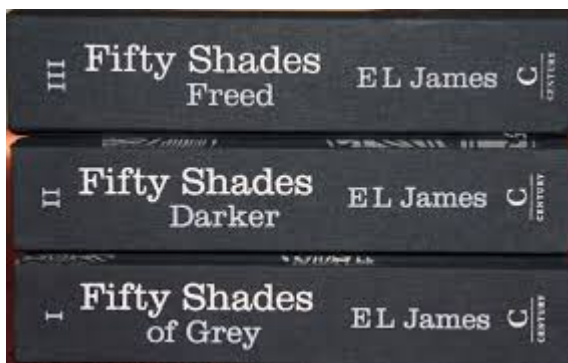


So Many Shades of Grey—Boomers, The Darker Side of Love, and Domestic Violence

This is a story about three dramas of domestic violence—in London, England, a beautiful villa in France, and Compton, California. One is a scandal, one is a romantic comedy, and one is a tragedy.

Boomers entered adolescence or young adulthood just in time for the [sexual revolution](#) , however much we individually may or may not have participated—free love, “wife-swapping,” orgies, birth control pills.



It's hard to remember the late 1950s and early 1960s in these days of [Fifty Shades of Grey](#), a mainstream bestseller about sexual submission and sadomasochism. Many Boomers may recall their excitement at surreptitiously scoring a copy of [The Story of O](#)—the predecessor to “Grey” published in France in 1954—[when S&M was illicit and shocking](#). In 1964, the comic and social commentator [Lenny Bruce was put on trial](#), convicted, and jailed on charges of obscenity for using vocabulary now easily accessible to any eight-year-old, and far outmatched by dozens of contemporary standup comedians. Bruce received a posthumous pardon in 2003—almost forty years later. Ah, the good old days.



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Boomers have lived the sea change, from clandestine petting in the backseats of cars to [twerking](#) as mass entertainment. But there is still the darker side of love—when relationships result in injury and pain.

On Sunday, June 9, 2013, an ever-alert paparazzo photographed Charles Saatchi, the wealthy advertising executive and patron of the arts, at lunch with his wife, celebrity cooking star [Nigella Lawson](#). Saatchi had his left hand around her throat, violently snapping her head backwards. The cameraman snapped photos for twenty-seven minutes while the abuse continued, uninterrupted and in public.

Across the English Channel, [Catherine Robbe-Grillet](#) was enjoying life with her fiftyish lover in a seventeenth-century French chateau. Robbe Grillet was the sexual submissive of her intellectual novelist husband, Alain Robbe-Grillet, “Pope” of the nouveau roman movement, and his publisher. Now in her eighties and a widow, she has become a famous [Dominatrix](#). She hosts erotic entertainments, and her companion and lover is the submissive.

Worlds away in Compton, California, [fifteen-year-old Deborah Peagler](#) was brutally beaten and forced into prostitution for six years by the man who molested her daughter. When her abuser was murdered by two Crips gang members, the justice system took his place.

At the time she was arrested, [battered women could not present domestic violence as evidence](#). [The award-winning documentary by Yoav Potash, Crime After Crime](#), documents how the legal system committed “crime after crime” to this remarkable woman, and the efforts of two lawyers working pro bono—Nadia Costa and Joshua Safran—to pursue justice.



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How do the stories end? Charles Saatchi and Nigella Lawson are now divorced. He was never legally charged or tried, and there are recent photos of his current woman friend crawling all over him in a London cab.

Cahterine Robbe-Grillet is living a golden old age in her chateau, whips and all, with an adoring lover almost thirty years younger. In 2022 she turned 92. We should all be so lucky.

Deborah Peagler spent her entire adult life in jail, where she became a model prisoner, worker, and mentor. Despite her exemplary record and wrongful imprisonment, it took her devoted lawyers seven years to free her. One official told lawyer Safran that if Peagler had been a white woman from an upscale neighborhood, she would never have been arrested or charged, let alone imprisoned. Peagler won ten months to live in freedom with her family before dying of lung cancer at age forty-nine.

Three stories—a man who gets away with domestic violence in public, a couple for whom pain is pleasure, and a victim of extreme violence who was abused by the justice system that is supposed to protect and defend her.

The [Me Too Movement](#) created a huge swell of publicity and legal action about sexual harassment, not to mention lawsuits and jail time for famous celebrities such as Bill Cosby and Harvey Weinstein. In 2002, President Biden signed into law the [Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act](#). It would seem to be progress, except that [violence against women](#) is still so prevalent, especially against women of color, trans women, and [Native American women](#). But sexual violence is democratic—[Chanel Miller, the rape victim](#) in the famous Stanford University [Brock Turner case](#)—is a highly educated Chinese-American artist brought up in privileged Palo Alto, assaulted on one of the nation's most prestigious

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university campuses.



Boomers have seen huge social changes and brought about social change—and no change at all. S&M is mainstream and fashionable, and it's no longer illegal to be a potty-mouth. But domestic violence, violence against women, and human sexual trafficking are everywhere. The pain that the victims, survivors, and families suffer is real, terrible, and absolutely not for fun or erotic thrills. The score is 10 for sexual freedom and free speech (especially when they are money-makers) and zero for social justice. "Sad"—as one well known perpetrator likes to say. Boomers, we still have work to do.

