SEXUAL PERVERSIONS, 1670–1890

Edited by Julie Peakman

Sexual Perversions, 1670–1890

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Sexual Perversions, 1670–1890

Edited By

Julie Peakman
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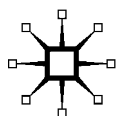

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Preface

Books about sexual perversion usually come within the realms of the theorizing of philosophers, psychologists or psychiatrists. Rarely do we see the topic of sexual perversion covered in history outside this remit – as a cultural and literary history. As a consequence, most of that which has been written on sexual perversion has remained the preserve of the sexologists and post-sexologists. Although there has been a development over the last few decades of the history of sexuality (both hetero and homo) and an emergence of occasional articles of 'non-normative' sexual practices and sexualities, the latter has been sporadic. A lacuna in detailed studies in the area of historical studies of sexual perversion still exists. Where studies have been made, they tend to stand within the context of history of sexuality overall rather than specifically examining sexual perversions in history.

The intention of this book is therefore to provide the reader with a glimpse into the history of sexual perversions and diversions pre-sexology to see where sexual perversion can be found prior to its categorization by the sexologists. We use the term sexual perversion nowadays to describe all sorts of sexual behaviour we consider deviant, but can we apply it to the period 1670–1890 at all? Semantically, we enter a minefield of historical denials and oppositions, leaving ourselves open to accusations of anachronism; some may argue that the phrase 'sexual perversion' was not used during the period under investigation; while others might posit that society did not have a concept of 'sexual perversion' *per se*; or that although the term 'perversion' was extant, it was not used in the manner of current day usage. This book will attempt to eschew some of those ideas and instead propose that the notion of sexual perversion was already circulating in the period under discussion, albeit in a different form from that of today.

The book will examine fetishism, cross-dressing, 'effeminate' men and 'masculinized' women, sodomy, tribadism, necrophilia, rape, paedophilia, flagellation and sado-masochism (some of these terms recognizably anachronisms), as well as sex amongst the clergy, and asks questions about how these sexual inclinations were viewed at a particular time in history. The book takes an interdisciplinary approach and covers the areas of theatre, literature, religion, and science, incorporating tradition, culture, colonialism and the social and sexual construction of images of women and men. It introduces new feminist scholars to the public, as well as new essays by more established ones, working in the arena of the history of sexuality. The book is for intelligent general readers as well as scholars interested in questions about sexuality, literature, and British culture.

In the introduction, Part I, *What is Sexual Perversion?* I investigate the broad range of theoretical application to the term and problems arising from its consideration for the period 1670–1890. I analyse the general debates which have emerged around sexual perversion, how they are problematic in terms of sense, terminology, catagorization and descriptions of certain behaviours. How can such a wide ranging subject matter be pinned down and applied to specific sexual practices and why?

Part II of the introduction is intended as a brief overview, an introduction to the subject of sexual perversion in the time period under observation. Because of its multifarious nature, within such short a space, I concentrate more specifically on the types of 'perversion' discussed elsewhere in this book. Onanism, auto-asphyxiation, urophilia, copraphilia and certain others perceived deviant acts and desires will be left for another time. Various understandings of perversion as dictated by religion, the law and morality are examined, and an assessment made of how pornography often sought to overturn this perception of normality, and acted to distort the delineations imposed upon behaviour in the real world. Some practices were perceived as deviant but not perverse, some seen as merely a bit odd.

The book is not, however, just about sexual perversion *per se* but also about perverting forms, and the construction of the sexually perverse in culture. In Chapter 2, Becky McLaughlin discusses the potential of theatre to pervert. Perversity in the theatre has always had a different meaning from perversity in real life. In 1958, Jean Genet wrote a letter which explained his intention in the creation of the 'Theatre of the Perverse', 'I would thus hope to attain the abolition of characters....and the advancement of symbols which are primarily indicative...to attain that by which the characters become on stage no more than the metaphors of what they would represent....'[1] This could perhaps be applied to George Etherege's play and his characters in *The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676) as in it, he creates parodies of characters which become metaphors for other things, and nothing is the way its seems – all is illusionary and intangible. The play was immensely popular in its day, not least because the characters represented notorious people; the effeminate Fopling Flutter was based on Beau Hewit who was known for dining out and managing splendid balls at the bath-rooms at Bath; Dorimant was John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester; Medley was either Etherege himself or the dramatist Charles Sedley.[2]

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[1]Thomas B. Markus, 'Jean Genet. Theatre of the Perverse', *Educational Theatre Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (October 1962), pp. 209–14.

[2]Wilmot was a friend of Etherege, so close in fact, that they each had a daughter by the same woman, actress Elizabeth Barry.

Intimations about sodomy in such effeminized men as Sir Fopling Flutter were more widely disseminated than just the theatre as seen in Marilyn Morris's Chapter 3 on Lord Hervey. His feminine counterpart was seen in the masculinization of women such as cross-dresser Charlotte Charke. As Morris discusses, there is some difficulty in the placing of people's sexual orientation in the past, and they frequently refused to be easily pigeon-holed. Jennifer Frangos in Chapter 4 examines the individual cross-dressing identity of sapphists within the realm of an entire community as seen in Mrs Delarivier Manley's coterie of Cabalists in *The New Atalantis* (1709). All three chapters point to the possibilities of creating or constructing different types of sexualities for men and women in opposition to the heterosexual 'ideal'.

Even the heterosexual 'ideal' femininity could be (and was) perverted in corrupted images of womanhood as seen in Jenny Skipp's discussion in Chapter 5, a corruption which resulted in a 'perversion' of the female form. The hostile male gaze was responsible for creating this negative view of the sexual woman but also for rendering the 'ideal' female submissive. The whole area of submissiveness and assertiveness is explored in the subject of rape in Chapter 6 by Jennie Mills. She investigates how, far from being seen as a perversion, rape was actually normalized through already extant imagery of violent seduction. Nor was the desire for young girls, which is considered an outright perversion nowadays, considered in the same way in the past where it was filtered through a conception of normative sex with defloration of young girls, a prevalent imagery of the libertine's fertile imagination. The ultimate submissive female was encapsulated in the desire for female dead bodies in necrophilia. In Chapter 7 on the Necrogaze, Rebecca May pushes the notion of the submissive female yet further, taking us into the world of science and dead bodies, to an extreme form of female submissiveness.

In Chapter 8, Diana Peschier takes up an exploration of religious perversion and how the British Protestant viewed the Catholic *religieuses*. Attacks directed on their religion mutated to incorporate accusations of sexual aberrations seen in depictions of lascivious monks and nuns. Convents, monasteries and the Catholic confessional all became sites for erotic subtexts, some of which revelled in graphic scenes of flagellation and sado-masochism. Peschier shows how priests' seduction of the female penitent in anti-Catholic rhetoric not only became a means of attack on Catholics, but developed into semi-pornographic literature intended to titillate readers.

The exploration of the construction of sexuality is continued by Pashmina Murthy in Chapter 9 and Sandra Adams in Chapter 10 who take up the gaze of the British upon Indians and Chinese respectively. In India, the creation of the feminized Bengali man allowed for the British officer to be positioned in a place of superiority, a true 'manly man', while the wild dangerously

erotic Indian female would threaten the British memsahib. In China, the development of footbinding, while considered very much part of Chinese female sexuality by the Chinese, was not always considered a sexual fetish by them, although the British considered it perverse and foot fetishism would be declared a sexual perversion by sexologists.

Together these essays show how slowly perceptions of perversions changed during this period. This book is very much a starting point to the exploration of sexual perversion in the past, pre-sexology, and no doubt future scholars can add and nuance the arena. It is not within the scope of this book to offer a panascopic view of perversions but it concentrates on presenting a few moments in history and highlighting certain aspects of certain activities at particular times.

Julie Peakman

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Contributors

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1
Sexual Perversion in History: An Introduction

Julie Peakman

I What is Sexual Perversion?

Sexual perversion as an activity or behaviour has been given definite, albeit, changing definitions throughout history, while simultaneously being seen as something fluid and uncontainable. It also has been seen as a social construction dependent on temporality and geography. Yet, seemingly contrarily, it also has been defined as inherent in nature, as essentially bound up with the individual. Sexual perversion, then, is made up of a complex interweaving of ideas and beliefs in history.

The watershed for this book can be seen to be the arrival of the late nineteenth-century sexologists, a group of sex researchers who were among the first to try and categorize sexual perversion in a 'scientific' way. Although this book concentrates on the period pre-sexology, sexology itself is a pertinent starting point since we gain most of our current understanding of sexual perversion from its categorizations. It should be pointed out, that although the sexologists were writing during the second half of the nineteenth century, it is doubtful they had a wide influence on the understanding of sexual perversion during the period under our examination, either in Britain or outside their immediate academic sphere.[1]

French psychologist Alfred Binet introduced the concept of fetishism (which he described as the sexual admiration of inanimate objects) around the same time Austro-German sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing surfaced.

[1]For this reason, this is not the place for a huge debate about sexology. There are experts who have written about the subject elsewhere. For a more complete overview of the labelling of sexual perversions in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see 'Classifying and Explaining Perversion', Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature. Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry and the Making of Modern Sexuality* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 43–55; and Gert Hekma, 'Sexual Perversions' in Julie Peakman and Tom Laqueur (eds), *A Cultural History of Sexuality*, Vol. 6 (Oxford, Berg, forthcoming).

Krafft-Ebing was the most comprehensive writer on sexual anomalies in his *Psychopathia Sexualis* (published in 1886 in German, in 1892 in English) and it was he who was responsible for labelling all the perversions – sadism, masochism, fetishism, exhibitionism, pederasty, bestiality, nymphomania, flagellation, homosexuality, lesbian love, necrophilia, incest and so on. His study included homosexuality but he had been preceded by other sexologists such as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and Magnus Hirschfeld who had focused their minds on that subject. Ulrich's impact came in his twelve essays on *Research on the Riddle of Male-Male Love* written between 1864 and 1879 in which he coined the phrase 'urning' for men desiring other men. Hirschfeld's pamphlet 'Sappho and Socrates' (1896) also explored homosexual love, his theory was much the same as Ulrich's. Both men believed that homosexuality was inherent, and both campaigned against the criminalization of homosexuals. However, some of these early pioneers, including Krafft-Ebing, although suggesting toleration, also saw the need for 'treatment' of homosexuals, and continued to see their behaviour as deviating from a commonly accepted idea of normality.

Havelock Ellis was another ground-breaker with his collection *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1897–1928), but these studies were still regarded with some hostility. In the series, British-born Ellis explains sadism, masochism, auto-eroticism, Eonism (cross-dressing, the word taken from the famous eighteenth-century cross-dresser Chevalier D'Eon), and undinism (urinating and sex). *Sexual Inversion* (1897), the first volume in the collection, was written with John Addington Symonds and attempted to explain same-sex love. The first edition came out in German, and then in English in 1897 under joint names but was recalled by Symonds's family, unwilling to allow the besmirching of his name. The second edition which came out without Symonds's name in 1898 was proscribed as a work of obscene libel.[2] Because of the suppression of these works, it is unlikely that they had any impact on identification or categorization of 'perversions' in Britain until the twentieth century at the earliest. Indeed, Ellis's work was not available for sale in Britain until 1936.[3]

With the formation of British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology in 1913, psychology was placed firmly on the agenda in an attempt to discuss 'perversions' in a more open way. Meanwhile, Sigmund Freud took sexology in a different direction and developed the psycho-analytical school of

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[2]OED.

[3]See Sean Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain, 1861–1913* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2005), pp. 138–51. Brady contends, 'Nearly all developments in early sexology were Continental achievements', p. 10. My thanks to Sean, Lesley Hall, Gert Hekma and Chiara Beccalossi for their comments on sexology.

psychology to explain sexual behaviour, seeing the seed of adult sexual desires in childhood experiences. He defined unconscious thoughts in notions about female hysteria, the Oedipal complex and Freudian slips in his *Studies of Hysteria* (1895), *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901). In his examination of perversions, Freud's theory sanctioned Krafft-Ebing's aberrations but placed them in groups – in one group, he placed the inverts, and those who commit bestiality and paedophilia; in another he placed fetishists, voyeurs, exhibitionist, sadists and masochists, and those fixations not caught up with the genital areas or the 'preliminary' aim – the aim being 'the union of the genitals in the act known as copulation. He defined the phenomenon:

> Perversions are sexual activities which either a) extend, in an anatomical sense, beyond the regions of the body that are designed for sexual union, or b) linger over the intermediate relations to the sexual object which should normally be traversed rapidly on the path towards the final sexual aim'.[4]

His definition implies a concept of 'normal' sexuality, this normality revolving around heterosexual intercourse between men and women. Yet widespread knowledge of sexology, psychology and psychiatry in Britain, did not take off until much later, and definitions of sexual perversions had not sunk firmly into popular culture until a couple of decades into the twentieth century.

By the 1960s and '70s, philosophers were attempting all-encompassing definitions of sexual perversion. These have proved inadequate as they fail to take into account the mutability of the concept over time. Thomas Nagel in his discussion on sexual perversions outlines three connected areas:

> First, if there are any sexual perversions, they will have to be sexual desires or practices that can be plausibly described as in some sense unnatural, though the explanation of this natural/unnatural distinction is of course the main problem. Second, certain practices will be perversions if anything is, such as shoe fetishism, bestiality, and sadism; other practices, such as unadorned sexual intercourse, will not be; about still

[4]Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* in *the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London, Hogarth Press, 1953), pp. 149–50.

> others there is controversy. Third, if there are perversions, they will be unnatural sexual *inclination* rather than merely unnatural practices adopted not from inclination but for other reasons.[5]

All three assumptions can be undermined or dismissed. In the first (perversions as meaning unnatural), historically there *is* an argument for unnaturalness as a definition in history as I shall show in the following chapter. However, what Nagel is doing here is *assuming* an ahistorical natural aversion to certain practices. Yet there have been arguments by sexologists and psychiatrists that the very fact that we feel such desires means that these feelings must be natural. The second and third claims have to be dismissed outright; in the second Nagel is again making the assumption that we all hold the same understanding – that shoe fetishism, bestiality and sadism are naturally considered perversion, which is simply not true; and his third, he is asserting that, for a perversion to exist, it has to be based on a biological urge rather than on possible influences of nurture or experience which informs a person's preference; this is without foundation. Rather the opposite has been found, that some sexual preferences which might be considered abnormal, have been caused by external influences. The seeds of these understandings can be seen in Sigmund Freud's investigations into childhood experiences connecting them to adult behaviour. A further criticism of Nagel is that he argues against any connection between sex and reproduction as it has 'no bearing on sexual perversion'. As we can see in this book, this is patently not true. Indeed, if anything, the opposite is true – acts considered sexually perverted were nearly always connected to those acts which do not result in procreation.

In another philosophical interpretation, Sara Ruddick has seen perversion as equated with unnaturalness. In this case 'natural' may be used synonymously with 'usual' or 'ordinary', in which case perversion would appear to be entirely culturally relative. She argued that typically, by 'unnatural', we mean not just 'unusual, but something more like contrary to nature'. Donald Levy broadened the debate when he asked what sexual practices can be defined as perverted? '(1) First of all, there are the various kinds of homosexuality; (2) next, the several forms of sadism and masochism; (3) then, exhibitionism, voyeurism, and the use of body parts (i.e. other than the genital parts) (4) fetishism, transvestism, and possibly kleptomania; (5) bestiality; and

[5]Thomas Nagel, 'Sexual Perversion' *The Journals of Philosophy*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (16 Jan., 1969), pp. 5–17.

(6) finally, necrophilia and paedophilia'.[6] We can immediately see how dated some of these definitions are as nowadays fewer people would consider homosexuality a sexual perversion. Some of the notions on naturalness and unnaturalness do adhere to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century notions of perversion but we can see just how constructed concepts of both sexual deviance and sexual perversions really are, and how they vary in time. Even within the same era, there is a lack of agreement around the term, as Alan Soble has more recently summed up, 'Masturbation, homosexual sex, anal sex, oral sex, voyeurism, exhibitionism, fetishism, sadism, masochism, transvestism, bestiality, necrophilia, coprophilia, and urophilia have all been thought perverse, but there is no philosophical or scientific consensus about the nature, origins, or even the genuine existence of sexual perversion.'[7]

One needs only to flick through the British Library catalogue under the term 'sexual perversion' to find an array of books on the subject, many rigorously intellectual in their examination of the topic, but nearly all of them are from the psychoanalytical or psychological perspective, and none from a historical perspective pre-sexology.[8] How useful these definitions are to the study of sexual perversions before their 'invention' has been a matter of contention.

Arguments about what exactly makes up perversity have oscillated on a dichotomy between the individual and society – whether perversity is an individual act as essentialists claim, or is it a 'creation' as a form of power control as social constructionists claim. It has been examined as both an inherent and personal characteristic and, in its broader more political context, as a means by which those in power constrain an unwieldy segment of the population. French philosopher and self-proclaimed historian Michel Foucault had been one of those attempting to introduce the theory of power as an explanation of the concept of perversion. He argued that perversion did not exist until the sexologists came along and labelled them as

[6]Sara Ruddick, 'Better Sex' in Robert B. Baker and Frederick A. Elliston (eds), *Philosophy and Sex* (Buffalo, NY, Prometheus, 1975), pp. 83–104; Robert Gray, 'Sex and Sexual Perversion' *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (April, 1978), pp. 189, 199; Donald Levy 'Perversion and the Unnatural as Moral Categories', *Ethics,* Vol. 90, No. 2 (1 Jan, 1980), pp. 191–202. Some of these have been reprinted in Alan Soble (ed.), *A Philosophy of Sex. Contemporary Readings* (NJ, Rowman & Littlefield, 1980: reprinted 2002). These essays still seem to be the most recent philosophical explorations of sexual perversion, apart from those mentioned below.

[7]Alan Soble, 'Sexual Perversion' *Sex from Plato to Paglia. A Philosophical Encyclopaedia*, 2 Vols (Greenwood Press, 2006), pp. 767–77.

[8]Dany Nobus & Lisa Downing (eds), *Perversion*: Psychoanalytic Perspectives/ Perspectives on Psychoanalysis (London & NY, Karnac Books, 2006); Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (London, Penguin, 1995); Elizabeth A. Grosz*, Space, Time and Perversion* (London, Routledge, 1995).

such – it was a figment made up from the discourse of the eighteenth century and consolidated in the nineteenth with the emergence of sexology and psychiatry. The theories around sexuality and its invention (including the notion of perversion) were based around control and power reflected in repressive laws.[9] For Foucault, there was no essentialist or inherent perversion, but its meaning was derived from the transgression of established mechanisms of so-called normalization put in place by those in power.

Criticism has been thrown at Foucault's theories on sexuality for various reasons.[10] He has been attacked for producing a model which was deterministic, offering a passive model of the body incapable of resisting power.[11] The subject has no agency but is a fiction constructed by some abstract power. Yet the construct of the sexual self is intrinsic to historians of sexuality as much as the culture around it – the how, why and when of how a sexual self came about and how it operates is what we are interested in. Yet Foucault fails to take into account the historical processes through which sex is produced in self. As Carolyn Dean asks, 'How can historians comprehend a self-professed historian who does not even bother to use representative, empirically sound data?'[12] Some historians find it difficult to accept Foucault's ideas on many levels, not least because he never included women in his equations, or considered the application of gender to his own work. Furthermore, although Foucault cites pornography as an example of the overlapping of power and pleasure in the deployment of sex, as Lynn Hunt points out, he says remarkably little about the subject.[13] We might imagine, as pornography developed as a major power house of sexual expression in the eighteenth century, he might have had more to say about it.

Hunt sensibly turned Foucault's theories around, suggesting (in real historical terms, rather than the ethereal abstract one of Foucault) that the modern sexual self emerged followed by the technologies constructed to discipline it, rather than the other way round. Certainly, in tracing the modern sexual body, we can see how sex was construed in everything within eighteenth-century pornography – in science, medicine, religion, fictional

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[9]Michel Foucault, *A History of Sexuality. An Introduction* ((London, Penguin, 1976), p. 34.

[10]For example, see Hoy and Michael Walzer in David Cozens Hoy (ed.), *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (London, Blackwell, 1986), pp. 1–12, 51–68.

[11]Nick J. Fox, 'Foucault, Foucauldians and Sociology', *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 39, No. 49, Sept, 1998, pp. 415–33.

[12]Carolyn J. Dean, 'The Productive Hypothesis: Foucault, Gender, and the History of Sexuality', *History and Theory*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Oct., 1994), pp. 271–96.

[13]Lynn Hunt, 'Foucault's Subject in *The History of Sexuality*' in Domna C. Stanton, *Discourses of Sexuality. From Aristotle to Aids* (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 78–9.

utopias and real explorations of the world.[14] Again, against Foucault, we can argue that if we look at those behind the abstract power which he puts forward as responsible for the creation of laws, those who were the real arbitrators of sexual licence/freedom during the eighteenth century were the aristocracy, the very class which harboured that most transgressive of sexual groups, the libertines. If they were responsible for exercising control and making laws, why would they make controls that they so wanted to transgress themselves?

So, does the law necessarily operate in conjunction with an abject power which wishes to deny its people means of enjoyment? As James Penney points out in his book, *The World of Perversion*, power cannot be purely abstract as Foucault suggests but has to be embodied in a power group.[15] It follows that if we are to believe that the law is created by those with the most power, we have to assume that they are not themselves sexually interested in the subject of their control. In the case of early modern period for example, we would have to assume that the Church Fathers who were following church law were simply not attracted to sodomitical behaviour but found it abhorrent. This is far from the case as we have seen from various studies on homosexuality in the Church.[16] The subjective and active interest in sodomy in cases of certain networks within the Church, as in those cases exposed in the Inquisition of sodomitical coteries, proves that not all church authorities acted collectively, or were necessarily in favour of the law of the Church.[17]

In his examination of the similarities and differences between Freud's theory of sexual morality and Foucault's theory on power and their production of normal and abnormal sexualities, Dollimore suggests that perversion can be seen as a transgression against the dominant force while also being part of its inconsistencies. In this sense, perversion acts as an inverse barometer pointing out the inconsistencies of the established norm, a sort of 'disruptive power' in which non-reproductive sex undermines the norm.[18]

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[14]Julie Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books: The Development of Pornography in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, Palgrave, 2004).

[15]James Penney, *The World of Perversion: Psychoanalysis and the Impossible Absolute of Desire* (Albany, State University of NY Press, 2006), pp. 9–10.

[16]There are countless cases studies on sodomy within the church. For some examples, see John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1981).

[17]Jordan points out that the Spanish Inquisition was reluctant to place sodomy on their list of crimes even after the papal assignment as such in 1451. Once implemented, clergy were among many of those found guilty and executed for the crime; Mark D. Jordan, *The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 126.

[18]Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence. Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 181.

But it seems that some acts were undertaken through opportunity and historically, environment and its change plays an important part. While Foucault's theory might be able to suggest that it was 'power' that defined a certain sexual act as 'abnormal', it would be unable to explain why an individual might decide to bugger a cow rather than any other activity. It might be able to explain why this act would be seen as abnormal or a perversion at any one point in time, but not why the individual performed the act in the first place, an act which seems to be a very individual and personal desire, as well as an opportunistic one.

It is the question of why a person might decide on any particular act which fascinates the historian. Why did some of these activities diminish over time (bestiality diminished when rural activities shifted to urban living), or expand (auto asphyxiation has become more widespread today as the word passed around of its link to sexual stimulation) – this is what really broadens our understanding about sex.

Sex tends to find its outlets through its social surroundings and opportunities – bestiality occurs more in rural places than in towns, flagellation occurs where discipline had been inflicted in the past, male sodomy occurs in prisons and at sea, and incest occurs between family members who live in close proximity. How they are interpreted is another matter. Bestiality, for example, was considered to be witchcraft in seventeenth-century Sweden; flagellation was seen as a medical treatment for impotence so an acceptable means of foreplay; incest was seen as a common result of overcrowding in eighteenth-century London, and so on. As the world changes, individual actions change and with it, patterns of sexual behaviour. At some point in history, there comes a pivotal time seen in a sort of 'acceptability principle', when a deviant act has been undertaken by enough people for it to become seen as 'normal'. Homosexuality is a case in point as seen in certain countries in the West.

With the coming of the queer theorists, sexual perversions became no more than labels of non-normative behaviour by which the persons enacting them might be criminalized or victimized. As James Penney points out, 'queer theory has nonetheless virtually unanimously endorsed the historical reduction of perversion to normative instantations of power.'[19] But without considering the individual action in one-off acts in the past, we are unable to understand how some non-normative behaviours increase in numbers, and acceptability, to become the norm; or *vice versa*. Why does this paradigm shift occur? Homosexuality, considered criminal until only a few decades ago, is now accepted as normal by many and the numbers of visible homosexuals (as opposed to those 'hidden' in history) have substan-

[19]Penney, pp. 1–2.

tially increased, with same-sex marriages acceptable in some countries. So how many people does it take to be doing a previously consider 'perverted act' for it to be considered normal?

Historians rarely now go forth into the history of sexuality or any other field of history, thinking they can unearth the past through the lens of the present. Most have learnt from past anthropological interaction that the best way to understand a culture is to immerse oneself in it and understand it from within. From this standpoint, sexual perversion is a social construction, but this entirely submerges the natural instinct or inherent desires of any individual, and we are back in Foucault's territory. Similar problems have emerged from the twentieth-century philosophers' definitions, and the search for an indomitable truth. But the truth in history is not necessarily always retrospective. For a clearer idea of sexual perversion at the time, we need to examine the influences around its perceptions from the time we are examining – perversion is not abstract but rooted in its era. We must look at individual as well as societal perspectives.

In order to explore perversion, we therefore have to look back to its original conceptions, starting with the theologians, the makers and controllers of morality (be they the Church, the state or the community) and the controls from which they emerged. But we also need to look at individual acts. In retracing our steps, it becomes clear that some of the loftier promulgations about what made up sexual deviancy did not always filter down to the masses, nor did those individuals committing such perceived acts bother to heed them. What becomes evident is a persistence of theories of 'unnaturalness', and what constitutes abnormal sexual behaviour, rather than any significant changes within this period.

II Sexual Perversion Pre-Sexology[20]

In 1677, a married woman from Cripplegate thought to be between thirty and forty was sentenced to death for her crime. According to the summary of her case brought before the Old Bailey,

> not the fear of God before her eyes, *nor regarding the order of Nature*, on the 23rd of June last, to the disgrace of all womankind, did commit Buggery with a certain Mungril Dog, and wickedly, divellishly, and *against nature* had venereal and Carnal copulation with him.

Through several holes in the wall between her house and next door, her neighbours had been able to see her in acts of 'uncleanliness'. The Dog was

[20]My thanks to Jad Adams, Sean Brady, Gert Hekma, Rictor Norton, and Marilyn Morris for their reading of this part of the introduction and their helpful suggestions.

brought before the Prisoner, and 'owned her by wagging his tail, and making motions as it were to kiss her, which 'twas sworn she did do when she made that horrid use of him.'[21] Only a few such bestiality cases were recorded in England in the seventeenth[22] and eighteenth centuries,[23] but bestiality was always condemned as a heinous sin against nature. It was also considered a crime in the eyes of the law.

So why were such cases defined as 'against nature', and why were they considered criminal? After all the perpetrator was not hurting anybody and, in this case at least, the dog seemed quite happy. Yet the legal system was only one of the aspects in the wider framework which made up sexual perversion in the early modern world. It emerged from a complicated interwoven understanding of nature, theology, the understanding of man's evil and the concept of sin. Within this structure, people's perception of the world at large was based around their comprehension of the social order of things – the natural order of the world was seen to be ordained by God and any act which upset this order was not merely deemed 'unnatural', but seen to be against God's will. Disruption to that social order was regarded with suspicion and dealt with either by the Church, the State or the Community. In other words, in England during the early modern period, the boundaries of acceptable sexual behaviour were set by religion, the law and tradition, the latter two aspects emanating from the rigid framework of the first. Outside of these boundaries, certain sexual behaviours or acts were deemed to be unnatural, and these acts made for 'perversion'.

The discussion on normative versus non-normative sexuality has been approached from many angles, usually from the premise that 'non-normal' has to emerge from its' opposite, the 'normal', and that this normal is nearly always taken to be heterosexuality.[24] But can this observation be applied historically? Can sexual acts of behaviour considered perversions now be taken to be perversions in the past? The boundaries of acceptability in society have changed over time, as we can see in our attitudes towards homosexuality. The acceptability of male-on-male sex has shifted from being tolerated in Ancient Greece, to outlawed in the early modern period, to being acceptable again in current day Britain. Although much ground has been covered in the study of homosexuality in current scholarship, dis-

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[21]*Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 26th December 2008) 11 July 1677 (t16770711-1).

[22]Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (London, Allen Lane, 1983).

[23]See www.oldbaileyon-line.org for examples.

[24]For arguments on this see Judith Butler*, Gender Trouble, Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London, Routledge, 1990); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, University of California, 1990); Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence. Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991); David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* (London, Routledge, 1990).

cussions on sexual perversity have not abounded in academia and as a subject, it is still unchartered territory. How far the understanding of the relationships between perversion and non-perversion was different from our current thinking varies depending on the type of perversion involved, although our studies also find on-going similarities.

A finite definition of sexual perversion has proved near impossible, although some nineteenth-century sexologists and twentieth-century philosophers have tried.[25] However, most of these definitions are of little relevance in connection with the period under discussion, as they fail to take account of the mutability of the concept, and the behaviours considered perverted in the twenty-first century are not necessarily the same as those so defined previously. If we are to understand sexual behaviour in history, it has to be on its own terms. How did the ordinary person differentiate between those sorts of sexual behaviour considered perversions in the early modern period, and those which were not? If we are to understand sexual perversion in the world of pre-sexology, we need to turn to contemporaneous influences for an explanation.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary 'perversion' technically meant 'The actions of perverting or condition of being perverted, turning the wrong way; turning aside from truth or right; diversion to an improper use; corruption, distortion'. Yet there was also a conception of perversion as 'evil' or incorrect, a stray from religion or nature, notably in early modern Britain. Wycliffe spoke of 'perversion of soule' as early as 1388: Caxton spoke of 'perverse' in 1484 meaning wickedness calling it, 'The deception and flatterye of the perverse and evyile folke'. More specifically, it can be applied in religious terms as 'change to error in religious belief (opposite of conversion)', as seen in its application to the Protestants who became 'perverted' or converted to the Catholic faith. This was then reflected in Protestant attacks on the 'perverse' sexual behaviour of the Catholic nuns and priests. Apart from the religious sense, although closely connected with it, there was also a sense of perverse in nature. Clock-maker William Derham described the workings of nature in his *Physico-Theology, Or a Demonstration of the being and attributes of God from his works of creation, 1711–1712* (1713): God had created nature and everything in the universe had a natural order to it. A perversion of nature would mean a disruption or inversion of this perceived natural hierarchy. In the natural order of things, men were thought superior to women, and as such, were natural rulers. They were thought better equipped to make decisions therefore women should obey them. Yet women were considered naturally unruly, and in need of discipline by their husbands. Exceptions to this rule were found in

[25]See Introduction, Part I.

the topsy-turvy world of theatre where unruly effeminate men and cross-dressing women could be found, as seen in Chapter 2 and 3 (also see below on Topsy-Turvy World of Dress).[26]

The origins of the norms of the eighteenth century belonged to the realms of religious doctrine which had laid down the rules over two thousand years previously.[27] Religion was one of the main definers of 'good' and 'bad' behaviour, reinforced by communities under the guise of 'morality', and sanctioned by first the church courts, and then the magistrates' courts. Sex was considered licit only between a man and a woman within the realms of marriage – and then too, for procreative purposes only. Although of course, not everyone adhered to this practice, this was the basic rule of permissible sex. All abnormal sex took place outside these confines, although not all the sexual acts outside of the rule were deemed perverted.

Understandings of perversion were closely bound up with the Bible and what it deemed unnatural or against God, this in turn producing social morality and the law, both methods of control. Although Foucault has been widely criticized in his survey of sexuality in history,[28] he at least recognized that perversion from the fourteenth century onwards served to legislate moral correctness through the concept of sin and the confessional. Although the use of the confessional did not apply in the late seventeenth and eighteenth-century Protestant Britain, the Judeo-Christian ethic and the concept of sin were deeply engrained. Originally, the Bible had been responsible for determining which crimes were unnatural, and theologians were therefore in charge of deciding what was perverse sexual behaviour. Same-sex behaviour was particularly castigated, as follows:

> *Leviticus 20:13 If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.*
> *Romans 1:26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:*
> *Romans 1:27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the*

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[26]Similar was to be found in French Culture, see Natalie Zemon Davies, 'Women on Top', *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, Sanford University Press, 1965), pp. 124–51, p. 136.

[27]John Boswell has argued that negative views on homosexuality did not emerge until the thirteenth century which means that the influences of the Judeo-Christian ethic are not constant throughout the whole of the period. This may well be true of other behaviours thought of as deviant over the last 2000 years but, as yet, not enough work has been undertaken in this area. John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1980).

[28]See Introduction, Part I.

> *woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly…*

There *was*, therefore, a definite understanding of sexual behaviour pre-sexology which was considered either deviant or 'abnormal'. This behaviour was most commonly seen as that which was 'against nature'.[29]

As Thomas Laqueur has identified, 'perverted sex was the sign of perverted social relations.'[30] The morality of the immediate community would therefore act to induce shame on people deviating from what was considered unnatural or sinful behaviour and played a major role in the control of an individual's behaviour. The community would also be a factor in delineating the 'good' sexual behaviour from the 'bad' and this would be manifested in a communal form of social control such as sexual slander, rough music and 'skimmington rides'.[31] The unnaturalness of an act was based on the extent of how far it deviated from procreative sex between man and wife. The concept of what was natural or unnatural was not only part of the biblical interpretation but was an application to the world in general. The early modern world saw itself as based on nature, and the whole interpretation of the natural order of things was based around it.[32] As Pierre Hurteau sums up, 'Moral conduct was dictated by objective rules derived from natural law, which reflected the order of God's creation.'[33] This application of perversions as defined in the Bible, nature and morality was, in turn, incorporated into criminal law.

Sodomy as perversion 'against nature'

The phrase 'against nature' was most quickly applied in cases of sodomy. Although nowadays, we take this to mean buggery between men, during

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[29]Although Jeffrey Weeks used the title for his book *Against Nature* (1991) to examine homosexuality, the phrase was frequently applied to other perceived sexual deviations.

[30]Thomas Laqueur, 'Sexual Desire and the Market Economy' in Domna C. Stanton, *Discourses of Sexuality: From Aristotle to Aids* (Michigan, University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 210.

[31]On social control, see Herman Roodenburg and Pieter Spierenburg, *Social Control in Europe*, Part 1, 1500–1800, Clive Emsley, Eric Johnson, and Pieter Spierenburg (eds) Part 2, 1800–2000 (Columbia, Ohio University Press, 2004); on sexual slander, see Laura Gowing, 'Language, Power and the Law: Women's Slander Litigation in Early Modern England' in Jenny Kermode and Garthine Walker (eds), *Women, Crime and Courts in Early Modern England* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 26–47; on rough music and 'skimmington rides', see E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London, Penguin, 1991), pp. 467–533.

[32]See Julie Peakman on science and nature in her *Mighty Lewd Books* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2003), pp. 67–92.

[33]Pierre Hurteau, 'Catholic Moral Discourse on Male Sodomy and Masturbation in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (July 1993), pp. 1–26; p. 4.

the early modern period it covered three main types of act – that of anal intercourse between men; sexual intercourse with a beast, or bestiality; and all other types of immodest or abnormal intercourse which might include anal sex between a man and a woman, or in fewer instances, penetration with a dildo of one woman by another. According to Jesuit Martin Bonacina (1585–1631) who wrote pages on the subject, sodomy meant anal intercourse between men and 'Emission of sperm was not required to apply, and penetration was sufficient'[34] for sodomy to have taken place, although this was not the case in British law. Since the buggery law of 1533, both penetration and ejaculation were necessary for a prosecution to be secured up until 1828 when the law changed to make conviction for sodomy easier and only proof of penetration was needed.[35] The law, however, was not always as consistent in the matter as it should have been, as shown by the case of the second Earl of Castlehaven in 1631 where only proof of ejaculation was needed for his conviction.[36] As seen in this case, political manoeuvrings could also influence action or non-action against a person or act.

Generally though, the concept of unnaturalness as stated in the Bible was reflected in criminal law. Men or women who were brought before the magistrates courts for committing sodomitical acts, were described as committing acts 'against nature'. When Thomas Burrows was brought before the Old Bailey on 4th December, 1776 for sodomy, he was indicted 'for feloniously assaulting one William Brooks on the 28th of November, and that he feloniously, diabolically, and *against the order of nature*, had a venereal affair with the said William, and carnally knew him, and did commit and perpetrate with the said William that detestable and abominable crime (*among Christians* not to be named) called buggary'.[37] By the end of the eighteenth century, the crime had become so disgraceful in public perception, that the court decided to suppress reporting the crimes publicly, possibly thinking that the more the subject was aired, the more men might be likely to try it. On 15th February, 1797, William Winklin was indicted for

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[34]Quoted in Hurteau, p. 10.

[35]As Sean Brady points out, there was a cascade of new legislation introduced in the nineteenth century but the Buggery Act remained the basis for legislation in prohibited sex between men right up until its repeal in 1967. Despite the introduction of new laws in 1823, 1861 and 1885, the laws remained highly ambivalent; Brady, p. 51.

[36]Herrup, Cynthia B., *A House in Gross Disorder, Sex, Law and the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999); Mervin Touchet, *The Arraignment and Conviction of Mervin Lord Audley, Earl of Castlehaven … at Westminster on Monday April 25, 1631* (London, 1642).

[37]*Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 26th Dec 2008), Dec 1776, Thomas Burrows (t17970215-46).

'an unnatural crime' but the evidence on the trial 'being extremely indecent, the Court ordered the publication of it to be suppressed'.[38]

Theologians also considered 'sexual intercourse between two women' to be sodomy,[39] but the matter was made more complicated by the difficulty of determining exactly what it entailed. Although the Bible condemned women having sex with other women, various European cases were divided on their treatment. The Florentine inquisitional records between 1619 and 1623 show that the Church took relatively mild action against their two lesbian nuns, Benedetta Carlini and Bartolomea Crivelli, and merely separated them, presumably to prevent any chance of a scandal. According to the Prussian Secret Archives, the case of Catherina Margaretha Linck and her female lover was taken much more seriously and Linck was beheaded in 1721. In the 1740s case of Catherine Viazzi, she was shot by an agent of her lover's uncle after she and her female lover had eloped so the problem was resolved by the immediate community.[40] In each case therefore, different approaches were made to a perceived problem of lesbian sex. The law in Britain was somewhat tentative in attending to women having sex together. Indeed, it has been questioned whether the concept of lesbianism was taken seriously at all.[41]

Punishment tended to be inflicted only when a woman had been seen to be penetrated by another with the use of a dildo; in other words, if they were aping a man's position. This happened in cases where women had married other women pretending to be men. Mary Hamilton, who supposedly married a total of fourteen women, was sentenced in 1746 to a public whipping and imprisoned for six months. But culturally in England, lesbian behaviour tended to be considered less harshly than other sexual 'crimes'. Women were considered less of a threat than men since it was considered peculiar for men wanting to take up the socially inferior role of women

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[38]*Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 26th Dec 2008), Feb 1797, William Winklin (t17761204-2).

[39]Hurteau, p. 11.

[40]See Julie Peakman, *Lascivious Bodies. A Sexual History of the Eighteenth Century* (London, Atlantic, 2004), pp. 174–200; Judith C. Brown 'Lesbian Sexuality in Renaissance Italy: The Case of Sister Benedetta Carlini, *Signs*, Summer 1984, pp. 751–8; G.P.S. Bianchi, *An Historical and Physical Dissertation on the Case of Catherine Vizzani, containing the adventures of a young woman who for eight years poised in the habit of a man… with some curious and anatomical remarks on the nature and existence of the hymen…. On which are added certain needful remarks by the English editor* (London, 1751); *The True History and Adventures of Catherine Vizzani* (London, W. Reeve, and C. Sympson, 1755); Brigette Eriksson, 'A Lesbian Execution in Germany, 1721. The Trial Records', *Journal of Homosexuality*, Vol. 6, No. 1–2 (1980/81), pp. 27–40.

[41]On toleration of lesbianism see, A.D. Harvey, *Sex in Georgian England. Attitudes and Prejudices from the 1720s to the 1820s* (London, Duckworth, 1994), pp. 111–15.

