

## Ragtime

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ot tonight dear. It's that **certain time**. How can I put it? I'm **ill, unwell, so, so-so**, (mid 19th–20thC), and **indisposed**. What's wrong? Why, I **fell off the roof today** (sometimes **out of a tree**). I'm suffering from the **domestic afflictions** (the **DAs**, 19th–20thC). If you're thinking about the **little house under the hill**, forget it! There'll be no **interior decorating** today; I'm **having the painter in** (early 20thC).

From the masculine perspective, the **gentlemen's pleasure garden is out of business, the gate is locked and the key is lost** (19thC). In case you still haven't gotten the message, there's **no roadmaking today, Leather-Lane and Main Avenue are in a state of no thoroughfare**, and the **road is up for repairs** (mid 19thC). Or as only men could put it, in their usual deft and subtle way, **her cherry is in sherry** (Swing musicians, 20thC), and her **snatch-box is decorated with roses** (US Navy, WWII). Computer geeks consider her **not user-friendly** (1990s).

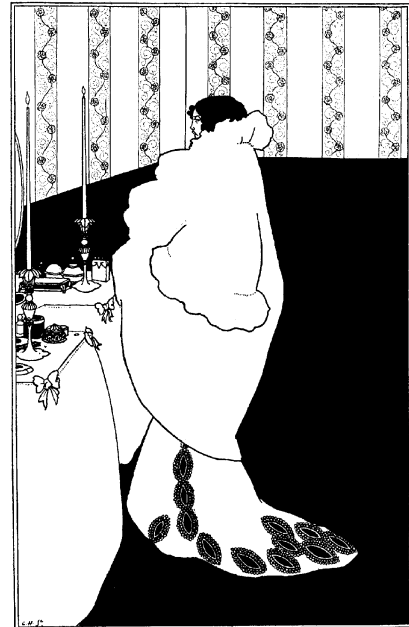
### *A Moon for the Misbegotten*

We're talking **menstruation** (c. 1382) here, a simple word meaning both "month" and "moon-change," the two being virtually synonymous. Americans once even spoke of **mooning** and **moontime** in that context. In France it's still **le moment de la lune**. Similar associations also exist in many non-western cultures. On the remote islands off the Northern tip of Australia, the natives believe that **menstruation** is caused by the moon, who came down to earth in the form of a man to seduce pubescent girls. In New Guinea, they refer to that time of month as **mun i killim**, "the moon of injury."<sup>1</sup>

The lunar cycle is the source of dozens of expression, one of the more obvious characteristics of **menstruation** being that it returns every thirty or so days.<sup>2</sup> In tribute to its punctuality, The French call the time, **les règles**, "the rules." This made for **the monthly**

*"There is nothing funny about the menstrual period...these are not suitable topics."*

—Jackie Gleason (on Norman Lear's decision to treat the issue in *All in the Family*)



*Women complain about premenstrual syndrome, but I think of it as the only time of the month I can be myself.*

—Roseanne Barr