature sense of sexual confidence. After a failed attempt to shave her intimate parts, Helen ends up in the Department of Internal Medicine at the Maria Hilf Hospital. She doesn't leave the ward for the rest of the novel. Surrounded by surgical instruments and humming X-ray machines, she reflects in ever more uncomfortable detail on the eccentric wonders of the female body. It's an explicit novel, often shockingly so, but also a surprisingly accomplished literary work, which evokes the voice of J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, the perversion of J.G. Ballard's *Crash* and the feminist agenda of Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*.

Feuchtgebiete hasn't been out of Germany's newspapers since publication, selling half a million copies. In March, it became Amazon's worldwide bestseller, the first German book to do so since Amazon made its sales figures public in 2004. As English-language publishers are engaged in a bidding war for Feuchtgebiete, Granta contributing editor Philip Oltermann caught up with Roche for an interview.

PO: You had a very successful career in television – why did you decide to write this book?

CR: First of all, the themes that appear in my book – the body, illness, hospitals, masturbation – are themes that I have always been fascinated by. I dare say they're my hobbyhorses. Whenever someone at a dinner party says that they've had an operation, I'll be the first person to shout: 'Come on, let me see it then!' So it's really the case that these issues are close to my heart – it's not like I decided to write a shocking book first, and then just wrote down the most disgusting things I could imagine. I enjoy

thinking about these sort of things in detail.

I'm convinced that in contemporary society a lot of women have a very messed-up attitude to their own bodies. We're obsessed with cleanliness, with getting rid of our natural excretions and our body hair. So I wanted to write about the ugly parts of the human body. The smelly bits. The juices of the female body. Smegma. In order to tell that story, I created a heroine that has a totally creative attitude towards her body – someone who has never even heard that women are supposedly smelly between their legs. A real free spirit.

From the way you talk about Feuchtgebiete, it sounds more like a manifesto than a novel. Is it fair to say that there are two books competing against each other in one?

Yes, I think that's right. Originally I wanted to write a non-fiction book. At the heart of it was always a general feeling: I was really jealous of the fact that men have this whole range of different names for their sexual organs – beautifully detailing what state of arousal they're in – while us women still don't really have a language for our lust. For example, I think a lot of women still don't masturbate, simply because they don't know how to talk about it.

I wanted to write in a creative way about the female body: exploring it, but also making it strange. I used to shut my eyes when I wrote, trying to shut out all that worn-out vocabulary we have about our physicality and come up with new words for each body part. 'Cauliflower' for Helen's haemorrhoids, 'pearl trunk' for her clitoris, and so on. Someone had to do it!

I wanted to point out how a lot of the emancipatory principles from the '60s and '70s have not yet arrived properly. In that respect, this book really is a manifesto, and I do think it has a serious message.

How did the manifesto turn into a novel?

I started to suspect that I was writing a very arrogant book – something very 'top-down' rather than 'bottom-up'. 'Charlotte Roche tells Germany's women how to appreciate their sexual organs'. That wasn't right. I know that I have my own limits, my own taboos too, when it comes to talking about sex, and I realized that I could only really go full throttle if I voiced these ideas through a fictional character.

Had you done much writing before?

Not at all. Only the lines for my own TV show.

But you must read a lot, surely?

I don't, actually. I used to read a lot in my early teens, even some of the classics, but it was all ruined for me by those German classes in which we had to take writing apart. It was so dull. And now that I'm a mother – my child was born five years ago – it's just very difficult to find the time for reading. The only book I have read recently is *The Great Gatsby* and even that took me almost three years.

If not from literature, did inspiration for Helen's character come from anywhere – or anyone – in real life?

There is, of course, a slightly autobiographical element to the novel. Some of the bits Helen gets up to – well, that was me as a teenager. Like the bit where she and her friend run drunkenly through the centre of town, snatching glasses off the noses of bewildered shoppers, snapping them in half and then legging it. And that rather sad emotional subplot in the story, about the girl who tries to think of increasingly absurd ruses to get her divorced parents back together – that was me, too. There's a short prologue to the novel, which is very much my teenage me as well: Every child of divorced parents has this fantasy that they will one day reunite their parents, even if it is to be on their deathbed.

It is noticeable that none of the German reviews and features on your book tried to make the link between your style as a writer and your style as a television presenter – even though the latter is very original and wordy, and has won you awards. It's almost as if reviewers tried to deny the fact that you have such a 'low-brow' CV.

You're right. No one has ever brought it up in an interview, either. When I started out as a presenter, I wanted to do television in a way in which no one has ever done television before. I wanted to find my own style – and that involved annoying a lot of people at first. While I couldn't stand literature at school, I was very much into drama and made sure that I always got the best roles in my school plays. I could never remember the right facts for my exams, but I always knew my lines for the school play. When I was eighteen, just before my final exams, I quit school altogether and got a job at the music channel Viva. I'm still proud of the work I did in TV – it was an immense achievement for a young person. Viva launched the careers of some of the people now regarded as Germany's most exciting actors, like Heike Makatsch and Christian Ulmen. But people often assume it was something I did as a sort of glamorous part-time job to support my writing career – that's a very German approach, perhaps.

A lot of critics have described your book as 'literary porn'. Do you mind that description?

Not at all. That's fine with me. I wanted to write about the female body in a way that is funny and entertaining, but also sexy. In many ways, these sort of reactions to my book have only justified my views. A lot of men have come up to me and said: 'Hey, some of the bits in your book are really quite sexy, aren't they?' And I'm, like, 'Thanks!', because they are meant to be. But not a single woman has come up to me and said the same thing. 'Wow, that just got me really horny' – it's just not something a woman would dare to say.

But it's more than just porn. For a start, it's not really sexy, it's also quite disgusting. There are the haemorrhoids, Helen's injury to her sphincter, and so on. So when you read the book and you get a bit too excited, you'll immediately get turned off again. I wanted to present the whole package: women aren't just a sexy presentation space, they also get ill, they have to go to the toilet, they bleed. If you love someone and sleep with them, you'll have to face those dirty bits – otherwise you might as well not get started with the business of sex in the first place.

You blame a lot of the hang-ups young women have about themselves on what you call 'the Americanization of the female' body. You yourself were born in England but have lived in Germany for most of your life. Do different cultures have different body images?

I'm afraid I don't think England is any better than America in that respect. In terms of body-culture, England is always quick to follow the latest trends in the States. And it always amuses me how Americans and English people will to this day continue to make jokes about German women having

hairy armpits. Get with the programme! These days, German women shave themselves too, you know. And don't worry, I don't think just because they read my book they will suddenly stop doing so.

Publishers are currently bidding for UK and US rights for *Feuchtgebiete*. Do you think your book will be received differently in the English-speaking world than it was in Germany?

No, not really. I think there will be a bit of hoo-hah in the press, as there has been in Germany, but that deep down most women will be relieved that someone talks about how tough it is to live up to the modern ideals of beauty. After one of the readings I gave in Germany, a woman came up to me and said: 'Charlotte, you're right, there's an unwritten law about shaving amongst women'. She told me that she is scared of having sex with her own husband unless she has shaved her legs the morning before. That's not right, is it?

If you get published over here in the UK, will it be a bit like a homecoming?

I was born in 1978, to English parents, in High Wycombe – which is ironic given that that's the place from which all the RAF bombers bound for Germany took off in the Second World War. Unlike every other English person moving to Germany at the time, my dad wasn't a soldier, but worked for Mars and was sent to build chocolate factories for them near Mönchengladbach when I was only one. Since then I have lived in Germany, but all my relatives live in England and I used to come over about six times a year. It was weird: my parents used to completely ignore Germany even though they lived there, so in our house there was only English radio, English TV and English newspapers. And tea.

Recently someone in the audience at a reading suggested that perhaps the war isn't over after all, that the Allies were merely concentrating on getting their offspring to write porno propaganda to confuse the German people. I love that image. Me flying over Germany, throwing sex bombs into people's minds.

#### 4. The Guardian

<http://books.guardian.co.uk/news/articles/0,,2282145,00.html>.

**Publishers battle to sign up Europe's sex sensation: Charlotte Roche's exploration of filth in all its meanings now tops Germany's literary charts. Soon it will hit the shelves in her country of birth**

Jason Burke, Europe correspondent  
Sunday May 25, 2008

The controversial novel by British-born Charlotte Roche (above) has sold more than 500,000 copies in Germany. Photograph: Markus Schreiber/AP

It starts as it means to continue: 'Ever since I could think, I've had haemorrhoids.' And through the next 229 unflinchingly explicit pages, there is little respite.

*Feuchtgebiete*, which translates as 'wetlands' or 'humid zones', is the first book by 30-year-old High Wycombe-born Charlotte Roche. For fans it is an erotic literary classic and an exploration of contemporary concepts of cleanliness and sex and femininity; for critics it is crude and cleverly marketed pornography. Either way it has already sold half a million copies in Germany and is now

heading for British bookshops.

Wetlands, which has beaten Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and Ken Follett's latest to the top of Amazon's international sales list, has sparked a frenzy among major British publishers. Roche's German publishers last week refused to speak to *The Observer* or to arrange an interview with Roche to avoid pre-empting what is expected to be a massive UK deal and publicity campaign. 'No, nothing, impossible,' they said.

For whether it is the fantasies about sex, the polemics against the use of deodorants, the avocado cores grown specially for use in masturbation, or the detailed and inventive passages of scatological or genital description, *Wetlands* has left few indifferent.

French magazines have run articles on 'taboos and literature', Swiss papers have worried about moral corruption and, after seven weeks at the top of the bestseller list in Germany, no one is tiring of the debate. *Der Spiegel* summed up the message of the book as 'I stink therefore I am' - a reference both to the heroine's distaste for personal hygiene and her sexual fantasies about bodily odours.

Roche herself, whose father moved to Mönchengladbach to build factories for Mars, is unfazed by the label 'pornography'. 'That's fine with me,' she told an interviewer from *Granta*, the literary magazine. 'I wanted to write about the female body in a way that is funny and entertaining, but also sexy ... But it's more than just porn. For a start, ... it's also quite disgusting. So when you read the book and you get a bit too excited, you'll immediately get turned off again.'

The heroine of *Wetlands* is Helen Memel, an opinionated, outspoken 18-year-old who is as articulate as she is sexually confident. After a failed attempt to shave her intimate parts, Helen ends up in the Department of Internal Medicine at the Maria Hilf Hospital. She remains in the ward for the rest of the novel, surrounded by surgical instruments and machines, mentally exploring her body and those of other women.

'I wanted to present the whole package,' said Roche. 'Women aren't just a sexy presentation space, they also get ill, they have to go to the toilet, they bleed. If you love someone and sleep with them, you'll have to face those dirty bits - otherwise you might as well not get started with the business of sex in the first place.'

According to Dr Claudia Neusüss of Berlin's Humboldt University, one reason for the book's German success is its role as a 'counterweight' to TV shows such as Germany's *Next Top Model*, hosted by supermodel Heidi Klum.