(again, considered 'against nature'). Women tended to be convicted when implications of another non-sexual crime came up, most often fraud. In these cases, women had usually dressed as men in order to marry richer women and defraud them of their money. Typically, one such woman was convicted at Guildhall Westminster for having married three different women and defrauded them of their clothes and money, and was sent to the pillory at Charing Cross and imprisoned for six months.[42]

Although women together were treated less harshly than their male counterparts, their behaviour was still perceived as unnatural. In his book, *The Female Husband* (1746) based on Mary Hamilton, Henry Fielding described Hamilton's desires as 'unnatural affections';[43] John Cleland in his translation of *The True History and Adventures of Catherine Vizzani* (1755) perceived her to have committed 'so unnatural a Vice' in her behaviour with other women, while diarist Hester Thrale described Sapphists as 'a Set of Monsters'.[44] This concept of the unnaturalness of sex between women (and hence its immorality) was therefore ingrained in society at large. Generally though, community reaction was less harsh regarding two women living together and they could easily escape serious repercussions as did the Llangollen Ladies, Sarah Ponsonby and Eleanor Butler who lived together relatively unscathed.[45]

The last case of sodomy, that of bestiality, we might think would be considered the worst of crimes within this category, if we are to consider it as an act 'against nature', and for the eighteenth century, this holds true. The theological condemnation was again already present in the Bible: Leviticus 20, 15 states, 'A man who has sexual intercourse with any beast shall be put to death, and you shall kill the beast.' Women who had committed sex with animals were condemned to the same treatment. Yet compared to cases of sodomy between men, relatively few people were brought to court for sex with animals in Britain. Christopher Saunders was indicted at the Old Bailey on March 10th, 1776, for that 'he (*against the order of nature*) had a certain venereal affair with a certain beast called a cow, and feloniously and wickedly against the order of nature did carnally know the said beast called a

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[42]*The Annual Register*, 5 July 1777, pp. 191–2.

[43]Henry Fielding, *The Female Husband: or the Surprising History of Mrs. Mary, alias George Hamilton* (London: M. Cooper at the Globe in Paternoster Row, 1746).

[44]See Peakman, *Lascivious Bodies* , pp. 174–218.

[45]The Llangollen Ladies, Sarah Ponsonby and Eleanor Butler were frequently visited by writers, artists and visitors from London and were accepted as a couple. They were therefore upset when the newspaper *General Evening Post* ran an article on them in 1790 insinuating lesbianism, but their friend Edmund Burke, advised them against suing for libel. Elizabeth Mavor, *The Ladies of Llangollen* (London, Penguin, 1973); also see the case of Anne Lister, Helena Whitbread (ed.), *'I Know My Heart' The Diaries of Anne Lister 1791–1840* (New York, New York University Press, 1992).

cow, and with the said beast called a cow did feloniously and wickedly and *against the order of nature* commit and perpetrate the detestable and abominable crime, not to be named among Christians, called Buggery'.[46] As seen in the case of woman from Cripplegate, women were also convicted of bestiality, but they were more often caught with dogs than with cattle. In both cases, the perpetrator was sentenced to death. From legal action taken against them, it would appear that sodomy between a person and an animal was taken more seriously than cases of sodomy between men, since men caught were usually sentenced to the pillory, a fine and a stint in prison (usually between six months and two years). The lack of bestiality cases in court indicates that such acts were either less detectable, or less common.

So why was it considered such a heinous act? From his study of bestiality in Sweden in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Liliequist has found that it was an act which was considered not only against nature but potentially evil, and therefore frightening. Copulation with animals was associated with witchcraft and association with Satan and had greater implications for one's soul and the community.[47] In tracing the antecedents of perversion and its historical context, the conception of sin emerges as either an evil deposited on a person by connections with the Devil or an inherent evil. The dichotomy of the correct and the perverse, the normal and the abnormal, becomes the parallel between good and evil. During the seventeenth century, French mathematician and philosopher Balise Pascal in his *Pensées* ('Thoughts', 1660) examined the link between perversity, concupiscence and sin and its inescapability in moral life. He saw man's inherent perversity of desire as man's deviation from Good. Knowledge of the natural world was inextricably bound up with a positive knowledge of God. Guilt was part of the process of self constraint, a parallel which Freud would find some two hundred and fifty years later. Similarly, in Britain witchcraft also figured in incest cases; in *Ravillac Redivivus, Being the Narrative of the late Tryal of Mr. James Mitchell* (1678), accusations against Major Thomas Weir were not merely of adultery, incest and bestiality but he was also accused of consorting with the devil and his crimes associated with magic and witchcraft.[48] Yet the act of bestiality continued to be classed with sodomy, at least

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[46] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 26th Dec 2008), Match 1776, Christopher Saunders (t17760417-28).

[47] See Jonas Liliequist, 'Peasants Against Nature: Crossing the Boundaries between Man and Animal in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Sweden' in John C. Fout (ed.), *Forbidden History. The State, Society and the Regulation of Sexuality in Modern Europe* (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1990), pp. 57–88; for the British case, see Peakman, *Lascivious Bodies*, p. 258; for French cases, see William Naphy, *Sex Crimes From Renaissance to Enlightenment* (Stroud, Tempus, 2002), pp. 43, 81, 95, 157.

[48] G. Hickes, *Rabillac Redivivus* (London, Henry Hills, 1678). Also see Ashbee, Vol. II, pp. 51–61.

in Sweden, right into the twentieth century. In his article, Rydström makes the case that bestiality, seen as the most problematic type of sodomy, was overtaken by homosexuality as the most cause for concern. This shift has taken place with the shift from rural living to city dwelling as 'older religious categories were replaced by new scientific ones, the "sinner" gave way to the "pervert"'.[49]

Although some people saw sexual deviations as acts of sin, temptations laid before the sinner, another aspect of perversion was where the evil was considered to be inherent in a person. James Penney in his book, *The World of Perversion* offers us an example of the inherently evil person in the medieval sodomite Gilles de Rais. He left his personal and subjective testimony to his crimes, now preserved in the Nantes archives. Although he was famous as a nobleman and warrior fighting alongside Joan of Arc during the Hundred Years War, he was responsible for the kidnapping and erotic torture of preadolescent boys, whom he then decapitated and dismembered. As Penney correctly points out, the Church needed its heretics to reinforce its own dominance. There is little point having Good, if Evil cannot be detected and exposed. This example is useful in considerations of early modern thought on perversion as it is so neatly aligned with the medieval notion of sexual perversion as moral and spiritual corruption. The church saw his crimes enacted as a result of diabolical desire, an inversion of moral consciousness rather than a negation of moral law.[50] This was in fact, seen as a form of radical evil, different from the concept of original sin.

Topsy-turvy world of dress

Cross-dressing was seen as a further perversion of the world, a topsy-turvy inversion of the sexes, although reasons as to why men and women cross-dressed, and reaction to it, were gendered. Again, the Bible had already laid down rules on the subject in Deuteronomy Chapter 22, Verse 5: 'The women shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God'. Seventeenth-century theologian William Perkins was quick to point out, 'The use of attire, stands by the very ordinance of God: who Hath not sorted all men to all places, so he will have men to fitte themselves and their attire, to the qualitie of their proper places, to put a differ-

[49]Jens Rydström, '"Sodomitical Sins Are Threefold": Typologies of Bestiality, Masturbation, and Homosexuality in Sweden, 1880–1950', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Jul., 2000), pp. 240–76; Jens Rydström *Sinners and Citizens: Bestiality and Homosexuality in Sweden, 1880–1950* (Chicago, University of Chicago, 2003).
[50]Penney, p. 55.

ence between themselves and others… By which it appeares, that many in these daies do greatly offend…'[51]

Although the church was quite clear on the matter, the reaction of the public shows a clear distinction in the way they viewed known cases of sodomy and mere cross-dressing, for not all men or women who cross-dressed were condemned as sodomites. In the case of men, they have been frequently associated with cross-dressing as part of their homosexuality but for women reasons have often been given as a means of entrance into a man's world – for economic opportunities, or to go to war or sea.[52] Tales of women dressing up as men to go off to join the army and the navy were both plentiful and popular; as such, they were an accepted cultural tradition in which women were seen as hearty lasses, much in the style of the modern day female Principal Boys in tights and boots. Rarely were these women thought to be lesbians or as having sex with each other, although some authors included lesbian innuendos to titillate the public,[53] but even then, these women were rarely portrayed as threatening.[54] In other cases, it also becomes obvious that women had been blamed for masculinizing themselves through their dress and mannerisms, and this was seen as distasteful by the public. Women who caused most concern were those seen to be penetrating their female lovers, or marrying them as men as seen above. Both these actions were seen to be usurping the male role, and as such, attracted greater punishment. Penetration was also connected to the act of sodomy thus making it a greater sin and potentially opening up the actions to broader condemnation.

Men who cross-dressed were most often associated with sodomites and, as such, more of a threat to social order. Examples of these can be seen in the men caught in Mother Clap's Molly House in the 1720s. Some of

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[51]William Perkins, *1558–1602: English Puritanist: His Pioneer Works on Casuistry: 'A Discourse of Conscience' and 'The Whole Treatise of Cases of Conscience'* edited with an introduction by Thomas F. Merrill (1966), quoted by Dollimore, p. 288.

[52]Nadezhda Durova, *The Cavalry Maiden. Journals of a Female Russian Officer in the Napoleonic Wars* (London, Angel Books, 1988); Julie Wheelwright, *Amazons and Military Maids* (London, Pandora Press, 1989); Suzanne J. Stark, *Female Tars. Women Aboard Ship in the Age of Sail* (Maryland, Naval Institute Press, 1996), pp. 102–7.

[53]For example see, Anon, *Lives and Adventures of a German Princess, Mary Read, Anne Bonny, Joan Philips…*etc (London, M. Cooper, 1755).

[54]Although Faderman has argued that female transvestism was perceived as threatening, others have found the opposite in cases of mere cross-dressing, where no sex was involved. Peakman, Donoghue and Friedli have found a friendly support for the women in such tales of cross-dressing. Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men* (London, Junction Books, 1982); Peakman, *Lascivious Bodies*, pp. 214–35; Emma Donoghue, *Passions Between Women* (London, Scarlet Press, 1993), pp. 87–108; and Lynne Friedli, 'Passing Women, a study of gender boundaries in the Eighteenth Century', G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter *Sexual Underworld of the Enlightenment* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987).

the men, called 'mollies', would dress in female clothes, especially during drag balls and what they called 'festival nights', and would act out female parts in role play involving marriages and giving birth to giant cheeses or wooden jointed dolls.[55] The crime was not so much the cross-dressing as the sodomitical acts taking place between the men, and the fact that they had reduced themselves to being women, thereby undermining their assertive masculine role. Their cross-dressing was considered a perversion in that it subverted the order of nature, by inverting the 'proper' gender roles in a hierarchy in which men dominated women.

Yet, men with airy ways might be thought fops, and would not necessarily have their sexual relationships scrutinized, particularly if aristocratic. Lord Hervey was one such eighteenth-century character who held good grace and an influential career at court while carrying on a relationship with his lover Stephen Fox, brother of the famous radical opposed to Pitt, Charles Fox. Effeminate men, although not always persecuted, frequently had slurs attached to their characters.[56] Historically these perversions of the feminized man and the masculinized woman can be seen in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 9.[57]

Cross-dressing in recent sex studies has been connected with sexual arousal although most current day investigations into *heterosexual* (as opposed to homosexual) transvestites have found that the majority of men who cross-dress deny that they do it for sexual purposes. One study found that although the core groups denied this association – that dressing as women aroused them sexually, when tested in a controlled environment, heterosexual cross-dressers responded with penile tumescence (blood rushing to the penis causing erection) to written fantasies of cross-dressing. The conclusion of the study found that heterosexual cross-dressing *was* directly related to sexual fetishism.[58] This then adds to the dilemma of how to

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[55]This has now been well-documented, first addressed by Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England, 1700–1830* (London, GMP, 1992).

[56]P.J. Carter, '"Mollies", "Fops", and "Men of Feeling: Aspects of Male 'effeminacy' and masculinity in Britain, c.1700–80".' (PhD, 1995); Philip Carter, 'Men about Town: Representations of Foppery and Masculinity in Early Eighteenth-Century Urban Society' in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (eds), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England* (Longman, 1997); and more recently his *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660–1800* (London, Longman, 2001). Also on masculinities in the early modern period see Elizabeth Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England* (London, Longman, 1999); Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen (eds), *English Masculinities* 1666–1800 (London, Longman, 1999); Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London, Routledge, 1996).

[57]See Chapter 2 and 6.

[58]R. Blanchard, I.G. Racansky, Betty W. Steiner, 'Phallometric Detection of Fetishistic Arousal in Heterosexual Male Cross-Dressers', *Journal of Sex Research*, 22 Nov, No. 4. (1986), pp. 452–62.

understand heterosexual male cross-dressers of the past, although so few cases have been uncovered and, as yet, we have little to examine.

In England, at least, there seemed to be ambivalence towards the subject of male cross-dressing. Although there was an antagonism towards sodomites who cross-dressed, those of status were less likely to be condemned. One case to cause a stir in London in the 1770s because of his cross-dressing was that of Frenchman Chevalier D'Eon (Fig. 1.1 & 1.2); the *London Evening Post* for 11–14 May 1771 went so far as to declare 'that a celebrated Chevalier [D'Eon] has with a few weeks past, been discovered to be of a different sex.'[59]

D'Eon is difficult to fathom as, unlike the mollies, he claimed to be asexual, yet obviously took delight in silk dresses, offering detailed accounts of them in his memoirs.[60] D'Eon never mentions a lover of either sex, but does confess to living with a woman at the latter end of his life, although he claims it was a purely domestic arrangement. It was possibly the fact that D'Eon did not outwardly display signs of desiring either sex, and that he was living with a woman as a woman, which alleviated him from persecution by British authorities. The fact that he came from an aristocratic background and had high social standing in society also meant that he was less liable for persecution than were unruly plebeians. Although he was not regarded as sexually perverted since his associations did not appear to be sexual, he *was* regarded as an oddity. His case was high profile, covered in the news, and he was the subject of various bets and raucous debates.

In her examination of the cases of both D'Eon and Madame Du Coudray (a female man-midwife working in obstetrics), Lisa Cody has argued that there was a self-fashioning through bending their own genders, following Vern and Bonnie Bullough who contended that 'cross-dressing…allows an individual to express a different facet of his or her persona'.[61] For John Dollimore, this transgression can be seen as a quest for authenticity and individualism – in defying a progressive order, we can be true to ourselves. Transvestism is a mode of transgression which finds its expression in inversion. Dress is important not just in defining gender, but in defining class; but dress confusion could be seen by contemporaries as symptomatic of

[59]On D'Eon, see Peakman, *Lascivious Bodies*, pp. 211–18.

[60]Chevalier D'Eon, *Mémoires pour servir á l'histoire générale des finances* (London, 1758); and *Letters, mémoires and négociations particulières* (London, 1764); Gary Kates, *Monsieur D'Eon is a Woman. A Tale of Political Intrigue and Sexual Masquerade* (London, HarperCollins, 1995).

[61]Lisa Forman Cody, 'Sex, Civility, and the Self: Du Coudray, D'Eon, and Eighteenth-Century Conceptions of Gendered, National, and Psychological Identity', *French Historical Studies* (Summer 2001), Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 379–407; Vern L. Bullough, *Cross Dressing, Sex and Gender* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993); also see Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests. Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (London, Routledge, 1992).

Fig. 1.1. Chevalier D'Eon as a Woman

Fig. 1.2. Chevalier D'Eon as a Man

impending social collapse.[62] In the theatre, we can see a mirror image of the world; it can transgress the natural order of things and confuse distinctions. In comic plays, this confusion might have a social function (see Chapter 2). Of course, cross-dressing characters in a play would not necessarily be seen as sexually perverted, but they would have been seen to transgress the natural order of the world, or to be flaunting it, or making a mockery of it.

If we examine dress fetishism more closely, in a broader sense rather than mere cross-dressing, we can do no better than to look at David Kunzle's definition in his book *Fashion and Fetishism.* He asserts 'Fetishism may be defined as the individual displacement of private erotic feeling onto a non-genital part of the body, or onto a particular article of clothing by association with a part of the body, or onto an article of clothing in conjunction with its effect on the body.'[63] In his book, *The Sex Life of the Foot and the Shoe* (1976) William Rossi describes a fetish as 'where the sexual desire chooses as its exclusive and sufficient object some part of the body (e.g. feet) or some article of clothing (e.g. shoes).'[64] He asserts 'The foot is an erotic organ and the shoe its sexual covering'.[65] He suggests that shoes became a subject of fetishism because of their importance for the female form. He explains, 'the voluptuous architecture of the body, owes much of its sensuous character to the foot, which was responsible for the upright posture and gait that altered the entire anatomy'.[66] The shoe has thus been connected to female sexuality in history in the Cinderella myths, with a small foot an example of perfection. Kunzle suggests that foot fetishism was a result of the need for male possession; he asserts, 'the expressed Chinese ideal of a foot small enough to fit inside a man's mouth probably reflect an oral-genital fantasy'; in the West, this was altered to a small foot should ideally fit into a man's hand.[67] What was seen to be a perversion in one country, however, would not necessarily be seen as such in another; although the British saw the *type* of foot obsession displayed by the Chinese as perverted, the Chinese obviously did not feel the same, as seen in Chapter 10.

In any case, the British displayed a liking for feet of their own. For many in the eighteenth century, a lady's pretty foot was something to be admired.

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[62]Dollimore, pp. 284–5, 290.

[63]David Kunzle's definition in his book *Fashion and Fetishism. A Social History of the Corset, Tight-Lacing and Other Forms of Body-Sculpture in the West* (New Jersey, Rowan and Littlefield, 1982), p. 1.

[64]William Rossi, *The Sex Life of the Foot and the Shoe* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 171. The term 'fetish' was adopted by medical and sex literature by Alfred Binet in 1888.

[65]Rossi, p. 1.

[66]Kunzle quoting Rossi, p. 15.

[67]Rossi, pp. 158–70.

Lord Jersey, beau to courtesan Harriette Wilson, carried her shoe in his pocket in the hope of finding her a new pair. She declared, 'His Lordship really loved me, and, above all, he loved my foot.... he used to go about town with one of my shoes in his pockets, as a pattern to guide him in his constant search after pretty shoes for me.'[68] Even more obsessive was that of a Marquis who wooed a friend of Irish madame, Mrs Leeson. Her friend related to her how the Marquis used to love to pick and wash her toes, yet declared that he 'never was even rude enough to give me a kiss'.[69] None of this foot fetishism seems to have been a matter of concern for eighteenth-century commentators, nor was it considered abnormal. Indeed, pretty feet appear to have been a source of joy amongst men and women alike. Why on earth such a liking for pretty feet furnished the eighteenth-century fashion is hard to say, except the possibility that as a part of the body seductively peeping out from under long dresses, feet carried mysterious appeal. Neither can we tell how widespread it was until the end of the nineteenth century when Krafft-Ebing expressed his belief that foot or shoe fetishes were the most common kind.

The word fetish carried different connotations in the eighteenth century. Fetishing was seen as 'to adorn oneself, dress up'.[70] Atkins in his *Voyage to Guinea* (1735) commented, 'The women are fondest of what they call Fetishing, setting themselves out to attract the good Graces of the Men'. This fascination with dressing up would be displayed in eighteenth-century plays,[71] in memoirs,[72] in erotica and gentlemen's magazines. In the erotic books and magazines such as *Exhibition of Female Flagellants* (1777) and *Bon Ton* magazine, the female dominatrix was depicted as a governess, or a mother figure. The wearing of both huge nose-gays and purple gloves is combined in an exploration of flagellation.[73] Far from being seen as abnormal, flagellation was recognized as a stimulant, a means to an end, an act which culminated in heterosexual 'normative' vaginal sexual intercourse between a man and a woman. The nose-gays and purple gloves here were seen as less of a fetishism than a signifier of female flagellants.

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[68]*Memoirs of Harriette Wilson,* reprinted in Lesley Blanche (ed.), *The Game of Hearts. Harriette Wilson and Her Memoirs* (London, Gryphon Books, 1957), pp. 135, 158.
[69]Lyons, Mary (ed.), *The Memoirs of Mrs. Leeson, Madam 1727–1797* (Dublin, Lilliput Press, 1995), pp. 176–7.
[70]OED.
[71]For example see George Etherege's play *Man of the Mode. Sir Fopling Flutter*, Chapter 2.
[72]Both Chevalliers De Choissy and D'Eon and left their memoirs. See R.H.F. Scott (ed.), *The Transvestite Memoirs of The Abbé De Choisy* (London, Peter Owen, 1973); and footnote above on D'Eon.
[73]Julie Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*, pp. 182–5.

Pornography as perversion?

How far can we use pornography as evident of perversion? Having looked at some of the perceptions of deviant sexual behaviour in religion and how morality and the law controlled it, I want to turn to the sphere of pornography to see if it can tell us more about thoughts on what was considered to be perverted, sinful, immoral or against the natural order. Although pornography can go some way in helping investigations of perversions in the past, and defining what was considered perverse or not, we have to be careful in its reading as in some cases, pornography turns society's normal values on their head, and what is considered perverted in society, is normalized in pornography. Although the type of acceptable behaviour (and the amount of its violation) might well have been contained by religious beliefs, the law and morality in real life (and it is impossible to gauge exactly how much systems of control worked since transgression occurred nonetheless), the range and scope of sexual perversity in pornography was limited only by the erotic imagination and this, to some extent, was dictated by class. Erotica was more easily obtained by the richer readers, so therefore they would have been more familiar with different types of fanciful sexual activities, having read about them. Aristocrats also had more time and money to indulge their fantasies, and therefore were often seen as more debauched. This did not necessarily mean their behaviour was considered perverted.

Increased privacy for many people during the eighteenth century meant that opportunities arose not only for private reading but for sexual experimentation. As Patricia Meyer Spacks has pointed out, 'eighteenth-century men and women simultaneously experienced heightened eagerness to penetrate the privacy of others…as soon as privacy exists, it challenges the desire for knowledge.'[74] Personal curiosity and the need for novelty combined with this new privacy was reflected in pornographic developments as texts tried out more innovative methods of sex, some of them deviating from the sanctioned missionary position promulgated by the theologians. With new developments in printing techniques, pornography became increasingly available in eighteenth-century England. From the mid-century onwards, its textual style began to develop in terms of exploring sexual perversion.[75]

De Sade has been shown as the exemplar of perversion in his various biographies and examination of his works. Foucault highlights the point that central to the sex of de Sade is a lack of a norm, a sex with laws known only unto itself. This, in itself, would serve as a contradiction of Foucault's

[74]Patricia Ann Meyer Spacks, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 141.
[75]Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*, pp. 12–15.

theory – it would mean that de Sade's sexual world is therefore outside of Foucault's power mechanism. Leaving this aside, can we use de Sade as an example of a catch-all European version of eighteenth-century perversions?

Marquis de Sade explored virtually every vice known to man – flagellation, blood lust, sadism, masochism, sodomy – in his work as well as in his personal life. In 1772, at the age of thirty-two de Sade was condemned to death at Aix for his cruelty and unnatural sexual practices. He later ended up, via the Bastille, in Charenton lunatic asylum where he was kept incarcerated until his death in 1844. He supposedly developed his taste for perversion in the army, and gave his life up to dissipation after the death of his sister-in-law who he idealized in his novel *Juliette*. One of his worst crimes was the forcible and indecent flagellation of thirty-six year old Rosa Keller. He tied her to a bed and whipped her with a birch, made various incisions in her flesh with a small knife and dropped wax into the wounds. Some years later he took part in an orgy of prostitution and flagellation with several whores to whom he had administered an aphrodisiac. They complained to the court that it had been so powerful that it had made them quite ill. De Sade believed that 'every man wants to be a tyrant when he fornicates'.[76]

De Sade's contribution to sexual perversion came in the form of pornographic books such as *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* (1785), *Justine, ou les Malheureurs de la Vertu* (1791), *Le Philosphie dans le Boudoir* (1795) and *Juliette* (1797), However, as Henry Spencer Ashbee, the notorious Victorian bibliographer of erotica stated, in De Sade's pornography, bloodthirstiness was usually connected with insulting virtue and making it ridiculous. In eighteenth-century English pornography, this is not necessarily so, sometimes even the opposite. In *Female Flagellants,* for example, virtue is not mocked but exalted.[77] According to Ashbee, de Sade's influence becomes evident in British erotica by the 1830s in such books as *The Inutility of Virtue* (1830), with similar sordidness and ridiculing of virtue seen in *The Seducing Cardinals* (1830). Humiliation is certainly an affect which increased in direct proportion with the violence. *The Experimental Lecture* by 'Colonel Spanker' (1836) contains the whole philosophy which was argued to exhaustion in de Sade, bloody orgies, vivisection and torture.

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[76]H. Montgomery Hyde, *A History of Pornography* (London, Heinemann, 1964), p. 122. For biographies on de Sade see, Neil Schaeffer, *The Marquis de Sade. A Life* (New York, Knopf, 1998); Maurice Lever, *Marquis de Sade. A Biography* (London, HarperCollins, 1993); Francine du Plessix Gary, *At Home with Marquis de Sade* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1999).

[77]'Pisanus Fraxis', [Henry Spencer Ashbee], *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, *Centuria Librorum Absconditorum* and *Catena Librorum Tacendorum* (London, privately printed, 1877), reprinted as *Bibliography of Forbidden Books* (New York, Jack Brussel, 1962), Vol. I , p. 37; Vol. II, pp. xliii, 133, 247.

But how far de Sade was available in England, or indeed in English, is difficult to access. A clumsy English translation of *Justine* was published in 1899 by Isidore Liseux imprinted by The Erotika Biblion Society for private distribution only – fifty copies were made for its members under the title *A Philosophical Romance*.[78] But translations were not available in England *en masse* until the Olympia Press publications in the 1950s, although a few select British readers and producers of pornography read him in the original. In any case, it is unlikely that de Sade had much influence on ordinary British people's view of perversion, even if the richer eighteenth-century libertine managed to obtain copies of his works. Even then, the perverse world of de Sade was not necessarily the same as the perverse world of the British pornographer.

Theoretically speaking, pornography should have been seen as perverse as it was seen through transgressive eyes – the intention of most pornography is to break taboos. However, the trangressive nature of pornography had been overplayed, and the more important point about British eighteenth-century pornography was its incorporative, and even conservative, nature – how it fed on, and feeds back into, the normative cultural world around it. Thus what we learn from British pornography in particular, is not necessary the perverse world itself, as in, say, de Sade, but what the normal world finds perverse. This can therefore act as a 'way in' to finding out what was considered sexual perversion in the eighteenth-century mind – or at least what the minds of the British writers and readers of pornography thought of as sexually perverse.

As forerunners of pornography, Britain looked to seventeenth-century French writers to begin the exploration of sex and its various derivations. Many of the story-lines were based on the introduction of young virgins to sex by an older woman, which would then lead to vaginal penetrative sex with a man.[79] Although lesbian interludes were seen as a normal part of a woman's introduction to sex, the 'main' act would be heterosexual. Yet sex between women was not regarded as unusual or threatening but a natural progression in a young woman's sexual initiation. Although overspilling fluids (tears, blood, semen, female ejaculations) were frequently used in erotica to convey excess, they were often seen as normal manifestations of an otherwise wayward body.

Diderot, whose philosophical influence was arguably more profound on British people than de Sade during the eighteenth century, saw the body as

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[78]Mendes, Peter, *Clandestine Erotic Fiction in English 1800–1930. A Bibliographical Study* (Aldershot, Scholar Press, 1998), pp. 187–8.

[79]For a discussion of French influences on English pornography, see Julie Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books. The Development of Pornography in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, Palgrave, 2003), pp. 17–22.

central to understanding man and wrote constantly about the body and its image. His friendship and correspondence with John Wilkes after they had met at a Parisian salon showed his influences stretched to English libertines. Conlin has argued that, 'It was Diderot's analysis that sexual licence, if treated as a function of liberty, could erode civilisation and cause chaos.'[80] This would, if true, demonstrate an eighteenth-century belief that sex without constraints leads to the downfall of society. Yet Diderot delighted in descriptions of fleshy uncontrol and the precariousness of the body. In this way, he saw the body as acting directly rather than merely being representative as an external force in society. He rejected many of the constraints placed on the body and he thought that curbing its instinct was pointless.[81] This is evident in his writings on incest as discussed in *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* (1772); and in *La Religieuse* (1760) in which we see scenes of Suzanne's copious tears, her nosebleeds and Mother Superior foaming at the mouth while she reaches a climax. Both narratives point to the impossibility of containing excess bodily fluids in relation to sexual outpourings as bodily transgressions. This bodily overflow was typically early modern manifestations of the body, seen in literature, medicine and erotica.[82] This all points to an eighteenth-century belief that the body would go its own way, despite any constraints placed upon it. It would follow that any act made outside of 'normal constraints' would be considered unavoidable. Thus certain acts of nymphomania, bestiality, even sodomy might be seen as outside the control of an individual which is why connections with the devil were often invoked, Satan having control of those sexually depraved bodies.

Sexual desire for children is another area of investigation which has recently opened up. Phillippe Ariès argued that the invention of the notion of a separate childhood evolved only in the seventeenth century and with it came the theory of child innocence.[83] From this, it was recognized that children needed to be protected and laws evolved to deal with this issue. By the late Victorian period, there was an the emergence of a definition of childhood as specifically a time in which sex with the person is forbidden, which in itself, attracted attention to the forbidden act. Further more, by the end of the nineteenth century, the question of the innocence of the child was

[80]Jonathan G.W. Conlin, High Art and Low Politics: A New Perspective on John Wilkes, T*he Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 3/4 (2001), pp. 357–81.
[81]Angelica Gooden, *Diderot and the Body* (Oxford, Legenda, 2001), pp. 4, 12.
[82]Julie Peakman, 'Bodily Anxieties in Enlightenment Sex Literature', *Studies on Voltaire & C18th*, 2005:1; Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed, Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1993).
[83]Phillippe Ariès. *Centuries of Childhood* (New York, Vintage Books, 1962).

subjected to sustained critique in sex abuse cases.[84] Running simultaneously with this, was the emergence of a historically specific love of young girls which precluded sex and insisted on maintenance of 'innocence' up to and beyond the onset of sexual puberty.[85] Although much of the investigation has concentrated on the nineteenth century so far, George S. Rousseau has broadened out the debate in his recent collection in *Child Sexuality. From the Greeks to the Great War*.[86]

In pornography, although it was on the erotic horizon in the 1770s, paedophilia was not part of the scene in terms of sexual perversion. Within the scenes, the potential for the lust for children was presented but was never fully realized. From the way that the flagellator (who was nearly always female in eighteenth-century erotica) is revered in the narration, the sexual interest is centred on her, rather than on the children; if anything, the child would stand as substitute for the reader watching the scenario unfold; only in the nineteenth century did pornography develop into full penetrative sex between guardians and their charges, sisters and brothers, and uncles and nephews and nieces as seen in *The Romance of Chastisement* (1866), *The Quintessence of Birch Discipline* ('1870', 1883)[87] and *The Romance of Lust* (1876). Not only are the relationships in the later period made closer, but they are now between older men and young women. The 'gentler' form of lesbianism was overtaken by men's violent attacks on young girls thus opening up a new world of sadism. By the nineteenth century, a pornographic technique, evident as early as John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, had been honed to perfection – gradations of sexual perversity followed on from each other in a logical progression, ending with the most perverse. Thus we can detect in the pornographic mind, what was perceived as the most perverted form of sex as it would be at the end of the book. Furthermore, as Lisa Sigel has pointed out, the scenes in nineteenth-century pornography became increasingly littered with swear words which

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[84]James R. Kincaid, *Child-Loving. The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (London, Routledge, 1992); Louise Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* (London, Routledge, 2000).

[85]Jad Adams, 'William and Edna Clark Hall: Private and Public Childhood "Your Child Forever"', *English Literature in Transition*, 1880–1920, Vol. 49, No. 4, 2006, pp. 398–417.

[86]George Rousseau (ed.), *Child Sexuality. From the Greeks to the Great War* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2007).

[87]Although a book entitled *The Quintessence of Birch Discipline* is mentioned in the PRO in a prosecution case for the eighteenth century, I have been unable to trace an eighteenth-century edition. The nineteenth-century edition is probably an extended and more advanced and explicit version of the earlier one.

were used in a more cruel way; there was also a move from use of the word such as 'fuck' in bawdy terms, to its use as meaning polluted.[88]

Graphic stories of monks and nuns utilized the religious as sites of sexual perversion. The violent sexual flagellant theme had already infiltrated England in the form of French imports such as *Dom Bourge, ou Portiers Des Chartreux* (1741) (Fig. 1.3) and *Therese Philosophe* (1748). Real life case such as the cases of Father de Rues and Father Girard (Fig. 1.4) provided much glee for the irreverent English reading public in a variety of books and pamphlets on the affairs.[89] Both had been accused of seducing female penitents. These books merely served to fire the imagination of the British authors while confirming Protestant suspicion of inveigling French Priests. In reality though, in England flagellation was never seen as a perversity, more of a divergence, and this was because it resulted, and even facilitated, vaginal copulation between a man and a woman. It had already been regconized as a cure for impotency. Flagellation assisted reproduction in that it encouraged erection which allowed for coition. Corruption of young virgins by serpent-like priests would, however, be seen as a form of perversion.

Flagellation as self-mortification had long been a favourite penance of the Catholics, and as such, was acceptable in the wider society (Fig. 1.5). With the coming of Protestantism, both the confessional and self-flagellation were rejected as part of the Popish religion and instead, became butts of Protestant jokes. More seriously, Protestants saw the confessional as a potential area of seduction of their wives and daughters, a place where the usually vigilant father and husband had no control over his female kin. Wives and daughters were perceived as becoming religiously perverted while being sexually exploited by lecherous priests. In this context, religious perversion became closely linked to sexual corruption, particularly of the innocent.[90] This perception of Catholicism and its connection to sex was carried right thought to the nineteenth century as seen in Chapter 8. Rape scenes and necrophilia were also to feature in nineteenth-century pornography becoming more violent as the century went on. Furthermore, the perverting of the female form by applying negative attributes to them – in showing women to be nymphomaniacs, prostitutes and full of venereal disease – was often part of the pornographic tradition as seen in Chapter 5.

Rape and necrophilia

Rape was essentially a crime against property, the woman being a chattel of her father and later, her husband. For this reason, until recently, married

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[88]Lisa Z. Sigel, 'Name Your Pleasure: The Transformation of Sexual Language in Nineteenth-Century British Pornography' *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Oct., 2000), pp. 395–419.
[89]See Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*, pp. 141–6.
[90]*Ibid.*, pp. 126–60.

Fig. 1.3. Anon, *Dom Bourge, ou Portiers Des Chartreux* (1741)

Fig. 1.4. Anon, Seduction of Marie-Catherine Cadière by Jean-Baptiste Girard. From: *Histoire du Père Jean-Baptiste Girard, Jésuite & Recteur du collège de la Marine à Toulon, et de Damoiselle Marie Caterine* (1735)

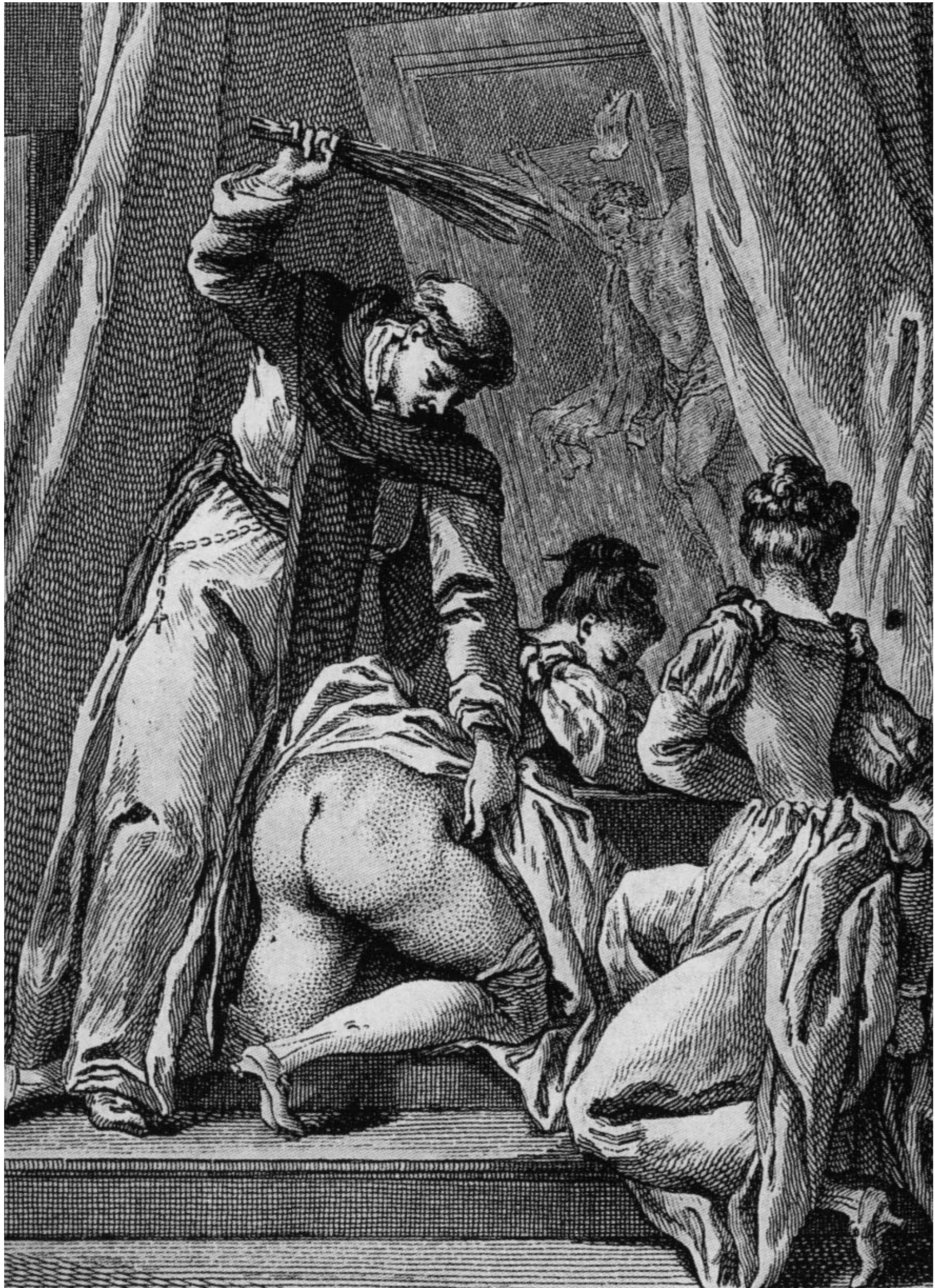

Fig. 1.5. Charles Monnet (1732–1808) *The Flagellation of the Penitents*. Engraved by d'Ambrun

men could not be prosecuted for raping their wives. Although nowadays, we talk loosely of rapists as perverts, was rape considered a perversion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? As Joanna Bourke points out, perverts were only labelled as such in 1883, before that, it was the act rather than the person which was imbued with the crime. She also points out how rape myths abound in history at the expense of successful prosecutions of the crime.[91] The understanding of rape in the past has been further muddied, as rape has been seen as different things – as abduction, as seduction, and as a means of exerting power. There is still no proper consensus on what rape entails. So how do we place rape in history?

Sylvana Tomaselli has argued that there is lack of a history of rape,[92] but more recently Barbara Baines has argued that the reluctance to acknowledge the reality of rape *is* the history of rape. She examines the literary world of rape in which 'Rape never primarily signifies the loss and suffering of the woman'.[93] In the past, women were not compensated for rape, rather their 'owners' were. In the Bible, Deuteronomy advises that when an unmarried virgin was raped, the offender had an option to pay the father of his victim fifty shekels or marry her. During the medieval and renaissance period, rape carried a meaning of abduction – 'the act of carrying away a person, especially a woman, by force',[94] as well as being seen as stealing another man's property.[95] By the late eighteenth century, this connection between woman as property and abduction would continue to be made in certain elopement cases; when the sister of courtesan Harriette Wilson, Sophia, ran off with Lord Deerhurst against her parents' wishes, the only avenue available to them was to sue him for loss of domestic services.[96]

An eighteenth-century understanding of seduction often meant 'accompanied with force', since any self-respecting maiden would not give up her maidenhead unless under pressure. As Anna Clark argues, violence was seen as an acceptable form of seduction.[97] Because of its public image, the British had a hard time seeing heterosexual rape as particularly perverse or

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[91]Joanna Bourke, *Rape* (London, Virago, 2007), p. 11.

