

## THE CREATOR

What do the inventor of the polygraph, a disgraced Ivy League psychologist and the leader of a 1920s Boston sex cult have in common? They're all the same man, William Moulton Marston, originator of Wonder Woman.

**WILLIAM MOULTON MARSTON LIVED A LIFE** that sounds like an outrageous work of fiction. For decades, he quietly maintained a polyamorous relationship with his legal wife, attorney Elizabeth Holloway, and live-in mistress Olive Byrne, the niece of birth-control activist Margaret Sanger. The three ran a cult of female sexual power in the 1920s, and rumors about their unusual arrangement eventually saw him effectively blacklisted from a career in academia, despite the fact that he held three degrees from Harvard and during his early years on campus had invented the lie detector.

So how did an Ivy League-educated feminist huckster with a gift for PR and an interest in S&M dream up one of the greatest heroes of all time? Precisely by channeling his predilections and radical gender philosophy into his Amazon ideal.

Author Jill Lepore chronicled Marston's incredible biography in her acclaimed 2014 study *The Secret History of Wonder Woman*. Although Diana of Paradise Island was Marston's brainchild, she was informed by his suffragist confidantes—in ways large and small. Wonder Woman throwing off the shackles of her oppressors was akin to her breaking the chains of patriarchy (and also taking bondage imagery mainstream). Her unflinching strength represented Marston's belief that women were, in fact, stronger in most respects than men. And those bracelets she used to deflect bullets—they were inspired by the cuffs that Olive Byrne wore on her wrists.

In the following excerpt from Lepore's book, Marston is masterminding a stunt to reveal himself as Wonder Woman's creator, having first written the character under the pseudonym Charles Moulton. A key accomplice? Olive Byrne.





**BOOK  
EXCERPT**

William Moulton Marston (center) and family. On far right, Elizabeth Holloway Marston (a Mount Holyoke and Radcliffe graduate, his legal wife and the mother of two of his children); in white, Olive Byrne (a Tufts and Columbia graduate, former student of Marston's, the other wife in his and Holloway's secret polyamorous marriage and the mother of his other two children).