'Young women are under an enormous pressure to have a serious career, to be beautiful, to have a perfect body and a rich sexuality before having their first child and the book shows that there is a different way of dealing with your body,' Neusüss told *The Observer*. 'This book will be understood in any country where there is a similar relationship to cleanness of the body, to hygiene, to bodily functions in general.'

Neusüss said she was touched by the mixture of humour and tenderness in the book. 'I think it is liberating that she is writing about masturbation, anal intercourse, sexuality, sickness, about things you don't talk about in public,' she said. 'People like to discuss it, people like to write about it. Even me, I

look at an avocado core differently since reading Wetlands.'

For others the book is a new feminist manifesto. 'I think she hit a nerve within society,' said Dr Ulla Egbringhoff, an author and journalist. 'What is it about young women? What problems do they have? They need something new. And Charlotte Roche is certainly filling a gap there.'

Roche, married and with a six-year-old daughter, has been a well-known media personality in Germany for years. Late-night interview programmes - Kylie Minogue and Uma Thurman have been among celebrity guests - on cultural channels and acting roles have assured a continually high profile and controversy. A trademark is questioning female guests about their sexual fantasies. 'Women have no language for their desire,' Roche has said. 'When it comes to their bodies, women are uptight.'

Roche's British origins have, however, influenced the reactions of some to her work.

'I was born in 1978, to English parents, in High Wycombe - which is ironic given that that's the place from which all the RAF bombers bound for Germany took off in the Second World War,' Roche told Granta. 'Recently someone in the audience at a reading suggested that perhaps the war isn't over after all, that the Allies were merely concentrating on getting their offspring to write porno propaganda to confuse the German people. I love that image. Me flying over Germany, throwing sex bombs into people's minds.'

The reviews

What the German critics said about Feuchtgebiete

'A denunciation of the fetishism of beauty and the obsession with hygiene ... or a satirical novel with little content, except to demonstrate that the media functions by searching for scandal?'

Die Welt (conservative daily)

'Phlegmatic, self-satisfied, taboo tearing ...'

Stern (mass circulation weekly magazine)

'A masturbation pamphlet ... '

Die tageszeitung (left-wing national daily)

'A protest at the Heidi Klum world ...'

Süddeutsche Zeitung (liberal Munich daily)

## 5. Thedailybedpost.com

<http://dailybedpost.com/2008/05/feuchtgebiete-means-wetlands-o.php#more>

**Feuchtgebiete Means Wetlands or Damp Parts or Moist Patches...**

05.27.2008

We just read about this scandalous novel published in Germany, written by an English-born woman, Charlotte Roche, called Feuchtgebiete--it's been a huge hit, precisely because it's offended so many people with it's graphic accounts of sex and bodily functions (for example, the very first line mentions hemorrhoids and later there is an avocado core grown specifically for masturbatory use). It's soon to be

published in her native tongue, and we can't wait--not necessarily for the raunchy sex, but because of this kick-ass quote from the author in *The Guardian* this past weekend:

'I wanted to present the whole package,' said Roche. 'Women aren't just a sexy presentation space, they also get ill, they have to go to the toilet, they bleed. If you love someone and sleep with them, you'll have to face those dirty bits--otherwise you might as well not get started with the business of sex in the first place.'

Amen, sister. That's the problem with lad mags (and even women's mags) these days--they create unrealistic expectations about the female body that 99 percent of ordinary women can't ever live up to. We're all stinky, hairy, humping animals who, on occasion, fart and poo. We're not for making those things the highlights of sex (that's what gross gonzo porn is for)--and hey, maintaining a little mystery is good for most relationships--but it's important to accept (indeed even just to be aware of) the somewhat harsh realities of the flesh. That's the foundation of true intimacy with another sex animal.

## **6. Thebookseller.com**

<http://www.thebookseller.com/news/59955-page.html>

### **German literary porn hit to HC**

30.05.08

Graeme Neill

*Feuchtgebiete* by Charlotte Roche—the talk of the London Book Fair after it topped Amazon's worldwide bestseller chart in March—has been acquired by Fourth Estate publishing director Nicholas Pearson for a "decent" sum.

The deal, which was struck following a bidding war among UK publishers, was for UK and Commonwealth rights excluding Canada and was done with Roche's German publishing house DuMont Buchverlag.

*Feuchtgebiete*, which translates as "moist regions" and which is being published as *Wetlands* by Fourth Estate, has been subject to controversy because of its frank examination of female sexuality. It is a bestseller in Germany, and is the first German novel to top Amazon's world bestseller chart. The book is about a teenage girl and her relationship with her own body.

"The novel is about the bold place between reality and imagination where a lot of people's sexual identities reside," said Pearson. "It's a very sarcastic, very funny and very playful book." Pearson is likely to publish in hardback next spring. He believes that the novel will "hit a nerve with people". "We live in a highly sexualised society," he said. "Even yoghurt adverts seem to be sexualised in some way and the book is a reaction to that kind of society."

Roche is a 30-year-old actress and television presenter. She was born in Wimbledon but grew up in Germany.

## **7. New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/06/world/europe/06taboo.html?hp> Germany Abuzz at Racy Novel of Sex and Hygiene**

By NICHOLAS KULISH

Published: June 6, 2008

TEGERNHEIM, Germany — Not many literary readings are restricted to an over-18 audience. Fewer still take place under circus tents. Yet nothing could be more appropriate for the scandalous German best-seller “Wetlands,” by a television personality and author, Charlotte Roche.

With her jaunty dissection of the sex life and the private grooming habits of the novel’s 18-year-old narrator, Helen Memel, Ms. Roche has turned the previously unspeakable into the national conversation in Germany. Since its debut in February, the novel (“Feuchtgebiete,” in German) has sold more than 680,000 copies, becoming the only German book to top Amazon.com’s global best-seller list.

The book, which will be published next year in the United States, is a headlong dash through every crevice and byproduct, physical and psychological, of its narrator’s body and mind. It is difficult to overstate the raunchiness of the novel, and hard to describe in a family newspaper.

“Wetlands” opens in a hospital room after an intimate shaving accident. It gives a detailed topography of Helen’s hemorrhoids, continues into the subject of anal intercourse and only gains momentum from there, eventually reaching avocado pits as objects of female sexual satisfaction and — here is where the debate kicks in — just possibly female empowerment.

The subject has struck a nerve here, catching a wave of popular interest in renewing the debate over women’s roles and image in society.

With its female chancellor, Angela Merkel, and progressive reputation, Germany would hardly seem to be thirsting for such a discussion. Yet, Germany has an old-fashioned tendency to expect women to choose between careers and motherhood rather than trying to accommodate both.

Last year, another German television personality provoked a storm of controversy about the role of women by suggesting that they should stay home to raise their children, and then referring approvingly to the Nazi policy of encouraging German women to have large families.

Beyond the historical land mines, there are also measurable gender-equality problems in Germany, Europe’s largest economy. Of the 27 European Union members, Germany is tied with Slovakia as third worst in the wage gap between men and women, with women earning 22 percent less, a figure surpassed only by Cyprus and Estonia.

So the topic is being debated in every newspaper and magazine in Germany right now. The discussion has been amplified by two nonfiction books about young women, the more traditional “New German Girls” and “We Alpha-Girls.”

A provocative female rapper in Germany, Lady Bitch Ray, who runs her own independent label, Vagina Style Records, grabbed headlines when she accused Ms. Roche of stealing her explicit form of empowering raunch. “I am what’s in the book,” said the rapper, 27, whose real name is Reyhan Sahin, in a telephone interview.

Germans have been accused, on occasion, of overanalyzing. Sometimes a funny, dirty book is just a funny, dirty book, but not this one, according to its author.

Ms. Roche, 30, has long identified herself as a feminist and, in a vein first explored in 1960s-era American feminism, describes the book as a *cri de coeur* against the oppression of a waxed, shaved, douched and otherwise sanitized women's world.

Newspapers here have contrasted her unhygienic, free-spirited fictional heroine to an American-import model of womanhood: the stable of plucked, pencil-thin contestants on "Germany's Next Top Model," a popular reality show hosted by the German supermodel Heidi Klum.

But Ms. Roche told the audience here that her inspiration for the book came not from those women, but from the feminine-product aisle of her local store. Peeking out at the audience from under dark brown bangs, speaking in a childish voice that accentuated her transgressions against propriety, Ms. Roche explained, to howls of laughter, how the lemon-scented products called out to her in uncensored terms that she was, as the commercials put it, not so fresh, or at least not fresh enough.

"It's not feminist in a political sense, but instead feminism of the body, that has to do with anxiety and repression and the fear that you stink, and this for me is clearly feminist, that one builds confidence with your own body," Ms. Roche, the mother of a young daughter and more serious in person than onstage, said last week in an interview after her reading here.

Ms. Roche's critics say that it is just a modern spin on not shaving your legs, this time for the genital-waxing generation. Meanwhile, sex sells and tends to grab the spotlight. As a result, a debate that might more profitably center on career counselors and day care is instead mired in old questions about sexual liberation.

With this in mind, critics have asked what practical help a book like "Wetlands" can offer, and even whether, by hyper-sexualizing the main character, it represents an all-too-familiar commercial ploy rather than a step forward.

"The combination of pornography and feminism is old, and was already a favorite marketing strategy for Playboy in the '70s," said Alice Schwarzer, Germany's best-known feminist and founder of the magazine EMMA, modeled in part on Gloria Steinem's Ms. magazine, in an e-mail message responding to questions about the recent books. "Right now we're living through another revival."

Those revivals come along fairly frequently — think the porn star turned "sex educator," Annie Sprinkle, Madonna and Eve Ensler of "The Vagina Monologues" — with varying degrees of relevance to feminism.

"When a woman breaks a taboo, it is automatically incorporated into the feminism debate, whether it really belongs there or not," said Ingrid Kolb, a German writer and longtime feminist.

While her generation in Europe and America grappled with many of the same issues in the early 1970s, there are differences, said Ms. Kolb, 67. For instance, the extremity of the beauty cult, particularly with surgery, was nowhere near what it is today.

The notion of sexiness and sexual frankness as feminism — pop empowerment, if you will — is well established on both sides of the Atlantic. As in the United States, “Sex and the City” roared past the new “Indiana Jones” movie for the top spot at the German box office last weekend.

“Wetlands” is something different. It is far more anatomical and scatological than erotic. In the interview, Ms. Roche said she wrote scenes specifically to build up arousal, only to bury them again in the repulsive. Lost in the whole hubbub is also a very sad story about a young woman who has undergone family traumas, the emotional core of the novel.

The event had something of a circus atmosphere. Some 200 fans showed up at the yellow-and-red-striped tent, paying more than \$25 each to hear Ms. Roche read and answer questions. As the signing began, the song “Rivers of Babylon” pumped through the speakers, which, in the book, one of Helen’s lovers sang as an ode to her sexual readiness.