[92]Sylvana Tomaselli and Roy Porter (eds), *Rape. An Historical and Cultural Enquiry* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986).

[93]Barbara J. Baines, *Representing Rape in the English Early Modern Period* (NY, Edward Mellen Press, 2003), pp. 2, 261.

[94]OED.

[95]On medieval understanding of rape Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe. Doing unto Others* (Oxford, Routledge, 2005), pp. 112–16.

[96]Julie Peakman, 'Memoirs of Women of Pleasure: The Whore Biography' in *Women's Writing* (Triangle Press, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2004).

[97]Anna Clark, *Women's Silence, Men's Violence: Sexual Assault in Britain, 1770–1845* (1987).

'against nature' although where it was proven, it was treated harshly by the courts as a capital crime. Rape was a deviance but with acceptable misogynistic overtones, as Roy Porter sums up Susan Brownmiller's argument, rape 'is not a sickness of perverts, but the sickness of patriarchy'.[98]

The debased female body was conveyed in submissive terminology in mainstream literature and in pornography as part of this discourse as seen in Chapter 6. Rape and violent seduction went hand in hand. Neither was considered a perversion, but part of normative discourse. Violent seduction pervaded erotic fantasies in mainstream literature such as *Clarissa* (albeit off-side); as Laura Hinton points out, 'In *Clarissa*, it does not take great powers of speculation to see that what is at the bottom of the pit is the subjected female body'. The whole book centres around Clarissa's rape giving the overall effect of a 'prettification of violence'.[99] We can see how, from Ovid to Cleland, misogyny has pervaded the history of imagery of rape in pornographic texts, and more often than not seduction was seen as an attack. Rape featured in common defloration fantasies in pornographic literature blurring the boundaries between rape and seduction. The impression given is that women feign defence but want to be overcome; for example, in *The Petit Maître* (1749), women are conveyed as enjoying a struggle, 'This is the plain Reason, why most Women refuse to *surrender* upon Treaty, and why they delight so much in being storm'd.'[100]

Yet Roy Porter believes that, in reality, the silence on rape by social moralists of the day indicates that rape was not 'the scandal of the day'.[101] However the realities and perception of eighteenth-century rape cases were muddled and high profile cases coloured the perceptions of the public's understanding of the rape law and the process of prosecution.[102] Few rapes were successfully prosecuted, because they were construed and understood in terms of seduction with pressure. There has been a history of difficulty in obtaining convictions for accused rapists; for example, between 1805 and 1818, only 76 men were convicted of rape. Despite rape being a capital

[98]Porter, *op. cit,* p. 218, summing up Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will. Men, Women and* Rape (London, Secker and Warburg, 1975).

[99]Laura Hinton, *The Perverse Gaze of Sympathy: Sadomasochistic Sentiments from Clarissa to rescue* 911 (Albany, NY, State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 36, 74.

[100]See John Aitkins, *Sex in Literature: Vol. IV. High Noon: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, John Calder, 1982), p. 91.

[101]Roy Porter, 'Rape – Does it have a historical meaning?' in Sylvana Tomaselli, and Roy Porter (eds), *Rape: An Historical and Cultural Enquiry* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 222.

[102]Antony E. Simpson, 'Popular Perceptions of Rape as a Capital Crime in Eighteenth-Century England: The Press and the Trial of Francis Charteris in the Old Bailey, February 1730', *Law and History Review*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring, 2004), pp. 27–70.

offence only 47 out of these 76 men went to the gallows. There were not only difficulties in securing a conviction, but many rapes went unreported. During the same period, only 17% of rapists were prosecuted, compared to 63% conviction of all crimes overall; a much higher rate of men were acquitted for rape than other crimes.[103] Earlier statistics show a similar tale.[104] Seventeenth-century judge Mathew Hale is quoted as saying 'though rape is a detestable crime, it is an accusation easily made, and hard to be proved'.[105] Worse still, prosecutors, whether successful or not, had to pay the costs themselves, making the process virtually impossible for the poor single girl. Even men who had been convicted of rape did not necessarily have their reputation or career affected.

The rape of young children was taken extremely seriously and death sentences ensued in cases where prosecution was successful. In one unusual case, a woman was found guilty of assisting in a rape of under-age children. Alice Gray of the Parish of St. Giles's in the Fields, was found guilty of rape, on 23rd April, 1707[106] after aiding and abetting Thomas Smith of raping ten-year-old Catherine Masters. The child, 'awaking about 2 a Clock in Morning, [she] found a Man in Bed with them, that as she was endeavouring to get away, the Prisoner pull'd her back again, and held her down in the Bed, and stopt her Mouth (that she could not cry out) while the Man gain'd the perfect knowledge of her Body.' A further proof no doubt helped in securing a conviction in this case; after inspection, it was obvious not only had the child been abused, but Smith had given her the pox. Both Smith and Gray were sentenced to death. Pederasty in relation to men and boys would fit into the category of sodomy, and similarly attract a capital punishment.

Published reports of violence against children, beatings of domestic servants and molestation of dead bodies serves as a cultural witness to people's understanding of the subject matter. Sadomasochistic reports of abused children frequently circulated in penny dreadfuls during the early nineteenth century, a prime example seen in *A Full and Particular Account of the Trial Sentence and execution of Esther Hibner senior for the Murder of Frances Colpotts, a young girl, by ill-usage and starvation* (1829). The child was taken in from the workhouse, forced to work all hours of the day, often from 3 in the morning till 11 at night, and was made to sleep on the floor of the workshop. 'She was frequently beaten for not doing her work, sometimes all the prisoners beat her together, either with a rod, a cane or a slipper. The younger Hibner,

[103]A.D. Harvey, Rape and Seduction in Early Nineteenth-Century England London (London, John Nold Books, 1991) quoting from T.E. Tomlins, *The Law Dictionary: Explaining the Rise, Progress and Present State of the English Law* (1810), p. 1.
[104]See Chapter 6.
[105]Harvey, *op. cit.*, quoting from Tomlins, *The Law Dictionary*, p. 1.
[106]*Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 26 Dec 2008), April 1707, Alice Grey (t17070423-26).

at one time, took the deceased up by the heels, and dropped her in a pail of water intended for the washing.'

Rape, murder and sodomy cases were similarly reported elsewhere.[107] Burke and Hare type stories proliferated; one described the body of Carlo Ferrari who was found when a hospital porter at St Guy's hospital saw his leg poking out of a hole in a sack; John Bishop had murdered him and was selling the body. Another reported the case of a porter at Bartholomew's Hospital who was said to have raped the corpse of a fifteen-year-old girl in front of medical students. Dr Robert Knox, when confronted with the beautiful body of Mary Paterson, which grave robber and murderer William Burke had given him, could not bring himself to hand her over to his students for dissection. Instead he brought in an artist to draw her and kept her in a tub of whisky for three months in order to preserve her.[108]

This interest in rape, violence, and dead bodies found its sexual outlet in necrophilia as examined in Chapter 7. Traditionally necrophilia involves men lusting after female bodies rather than vice versa as Elisabeth Bronfen's work states in her *Death, Feminity and the Aesthetic*, 'the feminine body as death turns the women into an object of sight', the gaze on sex and death are invariably connected to women and her sexuality.[109] This connection has also been associated with male violence as Beverley Clack has pointed out, 'Any discussion of death is invariably associated with male violence and destruction'.[110] In this connection between women, sex and death, there has also been a development of a macabre exoticism created in the juxtaposition of love and death.[111] Lisa Downing has pointed out that definitions of necrophilia traditionally focus on the actual activities of the necrophile, obsessed with the act of intercourse with a corpse 'the repeated focus of penetration of the corpse implicitly relegates necrophilia to the realms of male perversion'.[112] According to Dr. Jonathan Rosman and Dr. Phillip

[107]Anon, *The Trial and Lamentation of Patrick Duffy for a Rape, sentenced to be hung at Oakham Gallows* (Nottingham, Sutton and Son, 1826)*; The Trial and Execution of the Burkers for Murdering an Italian Boy* (J. Catnach, Monmouth Court, 7 Dials, n.d.); *Particulars and Execution of Charles Cluttoon…for Sodomy* (Freeman, Printer, 1824).

[108]Helen MacDonald, *Human Remains. Dissection and Its Histories* (London, Yale, 2006), pp. 33–4.

[109]Elizabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body. Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1992); Camille Naish, *Death Comes to the Maiden. Sex and Execution 1431–1933* (London, Routledge, 1991); Janet Todd, *Gender, Art and Death* (NY, Continuum Publishing Company, 1993).

[110]Beverley Clack, *Sex and Death* . A *Reappraisal of Human Mortality* (Cambridge, Polity, 2002), p. 81.

[111]Jolene Zigarovich (ed.), *Sex and Death in C18th* (University of Delaware Press, forthcoming).

[112]Lisa Downing, *Desiring the Dead: Necrophilia and Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (Oxford, Legenda, 2003), p. 11.

Resnick who reviewed 122 cases of necrophilia in 1989, there are three basic types of 'true' necrophilia:[113] necrophilic homicide, which is murder to obtain a corpse; regular necrophilia, the use of corpses already dead for sexual pleasure; necrophilic fantasy, envisioning the acts but not acting on them. In his *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1894), Krafft-Ebing called necrophilia a horrible manifestation of sadism.

As yet, little investigation has been undertaken into necrophilia in the eighteenth century[114] probably because of the difficulty in finding reports of such cases. We know about thirty-six year old Samuel Pepys who staged his own show for visiting cousins when he violated the corpse of Katherine of France, long since dead, even if it was only 'a fondle and a kiss.'[115] George Selwyn's love of dead bodies was evident, not only in his enthusiasm for watching public hangings, but in his excitement on visiting his dying friends. More serious medical non-fictional examinations of corpse profanation can be seen in Johan George Simonis's mention of it in *Brevis Delineato Empotentia Conjugalis* (1665) and Martin Schurig's *Gynaecologia* (1730); both mention copulation with corpses,[116] but these are unusual for their time; also both were written in Latin and aimed at the medical profession.

Although real life cases are hard to uncover, an eighteenth-century interest in necrophilia was evident,[117] no doubt a reflection of a time when public hangings were a common spectacle, and medical dissections were increasingly on display, both in the surgeon's dissecting room and in art, as in Hogarth's 'The Reward of Cruelty' (Fig. 1.6). Jonathan Sawday, Ruth Richardson and Timothy Marshall have shown how dissection was inextricably linked to, and had an effect on, other areas of eighteenth-century life such as culture, art and literature.[118] Death and sex were increasingly juxtaposed in Gothic literature such as Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otrant*o (1764) and Matthew Lewis's

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[113]Jonathan P. Rosman and Phillip J. Resnick, 'Sexual Attraction to Corpses: A Psychiatric Review of Necrophilia', *Bulletin of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 17 (1989), pp. 153–63.

[114]But see Jolene Zigarovich, *Sex and Death in C18th* (Delaware, University of Delaware Press, forthcoming).

[115]Joseph Loach, 'History, Memoir and Necrophilia' in Peggy Phelan (ed.), *The End of Performance* (NYU Press, 1998), pp. 23–30.

[116]See Ashbee, *Bibliography of Forbidden Books*, Vol. II, p. 6; Vol. 3, p. 15.

[117]Scott Dudley, 'Conferring with the Dead, Necrophilia and Nostalgia in C18th', *ELH*, Vol. 66 No. 2 (Summer 1999), pp. 277–94.

[118]For cultural influences and dissection see Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned. Dissections and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London, Routledge, 1995); Tim Marshall, *Murdering to Dissect: Grave-Robbing, Frankenstein and the Anatomy Literature* (Manchester, MUP, 1995); Ruth Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute* (London and NY, Routledge, 1997); Richardson, *The Human Corpse and Popular Culture* (University of Sussex, 1985).

Fig. 1.6. William Hogarth, 'The Reward of Cruelty', *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, Plate IV (1751)

The Monk (1796). Necrophilia as the rape of dead bodies was in some ways an extension of the imagery which permeated eighteenth-century society in the image of seduction of the submissive female body – necrophilia was the height of this submission. Pornography also saw fictional depictions of girls being sedated, or raped while unconscious, linking scenes of rape to necrophilia as seen in *The Lascivious Hypocrite* (1790).[119] Although this purports to be a translation of *La Tartufe Libertine*,[120] it has been substantially reworked and was probably published about forty years later than it states. The aggressiveness of the narration suggests sado-masochism as the protagonist Valentine St. Geraud (a reference to the scandal of French priest Father Girard mentioned above) slips Eugenie a sleeping draught, renders her unconscious, and rapes her. Thus we see a shift in the way these images were presented with these earlier loving scenes between couples, in which 'surrenders' were a common theme being increasingly overtaken by scenarios which highlighted violence, brutal rape and pain.

We can perhaps see a retrospective connection between the sexologists and the time period covered by this book in Krafft-Ebing's definition of what sexual perversion *was not*; he believed that the purpose of sexual desire was procreation, and any form of desire that did not go towards that ultimate goal was a perversion.[121] Rape, for instance, was an aberrant act, but not a perversion, since pregnancy could result. Any sexual act which evaded procreation was seen to be perverse and anything which might result in procreation was deemed to be acceptable.

Creation of the perverse 'Other'

The development of imperialism gave rise to a new measure for deviancy. European colonialist, eager to create and maintain a distance between themselves and their conquered peoples, registered their own sexuality as wholesome, human and natural but classed native sexuality as abhorrent, bestial or somehow perverse. Historians have classed this colonialist perception of natives as 'The Other', a perception of the native as a lower person or animalistic – in essence meaning a people other than British. This creation of 'The British' as the standard norm by which to judge

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[119]A copy of the *The Lascivious Hypocrite* (1790) is in the Dawes Bequest at the BL; Ashbee cites the book entitled *La Tartufe* (sic) *Libertin ou Le Triomphe du Vice (Par Le Marquis DE SADE) En Holland Chez Les Libraires Associés 1789* (Fraxis, *Centuria*, Vol. II, pp. 267–8).

[120]Translations announcing themselves as 'true and accurate' were frequently freely altered, if not completely spurious.

[121]For his categorizations of sexual anomalies see, Kraft-Ebbing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886, English trans. 1892).

foreigners helped to establish the perverted 'other' as seen in Chapters 9 and 10.[122]

Nationalism became part of the history of sexuality and, with the onslaught of respectability, came the need for self-control. Philippa Levine has examined how ingrained prejudices of the sexual practices of colonized people had a direct effect on how new colonial laws penetrated and reinforced the distinction between the colonized and the colonizer.[123] As George L. Mosse declares 'nationalism not only helped to control sexuality, to reinforce what society considered normal, but it also provided the means through which changing sexual attitudes could be absorbed and tamed into respectability'.[124]

'Sinners' increasingly became the preserve of science and it now lay with the medical fraternity rather than the clerics to save morality. One example is Ambroise Tardieu's *Crimes Against Morals from the Viewpoint of Forensic Medicine* (1857) listing the inward and outward signs of pederasty in order to both help the law, and to ensure the state's better control over private morality – the 'feminized' appearance of these men was criticized. The concept of 'degeneration' was introduced by Bénedict Augustin Morel as early as 1852, to be crystallized by Max Nordau in a book of the same name in 1892 and used to exemplify the difference between normalcy and non-normalcy. Mosse asserts that 'At the end of the nineteenth century, Darwinism and degeneration had sharpened public attitudes towards the abnormal which had existed for over a century.'

Even prior to this, from the beginning of our period and earlier, we see a belief in most travellers that the foreigners they encountered were bestial, savages, or at the very least, below themselves in terms of human specimens.[125] As the British Empire stretched its rule, so did the notion of superiority of the British herald itself as never before. The encounters by soldiers, missionaries and explorers often give us our first views of the natives of other countries and with it came the biases and racism which

[122]Hyman believes the erosion of respect of other races of the British Empire took place between 1790s and 1840s, and the growth of prejudice against them took place between mid-1850s and the late 1860s, although I have found lack of respect and prejudice from much earlier explorations. Ronald Hyman, *Empire and Sexuality. The British Experience* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1900); Julie Peakman, *Civilising* Sex. *Two Thousand years of History* (London, forthcoming).
[123]Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics. Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (London, Routledge, 2003). Also see her chapter in Levine (ed.), *Gender and Empire* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 134–55.
[124]George L. Mosse, 'Nationalism and Respectability: Normal and Abnormal Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Sexuality in History (Apr., 1982), pp. 221–46.
[125]*Ibid.*

infused sexual attitudes for the next three hundred years. Reaction against foreigners most often came in the form of attacks on their sexuality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can see that sexual perversion manifested itself both as a crime 'against nature' and religion, and was regulated through the moralist attitude of the local community and through legal attempts to control it. The acts which fit into that category had been defined in the Bible and were buttressed by centuries of theological interpretation, the worst being sodomy (whether with beasts, anal sex between a man and a woman, or sex between two men). Female cross-dressing was not generally regarded as perverse although male cross-dressing was when it was associated with sodomy. Likewise, female to female penetration was regarded as against nature but less was mentioned about these activities, and they caused less concern. Flagellation was seen merely as curious diversions, while foot fetishism seems to have been a celebrated activity.

Apart from finding sexual perversion in the past by examining delineations of religion and in the classification 'against nature', another 'way in' to finding sexual perversion in history can be seen through the lens of pornography. What was considered 'against nature', or what was considered perverse in pornography, does not necessarily adhere to what we see as sexually perverse now. Therefore 'normality' is not a given, nor is it a concept set in time but it changes and mutates, it varies between classes, and genders. Perversity can therefore be seen to be set against the norm, and in turn, this also changes in time. However, that change has been relatively slow and piecemeal. From the Restoration through the Enlightenment to the Victorian period we find a concept of perversity that was fairly constant and consistent, although this argument might be nuanced with further investigations. It included certain sexual acts considered deviant or divergent from what was perceived as 'normal' or natural – the further away from the perceived 'normal', the more perverse that sexual behaviour was seen to be.[126]

Although religion and ensuing moralities played a major part in influencing and overseeing people's sexual behaviour and the creation of perceptions of perversion, lofty values of the literary or moral world of eighteenth-century

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[126]The concept of normality as 'constituting, conforming to, not deviating or differing from the common type of standard' and the term 'abnormal as 'deriving from the ordinary rule or type, contrary to the rule or system', appears only to have became common from the 1830s or 40s onwards; as did its opposite abnormal 'deviating from the ordinary rule or type; contrary to the rule or system; irregular unusual aberrant'.

French (or even English) philosophers are unlikely to have deeply affected the perception of the ordinary man on the street (or in the field) of either his sexual perversion, or that of others. S/he was more likely to be indirectly influenced by the writings of the Church Fathers as it filtered down through lectures from the pulpit. Social control and community action would also have played a large part in expunging deviant behaviour, but this effect would have declined as rural communities dispersed. As people redeployed into the cities, family networks broke down – spies were now the neighbours next door who resorted to the law for retribution.

Perceptions of behavioural types and acts were gradually recategorized as new scientific methods and appraisals came into view. The old religious connections of 'perversion' to sin, witchcraft, and association with the devil were slowly being replaced with condemnation of deviant behaviour through medical and scientific models of classification or 'treatment'. Although these breakdowns and delinkings were taking place over the nineteenth century, only with the coming of the new sexologist models was sexual perversion defined as specific medical categories. Nonetheless, there was a continued link between an impressed knowledge of 'correct', or good way of doing things, and a 'bad' or incorrect way, with the old theological thinking of the individual moral consciousness being linked to the new ideas of the sexologists and psychiatrists such as Freud. In sexology and psychiatry, perversion continued to reinforce the notion of sexual normality through its inversion but in a new language.

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2

Staging Perversion: The Restoration's Sexual Allegory of (Un)civil War

Becky McLaughlin

> But I'm afraid that while to France we go,
> To bring you home fine dresses, dance, and show,
> The stage, like you, will but more foppish grow.
> Of foreign wares why should we fetch the scum,
> When we can be so richly served at home?
> For, heav'n be thanked, 'tis not so wise an age
> But your own follies may supply the stage.
> – From the Prologue to *The Man of Mode or Sir Fopling Flutter*

While many have argued, and I would agree, that George Etherege's play *The Man of Mode or Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676) can be read as a comment on boredom and social ennui, an attack on the mannerisms of the bourgeoisie, I would also argue that a powerful political undercurrent becomes quite evident if we take into account two phenomena that were considered the curse of Restoration and post-Restoration English society: social mobility and sexual impotence.

By the late seventeenth century, England had been through a long period of social mobility, the climax of which had been civil war. The country had also seen such a dramatic decline in fertility and a sharp rise in mortality among the upper classes that members of the aristocracy born between 1625 and 1674 were no longer reproducing themselves. Given this fact, it is hardly surprising that the figure of ridicule on the Restoration stage is represented as a fetishistic, social-climbing fashion snob such as Sir Fopling. Paul Seaver argues that part of the Restoration settlement involved a determination 'to put a damper on change and to reassert traditional control by traditional authorities'.[1] By putting Charles II back on the throne, the English embraced stability and rejected change, creating property and

[1]Paul Seaver, *Seventeenth-Century England: Society in an Age of Revolution* (New York, New Viewpoints, 1976), p. 55.

sumptuary laws that effectively road-blocked the avenues of social mobility. Unwittingly or not, Restoration playwrights such as Etherege assisted in this endeavour by portraying stability and virility through a libertine such as Dorimant, and change and impotence through a fop such as Sir Fopling.

In an examination of Etherege's play, I will show that beneath the play's apparent banality there is an aggressive political and social agenda. Roland Barthes has correctly commented: 'When a great many people agree that a problem is insignificant, that usually means it is not. Insignificance is the locus of true significance'.[2] Although Barthes may have been thinking of something such as a Freudian slip,[3] which psychoanalysis sees as a nonsense utterance through which the truth speaks, he could just as easily have been thinking of allegory. For allegory frequently makes use of the ordinary to speak of the extraordinary, the humble to speak of the exalted, and thus it is the play's very insignificance that signals its true significance. If we read attentively, we find that the play not only contains masks but also functions as a mask itself, for behind the everyday banality of a bored leisure class's sexual exploits lies socio-political crisis and conflict cleverly displaced onto, and veiled by, the sexual but which is nevertheless discernible and thus readable as crisis and conflict.

As the play opens, we are introduced to the libertine Dorimant, who is both the protagonist of Etherege's play and one of the two central characters in what I am calling the Restoration's allegory of perversion. Soon after, we are introduced to the foppish Sir Fopling Flutter, who functions as Dorimant's antagonist or foil in both venues. There is little to say about the plot of the play, for although it follows, in a greatly flattened-out manner, the contours of classical dramatic structure, not much happens. Dorimant chases women in a bid for sex, while Sir Fopling chases Dorimant in a bid for popularity. In the end, Dorimant gets the girl of his dreams and Sir Fopling gets the ultimate put-down.

With a discussion of classified, gendered, fetishized, busy, and castrated bodies, I will illustrate how the bodies of Dorimant and Sir Fopling are, finally, allegorical bodies. For Etherege's play stages an (un)civil war between libertine and fop through which is posed a question that must have lain heavily on every Restoration subject's heart: in what does a 'real' English subject's authenticity lie? If Puritan and Royalist, Catholic and Protestant, libertine

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[2]Roland Barthes (trans. Linda Coverdale), *The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962–1980* (New York, Hill and Wang, 1985), p. 177.

[3]Freud mentions slips of the tongue, now simply referred to as Freudian slips, in his *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life,* 1901. Such a slip occurs when one says something other than what one intends to say. For example, one might intend to say, 'I put a spell on you' but unintentionally substitute the word 'smell' for 'spell'. According to Freud, this substitution would be no accident but a truth welling up from the unconscious.

and fop look more or less alike, how is one to recognize a true English subject when one sees one?

I. Classified and Labelled Bodies

Sexuality studies of the 1980s and 1990s relied upon the work of Austro-German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebbing; the British sexual psychologist and social reformer Havelock Ellis; and the Viennese father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, as the originary labellers of the perversions, and therefore these studies had a tendency to privilege discourse over object. Although certain labels may not have existed until the late nineteenth century, there were nevertheless certain dynamics, effects, functions, and structures in operation before Krafft-Ebbing, Ellis, or Freud entered the scene. Krafft-Ebbing can be credited with having written the famous *Psychopathia Sexualis*, a study of sexual perversity published in 1886, and with having coined the term *sadism*, but he cannot be credited with the invention of perversion. Similarly, while Ellis can be credited for having been interested in sexual liberation long before its popularization in the 1960s and for writing the first English medical textbook on homosexuality, *Sexual Inversion*, he cannot be credited with the invention of perversion. Even Freud, whose *Three Essays on Sexuality* introduced the idea of sexuality as a process independent of an individual's sex, cannot be credited with the invention of perversion. All three men, however, have helped provide a fruitful way to speak about perversion, for their discourse, particularly the psychoanalytic, can be used as a tool to analyze behaviours that have been around for centuries.

The question is whether it is legitimate to engage in this kind of retroactive analysis; whether it is legitimate to make use of a later discourse to discuss an earlier object. One answer to this question is that a precedent has already been set by those such as Alfred Binet,[4] who analysed the operations of fetishism in the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Maurice Heine, who used the writings of the Marquis de Sade to diagnose the writer. According to Emily Apter, 'In constructing the genealogy of [the] fetishist character [type] the pre-Freudian doctors relied not only on [...] case studies but also on the weighty evidence provided by literature of the fetishist's continuous presence in history'.[5] Perhaps a better, more theor-

[4]Binet (1857–1911) was a French psychologist who invented the first usable intelligence test in 1905. His test, known as the Binet-Simon, is the basis of today's IQ test. In 1883, he accepted a position at the Salpêtrière, where he worked with Jean Charcot. In 1894, he was appointed director of the Sorbonne's Laboratory of Physiological Psychology, where he studied memory, thinking, hypnosis, handwriting, and perception.

[5]Emily Apter, *Feminizing the Fetish: Psychoanalysis and Narrative Obsession in Turn-of-the-Century France* (Ithaca, Cornell UP, 1991), p. 18.

etically sound answer, however, is that even before something is identified (given identity by naming), it can 'ex-sist' Heideggerian-style in what Jacques Lacan would call the register of the real, a register that New Lacanian Bruce Fink defines as '*that which has not yet been symbolized* [his emphasis], remains to be symbolized, or even resists symbolization'.[6] Once named, the thing comes to exist in language or the symbolic register, which is identified with 'social reality'. Fink explains the shift from ex-sistence to existence: 'insofar as we name and talk about the real and weave it into a theoretical discourse on language and the "time before the word," we draw it into language and thereby give a kind of existence to that which, in its very concept, has only ex-sistence'.[7] In other words, meaning can now begin to congeal in and around the thing in a way that was impossible before this shift occurred. This shift does not mean that the object moves out of one register and into another. Instead, it means that the object occupies two overlapping registers, and because of the complexity created by the overlap of real and symbolic, a residue of opacity will always cling to the name, which is simply to say that we can never experience the thing named in an unmediated, fully present, fully revealed form.

One of the most important observations Michel Foucault makes in *The History of Sexuality* is that in the nineteenth century a discursive shift occurred, which allowed what one *does* to dictate what one *is*. After this shift, one no longer simply engaged in homosexual acts, for example, but was now identified and/or classified as a homosexual because of those acts: 'the nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology'.[8] No doubt, this shift in discourse is partly responsible for our mistaken impression that perversion was an invention of the nineteenth century.

Like any paradoxical concept, perversion is especially elusive because it slips so easily into what is often considered its opposite: the natural, right, or normal. The reason for this slippage is that when we use the term perversion, we generally understand it as a deviation from something, and yet perversion, in its sexological sense, was observed by Freud to be primary while 'normal' sexuality was considered secondary. In fact, if perversion is defined as a deviation from the natural or instinctual, then the truly perverse is 'normal' sexuality since it entails learned practices that take shape only after the erotic field of what Freud called the 'polymorphously

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[6]Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton, Princeton UP, 1995), p. 25.
[7]Fink, p. 25.
[8]Michel Foucault (trans. Robert Hurley), *The History of Sexuality; Volume I: An Introduction* (New York, Vintage Books, 1990), p. 43.

perverse' body has been divided up into erogenous zones. As Jonathan Dollimore articulates Freud's theory of sexuality and civilization,

> [...] it is sexual perversion, not sexual 'normality', which is the given in human nature. Indeed, sexual normality is precariously achieved and precariously maintained: the process whereby the perversions are sublimated can never be guaranteed to work; it has to be reenacted in the case of each individual subject and is an arduous and conflictual process [...]. Sometimes it doesn't work; sometimes it appears to, only to fail at a later date. Civilization, says Freud, remains precarious and 'unstable' (1.48) as a result.[9]

What Freud does not merely imply but directly asserts is that perversion is natural, while sexual 'normality' is artificial, and yet ironically the label of 'unnatural' is always reserved for perversion.

The fact that the term perversion is, at the very least, a bit of a misnomer does nothing to mitigate its uncanny effects, for what is most disturbing about perversion, says Dollimore, what creates its 'shattering effect', an effect he has termed the 'perverse dynamic', is its place of origin: 'it originates internally to just those things it threatens'.[10] Using Augustine's answer to the problem of the origin of evil, Dollimore explains how the perverse dynamic operates:

> [...] evil not only erupts from within a divinely ordained order but, more telling still, it erupts from within the beings closest to God, *those who participate most intimately in divinity* [...]. In short, a negation/deviation erupts from *within* that which it negates (divinity) only to be then displaced onto the subordinate term of the God/man binary – and then further displaced onto the subordinate within man (i.e., woman): *proximity is the enabling condition of a displacement which in turn marks the 'same' as radically 'other'* [his emphases].[11]

Dollimore argues that this displacement probably explains why perversion, whether 'theological or sexual, is so often conceived as *at once utterly alien to and yet mysteriously inherent within* [his emphasis] the true and the authentic'.[12]

One might say that the inadequacy of language and the uncanny nature of perversion work together to vex discussion of this slippery concept, and

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[9]Jonathan Dollimore, 'The Cultural Politics of Perversion: Augustine, Shakespeare, Freud, Foucault', *Genders, 8* (1990), p. 1.
[10]Dollimore, p. 4.
[11]Dollimore, p. 5.
[12]Dollimore, p. 4.

yet it may be possible to understand more clearly what Dollimore has identified as a paradox if we think of how the term perversion is used or fails to be used in certain situations. For example, when people refer to someone as a 'pervert', they generally mean it as an insult. If one is called a pervert, one is considered sick or abnormal. In fact, people use the terms 'perverse', 'sick', and 'abnormal' interchangeably.[13] Dominant ideology in the heterosexual realm, the realm considered the norm in Western culture, forces women to function as fetish objects, or props, supporting the illusion that men are in possession of the phallus and thus lack nothing.[14] When fetishism operates to support the status quo, to support certain power relations that exist in the sexual domain, it is seen as perfectly normal. In fact, it is rarely identified as a perversion when it functions in the procreative heterosexual realm.

II. Gendered and Fetishized Bodies

The contradictions and paradoxes inherent in the West's dominant ideology, which takes heterosexuality and procreation as its cornerstones, are not new ones, however, for we see them occurring more than three hundred years earlier on the Restoration stage. Etherege's *The Man of Mode or Sir Fopling Flutter* illustrates these contradictions and paradoxes especially vividly through the Restoration's allegory of perversion, for it is on the stage that we see the subtle but powerful machinations of the perverse dynamic played out in an opposition between man and woman, libertine and fop.

While it is true that labels such as 'fag', 'gay', or 'perv' are absent from Etherege's play, we nevertheless register the effects of such name-calling. Not only do we see the double standard applied when libertine and fop

[13]Take, for example, a fetishist such as Manley Pointer, the young Bible salesman in Flannery O'Connor's story 'Good Country People'. Not only is he fascinated by Hulga's artificial leg, but also he wishes to see how she takes it off and puts it on, the story culminating in his theft of the leg. What is implied by the sexually-charged scene in which the leg theft takes place is that Manley Pointer is fixated on prosthetics in the way another man might be fixated on a woman's breasts. Although both mistake a part for the whole, only Manley Pointer will be considered abnormal.
[14]In psychoanalytic discourse, the phallus is distinguished from the penis, which is simply one metaphor among many for the phallus. The phallus is understood as a key signifier (albeit a repressed one) that stands for 'imaginary fullness of being, complete identity, and immortality', Lee, 1990, p. 116. According to Jonathan Scott Lee, 'a woman's role in man's fantasy life is simply that of being the *objet a* that makes up for the man's castration by language, his lack of the omnipotent phallus. Thus, man's sexual desire is ultimately narcissistic [...], and the object(s) of his desire are precisely those imaginarily detached body parts, those *objets a* – breasts, buttocks, mouths – that trigger his desire and his masturbatory *jouissance*', p. 179.

engage in fetishizing – the former's fetishizing gesture is registered as socially acceptable and the latter's as socially *un*acceptable – we also see two kinds of fetishization in evidence: that of the female body and that of the male. Just as a double standard applies to men whose fetish objects differ, so, too, does a double standard apply when the body being fetishized is masculine. Two scenes from Etherege's play will serve to show how this double standard operates.

The first scene involves fetishization of the female body and takes place in Dorimant's dressing room where he, his friend Medley, and the Orange-Woman are discussing Harriet Woodvill, a 'young gentlewoman, lately come to town with her mother' (I. i. 83).[15] Although the Orange-Woman consistently refers to Harriet as a woman, Dorimant refers to her as a 'mask', a synecdochic gesture that allows an object to stand in for a complete female body, a part to stand in for the whole. Medley, while ostensibly speaking in complimentary terms, nevertheless engages in a radical dissection of Harriet, thereby reducing what might be called her 'organic whole' to a list of fetishized pieces: 'a fine, easy, clean shape; light brown hair in abundance; her features regular; her complexion clear and lively; large, wanton eyes; but above all, a mouth that has made me kiss it a thousand times in imagination – teeth white and even, and pretty, pouting lips, with a little moisture ever hanging on them' (I. i. 85). If we believe as Lacan does that the signifier has the power to mortify or disembody the life substance, to 'dissect' the body and subordinate it to the constraints of the signifying network, then Medley's particular use of language only compounds the violence already inherent in language by 'quartering' Harriet's body, or, as Slavoj Žižek says, by tearing her out of 'the embedment in [her] concrete context', and treating her 'component parts as entities with an autonomous existence'.[16] Her mouth, for instance, becomes larger than life or, at the very least, takes on a life of its own.

Although Harriet is not privy to the statements Medley utters about her in Dorimant's dressing room, she makes it quite clear in a later scene that she would receive his flattering commentary as a most unwelcome violation, for when Dorimant suggests to Harriet that she come to court, she replies, 'And expect to be taken in pieces, have all my features examined, every motion censured [...]. What think you?' (IV. i. 123).[17] Obviously,

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[15]Quotations of Etherege are from Scott McMillin (ed.), *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Comedy*, 1st ed. (New York, W.W. Norton, 1973).
[16]Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (New York, Routledge, 1992), p. 51.
[17]Even before Freud associated fetishism with castration, Binet had already theorized the fetish as a freestanding, self-enclosed object abstracted from its context that 'bore the signs of cutting' and 'underscored the importance of the synecdochic gaze', Apter, p. 21.

Harriet intuitively grasps the unconscious linkage between a man's compliment to a woman and a cut.

The second scene involves fetishization of the male body and takes place at Lady Townley's house where a group of friends has just been joined by Sir Fopling Flutter. What this scene makes obvious is Sir Fopling's marginality to a privileged community with which he desperately wishes to be associated. Although the exchange that follows Sir Fopling's arrival may pass on the surface as a series of compliments offered the new man in town, 'arrived piping hot from Paris' (I. i. 89), it is, in fact, the opposite; we have already been educated as to how to read this scene by Harriet's comments about being taken in pieces and by the snide remarks made about Sir Fopling before his arrival, remarks that include his being called 'the freshest fool in town' by none other than his hostess. Appropriately enough, the commentary opens with a synecdochic image:

> EMILIA: He wears nothing but what are originals of the most famous *hands* in Paris [my emphasis].
> SIR FOPLING: You are in the right, madam.
> LADY TOWNLEY: The suit?
> SIR FOPLING: Barroy.
> EMILIA: The garniture?
> SIR FOPLING: Le Gras.
> MEDLEY: The shoes?
> SIR FOPLING: Piccar.
> DORIMANT: The periwig?
> SIR FOPLING: Chedreux.
> LADY TOWNLEY, EMILIA: The gloves?
> SIR FOPLING: Orangerie. [...] (III. ii. 111)

This exchange cannot be read as simply a public stripping but as a castrating gesture through which the community takes Sir Fopling apart limb by limb. They appear to view him not as a whole man but as a man-in-pieces. In fact, Dorimant shows precisely how he views Sir Fopling – i.e., as an object – when he declares to Mrs. Loveit that fools such as Sir Fopling 'are designed for properties and not for friends' (V. i. 138).[18] In offering her guests 'the freshest fool', arrived 'piping hot', Lady Townley has served

[18]The same sort of belittling gesture occurs in William Congreve's *The Way of the World*, where it is suggested that two fops add up to one man: 'You and I are excluded,' says Fainall to Mirabell, 'and it was once proposed that all the male sex should be excepted; but somebody moved that, to avoid scandal, there might be one man of the community; upon which motion Witwoud and Petulant were enrolled members' (I. 158).

Sir Fopling up to be plucked, roasted, and devoured, for the assembled guests resemble nothing if not predators pouncing on prey.

These two scenes share many obvious similarities, but they also betray significant differences that point toward contradiction or double standard. In the first scene, Medley's fetishizing gesture is made in private about the fetishized object, while in the second scene, the group's fetishizing gesture is directed at the fetishized object in a public situation. In other words, one is padded by indirection and the other is a direct, frontal assault. Furthermore, Medley's fetishizing gesture (i.e., his dissection of Harriet) is not only meant to be a compliment but an aphrodisiac, and what it gives rise to is Dorimant's desire; conversely, the group's fetishizing gesture (i.e., their dismemberment of Sir Fopling) is meant to be an inside joke at Sir Fopling's expense, inciting further ridicule of and contempt for him.

Given the particular set of similarities and differences between these two scenes, it seems clear that fetishizing or cutting up the female body is considered 'normal' in that there is a shared understanding of what a female body is – i.e., something already lacking, castrated, or mutilated because it does not have a penis but a vagina. The fetishizing of the male body, however, must be understood quite differently. It is, at least in the context of Etherege's play, an act of aggression meant to threaten or, worse still, punish a masculine body that is supposed to be non-lacking, un-castrated, and un-mutilated but that fails to pull off the illusion of full-blown phallic power.[19] Both responses fall under the rubric of the perverse, but in the case of the two scenes discussed above, one type glorifies and the other type punishes. Because of the fact that Sir Fopling is the only male who appears in a mask (or a 'vizard,' as Sir Fopling refers to it) and because of the fact that he is compared to a woman on numerous occasions – first, when Medley claims that Sir Fopling's 'looks are more languishing than a lady's' and his periwig 'more exactly curled than a lady's head newly dressed for a ball' (I. i. 89); second, when Young Bellair refers to Sir Fopling's lisp as 'pretty' (I. i. 89); and, third, when Medley says to Sir Fopling, 'Like a woman I find you must be struggled with before one brings you what you desire' (IV. i. 126) – what seems apparent is that he represents the same kind of horrifying spectacle as the castrated female body, but because he is a man rather than a beautiful woman, the defensive gesture on the part of the viewer will be a punishing rather than a glorifying one. The question

[19]In drawing a distinction between these two fetishizing gestures, it is of use to recall what Laura Mulvey has said about the defense mechanisms of a male spectator confronted with the spectacle of the castrated (female) body. He defends himself against the horror of castration either by glorifying the female body to such a degree that it is seen to lack nothing and be everything (i.e., with fetishism) or by punishing the female body for the pain it has caused him (i.e., with sadism). Laura Muvley, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn 1975).

that arises, however, is why the group, and Dorimant most of all, views Sir Fopling as someone (or some*thing*, as Dorimant would have it) to defend oneself against.

Clearly, the vehemence of the antagonism levelled at Sir Fopling is hardly justified by his behaviour, for the worst that can be said of him is that he is a bit of a narcissist, and although his priggish mannerisms may be annoying, he holds Dorimant in very high esteem and says so repeatedly. Further, it would seem that there is altogether too much effort on Dorimant's part to distinguish himself from Sir Fopling if they are as radically different as they are supposed to be. In fact, when Dorimant says to Mrs. Loveit, 'I would not have a woman have the least good thought of me that can think well of Fopling' (II. ii. 101), it reasserts the invisibility and/or the brokenness of the male homosocial continuum in modern Western culture.[20] Obviously, Dorimant's statement is meant to hide, destroy, or deny a continuum upon which he and Sir Fopling might be said to exist. While it is hardly without significance that the distinction between the two men is called into question several times within the play itself – once when Pert refers to Dorimant as a 'modish man' and argues that Sir Fopling is 'as handsome a man as Mr. Dorimant, and as great a gallant' (V. i. 135) and another when Harriet accuses Dorimant of affectation and implies that he is a fop – it is, perhaps, of even more importance that Etherege himself goes to the trouble of making this distinction clear with his subtitle, 'Sir Fopling Flutter'. The fact that he includes Sir Fopling's name in the title of his play suggests that there might be, for the audience, some doubt or confusion as to the man of mode's identity and that there might appear on the stage a number of contenders for this dubious title, including Dorimant himself.

Already by the late seventeenth century, then, we see evidence that the male homosocial continuum is anything but fluid or flexible and that there is a powerful investment in maintaining differences between men rather than acknowledging the wide spectrum of experience that the category 'man' encompasses. Because an opposition is created *between* men rather than *within* the category itself, Dorimant's hostile attitude toward Sir Fopling seems to be the same as the attitude a modern-day homophobic man adopts toward a gay one: 'I'm one kind of man, the right kind; and you're a different kind of man, the wrong kind. There is a difference between us, a gulf so wide that it can never be bridged, for I represent "same" and you, "other"'. Perhaps at some level, that of the unconscious, Dorimant recognizes the concepts of same and other, and this is what gives rise to his discomfort: as Dollimore says, 'The natural/unnatural binary is only ever a

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[20]I am indebted to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, here, for her discussion of the male homosocial continuum in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, published in 1985.

differential relation; that is, a difference which is always already one of intimate though antagonistic interdependence. What is constructed as absolutely other is in fact inextricably related'.[21] Here, in a nutshell, is the shattering truth of the perverse dynamic, a truth that the dominant ideology seeks to keep repressed at all costs.

The questions that emerge, therefore, are less about the fop than the libertine: first, why does Dorimant exhibit an aggressivity[22] that manifests itself as a need to insult, exclude, or even annihilate Sir Fopling? And if annihilate seems too strong a word, one has only to recall the scene already examined in which the group gathered at Lady Townley's house publicly 'castrates' him; or to note Dorimant's almost obsessive need to bash Sir Fopling every time he gets a chance, making such venomous statements as the following: 'To be seen publicly so transported with the vain follies of that notorious fop, to me is an infamy below the sin of prostitution with another man' (V. i. 139). Second, why does Dorimant exhibit an excessive anxiety that manifests itself as a need to seduce every woman in sight? As his friend Medley quite accurately says of Dorimant, 'He's a man of great employment – has more mistresses now depending than the most eminent lawyer in England has causes' (II. i. 95). Because behaviour such as aggressivity and an affect such as anxiety cannot help draining these comedies of their humor, they seem inappropriate or 'perverse', to use the word in its popular sense, and given that they effectively undermine what one generally understands the purpose of comedy to be – transforming hostility into gaiety and relieving anxiety through laughter – we are led to a new problem: how to account for the fact that a play with so much clever wit could be cause for such little laughter, and why the play works so hard to convince us (rather unsuccessfully) that Dorimant is the likeable 'hero' worthy of our admiration and respect while Sir Fopling is his contemptible 'enemy' worthy only of our disdain. The play opens, for instance, in Dorimant's dressing room, the intimacy of the setting inviting us to identify or sympathize with its occupant. And yet, despite directives given by the diegesis of the play and its characters, audiences throughout the ages have found Etherege's libertine somewhat less than likeable. There is a notable tension, then, between what we as audience are directed to do (i.e., like Dorimant) and what we in fact *do* do (i.e., dislike Dorimant). This is the kind of tension that can easily arise, unbidden, when one such as a playwright or a society at large is desperate to believe something that one knows is not true – in other words, when one engages in disavowal.

[21]Dollimore, p. 8.

[22]I use the psychoanalytic term 'aggressivity' to suggest what pop psychology refers to as passive-aggressive behaviour. In other words, aggressivity can be understood as displaced aggression and/or misplaced hostility, both of which go unacknowledged or unmarked by the one engaging in it.

To dispel the notion that it is only the passage of time that has made it difficult to see the humor of *The Man of Mode or Sir Fopling Flutter*, we have, from 1711, Richard Steele's response to it: 'I think nothing but being lost to a sense of innocence and virtue can make any one see this comedy without observing more frequent occasion to move sorrow and indignation than mirth and laughter'.[23] Steele's comments were, of course, spoken out of a moralizing agenda, but more than two hundred years later we have similar comments being made by L.C. Knights when he refers to Dorimant's treatment of Mrs. Loveit as 'spiteful' and describes the scenes in which Dorimant tries to force a quarrel with her as 'brutish'.[24] If the play is witty without being funny, perhaps this discrepancy can be accounted for by noting that a joke told in order to conceal something unpleasant – embarrassment, fear, or nervousness, for example – often falls flat. The play, then, is very much akin to a joke that does not quite come off, a joke that calls attention to what Freud would call its teller's 'unpleasure'.[25]

III. Busy and business bodies

I have tried to suggest, thus far, that although Dorimant and Sir Fopling are not nearly as different as they might appear, there is a heavy investment on the part of Dorimant and his social set in maintaining that they are. Sir Fopling, who represents social mobility and sexual impotence, is made to look like a fool, while Dorimant, who represents social stability and sexual virility, is made to look desirable. In the Restoration's allegory of perversion, in fact, Dorimant represents desire and Sir Fopling, the drive. Dorimant, then, is both a personification of desire and a desiring subject who manifests his desire in an excessive hostility toward Sir Fopling and an equally excessive pursuit of women. Sir Fopling, on the other hand, is both a personification of drive and a subject given over to the drive, for he concentrates his libidinal energies upon auto-erotic activities and fetish objects such as clothing.

One of the most notable features of Etherege's comedy is the way it relies for its humour on Sir Fopling's futile efforts to place himself at the centre of, or make himself popular with, a group of people who obviously wish to exclude him. Despite his use of fashionable words and clothes, he only

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[23]Richard Steele, *The Spectator, No. 65*, in Scott McMillin (ed.), *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Comedy* (New York, W.W. Norton, 1973), p. 422.

[24]L.C. Knights, 'Restoration Comedy: The Reality and the Myth', in Scott McMillin (ed.), *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Comedy* (New York, W.W. Norton, 1973), pp. 495–6.

[25]The term 'unpleasure' comes to us from Freud's notion of the pleasure principle, a regulatory principle of mental functioning whose aim is to avoid unpleasure and obtain pleasure.

manages to appear ridiculous, while his more successful counterpart, a libertine such as Dorimant, carries his lexical and sartorial fashions with flair. How, one wonders, are we to account for the social failure of one and the success of the other? Why does the Restoration fop remain marginal to a community that he desperately wishes to join? Why are his attempts to gain entry into this privileged community so ineffectual? While it is true that the fop uses his storehouse of foreign words and faddish clothes fetishistically, calling undue attention to the psychic 'wound' that locates itself not on the body (as would be the case in hysteria) but outside it, and thus short-circuits successful entrance into the desired community, it is also true that the socially successful Dorimant labours even more frantically than Sir Fopling, albeit with an apparently different aim in mind, and that the kind of play in which he engages – sexual dalliance and seduction – more closely resembles work. In fact, for a libertine, there is something considerably utilitarian about Dorimant.

To answer some of the questions that have been raised, particularly those that attempt to interrogate Dorimant's attitude and behaviour toward Sir Fopling, we can read Etherege's play as the staging of a civil war in which the Restoration subject's repressed, or neurotic, part (Dorimant) does battle with its unrepressed, or perverse, part (Sir Fopling). The antagonism that the libertine offers the fop is the antagonism that exists between desire and the drive, desire acting always as a defense against the drive. The work, labour, or business in which the libertine and fop engage is an attempt to mask anxiety about castration and the sexual relation, but this work manifests itself as hysterical desire in the case of Dorimant and as the perversions associated with the drive in the case of Sir Fopling. Dorimant is satisfied *by* nothing, hence his need to bounce from one woman to another, while Sir Fopling is satisfied *with* nothing, hence the general impervíousness with which he responds to his failure to seduce Mrs. Loveit. Even though Dorimant is having all the sex, Sir Fopling is getting all the enjoyment, for Sir Fopling is on more intimate (if by intimate we mean proximate) terms with what Lacan refers to as object small a or the object-cause of desire.[26]

The difference between desire and drive can best be explained by articulating their relation to the symbolic register. Desire, which is set in motion

[26]Object small a was one of Jacques Lacan's most important contributions to psychoanalysis, but it is a complicated concept to which he devoted thousands of pages, many as yet unpublished. For the sake of simplicity, I will make use of Bruce Fink's list of avatars: 'the other [*autre* in French, hence the letter a], *agalma*, the golden number, the Freudian Thing, the real, the anomaly, the cause of desire, surplus *jouissance*, the materiality of language, the analyst's desire, logical consistency, the Other's desire, semblance/shame, the lost object, and so on and so forth', Fink, 1995, p. 83.

by lack or absence, is linked to the Oedipal law (not natural laws but legal and/or institutional) since it continually searches for something that is prohibited or unavailable. The logic of desire and drive is nicely summed up by New Lacanian Renata Salecl: in desire, the subject says, 'It is prohibited to do this, but I will nonetheless do it'.[27] Drive, on the other hand, does not care about prohibitions or transgressing the law, and thus a subject following the drive would say, 'I do not want to do this, but I am nonetheless doing it'.[28] In the case of the drive, the subject does not *desire* to do it (whatever it may be) but *enjoys* doing it. The drive always achieves satisfaction, while desire remains unsatisfied, endlessly moving from one object to another, creating new limits and prohibitions. As Jacques-Alain Miller says, 'With the drive you can always ask, who is driving? Is there a pilot in this drive? In some sense, the drive seems to go adrift (*à la dérive*). But in fact it is desire that drifts, whereas the drive knows its way'.[29] Drive is a constant pressure, a circulation around object small a, which produces the painful satisfaction that Lacan refers to as *jouissance*. What, then, is the relationship between perversion and the drive? According to Miller, drive is by its very nature perverse. Perversion is the norm of the drive. 'To take a person, a whole person as an object, is not the role of the drive [...],' says Miller.[30] Because there is no such thing as a genital drive, only partial drives, the drive does not seek any object in particular. There is no opposite-sex drive, for example. All the drive seeks is satisfaction, and it will take it wherever it can get it. Desire, however, keeps a respectful distance from object small a, a distance from which object small a appears to be a lost part of ourselves whose absence prevents us from becoming whole. Thus it comes to function as the object-cause of our desire, the thing that would complete us if we could ever locate its whereabouts.

Dorimant's sexual 'business' or 'employment' is a good example of the logic of desire, for by the end of the first act, we learn of his involvement with four different women, each one less available or more prohibited than the last. Although the women are not introduced into the play in this order, we learn of Dorimant's relations with a whore named Molly through a letter she sends him requesting money. This letter arrives just as he is composing a letter to Mrs. Loveit, a woman of quality with whom he has been having an affair, a letter in which he attempts to cover the relationship he is beginning to have with Bellinda, Mrs. Loveit's best friend

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[27]Renata Salecl, 'The Satisfaction of Drives', *Umbr(a)*, 1 (1997), p. 106.
[28]Salecl, p. 106.
[29]Jacques-Alain Miller, 'On Perversion', in Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink, and Maire Jaanus (eds), *Reading Seminars I and II: Lacan's Return to Freud* (Albany, SUNY Press, 1996), p. 316.
[30]Miller, p. 313.

and confidant. But even as his passion for Bellinda is heating up, Dorimant begins hankering after Harriet, who is out of bounds for at least three reasons: first, she is engaged to be married; second, she is engaged to someone Dorimant calls friend, and thus to seduce Harriet or steal her away would be a breach of what is normally considered ethical conduct; and, third, Harriet's mother views Dorimant as the devil himself and is actively working to keep her daughter out of his clutches. It is little wonder that all of Dorimant's desire will become congealed in and/or circulate around this one female object, for Harriet Woodvill is clearly the most prohibited of women, and thus obtaining her will present Dorimant with the most obstacles to overcome as well as the most opportunities for transgression.

If, metaphorically speaking, Dorimant is trying to get his business off the ground – hence his eagerness to 'trade' with women both inside and outside his social set – then Sir Fopling has already made his fortune. Because the perverse subject has found his libidinal object in the fetish, he might be said to enjoy an equanimity that the neurotic subject rarely achieves. Unlike the neurotic subject, the perverse subject is certain about his means of obtaining sexual gratification. As Miller aptly puts it, the pervert 'has an immutable, constant share that is always ready to use – it is *at hand*, an *at hand* enjoyment'.[31] This is why we see Sir Fopling focusing on Emilia's Spanish lace: 'I never saw anything prettier than this high work on your *point d'Espaigne*,' he says, to which Emilia replies, ''Tis not so rich as *point de Venise*.' Sir Fopling concurs but argues that it 'looks cooler, and is more proper for the season' (III. ii. 110). On Dorimant's less-than-perfect cravat: 'Dorimant, thou art a pretty fellow and wear'st thy clothes well, but I never saw thee have a handsome cravat. Were they made up like mine, they'd give another air to thy face. Prithee, let me send my man to dress thee but one day. By heav'ns, an Englishman cannot tie a ribbon!' (IV. ii. 132). On his own dishevelled periwig: ''Tis a damned windy day. Hey, page! Is my periwig right? [....] Pox o' this apartment! It wants an antechamber to adjust oneself in' (V. ii. 148). And even on language itself: 'Oh, insufferable! Trott, Trott, Trott! There's nothing so barbarous as the names of our English servants' (III. iii. 118). Each of these inanimate objects – Emilia's lace, Dorimant's cravat, Sir Fopling's periwig, and words such as 'Trott' – is at hand in a way that another person is not. And thus it is easy to see that in Dorimant's contemptuous statement about the young men of the age such as Sir Fopling, he has unwittingly stumbled upon a kernel of truth regarding the perverse subject. As he quips during a discussion with Lady Woodvill, 'They're generally only dull admirers of themselves and make their court to nothing but their periwigs and their cravats – and

[31] Miller, p. 310.

would be more concerned for the disordering of 'em, though on a good occasion, than a young maid would be for the tumbling of her head or handkercher' (IV. i. 120–1).

What Dorimant's statement implies is that Sir Fopling busies himself with the wrong things. Instead of admiring himself and attending to his own clothing, he ought to admire the young maids and attend to the tumbling of them (that is, into bed). And while both Dorimant and Sir Fopling could be called fetishists – in each case, there is intense visual fixation on something partial whether animate (Harriet's hair or teeth) or inanimate (Emilia's Spanish lace or Dorimant's cravat) – only Sir Fopling will be considered a pervert since his sexual energy is directed toward an object with which he cannot produce offspring.

It is striking that Dorimant's sexual exploits are jokingly referred to as 'business' or 'employment', for this work metaphor begins to take on interesting significance when we look at how it intersects with Foucault's analysis of the explosion of sexual discourse that occurs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Foucault so relevantly asks,

> [...] was this transformation of sex into discourse not governed by the endeavor to expel from reality the forms of sexuality that were not amenable to the strict economy of reproduction: to say no to unproductive activities, to banish casual pleasures, to reduce or exclude practices whose object was not procreation?[32]

This question takes on even more interesting contours when juxtaposed to the description Apter gives of the fetishist: the shy, foppish, 'feminized' male who digresses 'on the path to coital consummation, foiling civilization's righteous aim to propagate the species'.[33] Or when juxtaposed to Paul Laurent's portrait of the fetishist:

> In effect, he spends himself genitally, and by a kind of amorous ectopy (transport), in an illogical, bizarre and absurd ritual, that could be considered as a sort of psychic onanism. Far from being excited sexually by venereal pleasures, he is on the contrary timid in matters of love, impotent and uninterested in the union of the sexes; genitally he sins much more often by default than by excess.[34]

Surely, a better description of Sir Fopling cannot be found, for he is clearly timid in matters of love, preferring to dance by himself in Dorimant's

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[32]Foucault, p. 36.
[33]Apter, p. 17.
[34]Quoted in Apter, p. 17.

lodging rather than in the company of Harriet at Lady Townley's. And his desire for a looking glass suggests onanistic tendencies:

> SIR FOPLING: Prithee, Dorimant, why hast not thou a glass hung up here? A room is the dullest thing without one.
> YOUNG BELLAIR: Here is company to entertain you.
> SIR FOPLING: But I mean in case of being alone. In a glass a man may entertain himself –
> DORIMANT: The shadow of himself, indeed.
> SIR FOPLING: – Correct the errors of his motions and his dress.
> MEDLEY: I find, Sir Fopling, in your solitude you remember the saying of the wise man, and study yourself.
> SIR FOPLING: 'Tis the best diversion in our retirements. [....]
> (IV. ii. 132)

Although everyone in Etherege's play except the Orange-Woman participates in fetishistic behaviour – one has only to compare the opening scene in which Dorimant is seen dressing to the scene in which he has sex with Bellinda to appreciate the fact that he spends more time with his clothes than he does with his lover – no one except Sir Fopling acknowledges or enjoys (in the sense of experiences *jouissance vis-à-vis*) this participation. Instead, all perversion is heaped into one pile and projected onto the scapegoat or abject other – in this case, Sir Fopling – for perversion is not simply 'something external to the culture or to the self, but [...] what is repressed [...] in the self and projected outwards in order to be hated and disowned'.[35] This repressive mechanism of sexual antagonism is present not only between straight- and gay-identified people but also, as Tim Dean argues, 'is internal to every person, is an effect of every subject's constitutive sexual dependence on the Other'.[36] Dean contends that the social antagonism which 'arises as a response to different or differing modes of sexual enjoyment (homo- or heterophobia, for example) can be understood as an effect of self-antagonism, every sexual identity not only warring with its opposite but constituted through the repression of its opposite and thus actively warring with itself'.[37] To conclude, then: 'the evil obscenity from which we shrink in our neighbor is in fact the expression of our own *jouissance*. As cultural subjects, our desire is produced as the desire *not* to enjoy, thereby rendering *jouissance* other'.[38] Although this is how Dorimant and his set view Sir Fopling – not merely as their opposite but as the evil

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[35]Robin Wood, 'An Introduction to the American Horror Film', in Bill Nichols (ed.), *Movies and Methods*, Vol. 2 (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985), p. 199.
[36]Tim Dean, 'The Psychoanalysis of AIDS', *October 63* (1991), p. 112.
[37]Dean, p. 112.
[38]Dean, p. 112.

obscenity representing everything they abhor – it is their own *jouissance* from which they shrink. We might say that Sir Fopling is treated as an object – and an abject one, without a doubt – because he is the receptacle for or the screen upon which is projected everyone's most abject fantasies.

IV. Castrated and impotent bodies

In 1968, Barthes announced the death of the author, a castrating gesture that exposed the acephalic nature of the subject, but, in fact, the author – one very important author, anyway – had already been put to death long before Barthes' announcement appeared in print. Calling King Charles I 'the capital author of all our woes', Oliver Cromwell resolved to 'cut off the King's head with the crown on it',[39] and this was no idle threat, for on January 30, 1649, he achieved his aim: 'King Charles I stepped out through a middle window of the Whitehall Banqueting Hall on to the scaffold and after he had handed his solitary jewel, the George and Garter, to Bishop Juxon he laid his head on the low block. At four minutes past two the blow was struck. The citizens of London who watched the event were silent'.[40]

Eleven years later, the silence of these London citizens was replaced with the witty but banal dialogue of the Restoration stage, and what takes place on that stage shows how hard it is to recover quickly or gracefully from twenty years of civil war, for the frightening truth that civil war exposes is something generally kept repressed – a country's difference from itself, the 'other' within – and what regicide gives rise to is a monstrous case of castration anxiety. Given that a monarch is the principal receptacle of phallic power, no Restoration subject can delude himself into thinking his own phallic power secure if his monarch can be put to death. It is therefore understandable why a country attempting to recover from the particular type of traumatic injuries England sustained in the mid-seventeenth century might engage in some rather odd coping strategies and why these strategies might be reflected in that most mimetic of arts, staged drama.

When Charles II returned to the English throne in 1660, he returned to a nation divided against itself, a nation that had been utterly ravaged by civil war and revolution. To make matters worse, within the first six years of his reign, the nation was hit with two disasters, the plague of 1665, which took the lives of over 70,000 people in London alone, and the fire of 1666, which destroyed more than 13,000 houses and left two thirds of the population homeless. Although ecclesiastical problems seem to have been resolved with the passing of the Test Act in 1673 (the Popish Plot was yet to come in

[39]Maurice Ashley, *England in the Seventeenth Century* (New York, Penguin Books, 1977), p. 89.
[40]Ashley, p. 90.

1678), the constitutional problems between King and Parliament that Charles II had inherited were not so easily resolved.

Surprisingly, none of these disastrous troubles is apparent in Etherege's *The Man of Mode or Sir Fopling Flutter*, which was first performed in 1676, the same year Charles II signed the second of three secret agreements with France and put himself completely at variance with Parliament. For Etherege and his audience, the Restoration stage functions as a kind of political or social fetish, and what it stages is the drama of disavowal, the formula for which is the familiar phrase that both acknowledges and denies: 'Yes, I know very well, but nevertheless –'. Disavowal, as Gilles Deleuze tells us, 'suspends belief in and neutralizes the given in such a way that a new horizon opens up beyond the given and in place of it'.[41] What one gets from Etherege, then, is not the given of political and social strife and upheaval but the everyday banality of a bored leisure class's sexual exploits.

The boredom and banality that seem to be the central affects of Etherege's play are merely a cover, however, for the far more disturbing affects of aggressivity and anxiety that roil just beneath the surface. Things are, one might say, suspiciously quiet. Clearly, Etherege and his fellow playwrights are at pains to prevent anything overtly political (other than the occasional nationalistic swipe at France) from creeping onto the stage, and thus political and social conflict is displaced onto sexuality, which probably accounts for the sexual antagonism so rampant in Restoration comedy. Perhaps because everyone is weary of war, and thus wary of saying too much or lurching uncontrollably into political conflict, the play becomes a covert or allegorical way to explore questions too volatile to explore openly, questions such as what it means to be an English subject and how social and political power should be distributed.

If, as Deleuze argues, the fetish 'represents the last point at which it was still possible to believe' that there is no such thing as castration, then

> […] it appears that fetishism is first of all a disavowal ('No, the woman does not lack a penis'); secondly it is a defensive neutralization (since […] the knowledge of the situation as it is persists, but in a suspended, neutralized form); in the third place it is a protective and idealizing neutralization (for the belief in a female phallus is itself experienced as a protest of the ideal against the real; it remains suspended or neutralized in the ideal, the better to shield itself against the painful awareness of reality).[42]

Because the desire to see and/or to know leads to a discovery that cannot be avowed, the fetishist must suspend time in order to keep at bay the danger

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[41]Gilles Deleuze, *Coldness and Cruelty* (New York, Zone Books, 1991), p. 31.
[42]Deleuze, pp. 31–2.

that accompanies movement, the harm that accompanies discovery and exploration. Obviously, then, there will be a reluctance on the fetishist's part to admit the before and after of temporality, and so any enjoyment the fetishist gets comes at the price of delay.

In keeping with the fetishist's suspension of time, Etherege's play offers no real forward movement or thrust, but there is such an over-abundance of busyness, such an over-abundance of activity and chatter on the part of the characters, that the illusion of progress is created. The play, however, operates in a circular rather than a linear fashion. The same things go on every day that have gone on the day before; in other words, on-stage repetition and stasis replace the off-stage given of profound change. Like the fetish, which Deleuze tells us is 'not a symbol at all, but as it were a frozen, arrested, two-dimensional image, a photograph to which one returns repeatedly to exorcise the dangerous consequences of movement, the harmful discoveries that result from exploration',[43] Etherege's play freezes or arrests movement through its banality and boredom, both of which veil, and thus protect its audience from, Restoration reality. Because the play quite literally goes nowhere – conversations take place in what might be called a closed circuit, and no one can be said to have discovered anything new – *The Man of Mode or Sir Fopling Flutter* functions very much like a two-dimensional image, like the photograph to which one returns for reassurance. And thus Etherege's play allows its audience to disavow the painful fact that Puritan and Royalist, Protestant and Catholic had been and continued to be at each other's throats and that one need not go to France to pick a fight since one could find – and indeed had found – a suitable 'other' to function as enemy in England itself. If swords had been drawn once and the country divided by civil war, swords could be drawn again and the country split twice over.

It cannot fail to be of interest that Freud defined anxiety as a signal indicating danger and that Lacan linked the danger signalled to '"the characteristic of *cession* [the French here means yielding, transferring, giving up, or handing over to another person] at the moment constitutive of object a" (Seminar X, July 3, 1963)'.[44] 'In other words,' explains Fink, 'the danger that brings on anxiety is the subject's imminent renunciation of satisfaction derived from an object (the breast, feces, and so on)'.[45] When one must give up something one values, hand it over to another person, one might behave with aggressivity in the face of impending loss. Is it possible that this explains both Dorimant's anxiety and his aggressivity? If so, what is the object of value that Dorimant has had to give up and to whom has

[43]Deleuze, p. 31.
[44]Bruce Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique* (Cambridge, Harvard UP, 1997), p. 191.
[45]Fink, p. 191.

he had to relinquish it? And what allegorical significance does Dorimant's *cession* have for Restoration society?

The answer to these questions lies in how we understand Dorimant's relation to Sir Fopling, which ultimately cannot be described as other than rivalrous. If an ordinary 'English blockhead' such as Sir Fopling can travel to France for a few weeks and come back with enough souvenirs – a neatly-tied cravat, a few fancy French words, and a newly-found philosophy of style, for example – to trick the *beau monde* into believing him worthy of their regard, then in what does a 'real' libertine's authenticity lie? Surely, this is the question uppermost in Dorimant's mind throughout the play, and it does not help that Sir Fopling makes obvious the fact that he has modelled himself after Dorimant, for each time Dorimant confronts Sir Fopling, he confronts none other than his double or mirror image, an unnerving parody of himself.

As we know from John Berger, once a reproduction is introduced into the world, the original loses its meaning, retaining value only through an authenticated or legitimate claim to be the original.[46] Lacan, too, tells us that when the subject first encounters his or her mirror image, he or she encounters an other that seems wholly superior to, or more together than, the subject itself. And this initial recognition of one's mirror image not only opens up the field of castration (since one can never coincide with one's mirror image) but also creates an antagonistic relationship between oneself and those with whom one identifies. What Dorimant's confrontations with Sir Fopling forcefully bring home to Dorimant is, precisely, his own castration and thus the instability and uncertainty inherent in both national and personal identity. Not only is Dorimant a subject of a split country, but also he is himself a split subject continually confronted by the abject 'other' within the foppish contours of Sir Fopling Flutter.

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3

Objects of Desire, Identity and Eros in the Writings of Lord Hervey and Charlotte Charke[1]

Marilyn Morris

At first glance, John, Lord Hervey (1696–1743) and Charlotte Charke (1713–60) might seem an incongruous pair for study. Hervey achieved standing first as a Member of Parliament, then as George II's Vice Chamberlain and later Lord Privy Seal, and, perhaps most significantly, as a favourite of Queen Caroline. Son of the first Earl of Bristol, he was an effete aristocratic courtier who moved in the highest circles of power. Charke, daughter of the actor, playwright and theatre manager, Colley Cibber, failed at every occupation she undertook, lived on the outskirts of society and died in penury. Both, however, married precipitously when young, then went on to set up a household with a member of the same sex (in Hervey's case while continuing to give his wife regular pregnancies). Hervey's effeminacy and Charke's cross-dressing on and off the stage brought them public notoriety. His political position and her renown as an actress appeared ascendant in the 1730s and both ended their lives with frustrated ambitions and disappointment. Each penned reminiscences, but these texts could not have been more different generically. Written over a long period and published posthumously, Hervey's memoirs left a seemingly indelible and wildly antipathetic picture of George II's court and its leading politicians as their author affected distance and objectivity. Charke, in contrast, chose autobiography, a form that allowed her the starring role, and produced a hastily penned performance for quick cash.[2]

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[1]The author would like to thank Jill Campbell, Jacqueline Foertsch, D. Harland Hagler, Deborah Needleman-Armintor, Stephen Taylor and Aurora Wolfgang for their feedback on earlier versions of this study and to express gratitude for Nicole Pohl's continued interest in its various incarnations and unflagging critical acuity.

[2]Unless otherwise indicated, all biographical information regarding Hervey and Charke is drawn from, respectively, Robert Halsband, *Lord Hervey Eighteenth-Century Courtier* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1974) and Fidelis Morgan, *The Well-Known Troublemaker: A Life of Charlotte Charke* (London, Faber and Faber, 1988).

Yet, for Hervey and Charke, writing served as a means of self-vindication and, thus, a site for self-fashioning. Because of their differences, the qualities that they had in common appear even more striking. A comparison between Hervey and Charke offers insights into the nature of same-sex relations in early modern England and the impact that sexual object choice had on an individual's reputation and sense of self before the notion of sexual orientation existed. Although the two refrained from straightforward revelations regarding their erotic natures, their accounts of interactions with others in these chronicles and their other writings demonstrate how the nonsexual relationships in their lives shaped their identities in as significant ways as did the personal associations that appearances suggest had a sexual component. Hervey and Charke experienced a range of complex and often ambiguous affective bonds with others. Unhampered by the freight of sexual orientation, their writings display the wider possibilities of erotic desire and its impact on public and private identities during the early modern period.

With the creation of the notion of sexual orientation in the late nineteenth century, sexuality became as palpable a category of individual identity as gender, class and race. In spite of Eve Sedgwick's first axiom in *Epistemology of the Closet*, which questioned why, in the face of the vastly different ways in which people could differ from one another in their sexual preferences, sexual object choice continues as the primary category of classification for sexual identity. Scholars continue to debate the question of whether or not transhistorical gay and lesbian identities existed.[3] Historians such as George Haggerty and Alan Bray have sought to bridge the schism between essentialist and social constructionist approaches to the history of sexuality that the question of gay and lesbian identities generated, as well as overcome the limitations of premodern evidence, by shifting their focus away from physical eroticism. They both posit a more nuanced view of intimacy by turning their attention toward the visible emotional, spiritual and economic aspects of same-sex relationships.[4] I

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[3]Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990), pp. 22–7. For the squaring off that this debate produced see Rictor Norton, *The Myth of the Modern Homosexual: Queer History and the Search for Cultural Unity* (London and Washington, Cassell, 1997) for the essentialist position and David Halperin, 'How to do the History of Male Homosexuality', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 6/1 (2000) 87–123 for the social constructionist argument.

[4]George Haggerty, *Men in Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 18–20, 174; Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 317–21. For discussion of the issue of Bray's seeming repudiation of the sexual elements of same-sex relationships see my review of the book in *CLGH (American Historical Society Committee on Lesbian and Gay History Newsletter)* 18/2 (2004) 11–12.

wish to push Bray's contention – that we distort the nature of premodern same-sex relations by imposing our modern tendency to give preferentiality to the sexual – in a different direction. Further interrogation of the reasons why object choice has remained such a strong signifier in the construction of an individual's identity suggests ways in which we can productively broaden the notion of orientation to encompass emotional patterns and tendencies.

Examining Hervey and Charke in tandem, moreover, highlights how gender and social class influenced the degree to which an individual's sexual script became an element in a premodern identity. Although Hervey married Molly Lepell (considered the prettiest of the Queen's Maids of Honour) for love rather than fortune, sired at least eight children and shared a mistress (Anne Vane) with Frederick, Prince of Wales, his effeminacy and his attraction to men would come to be his defining characteristics. In contrast, contemporaries did not probe and scholars are divided over Charke's sexuality in spite of her failure at matrimony, delight at passing as a man, use of the alias 'Mr. Brown' and ten-year relationship with her 'Mrs. Brown'. An aristocratic man's sexual prowess received public scrutiny whereas society did not accord a woman of middling rank sexual agency. At the same time, however, Hervey and Charke were remarkably similar in the ways in which they cultivated associations that replicated or sought to repair fractured familial bonds. Their examples demonstrate the utility of considering sexuality and identity as dynamic rather than fixed; thus, abandoning the hunt for individuals' one 'true love' and instead tracking how objects of desire – material, emotional, intellectual and spiritual as well as sexual – continually shift and sometimes intersect. Examining sexuality as part of a larger system of affective and material relations in these two lives exposes the inadequacies of our modern taxonomies of sexual identity.

Hervey and Charke both confronted head-on the issue of self in their chronicles. Hervey resolved to refer to himself in the third person in order, he explained, to avoid 'the disagreeable egotisms with which almost all memoir writers so tiresomely abound'. Focusing on his political milieu, he professed a desire that his account of the histories of others not be 'imputed to foolish vanity and impertinent desire of troubling the world with my own, which, indeed, would be of as little use to me as to posterity, and conduce no more to my profit than to their entertainment'.[5] Charke's production, in contrast, was unabashedly egotistical. Not only did she choose autobiography over memoir, she dedicated the work to herself as her sole patron. She began from a premise the exact opposite of Hervey's: 'As I have

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[5]John, Lord Hervey, *Some Materials Towards Memoirs of the Reign of King George the Second*, ed. Romney Sedgwick, 3 vols. (New York, AMS Press, 1970, orig. pub. 1931), pp. 1–2.

promis'd to give some Account of my UNACCOUNTABLE LIFE, I shall no longer detain my Readers in respect to my Book, but satisfy a Curiosity which has long subsisted in the Minds of many: And, I believe, they will own, when they know my History, if Oddity can plead any Right to Surprize and Astonishment, I may positively claim a Title to be shewn among the Wonders of Ages past, and those to come'.[6] Hervey began penning his memoirs of the reign of George II in 1733, starting from that monarch's accession in 1727, not intending their publication in his lifetime. Because Hervey died at the age of forty-seven and suffered declining health during his last years, he left the manuscripts in a rough form for others to shape. His descendants released a heavily edited edition in 1848. A fuller version based on manuscripts left at the Royal Archives at Windsor appeared in 1931. Charke published *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs Charlotte Charke* in 1755, five years before her death (also at age forty-seven), as fast as she could write it. Whereas Hervey offered painstaking description, explanation and digressions, in which he broke into the first person and reassured the reader of his commitment to truth, Charke's story was riddled with ambiguity, a mishmash of genres and literary allusions and lacking in narrative coherence.

Hervey's memoirs and Charke's autobiography, although outwardly as different as two texts can be, both can be seen as acts of reckoning, of settling scores and in many respects taking revenge. The two chroniclers left larger-than-life images of themselves but ultimately leave the reader unsure of exactly who they were. Whatever he might have declared to the contrary, Hervey did construct a persona in his memoirs, one that bore little resemblance to his public image or to his self-presentation in familiar letters. Publicly pilloried for his effeminacy and relations with other men, the memoirs revel in his conquests over women. For all her promises to satisfy curiosity, Charke teased the reader as she obscured more than she elucidated:

> My being in Breeches was alledged to me as a very great Error, but the original Motive proceeded from a particular Cause; and I rather chuse to undergo the worst Imputation that can be laid on me on that Account, than unravel the Secret, which is an Appendix to one I am bound, as I before hinted, by all the Vows of Truth and Honour everlastingly to conceal.

A few pages later, when recounting being asked by a gentlewoman whom she had not seen in years why she has donned male dress, Charke stated

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[6]Charlotte Charke, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs Charlotte Charke*, 2nd edn. 1755, ed. Leonard R.N. Ashley (Gainesville, Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1969), p. 13.

simply that she had informed her 'as far as I thought proper'.[7] It would be easy to read these texts with what Foucault identifies as the modern West's preoccupation with sex as a site for 'a never-ending demand for truth' and 'the explanation for everything'.[8] The thing most hidden seems closest to the truth, particularly given the sorts of censorship involved. Hervey's heirs destroyed the portions of his memoirs that apparently dealt with his relationship with Stephen Fox, a scion of an up-and-coming political family with whom he was romantically linked, as well as with Frederick, Prince of Wales.[9] Charke, on the other hand, performed her own censorship, declaring, 'I have paid all due Regard to Decency wherever I have introduced the Passion of Love'.[10] The focus on collecting clues that together might reveal Hervey and Charke's sexualities and hence the 'truth' about them, however, would blind us to what they considered important enough to articulate in their accounts of themselves. Although they declined to elaborate on their sexual desires in their chronicles (unless the destroyed pages of Hervey's were a significant departure from the rest), they provided ample material on the range of compunctions and compulsions that shaped their relations with others. Their stories suggest that sexuality inhabited unstable ground on the landscape of individual identity, and that ambiguous lines of demarcation between the public and the private on this terrain did much to render problematic the idea of having a sexuality or sexual identity in early modern England.

John Hervey's private family was heavily enmeshed in the public households of the reigning dynasty. And like the family of George II, the Herveys often fell out over politics. The Earl of Bristol brought up his son to be a courtier. He sent him on the Grand Tour at age twenty with strict instructions to go to Hanover and ingratiate himself with the nine-year-old Prince Frederick. Hervey had a helpful but sometimes unfortunate role model in his mother, who served as Princess, later Queen, Caroline's Lady of the Bedchamber for twenty years and infuriated her husband with her political meddling. Hervey's good looks and adroit wit gained him popularity at court. It was his political alliance with the widely hated Robert Walpole, the King's principal minister, which brought his sexual proclivities into

[7]*Ibid.*, pp. 139, 144.
[8]Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1978), pp. 77, 78.
[9]Hervey's grandson inherited the manuscript and a copy. The pages spanning from 1730 to 1732, the period covering Hervey's friendship with the Prince and its demise were ripped out and destroyed in both. This section presumably contains an account of Hervey's association with Fox who, in the extant text, does not appear until 1737 where Hervey alludes to the Fox brothers as 'Lord Hervey's most intimate friends, often mentioned in these papers'. Hervey, *Some Materials*, 3: 661.
[10]Charke, *A Narrative*, 12.

public discussion. For the sake of his delicate health, Hervey took a tour of Italy in 1729 with Stephen Fox in attendance. In his absence, William Pulteney, an old friend, godfather to his daughter, and erstwhile political ally, schemed with Lady Hervey as well as Lord Bristol, who both loathed Walpole, to bring Lord Hervey into the opposition. Not only did Hervey refuse to do so, he wrote the dedication prefacing a political pamphlet against the opposition that impugned Pulteney's character and insinuated that the opposition dabbled in treason.[11] Stung, and assuming Hervey had authored the whole work, Pulteney retaliated with a pamphlet that excoriated him as 'Mr. Fainlove', 'such a *delicate Hermaphrodite*, such a pretty, little, *Master-Miss*'. If his meaning were not perfectly clear, Pulteney, noting his detractor's limited use of the term 'corruption' in reference to the corrupter only, drew a parallel to 'a certain, unnatural reigning Vice (indecent and almost shocking to mention) which hath, of late, been severely punish'd in a neighbouring Nation'. This alluded to recent trials and executions of some two hundred men for sodomy in Holland. Pulteney continued: 'It is well known that there must be *two Parties* in this Crime; the *Pathetick* and the *Agent*; both equally guilty.'[12] Hervey immediately issued a challenge. He also slyly let it be conveyed to Pulteney that he had not written the offending pamphlet but left the fact of his authorship of the equally damning dedication unmentioned. So, on a frosty day at the end of January 1731, the two men met in Upper St. James's Park, stripped to their shirtsleeves, and crossed swords. After Pulteney nearly ran through his old friend and the seconds parted them, he embraced Hervey and begged that they argue no more. Hervey bowed, said nothing, and decamped to Fox's house to have his wounds dressed.