Ardent fans have shown up to her readings with avocados as presents and, in several instances documented in the local media, the unprepared have fainted at some of the scenes. In one of those, Helen describes saving dried semen under her fingernails as “a keepsake” to savor later. And as attested by the reading in tiny Tegernheim — a suburb of Regensburg on the Danube River, in famously conservative Bavaria — the controversy surrounding the book is more than a media ruckus just in Berlin and other big cities.

“‘Sex and the City’ is always just about sex, whereas this is more about hygiene, or, better put, not-hygiene. It’s just something completely new,” said Katja Bergmeister, 24, a student in Regensburg. She came with her roommate and her roommate’s sister, all in their 20s and all clutching autographed posters of Ms. Roche. “I could see how we would be able to speak more openly with one another now,” she said.

Ms. Bergmeister and her friends knew of Ms. Roche from her work as a presenter for music video channels, but many others said they had come to her through the book. “It’s sexuality like it’s never represented in women’s magazines, but more the way it is in real life,” said Silvia Wilfurth, 28, a psychiatrist. “It speaks to themes of the body and sexuality that normally are not addressed and that it is not bad at all to be discussed.”

Ms. Roche, who was born in Britain but moved to Germany when she was a small child, said she hoped to help women find “a language for lust.” The sensational response to her book was unexpected, but she has taken it all in stride, including her first turn under the big top. “I would say that my own profession is circus pony, so I feel quite comfortable,” she said.

Alex Bolland, the organizer of the reading, said that the local authorities had made him limit the event to an over-18 audience, but that he was still glad he could book Ms. Roche.

“There are almost no taboos today,” Mr. Bolland said. “I appreciate it when someone can show that there are still a few out there.”

Victor Homola contributed reporting from Berlin.

8. [lynx-sis.blogspot.com](http://lynx-sis.blogspot.com): <http://lynx-sis.blogspot.com/2008/06/cat-blog-day-and-other-pensees.html>

### **Cat blog day and other pensees**

Friday, June 06, 2008

Last item of the day, again from the New York Times, was a front page article about a young German woman who has written a frank, racy novel, about, I am not making this up, feminine hygiene. A kind of tell-all, a combo orfporno and feminism. The title is "Wetlands." Throat clearing heard. The author, Charlotte, Roche is cute and calls her profession, "circus pony." The readings are for over-18 audiences only.

Do I see men smirking? Yup.

9. [literaryrapture.blogspot.com](http://literaryrapture.blogspot.com): <http://literaryrapture.blogspot.com/2008/06/let-buzz-begin.html>

### **Let the Buzz Begin!**

Friday, June 6, 2008

I would like to draw your attention to Charlotte Roche's book that has all of Germany atwitter and will come out with Grove Press in the US sometime next year. According to Buchreport, Grove has already found a translator. The New York Times ran an article on the book today. I expect this book to be everywhere before the translation is even finished. Is it porn or the liberation of female sexuality? You be the judge.

10. [Salon.com](http://www.salon.com):

<http://www.salon.com/mwt/broadsheet/2008/06/06/wetlands/index.html?source=rss&aim=/mwt/broadsheet>

### **Hygiene and the city**

Logan Scherer

06.06.2008

Talk about sex in America, and you'll do more than turn heads: You'll beat "Indiana Jones" at the box office. In Germany, on the other hand, it's female grooming that stirs people up. "Wetlands," the salacious, bestselling novel from television personality and author Charlotte Roche, chronicles the sexually and hygienically transgressive behaviors of its 18-year-old narrator. According to the New York Times, the book is raising debates about women in a country that, despite its reputation for progressiveness, nonetheless "has an old-fashioned tendency to expect women to choose between careers and motherhood rather than trying to accommodate both."

It isn't the sex that's controversial, however, and Roche's novel isn't meant to titillate its readers; it repulses them with details like "a detailed topography of [the heroine's] hemorrhoids" and exhaustive descriptions of private grooming habits. According to Roche:

"It's not feminist in a political sense, but instead feminism of the body, that has to do with anxiety and repression and the fear that you stink, and this for me is clearly feminist, that one builds confidence with your own body."

"Wetlands" is to be published in the U.S. next year, and it will be interesting to see how Americans receive this kind of feminist fiction. It seems to be fiercely opposed to everything "Sex and the City" glamorizes, rejecting the conventional ways women like Carrie beautify themselves, instead opting for a more primeval beauty, a beauty with spiritual comforts, not material ones.

**11. International Herald Tribune:** <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2008/06/05/europe/taboo.php>

### **A raunchy best seller gets Germans talking**

By Nicholas Kulish

Published: June 6, 2008

TEGERNHEIM, Germany: Not many literary readings are restricted to an over-18 audience. Fewer still take place under circus tents. Yet nothing could be more appropriate for the scandalous German best seller "Wetlands," by the television personality and author Charlotte Roche.

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The book, which will be published next year in the United States, is a headlong dash through every crevice and byproduct, physical and psychological, of its narrator's body and mind. It is difficult to overstate the raunchiness of the novel, and hard to describe in a family newspaper. If you are reading this over breakfast, stop eating for a moment.

"Wetlands" opens in a hospital room after an intimate shaving accident with a detailed topography of Helen's hemorrhoids, continues into the subject of anal intercourse and only gains momentum from there, eventually reaching avocado pits as objects of female sexual satisfaction and - here is where the debate kicks in - just possibly female empowerment.

The subject has struck a nerve here, catching a wave of popular interest in renewing the debate over women's roles and image in society.

With its female chancellor, Angela Merkel, and progressive reputation, Germany would hardly seem to be thirsting for such a discussion. Yet Germany has an old-fashioned tendency to expect women to choose between careers and motherhood, rather than trying to accommodate both.

There are also real gender-equality problems in the largest European economy. Of the 27 European Union members, Germany is tied with Slovakia as third-worst in the wage gap between men and women, with women earning 22 percent less, a figure surpassed only by Cyprus and Estonia.

And so the topic is being debated in every newspaper and magazine in Germany right now. Two more traditional, nonfiction books about young women, "New German Girls" and "We Alpha-Girls," have amplified the discussion.

And the provocative female rapper, Lady Bitch Ray, who runs her own independent label, Vagina Style Records, and said she stands for "strong women, courage and sexuality," grabbed headlines when she

accused Roche of stealing her explicit form of empowering raunch.

"I am what's in the book," the rapper, 27, whose real name is Reyhan Sahin, said in a telephone interview.

Germans have been accused, on occasion, of over-analyzing. Sometimes a funny, dirty book is just a funny, dirty book - but not this one, according to its author.

Roche, 30, has long identified herself as a feminist and, in a vein first explored in 1960s-era American feminism, describes the book as a *cri de coeur* against the oppression of a waxed, shaved, douched and otherwise sanitized women's world. Newspapers here have contrasted her unhygienic free-spirited fictional heroine to another, American-import model of womanhood: the German supermodel Heidi Klum's stable of plucked, pencil-thin models who reliably burst into tears in every episode of Klum's popular reality show, "Germany's Next Top Model."

But Roche told the audience here that her inspiration for the book came not from them but from the feminine-product aisle of her local store. Peeking out at the audience from under her dark-brown bangs, speaking in a childish voice that accentuates her transgressions against propriety, Roche explained, to howls of laughter, how the lemon-scented products called out to her in uncensored terms that she was, as the commercials put it, not so fresh, or at least not fresh enough.

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The notion of sexiness and sexual frankness as feminism - pop empowerment, if you will - is by now well-established on both sides of the Atlantic. As in the United States, "Sex and the City" roared past the new "Indiana Jones" movie for the top spot at the German box office over the weekend.

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Ardent fans have showed up to her readings with avocados as presents, and in several instances documented in the local media, the unprepared have fainted at some of the scenes.

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Alex Bolland, the event's organizer, explained that it was the local authorities who made him limit the reading to an over-18 audience, but he was still glad he could book Roche.

"There are almost no taboos today," Bolland said. "I appreciate it when someone can show that there are still a few out there."

Victor Homola contributed reporting from Berlin.

12. [tomorrowmuseum.com](http://www.tomorrowmuseum.com/2008/06/09/charlotte-roches-female-perversions/): <http://www.tomorrowmuseum.com/2008/06/09/charlotte-roches-female-perversions/>

### **Charlotte Roche's Female Perversions**

Joanne

6/9/08

Is Charlotte Roche the lady JG Ballard? The passages I've read are quite horrible (this from someone who adores Elfriede Jelinek, even at her most scathing) nevertheless, I'm delighted to see a book described as part Crash, part Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*.

Tagged: charlotte roche, cult fiction, Elfriede Jelinek, female perversions, feminism, jg ballard, literature, perversions

One Response to "Charlotte Roche's Female Perversions"

Posted by: E Miller - 06/10/2008

It's a great novel. Very funny. Very creative. Very refreshing. Very different. But it will be extremely hard to stomach for the average American. I'm not even sure it get past the censors, at least in Southern states.

13. [bibliophile.blogs.com](http://bibliophile.blogs.com/norm_pattis/2008/06/the-war-of-the.html): [http://bibliophile.blogs.com/norm\\_pattis/2008/06/the-war-of-the.html](http://bibliophile.blogs.com/norm_pattis/2008/06/the-war-of-the.html)

### **The War of the Worlds?**

Norm Pattis

June 08, 2008

I am sure the editors of *The New York Times* did not mean to suggest this simple, but elegant form of justice. They merely placed news stories side by side. What is suggested by that decision is not their fault. But there is poetic justice to be discerned in this simple act of juxtaposition. And a parable of sorts about our times, too.

Friday's *Times* carried an above-the-fold story about the arraignment of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the alleged planner of the 9/11 attacks. He wants martyrdom. Hence, he will represent himself. "I'm looking to be a martyr for a long time," he said. To that end he and fellow defendants are rejecting counsel; they want to represent themselves and commit judicial suicide.

Just below that story, appearing below the fold, another about a literary sensation in Germany. Charlotte Roche has written a new book. It has sold more than 680,000 copies since February. *Wetlands*, or *Feuchtgebiete* in German, is, a *Times* writer reports, "a headlong dash through every crevice and byproduct, physical and psychological, of its narrator's body and mind." It is described as far more "anatomical and scatological than erotic." Readers can delight in descriptions of hemorrhoids, anal intercourse and the use of avocado pits as sex toys.

One story the claim of a man at war, taking aim at a culture he despises and wanting to die. Another

story about a society infatuated with the obvious workings of the body. Is there a dissonance here?

Ideas can energize. They can offer visions of new worlds. They can inspire people to sacrifice, even to sacrifice their lives, in the service of a vision larger than themselves. Khalid Shaikh Mohammed seems to have been so energized. His mind is afire with visions of a grander and better world.