Although Pulteney's political reputation suffered more in the short-run because of the altercation and Hervey surprised the political community as well as himself with his display of masculine bravado, Pulteney's characterization of him stuck. Four years later, after unwisely trading insults in verse with Alexander Pope, another old friend-turned-political-foe whose poetical prowess far surpassed his, Hervey found this image engraved in stone in *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (1735).[13] Pope represented him as 'that thing

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[11]John, Lord Hervey, 'To the Patrons of the *Craftsman*', in William Yonge, *Sedition and Defamation Display'd* (1731), ed. Alexander Pettit (New York, AMS Press, 1997).
[12]William Pulteney, *A Proper Reply to a Late Scurrilous Libel; Intitled,* Sedition and Defamation Display'd (1731), ed. H.T. Dickinson (New York, AMS Press, 1998), pp. 5, 6, 27.
[13]For a recent analysis of the motivations for and composition of the poem see James McLaverty, *Pope, Print and Meaning* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 175–207. For the larger context of opposition to Walpole, see Bertrand Goldgar, *Walpole and the Wits: The Relation of Politics to Literature 1722–1742* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1976).

of silk, / Sporus, that mere white curd of ass's milk' (lines 305–6), wedding the images of Nero's castrated concubine and Hervey's penchant for Dr. George Cheyne's fashionable dietary cures. Pope wallowed in every personal quality that he despised in Hervey and turned him into the epitome of everything he hated about Walpole's regime. He represented Hervey as a delicate butterfly, a court spaniel that fetches the game bird but cannot partake in it, a venomous toad at the ear of the Queen (playing Satan to her Eve) and Walpole's squeaking puppet. Pope clearly loathed the way that Hervey could worm or flutter his way into the affections of both sexes:

> His wit all seesaw between *that* and *this*,
> Now high, now low, now master up, now miss,
> And he himself one vile antithesis.
> Amphibious thing! that acting either part,
> The trifling head or the corrupted heart,
> Fop at the toilet, flatterer at the board,
> Now trips a lady, and now struts a lord (lines 323–9).

As Sporus, Hervey again was cast as the 'pathetic', the passive recipient in a sodomitical union. His position *vis-à-vis* the Queen rendered him the old style of fop, the effeminate man of politeness and refinement who courts ladies.[14] Hence, he emerged as truly amphibious in gender and sexual behaviour. What do these representations tell us about premodern notions of gender and sexuality and their role in an individual's identity?

Most striking about these public attacks on Hervey's ambiguous gender performance and the imputations of sodomy is that they never made any allusion to Stephen Fox. After their return from Italy, the two men spent stretches of time together in London and at Redlynch, Fox's country estate. Fox went so far as to purchase the Hervey's London house at the end of 1730. Hervey did little to hide his obsession with Fox, even after the duel. Hervey's biographers have no doubt that the relationship had a physical as well as emotional dimension, but differ greatly in how they situate it in Hervey's life. Although published in the 1970s, before the history of sexuality became an acceptable field of academic enquiry, Robert Halsband's scholarly biography offers a refreshingly nonjudgmental, albeit undertheorized, account of Hervey's relationships with Fox, Frederick, Prince of Wales, and the *philosophe* Francesco Algarotti. Hervey's recent popular biographer, Lucy Moore, organizes her account of Hervey around his relationship with Fox as the love of his life. Reconstructing the vicissitudes of the romance with copious extracts from Hervey's letters (only two of Fox's

[14]For the changing image of the fop, see Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660–1800* (Harlow, Longman, 2001), chap. 4.

have survived), Moore recounts the story of Hervey first cultivating a friendship with Ste Fox's younger brother Henry, whom he met at Bath at the end of 1726, before moving on to Ste who was more available emotionally. Whereas he and Henry shared more intellectual and political interests, Hervey cherished Ste's aloofness from the political fray as a sanctuary from the falsehood and treachery of court life. Nonetheless, as he wrote to his lover about the tedium of people at court and his yearning for Ste's company, Hervey piqued his jealousy with his flirtation with the Prince of Wales and his affair with Anne Vane, one of Queen Caroline's Maids of Honour. By Christmas 1731, Hervey realized that Prince Frederick too had been seeing Vane, who, when confronted, broke with Hervey. Frederick soon had a new male favourite as well, and ensuing recriminations involved Hervey dangerously overstepping his bounds at court. Meanwhile, Ste's emotional attachment continued to dissipate as Hervey turned his attention to cultivating the Queen's favour. In 1736, Hervey helped orchestrate a clandestine marriage between Ste, then thirty-two, and a thirteen-year-old heiress, the daughter of Henry's mistress, against the wishes of her father, a union that contributed to further estrangement. Moore finds it ironic that the final break with Ste took place over a political rather than a personal issue. After the death of Caroline at the end of 1737 and the fall of Walpole in 1742, Hervey lost the office of Lord Privy Seal that Walpole had granted him two years previously. Pressured by Hervey to join him in opposition to the new ministry and angered by his accusations of ingratitude when he would not comply, Ste severed all ties with him. Moore concludes, 'Hervey's unwillingness to conform to the standards set by his peers meant they excluded him from their number, but his desire for worldly recognition destroyed the love that had set him apart in the first place.'[15] If this were the case, why didn't the public allegations of Pulteney and Pope finish Hervey's career years before? Moreover, the underlying weakness of his bond with Fox and the nature of Hervey's associations with men and women both had everything to do with politics.

The use that Pulteney and Pope made of the notions of hermaphrodism and sodomy did not concern personal identity as much as political affiliation. Scholars have amply catalogued the rich array of meanings and ambiguities attached to these terms in the early modern period. George Rousseau's

[15]Lucy Moore, *Amphibious Thing: The Life of Lord Hervey* (London, Viking, 2000), p. 297. Moore confesses her ambivalence toward her subject and her analysis bogs down in her inability to transcend her judgment of Hervey as a bad husband and a bad father. She can barely contain her glee as she recounts how Fox's marriage endured and helped separate him from Hervey (pp. 3, 206–10). Copious, though expurgated, extracts from Hervey's correspondence can also be found in Earl of Ilchester (ed.), *Lord Hervey and His Friends 1726–1738* (London, John Murray, 1950).

contemplation of Foucault's notion of sodomy as 'that utterly confused category' maps out six different traditions of homosexuality, homoeroticism, and homosociability in eighteenth-century culture. Sodomy too could be associated with sins of excess like gluttony and drunkenness, the evirating effects of luxury, a lack of manly independent agency, and treachery.[16] For example, at least one newspaper represented the disgraced directors of the South Sea Company, on whose ruins in 1720 Walpole built his political machine, as a company of sodomites.[17] As Jill Campbell perceptively observes, 'Pulteney's analogy uncannily anticipates Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's thesis about the uncomfortable juncture between "homosocial" relations in the all-male preserves of government or commerce and the homosexual bonds which those establishments so fiercely reject; and the most insistent complaint of opposition writers during Walpole's ministry suggest that this juncture was under particular pressure in the period.'[18] Hervey stubbornly held on to a political tradition that had its roots in the ancients. Reed Browning's analysis of Hervey's political thought categorizes him as 'a disciple of Tacitus and Machiavelli' who 'prided himself on his realism' and who 'admired the Romans in part precisely because for centuries they had known how to use power without letting it destroy them.' He had faith that the English constitution allowed for the strong, decisive leadership of Walpole to promote prosperity without being a threat to individual liberty. Browning sees Hervey's philosophy based on a complex view of human nature. 'People might be impelled largely by self-regarding concerns, but they were capable of shaping behaviour to the expectations and even the needs of their fellows. Even

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[16]George Rousseau, 'The Pursuit of Homosexuality in the Eighteenth Century: "Utterly Confused Category" and/or Rich Repository?' in *'Tis Nature's Fault. Unregulated Sexuality in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987), ed. Robert Maccubbin, pp. 132–68; Alan Bray, 'Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England' in *Queering the Renaissance*, ed. Jonathan Goldberg (Durham, Duke University Press, 1994), p. 41. For the ambiguous figure of the hermaphrodite see Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, 'Fetishizing Gender: Constructing the Hermaphrodite in Renaissance Europe' and Randolph Trumbach, 'London's Sapphists: From Three Sexes to Four Genders in the Making of Modern Culture' in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, ed. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (London, Routledge, 1991), pp. 80–141. Ian McCormick, ed., *Secret Sexualities: A Sourcebook of 17th and 18th Century Writing* (London, Routledge, 1997) presents the range of early modern treatments of hermaphrodism and sodomy.

[17]Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England 1700–1830* (London, GMP, 1992), p. 52.

[18]Jill Campbell, 'Politics and Sexuality in Portraits of John, Lord Hervey', *Word and Image* 6 (1990), pp. 281–97, quote on p. 281. For the implications of the 'residual pederasty' in early modern court society, see Thomas A. King, *The Gendering of Man, 1600–1750. Volume 1: The English Phallus* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).

more, such behaviour could be touched by presumably autonomous sensations of affection or pity.'[19] While Hervey drew political lessons from the Romans, as did most other writers of the era, he appears to have situated himself as a political actor more in the tradition of the Greeks. In a communication of November 1731, for example, he cast himself as Hephaestion to Prince Frederick's Alexander. Whereas the Romans treated sex between men as a form of domination, the Greeks revered bonds between men and adolescent boys as 'protective and affective mentorship'.[20]

Paul Ludwig's study of eros in Greek thought provides some context in which we can understand the Hervey phenomenon:

> Much classical thought, explicitly and implicitly, based its notions of eros on purely formal resemblances among sexual desire, love, and ambition as well as higher aspirations such as patriotism and cosmopolitanism. Common features in the psychological responses to each of these passions led orators, poets, and philosophers to conclude that said passions were differing manifestations of a single, underlying eros. They were then able to place the apparently diverse passions on a continuum with one another, so that the logical progression, for example, from sexual license to tyranny or from citizen lovers to loving the city, could seem unproblematic to them. Eros therefore provided them with a bridge, missing in modern thought, between the private and public spheres.

Eros, Ludwig points out, 'never lost a sense of 'longing' and usually meant the desire to possess for oneself'. The Greeks 'were keenly aware that people often perform acts of service in the hopes of winning favor in the eyes of their beloved.'[21] Stephen Fox gave Hervey the affection that he craved but failed to be impressed by his political exertions. Similarly, Prince Frederick became alienated from the court and the political regime that Hervey worked to protect.

Pope most likely intended Walpole as the Nero to Hervey's Sporus, but Hervey took revenge on the Prince in his memoirs with an elaborate study of the parallels between Frederick and Nero '(cruelty excepted)'. He first made the analogy in a digression in his account of 1734 then returned to it in his chronicle of 1737, directly before his elaborate description of the

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[19]Reed Browning, *Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Court Whigs* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1982), pp. 35–66, quotes on pp. 37, 66.

[20]Moore, L., *Amphibious Thing*, p. 135; Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization* (Cambridge, Mass., Belknap Press, 2003), p. 79.

[21]Paul W. Ludwig, *Eros and Polis: Desire and Community in Greek Political Theory* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1–2, 5. I am indebted to Steven Forde for alerting me to classical notions of eros.

Queen's last illness and death, as part of an unfinished piece on the character of the royal family. Here Hervey juxtaposed a narrative of the Prince's life to accounts of Nero's by Plutarch, Suetonius, Tacitus, *et al.*[22] Criticism of the Prince is reminiscent of Hervey's attack on Pulteney for falsity and ingratitude. The Prince and Nero, Hervey averred, 'were once so fond of their mothers that they were in everything absolutely governed by them; and both of them grew afterward to hate those mothers as violently as they had once loved them. Both, too, when they hated them most caressed them most, from these two predominant ingredients in the amiable and great compositions of these Princes, hypocrisy and fear.' Warming to his point, Hervey pronounced Nero and Frederick 'as false to their mistresses as their friends, and no more capable of attachment by constitution to the one than they were of fidelity by principle to the other'.[23] This essentially was the charge that he had levelled against Pulteney in the dedication he wrote for *Sedition and Defamation Display'd*:

> Let me then suppose a young Gentleman coming some time since into the World, with all the Advantages that recommend Men to the Esteem, Favour, and Approbation of Mankind, caress'd and espoused by the *Ministers*, loaded with the Favours of the *Crown*, promoted to some of the most considerable Employments of Honour, Profit, and Trust, and particularly supported by *One*, who heaped upon him all the Obligations that a cordial Friendship could ask or give: But being in his own Nature ambitious and aspiring, a Slave to his Passions, impatient and irresolute, unable to bear a Superiority; conceiving unjust Jealousies and Discontents, full of himself, and his own extraordinary Merit, and determined to hold the highest Offices in the State, or to censure and confound *all* the Measures of the Government, under any other *Administration*; he at length renounced at once all former Friendships and Principles, vowing the Destruction of those who had distinguished him by a peculiar Regard, betraying private Correspondencies, and endeavouring to distress and disturb *that Prince and that Family* to whom he owed the highest Obligations.[24]

Tellingly, Hervey used metaphors of courtship, marriage and infidelity to describe Pulteney's relationship to the government, and brought in the figures of the King and his family to personalize Pulteney's betrayal (Pulteney had been a favourite of George I). As Ludwig points out, politicians used conventions of chivalry and courtly love to invoke political

[22]Hervey, *Some Materials*, 1: 308–11, 3: 858–77, quote on 1: 308.
[23]*Ibid.*, 1: 308
[24]Hervey, 'To the Patrons of the *Craftsman*', pp. iii–iv.

eros in relation to particular rulers. Edmund Burke's apostrophe to Marie Antoinette in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) was this practice's swan song.[25]

The political community thought that Pulteney had gone beyond the bounds of political invective with its personal nature and the imputation of sodomy, a capital crime. The tenor of his attack makes more sense when one considers the variety of forms political eros could take. We will never know for sure what Pulteney was thinking, but a letter he wrote to Jonathan Swift two weeks after the duel indicates that he considered this an appropriate tit-for-tat for having been accused of political as well as personal treachery. The body of the pamphlet written by William Yonge intimated that the patrons of the *Craftsman* were guilty of treason (another capital crime) for abusing the King and for publishing the 'Hague Letter', containing information that Pulteney had obtained from the French ambassador that exposed details of the secret negotiations Britain had undertaken to resolve a conflict with Austria.[26] One spate of name-calling in Pulteney's stream of invective appears prophetic considering the final form that Hervey's political eros would take. In reference to the allegations made in *Sedition and Defamation Display'd*, Pulteney asserted, 'I was afterwards inform'd that, They were the Sampler-works of a forward, little, *Boarding-School Miss*; who was ambitious of becoming, one Time or other, a *Maid of Honour*; and indeed some dainty *virgin Expressions* in those Performances [...] render'd it far from being improbable.'[27] Hervey had married one Maid of Honour, had an affair with another and, perhaps, ultimately became one himself. In Hervey's memoirs, Queen Caroline stood out as the leading light. As Hervey wreaked vengeance upon Frederick by winning back Anne Vane and turning her against him and by usurping Frederick's place in his mother's affections, Queen Caroline – intelligent, cultured and generous in ways that his own mother was not – became the most significant figure in his life. In a way reminiscent of his attempts to protect Vane's interests against Frederick, Hervey supported Caroline as she endured the King's infidelities and general boorishness.

Hervey's memoirs convey an image a far cry from Mr. Fainlove, the delicate hermaphrodite. He recorded in great detail his resumption of his affair with Vane once the Prince tried to persuade her to retire abroad in 1735 when negotiation of his marriage contract commenced. Hervey claimed that the Prince's relationship with his new mistress, Lady Archibald Hamilton, was platonic, but that the pair put on a show so the public would think them ardent lovers. He wrote with a shivering delight of the risks that he and Vane

[25]Ludwig, *Eros and Polis*, p. 17.
[26]Dickinson's introduction to Pulteney, *A Proper Reply*, pp. vi–viii, xviii.
[27]Pulteney, *A Proper Reply*, p. 5.

took in their lovers' trysts and of 'fretting the Prince' with the letters he wrote on Vane's behalf. The two men's falling out coincided with relations between Prince Frederick and his royal parents deteriorating to the point that the Queen complained that even a glimpse of her son made her nauseated. Moreover, after Vane delivered a son, Hervey claimed that the Queen was sure that young Fitzfrederick had to be the work of Hervey, not the Prince. In his account of the previous year, Hervey also mentioned the joke in circulation that the child was the product of a triumvirate; Lord Harrington also had an association with the Queen's Maid of Honour. Hervey reported a conversation with the Queen that took place after the Prince's marriage in 1736 during which she pressed Hervey for details regarding her son's sexual potency. In spite of his assurances to the contrary, she continued to doubt Frederick's ability to father children, and broached the possibility of Hervey performing the same service for the Princess of Wales that she assumed he had done for Miss Vane.[28]

Attempts to corral Hervey within the parameters of sexual orientation reveal more about modern preoccupations than Hervey's sensibilities. Rictor Norton asserts that *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* 'possibly has had more influence in creating the stereotype of the Effeminate Pouf than any other document in English literary history, and even today it is seriously believed by some that these malicious lies accurately portray the modern homosexual male.' Norton notes how this propaganda image of 'the archetypal pansy' was readily believed in spite of Hervey having been 'a reasonably robust bisexual'. The first analysis of Hervey's sexuality, published by James R. Dubro in 1976, observes 'the aura of the homosexual personality that permeates Hervey's life and works' and points to his 'superficial and fashionably bitchy variety of gay wit'.[29] While trying to come to grips with the rivalry between Hervey and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu for the affections of Francesco Algarotti, Isobel Grundy throws up her hands and declares, 'John, Lord Hervey, is a figure who resists interpretation.'[30] When one steps back and views Hervey's relationships in their totality, the hopeless reductionism of labelling him according to sexual orientation becomes manifest. 'Bisexual' does not capture the very different ways in which he related to his wife, Molly, his mistress, Anne Vane, his lover Stephen Fox or his jilt, Frederick, Prince of Wales. In categorizing Hervey, how do we incorporate the fact that his affection for the Queen occasioned the greatest

[28]Hervey, *Some Materials*, 2: 475–83, 1: 290, 2: 614–18.

[29]Norton, *Myth of the Modern Homosexual*, p. 38 and *Mother Clap's Molly House*, pp. 146–58, quote on p. 146; James R. Dubro, 'The Third Sex: Lord Hervey and His Coterie', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 2 (1976) 89–95, quotes on pp. 90, 91.

[30]Isobel Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 335.

emotional outpourings in the memoirs and that his most enduring relationship proved to be with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (who also supported Walpole), both associations being indisputably nonsexual?[31] Moore interprets the Hephaestion-Alexander analogy as evidence that Hervey and Frederick were lovers. What was the nature of this love? Louis Crompton points out that Alexander might have exhibited an excessive outpouring of grief upon Hephaestion's death and invoked the love between Achilles and Patrocles to explain his feelings for Hephaestion, but evidence of physical consummation in both of these couples was ambiguous. Perhaps more illuminating, given the dynamics among Hervey, the Queen and her son is the anecdote that Crompton cites to illustrate the nature of the bond between Alexander and his boyhood friend. 'When the aged queen mother of Persia, brought captive to Alexander's tent, bowed by mistake to Hephaestion, who was taller and handsomer, Alexander eased her embarrassment with the remark, "Never mind, Mother. For he too is Alexander."'[32] 'Desire-for' and 'desire-to-be' are not as easily distinguished as Freud proposed.[33]

Charlotte Charke's 'desire-to-be' also had a significant impact on all her affective relations. As had been the case in the Hervey and the royal households, professional aspirations, identifications and identities shaped and sometimes snapped affective bonds within the Cibber clan. Ostensibly, in *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs Charlotte Charke*, Charke confessed her mistakes, offered explanations for them from the point of view of a reformed self, and begged for absolution. In the letter that Charke wrote to her father on 8 March 1755, reprinted a little less than half way into her *Narrative*, she referred him to the first installment published the previous week. In its justification, she explained, 'I thought I could not be too publick in suing for your Blessing and Pardon.'[34] That she had any hope of reconciliation with her father seems unlikely, however. In the first half of the *Narrative* she recounted episodes from her early life that she must have known would be embarrassing to Cibber. Her approach to him, on and off the page, consisted in imitation, pleading and threats. While her relationship with her father dominates the narrative, and has been the focus of one strand of scholarly analysis, another line of investigation contemplates the puzzle of her sexuality. In contrast to the palaver that Hervey's effeminacy generated, Charke's noisy gender bending did not raise speculation about the nature of her relations with women at the time. She married at age seventeen

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[31]I have investigated the complexities of their friendship and rivalry for Algarotti in 'Transgendered Perspectives on Premodern Sexualities' *SEL* 46 (2006) 585–600.
[32]Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, p. 78.
[33]On this point, see Alan Sinfield, 'Lesbian and Gay Taxonomies', *Critical Inquiry* 29 (2002) 120–38.
[34]Charke, *A Narrative*, pp. 118–22.

in 1730, gave birth to her daughter Kitty and separated from her husband. A shadowy second marriage in 1746 soon ended with her husband's death. Her autobiography recounted how two women fell in love with her when she was passing as a man (both of whom she chose not to deceive) and represented her relationship with the fellow strolling player who shared her alias in much more affectionate terms than she did her relations with men. Nonetheless, although she had a reputation for eccentricity, no evidence has surfaced of contemporaries referring to her as a sapphist, tommy, tribade or hermaphrodite. When one combines these two strands of analysis, a picture of the complex dynamic between desire and identity emerges. A comparison of Charke's orientation toward her father and toward her 'Mrs. Brown', placed in the context of other familial and professional associations in her life, provides some insight into her experience of the 'Passion of Love' albeit shrouded in her 'due Regard to Decency'.

Scholars are divided over Charke's attitude toward her father and its meaning. Indeed, throughout the *Narrative* it is hard to determine whether or not Charke simply was practising her acting skills. She interlarded her text with references to characters and lines from plays, often those written by her father. When she described herself working as a shopkeeper, a publican, a sausage purveyor, a waiter or a pastry cook (the latter two enterprises while living as a man), she gave the impression of playacting. Some represent her as a successful rebel against the restrictions of conventional sex roles while others emphasize the failure of her performance to construct a stable identity and to subvert patriarchy. She failed at her presumed reason for writing: taking on the role of the prodigal son in an attempt to solicit forgiveness and, more importantly, financial support from her estranged father.[35] But was she showing her admiration of Cibber *père* through imitation and clumsy attempts to please or was this performance travesty or blackmail or did all of these motives pertain? She had commandeered her father's famous stage persona, Lord Foppington, by playing the role herself in 1735, and then agreed to play Lord Place, a send-up of her father, for a production by Cibber's enemy, Henry Fielding, after she fell out with the management at Drury Lane Theatre. The form that her *Narrative* took

[35]Erin Mackie, 'Desperate Measures: The Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke', *ELH* 58 (1991) 841–65; Cheryl Wanko, 'The Eighteenth-Century Actress and the Construction of Gender: Lavinia Fenton and Charlotte Charke', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 18 (1994) 75–90; Jones DeRitter, '"Not the Person She Conceived Me": The Public Identities of Charlotte Charke', *Genders* 19 (1994) 3–25; Sidonie Smith, 'The Transgressive Daughter and the Masquerade of Self-Representation' in *Introducing Charlotte Charke: Actress, Author, Enigma*, ed. Philip E. Baruth (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1998), pp. 83–106; Joseph Chaney, 'Turning to Men: Genres of Cross-Dressing in Charke's *Narrative* and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*' in Baruth, *Introducing Charlotte Charke*, pp. 200–26.

resembled her father's *Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber, Comedian* (1740). The much-quoted opening anecdote in the *Narrative* had the four-year-old Charlotte, '[h]aving even then, a passionate Fondness for a Perriwig', liberating her father's famous 'enormous bushy Tie-wig' with the aid of a broom, donning it, although it engulfed her, and further weighing herself down with 'a monstrous Belt and large silver-hilted Sword' and 'one of my Father's large Beaver-hats, laden with Lace, as thick and broad as a Brickbat'. She then attempted to 'pass' as her sire by parading up and down in a ditch to conceal her diminutive lower half. She presented her deluded sense of achievement as a joke on herself: 'but alas! I was borne off on the Footman's Shoulders, to my shame and disgrace, and forc'd into my proper Habiliments'.[36] Robert Folkenflik and Kristina Straub each have explored the obvious Freudian resonances in this and other anecdotes that she related. Whereas Folkenflik detects pride in her telling and sees wish-fulfilment underlying the whole narrative, Straub argues that the joke really was on Cibber who when he played Foppington had his diminutive stature exaggerated by the signature full-bottomed periwig, an article popularly associated with actors' vanity.[37]

Charke's feelings for other women appear as open-ended as her feelings for her father. Straub remarks that Charke's sexual ambiguities 'both demand and resist labeling from her later readers'.[38] As in the case of Hervey, such attempts reveal more about the observer than the subject. Fidelis Morgan, her biographer, quotes one history book from the 1950s that calls Charke's *Narrative* 'the inconsequent and madly egocentric memories of an ageing and desperate woman' and opines, 'modern psychoanalysis would, no doubt, neatly label Mrs Charke as a psychopathic lesbian, but we need not here peer too far into the deep well of loneliness from which this unhappy woman drew her inspiration'.[39] In the course of establishing Charke's reliability as a

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[36]Charke, *A Narrative*, pp. 17–20.

[37]Robert Folkenflik, 'Gender, Genre, and Theatricality in the Autobiography of Charlotte Charke' in *Representations of the Self from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, ed. Patrick Coleman, Jayne Lewis and Jill Kowalik (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 97–116; Kristina Straub, *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 139–41; see also Chaps. 2–4 on Cibber's ambiguous self-representation. Charke presents two rumours allegedly in circulation, professedly to deny their verity; however, the relish with which she recounted them in print gives them life. One story had her dressed as a gun-wielding highwayman holding up her father's coach; the other had her as a fishmonger slapping him with a flounder: *A Narrative*, pp. 114, 141.

[38]Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, p. 143. Straub offers the most nuanced interpretation of Charke's sexuality by viewing it in relation to her father's compromised masculinity in his portrayal of fops, his pandering to aristocratic tastes and associations of the theatre with sexual transgression.

[39]Morgan, *The Well-Known Troublemaker*, p. 192.

narrator, Morgan goes to great lengths to present her as heterosexual – even to the point of misquoting Charke's text in her commentary. Scholars who place Charke's story in the context of lesbian history find a lot of material for speculation and point out that the burden of proof is always greater for female homoeroticism. Had Charke written about a man in the same way as she wrote about 'Mrs. Brown', the automatic assumption would be that it was a sexual relationship. Lisa Moore believes that critics become distracted by evaluating Charke's gender performance and thus miss the assertions of sexual agency that it facilitated.[40] When one views Charke's account of her childhood household alongside the details she relates about her life with 'Mrs. Brown', certain parallels present themselves. Charke often declared one point then presented evidence that suggested the opposite to be the actual state of affairs, which renders this exercise difficult. The patterns of subterfuge, however, can be indicative of Charke's true feelings.

Most striking about her narrative is the way Charke *told* the reader how her father loved and indulged her and how through her own folly she displeased him while she *showed* him to have been negligent and herself to have been hostile. The account of her early marriage illustrates this stratagem:

> Alas! I thought it a fine Thing to be married, and indulged myself in a passionate Fondness for my Lover, which my Father perceiving, out of pure Pity, tenderly consented to a conjugal Union. The Reader may suppose that I thought, at the Time, 'twas the greatest Favour he ever conferred on me, as indeed I really did, but I have some modest Reasons to believe, had he indulged me under the Guardianship of some sensible trusty Person, or have taken a small Tour into the Country, without letting me know 'twas done with a Design to break off my Attachment to my then intended Husband, it would have prevented the Match, and both Parties, in the Main, might have been better pleased; for I am certain that Absence, and an easy Life, would soon have got the better of

[40]Lisa Moore, '"She was too fond of her mistaken bargain": The Scandalous Relations of Gender and Sexuality in Feminist Theory', *Diacritics* 21 (1991) 89–101. See also Emma Donoghue, *Passions Between Women: British Lesbian Culture 1668–1801* (New York, HarperPerenial, 1996, orig. pub. London, Scarlet Press, 1993), pp. 97–100, 164–6. Similarly, Hans Turley's study of the *Gentleman's Magazine*'s review of the *Narrative* demonstrates how the editors recounted Charke's story in such a way as to rob her of her narrative agency: '"A Masculine Turn of Mind": Charlotte Charke and the Periodical Press' in Baruth, *Introducing Charlotte Charke*, pp. 180–99. Baruth reviews the debate on Charke's sexuality in his introduction, 46–52. Folkenflik declares it an open question: 'Gender, Genre, and Theatricality', pp. 100–1, 114.

> the Violence of my Fondness, being then of too indolent a Disposition to let any Thing long disturb my Mind.
>
> I don't advance this as a Reproach for my Father's Indulgence, but to give the Reader a perfect idea of the Oddity of my youthful Disposition [...].[41]

By her own account, young Charlotte received an education more suitable for a boy, shot fowl, was most at home in the stables and the gardens and hopeless at needlework. Although she did not say so directly, Cibber obviously spent a lot of time in London and Paris, leaving her and her mother to fend for themselves in the country. She described sitting up all night with her arsenal of firearms to protect the family plate when mother and daughter feared that a servant lately dismissed for drunkenness would attempt to rob the house.[42] In Charke's stories of her childhood, this taking of male responsibility segued into episodes that showed a desire for an independent identity. She set herself up as an apothecary after a stay with a doctor, ministered to sick neighbours, and stuck her father with the bill. She then turned to gardening; the real gardener's dismissal allowed her to throw herself completely into the role. 'I was entirely lost in a Forgetfulness of my real Self', she mused, but remained vague about who that real self might be.[43]

Significantly, when Charke broke from the chronology of her story to report her father's rejection of her letter of March 1755, Charke introduced 'a young Lady, whose tender Compassion was easily moved to be the obliging Messenger'. Later, Charke identified her as an actress in her strolling company whose performance she took the trouble to observe: 'being a Person I had known many Years, and was really anxious for her Success'. Puzzled by the woman's odd posture, Charke eventually discovered that 'with a superfluity of good nature', she had lent the lead actor her own tattered stockings and engaged in various contortions on stage to hide her bare legs, risking ridicule and chill.[44] This of course turned out to be the woman who would become Mrs. Brown, nurse her patiently when she was sick, suffer alongside her in poverty, help her bring up Kitty, support her in her various money-making schemes, share a bequest from a deceased relation with her and gently chastise her when Charke/Mr. Brown made bad decisions for them. For her part, Charke acted as protector and fretted over the inconveniences her 'Friend' suffered by throwing in her lot with her. Finally, her father completely gone from her life, Charke could be the head of her own household, albeit a transient one. The root of Charke's frustration was

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[41]Charke, *A Narrative*, p. 51.
[42]*Ibid.*, pp. 41–5.
[43]*Ibid.*, pp. 34–42, quote on p. 42.
[44]*Ibid.*, pp. 120, 185–6.

the absence of a satisfactory, socially acceptable role. She expended all her energy trying out every conventional identity available, but none fit. Her desire to be a better version of her father as an adult was as futile as trying to impersonate him as a four-year-old. At times, her financial fecklessness and the burden that placed on her itinerant family seemed a travesty of her parents' arrangement, which featured her father taking control of and often squandering the family assets supposedly for their own good. Regarding her scheme to quit acting, settle down, and become a pastry-cook in a town with the absurdly apt name of *Pill*, Charke reflected, 'I own it, I was secretly chagrin'd at my Exploit, but did not dare to make the least Discovery of it to Mrs. *Brown*, who had very justifiable Reasons to reproach me for an Indiscretion she had prudently taken much Pains to prevent.' When their destitution reached its greatest extreme, it was the suffering that she had inflicted upon her Friend that roused her to raise money by her pen. The sum facilitated escape from Pill, only to have the next scheme fail and, as she lamented, 'I was obliged to strip my Friend of the ownly decent Gown she had' in order to hire horses for the players who gave her a less-than-lucrative benefit. While contemplating Kitty's performances in this company, old familial resentments resurfaced: 'I beg Pardon for degenerating so far, as to speak in Praise of so near a Relation, who really deserved it; *An Error my Family is not very apt to run into*'.[45]

Throughout the narrative, Charke acknowledged virtually every person who had shown her kindness, particularly by opening his or her purse, and meticulously catalogued those who had refused her. She wrote to settle scores as well as her debts, not for forgiveness. The printer who solicited her life story in 1754 later revealed that Charke had been living in a miserable hovel with an odd selection of emaciated pets, using a pipeless pair of bellows as a writing desk and a broken teacup as an inkstand to pen her first novel, *The History of Henry Dumont*.[46] Mrs. Brown faded from the narrative after repining (with 'great Cause') Charke's decision to quit a theatre company at Bath where they had fled after Charke's son-in-law treated them with impertinence and insult. Mrs. Brown nonetheless had trudged after her through downpours of rain, extreme heat and intense hunger and thirst to try their luck again with Kitty.[47] Upon another unsatisfactory visit, Charke took her last leave from her daughter. A further attempt at the life of a strolling player brought all-too-familiar complaints of players' villainy,

[45]*Ibid.*, pp. 224–5, 236–7, 240, 243.
[46]Morgan, *The Well-Known Troublemaker*, pp. 181–2. Felicity Nussbaum presents a valuable analysis of Charke's preoccupation with material concerns in her novels: 'Afterward: Charke's "Variety of Wretchedness"' in Baruth, *Introducing Charlotte Charke*, pp. 236–40.
[47]Charke, *A Narrative*, pp. 245, 261–2.

and laments of misfortune. Somehow, amidst the turmoil, Charke managed, as she said, 'to make a considerable Progress in Mr. *Dumont'*s History; which, as I had determined not to lead that uncomfortable Kind of Life any longer, I thought I could easily finish during the weekly Publication'.[48] Attributing Kitty's rejection to an excess of wifely duty toward an ignorant and malicious man, and renouncing the life of a player for a writing career, Charke emerged rejuvenated: 'When I set my foot upon *London* Streets, though with only a single Penny in my Pocket, I was more transported with Joy, than for all the Height of Happiness I had, in former and at different Times possessed.'[49] If her words are to be believed, she had less trouble walking away from her daughter than she did from her father. She concluded with a wish that her father could have been as forgiving as the divine creator, who repeatedly saved her from her folly with providential turns of fortune. Her last plea for forgiveness had a sting in its tail. 'The Errors of my Youth chiefly consisted in a thoughtless Wildness, partly owing to having too much will of my own in Infancy; which I allow was occasioned by an over Fondness, *where I now unhappily find a fix'd Aversion*.'[50] She was determined that her father share some of the blame for the person she had become.

The examples of John, Lord Hervey and Charlotte Charke expose the difficulties of categorizing premodern figures according to the modern notion of sexual orientation. Sexual object choice is a problematic concept in itself considering the pressure to marry and reproduce, and the overwhelming social hostility towards same-sex sexuality of this period. This study of the impact that Hervey's and Charke's affective relationships had upon their identities suggests that orientation would be a more useful descriptor if it were seen more in the sense of personal affinity and acknowledged the material, familial and professional needs and desires that shape erotic possibilities. In spite of their difference in sex and socio-economic status, each of them travelled a similar path in pursuit of self-fulfilment. After precipitous plunges into heteronormativity, each managed their love for a member of the same sex in a similar way: they did not hide their relationship or offer to explain it but left others to draw their own conclusions. Their strategies demonstrate how the performance of queer identities differed before the existence of gay and lesbian cultures. Their self-representation stressed their individuality and produced a protective ambiguity rather than an association with a group identity. Hervey's quest for political power and Charke's for self-sufficiency came to take precedence over erotic desire. At the same time, each of them sought out associations that allowed them to fulfil

[48]*Ibid.*, pp. 263–4.
[49]*Ibid.*, p. 267.
[50]*Ibid.*, p. 276.

the expectations instilled by their families while concurrently compensating for the desires those families sparked and left unsatisfied.

This comparison of Hervey and Charke also demonstrates how analyses of male and female subjects can be productively juxtaposed without falling into the trap of treating the male experience as normative. Whereas striking similarities exist between these two figures, the disparities of opportunity each had for pursuing their desires and the very different ways in which their sexualities were recognized by their milieu must be taken into account. The conventions of aristocratic marriage allowed Hervey the freedom to build affective relations with other men, but the homosociality of the political world rendered these dangerous. His sexual behaviour, combined with power and influence, seemed an aristocratic weapon to his enemies, and they fixed an enduring image of him with labels of gender and sexual transgression. This, in turn, affected the form that his self-writing ultimately took. In his memoirs, he effaced the image of effeminate courtier by representing himself as the protector of women. Charke, in contrast, was left destitute by her bad marriage choice and her defiance of her father. Coming from the theatre world where sexual and gender ambiguity reigned, she had a lot of room for play but little opportunity to enjoy it. Her sexuality, in the context of her middle-class origins and slide down the social ladder, did not seem threatening enough to categorize. The studied ambiguity and generic jumble of her autobiography reflects the absence of any identity label aside from the nebulous 'eccentric'. The familial and socio-economic positions of Hervey and Charke shaped their sexualities more than their sexualities fixed their identities. The great impact that Hervey's and Charke's non-sexual affective relations, particularly those tied to their personal ambitions, had upon their sense of self suggests the wisdom of incorporating the wider range of desires encompassed by the ancient idea of eros in our modern idea of sexual orientation.

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4
The Woman in Man's Clothes and the Pleasures of Delarivier Manley's 'New Cabal'

Jennifer Frangos

> What an irregularity of taste is theirs? They do not in reality love men, but dote [on] *the representation of men in women*. Hence it is that those ladies are so fond of the dress en cavaliere, though it is extremely against my liking, I would have the sex distinguished as well by their garb as by their manner.
>
> Delarivier Manley, *The New Atalantis* (1709)[1]

While participating in the swirl of political satires of the first decade of the eighteenth century, Delarivier Manley, popular and widely-read author of several salacious fictions about the Whig court of Queen Anne's reign, advanced a model for negotiating and understanding desire and sexual activity between fictional women in her depiction of a group of women called the 'new Cabal'. These women form alliances with a 'female favourite', have strict guidelines for screening new members of the group, and take their pleasure in the 'representations of men in women', the juxtaposition of maleness or masculinity in and around a female body. In the eighteenth-century context, and in modern critical discourse about the eighteenth century, there is no term for the women of the new Cabal.[2] They are not tribades, tommies,

[1]Delarivier Manley, *The New Atalantis* [1709], ed. Rosalind Ballaster (New York, Penguin, 1992), p. 235 (emphasis added).
[2]Lillian Faderman's *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendships and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York, William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1981) provided the first sustained examination of love between women written in the late twentieth century. Many others have written in her wake (Faderman herself has also produced an anthology, *Chloe Loves Olivia: An Anthology of Lesbian Literature from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* [New York, Viking, 1994]), and a number recent critics have taken issue with her unwillingness to allow for physical sexual activity between women before 1900 in the absence of credible, first-hand testimony; see, for example, Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 355–61, as well as the critics cited in the next two notes.

or hermaphrodites (terms operative in the early part of the century to describe women who desired women); though some of them cross-dress, they are not female husbands, for they do not adopt an exclusively male public persona.[3] Nor are they bluestockings, romantic friends, sapphists, or 'lesbians' (terms used to discuss female same-sex relationships toward the end of the century).[4]

Instead, the erotics of the new Cabal is negotiated through the trope of the woman in man's clothes, a figure different from many described in critical work on cross-dressing/transvestism,[5] for it is a body that wears men's clothing, but is known to be female at the same time. The female

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[3]On tribades, hermaphrodites, and female husbands, see Emma Donoghue, *Passions Between Women: British Lesbian Culture 1660–1801* (New York, HarperCollins, 1993), pp. 25–33 and my essay, 'Aphra Behn's Cunning Stunts: 'To the fair Clarinda', *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 45: 1 (Spring 2004), pp. 22–40.

[4]On sapphists, see Randolph Trumbach, 'London's Sapphists: From Three Sexes to Four Genders in the Making of Modern Culture', in Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (eds.), *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 112–41. For discussions of romantic friends, tommies, and 'lesbians,' see Martha Vicinus, '"They Wonder to Which Sex I Belong": The Historical Roots of the Modern Lesbian Identity', *Feminist Studies* 18:3 (Fall 1992), pp. 467–97; Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1993); Elizabeth Susan Wahl, *Invisible Relations: Representations of Female Intimacy in the Age of Enlightenment* (Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 1999); Lisa L. Moore, *Dangerous Intimacies: Toward a Sapphic History of the British Novel* (Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1997); and Sally O'Driscoll, 'The Lesbian and the Passionless Woman: Femininity and Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century England', *The Eighteenth-Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 44: 2–3 (Summer–Fall 2003), pp. 103–31.