And in Germany, our sister across the sea? Minds are afire there as well. But what ignites them is the topography of a hemorrhoid, the mechanics of an orgasm, the rendering of the flesh and its desires in written form. If these two expressions of the human spirit at work express something enduring, the message is simple: One culture looks to the future, the other sees nothing at all. It is a frightening prospect.

Individual and national destinies are driven largely by unseen forces. Energy is destiny. As Augustine once noted, you become what you love. I worry some about Germany, and our side of the so-called War on Terror. What fills the soul on our side of the divide shares much, apparently, with what fills a toilet bowl.

Perhaps I oversimplify things. Perhaps there is nothing to worry about at all. Perhaps this random pairing of stories is present merely to suggest what justice requires in the prosecution of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed: Islamic martyrs, I am told, are consoled by the hope of bliss with 70 beautiful virgins in the afterlife. If convicted, we should deprive Mohammed of martyrdom, what he wants for his role as mastermind of mass murder. Perhaps we should punish him with paradise. Lock him a cell for life while pornographic films play round the clock. Give him seventy times seven the bliss he has promised others.

Would that be cruel and unusual? Not in Germany. In Germany that would apparently be called Heaven on Earth. Perhaps what divides the cultures in this conflict is not so much the contents of their desires, but differences on when those desires should be satisfied.

14. [unliteratereview.com: http://unliteratereview.com/2008/06/09/charlotte-roches-feuchtgebiete/](http://unliteratereview.com/2008/06/09/charlotte-roches-feuchtgebiete/)

### **Charlotte Roche's "Feuchtgebiete"**

June 9, 2008

Lately, Germans have been fascinated by more than just David Hasselhoff. Charlotte Roche, a popular British-born TV personality in Germany, has written the best-selling novel in the world on Amazon.com in March. The novel entitled, "Feuchtgebiete," which loosely translates to "wetlands," sounds like a daringly explicit treatise on the female body and sexuality. Some critics have described it as "literary porn." In an interview with *Granta*, Charlotte Roche talks about her novel:

"I'm convinced that in contemporary society a lot of women have a very messed-up attitude to their own bodies. We're obsessed with cleanliness, with getting rid of our natural excretions and our body hair. So I wanted to write about the ugly parts of the human body. The smelly bits. The juices of the female body. Smegma. In order to tell that story, I created a heroine that has a totally creative attitude towards her body - someone who has never even heard that women are supposedly smelly between their legs. A real free spirit."

After just finishing Scott Spencer's, "Willing," I'm frustrated with authors who pull their punches and fail to deal with our base instincts and our inhibitions directly in an honest manner.

I look forward to the US release of this novel for two reasons: one, to find out if Charlotte Roche's novel is as fearless as it sounds; and, two, to see how the this novel impinges upon America's puritanical sentimentality.

Tags: charlotte roche, feuchtgebiete, wetlands

#### 15. **theweekdaily.com:**

[http://www.theweekdaily.com/arts\\_leisure/books/43839/is\\_wetlands\\_a\\_feminist\\_novel\\_or\\_pornography.html](http://www.theweekdaily.com/arts_leisure/books/43839/is_wetlands_a_feminist_novel_or_pornography.html)

#### **Is 'Wetlands' a feminist novel or pornography?**

What happened

German bestseller *Wetlands*, written by television personality and author Charlotte Roche, has sparked a debate in Germany and abroad about whether the book—which features explicit descriptions of the private grooming practices and sex life of the novel's 18-year-old narrator—is a bastion for modern feminism or glorified pornography. (The New York Times)

What the commentators said

As the author has said, "Wetlands is not feminist in a political sense, but instead feminism of the body, that has to do with anxiety and repression and the fear that you stink," said the celebrity, sex, and fashion blog Jezebel. It's not just the "literary equivalent of a Sarah Silverman act." Yes, the book is "kind of icky," but "if it helps women take away a moment of understanding that we're all sort of dirty and weird and sexual and that that's okay," then "this should be required reading."

The combination of pornography and feminism is quite old, said Nicholas Kulish in The New York Times, and it experiences periodic revivals. These revivals—think porn star turned "sex educator," Annie Sprinkle, pop icon Madonna, and Eve Ensler of *The Vagina Monologues*—have "varying degrees of relevance to feminism," and *Wetlands* is just the most recent installment. But as German feminist and writer Ingrid Kolb told me, "When a woman breaks a taboo, it is automatically incorporated into the feminism debate, whether it really belongs there or not."

I haven't even read *Wetlands*, said Kris-Stella Trump in *Coffee Shop Philosophy*, but "why would the taboo she broke—on female bodies—not be a feminist issue? For me, raunchiness and sexiness do not mean a topic can't be 'truly' feminist." Sure, sex sells, and the book might draw a crowd for reasons other than feminism, but "what matters is that [the author] rebelled against a taboo that she felt was constraining her as a woman."

#### 16. **jezebel.com:** <http://jezebel.com/5014581/feminism-is-loving-your-fragrant-ladyflower>

#### **Feminism Is Loving Your Fragrant Ladyflower**

Mon Jun 9 2008

Megan Carpentier

There has been a lot of talk about Charlotte Roche's *Wetlands* and whether it is, as the author says, "not feminist in a political sense, but instead feminism of the body, that has to do with anxiety and repression and the fear that you stink," or whether it's just the literary equivalent of a Sarah Silverman act, all fart jokes and cringe-inducing explorations of the depths of female potty humor with no political content. Not that I'm by any means all the way through the book (reading in another language you haven't read consistently in almost ten years is hard!), but I have to say that I'm kind of coming down on Ms. Roche's side in this debate. Yeah, it's kind of icky, but that's sort of the point. Another excerpt, and a case in point, is after the jump.

Some of you hard-core ladies might recall Tracie's grand experiments with the perfume *Vulva*, taking it to be sniffed in Chelsea and on the Upper East Side. Most people were, let's be frank, kind of grossed out by the smell of pussy. Now, while there are, no doubt, plenty of sex-phobic and gynophobic people in the world, legitimate phobias were not the issue here. Pussy (when not in the throes of a bacterial infection) doesn't smell bad. It doesn't need to be douched or perfumed away. Femininity shouldn't be a celebration of being hairless and stankless and pristine like a fucking Barbie doll, and (good) sex doesn't look like an R-rated movie. It's fluid-filled and objectively kind of weird-looking, sweaty and, yes, smelly and full of heavy breathing and weird noises and none of it detracts from the fact that we are biologically designed to want to do it, badly, and that, when done right, it feels really damn good. And the more we all (men and women) obsess about whether we smell or look perfect or are doing it "right," the less we pay attention to doing it (and having fun at it). And, yes, pay equality and child care and parental leave and equal rights are important feminist issues, but it is no less important for women to feel comfortable in their own bodies and not try to live up to some Barbie ideal of what women are "supposed" to be, and if *Wetlands* helps start a conversation about hemorrhoids and taking a crap like a human being whether or not you're at "his" house and liking anal sex and liking the smell of pussy or whatever, if it helps women take away a moment of understanding that we're all sort of dirty and weird and sexual and that that's okay, then, fuck it, this should be required reading.

Anyway, with that preamble, here's Helen, our heroine, on stank.

Pussy washing was made into some great science in our house. It is allegedly very hard to get a pussy really clean. That is, of course, total bullshit. A little bit of water, a little bit of soap, scrub, scrub. Done.

But, you have to be careful not to wash it too much, or else you'll wash away the important pussy flora. And they're really important during sex for the right pussy smell and taste. They shouldn't be gotten rid of. I've been experimenting for quite a while with unwashed pussy. My goal is for it to be easily and seductively smelled through pants, even through thick jeans or ski pants. It won't exactly be known by men, but they'll experience it subliminally, because we're all really just animals looking to pair up. Preferably with people that smell like pussy.

So then you start to flirt and you have to grin the whole time because you just know that the air is filling with this deliciously sweet smell. It's exactly the effect that perfume is supposed to have. We're always told that perfume can have erotic effects on others, but why don't we use our own, more effective perfume? In reality, we all get turned on by the smell of pussy, cock and sweat. Most people are just alienated and think that everything natural reeks and everything man-made smells good. When a woman coated in perfume walks by me, it makes me want to hurl. What does she have to hide? Women spray their perfume around in public toilets after they've taken a shit, thinking that it makes everything smells agreeable. I can always smell their shit through the perfume, though. I prefer the smell

of old shit and piss to these purchased, disgusting perfumes.

What is worse are these women who spray perfume in the toilet think it's some brilliant new idea that they just have to pass on.

Whenever you are in a public bathroom, regardless of whether its a restaurant or a train station, you go to the bathroom and pull the stall door closed behind you and then are sprayed with something wet from above. The first time, I was startled. I thought someone from a neighboring stall had flicked water at me. But peering up I realized that there was a kind of soap dispenser fixed above the door, the purpose and intention of which is to water unsuspecting bathroom users with an objectionable air freshener as soon as they close the door. In your hair, on your clothes, in your face. If that's not the ultimate violation to a hygiene fanatic, I don't know what is.

I use my own pussy juice the way others use their perfume bottles. I stick a finger in my pussy and then dab the slime behind my earlobes. It works wonders when you're kissing people on the cheek.

## COMMENTS

HereKittyKittyKitty at 01:08 PM on 06/09/08  
Oh.My.God. That was intense.

I've never seen a soap dispenser afixed to stalls in public bathrooms, but I will now start looking.

solaana at 01:11 PM on 06/09/08

Yeah, that last bit was the blurb I read on the amazon.de website. I think the revelation for me is that this whole obsession with cleanliness is pervasive in Europe too - I grew up in Germany but hit puberty in the U.S. so I associate feeling unclean with the states. I wonder whether this book will be as big a deal here as it is in Europe - I'd like it to get mad press because sweet jesus, I wish I'd had something like this when I was a teenager because I thought I was a freak and was way too intimidated by everyone else to ask what the fuck was wrong with me.

Triphena at 01:13 PM on 06/09/08

No, sorry, unwashed pussy that can be smelled through pants is gross, not liberated. Ditto rubbing your secretions behind your ear like perfume.

blackbirdfly at 01:13 PM on 06/09/08

What does "pussy juice" translate to in German, I wonder?

ineffable.me at 01:13 PM on 06/09/08

Ugh. even less impressed. really. dead on with the sarah silverman comparison though.

wolf biter at 01:13 PM on 06/09/08

Without going into too much detail, I will simply say that I am the anti-Miranda.

galaxina at 01:14 PM on 06/09/08

Fragrant Ladyflower shall be the name of that bottled scent. We'll hire the artist who made the giant traveling vagina to design the bottle.

haptotrope at 01:15 PM on 06/09/08  
Ah, dispatches from the Rubber Rose Ranch.

nattiebo at 01:16 PM on 06/09/08  
i dare someone to try the pussy perfume trick and report back how it goes. i would volunteer, but i'm alone in a new town and don't know anyone to try it on. takers?