[5]For a general study of transvestism, see Marjorie Garber's *Vested Interests* (New York, Routledge, 1997). Early-modern cross-dressing women are discussed in Julie Wheelwright's study of cross-dressing women in the military, *Amazons and Military Maids: Women Who Dressed as Men in the Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness* (Boston, Pandora, 1989); Dianne Dugaw's *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1650–1850* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989); Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol's *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early-Modern Europe* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1989); and Trumbach, *op. cit.* One remarkable feature of these studies, however, is the near-complete absence of an erotic dimension to the donning of men's clothes. Dekker and van de Pol, for instance, write with conviction that there are three basic motivations for female cross-dressers in Holland, which they categorize as Romantic (the desire to follow a male lover/husband into war), Patriotic (the desire to fight for her country, where the only way to do that was to disguise herself), and Economic (she can earn more in male professions and the work is not so degrading as prostitution), erasing same-sex desire as a factor altogether (pp. 27–35). Trumbach echoes their conclusions when he confidently states that 'it is likely that most women who dressed and passed as men for any length of time did not seek to have sexual relations with women, and this was probably true even of those who married women' (p. 115). For a discussion of cross-dressing as it *could* relate to female homosexual desire, see Donoghue, ch. 3.

body in man's clothes signifies quite differently if it is known to be female as it circulates, than the female body discovered underneath the male clothing *after* the performance. 'Passing women' or 'female husbands' like Mary (a.k.a. George or Charles) Hamilton and Charlotte Charke, and female soldiers or sailors like Hannah Snell and Mary Anne Talbot were individuals who were accepted in most social contexts as men but were at some point discovered 'really' to be women. Such women occupy very different cultural spaces than, for example, the breeches actress, whom everyone knows is a woman wearing a costume, or the late-Renaissance figure of Moll Cutpurse or Harriot Freke (in Maria Edgeworth's 1801 novel *Belinda*), both of whom are occasionally mistaken for men because of their dress, but neither of whom dresses that way in order to pretend to be a man.

Similarly, none of the women in the new Cabal appears to want to be, become, or 'read' *exclusively* as a man. Instead, the point of the cross-dressing is a particular kind of erotic spectacle, which always turns on the disjunction of her female body and the male clothing. The act of wearing the 'wrong' clothes cannot be a purely innocent gesture, especially in a culture like the British eighteenth century, where clothing is a discursive marker of many kinds of difference.[6] Because the culture made it clear what kinds of clothing were appropriate to what kinds of bodies, clothing ought to be a relatively stable signifier. Removable and recombinable, dress can therefore be an unreliable indicator of the body it covers.[7] Thus, the eighteenth-century reliance on clothing as a marker of identity had a darker flip side: what you see might not, in fact, be what you get.

The woman in man's clothes, too, is a part of eighteenth-century culture. She came to be in no small part through a particular manifestation of the actress's body on the British stage, the breeches role: the practice, extremely popular in the late Restoration and early eighteenth century, cast actresses in male roles for the novelty, the titillation, the box-office draw.[8] A great deal of the appeal of the breeches role certainly came from the 'truth' of the female body under the masculine costume and from the way that body was revealed by the configurations of the clothing: hose and breeches displayed the actresses' hips and legs in a way that petticoats and skirts

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[6]Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 1986), p. 55.

[7]'Because the meanings we read into clothing are always conventional – cultural rather than natural inscriptions – the system itself can be exploited. Fashion is endlessly separable from truth', Castle, *Masquerade*, p. 56.

[8]See Kristina Straub, *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology* (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 128–9. Straub also traces some of the specific theatre managers' commodification and use of the breeches part spectacle, including all-female casts, the popularity of particular actresses for such roles, and publicity focusing on a specific actress's body being well suited to the 'small clothes'.

could not. The actress in male clothing is in some sense the 'opposite' of what she appears to be, and the spectator's awareness of the juxtaposition, of the tension between 'appearance' and 'reality', between surface and underlying truth, is an important part of the attraction and erotic dynamic.[9]

The masquerade, a popular entertainment in London from the very early years of the eighteenth century,[10] also locates at least part of its appeal in the sexualized aura created by the masks, costumes, and deliberate reversals of traditional signifiers of identity. The point at a masquerade was to go as one's complete opposite; sex, class, and race/nationality seem to have been the major axes along which such differences were measured.[11] Interestingly, having these three major axes suggests that more than one 'opposite' would exist for any given individual: the noble lady, for instance, could masquerade as a man (her sexual opposite), as a shepherdess (her class opposite), or like Defoe's Roxana as a Turkish princess (her national opposite). Thus the masquerade complicates not only the truth of one's everyday 'identity' by highlighting the ease with which one can adopt a completely different persona (even if for a proscribed time and place) but also the ambiguity of the binary construct of the 'opposite' of the 'self'.[12]

Thus, through popular and mainstream entertainments and conventions such as the breeches role and the masquerade, we can trace a cultural awareness that, in certain contexts appearance and reality do not correspond with each other, and may in fact contradict one another. Such popular entertainments were predicated in no small measure on interpretation, ambiguity, and eroticized tension: the masquerade and the breeches actress contributed to a cultural fascination with disguise and enhanced, even encouraged, practices of reading multiple layers of meaning from a single body. Cross-dressing also provides a space of play that opens up many possibilities

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[9]Castle, *Masquerade*, p. 75.

[10]Castle dates the masquerade from the very early years of the eighteenth century; see 'Eros and Liberty at the English Masquerade, 1710–90,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 17: 2 (Winter, 1983–1984), pp. 156–76. She notes that young aristocrats returning from the Grand Tour in Europe brought the idea back with them, an imitation of the Continental carnival. The masked ball was primarily associated with 'Count' John James Heidegger, who came to England in 1708, and by the 1720s was presiding over public assemblies at the Haymarket that attracted between 700 and 1000 people per week (p. 160). See also *Masquerade and Civilization*, pp. 7–15.

As early as 1710, *The Tatler* contains mentions of the masquerade: see No. 146 (Thursday, March 14–Saturday, March 16, 1709/10). By 1711 *The Spectator* was commenting on the 'Midnight Masque', calling it a 'libidinous Assembly': see No. 8 (Friday, March 9, 1711); see also Nos. 9, 14, and 23.

[11]Castle, *Masquerade*, p. 5.

[12]See Castle *Masquerade*: 'The pleasure of the masquerade attended on the experience of doubleness, the alienation of inner from outer, a fantasy of two bodies simultaneously and thrillingly present, self and other together, the two-in-one' (p. 4).

for 'perverse' pleasures, alternate interpretations, and 'deviant' sexual practices. In considering ways that the figure of the female body in male clothing was used to negotiate desire between women in the early eighteenth century, this essay traces out connections between fiction, reading, textuality, and sexual practice – concepts which in early eighteenth-century Britain often seem so entwined that it is difficult to separate conclusively.

Manley's *New Atalantis* eroticizes textual practices like reading and juxtaposing multiple layers of meaning, and draws on discourses of satire, scandal, fiction, masquerade, and sexuality in ways that establish fiction as an erotic technology, both a *technology that is erotic/sexualized* (reading/writing as a sexual act) and a *technology of the erotic* (a means of conveying erotic information, shaping erotic desires and practice, a tool or a toy of sexuality). These discourses, in combination with the cross-dressing element of the masquerade and the conventions of the breeches role, inform the erotics of the new Cabal as well, demonstrating ways that the known female body in male clothes combines apparent contradictions between clothing and body to create or inform particular kinds of sexual desire and to enable erotic practices.

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As a satirist, writer of scandalous narratives, and playwright, Manley was a presence on the literary scene before she published *The New Atalantis* in two volumes in 1709. *The New Atalantis* was one of many politically inspired scandalous satires (and only one of Manley's), but one that seems to have caught the attention of the reading public. It was phenomenally popular and widely discussed in social circles and in letters among friends, was condemned in the pages of *The Tatler* in 1709[13] and even makes an appearance in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1714).[14] Manley's characters are based on real-life court figures of the time, exaggerated and sexualized in scandalous ways;[15] the connections between the real-life individuals and

[13]*The Tatler*, No. 63, 3 September 1709.

[14]Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock* (1714), 3:165. Rosalind Ballaster notes that *The New Atalantis* became the talk of the town in contemporary correspondence, and argues that it helped along the collapse of the Whig ministry in 1710: see her introduction to *The New Atalantis*, v–vi, xv, xix, and also her essay 'Manl(e)y Forms: Sex and the Female Satirist', *Women, Texts & Histories 1575–1760*, ed. Clare Brandt and Diane Purkiss (New York, Routledge, 1992), p. 233.

[15]On the political climate of the times, and for discussions of the people caricatured in Manley's novel, see Ruth Herman's essay, 'Enigmatic Gender in Delarivier Manley's *New Atalantis*', *Presenting Gender: Changing Sex in Early-Modern Culture*, ed. Chris Mounsey (Lewisburg, PA, Bucknell University Press, 2001), pp. 202–24; and ch. 3 of her book, *The Business of a Woman: The Political Writings of Delarivier Manley* (Newark, University of Delaware Press, 2003).

the characters was never directly stated, though there were a number of keys to the characters published separately as supplements to the text.[16] *The New Atalantis* is much more sexually explicit and politically charged than most of its predecessors; its publication landed Manley and her publishers in jail on charges of libel against the Crown in 1709 (the two men were released, and Manley was tried and acquitted of the charges).[17]

The New Atalantis is a work of Menippean satire, in which three characters wander through the island of Atalantis and discuss the various people they see. Astrea, goddess of justice, is gathering information for use in the education of the future prince of the moon; her mother, the bedraggled Virtue accompanies her. Lady Intelligence is their guide and informant, and tells the story of each person they encounter. The stories all involve sexual scandal of one kind or another; rape, adultery, incest, and seduction and abandonment are the most common. To further emphasize the political nature of this satire, each character is also connected in the narrative to the recent rulers of Atalantis and the political jockeying that takes place in those courts.

In her introduction to the second volume of *The New Atalantis*, Manley quotes John Dryden's 'A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire' (1693):

> What is most essential, and the very soul of satire, is scourging of vice and exhortation to virtue. [...] 'Tis an action of virtue to make examples of vicious men. They may and ought to be upbraided with their crimes and follies both for their own amendment, if they are not yet incorrigible, and for the terror of others, to hinder them from falling into those enormities, which they see are so severely punished in the persons of others.[18]

Citing Dryden lends legitimacy to her purpose in writing as well as the act of publishing and circulating what she had written. Like so many Augustan writers, Manley treated satire as a means of intervening in the political, social, and cultural discourses and practices of her time. Augustan satire, following Dryden's demarcation, generally falls into one of two cat-

[16]Catherine Gallagher considers the proliferation of keys to the characters as a measure of the novel's popularity: 'Chapter 3: Political Crimes and Fictional Alibis: The Case of Delarivier Manley', *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace 1670–1820* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994), pp. 88–144, esp. pp. 124–6.

[17]Gallagher's 'Political Crimes' presents a nuanced analysis of Manley's defense and trial (pp. 90–2).

[18]Dryden, 'A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire', [1693] qtd. in Manley, *The New Atalantis*, p. 132.

egories, each with a classical model: 'smiling' satire like that of Horace and 'savage' or personal satire, as of Juvenal; Addison and Steele are the major proponents of Horatian 'smiling satire,' while Swift favoured Juvenal's harsh, personalized attack in satiric writing. Manley resisted the traditional breakdown of satire by claiming to have opted for the model provided by Varro, rather than of Horace or Juvenal, though in practice her satires were as savage and personal as Swift's, if not more so for being based primarily on fantasy and hearsay rather than on known activities of her targets.[19] Even so, in many ways she was a conventional satirist who saw herself involved in the process of effecting social or political change through accepted textual practices – the process, as she writes, of 'scourging of vice and exhortation to virtue'.

Two hallmarks of Manley's style were to build up different levels of 'truth' and to encourage her readers to look beyond the literal claims of her text. The fact that the characters in the *New Atalantis* are thinly veiled representations of (mostly) Whig figures in the court (a layer of meaning reinforced by the separate publication of keys to the novel)[20] carries an important signal to read on at least two levels at once: enjoy these salacious tales at the literal level; at the same time, try to figure out who they are supposed to be and what rumours or events in those people's lives are being exaggerated. In the 'erotic double vision' (to use Gallagher's term) that pervades episodes of *The New Atalantis*, it is the juxtaposition of appearance and reality which generates pleasure, a multi-layered pleasure which is produced precisely within those spaces of disjunction.

The New Atalantis draws quite explicitly upon the spectacular and eroticized dynamics of masquerade and gender play in presenting the ladies of the new Cabal.

* * *

The new Cabal is featured twice in the text of *The New Atalantis*, and these two episodes provide both an overview of the community as well as detailed histories of individual members of the group. Indeed, a great deal of narrative space is dedicated to describing the group's social structure and organization. The new Cabal is organized like a guild or a religious institution, with a social hierarchy, regular meetings, a policy concerning the distribution of property among its members, a screening process for new members, and a system of tutelage. There is a decided class element to the group's existence: the Cabal are court ladies, and although the Whig political affiliations of the characters' real-life correspondents is probably meant to be a contributing factor in their

[19]Ballaster, 'Manl(e)y Forms', pp. 222–3.
[20]Ballaster, Introduction, xv; and Gallagher, pp. 124–6.

dissipation, class status is the main facilitator of their lifestyle, in that they have both money and time to pursue their inclinations. On the one hand, such a position in the social milieu of Atalantis lends them a certain amount of political clout and influence, thus reinforcing the satiric convention of the dissipated ruling class. On the other hand, this social status firmly locates the Cabal in the upper echelons of the existing social structure and suggests further difficulties with Manley's implicit project of the scourging of this particular vice.

Through a rigorous screening process, the older, established members of the Cabal have the responsibility of making sure that each new recruit is suitably disposed to be a member of the group:

> with particular reserve to the constitution of the novice, they strictly examine her genius, whether it have [sic.] fitted her for the mysteries of the Cabal, as if she may be rendered insensible on the side of Nature. Nature, who has the trick of making them dote on the opposite improving sex, for if her foible be found directed to what Nature inspires, she is unanimously excluded, and particular injunctions bestowed upon all members of this distinguishing society from admitting her to their bosom, or initiating her in the mysteries of their endearments.[21]

In other words, women whose primary erotic attraction is toward men are explicitly excluded from membership. By ensuring that each member is 'insensible on the side of Nature', or uninterested in the attractions of men, this selection process guarantees that the Cabal remains a society of like-minded individuals, united by their same-sex attraction, which is pointedly described as contrary to Nature. Nonetheless, in deference to economic reality, it is recognized that, for young women who are not financially independent, marriage is a necessary evil; marriages are therefore arranged by the older women of the Cabal, usually in the form of a match with an older man who is expected to soon die, leaving the young woman a widow with a reasonable fortune to command. Married women are, however, strongly cautioned by the Cabal 'to reserve their heart, their tender amity for their fair friend, an article in this well-bred, willfully indistinguishing age which the husband seems to be rarely solicitous of'.[22] The narrator's comment about husbands' lack of affection for their wives would seem to counter Intelligence's characterization of the Cabal as unnatural, suggesting a reason that women seek emotional connections with each other. Sympathy generated for the neglected wife, however, is mitigated through an excess of emotion, and even the perverse misdirection of attachments, as in the case of the wife

[21] *New Atalantis*, p. 153.
[22] *New Atalantis*, p. 156.

of the Viceroy of Peru, who is described as having 'a more extensive taste, her circle admitting the eminent of both sexes'. Her bisexuality is explained as a matter of 'undoubtedly know[ing] herself born to a greater capacity of giving happiness than ought to fall to the share of one mortal'.[23] This Cabal member, then, disputes the exclusivity attributed to the Cabal and suggests a degree of hypocritical tolerance within their ranks.

The new Cabal is first introduced when Astrea asks Lady Intelligence about the passengers of three coaches that pass by. Astrea seems to want confirmation that the passengers are indeed women, as she asks for information about 'those ladies (we know 'em to be such by their voices)', and the question calls attention to a discrepancy between appearance and 'reality' and fixes such a disjunction at the centre of the new Cabal's identity. Astrea further notes that the ladies are laughing incessantly. She asks, 'Can any persons be more at their ease? Sure these seem to unknow that there is a certain portion of misery and disappointments allotted to all men, which one time or another will assuredly overtake 'em'.[24] The ladies' levity calls attention to them (in contrast to the supposed 'secrecy' of their community and connections described later on) and seems to Astrea to set them apart from other people who cannot escape the weight of misery and unhappiness in the world, even when they do not feel the direct effects of it. As well, the awkward construction of Astrea's question – especially the tentative and ungrammatical phrase, 'seem to unknow' – sets the new Cabal apart from conventional structures and systems.

Lady Intelligence answers Astrea's question by expostulating on the reputation of the ladies:

> these ladies are of the new Cabal, a sect (however innocent in it self) that does not fail from meeting its share of censure from the world. Alas! what can they do? How unfortunate are women? If they seek their diversion out of themselves and include the other sex, they must be criminal? If in themselves (as those of the new Cabal), still they are criminal?

The Cabal equates unspecified 'diversions' – sexual improprieties of the kind that need no explanation, namely premarital or extramarital heterosexual activity – with same-sex possibilities: as Intelligence describes it, seeking either kind is a criminal act; both are therefore equivalent in status in the face of the law. The fact that Intelligence asks questions, too, is an important point: she does not state these things about the Cabal outright,

[23]*New Atalantis*, p. 157.
[24]*New Atalantis*, p. 154.

but rather intimates through a series of questions, which, though rhetorical, could be answered either yes or no.

The passage also contains a nice segue from seeking 'diversion out of themselves' to 'includ[ing] the other sex' and then to seeking it 'in themselves', making it clear that the ladies of the Cabal engage in sexual relationships with one another. Looking for sexual diversion from other people (i.e., alloerotic desire, as opposed to solitary pleasure) is a logical step; the expected heterosexual component of sexual desire, however, is thwarted with the criminal overtones and redirected into seeking sexual satisfaction 'in themselves (as those of the new Cabal).' Intelligence therefore clarifies that we are not talking about solitary sexual pleasure, for the parenthetical aside lets us know that the Cabal is most definitely alloerotic *and* same-sex. Thus, our associational process is carefully guided to reach the conclusion that, in the next sentence, Intelligence claims she cannot conceive of at all:

> Though censurers must carry their imaginations a much greater length than I am able to do mine, to explain this hypothesis with success. They pretend to find in these the vices of old Rome revived and quote you certain detestable authors who (to amuse posterity) have introduced you lasting monuments of vice, which could only subsist in imagination and can, in reality, have no other foundation [than] what are to be found in the dreams of poets and the ill nature of those censurers, who will have no diversions innocent, but what themselves advance![25]

In Intelligence's comments, the process of imagination is integrally related to sexual practice, especially sexual perversion: the 'lasting monuments of vice' created by the classical authors are, she protests, only possible in the realm of imagination. A specifically textual dimension to these vices is important as well, as these classical vices come down to us in written form. Furthermore, our understanding of the new Cabal and their crimes and vices hinges on interpretation, which opens the question of whether the vice is really there or if the censurers find it because they're *looking* for it? Intelligence seems to take the position that those who seek perversion or irregularity will find it, but at the same time, there is almost a challenge in her comment that 'censurers must carry their imaginations a much greater length than I am able to do mine'. The reader is practically invited to take her imagination farther than Intelligence is willing to, and is reminded that there are other interpretations of the stories or texts Intelligence alludes to and is about to relate. Intelligence here claims what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has termed 'the privilege of unknowing', which facilitates a specific and

[25]*New Atalantis*, p. 154.

detailed narration of sexual activity while maintaining that she does not know what she is describing.[26] Thus in this introduction to the ladies of the new Cabal, the process of reading and interpreting is foregrounded and, despite Intelligence's protests, the reader is set up to read against the grain, and clued in that something other than the literal meaning is to be understood.[27]

The 'vices of old Rome' reputedly revived by the ladies are no doubt the sexualized activities between women represented in the classical poetry of Martial, Lucian, and Ovid receiving attention through the renewal in classicism that brought with it the fashion for misogynist satires on the Sapphic impulse. As Donoghue has suggested, the works of Roman poets Ovid and Martial, and Greek writer Lucian (in English translations as well as the original Latin and Greek) made available images of female same-sex

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[26]See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'The Privilege of Unknowing: Diderot's *The Nun*', *Tendencies* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 23–51, esp. pp. 23–25. Sedgwick writes, 'Insofar as ignorance is ignorance *of* a knowledge [...] these ignorances, far from being pieces of the originary dark, are produced by and correspond to particular knowledges and circulate as part of particular regimes of truth' (p. 25); particularly applicable in the context of Western notions of female sexuality, Sedgwick explicates the 'powerful but labor-intensive ignorance' of the narrator of Diderot's novella and the implications of a reading that appreciates, rather than condemns, the deployment of such an absence of knowledge, concluding, 'The only move that I can see worth making in this context is the actively antihomophobic one, valuing and exploring and sharing a plurality of sexual habitation, love, and even crucially knowledge' (p. 51).

See also David M. Robinson, *Closeted Writing and Lesbian and Gay Literature* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006), pp. 28–9 and ch. 5; Robinson discusses this rhetorical strategy as 'mock ignorance', and firmly locates Manley's text within homophobic discourses, arguing that the weight of the speaker's and author's condemnation simply cannot be overcome. My reading here falls in line with what he calls 'dissident readings' and, though I do not dispute the homophobic and vitriolic tone he identifies, I do not concur with the finality and precedence that he attributes them.

[27]This process of interpreting irony is described by Wayne Booth as having four basic steps that distance the ironic meaning from the literal meaning: recognition that the irony is *intended*, 'not mere openings, provided unconsciously, or accidental statements'; *covert* or 'intended to be reconstructed with meanings different from those on the surface'; *stable or fixed*, 'in the sense that once a reconstruction of meaning has been made, the reader is not then invited to undermine it [...] further'; and *finite* or local and limited in application; *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 5–6. Booth limits his discussion to 'stable irony', as is clear from the third step in this process; the implicit possibility that individual readers can further undermine an ironic meaning is outside the scope of his argument. For my purposes here, however, this potential for misreading even the most stable of ironic texts will become important; see my discussion of perverse reading practices below.

sexuality to an eighteenth-century audience.[28] Most of these images involve women who are masculine in one way or another, implying that irregular sexual activity and 'improper' gender expression go hand in hand; true to these classical models, the ladies of the Cabal are masculine, boisterous, given to cross-dressing and passing as men, and often sexually aggressive and voracious.[29] Lady Intelligence, however, chooses to profess disbelief in the ladies' guilt:

> Alas! what can they do? How unfortunate are women? if they seek their diversion out of themselves and include the other sex, they must be criminal? If in themselves (as those of the new Cabal), still they are criminal?[30]

This protest suggests an awareness, on the part of the social censors, that the new Cabal is engaged in sexual improprieties that might be understood as roughly analogous to a woman seeking sexual relations with a man outside of marriage. A particular kind of cultural blindness, however, works to keep the terms of that impropriety unclear; while such a heteronormative imperative would seem to erase the possibility of a non-phallocentric female sexuality, it in fact provides the very cover for such a thing. A roughly contemporary example of this cultural blindness is mocked in Aphra Behn's poem, 'To the fair Clarinda' (1688), in which the speaker 'Mrs. B' declares to Clarinda, 'For sure no Crime with thee we can commit; / Or if we shou'd – thy Form excuses

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[28]While Donoghue's reading of these misogynist texts is admittedly optimistic, I take her argument to be that negative representation is better than no representation at all, for even highly condemnatory texts acknowledge the presence of, and thus to some degree legitimate, women who desire women. Furthermore, she suggests that in their explicit detailing of these vices and perversions, the misogynist satires on women also provide information about what two women could do together sexually: she writes, 'Hostile texts could be of great use as sources of information and even enjoyment. Anne Lister, for instance, read and clearly appreciated Juvenal's *Sixth Satire*, mentioning it to test women she suspected were lesbians like herself' (p. 214).

Sedgwick refers to a process of reading against the grain as 'becoming a perverse reader', 'Queer and Now', *Tendencies* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1993), p. 4; Bonnie Zimmerman elaborates on a similar practice in her essay, 'Perverse Reading: The Lesbian Appropriation of Literature', *Sexual Practice/Textual Theory: Lesbian Cultural Criticism*, ed. Susan J. Wolfe and Julia Penelope (Cambridge, MA, Blackwell, 1993), pp. 135–49. The concept of perverse reading will inform my discussion of the widow of the new Cabal and the breeches actress, below.

[29]Similar dynamics concerning boisterous and masculine women during this period are discussed by Julie Peakman: see *Lascivious Bodies* (London, Atlantic Books, 2004), pp. 222–3.

[30]*New Atalantis*, p. 154.

it. / For who, that gathers fairest Flowers believes / A Snake lies hid beneath the Fragrant Leaves' (ll. 14–17).[31] In these lines, the speaker playfully alludes to the sexualized relationship between herself and Clarinda, while at the same time declaring that the fact that the two of them seem to be women would, for some observers, necessarily mean that there is no crime, no sexual activity, possible between them. The word 'crime' provides an interesting tenor to Behn's love poem, especially one between two women, where 'evidence' of the crime would be hard to come by; it also functions here as a provocative means of legitimating sexual love between women by allying it with sodomy, which – although the legislation at the time specified sodomy between men, between man and woman, or between man and beast – was typically understood to mean sexual activity between men. Lady Intelligence's comments in *The New Atalantis* demonstrate a similar awareness that a chaste female friendship could mask a physical sexual relationship.[32] Like the speaker of Behn's poem, then, through a combination of sexual characteristics and practices, the Cabal can play to the dictates of a hegemonic heteronormative society that simultaneously feared women's sexuality and encouraged close female friendships, and find within those restrictions both the means to enable their passions and to at the same time shelter themselves from punishment.

Intelligence continues her description of the Cabal:

> The Cabal run no such dangers, they have all happiness in themselves! Two beautiful ladies joined in an excess of amity (no word is tender enough to express their new delight) innocently embrace! For how can

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[31]The punishment for sodomy, though sporadically enforced between 1533 and 1861 (when the laws against male same-sex sexual activity were changed), was death. See Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800*, 2nd edition (London, 1989), pp. 99–100. For further discussion of Behn's poem in this light, see Wahl, *Invisible Relations* 58; my essay, 'Aphra Behn's Cunning Stunts' 28–30; and Robinson, 'The Abominable Madame de Murat', *Homosexuality in French History and Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Merrick and Michael Sibalis (Binghamton, NY, Harrington Park Press, 2001), pp. 53–67.

[32]On the tensions surrounding potentially sexualized female friendships in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Donoghue, ch. 5; Wahl, whose study 'delineate[s] ways in which a sanctioned model of female intimacy might represent an attempt to conceal or counter cultural anxieties about sexual relations between women that could not be openly acknowledged' (pp. 11–12); Moore, whose argument 'emphasizes the conflict between approbatory accounts of the chastity of these relationships and the virulent eighteenth-century discourse about the present dangers of female homosexuality in such relationships' (p. 8); and Traub, who devotes two chapters to arguing that 'whatever the efforts of female friends in the late seventeenth century to ward off suspicions about their affections, rather than effectively protecting themselves from the transgressive signification of the tribade, such friends were increasingly in danger of being interpreted from within the terms of tribadism' (p. 218).

> they be guilty? they vow eternal tenderness, they exclude the men, and condition that they will always do so. What irregularity can there be in this? 'Tis true, some things may be strained a little too far, and that causes reflections to be cast upon the rest.[33]

Intelligence's description of the Cabal's 'Crimes' or 'vices' pushes the limits of the cultural myopia that insists on reading female friendship as chaste and asexual. The 'excess of amity' between these closest of friends echoes certain seventeenth-century depictions of female-female friendship that in turn draw on a classical tradition of *amicitia* in male friendships, where the language of love and marriage is deployed in the celebration of same-sex friendships.[34] That 'some things may be strained a little too far', however, troubles the question of the chastity of these female friendships by implying that some of these excesses of amity have overflowed into 'irregularity', that is, sexual practices or unnatural affections.

On the surface, then, the new Cabal is condemned for several reasons. One is undoubtedly being disposed to same-sex attraction, contrary to Nature; another is most certainly the fact that ladies of the new Cabal prefer their 'female favourites' over their husbands. The impact of these two transgressions, as I have mentioned, is mitigated by the text itself. What seems to get the most emphasis in the descriptions of the ladies, and thus what might be considered their most important transgression, is ambiguous or inappropriate expressions of gender, that is, a noticeable masculinity (and an implicit lack of femininity) in these women.[35] The first mention of the Cabal suggests that they are not clearly feminine in appearance:

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[33]*New Atalantis* , p. 154.

[34]Discussing a sixteenth-century Scottish poem, for example, Traub notes, 'Appropriating the classical discourse of idealized male *amicitia*, Poem XLIX renegotiates the possible terms of female-female amity by invoking a historical precedent for such liaisons – Ruth and Naomi – and implicitly envisioning a world in which women can marry' (p. 289). On male friendships, especially in the early modern context, the classic study is Alan Bray's *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London, Gay Men's Press, 1982).

[35]For an insightful study of the masculine woman, see Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, N.C,: Duke University Press, 1998). Her discussion of the project of studying female masculinity in history (pp. 50–7) is especially useful: she writes, 'before the emergence of what we now understand as 'lesbian' identities, same-sex desire worked through any number of different channels. If it seems both obvious and undeniable that probably many models of same-sex desire did exist, then why have we not busied ourselves in imagining their variety?' (p. 50), and recommends 'that we consider the various categories of sexual variation for women as separate and distinct from the modern category of lesbian and that we try to account for the specific sexual practices associated with each category and the particular social relations that may have held each category in place' (p. 57).

we are told that the only way 'we know 'em to be [ladies] [is] by their voices'.[36] One of the founders, a 'bold and masculine' woman is introduced as 'having something [so] robust in her air and mein that the other sex would have certainly claimed her for one of theirs, if she had not thought fit to declare herself *by her habit (alone)* to be of the other'[37] (emphasis added). I would not argue, as has been the trend in some readings of transgressive women, that this sexual multiplicity makes the Cabal unrepresentable or nonsensical, although it clearly confounds and disturbs a binary-driven system of representation.[38] The crisis in category would seem to be that the women of the new Cabal are sexually overdetermined, male and female (or rather, masculine and feminine) both at the same time. Yet it is important to note that, however masculine they may appear, the ladies are always obviously female in one way or another. As with the breeches actress on the eighteenth-century stage, the female body persists as a structuring truth in these representations even as the supposed reality of their female bodies is transformed, through the erotic double vision at work in the satire, into one of several layers of meaning. The women of the new Cabal, we are told, 'do not in reality love men, but dote [upon] the *representations of men in women*'[39] (emphasis added). This distinction is very important: the ladies do not love men, that much we understand; however, they do not simply love women either. They love the 'representations of men' – that is, the appearance of masculinity – 'in women', that is, in combination with the actuality of essential femaleness. A normative male–female dynamic is referenced within this setup, but it is not merely imitated. It is modified and renegotiated to a new end: what we have is not women pretending to be men, but women acting or looking like men while still being women. The manifestations of this conjunction of masculinity and femaleness take different forms, depending upon the tastes of the ladies involved.

It is in the two explicitly sexualized stories involving cross-dressing that we see the erotic practices associated with the woman in man's clothes. In one of the cross-dressing scenes featuring ladies from the new Cabal, the 'witty' Marchioness of Sandomire 'used to mask her diversions in the habit of the other sex and, with her female favourite, Ianthe, wander through the gallant quarter of Atalantis in search of adventures'. The two women pick up prostitutes, 'cajole with the affected seeming gallantry of [men], engage and carry them to the public gardens, and houses of entertainment with music and all diversions.' At the end of the evening,

[36]*New Atalantis*, p. 153.
[37]*New Atalantis*, p. 156.
[38]See, for example, Garber, pp. 132–3; and Traub, pp. 13–14.
[39]*New Atalantis*, p. 235.

we are told, '[t]hese creatures of hire [the prostitutes] failed not to find their account in obliging the Marchioness's and Ianthe's peculiar taste, by all the liberties that belonged to women of their loose character and indigence'.[40]

Here, the erotic double vision, as well as the sexualized nature of the encounter, is signalled by the exchange of money implied by the presence of the prostitutes, who accept the masquerade and receive their payment, perhaps finding an outlet for their 'loose character and indigence', and thus gratification of their own. The Marchioness and Ianthe realize a certain (probably sexual) satisfaction through the use of male clothing and, of course, through the exchange of money which purchases the prostitutes' participation. They are also, interestingly enough, having the experience together; it is not clear whether or not Ianthe also dresses in men's clothes, but she is certainly a participant in the 'adventure' that ensues. Whether or not the prostitutes are let in on the 'reality' of the Marchioness's disguise, Ianthe knows, and thus figures as the ideal audience for the eroticized spectacle of the cross-dressed Marchioness engaging the prostitutes' services. Regardless of what actually transpires between them (what sexual services the prostitutes provide), this sexual encounter gets its charge from the fiction of the masquerade and the 'reality' of the two sets of female bodies underlying it all.

Now, though we do not find Dryden's unqualified 'scourging of vice' here, the Cabal's association with prostitution and the reduction of sexual pleasure to an economic transaction might be enough to hinder us (the readers) from falling into like enormities. At the same time, however – and arguably more powerfully because this scene is open-ended – this association sets up reading or interpreting Manley's writing in *The New Atalantis* as the pleasurable act, especially if the reader is aware of multiple layers of meaning without necessarily privileging any one over the others.[41] This lesson from the text, encouraged if not demanded of its readers, is the means of appreciating the pleasures of the new Cabal's sexual practices, which draw on satiric conventions, reading practices, and the erotic technology of fiction. Thus the Cabal's sexuality and erotic economy is negotiated in no small part through language and textuality, to which are added cultural practices of masquerade and women in breeches that also hinge on reading and interpreting the human – specifically, the female – body.

The second scene involving a sexually explicit story is between a widow of the new Cabal and a breeches actress. This scene in particular shows a

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[40]*New Atalantis*, p. 157.
[41]Gallagher, p. 103.

complex sexual identity and mode of pleasure at work. The satiric 'scourging of vice' Manley proclaimed in her preface is far more difficult to locate in this passage and, as a result, the passage looks a lot more like a blueprint, a recipe to 'try this at home'; in other words, the weight of the implied ironic meaning threatens to override Lady Intelligence's privilege of unknowing, as the pleasures of the text assert themselves to validate the literal meaning of the text. A wealthy widow of the new Cabal falls in love with a young actress who was playing a male part on the stage. She invites this young actress (in costume) to her house in the country and begins to make sexual advances toward her. However, the widow meets with resistance:

> The [actress] was at a loss to know not only how to merit so many favours, but of the meaning of 'em. [... She] told the lady she did not like those hugs and endearments from her own sex, they seemed unnatural: did they come from a man, she would be able to guess at his design, but here she was at a loss –.[42]

The actress is receiving what seems to her to be mixed signals: in her understanding of sexual interactions, sexual advances are supposed to come from the man; here, however, they come from the widow, the one designated by her dress as 'the woman'. The actress is the recipient of these advances, yet by her clothing she is designated 'the man'. She is the one in male clothing, yet she knows that she is not male, for under her clothing is a female body. Caught in an uncomfortable situation involving an unexpected female aggressiveness and her blindness to the possibility of woman-to-woman sexuality, she cannot maintain the charade suggested by her costume, for charade it must be. The actress insists upon her loss (literal and figurative, and cunningly echoed in the textual joke of the phallic dash and vaginal dot at the end of the dialogue: '–.') and eventually returns to the town.

At this point, we are told,

> The widow found her companion not of a taste virtuous enough for the mysteries of their union; her mind ran all upon what she had been too much used to, the other sex. The [actress] had been vitiated by amour! by abominable intrigue with the filthy, odious men! and was not therefore worthy of the honour of being admitted to their community. She withdrew those airs of fondness from a tasteless

[42] *New Atalantis*, p. 235.

> undeserving wretch [... and] by little and little, dropped her very acquaintance.[43]

This interaction has been read as a failure of the Cabal and of their eroticism and as a definitively final ending to the scene, in accordance with the satiric mode.[44] Such a reading might be justified if we assume that the actress's interpretation is the only interpretation of the scene; she sees this 'play' as a failed attempt to reproduce a male–female sexual encounter, which is foiled by her anatomical 'loss', typographically emphasized by the '–.' as her protests trail off. The dismissal of the widow's version of 'gender play' as a failed imitation of heterosexuality is underwritten by the assumption that to cross-dress as a man is to want to be a man.

Appreciating the layers of meaning clustered around the woman in man's clothes does not preclude the perspective that she is a failed man, but it does not limit readings of her to that answer. Instead, it opens the possibility of a nuanced erotics that renegotiates the concept of a sex-binary system and derives pleasure from the apparent contradiction in combining 'masculine' and 'feminine' characteristics, clothing, and body parts, and suggests that there are two models of sexuality at work here: the actress's, which regards this encounter as a doomed and incomplete replication of heterosexuality, and the widow's, which employs the erotic double vision operative and productive elsewhere in the text to produce a complex eroticism based in some ways upon, but not reiterating, the heteronormative. The actress's model fails in this situation because appearances do not correspond to 'reality', but there is no textual evidence to support the assertion that the widow's model fails as well: after a fit of revenge enacted on a portrait of the actress in her breeches costume, the widow accepts that this actress is not 'worthy of the honour of being admitted to their community', and in the same way that the actress presumably returns to her previous activities, so too the widow probably continues her search for a suitable companion. In the logic of the narrative, each has returned to her proper place: according to the screening process for new members of the new Cabal, those women who are attracted to men are denied admission to the group. Far from suggesting that either of these models of desire has failed, then, this move would seem to say that both are able to succeed, just not in combination. Far, too, from condemning the widow's activities, the text seems to ensure that they continue,

[43]*New Atalantis*, pp. 235–6.

[44]See Gallagher, pp. 140–4, for a particularly egregious example: after establishing the joys of reading on multiple levels encouraged by Manley's text, Gallagher categorically denies that the same 'erotic double vision' is applicable in the new Cabal's encounters. She writes, 'The episode of the widow and the actress is anomalous and seems designed to reflect not only the precariousness of "pure" fiction but also on its thinness as an imaginative experience' (p. 142).

albeit in a space out of reach of the likes of the actress, and any reader who shares the actress's perspective.

Such a perverse reading of this scene, as seen by Sedgwick and Zimmerman, is upheld by the stated purpose of this satirical text; recall the quotation of Dryden in Manley's Preface:

> What is most essential, and the very soul of satire, is scourging of vice and exhortation to virtue. [...] 'Tis an action of virtue to make examples of vicious men. They may and ought to be upbraided with their crimes and follies both for their own amendment, if they are not yet incorrigible, and for the terror of others, to hinder them from falling into those enormities, which they see are so severely punished in the persons of others.[45]

The New Atalantis contains its share of vicious portraits and terrible ends (including 'guilty pregnancies', death in childbirth, social ostracism, and descent into madness), so readers know that Manley is not afraid to severely punish the objects of her satire. But she does not do this with the new Cabal: at the end of the story of the widow and the actress, we see no condemnation, no spectacle of the vicious being severely punished (unless we count the actress, whose portrait is mangled and rejected), none of the 'scouring of vice' that we have been primed to expect. But we do find certain interpretive pleasures in this scene, which readers are invited to appreciate through typographical puns and layered representations of reality. In this scene's lack of definitive closure *vis-à-vis* the widow's erotic 'transgressions', there exists the possibility that the widow will find satisfaction elsewhere. Instead of exhorting the reader to virtue through the widow's negative example, then, Manley might very well be providing, for the willing reader, what could be called a blueprint for the kind of behaviour she seems to satirize. The combination of ironic reading and erotic double vision – reading practices instilled through *The New Atalantis* itself – allow for a new genre (and a new location of agency) to be found in the spaces of satire's failures. A reader who finds new possibilities of behaviour in the ambiguously condemnatory passages of satiric or scandalous writing will do so with the awareness that something about these activities is transgressive or threatening enough to have warranted satiric treatment in the first place. Such a reader, if she chose to try this at home, would combine her blueprint with that awareness, and would, if successful, perform a more knowledgeable, and ultimately more subversive and possibly more pleasurable, transgression than her textual predecessors.

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[45]Dryden, qtd. in, *New Atalantis*, p. 132.

The new Cabal's erotic practice stems from a kind of reading of the body that works on several levels at the same time and derives pleasure from the juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory elements. The act of deriving meaning from a body and its clothing, appreciating the tensions between the layers of meaning and the (known and/or imagined) surface beneath the layers, is an act of interpretation, not unlike textual practices more formally associated with reading, especially reading allegorical satire or scandalous fiction or the *roman a clef*, where what is said is not always, or not only, what is meant. The new Cabal's sexual practices, therefore, hinge on a desire for specific combinations of attributes and qualities, dependent upon the erotic frisson of layers of meaning and contradiction for its charge. Because the erotics of the Cabal resonates with cultural discourses involving multiplicity, interpretation, and layers of meaning, in a sense, what the ladies do is what any reader of early eighteenth-century scandalous fiction does: they read (female) bodies, supplement those bodies with stories and details that provide excitement and titillation, and take pleasure in the resulting 'text'. Manley's *New Atalantis* perpetuates, if inadvertently, the threat posed by the cross-dressed actress and the masked, costumed body of the masquerade; indeed, she helps keep it in circulation by representing – making their practice hers in many ways – and reinforcing their erotic power. Though on the surface the new Cabal's sexuality is not officially condoned by Astrea, Virtue, or Lady Intelligence, it is allied with commonplace, mainstream activities (theatre, masquerade, reading satire) and therefore cannot be eradicated altogether. In fact, because it is produced and authorized by and through the specific echoes of popular and mainstream entertainments and discourses, the model of the new Cabal's community, as well as their erotic and sexual practices, are, we could argue, there to stay.

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5
The Hostile Gaze: Perverting the Female Form, 1688–1800

Jenny Skipp

In *The History of the Human Heart* (1749) Camilo, a young libertine, is taken to a bagnio where he is fascinated by the posture girls who perform for him and his friends. Camilo is aroused by the exhibited female genitalia until one of the girls ejaculates into a wine glass, at which point he becomes disgusted with the girl's lewdness.[1] Camilo rejects the wantonness of the posture girl, and sees the display of her sexuality as an inversion of femininity. Camilo's reaction to this representation of the female form reflects one of the numerous critiques about female sexuality and women's bodies which were present in eighteenth-century erotic literature. Other erotic narratives either celebrated female sexuality, or denied it altogether. This article focuses on the negative representations of female sexuality and the way in which writers of erotic literature inverted, exaggerated or perverted the female form.

The History of the Human Heart follows the story of Camilo from boyhood sexual experimentation, to adolescent dalliances, to sexual maturity. Camilo's liaisons with females provide an opportunity for the author to comment on different types of sexualized women, a technique consistent with an erotic genre of literature which discussed the nature of female sexuality and the impact this had on men's own sense of sexual identity. Long eighteenth-century culture, erotic literature in particular, juxtaposed the insatiable female with the passionless woman, as well as representing all the gradations in between.[2] Women could be presented as submissive, their demeanour and behaviour depicted in accordance with the models of idealized femininity, or they could be presented as sexually aggressive. Depictions of female

[1]Anon, *The History of a Human Heart* (London, for J. Freeman, 1749), p. 123.
[2]J. Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books. The Development of Pornography in Eighteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 2.; A. Clark, *Women's Silence, Men's Violence Sexual Assault in England 1770–1845* (London, Pandora Press, 1987), p. 2.

sexuality were sometimes used to celebrate womanhood and gender difference, but more often were used to criticize women, equating their physical lewd desires with threatening female autonomy. Such critiques confronted female sexuality as a means of negotiating the threat it posed to male authority. By constructing representations of perverted women who inverted femininity and the female body, authors of erotica could confront and then contain women's sexuality.[3]

Women who contradicted ideals of the sexually passive nature of femininity were often vilified in eighteenth-century literary culture. The motivation for this was derived from a growing unease over female sexuality during this period, specifically, the apparent prevalence of the sexualized and dissimulating woman. These anxieties led male authors to pervert the embodiments of womanhood; the vagina and the womb, and to simultaneously show female nature as essentially perverse and corrupt. This article therefore defines the perversion of the female form as both the denigration of women's bodies <u>and</u> the distortion of female characteristics. The perverse could be found in the numerous ways in which writers deviated from the constructions of a more socially and morally accepted female identity that was being formulated during the long eighteenth century.

The article will first explore and explain the constructions of womanhood and femininity and how these constructions were informed by both widespread belief about female nature and through reports of women's behaviour as seen in trial reports, scandalous memoirs and erotica. Secondly, it will reveal numerous depictions of perverted femininity in erotica, by analysing the specific negative personal characteristics by which lascivious women were frequently defined. Thirdly, it will examine how erotica used images of diseased women, specifically in representations of venereal diseases, to corrupt the image of sexually alluring females, and to lay the blame of the spread of venereal diseases (and thereby the corruption of society) squarely at their door. Male writers viewed perversion as a vehicle with which to conquer the female form, dispossessing women of control over their own identity and making women subservient to male definitions once again. The negativity associated with female autonomy became intrinsic in supporting normative prescriptions of chaste, virtuous and passive femininity found in the core of eighteenth-century ideology.

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[3]For other works on erotic literature see K. Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books* (2003); L. Hunt, *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500–1800* (New York, Zone Books, 1993); P. Wagner, *Eros Revived Erotica of the Enlightenment in England and America* (London, Paladin Grafton Books, 1988); W. Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture* (New York, Penguin 1987); P. Kearney, *The History of Erotica* (London, Macmillan, 1982).

I Constructions of womanhood and femininity

There is a great deal of debate about how women and their bodies were represented during this period. Many historians believe that construction of a model of 'the ideal woman' helped to restrict female autonomy and enabled men to gain authority over women. This model conflated economic and social subservience with sexual passivity.[4] Women's role in eighteenth-century life was often defined by their relationship to the home, religious instruction and moral guidance.[5] Idealized women were virtuous, compassionate, patient, modest and submissive,[6] characteristics which were entirely consistent with their functions in the home as mothers and supportive wives.[7]

Concomitantly, there was a concerted effort to deny female sexual desire.[8] Indeed, conduct literature ceased to discuss female lust after 1750.[9] A re-assessment of women's biology and sexual role during the eighteenth century denigrated them into a position of sexual passivity and repressed sexual emotions.[10] Female sexuality increasingly became defined by its apparent absence. Growing convictions that women lacked a libido meant that cultural producers could define women in terms of passivity and naiveté.[11] The

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[4]Davidoff and Hall argue that these female roles were consolidated during the later eighteenth century as the process of moving women away from the public world and confining them to the private and 'separate spheres' from men became an intrinsic part of the ideology of the emerging 'middle class'; L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (London, Hutchinson, 1987). For a discussion, see K. Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture in the Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (London, Routledge, 1989); A. Laurence, *Women in England 1500–1760: A Social History* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994).

[5]R. Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, Academic Press, 1978).

[6]As prescribed by conduct literature for women. A good example is R. Allestree, *The Ladies Calling* (Oxford, at the Theatre, 1693, original 1675). For a discussion see A. Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination* (London, Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 334–6.

[7]See V. Jones, *Women in the Eighteenth Century Constructions of Femininity* (London, Routledge, 1990), pp. 57–8.

[8]A.D. Harvey, *Sex in Georgian England Attitudes and Prejudices from the 1720's to the 1820's* (London, Gerald Duckworth, 1994), pp. 38–53.

[9]R.B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650–1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (London, Longman, 1998), p. 63.

[10]See the work of A. McLaren, *Reproductive Rituals, The Perception of Fertility in England from the Sixteenth Century to the Nineteenth Century* (London, Methuen, 1984); T. Laqueur, 'Orgasm, Generation and the Politics of Reproduction Biology', in Gallagher and Laqueur (eds), *The Making of the Modern Body* (Berkeley and London, University of California Press, 1987); L. Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine Between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989).

[11]A.D. Harvey, *Sex in Georgian England,* pp. 38–53.

idea that normal women did not generally enjoy sex was corroborated by ideas that women who did enjoy sex were not normal. After 1743, the term 'nymphomania' was coined by French physician Jean Astruc to describe the medical disorder in women of rampant sexuality. The 1775 translation of M.D.T. De Bienville's treatise *Nymphomania, Or, A Dissertation Concerning the Furor Uterinus* popularized ideas about the dangers of unguarded female sexuality by claiming that women's obsession with carnal gratification was closely associated with madness.[12]

Acceptance of the idealized woman model, however, has been made problematic by the reality of women's behaviour. For example, the middle third of the eighteenth century witnessed an increase in the number of adulterous wives appearing in the public eye. Adultery during this period was prosecuted through Criminal Conversation (Crim. Con.) trials, brought to court by a husband who believed his wife had been unfaithful, and wished to sue her lover for damages. Securing a successful Crim. Con. verdict was a necessary prelude to initiating divorce proceedings but they were expensive acts of litigation which only members of the aristocracy and upper-gentry could afford.[13] The most lurid and sensational details of many of the trials were published in modestly priced pamphlets, newspapers and magazines, and often highlighted the guilty sexual nature of the wife who had betrayed her marriage vows and abandoned prescribed passive femininity in favour of pursuing sexual gratification.[14] Crim. Con. Pamphlets, exposés of other women

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[12]M.D.T. De Bienville, *Nymphomania, Or, A Dissertation Concerning the Furor Uterinus. Clearly and methodically explaining the Beginning, Progress, and Difference Causes of the Distemper. To which are added, The Methods of treating the several Stages of it, And The Most Approved Remedies* (London, J. Bew, 1775).

[13]For further discussion see M. Morris, 'Marital Litigation and English Tabloid Journalism: Crim.Con. in *The Bon Ton*', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 28 (2005) 33–54; L. Stone, *Broken Lives: Separation and Divorce in England 1660–1857* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993); D.T. Andrew, 'Adultery-à-la-Mode: Privilege, the Law and Attitudes to Adultery 1770–1809', *History,* 82 (1997) 5–23; P. Wagner, 'The Pornographer in the Courtroom: Trial reports about cases of sexual crimes and delinquencies as a genre of eighteenth-century erotica', in P-G. Boucé (ed.), *Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1982).

[14]See especially Anon, *The Trial of His R.H. the D[uke] of C[umberland]. July 5th 1770 for Criminal Conversation* (London, John Walker, 1770); Anon, *The Trial of Lady Ann Foley Wife of the Hon. Edward Foley Esq; and Daughter of William, Earl of Coventry, for Adultery, with the Right Hon Charles Henry Earl of Peterborough* (London: G. Lister, 1778); Anon, *The Tryal, with the whole Evidence, between The Right. Hon. Sir Richard Worsley, Bart. Comptroller of his Majesty's Household, Governor of the Isle of Wight, Member of Parliament for Newport in the Island, &c. &c. Plaintiff, And George Maurice Bissett, Esq. Defendant, for Criminal Conversation with the Plaintiff's Wife* (London, for G. Kearsley, 1782).

involved in public sex scandals,[15] along with the memoirs and pseudo-memoirs of courtesans and bawds,[16] and tracts raising moral concerns about levels of prostitution, all made it difficult to deny female sexual activity.[17]

Demographic historians also highlight women's sexual behaviour during this period.[18] Demographers explain that the large population growth after 1750 was not owing to a decline in death rates but an increase in the number of births. There was a rise in bastardy and pre-nuptial pregnancy figures, as well as increased numbers of pregnant brides, trends that suggest there was a rise in pre-marital penetrative sexual activity. In addition, the 'commercialization' of popular sexual beliefs in medical and pseudo-medical advice manuals encouraged discourses on sexuality.[19] Popular teachings about the body had appeared in 'sexual advice literature' from the late seventeenth century.[20] The function of these publications, such as *Aristotle's Masterpiece* (1690) and *The Mysteries of Conjugal Love* (1703) was to 'invent, create and criticise sexual identity'.[21] Such evidence has led socio-cultural historians such as Roy Porter and Michel Foucault to argue that there was greater importance being placed on the role of sex and intimate relations during the eighteenth century,[22] and Julie Peakman to suggest that there

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[15]For literary representations of scandalous women see D. Manly, *Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality of Both* Sexes (London, J. Morphew and J. Woodward, 1709); A. Smith, *The Secret History of the Lives of the Most Celebrated Beauties* (London, n.p., 1715).

[16]See A. Turner, *The Life of the Late Celebrated Mrs Elizabeth Wisebourn. Vulgarly Called Mother Wybourn* (London, for A. Moore, 1721); Capt. Charles Walker, *Authentick Memoirs of the Life intrigues and Adventures of the Celebrated Sally Salisbury* (London, n.p., 1723); Anon, *Genuine Memoirs of the Late Celebrated Mrs Jane D******* [Douglas] (London, printed for J. Simpson, 1761). See also literature about 'Polly Peachum' aka Lavinia Fenton who became the Duchess of Bolton. Anon, *Polly Peachum's Jests* (London, n.p., 1727); Anon, *A New Ballad Inscriped to Polly Peachum* (London, n.p., 1728); Anon, *The Whole Life of Polly Peachum* (London, printed by M. Mind, 1730).

[17]T. Henderson, *Disorderly Women in Eighteenth-Century London. Prostitution and Control in the Metropolis* (Harlow, Longman, 1999).

[18]For demographic histories see A. Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England Modes of Reproduction 1300–1840* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986), and E.A. Wrigley, 'Marriage, Fertility and Population Growth in Eighteenth Century England' (ed.), R.B. Outhwaite, *Marriage and Society Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London, Europa, 1981); P. Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977).

[19]Wagner, *Eros Revived,* p. 41.

[20]R. Porter and L. Hall, *The Facts of Life. The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650–1950* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1995), p. 33.

[21]Porter and Hall, *The Facts of Life,* p. 11.

[22]R. Porter and M. Teich (eds), *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science The History of Attitudes to Sexuality* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994) and M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (London, Allen Lane, 1979).

was more exploration into different types of sexual activity taking place at this time.[23] Indeed, the growing publicity of the figure of the conniving adulterous wife, the prostitute and the libidinous woman was absorbed into other literary forms and sparked a more general discussion about female sexuality and the duplicitous nature of women.

Women were thought to be capable of concealing their carnal urges to make it appear that they subscribed to notions of chastity while secretly harbouring licentious desires. If a woman could successfully hide her lasciviousness long enough to be married, men worried that she might have adulterous sex and produce illegitimate offspring. Eighteenth-century literature resonated with male concerns that a man might have a spurious issue foisted upon him, resulting in his property and titles passing to a child who was not of his own blood.[24] *The Pleasure of a Single Life, or, The Miseries of Matrimony* (1701) claimed that a solitary state was preferable to marriage because of the concerns a husband had about his children;

> No mottled Off-spring to disturb my Thought,
> In Wedlock born but G_d knows where begot;
> No Lustful Messalina to require
> Whole Troops of Men to feed her Brutal Fire;[25]

An illegitimate child would also be tangible evidence of a wife's infidelity and her disregard for her husband's authority.[26] Female dissimulation therefore, undermined men's power over women and their bodies.[27]

Erotica as a literary genre employed techniques to discuss both idealized images of femininity, as well as their opposites, including cultural depictions of women as 'passionate, resolute and strong', which celebrated female power, even if these were satirical.[28] Eighteenth-century prints which depicted prostitutes sometimes inverted gender relationships; prostitutes could be represented as overpowering females, who challenged male authority and turned the male client into a 'victim'.[29] Other women's desires were also depicted as considerable. Erotica often showed the female body to have a greater sexual capacity than men's, becoming exhausted less easily. *Little Merlin's Cave*

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[23]Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*.

[24]See Anon, *The Fifteen Comforts of Matrimony* (London, n.p., 1706), p. 3.

[25]Anon, *The Pleasures of a Single Life, or the Miseries of Matrimony* (London, n.p., 1701), p. 2.

[26]D.M. Turner, *Fashioning Adultery Gender, Sex and Civility in England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 114.

[27]R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge, Polity, 1995), p. 85.

[28]Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society,* p. 37 and Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books,* p. 8.

[29]S. Carter, *Purchasing Power, Representing Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century English Popular Print Culture* (London, Ashgate, 2004).

(1737) conveyed this through a discussion of female genitalia, 'The more 'tis fed, the more it craves, Raw Flesh it covets most for Food'.[30] Although male genitals were seen as essential to conception, female genitalia was procreatively more powerful, enjoyed stronger orgasms and produced more sexual fluids,[31] as seen in *The Cyprian Cabinet* (1783),

> Love's choicest spirits did supply,
> His empty veins, she suck'd 'em dry,
> And all this mighty show'r of love,
> Did scarce a common wat'ring prove;
> A deluge she could well receive,
> And faster take than he could give.[32]

John Hill's satire *Lucina Sine Concubitu* (1750) claimed that women did not need men to procreate, being biologically superior and could therefore use men for their seed only. 'The erotic talking, permissive woman' identified by Peter Fryer 'who has no strings attached sex and longs to take control of the sexual situation and is a willing pupil or accomplished teacher',[33] who he states became a trope of subsequent 'pornography', was already being defined in eighteenth-century erotic literature. The capability of erotic writing to invert or subvert dominant ideologies was part of its appeal.[34] There were also numerous occasions in erotic literature where female genitals were described in aesthetically pleasing imagery. Men observed vaginas and extolled their beauty, celebrating the notion of sexual difference.[35] 'Peter Aretin' became delighted in the sight of a girl's fair skin, ringlet long hair, small hard breasts, fine limbs and polished thighs. But what he found most alluring was 'her cunt, surrounded by soft mossy hair [and], by her kneeling stance [he] could see the bud of sensuality'.[36]

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[30]Anon, *Little Merlin's Cave: as it was Lately Discover'd by a Gentleman's Gardener in Maidenhead-Thicket* (London, T. Read, 1737), p. 5. See also 'Roger Pheuquewell' [T. Stretser], *A New Description of Merryland* (Bath, [London], J. Leake and E. Curll, 1741).

[31]Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books,* p. 92 and p. 191.

[32]Anon, *The Cyprian Cabinet* (London, printed for B. Pownall, 1783), p. 20.

[33]P. Fryer, *Private Case, Public Scandal* (London, Secker and Warburg, 1966).

[34]Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books,* p. 9.

[35]See D. MacLaughlin, 'Philosarctus', *An Essay upon Improving and Adding to the Strength of Great-Britain and Ireland, by Fornication* (London, n.p., 1735), p. 11; J. Cleland, *Memoirs of a Coxcomb* (London, for R. Griffiths, 1751), p. 67 and Anon, *The Gentleman's Bottle Companion* (London, n.p., 1768), pp. 12 and 41.

[36]Anon, *The Genuine and Remarkable Amours of the Celebrated Author Peter Aretin* (London, n.p., 1746), p. 11.

However, in other texts celebration was tempered by anxiety and female sexuality mediated so that the threat it posed to masculinity would be dissipated. Problems of immodest women were seen to be spread throughout society. The author of *A Congratulatory Epistle from a Reformed Rake to John F…* (1758) offered this gradation of sexualized females:

> Women of Fashion, who intrigue
> Demi-Reps
> Good natured girls
> Kept Mistresses
> Ladies of Pleasure
> Whores
> Park-walkers
> Street-Walkers
> Bunters
> Bulk-mongers[37]

Writers frequently showed that woman's sexual nature transcended class boundaries. Often a woman's social status was subsumed by her sexual identity. Consequently women from all strata of society were the 'victims' of satirists and erotic authors.

Anxieties over female sexuality encouraged writers to play out hostile emotions and anxieties felt about women on the female form, using women's bodies as sites on which they could re-build their sexual authority by subordinating women as sexual objects.[38] By re-constructing women's bodies and their femininity, the male desire to dominate women could be gratified and at the same time male fears of diminishing sexual and social authority were alleviated. Perversion, therefore, was a tool of confrontation and containment, which endeavoured to redefine women's sexual nature on masculine terms.

II Perverting womanhood and femininity

Writers focused on ideas of female duplicity, women's sexual corruption and negative facets of personality to convey the danger of female autonomy. Their approach to female figures was often aggressive and expressed

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[37]Anon, *A Congratulatory Epistle from a Reformed Rake to John F___* (London, G. Burnett, 1758), p. 8.
[38]M. Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 73.

the hostilities men felt towards female independence.[39] Instead of prescribed ideals of female virtue; passivity, chastity, compassion and thoughtfulness, sexualized women in erotica were frequently presented as lust-filled, dissimulating, vain and ambitious harlots; characteristics that were the very antithesis of idealized femininity. In presenting women this way, writers warned that female sexual liberty de-feminized women by stripping them of more positive womanly attributes.

Many erotic publications discussed the way in which female figures displayed wanton behaviour to satisfy their need for adoration. Thompson in *The Demi-Rep* (1765) described how a woman could be corrupted by the flattery of Dukes, Lords and princes, and how this flattery was a 'poison', which gave an 'endless wound'.[40] Flattery was an intoxicating mixture that endangered female nature because it placed personal and selfish gratification ahead of modesty.[41]

Flattery satisfied female vanity, something which authors believed was frequently to blame for a woman's desire to seek sexual attention. Women were led away from chastity to a life of illicit sex as they sought to indulge their vanity and pride. *An Odd Letter on a Most Interesting Subject to Miss K__ F__* [Kitty Fisher] (1760) claimed that gratification of female vanity was the doctrine which governed women's lives, asserting that 'Youth and Beauty are the universal desire of your sex and the admiration of ours'.[42] Such a doctrine was evident in *The True and Entertaining History of Miss Charlotte Lorrain* (1790). In the text Charlotte was given a genteel education by her father, but because he kept his children in such good circumstances he lost his fortune. Charlotte had to be apprenticed to a milliner in town where she was seen and admired. This appreciation pleased her vanity so much, that when she married, her life was dedicated to indulging her vain whims. Charlotte's pride and vanity became intolerable to her husband, as she continually berated him for not providing her with a carriage. Charlotte became so obsessed with achieving these opulent signs of wealth that she chose her lovers based on the equipages with which they could provide her.[43]

Similar connections between vanity and social ambition were made elsewhere. In *The Uncommon Adventures of Miss Kitty F___* (1759), Miss Murio

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[39]Connell says that violence is an integral part of the system of domination, yet is also a measure of its imperfection, because of the need to legitimate hierarchy through a process of intimidation. Connell, *Masculinities,* p. 84.

[40]Edward Thompson, *The Demi-Rep* (London, printed for C. Moran, 1756), p. 22.

[41]See comments in C. Pigott, *The Female Jockey Club* (London, printed for D.I. Eaton, 1794).

[42]'Trusty Simon', *An Odd Letter on a Most Interesting Subject to Miss K__ F__* [Kitty Fisher] (London, for C.B., 1760), p. 5.

[43]Anon, *The True and Entertaining History of Miss Charlotte Lorrain* (London, printed and sold by T. Sabine, 1790), pp. 7–30.

and Miss Cupero [Fanny Murray and Lucy Cooper] the renowned courtesans were heralded as the greatest influence to other girls;

> The success of these two women operated upon the minds of most of the girls of an ambitious turn…the example of these two women were greater incentives to prostitution than all the arts of men, or the force of inclination.[44]

Girls supposedly coveted the wealth and perceived status which these courtesans seemingly possessed because of a natural female ambition for fame and fortune. In her desire to emulate the fashions and behaviour of the gentry Cloe, a milkmaid in *The Ladies of Pleasure* (1734), sold her maidenhead to buy clothes and go to masquerades. Cloe's quest for luxury and pleasure forced her into debt, and she tumbled down the social scale until she was forced to sell her body, eventually dying destitute and alone.[45] Women were supposedly smitten with the idea of potentially achieving status and power over men by the use of their female beauty. In *The Insinuating Bawd* (1700) it was the obsequious words of the bawd which made the young girl eager for the arms of a man and turned her into a repenting harlot;

> Gain with your Smiles, fresh Conquests ev'ry hour;
> Hero's themselves will yield to Beauties Pleasing Power.[46]

Such ambition was incompatible with passive prescriptions of femininity, especially when ambition was achieved through an aggressive pursuance of sexual relationships. Writers criticized women who valued beauty and personal gain above attributes of modesty and selflessness. Female sexual immodesty was highlighted and exaggerated by the qualities by which male writers frequently chose to define them. Vanity, ambition, pride and conceit were judged to be natural features of nearly all women from the lowest street walker to princesses and even 'unhandsome women'.[47] Imbuing females

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[44]Anon, *The Uncommon Adventures of Miss Kitty F___* [Fisher] (London, Thomas Bailey, 1759), p. 19.
[45]Anon, *The Ladies of Pleasure in a Familiar Epistle From Beau Dapper to Miss* (London, printed and sold by J. Roberts, 1734), p. 4. Also told as part of Anon, *Pretty Doings in a Protestant Nation, Being a View of the Present State of Fornication, Whorecraft and Adultery in Great Britain* (London, printed for J. Roberts, J. Isted, J. Jackson, W. Waring, Robert Amey, 1734), pp. 27–30.
[46]Anon, *The Insinuating Bawd: And the Repenting Harlot. Written by a Whore at Tunbridge to a Whore at the Bath* (London, printed and sold by most Booksellers, 1700).
[47]Anon, *Genuine and Authentic Memoirs of a Well Known Woman of Intrigue* (London, printed for J. Ridgway, 1787), p. 36.

with these characteristics helped writers to satisfactorily explain the high numbers of lascivious women and prostitutes.[48]

In addition, writers accused sexualized women of an inherent capacity for lust.[49] John Dunton in his *Bumography* (1707) referred to a woman's 'natural itch',[50] and used the term 'wag-tail' to describe the way in which licentious women paraded their bottoms in front of men to imply their sexual wantonness. These women paid particular attention to dressing those parts which would draw a man's eye to their seat of pleasure.[51] *The Folly of Love* (1700 edition) and *Love Given Over* (1710 edition) referred to women's unbounded lust and claimed that these emotions had grown to such epidemic proportions in female society that dildos and lapdogs were used in an attempt to satisfy women's carnal desires.[52]

When female lust was specifically discussed by a writer, it was frequently associated with ladies of figure and fashion from the higher orders of society. Elite females were often represented as voracious. In publications which depicted the lascivious nature of elite women the rhetoric used to describe their behaviour was explicit. *The Midnight Spy* (1766) for example, rambled through the streets of London as the narrator commented on the whores who 'lay in wait for men who are deprived of their reason by drink' and were therefore prey to the deceitful arts of these women.[53] The young handsome girl at the bagnio who was well paid by dotards was observed, as was the owner of a bawdy house whose ruddy complexion bore witness to her decline from the days when she was the eminent toast of bucks and bloods.[54] However, it was the 'lady of figure' for whom the most explicit description of sexual nature was reserved:

> The antiquated Messalina, in company with the brawny fresh coloured man, is a lady of figure, who having tried all her servants, is compelled

[48]Anon, [R. Gould], *Love Given Over, Or, A Satyr Against the Pride, Lust and inconstance, &c. of Woman* (London, printed and sold by H. Hills, 1710, original 1680), p. 8.
[49]See Edward Thompson, *The Courtesan* (London, printed for J. Harrison, 1765), Anon, *The Fifteen Plagues of a Maidenhead* (London, n.p., 1707), Anon, [Ward] *The Amorous Bugbears* (London, printed and sold by A. Bettesworth, J. Bately and J. Brotherton, 1725).
[50]'A Water Drinker' [J. Dunton], *Bumography, or a Touch at the Lady's Tails* (London, n.p., 1707), p. 17.
[51]*Ibid.*, p. ii.
[52]Anon [R. Ames], *The Folly of Love. A New Satyr Against Women* (London, printed for E. Hawkins, 1700, original 1691), p. 8 and [Gould], *Love Given Over*, p. 6.
[53]Anon, *The Midnight Spy: Or a View of the Transactions of London and Westminster* (London, printed for J. Cooke, 1766), p. 104.
[54]*Ibid.*, p. 113.

> to have recourse to the frequenters of the stews; but her desires are unconquerable, and she returns to her house every morning tired, but not satisfied.[55]

Similarly, *The Temple of Prostitution* (1779) highlighted the debauched nature of elite women. Lady Grosvenor and Lady Barrymore were present, with many others of high rank who asked their goddess to grant the fulfilment of their physical desires.

> Lust tripp'd with Lewdness side by side:
> …
> A shout proclaim'd the wanton throng,
> The bounding dance, the choral song –
> The sport of phantasy.
> They pant, they throb, they glow with fire,
> Their eyes dart sparks of wild desire,
> Their cheeks of extasy[sic].[56]

The frenetic language used by the writer conveyed the loss of control and lack of restraint associated with incessant female urges.

Similarly, *Variety* (1782) a poem dedicated to Lady Worsley,[57] described how she ranged unreserved through carnal pleasures with no consideration for her own reputation and honour. The poem suggested that this lady's sexual appetite was so gratuitous that she could find no contentment.

> Each luxury my mind created
> I glutted on with taste unsated;
> But fruitless hours my labours spent,
> In vain I strove to find *Content.*
> …
> I then resolv'd the mode to try
> Of tasting *carnal infamy;*
> And there renew my search, to find
> That *antidote* so long behind:

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[55]*Ibid.*, p. 31.

[56]Anon, *The Temple of Prostitution* (London, printed for J. Harrington, 1779), pp. 11–12.

[57]Dedications were often made by detractors as a way of attacking the person to whom the poem was dedicated.

I took, without reserve or dread,
A crew alternate to my bed:[58]

Writers illustrated the behaviour of elite women with strong sexual inclinations as contemptible in order to comment on the destabilizing effect that their actions had on society and its patriarchal hierarchy.[59] Elite women not only failed to provide a suitable example to women in wider society but more importantly threatened their husband's reputation by making a mockery of his authority and acting in a way which could potentially disrupt noble lines of heritage.

The threat that wives' affairs posed to pure family lineage was a prevalent concern to writers. In 1724 Thomas Salmon surmised that the reason why a husband did not need to restrict himself sexually with the same vigour as a wife must, was because of her potential for having a child that was not her husband's.[60] In *The Art of Knowing Woman: or, The Female Sex Dissected* (1730) François Bruys criticized women for threatening heredity by their sexual tastes for 'prize-fighters' and 'hackney coach-men',[61] while the preface of the anonymous *Adultery Anatomized* (1761) warned husbands that there was a great danger of them having children that were not his.[62] Having a spurious issue put upon a husband, was one thing, but this anxiety was exacerbated by the concern that the child may be descended from a commoner, and therefore not even be of noble blood: 'Such are our Ladies' tastes, that half our Heirs are the concurring scum of paltry play'rs.'[63] *The Joys of Hymen* (1768) reiterated this concern;

In the child's look, or features, air and mein,
Plainly the curate or the captain's seen;
The footman, or the gard'ner, here your view,

[58]Anon, *Variety, or Which is the Man? A Poem Dedicated to Lady W**sl*y* (London, printed for Swift and Son, 1782), pp. 8–9.
[59]For other depictions of elite lascivious women see Anon, *An Epistle from L__y W__y to S_r R__d W__y Bart* (London, printed by P. Wright, 1782) and Anon, *The Prostitutes of Quality; or Adultery a-la-mode. Being Authentic and Genuine Memoirs of several Persons of the highest Quality* (London, printed for J. Cookes and J. Coote, 1757).
[60]Thomas Salmon, *A Critical Essay Concerning Marriage* (London, for Charles Rivington, 1724), p. 86. See also 'The Most Eminent Hands', *The Cases of Polygamy, Adultery, Concubinage, Divorce &c* (London, printed for E. Curll, T. Payne, J. Chrichley and J. Jackson, 1732), pp. 68–90.
[61]'Chevalier Plante-Amour' [François Bruys], *The Art of Knowing Woman: or, The Female Sex Dissected* (London, n.p., 1730), p. 179.
[62]Anon, *Adultery Anatomized in a Select Collection of Tryals, for Criminal Conversation. Brought Down from the Infant Ages of Cuckoldom in England, to its Full Growth in the Present Times* (London, n.p., 1761), p. vi.
[63]Anon, *The Adulteress* (London, for S. Bladon, 1773), p. 7.

And clear distinction whence its birth drew.
Hence springs the motly race, who quickly spend
Those sums, which from the mother's guilt descend.[64]

The promiscuity of elite married women undermined the patriarchal institution of marriage and threatened pure lines of heredity and this disregard for the foundations of men's authority necessitated that these women were treated in the harshest terms and with the most severe rhetoric.

Writers of erotica seized the opportunity to portray women as duplicitous because of the ability of women to hide their sexual wantonness, a trait defined by Ned Ward in his *Nuptial Dialogues and Debates*:[65]

Charming in Feature, of an awful Mein,
Without an Angel, but a Dev'l within;
Beauteous but Lustful, Gen'rous not Good,
Modest in publick, but in private lewd.[66]

Evidence of these concerns is found in comments about the sale of a girl's maidenhead. *The Constables Hue and Cry* (1701) claimed that some maidenheads were sold twenty times,[67] while *Bumography* (1707) inflated this figure to forty times.[68] Sally Salisbury supposedly sold her virginity to twenty-six different men,[69] and it was said that the bawd Mother Douglas could make a maidenhead last almost a year.[70] A pretence to virginity and chastity when it was far from the case gave women a reputation for duplicity.

Men's susceptibility to female deception originated from the lack of clear contrast between a beautiful looking woman and the filthy depravity which could characterize her sexual behaviour;

But there are some, a scandal to the race,
Endu'd with beauty, void of inward grace,

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[64]Anon, *The Joys of Hymen, or the Conjugal Directory* (London, printed for D. Davis, 1768), p. 20.
[65]Also see Salmon, *A Critical Essay Concerning Marriage*, p. 127 [Bruys], *The Art of Knowing Woman*, pp. 66–7 and 'The Most Eminent Hands', *The Cases of Polygamy*, p. 222.
[66]Edward Ward, *Nuptial Dialogues and Debates* (London, T. Norris, A. Bettesworth and F. Favram, 1723), p. 26.
[67]Anon, *The Constables Hue and Cry After Whores and Bawds* (London, printed for John Smith, 1701), p. 7.
[68][Dunton], *Bumography*, p. 14.
[69]Anon, *The Genuine History of Mrs Sarah Prydden usually called Sally Salisbury* (London, for Andrew Moore, 1723), p. 29.
[70]Anon, *Genuine Memoirs of the Late Celebrated Mrs Jane D___* , p. 10.

Who, like some meteor, rise upon the sight,
And splendid shine with borrow'd lustre bright;[71]

The discrepancy between looks and attitude was further complicated by the fashions of the day which made distinguishing a woman's status and nature by her clothes problematic.

Here the Fair with their Cloths,
Do puzzle the Beaus,
That they oft make their humble Approaches
To a batter'd old Jade,
They mistake for a Maid,
Or a Drury instead of a Dutchess.[72]

Not only could 'common' women be mistaken for elite females but 'polite' ladies were depicted appropriating the dress of 'women of pleasure' to show their contempt for modesty and chastity.[73] They were described as turning their backs on the modest parts of town to attend events such as masquerades, much maligned as breeding grounds for illicit sexual activities.[74] In these places elite women mixed and merged with women from lower social ranks, and consequently writers of erotica often identified women by their sexual nature rather than demarcating them by their social status.

III Perverting the female body

In an attempt to counteract the authority which deception lent to women, writers of erotica provided ocular proof of the degenerative consequences of female sexual liberty. The author of the anonymous *The Joys of Hymen* (1768), Ward's *Nuptial Dialogues* and his *The Northern Cuckold, or, the Garden House Intrigue* depicted blushes, nauseous mists, brightness of the eyes,[75] and spots on female countenance,[76] to connect the libidinous urges of women with a visible stain on her appearance.[77] Writers of erotica sought

[71]Anon, *Conjugal Infidelity* (London, printed and sold by John Abraham, 1788), p. 33.
[72][Ward], *The Amorous Bugbears,* p. 61.
[73]'Adam Eden', *A Vindication of the Reformation On Foot, among the Ladies, to Abolish Modesty and Chastity, And restore the Native Simplicity of going Naked* (London, printed for R. Griffiths, 1755), p. 4.
[74][Ward], *The Amorous Bugbears,* p. 3.
[75]Anon, *The Joys of Hymen or the Conjugal Directory* (London, printed for D. Davis, 1768), p. 23.
[76]Ward, *Nuptial Dialogues,* p. 27 and Anon, *The Adulteress,* p. 18.
[77]Ward, *The Northern Cuckold, or, the Garden House Intrigue* (London, printed for Sam Briscoe, 1721), p. 13.

to address the disjunction between the way women looked and the way they acted by making women the natural vehicles of venereal disease.

Venereal diseases were invested in the female body more often than they were in the male reproductive system,[78] because the female body was culturally constructed as the site of the disease. The pox and clap were known to be rife throughout society by this time and the sense that women were to blame for the conveyance and spread of venereal disease was prevalent.[79] Bernard Mandeville's work *A Modest Defence of Public Stews* (1724) believed that the biggest problem associated with whoring was the spread of venereal disease. The anonymous *The Fifteen Comforts of Whoring* (1701) reflected this common assumption blaming whores for afflicting young men with venereal disease;

> What nature has not done, a Harlot will,
> (For future destruction is her boasted skill)
> One Scarce to the full Bloom of Life attain'd,
> Before of Cramps and Aches he complains,
> Curses the Jilt – looks pale and wan withal.[80]

In Dunton's *Bumography*, women were branded as fire-ships, because they burned a man with their sails,

> A Fire-Ship is ev'ry Woman
> Whose Tail is Pocky, Lewd, or Common.[81]

The Demi-Rep (1765) used metaphorical language to associate the spread and symptoms of disease with the visible signs which women carried if they were infected;

> This Town's infested by a pack of Dames,
> Burnt with the hottest meretricious shames:

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[78]Peakman, *Lascivious Bodies A Sexual History of the Eighteenth Century* (London, Atlantic, 2004), p. 19.

[79]The Lock Hospital which opened in January 1747 treated only venereal disease, and once a patient had been discharged they could not be re-admitted. By 1791, the hospital claimed it had cured 22,475 cases, which rose to 30,222 by 1808. Henderson, *Disorderly Women*, p. 41.

[80]Anon, *The Fifteen Comforts of Whoring: or, The Pleasure of Town Life* (London, n.p., 1706), p. 3.

[81][Dunton], *Bumography*, p. 2. Also see Anon [R. Ames], *The Female Fire-Ships. A Satyr Against Whoring In a Letter to a Friend just come to Town* (London, printed for E. Richardson, 1691).

> Chaste as unfired coals they seem, but sin
> Has to a cinder burnt them up within:
> Their skins are parch'd with use, and yet they rail
> At whoredom, tho' they're whores from head to tail.[82]

The author, Edward Thompson, commented on the dissimulation of sexualized women who criticized lasciviousness to disguise their own wantonness. Such connections inextricably linked venereal disease with female duplicity and reiterated that venereal infection was a female disorder which was destroying society as a consequence of women's nature.

Writers appeared to take delight in providing detailed descriptions of the ruined features of the poxed woman. Venereal disease was described as ravaging the features and attractions of a woman. An infected woman could lose her nose, have rotting teeth, bad breath and at the very least display 'beauty spots', the black marks of the disease. In Robert Gould's *Love Given Over,* Lady Bewley's body was described as one giant putrid sore, studded with pox and ulcers.[83] By visibly destroying female beauty, writers undermined the very quality which they believed women identified as the foundation of their femininity, as 'Trusty Simon', the writer of *An Odd Letter on a Most Interesting Subject to Miss K___ F___*[Kitty Fisher] (1760), confirmed by stating that 'Youth and Beauty are the Universal desire of your Sex'.[84]

Perverting female genitalia by imbuing it with disease served as a vehicle for men's hostilities and fears regarding the ability of women to damage male virility and fertility,[85] as the *Genuine Memoirs of the Late Celebrated Mrs Jane D___* (1761) demonstrated when the author claimed that there was a case of the pox which was so bad that one of Mother Douglas's customers lost his penis.[86] The clear message that men could be emasculated by fraternizing with lascivious women was one in a series of warnings about the wickedness of voracious female nature. Guides to prostitutes such as *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies* (1761–1793) were keen to point out which women were clean and healthy and these were considered attributes along with the sexual performance the prostitutes could offer.[87] Erotica showed sexually active men consciously choosing sexual partners who looked attractive in the hope that they were free from disease. Thus, the narrator of *The Rambling Fuddle Caps: Or, A Tavern Struggle for a Kiss* resists a pretty maid

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[82]Thompson, *The Demi-Rep,* p. 14.
[83][Gould], *Love Given Over,* p. 5.
[84]'Trusty Simon', *An Odd Letter*, p. 6.
[85]Harvey, *Reading Sex,* p. 109.
[86]Anon, *Genuine Memoirs of the Late Celebrated Mrs Jane D__ ,* p. 111.
[87]See various editions of *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies, or a Man of Pleasure's Kalendar* (London, 1773 to 1793).

because her skin is of 'gingerbread-colour' and yellow is the colour of mutton 'which dies of rot'.[88]

By investing and infesting the female body with venereal disease writers drew on accepted assumptions that the disease would strip a woman of her natural ability to be a mother, thus undermining the very essence of her femininity.[89] Barrenness was seen as a 'moral judgement', as a woman was unable to fill her function in society.[90] Without children in her life, it was also far easier to level accusations of indolence and idleness at women, other typically unfeminine characteristics. Venereal disease was used by writers to unveil the true nature of women. Female organs were considered 'sites of lies, illusions and unnatural powers,' but by reconstructing them, male writers attempted to alleviate the fear they represented.