Miss-Pringle at 01:18 PM on 06/09/08  
I think a lot of your appreciation of smells is down to circumstances. I get a lot of unwashed sex smells in my sunday morning gym class and it's pretty gross, and so are the random farts.  
But, I don't mind the smell of sweat in there at all.

Meg at 01:18 PM on 06/09/08  
She lost me with "slime."

hellolola at 01:19 PM on 06/09/08  
"...dab the slime behind my earlobes."  
Call me old-fashioned, but I don't want to describe what comes out of my vagina in terms best used for an old Nickelodeon show.

wolf biter at 01:20 PM on 06/09/08  
@nattiebo: I have a date tonight. Will do.

MissusTufnel at 01:21 PM on 06/09/08  
During high school, I lived in fear of someone being able to smell my twat because once I overheard some people - boys and girls - talking about the only out lesbian at my school at the time, and they were talking about how she "smelled like period." Since I knew I was at least halfway lesbian, and I knew that my pussy smelled like something other than air, I was petrified that I would be next.

Even though I'm in the pool every day and take showers, I still have that fear that someone will smell me, and that affects how I sit when I'm wearing my workout clothes or PJ's (thin material,) and how close I will sit to people.

This book would have been good for me to read. Probably still would be. I don't think I'll start dabbing my juice behind my ear, but I'll probably feel a little better about my vadge.

Skinny Bone Jones at 01:22 PM on 06/09/08  
While I am by no means unrealistic, I am a tiny bit of a prude.

To me, potty humor is the opposite extreme of the heavily perfumed and in denial ladies. Both are unnecessary ways of dealing with something so natural to being a human they require no further discussion. There's nothing empowering, in my experience, in having the same bodily functions as anyone else. If someone else feels differently, fine, but kindly remove yourself from earshot.

When it comes to sex, however, that's different. There is plenty empowering about the discussion and sharing of most aspects of one's sexual experiences. It's sex, for fuck's sake!

I suppose one could argue that it's silly to have some sort of division between the two, and perhaps it is, but that's how I roll.

haptotrope at 01:23 PM on 06/09/08

...and while I'm at it... the best(and only) douche? A full-on-g-spot orgasm -- I mean really, why bother with some inane medical contraption, when you have an ingenious internally mounted spigot of lurve.

mysterygirl at 01:23 PM on 06/09/08

I agree with most of this. It seems like there's a current imperative to be completely sanitized, which is unnecessary. I'm not about to perfume myself with... myself, but I think being clean and hygienic should be enough. No need to douche oneself into a complete disconnect with nature.

ForeverBlueGirl at 01:23 PM on 06/09/08

So like, I will never forget the time when my mom was asking me why I didn't use a wash cloth in the shower. And I was all, "I soap up my hands." And she was like, "How do you wash your privates?" Like it was too scary to touch them with your own hands!

NapalmKitty at 01:23 PM on 06/09/08

That was freaking awesome. Vaginas are beautiful and delicious. People need to get over this silly ick factor having to do with the female body.

bowleserised at 01:23 PM on 06/09/08

She's only talking science.

solaana at 01:24 PM on 06/09/08

@blackbirdfly: In the bit I read, they called it smegma.

BLK GRL at 01:25 PM on 06/09/08

Uhm I know my limitations...not washing my pa-dussy is one of them, sorry, Gina gets washed...always and I damn sure ain't putting my excretions on like perfume. What do I say when some =one asks what I am wearing "eau de poos-say" no ma'am

rubalicious thinks queefs are vulgar at 01:25 PM on 06/09/08

Slime? How does calling it slime make us feel good about it? Or is that part of the point, to do away with the pretty words we use to avoid cringing? Because we shouldn't cringe, no matter what it's called? I can has drink now?

katastic at 01:26 PM on 06/09/08

@haptotrope: Exactly. This "juice-behind-ear" thing ain't new, people.

True story: yesterday it was extremely hot out, and I was with an attractive man. At one point, I realized- I smelled like pussy. Because I have one. And that is okay.

BlowJoy at 01:27 PM on 06/09/08

I like how pussy smells, but only during sex. But walking around with it for an extended period of time changes it's smell to something closer to B.O. I mean, sexytime sweat smells good, but you don't want to walk around all day smelling like sweat. There's a difference.

TheKnife at 01:27 PM on 06/09/08

Recently, I was in a resort in Mexico and noticed that everywhere, there was this cloying scent of baby-powder. At first, I just thought it was all of the massively obese American guests (who were everywhere) who would sit by the infinity pool, sighing gently and folding their hands over their massive quadruple labia bellies. They would gently lower themselves into the water, sighing with pleasure and in my mind, emitting little poofs of baby powder. One day in the elevator I heard a squirting noise and felt some droplets on my arm. Turns out my theory was wrong and the ENTIRE resort was equipped with machines that squirted baby powder scent at well timed intervals so that none of the American guests would have to smell themselves or the country they happened to be visiting. Friends, i have smelled the future and it smells like the aftermath of baby poo.

Be warned

olivia2.0 at 01:27 PM on 06/09/08

Dude - we have one of these auto-air-freshener-sprayers in our office, and it is FOUL. Once it was apple cinnamon flavored, and ick. Fake apple cinnamon is about the worst thing ever. Except around christmas when it was pine. Ugh.

brookidy at 01:28 PM on 06/09/08

Sorry, but I'd prefer Jordache cologne from the drugstore over "old shot and piss".

Megan Carpentier at 01:29 PM on 06/09/08

@solaana: Yeah, but smegma has a rather specific meaning in English that she doesn't mean.

Translator's license.

@rubalicious: In a previous passage, she talks about how she's basically, like constantly wet and describes the texture in detail before settling on the word "slime" to describe it.

BlowJoy at 01:29 PM on 06/09/08

@solaana: That's interesting, because smegma in English is the technical word for "dick cheese" (gag), associated with a male.

But... after some research, apparently it's used for the female, too. You learn something new every day!  
Thanks, Jezebell!!

[en.wikipedia.org]

msAnthrope at 01:31 PM on 06/09/08

part of our natural scent is to attract or repel. i'm instinctively turned off by some peoples' odor and attracted to others. it has nothing to do with being repulsed by the natural scent. i'm all for personal biological chemistry. but still some are gonna not be my thing. and ps i absolutely despise when men wear almost any kind of cologne at all.

i'd rather not be forced to smell anybody's scent that my nose decides is unpleasant~~whether it's natural or man-made. i don't think spraying gobs of perfume on oneself is great either~~i think the best perfumes can be detected only when somebody is close enough in my personal space.

bowleserised at 01:32 PM on 06/09/08

Oh, and an expert once told me that all women's body scents divide into a few rough categories, which correlate to major perfume groups like musk, civet etc, so you can actually choose a commercial perfume that enhances/compliments your natural scent, if you've got the nose for it.

iBurgle at 01:33 PM on 06/09/08

Ok but if I ever get a money shot of unwarranted air freshener in a public restroom I WILL proceed immediately to douse myself in iBurgle-ness.

I so wish I could read German.

Hate Mitigator ULookinAtMyJunk is the... at 01:34 PM on 06/09/08

Bathing is not optional. Now, I don't think you should douche or stick Norforms up there, but cleaning is necessary. Soap, water, squash-squash and keep it moving. Also, I would not want to have a preview of someone's stank stuff after a night of clubbing and dancing. Stuff tends to marinate on the dance floor.

mynameisrita at 01:34 PM on 06/09/08

I'm sure "slime" has lost a little something in the translation. I agree, dabbing some of your personal perfume behind your ears is a bit much, but I loved this. I remember being in sixth grade, sitting outside crossed-legged (what used to be called "indian style" but that seems like an inappropriate term these days). This boy that I was talking to told me to close my legs because he smelled tuna. I didn't even know what he was talking about at the time, but it definitely made me self-conscious once I figured it out. Even though I knew a) it didn't smell like tuna and b) he was an asshole, it still worried me a little. Like he might know something I didn't. Being really positive about your girl and all that goes with her seems to be an excellent idea to me. I can't wait until it is translated into English.

roseisaroseisarose at 01:35 PM on 06/09/08

eh, not to reapeat myself...but you can check out the translations here...[jetzt.sueddeutsche.de] ...but honestly, this is the third separate post I read from you guys about this book, does someone need to get a bonus this month or what is up with that....;-)

LaFemme at 01:36 PM on 06/09/08

I don't have a problem with my vagina, but I think it is super gross to think it would be liberating to smell through ski pants. How would you even do that? Just not shower? I mean, even just standing in a shower and getting some water on yourself would probably be enough to keep you from smelling. This sounds really unnecessary, unhygienic, and revolting.

galaxina at 01:36 PM on 06/09/08

All this talk of cleanliness is reminding me of the SNL Woomba commercial.

deserter at 01:37 PM on 06/09/08

Um... I don't think that vaginas should be obsessively scrubbed to purge the scent, but I'm with @Triphena here... I don't really want to walk down the street catching the scent of unwashed lady parts, the same as I don't want the scent of sweaty balls to intrude on my day-to-day life. In the bedroom, it's different, but I feel like the smell of sexual organs, while not necessarily bad (although the scent personally does not appeal to me), is something that should be kept between oneself and one's sexual partners.

brookidy at 01:38 PM on 06/09/08

@brookidy: Um, shit, such as.

lollygagger at 01:39 PM on 06/09/08

@Triphena: Um yeah, gotta agree. I don't oppose the natural, clean smell of my goods, but I don't want anyone smelling it unless I specifically invite them.

Dvizzl at 01:41 PM on 06/09/08

All I know is I like to wear natural deodorant. I don't feel the need to inhibit my body's natural processes with chemicals just because some arbitrary rule says that women can't sweat or have a natural smell.

Same thing for my boy. He never wears cologne and it's refreshing (most of the time, that is. ha.) to experience what a real man smells like, naturally.

Since I've switched to natural beauty products I can't go back to the proctor and gamble shizzit. All those corporate shampoos, perfumes, lotions all smell so chemical and fake to me. Yuck.

ZombieEmpress at 01:41 PM on 06/09/08

When my sister and I were young enough to still be taking baths together, she got the bar of soap too close to my lady parts. The soap burned so badly I ran out of the tub and cried on the toilet. If something burns that bad, it really doesn't belong there.

As for the novel, I definitely think that women need to realize that they are real people with odors, bodily functions, and body hair. Why should we be ashamed of an odor that says your vagina is healthy? Why are we expected to wax all our pubic hair off so that we resemble pre-pubescent girls?

If this book helps woman understand that its okay not to look and smell like Barbie and become more comfortable in their own bodies, then I would say Ms.Roche has accomplished an amazing thing.

trikitixa at 01:41 PM on 06/09/08

I've always hated having to deal with other women's hang-ups about smells; my last boss drowned herself in sickly-sweet Mugler 'Angel' and she had the audacity to ask me to wear deodorant (the building was not air-conditioned and the work was very physical at times) while stinking up 200 feet around her with that foul floozy juice that gave me headaches. I acted embarrassed when she asked but never complied. Meanwhile, all the men I worked with smelled like dumpsters. I think it's interesting, too, when a woman like this wanted control over a space she would ask for another younger, fertile woman to eliminate her smell.

The novel passages do not shock me one bit. Being smelly can be just as fun as being clean (though I do wash my clothes when they smell like pussy or sweat).

Dear Blond Diary... at 01:41 PM on 06/09/08

Oh I completely agree that commercial chemical perfume smells are the worst. I hate all perfume and cologne. The only thing I can stand is lightly scented lotion, and some essential oils, and soaps. Otherwise, if I can smell you and we are not embracing, you are wearing too much perfume.

I think clean, healthy human body smells are good. In general, when it comes to skin, water and

scrubbing is enough, in my opinion.

vegemitekid at 01:42 PM on 06/09/08

@msAnthrope: So dabbing cooch juice behind one's ear would be a waste of time, yes? There are just people you will/won't be attracted to and vice versa no matter what you do. I would imagine that there wouldn't be that much of a smell anyway and if there is, it's probably already detectable through your knickers so why dab?

BLK GRL at 01:42 PM on 06/09/08

@LaFemme: Girl yes, I was thinking the something, like "really Charlotte, ski pants? wow" that right there means I havent washed in a FEW DAYS. I am sorry that is abit much. I think sexy time pussy is wonderful, fishy, I need a bath pussy not so much. Something with a man, if he can smell his nut sack, something is wrong and it can be easily remedied with water and a mild soap.I mean I get the point and I am there with ya but this just seems a bit extreme

soulless economist at 01:44 PM on 06/09/08

This whole thing reminded me of the Sex Panther scene in Anchorman. "Made with bits of real panther, so you know it's good...illegal in 9 countries"

Pussy Slime: Made with real vaginal secretions so you know it's legit. Coming to a liberated female near you! Only available in Europe.

sacapuntas at 01:44 PM on 06/09/08

Am I crazy? I was told to NEVER use soap down there because it gets rid of important natural bacteria, thus irritating it and making it smell worse. I only wash with water, and I don't think I stink.

ineffable.me at 01:46 PM on 06/09/08

i never understand how some people think wearing deodorant makes some sort of statement about whatever. wearing deodorant is just like brushing your teeth. its just something you do

MollyShroom at 01:46 PM on 06/09/08

The ol' pussy juice behind the ears is a trade stripper trick. The pheromones (sp? sorry) are a goldmine. It makes a dancer's money go up significantly, based on an informal poll of myself and colleagues. haha. I know how gross it sounds, but if you've had a shower, then dab a little of the ladybits stuff on your neck with a clean finger, it's not really 'dirty'. It's nature!

ShiftySunshine at 01:47 PM on 06/09/08

@BlowJoy: Exactly, sometimes I'm going to enjoy those scents, sometimes I'm not. I don't want to smell myself ALL DAY.

On a side note, I personally have an awful sense of smell. I never know if I smell gross or not, so when people talk about being able to smell sex on people in the gym on Sundays, that terrifies me. I would have NO idea!

NOLA girl at 01:49 PM on 06/09/08

@sacapuntas: I've heard people say that here but it's bullshit. Soap and water has never hurt my ladybits. NEVER.

AFever at 01:51 PM on 06/09/08

@sacapuntas: I think everyone has their own personal chemistry. Some chicks may need/feel more comfortable using soap, but I don't think there's generally anything wrong with just using water. Also, I think the natural bacteria is kind of self-refreshing.

aspiringexpatriate at 01:53 PM on 06/09/08

Um, just a suggestion for those who are no longer listening after the use of "slime," well, it's in German, so who knows what word was used and what the connotations are. Somehow I doubt she'd use an equivalent of slime.

@Skinny Bone Jones: Yes, it is the opposite extreme. But if the culture doesn't allow any discussion of what is natural, then well, it's sometimes useful to jump into the opposite extreme, if only so you windup somewhere near the middle.

I've heard of people doing this, and it does make sense that we should be attracted to another's smell. Well, at least biological sense.

@ineffable.me: But also, yeah, it doesn't seem that extraordinarily well written. Course, I was never one for minimalism.

Doreen DelPurgatorio at 01:53 PM on 06/09/08

@sacapuntas: No, silly, you've confused your vagina with a cast-iron skillet -- never use soap or you'll lose the "seasoning!"

akleinsmith at 01:53 PM on 06/09/08

@mynameisrita: I think that people hear that something "smells like tuna" and they say it whenever they see a girl with her legs open. A girl said that on the bus to another girl, and it just made me so angry. Another time was when a guy said that dogwood trees smelled like vagina. First off, there's no way he would know, and second off, I'm sure he just picked it up from somewhere. I asked my lady doctor once and he assured me that it's very, very unlikely that ANYONE can smell a normal ladyflower. Haha. If they say they can, they're lying, and that's what makes me not believe this book.

Miss-Pringle at 01:55 PM on 06/09/08

@ShiftySunshine: It's a spinning class, I ride in back, there's a fan, so I'm downwind. Maybe I should switch to up front, but too close to the mirror on Sunday a.m.

brassinpocket at 01:56 PM on 06/09/08

So weird because I have never thought I smelled anything remotely like fish or tuna. It's like a spicy, musky scent that gets stronger over time or with a lot of sweating. The only time I don't like my odor is...after being with a man! A man's, uh, love juice, completely throws off my own flora and fauna, and I found it takes me days to get back to my own, natural scent. But just me on my own is fine.

Dear Blond Diary... at 01:56 PM on 06/09/08

@NOLA girl: @sacapuntas: I used to use soap...until I got a lovely infection. Now i stick to water, and it works splendidly.

Dear Blond Diary... at 01:57 PM on 06/09/08

@brassinpocket: Agreed I find that smell to be really ironically, unpleasant!

tscheese at 02:00 PM on 06/09/08

@akleinsmith: it's very, very unlikely that ANYONE can smell a normal ladyflower.

So...a normal ladyflower isn't supposed to smell like anything at all? This is kind of alarming to me, because I'm pretty sure most ladyflowers smell like SOMETHING.

expatriatedjerseyan at 02:01 PM on 06/09/08

I'm not against natural odors and whatnot, and I can recognize and agree with the point the author is making, but there are completely reasonable measures of personal hygiene that can be taken by all people that more or less balances the desire for 'being natural,' and the desire for attractive smell and appearance.

I don't think it's a reasonable expectation, unless an individual personally wants it, to expect a partner to be fully waxed or anything; however, I do think it's a reasonable expectation that there be some measure of...personal maintenance, if you will. Likewise, I don't think it's a reasonable expectation that there be a purge of all natural sexual scents, but I do think it is reasonable for both partners (and not to go down this path, but as a guy who is not circumcised, this is especially true) to adopt a pattern of thorough and regular cleansing. Seriously, I'm not sure anyone wants to interact with genitalia that has gone days without being washed, whether it is male or female, and while I can really only speak with authority on matters of male hygiene, I'm fairly sure that a little bit of soap, water and attention never hurt anyone.

dictator4life1 at 02:01 PM on 06/09/08

Was she seriously advocating doing this outside of the bedroom, in public? If I were out with a friend, and noticed that she smelled of pussy, I would seriously consider not going out with her again. I don't want to know what my friends' pussy smells like. For that matter, I don't want to know what strangers' pussy smells like. I don't mind the way I smell at all (it reminds me of my ex's post-sex breath, which is nice). But I think that particular smell should be kept between you and those with whom you are comfortable naked.

Devonna at 02:05 PM on 06/09/08

When I'm ovulating, I smell. Through any kind of clothing. I'm not ashamed of having a clean, sweet-smelling ladyflower but damn, sometimes I just want to tell it to quit unfurling its petals at inopportune moments. So, I think it's funny the author wants hers to smell stronger...I'm livin' that life and it's NOT THAT GREAT.

vegemitekid at 02:06 PM on 06/09/08

@brassinpocket: Same here, it just seems to upset the whole balance of my natural smell. It's not even that he's particularly smelly, it just seems that the mix of both of us doesn't work, as a perfume that is.....

Gingerlime at 02:07 PM on 06/09/08

"I prefer the smell of old shit and piss to these purchased, disgusting perfumes."

GA-ROSS. There's nothing better than a light perfume that works with a person's specific body chemistry. Nothing sexier. Eu De Colon is not for me.

estrojen at 02:20 PM on 06/09/08

I remember reading the "dab-a-little" trick in an issue of Cosmopolitan, ca. 1984. (Probably in one of those ridiculous "Why Don't You..." features that included such delightful suggestions as "Why don't you line your car trunk with pink fun fur?")

Anyway - my 12-year-old self thought it was revolting at the time, but I tried it when I was a young trollop (from freshly-washed ladybits, I'd like to point out), and I will tell you - it does have an effect. A nice one. And honestly, unless you have toxic bilge coming out of there, you really can't smell it per se...it sort of blends in with the natural scent of your hair and skin, and if you're on a hot date (or you're hoping it'll be a hot date) it's a nice little nudge, shall we say, in the right direction.

estrojen at 02:23 PM on 06/09/08

And I agree: Chemical odors are repugnant. Most of them equal instant headache for me. I have a few favorite perfumes but am very careful not to overapply, because I don't ever want to be known as "Oh Crap, Here Comes That Chick With The Stank Perfume."

Said the chick who's dabbed vadge behind her ears before a hot date.

AvantGardenia at 02:25 PM on 06/09/08

@haptotrope: AMEN! I'm going to get on my uxorious husband to make that happen when I get home.

msAnthrope at 02:46 PM on 06/09/08

@vegemitekid: theoretically if i can smell vagina through clothes, natural chemistry is gonna kick in way before i ever get close to somebody's ear.

to me it's just a territorial thing if somebody wants to be in your face with their natural days-unwashed body odors. it's like claiming a perimeter around yourself screaming "here i am, and this whole space is mine!"

jianna at 02:50 PM on 06/09/08

I'm so freaked out by the grossness of sex that I don't have it. Yes I am in therapy for this. Although, it kind of bugs me that society is so sex-oriented that I'm forced to feel like a freak for not wanting to have sex like everyone else. And I don't mean that in a prudish, no one should talk about sex ever way. I firmly believe that sex should be discussed, especially to get people to be responsible about it re: diseases, pregnancy yadda yadda yadda. I just mean in the fact that when talking about the ickiness of sex, the point that "EEEEVVVEERRRRYYYBODY DOES IT!!" is always stressed and it's not good for my psyche. :P

18thfloor at 03:04 PM on 06/09/08

ive been told my cooch smells delicious, but that's not something i'd like my grandmother to find out while we're shopping for her new pantsuits.

youfatduck at 03:10 PM on 06/09/08

"No! Love is wearing makeup to bed, and going downstairs to the Burger King to poop, and hiding alcohol in perfume bottles. That's love."

glamzonzobbitfeet at 03:31 PM on 06/09/08

-oooh! I love your perfume! what is it?

-It's my Ill Na NA

disgustedcitizen at 03:35 PM on 06/09/08

WTF? Speaking from a man's point of view... Yech!

lucyjae at 03:48 PM on 06/09/08

@olivia2.0: Yeah, we had those in my old office building. Someone started calling it the napalm and it stuck. So, if you came back from the bathroom reeking of whatever the "freshener" of the week was, you got napalmed.

thebeerbitch at 03:50 PM on 06/09/08

@youfatduck: Amen.

thenewmasses at 04:01 PM on 06/09/08

thank god for grunge and grunge being ok when i was a teen.

"Feminism of the body" is something you accomplish in between your ears.

May every girl be as lucky as I - to be free to be grungy - when they're 15, 16, 17... means by the time they're 26 and have developed as fashion sense, they can above all be comfortable in their own skin underneath it all... and reap the recreational benefits not just of being comfortable with your body - but being comfortable with your body to the point that IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL... you know, being so down with being down with yourself, that you don't even notice...

meredithkb at 04:04 PM on 06/09/08

I remember that same "perfume" idea from "Even Cowgirls get the Blues." I even tried it once (not in public) but the BF didn't even notice. I think the smell evaporates pretty quickly.

LaGiulia at 04:05 PM on 06/09/08

That thing about dunking your finger in your pussy and then dabbing the juice behind your ears has been done before in literature. In Tom Robbins's "Even Cowgirls Get the Blues", more precisely.

StrangeNurse at 04:22 PM on 06/09/08

Okay, on cleanliness and the normal care of the normal female genitalia:

1. First, let's make sure we know which area we're talking about. The part INSIDE YOU is the vagina. That is the ONLY part that is called the vagina. The part OUTSIDE of you, where the lips (labia) and clit reside is the vulva.

2. Don't wash your vagina. As in, don't wash INSIDE yourself. No soapy fingers inserted, nope. The vagina is a self-cleaning organ. The vaginal flora could get upset, it's true, but irritation -- and some

women are more sensitive than others -- is also a concern. In other words, in an effort to become sparkling clean, you could CAUSE things like bad odor and itchiness. This might make one want to wash MORE. And you see a cycle developing, yes?

3. The vulva is made of delicate tissue. It is a mucus membrane, which means it's supposed to be moist. Sorry, but it's true! While some women's bodies can deal just fine with soap and water, I don't recommend it. Soap is drying and can be irritating. Consider a gentler cleanser. I have sensitive skin all the hell over, so I use a Eucerin body cleanser made for babies, and I use it all over my body.

4. When cleansing, gently sweep water all over your various folds. Some women are more foldy than others. That's okay; just make sure you rinse everything you've got. Get rid of bodily or cleanser-related residues.

5. For advanced users: if you've got a piercing there, for the love of God, don't use peroxide, rubbing alcohol, or anything else like that to rinse it. Try normal saline solution.

- Your Strange Nurse

jammiriffic at 04:34 PM on 06/09/08

I have no problem with the smell of my vagina - I don't scrub it (just a little rub with soap and water and a rinse) and I don't perfume it. But I don't want the damn smell all over. I find it just as annoying and unpleasant as processed perfumes, making me uncomfortable and sometimes headachey. This is why I less and less want to masturbate with my hand (the smell lingers even after washing, and I don't want to smell it EVERY TIME I have my hand near my face for the whole day) and why I always prefer to shower after sexy times before going someone crowded like class or something. I honestly don't think this makes me less liberated ...

goneagain at 04:34 PM on 06/09/08

must order this book now. have spent the whole year taking courses in german and german literature and don't want to forget it all during the summer. however, the idea of lying in a hammock reading thomas mann is not at all as appealing as charlotte roche. thanks for the tip!

(who am i kidding? there will be no hammocks, only the long, hot bus rides to and from work. everyday i will bring my book and everyday i will end up reading 'metro' instead)

lurleen at 04:55 PM on 06/09/08

what about pussy sweat? doesn't smell of vagina is like sweat but in your crotch..because the fucking sky pants or the tights..this isnt sexy but oh well..I was wondering if there was some kind of pussy desodorant..

and what about if you are turned on by cleanness..I swear I'm more horny after a shower and I dunno why..

now my man body odor is a fucking pleasure for my nose..that's right..

I have to agree about the wrongness of using perfume to mask other smells..argg I hate perfume but damn all that about pussy juicy impregnation uhhh too much.. now I will think about it everytime I kiss someone's cheek!!

sacapuntas at 05:01 PM on 06/09/08

@StrangeNurse: SEE, I WAS RIGHT. take that, soap.

alysbrangwin at 05:26 PM on 06/09/08

When I was in the Peace Corps I could only shower about every five days. I did smell like pussy, and it would drive me crazy just about every month so much that I'd shave off all the hair and then it wouldn't smell. I felt like it could be smelled through my clothes and that wasn't cool since I was the only American gal in my town. They already thought I was a "loose woman" because I was American. Mostly it was because I wasn't getting to wash any part of myself every day and that part smells strongest. Oh and it was so cold outside that showering was awful anyway and hair would frost before it dried.

improperdancing at 05:39 PM on 06/09/08

Every discussion brought about by this book SERIOUSLY makes me think about the Vagina Monologues.

Especiallly "My Angry Vagina"

improperdancing at 05:53 PM on 06/09/08

@brassinpocket:agreed! my boyfriend's smell completely overtakes mine for a few days after we do the deed.

ObtuseIntolerant at 07:16 PM on 06/09/08

Can other people really smell you in a direct way, when you are washed and clean and normal smelling?

My feeling is that I can occasionally smell myself (ie. during my time of the month...but my sense of smell becomes extremely acute at that time), but cannot honestly say I have smelled others in normal passing contact. If that makes any sense.

Buckyball at 07:19 PM on 06/09/08

@jianna: Try reading Intercourse by Andrea Dworkin, it's been misrepresented a lot, but she does make good points about American society's penchant to make sex wholesome in regards to those who don't want to do it.

Random note: I changed smell when I went on the pill, a lot less strong. I miss it sometimes, but now my bf goes down on me much more. :)

ronaldpagan at 08:18 PM on 06/09/08

@BlowJoy: Exactly. Just because sweat can smell good when you and your lover are having passionate sex, doesn't mean you get turned on by some obese stranger's BO on the subway.

Also: "We all get turned on by the smell of cock?" Um, I'm a straight girl and everything, but NEVER, at any point, have I been like "Mmmm...dick and balls...if only they could inject this smell into cigarettes so I could smoke it all day long..." I am not turned on by the smell of cock, ever. What about you all?

IamKateness at 10:01 PM on 06/09/08

@ronaldpagan: I find the smell of my boyfriend's genitalia really arousing actually. I like thinking about the way he smells when we're apart. I may be a complete freak, but I like it! I assume it's because it reminds me of him, and sex... and I am very fond of both.

Wanda\_Ball at 10:24 PM on 06/09/08

Huh. This seems so 1990 to me. Anybody remember Annie Sprinkle, the feminist prostitute/performance artist? Also, it's so weird that a German woman is all up in arms about her right to stink. I always thought Western European women paired elegance and stinkiness so neatly.

Miss.Sarah at 11:18 PM on 06/09/08

Ugh, I knew a few girls in high school who always reeked and there was nothing liberating about it as far as I could tell. One reeked of bad breath and BO all the time, she claimed to be allergic to mint (so never brushed her teeth) - it was foul. One girl stank like horse shit and tried to cover for it by lying about taking horseback riding lessons. The last girl always stank of dirty pussy and it was repulsive! I'm all for natural smells, I get wicked migraines from strong chemical odours, but please keep it a clean natural smell. I totally agree a little warm water and gentle touching goes a long way to keeping a fragrant lady flower.

I'm curious to know everyone's feelings on female BO. I'm sort of fascinated/horrified by my own, like after a good workout or sex romp it's sort of a badge of honour, but any other time I just feel nasty and worry someone will smell me out. Any thoughts? Is female BO ever acceptable? Or is it just men who are allowed to stink up the world with their underarms?

Ewalda at 12:15 AM on 06/10/08

@Megan: See, that German Lit degree came in handy for something!

Anyway, I feel compelled to weigh in on this discussion as a man who had an overactive libido and broad experience in my youth.

Leaving aside the unpleasant stench of any number of yeast and bacterial infections, there is a difference between the aroma of a healthy vagina and the smell of a dirty twat and/or pee. Unclean twat/pee smell is a turnoff. On the other hand, to a man, a healthy vag, particularly when the person attached to it is aroused, has an absolutely wonderful aroma.

Oh, and Miss.Sarah: Regarding BO, neither men nor women are allowed to stink up the world with their underarms. Some folks sweat and their pits do not stink. Some folks sweat and their pits stink. Part of growing up is finding out into which camp you fall. If your pits stink, wash them. Otherwise, wash them anyway. It's the Christian thing to do.

mariamariamaria at 03:50 AM on 06/10/08

The natural smells that happen when you are tangled up with someone is a-okay. Smelling someone's sweaty stank as you pass them in the hall is NOT! Sorry if that makes me a prude, but if you're not my lovah, I don't want to smell you.

And not all perfume lovers are trying to hide their smells! I wear fragrance because I like the smell of flowers or sandalwood or amber or whatever. A spritz of Creed's Millesime Imperial gives me paroxysms of joy. Seriously - it literally makes me happy. But I am judicious with my spritzes. Both out of courtesy to others and because the shit is expensive.

And a final word of advice ladies - careful with the soap! Lather up your outer lady parts, but don't be

invasive with the soap - it stings! I know other jezzies have mentioned it, but it bares repeating.

blushingflower at 03:26 PM on 06/10/08

@LaFemme: OK, but here's the thing. I can be fresh out of the shower and wearing all clean clothes and my pussy can still occasionally be fragrant. Not through ski pants, but through cotton or linen, yeah. And it's not an unpleasant fragrance, it's the smell of healthy pussy. But I'm pretty much always wet, more or less depending on where I am in my cycle, and the smell waxes and wanes with the moon. Not much that can be done about it, at least not without risking infection and a far worse aroma.

Ewalda at 11:42 PM on 06/10/08

@blushingflower: Call me?

Ewalda at 11:44 PM on 06/10/08

(That was a jocular rejoinder, by the way. Please do not strike me with your shoe.....)

**17. Coffee shop philosophy:** <http://kstrump.blogspot.com/2008/06/charlotte-roche-wetlands.html>

### **Charlotte Roche: Wetlands**

Monday, June 09, 2008

Kris-Stella Trump

A friend sent me this NY Times article on a racy feminist book that is breaking sales records in Germany.

With her jaunty dissection of the sex life and the private grooming habits of the novel's 18-year-old narrator, Helen Memel, Ms. Roche has turned the previously unspeakable into the national conversation in Germany.

This is a book that discusses, in (apparently gross) detail, the bodily fluids and sexual activities of a hypersexual (NY Times wording) teenager. Is this empowering for women? The article discusses the two sides of the coin.

Ms. Roche, 30, has long identified herself as a feminist and, in a vein first explored in 1960s-era American feminism, describes the book as a cri de coeur against the oppression of a waxed, shaved, douched and otherwise sanitized women's world.

/.../

"The combination of pornography and feminism is old, and was already a favorite marketing strategy for Playboy in the '70s," said Alice Schwarzer, Germany's best-known feminist and founder of the magazine EMMA, modeled in part on Gloria Steinem's Ms. magazine, in an e-mail message responding to questions about the recent books. "Right now we're living through another revival."

/.../

"When a woman breaks a taboo, it is automatically incorporated into the feminism debate, whether it really belongs there or not," said Ingrid Kolb, a German writer and longtime feminist.

Either way, it sounds like an intriguing book (coming out in English next year) - and if I can take a stand without having read it, it sounds feminist to me. Why would the taboo she broke - on female bodies - not be a feminist issue? For me, raunchiness and sexiness do not mean a topic can't be 'truly' feminist. So, sex sells. So, men (and women) might find the book arousing. That is peripheral as far as I am concerned - what matters is that the woman in question rebelled against a taboo that she felt was constraining her as a woman. As she herself put it,

[H]er inspiration for the book came (...) from the feminine-product aisle of her local store. Peeking out at the audience from under dark brown bangs, speaking in a childish voice that accentuated her transgressions against propriety, Ms. Roche explained, to howls of laughter, how the lemon-scented products called out to her in uncensored terms that she was, as the commercials put it, not so fresh, or at least not fresh enough.

**18. bavgirl.com:** [http://www.bavgirl.com/2008/06/day\\_46\\_the\\_most\\_bizarre\\_book.html](http://www.bavgirl.com/2008/06/day_46_the_most_bizarre_book.html)

### **DAY 46 - THE MOST BIZARRE BOOK**

June 11, 2008

I have to say I have never read a book like this one before. In my entire life. HONESTLY!!!

My roomie gave it to me after we talked about the author recently. Charlotte Roche, 29, became famous as a TV moderator on a German music channel called VIVA 2. Famous because of her unusual "non-conformist" moderation style.

The book is about the hysteria we humans have with hygiene and the title translates into "Wetlands" in English. All I'm going to say is I sit in the subway with my mouth wide open (not literally, but in my mind) because the author uses unimaginable language (even for guys) in her book when she talks about the wetlands of the book's heroine... It's so bizarre that it made me almost ill when I first started to read it. And now it's like a train wreck... You don't want to look, but you have to. I feel like I don't know if I should stop reading it and give the book back or if I should finish it tonight. Honestly, extremely strange...

Yes, I do other stuff besides knitting and visiting family. I just wonder what good it does me...

**19. Sethedaughter's Weblog:** <http://sethedaughter.wordpress.com/2008/06/11/when-do-we-stop-being-girls-and-start-being-women/>

### **When do we stop being girls and start being women?**

June 11, 2008

One of the discussions coming out of the new novel *Wetlands*, written by Germany writer, Charlotte Roche is the oppression women face by dint of their gender. Roche notes that society, in a way that has become more extreme over the years, insists that women be "shaved, douched and sanitized." I believe this is part of the wide scale conspiracy to infantilize women, a conspiracy in which we women are showing ourselves to be complicit.

I have not read the book yet, but the NY Times review brought to my mind experiences I had with my mother when she was in the early stages of Alzheimer's. For the uninitiated, early stage Alzheimer's is a period of denial, both for the sufferer and the caregiver. Many times the victim of this disease is clearly not rational but expects to be treated as if she is. Despite evidence to the contrary, the caregiver, in this case me, buys into that fiction and becomes convinced the victim is deliberately being difficult.

Even before she became afflicted, my mom was determined to remain girlish. Early in her disease she became obsessed with hair on her body, and was determined to remove every bit. On some days she'd put Nair on her eyebrows, leaving it on for hours. Other days she'd become obsessed with her underarm hair. At first, I paid little attention. Although a little extreme, her concerns did not seem that unreasonable. Like every woman I knew of, she had always removed her underarm hair. And unless I was in one of my slovenly periods, brought on by depression, I also routinely removed my underarm hair. Even the fact of Nair on her eyebrows did not overly bother me. It had to do with youth or at least the illusion of youth. She had been removing them for years, replacing them with a dark eyebrow pencil.

What changed was the degree of her concern. Increasingly, it began to border on the abnormal.

"You can't leave the Nair on for that long," I began to say. "It'll burn your skin."

"It's gray," she'd say to me. "I have to get it off."

I'd continue to try to reason with her. The attempts always escalated into white hot anger and frustration. Eventually I'd signal my defeat with a "Do what you want."

After awhile her obsession turned to her pubic hair. "It's gray. It's gray down there. I need some Nair so I can take it off," she'd piteously cry for hours on end. "Take it off," she'd say to me. "Put some Nair on it."

To understand the mixture of horror and embarrassment I felt, you'd have to understand the Puritanical nature of my family. We were a family that tiptoed around any word that had to do with sexuality and intimacy, which in our minds were related to shame and sin. When I started my period, for instance, I was so ashamed of my body's betrayal, I waited until my mother went into the bathroom, then clasped my hands over my ears so I couldn't be a witness to my extreme shame, before saying "Mom, I've started my period."

Now my mother was openly talking to me about her private area and despite my overwhelming need to cover my ears with my hands and run screaming out of the house, I had to stay put and listen. I had to begin the process of growing up. It was something I wasn't ready to do. After all I too was concerned about the signs of gray that were threatening to take my girlishness away and although I had not yet reached the point of putting Nair on my pubic area, I had begun to tweeze the one or two gray hairs that had begun to take root "down there."

**20. The Stranger:** <http://www.thestranger.com/seattle/Content?oid=601462>

**Totally Fucking Limp: Can a Filthy, Filthy German Give Sex Writing a Kick in the Pants?**

by Paul Constant  
June 18, 2008

Germany—in fact, based on global book-sales lists, the entire world—is abuzz over a novel titled *Feuchtgebiete* (in English, *Wetlands*), by an author named Charlotte Roche. It's an erotic novel narrated by an 18-year-old woman with a propensity toward all things unhygienic. *Wetlands* will be published in America next year, but it's already made news, from the *New York Times* to Jezebel.com, Gawker Media's feminist blog.

Jezebel's Jessica Grose translated a few bits of *Wetlands* and the blog's commenters have been mortified by these brief, clumsy passages. The novel's narrator explains: "I've been experimenting for quite a while with unwashed pussy. My goal is for it to be easily and seductively smelled through pants, even through thick jeans or ski pants." She continues, "I use my own pussy juice the way others use their perfume bottles. I stick a finger in my pussy and then dab the slime behind my earlobes. It works wonders when you're kissing people on the cheek."

According to the *New York Times*, *Wetlands* begins with a picturesque description of the narrator's hemorrhoids and anal sex. And then, by any number of accounts, it continues with florid descriptions of every tangy fluid and smelly crease the human body has. The typical discussion online has to do with whether this book is indicative of a new anti-glamour-and-deodorant brand of feminism or simply poor bathing habits. There's another discussion that this book prompts, however, and it's something that publishing should take very seriously. Roche is quoted in the *Times* as saying "she wrote scenes specifically to build up arousal, only to bury them again in the repulsive." This means that *Wetlands* is probably the most innovative erotic book to be written in a very long time.

It's hard to come up with totals—Amazon .com and Barnes & Noble don't keep best-seller lists for erotica—but based on anecdotal evidence, one of the best-selling American erotic books of 2008 is *Boink: College Sex by the People Having It*. It's the book version of a magazine published by Boston University students, and part of the reason for its success might be that it's full of glossy, full-color photos of naked coeds. But *Boink* praises itself far too much; an editor's note says, "We felt that it was important to keep it real and to provide something for everyone; guys and girls, straight, gay, and bi," and while the book does have some gay prose in it, there is no man-on-man action in any of the photos. There are a few spreads with men by themselves on pristine beaches, and some other demure photos of men and women in sexual positions. And in true collegiate fashion, there are plenty of photos of classically attractive young women (without silicon parts, it's true, but still skinny, mostly long-haired, and incredibly femme) making out, but it seems to be framed in the traditional lesbian-until-graduation sort of masculine-approved bisexuality.

And when one gets bored with *Boink*'s pictures and starts reading the allegedly erotic stories, it becomes clear that this could just as easily be your parent's sex writing, poorly written and loaded with clichés. "We lay there for a while, panting, unable to move or speak," ends one encounter. One penis pounds like a "jackhammer" and in another story a woman is brought "to a shuddering climax." People done with sex "collapse in a sweaty pile." There is not one original thought in the entire book.

A sure sign that erotica isn't as sexy as it used to be is the fact that it's been co-opted by political causes. Stephen Elliott, the author of the fairly sexy short-story collection *My Girlfriend Comes to the City and Beats Me Up*, recently edited an anthology called *Sex for America*, subtitled *Politically Inspired Erotica*.

Some of the stories are intentionally unsexy—Jerry Stahl's story is about sodomizing Dick Cheney—but many of the others seem to aim for excitement and fall far from the mark. James Frey has a story about a man fucking a senator's wife that's as boring as most of the writing in *My Friend Leonard*: "He uses his lips, tongue, and fingers, uses them to give her a taste of herself. When he's done, he mounts her and gives her a taste of himself."

There are those who will say that erotica by its very definition should be the home of cliché, and that there are only so many different ways to have sex. Mathematically, they're correct, of course—there's a limited number of inputs, outputs, and limbs that can possibly be involved. But sex is always as different as the person you're having it with, and erotica should reflect that. The people who have pigeonholed themselves into only reading erotic fiction about, say, blond Australian yodel champions who are into S&M, water sports, and humiliation are only sexually cheating themselves.

And people who would call disgust and eroticism (à la *Wetlands*) an unnatural combination completely lack any sense of historical perspective. Revulsion is always the emotion that comes before a new erotic barrier is smashed, from the older generation's anger at cohabitating unmarried couples in the 1960s to the mindless Bible-waving at homosexuals today. There's always a wave of nausea in the public sphere before acceptance, possibly a reflection of the fact that virgins, no matter how hard they try to convey calm, are seldom blasé in the moments leading up to their first time. (I have a friend who, in blind terror, vomited on his first lover.)

Erotica used to be the home of literature's outlaws, from the Marquis DeSade to Georges Bataille, Anaïs Nin to Kathy Acker. Their writing ignited strange new hungers in the minds of their readers, and created an entirely new vocabulary for people to talk about their desires. Until Roche's book, it had been years since anyone brought something new to the field, and as much as people may be disgusted by the very idea of *Wetlands*, the book has been nothing less than an electric shock to the fleshy bits of a genre that was as dumbed down and overmarketed as its older sister, the romance novel.

recommended  
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