V Conclusion

Writings about sexualized women were often a reaction to male anxieties about female sexuality and about the disruption that female autonomy could create within traditional spheres of patriarchal authority, sex and marriage. If women transgressed the constraints of acceptable femininity then often they were rhetorically punished for doing so. Some depictions of sexualized women in erotic literature tainted females with physical deformities, while other female characters were de-feminized by being imbued with unattractive personal traits. Such negative depictions were punishment for attempting to invert social and gender hierarchies by the use of womanly wiles.

Writers of erotica did not ignore the figure of the lascivious female, or even deny her sexuality. Instead, they used her to construct multiple representations of women which acknowledged the existence of the sexualized female while concomitantly denying her femininity and social validity. In fact, writers magnified the behaviour of sexualized and autonomous women because it reflected their inflated concerns about female independence. Although the chaste and sexually deviant woman were seemingly polar opposites, they were, in fact, part of the same patriarchal ideology which sought to contain females and their sexuality in accordance with patriarchal authority.[91]

Illicit female sexual behaviour can be interpreted as perverse because it dislocated the reader's sense of patriarchy. The erotic element of the text

[88]Anon, *The Rambling Fuddle-Caps: Or, A Tavern Struggle for a Kiss* (London, printed and sold by H. Hills, 1709), p. 5.
[89]In 1758 Saunders Welch estimated that there were 3,000 prostitutes within the Bills of Mortality, of which 2,500 were incapable of conceiving. Henderson, *Disorderly Women,* p. 42.
[90]*Ibid.*, p. 169.
[91]Jones, *Women in the Eighteenth Century,* p. 4. See also Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society,* p. 67.

operated by regaining this sense of authority.[92] Sexually voracious women in eighteenth-century literary culture were often presented as deviant forms of femininity. Their punishment for destabilizing patriarchal constructions of womanhood, was to be represented as perverse and perverted women in erotic publications. By representing women as perverse, writers provided titillation whilst simultaneously dismissing the threat to patriarchy by regaining descriptive authority over the female form. It was therefore in the interests of many writers of erotica, not to always repress female sexuality. Many authors used it as a vehicle through which women's sexuality could ultimately be condemned and contained by representing it as a perversion.

By perverting the female form writers mobilized a descriptive authority over female bodies allowing them to reclaim both sexual and social control over women. Perversion was therefore a necessary preserver of male and patriarchal potency.[93] Perversion allowed the release of hostility and a concomitant re-assertion over the object of denigration, in this case, women.

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[92]C.L. Carlson, R.L. Mazzola, S.M. Bernardo (eds), *Gender Reconstructions. Pornography and Perversions in Literature and Culture* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2002), p. ix.

[93]R. Stoller, *Perversion: The Erotic Form of Hatred* (Sussex, The Harvester Press, 1976), p. 65.

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6

Rape in Early Eighteenth-Century London: A Perversion 'so very perplex'd'

Jennie Mills

John Drummond, at his trial for a rape mused that 'The Nature of a Rape is so very perplex'd, and the perpetration of it on Adult Persons so very difficult, that it requires something of an implicit Belief to be credited.'[1] The difficulty of establishing convincing evidentiary proof given the private nature of rape, coupled with a deep-seated belief that rape was physically impossible, made the presumption of male innocence compelling. It was commonly understood that if a woman put up a sufficiently determined defence it was unlikely that she could be raped.[2] Voltaire provides a neat analogy to depict the physical difficulties faced by the would-be rapist: 'For girls or women who complain of having been raped, all that is needed, it seems to me, is to tell them how, long ago, a queen frustrated an accusation of rape. She took a scabbard and, constantly shaking it, she made the complainant see that it was then impossible to put a sword in the scabbard.'[3] Voltaire's evocation of female authority indicates a truth born of female experience, and although women may not be aware of their tacit consent, accusations of rape can never be accounts of rape. An incomprehension of the possibility of rape existed which deemed that any modest and decent woman worth her reputation resisted and could not be raped. Thus, the physical implausibility of rape was a strong defence.[4]

Rape in law was considered an illegal sexual practice, the gravity of the crime reflected in the fact that it was a capital offence. Yet there were

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[1]*The Case of the Ld. John Drummond, in Relation to a RAPE Sworn to have been committed by Him on the 18th Day of May 1715, upon the Body of* Elizabeth Gallway, *a Common PROSTITUTE. To Which are added, Two Remarkable Cases of the Like Nature* (London, J. Roberts, 1715), pp. 3–4.

[2]Georges Vigarello, *A History of Rape: Sexual Violence in France from the 16th to the 20th Century* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2001), p. 42.

[3]F.M. Arouet dit Voltaire, *Prix de la justice de l'humanité* (1777), *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris, 1877–1885), Vol. 30, p. 567 cited in Vigarello, *A History of Rape*, p. 43.

[4]Vigarello, *A History of Rape*, p. 42.

relatively few social comments about rape: Roy Porter takes the silence of social critics like Henry Fielding and Daniel Defoe as evidence that rape was not perceived as a major problem in the eighteenth century.[5] Indeed statistics might reflect this; of the thousands of cases heard between 1700 and 1750, there were only 115 cases of rape and, of those, only seventeen defendants were found guilty. Despite this apparent legal disinterest in courts, rape was everywhere outside it. Eighteenth-century sexual discourse on both perceived normative sexual behaviour and rape circulated in the public domain in mainstream literature, medical and pseudo-medical manuals, and erotic fiction; all buttressed the public view on rape and fed into perceptions of the raped and the rapists and how they should be treated in court. The mainstay of popular eroticism was the erotic model of defloration, in which fictional virgins were seen to ignore the social pressures of morality, forgo any residual modesty and succumb to the urges of their pressing beaus.

In reality, eighteenth-century rape trials interrogated the boundaries of normative sexual practice, and deviant sexual behaviour was punished. However, the normative erotic elements of rape ensured that deviant behaviour was rarely found, and most trials ended in acquittal. The age set for Statutory Rape (under ten) created a distinction between women, available for sex, and children, not available for sex. This was itself problematic as the erotic fascination with virginity and defloration had a powerful hold over the eighteenth-century imagination. To desire to have sexual intercourse with very young girls was entirely within the boundaries of acceptable sexual behaviour. The notion of legality therefore seemed artificially grafted onto a somewhat arbitrary age limit, vaguely associated with the sexual maturity of the female child, and her physical ability to resist unwanted sexual advances.

Women were considered to be essentially sexual creatures which were always desirous of intercourse. This tenet was informed by ancient humoral medicine and reached well into the eighteenth century.[6] These ancient theories of female physiology were widely circulated in medical manuals such as *Aristotle's Masterpiece* first published in 1684, going through more than forty editions by 1800.[7] Within the humoral economy the female body

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[5]Roy Porter, 'Rape – Does it have a historical meaning?', in Sylvana Tomaselli, and Roy Porter (eds), *Rape: An Historical and Cultural Enquiry* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 217.

[6]Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex?: Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 181; also see Helen King, *Hippocrates' Women. Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece* (London, Routledge, 1998).

[7]*Aristotle's Masterpiece* (London, 1694); Roy Porter, 'Spreading Carnal Knowledge or Selling Dirt Cheap?; Nicholas Venette's *Tableau de l'Amour Conjugal* in Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of European Studies*, Vol. 14, 1984, p. 237.

was an imperfect version of the male body, as it lacked vital heat. As Nature always worked towards achieving an ideal state, the female body naturally attempted to improve itself. In humoral terms, women's cold, clammy wombs therefore sought the hot, dry remedy of male seed: 'The wombe and nature do draw the seed, as the Lodestone doth iron ... but she doth draw it for the perfection of hir selfe'.[8] This insatiable desire was seen as an inescapable physical fact, innate in all women.

Sexual insatiability was seen to be not only physical but a product of the female mind. In *The Pleasures of Conjugal Love Explained* (1740), a 'Physician' [Nicolas Venette] traces the well-worn humoral argument, disputing that: 'Women were hotter than Men, because they are sooner ripe for Business'. This 'Physician' shifts the reason for women's amorous nature away from the humoral economy. It is no longer merely the corporal hunger of a cold and clammy womb which motivates desire, but also a woman's imagination: 'That Excess of Love cannot be particularly ascribed to the force of this same Heat, but to the Inconstancy of their Imagination, or rather to the Providence of Nature, that has made them to serve us for Playtoys after our more serious Occupations'.[9]

Rape in mainstream literature

In discussions of prostitution, Bernard Mandeville was in line with contemporary thought when in his *Modest Defence of Publick Stews* (1724), he attributed women with an inherent sexual nature and a 'violent natural Desire', which is necessarily counterbalanced by insistent artificial 'Notions of Honour carefully inculcated into them from their Infancy'.[10] Women were thought to be more sexually inclined than men. In *The Present State of Matrimony: or, the Real Causes of Conjugal Infidelity and Unhappy Marriages* (1740), the author 'Philogamus' comments that '... as to Lubricity, it is generally supposed by us, that Women are more inclined than Men. Their Souls seem to be of a more amorous Temper: Their Constitutions are more tuned to supply that Passion: Love, and the Effects of it, is the darling and predominant Passion of the Sex.'[11]

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[8]*The Problems of Aristotle* (1597) sigs, B8v, E4, quoted in Gail Kern Paster, 'The Unbearable Coldness of Female Being: Women's Imperfection and the Humoral Economy', *English Literary Renaissance*, Vol. 28, 1998, p. 432.
[9]Nicolas Venette, 'A Physician', *The Pleasures of Conjugal Love Explained. In an Essay Concerning Human Generation* (London, 1740) in Vivien Jones (ed.), *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (London, Routledge, 1990), p. 82.
[10]Bernard Mandeville, 'A Modest Defence of Public Stews; or, an Essay upon Whoring' (London, 1724), 1740 edition in Jones (ed.), *Women in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 81.
[11]Philogamus, *The Present State of Matrimony: or, the Real Causes of Conjugal Infidelity and Unhappy Marriages* (1739) in Jones (ed.), *Women in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 77.

In her examination of eighteenth-century fiction, Susan Staves argues that *attempted* rape becomes the measure of both female desirability and of female chastity. She suggests that in Fielding's comedies 'chaste and beautiful women who genuinely attract would-be rapists are structurally set against loose and lascivious women who falsely cry rape to cover up their own delinquencies.'[12] Once the raped woman testifies to the inadequacy of her resistance she aligns herself with the loose and lascivious rather than the chaste and the beautiful, and invites sexual attention. An example can be seen in Henry Fielding's play, *Rape upon Rape* (1730), which demonstrates how the victim's testimony consciously arouses, and invites further assault. The knowing heroine Hilaret sets a honey trap to ensnare lascivious Judge Squeezum with an account of her ruin: '*Hilaret*: I in the greatest agony of rage repelled him with my utmost force; he redoubled his attacks, I slackened my resistance; he entreated, I raved; he sighed, I cried; he pressed, I swooned; he – .'[13] The quick succession of verbs signals not only the high passion of the recollected events, but also anticipates the audience's erotic involvement in the moment. By bringing her account to life, Hilaret transfigures her narrative into another moment of seduction, this time enacted upon her audience, Judge Squeezum: '*Squeezum.* Oh! – I can bear no longer, my angel! My paradise! My honeysuckle! My dove! My darling! *Hilaret.* What do you mean, sir? *Squeezum.* I mean to eat you up, to swallow you down, to squeeze you to pieces. *Hilaret.* Help there! A rape, a rape.'[14]

While a completed rape defiles female chastity and ruins a woman, a mere attempt attests to her victorious modesty. In Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747–1748), the most celebrated rape victim in eighteenth-century literature, Clarissa Harlowe, escapes imputations of immodesty. Frances Ferguson argues that Clarissa's rape is framed so that 'it cannot depend upon the victim's mental state', eliminating the 'capacity to consent'.[15] Unconscious Clarissa can neither resist nor submit to Lovelace. Paradoxically, the impossibility of resistance renders Clarissa's non-consent inescapable. Lovelace admits his legal vulnerability in a letter to Belford, 'I know thou hast such a high opinion of this lady's virtue, that thou wouldst be disappointed

[12]Susan Staves, 'Fielding and the Comedy of Attempted Rape', in Fowkes Tobin, Beth (ed.), *History, Gender and Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Athens and London, University of Georgia Press, 1994), p. 93.
[13]Henry Fielding, *The Coffee-House Politician; or, the Justice Caught in his own Trap. A Comedy,* [Rape upon Rape] (London, J. Watts, 1730). Reproduced in *Complete Works of Henry Fielding*, Vol. 9 (London, Heinemann, 1903), p. 131.
[14]*Ibid.*, p. 131.
[15]Frances Ferguson, 'Rape and the Rise of the Novel', *Representations*, Vol. 20 (1987), p. 100.

if thou hadst reason to think that she was subdued by *her own* consent, or nay the *least* yielding in her will. And so is she beholden to me in some measure, that at the expense of *my* honour she may so justly form a plea, which will entirely salve *hers?'*[16] For Lovelace the possibility of successful resistance is entirely unforeseen, previous sexual conquests enable him to anticipate only success: 'have I not known twenty and twenty of the sex, who have seemed to carry their notions of virtue high; yet, when brought to the test, have abated of their severity? And how should we be convinced that *any* of them are proof, till they are tried?'[17] Clarissa's intransigent non-consent blights Lovelace's pleasure, 'have not I the worst of it; since her insensibility has made me but a thief to my own joys?'[18] Lovelace is left longing for retrospective confirmation that his desire has kindled hers, 'And yet why say I, *completed*? When the *will*, the *consent*, is wanting –'.[19] Irrespective of scratches and bites, a completed rape implicitly acknowledges submission, not only to the greater physical power of men, but also to the greater sexual desire of women.

Clarissa distances herself from the commonality of 'raped' women of easy virtue. She sinks into insensibility, her reaction to the rape is incommensurate with Lovelace's interpretation of honour as an inconsequential 'trifle' to be robbed.[20] Perhaps more significantly, she is unable to satisfy readers with a narrative account of the rape: 'I remember, I pleaded for mercy – … But no mercy found I! – My strength, my intellects, failed me! – And then such scenes followed – Oh my dear, such dreadful scenes! – fits upon fits (faintly indeed, and imperfectly remembered) procuring me no compassion – but death was withheld from me.'[21] Clarissa's confused memories of the rape remain private, not to be shared with the wider world: 'I will say no more on a subject so shocking as this must ever be to my remembrance'.[22]

Indecent testimony is inextricably linked to indecent behaviour. This is exploited in an anonymous bawdy, *The Trial: A Poem. The Trial of Roger, For an Accident that happened at Game of Romps with Esther* (1744).[23] The

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[16]Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa, or, The History of a Young Lady* (1747–1748) (ed.) Angus Ross (London, Penguin, 1985), pp. 886–8.
[17]*Ibid.*, p. 886.
[18]*Ibid.*, p. 887.
[19]*Ibid.*, p. 888.
[20]*Ibid.*, p. 886.
[21]*Ibid.*, p. 1011.
[22]*Ibid.*
[23]*The Trial: A Poem. The Trial of Roger, For an Accident that happened at A Game of Romps with Esther* (London, G. Lyon, 1744).

narrative unfolds through the successive testimonies of three women. The first female witness sees the penis; the second, Ruth, witnesses penetration; and the third, the prosecutrix attests to emission.[24] The looseness of the work is defended in the Preface by the author's claims to verisimilitude: ''tis as little so as can be, considering the Subject, the Evidences upon these Occasions being always enjoined to speak as plain as possible.' Although Ruth is reluctant to enter into sexual discourse, she plays into a puzzling dichotomy. She 'can't for Shame' name the vagina, but her modesty is proved to be false when she offers her body in place of her words: 'You see I blush as red as Fire, / But if the Jury will retire, / I then may do't with greater Ease, / And show 'em, if your Lordship please.'[25] The 'Shame' of naming the female genitals, 'which are called by the General Name of *Pudenda*, because when they are bared they bring *Pudor* or Shame upon a Woman', is overcome by uncovering the offending parts.[26] This suggests that although women are able to masquerade their modesty, they are inherently shameless.

Compelled to abandon learnt decorum, Ruth's modesty is confounded, and her true sexual nature exposed. The courtroom forces previously silenced sexual discourse into the public realm, female testimony becomes 'something akin to a secret voice whose discovery is imperative ... difficult and necessary, dangerous and precious to divulge'.[27] *The Trial* reaffirms the logic of the pornographic narrative, which always anticipates compulsive female sexual activity, and results in male sexual release. After professing her modesty to the jury, Ruth seduces them: 'In two Hours Time with grinning Faces/ They all return, and take their Places; Ruth's glowing Cheeks were much admir'd, / Tho' seem'd a little Faint and tir'd'.[28] Immodest female testimony, demanded by the legal codes, violated the codes of female sexual behaviour, and her testimony alone attested to the sexual irregularity of the alleged victim.

Submission in pornography

The rise of the pornographic book trade meant that male sexual leisure was now also spent reading erotic literature. Men encountered sexually active and sexually pleasured women not only in the real world, but also in the

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[24]*Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.
[25]*Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.
[26]*Gonosologium Novum: or, a New System of all the Secret Infirmities and Diseases, Natural, Accidental, and Venereal in Men and Women* (1709), in Bradford Mudge (ed.), *When Flesh Becomes Word: An Anthology of Early Eighteenth-Century Libertine Literature* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 115.
[27]Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume One* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1990), pp. 35–6.
[28]*The Trial*, p. 8.

textual world of pornography.[29] Female sexual desire now became evident also through male sexual/textual experience. The truth of female desire was reiterated once more, as an inherent physical manifestation in erotic fiction.

Pornographic texts, with their sexually submissive heroines, are overwhelmingly preoccupied with sexual initiation: the female journey from sexual innocence to sexual experience, with the most powerful erotic charge delivered at the moment of defloration. Defloration therefore becomes erotic shorthand for the ultimate satisfying sexual experience.

Within these pornographic fictions, moral constraints and social codes of proper feminine modesty are quickly overcome by woman's natural inclinations, and sexual desire is victorious. Any initial reluctance is swept away by woman's first taste of pleasure. The height of male pleasure is achieved in effecting this transformation from restraint to abandonment in the woman, and so readers of this genre are absorbing the lesson that it is both the man's obligation and his pleasure to override female objections to defloration. Philander, hero of Chorier's *A Dialogue between A Married Lady and a Maid* (1740) accounts for his particular delight: 'But to see a delicate Creature, whose Modesty struggles with her very Senses, be forced, in our Arms, to give up all her Reserve, and to abandon herself to the Joy we give her, is, at the same Time, paying back to us, a more infinite Pleasure, who cannot but imagine, that we are infinitely lov'd by a Thing, which seems pleased without Measure by us.'[30] When framed by marriage his exertions fulfil a social duty.

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[29]Literary pornography during the eighteenth century has attracted a wealth of critical attention in recent years. Karen Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth-Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004); Julie Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books: The Development of Pornography in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, Palgrave, 2003); Bradford K. Mudge, *The Whore's Story: Women, Pornography, and the British Novel, 1684–1830* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000); Other important works include David Foxon, *Libertine Literature in England 1660–1745* (New York, University Books, 1965), Jean Marie Goulemot, *Forbidden Texts: Erotic Literature and its Reader in Eighteenth Century France* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1994); Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500–1800* (New York, Zone Books, 1993); Walter Kendrick, *The Secret Museum; Pornography in Modern Culture* (London, Penguin Books, 1988); Roger Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears: A Study of Pornographic, Obscene and Bawdy Works Written or Published in England in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century* (London, Macmillan, 1979). Key pornographic works of the early eighteenth century, including *The School of Venus,*(1680) *Fifteen Plagues of a Maiden-Head* (1707), *Venus in the Cloister* (1725) and *A Dialogue Between a Married Lady and a Maid* (1740) are reprinted in a collection edited by Bradford K. Mudge, *When Flesh Becomes Word: An Anthology of Early Eighteenth-Century Libertine Literature* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004).
[30]*A Dialogue between A Married Lady and a Maid: Tullia and Octavia* (London, 1740), Dialogue Three, in Mudge (ed.), *When Flesh Becomes Word*, p. 251.

It has been suggested by twentieth-century feminists such as Susan Brownmiller and Susan Griffin that pornography, like rape, reduces women to passive objects of sexual access, and celebrates aggressive male domination over women as man's natural right. Griffin asserts that the continuum between pornography and rape is part of the culture of inequality, in which women are subordinate to men. In this way, pornography makes visible a cultural truth, one within which rape is normative: 'The secret fantasy life of a culture that creates rape is expressed in pornography'.[31]

Pornographic texts obsessively refigure the moment of lost virginity, testifying to the power of male will, which compels a woman to overcome all socially imposed dictates of modesty and decorum.[32] Once deflowered, woman's quest for sensual pleasure was unbounded. To this end, the male characters are necessarily well-protected against the potentially debilitating demands of the insatiable womb and the penis is necessarily a tool of both Venus and Mars, and 'of a size fit to defend itself'.[33] In *Aretinus Redivivus* (1745) Charlotte refers to her new husband's manhood with ambiguous endearment: 'it was like a pike … and every now and then cock'd up it's head as if it had a Mind to kiss me or rather Threaten me with the Approaching Assault.'[34] The language of battle dominates these pornographic encounters, the penis becomes a weapon independently engaged in enemy action, it 'threaten[s]' an 'Assault'.

The power of defloration reached it's zenith by the mid-eighteenth century[35] in Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* with each sexual

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[31]Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976), pp. 390–6; Susan Griffin, *Rape: The Politics of Consciousness* (3rd edition, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1986), pp. 63–6.
[32]Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears,* pp. 12, 33.
[33]*Aretinus Redivivus, or, The Ladies Academy.* Translated from the Original French by Philo Cunnus Posture professor in the University of Pathos. Adorned with Twenty Four Curious Copper-plates. Tho' formal prudes and Nuns may have disclaim, All Nuns and prudes in Secret Love the Game, Monks too and hermitism tho' they Live in Cells have their Gay Hours, and Use their Aaron's Bells' From P.R.O. K.B. 28/176/21 Hil. 19. G2. Judgment against John Leake, Printer, 1745, p. 40.
[34]*Ibid.*
[35]See Antje Schaum Anderson, 'Gendered Pleasure, Gendered Plot: Defloration as Climax in *Clarissa* and *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*', *Journal of Narrative Technique*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 1995, pp. 108–38.

encounter representing a form of defloration. Fanny narrates the storming of her virginity after Charles makes several frustrated attempts:

> … now, outrageous, and no longer his own master, but born head-long away by the fury and over-mettle of that member, now exerting itself with a kind of native rage, he breaks in, carries all before him, and one violent merciless lunge, sent it, imbrew'd, and reeking with virgin blood, up to the very hilts in me: then! then! all my resolution deserted me: I skreame'd out, and fainted away with the sharpness of the pain; and (as he told me afterwards) on his drawing out, when emission was over with him, my thighs were instantly all in a stream of blood, that flow'd from the wounded torn passage.[36]

The images of woman's pleasurable subjugation reinforced the fact of female insatiability, and of man's ability to tame it, only an exceptionally manly man could satisfy female desire. Therefore the ability of the conquering penis to break through the hymen, destroy virginity and take full possession of the female body is emphasized in these works. The first instance of intercourse acquainted woman with her true nature, and made a woman a woman. Fanny Hill notes the physical difference 'between the maid, and the now finish'd woman' which intercourse brings.[37] In *A Dialogue between A Married Lady and a Maid*, Octavia asks Tullia to tell her how she 'shall be made a Woman from a Maid that now I am', who dutifully recounts her own defloration.[38] Horatio's first two attempts to 'open himself a Way into those secret Parts' end in premature ejaculation, testament to the untested deliciousness of the prize[39] until at last, his seduction is complete, described as a full frontal assault on Tullia's body; 'he bid me prepare for a new Attack; for by this Time, the terrible Foe began to raise his Head, and threaten my Fort with a new Assault.'[40]

Only sex with men had the power to change a woman's status, which was seen not as a development from childhood to adulthood, but from virgin to non-virgin. Octavia's mother congratulates her on forthcoming transition: 'My dearest *Octavia*, said she, thou art now born to a new Life;

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[36]John Cleland, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, Vol. 1 (London, printed for G. Fenton, 1749, 2 Vols), pp. 108–9. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, Gale Group, http://galenet.galegroup.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/servlet/ECCO, Accessed 6 October 2007.
[37]*Ibid.*, p. 120.
[38]'A Dialogue Between a Married Lady and a Maid' in Mudge, *When Flesh Becomes Word*, p. 241.
[39]*Ibid.*, p. 243.
[40]*Ibid.*

and this Night will make an End of shewing you that which the Light of a thousand Days would never do without thy dear *Philander*.[41] Philander revels in her new status, and the unbounded amusement which it represents: 'Now, said Philander, thou art a Woman, and that silly Thing called a Maidenhead is gone to all Intents and Purposes. Now, the Field of Delight is opened unto me for ever'.[42]

Female sexual subjectivity was objectified in these texts as part of the writers' intention to stimulate their male readers' sexual response. This secret fantasy life of eighteenth-century men created the circumstances in which rape became thinkable and was synonymous with sex. Although in real-life, rape was illegal, it was almost indistinguishable as such, because it too closely resembled normative erotic experience (in violent seduction), as encountered both in public discourse, in mainstream literature, and in private discourse through pornographic texts.

Rape narratives themselves became erotic fictions in the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers*. The feminocentric narrative of pornography cast doubt upon the veracity of female testimony. If a woman was engaged in sexual discourse, she was transfigured into the carnal creature of the pornographic imagination, any profession of modesty could only ever be a smoke-screen to disguise her lustful nature.

Old Bailey Sessions Papers and the law

Rape trials were communicated to London's reading public through commercially published trial reports, the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers*. These quasi-official pamphlets met a reading public greedy for crime, with a particular appetite for accounts of sexual offences.[43] Salacious or scandalous trials were capable of generating media frenzy prompting trial reports, biographies, confessions, accounts of the execution and dying words of the malefactor,

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[41] *Ibid*., p. 249.

[42] *Ibid*., p. 251.

[43] On the legal status of the *Sessions Papers* see John H. Langbein, 'The Criminal Trial Before the Lawyers', *University of Chicago Law Review*, Vol. 45, No. 2, Winter 1978, p. 15. and John H. Langbein, 'Shaping the Eighteenth-Century Criminal Trial: A View from the Ryder Sources', *University of Chicago Law Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1, Winter 1983, pp. 14–5. For the sexual titillation they awarded see Peter Wagner, 'The pornographer in the courtroom: trial reports about cases of sexual crimes and delinquencies as a genre of eighteenth-century erotica', in Paul-Gabriel Boucé (ed.), *Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1982), p. 123. Lucy Moore, *The Thieves' Opera: The Remarkable Lives and Deaths of Jonathan Wild, Thief-Taker, and Jack Shepherd, House-Breaker* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1998).

and bawdy bildungsroman celebrating his life.[44] Their aim was to titillate the reading public and therefore reports were not only widely exaggerated but sheered in a way to provide the readers with an authoritative declaration of the truth.

Remarkable trails had already been anthologized with publications such as *Complete Collection of Remarkable Tryals of the most notorious Malefactors at the Sessions House in the Old Bailey, for near fifty Years past* (1718), and ensured that rapists lingered in the public imagination long after they had been judicially dispatched. From 1720 a spin-off publication, *Select Trials for murder, robberies, rape, sodomy, coining, frauds and other offences at the Sessions-House in the Old Baily (sic). To which are added genuine accounts of the lives … of the most eminent Convicts* compiled the most entertaining trials in just two volumes. This publishing venture testified to the marketability of the genre, and the advertisements which appeared both in the *Sessions Papers* and the Ordinary's account indicate which crimes drew the greatest audience: 'Both volumes containing upwards of Five Hundred Trials; among which are upwards of seventy Trials for Murder, near Sixty for Whores for

[44]Nobleman Francis Charteris achieved the highest notoriety. His profligate lifestyle culminated in the rape of a servant girl, and although the jury brought in a guilty verdict, Charteris received a pardon and was not executed. A plethora of pamphlets subsequently flooded the market. *The History of Colonel Francis Ch-rt-s. Containing the Birth, Parentage, Education, Rise, Progress, and most memorable Exploits of that Great man, down to his present Catastrophe in Newgate. Collected from the most authentick Accounts of Gentlemen who have been intimately aquainted with him, and his TRANSACTIONS*. The Second Edition (London, Printed for the Author; and to be Sold by the Booksellers at the several Pamphlet-sellers. 1730); *The Life of Colonel Don Francisco Containing The Whole Series of the most remarkable and unprecedented Actions from his Birth of the Time of his receiving sentence of Death for a Rape. To which is prefixed, as an Ornament, The Effigy (curiously engraven) of Colonel Francis Chartres, now under Sentence of Death in Newgate for the like Fact* (London, Printed for the Author, and sold by the Book sellers, Pamphlet-sellers and Hawkers, 1730); *Proceedings of the Sessions of the Peace, and Oyer and Terminer for the City of London, and County of Middlesex, held at the Justice Hall in the Old Bailey, on Friday the 27th of February last… upon a Bill of Indictment found against* Francis Charteris, Esq.*; for committing a* Rape *on the Body of* Anne Bond, *of which he was found* Guilty (London, T. Payne, 1730); *Scotch GALLANTRY display'd: or the Life and Adventures of the unparallel'd Col. Fr-nc-s Ch-rt-s, Impartially related. With some Remarks on other Writers on this Subject* (London, Printed for, and sold by the Booksellers in Town and Country, 1730); *Some Authentick MEMOIRS of the LIFE of Colonel Ch——— s, Rape-Master-General of GREAT BRITAIN. By an Impartial Hand* (London, Printed and Sold by the Booksellers of *London* and *Westminster*; and of the several *Pamphlet-Shops*, 1730).

privately stealing, upwards of one Hundred for the Highway, about Thirty for Rapes; the rest being for Frauds, Forgery, Burglary, Sodomy, Bigamy, shop-lifting, Riots, Misdemeanours, Receiving Stolen Goods, Single Felonies etc… N.B. These Trials are not only very necessary for all Lawyers, Justices of the Peace, Clerks of the Indictments, and other Persons concern'd in Prosecutions, etc, but are very useful and entertaining to the generality of Readers.'[45]

Alleged rapists in the dock at the Old Bailey were largely distinguished by their ordinariness, a parade of servants, apprentices, chandlers, tailors, barbers, inn-keepers and tradesmen.[46] Their accusers were drawn from the same working and middling classes, and were frequently very young. A typical case involved ten-year-old Phillis Holmes, who lodged in her Uncle's inn, was regularly fed on bread and water, and contracted the pox after being raped in the cellar by a waiter.[47] Uncommon prosecutions of aristocratic rapists created *cause celebres*, and frequently embodied political and social tensions. Confirmed rapists were vilified in the press, and expurgated at the gallows. Yet violent sexual behaviour was accepted as normal in the trial reports. What was considered to be 'normal' profoundly problematized the prosecution of rape, and rendered the very possibility of rape questionable.

Between 1700 and 1750, 85% of rape trials detailed in the *Sessions Papers* ended in acquittal.[48] Through the *Sessions Papers* readers discovered that the stories of violence and forced sexual intercourse were not actually rape, but considered to be tales fabricated to convict an innocent man or consensual intercourse. Accounts of sexual violence offered by the prosecutrix were either not credited, or not found to be criminal, and accusations of rape were transfigured by the 'not guilty' verdict as normative sexual encounters. Through the *Sessions Papers*, rape appears to be uncommon; the dissemination of rape trials through the publication of the *Sessions Papers* ensured that the rarity of rape convictions, and therefore of rape, was communicated to the wider public. This inclined future jurors to disbelieve the allegations brought before them. Although women may have communicated the harm done to them within their own communities, when they took their case to Law their injury was elided. The legal conditions for

[45]Old Bailey Proceedings (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 29 March 2009), Ordinary of Newgate's Account, 31st July 1741 (OA17410731).

[46]Anthony E. Simpson, 'Popular Perceptions of Rape as a Capital Crime in Eighteenth-Century England: The Press and the Trial of Francis Charteris in the Old Bailey, February 1730', *Law and History Review*, Vol. 22, Issue 1, 2004, www.historycooperative.org/journals/1hr/22.1/simpson.html (accessed 23 May 2006): 10:8 EDT, para 47, note 59. From the 280 cases tried between 1730–1830, 141 defendant occupations are recorded, of these only 15 (10 per cent) defendants were of genteel status.

[47]*OBP*, (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 29 March 2009), September 1766, Edward Brophy (t17660903-38).

[48]Only 17 defendants were found to be guilty.

finding a rape – the use of force to have carnal knowledge of a woman against her will, achieving full penetration and ejaculation – were clearly stated by the law. However, for many girls and women proving a rape was unfeasible and hopeless.

The *Sessions Papers* carefully fostered public perception that they represented the Law in its purest form: objective, inclusive and disinterested. They commonly reflected upon their own responsibility to the courts, and implicitly to the Law: 'That our Account of the Proceedings of the Last Sessions might be confined to One Book, we were under a Necessity of leaving out some Part thereof; with which the Court being dissatisfied, we are obliged to divide this Book into Two Books: The Second of which will be published on Thursday next.'[49] The papers fiercely deflected accusations of partiality: 'The Trials of the five following Persons having been omitted in the last Sessions Book for want of Room, they are here inserted to obviate any Surmise that they were left out with any Design or sinister View whatsoever.'[50]

The formal simplicity of the *Sessions Papers*, which mimicked the questions and answers of the adversarial trial, fostered belief in the transparency of Law. This impression was not entirely honest: procedural and doctrinal detail were strategically excluded. The influence of the presiding judge was almost entirely absent. Questions from the court were indicated but not attributed, so readers were unaware whether cross-examination was undertaken by the judge, the defence or the prosecution. Perhaps most importantly, the important process of summing up was omitted from the *Sessions Papers*.

In a rape trial, two versions of events were presented to the court; the female version in which a woman had been raped; and the male version in which no rape had occurred. Fundamentally, there were two defences to an allegation of rape. One maintained that no sexual contact between the prosecutrix and the defendant had occurred. The other was that intercourse was consensual, and therefore that there was no rape. While the first defence cast the allegation as entirely malicious, the second admitted the possibility that two understandings of the sexual encounter may co-exist. A woman might believe that she had not consented to intercourse, her sexual partner may be under the apprehension that she *had* consented to intercourse. As Eve Sedgwick points out, 'the epistemological asymmetry of the laws that govern rape [...] privileges ignorance: inasmuch as it matters not at all what the raped woman perceives or wants just so long as the man raping her can claim not to have noticed'.[51] Intercourse only became rape

[49]*OBP*, April 1740.
[50]*OBP*, February 1742, (17420224).
[51]Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'The Privilege of Unknowing: Diderot's *The Nun'*, *Tendencies* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1993), 23–4.

when the man was aware that consent has been withheld, and therefore although women were harmed by rape, only the man could prove whether or not he was aware that his actions were criminal. In May 1717, Henry Burt admitted to having intercourse with Mary Lye (aged 13), but denied that it was a rape, 'saying that he indeed was eager and she not very unwilling'.[52] Burt's 'eagerness' led him to trap Lye in a backroom for five hours, throw her on the bed, and inform her that he meant to lie with her. Lye's struggles and cries did not register on Burt's consciousness as genuine indicators of resistance. As Lye was unwilling, but not 'very unwilling', the court found that the degree of force used by Burt was not consistent with rape and acquitted him.

The jury uncovered which version was true, and damned the alternative narrative as lies. The *Sessions Papers* completed the process begun in the courtroom, whereby the public discourse of law qualified private testimonies, not only with rules of evidence which rendered accounts admissible or inadmissible, but also through the unstated protocols of public speech.[53] This experience of courtroom procedure is both effaced and tacitly affected by reading the *Sessions Papers*, as the narrative voice converged with the single narrative truth of law. The chaos of subjective experience was regulated by textual authority, accounts were shorn of unruly vernacular, rambling testimonies, disjunctive questions and answers, trivia, repetition, lewdness, and indecency.[54] In 1725, George James, the printer and shorthand writer, was called to account by the Court of the Common Council for the 'lewd and indecent manner' in which he had reported the Sessions.

We can occasionally see what the *Sessions* reporters decided to omit, in the responses made by witnesses to absent questions from the court. Some cases, especially during the first decades of the eighteenth century were summed up in a sentence or two. Even towards the middle of the century, when individual testimony and the questions of the court were increasingly included we find accounts which indicate discourse beyond the facts of the case.

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[52]*OBP*, May 1717, Henry Burt (t17170501-67).

[53]Margaret Anne Doody, 'Voices of Record: Women as Witnesses and Defendants in the Old Bailey Sessions Papers', in Susan Sage Heinselman and Zipporah Batshaw Wiseman (eds), *Representing Women: Law, Literature and Feminism* (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1994), pp. 287–90. On how court protocols and formulaic language formed litigation in early modern England see Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 41–8.

[54]Michael Harris, 'Trial and Criminal Biographies: A Case Study in Distribution', in Robin Myers and Michael Harris (eds), *Sale and Distribution of Books from 1700* (Oxford, Oxford Polytechnic Press, 1982), p. 10.

In the trial of Matthew Cave for the rape of Martha Flanders the reporter comments that 'It was with great Difficulty that the Court could get her to speak particularly of the Affair'. This account also intimates that the Prisoner was guilty; 'on these Accounts the Prisoner, who richly deserved severe Punishment, was Acquitted'.[55] This hints that the plain 'facts' recorded in the *Sessions Papers* although accurate, did not capture the essence of courtroom proceedings.

It is frequently impossible to determine unequivocally how a verdict has been reached. The reader is left unable to articulate the social and legal restrictions by which these accounts are bound. The absence of material evidence in rape prosecutions threatened to make manifest the fact that legal truth was determined by the opinion of the court as to which particular point of view was coextensive with the most plausible reality. This threat was never realized. The authoritative manner in which the corroborating factors were portrayed as exhaustively explored, made rape appear to be rare, and allegations of rape suspect.

If the court accepted the male testimony as truth, it was his interpretation of the events which became reality. A determined refusal to consent when followed by full intercourse appeared as female submission. Sexual agency went only as far as submitting to intercourse, female submission inevitably indicates consent.[56] Judge Hale emphasized the difficulty of crediting allegations of rape thereby iterating a belief which was common currency. 'It is true that rape is a most detestable crime, and therefore ought severely and impartially be punished by death; but it must be remembered, that it is an accusation easy to be made, hard to be proved, but harder to be defended by the party accused, though innocent'.[57] He urges 'great care and vigilance' lest the judge and jury, transported with 'so much indignation, that they are overhastily carried to the conviction of the person accused thereof, by the confidant testimony of sometimes false and malicious witnesses'.[58] Laurie Edelstein points to Hale's desire to balance the jury's natural instinct to convict those accused of this heinous crime and the need to protect the presumption of innocence and the burden of evidentiary proof.[59]

[55]*OBP*, October 1747, Matthew Cave (t17471014-15).
[56]Garthine Walker, 'Reading Rape and Sexual Violence in Early Modern England', *Gender & History*, Vol. 10, No. 1, April 1998, pp. 1–25, p. 6.
[57]Blackstone, *Commentaries of the Laws of England* (1765–1769) I Hal P.C. 635 (www.longnag.com/exlibris/blackstone,19th April 2006).
[58]*Ibid.*
[59]Laurie Edelstein, 'An Accusation Easily to be Made? Rape and Malicious Prosecution in Eighteenth-Century England', *The American Journal of Legal History*, Vol. 42, No. 4, (Oct 1998), pp. 351–90, 356.

Cross-examination of the prosecutrix often reveals the incredulity of the court that a woman had not fought off her assailant, and was undoubtedly designed to generate scepticism in the jury. The graphic account of intercourse presented to the courts in order to satisfy the rape charge had to be countered by proof of non-consent. As the very fact of intercourse on some level implied female consent, non-consensual sex therefore had to begin to resemble something other than sex. One response to this double-bind was to provide evidentiary proof that the woman had been forced to submit, and accounts of rape begin to resemble something other than rape by including physical assault. In this way the mental state of non-consent was made manifest as active physical resistance.[60]

Sarah Matt brought John Ellis to trial for raping her. She deposed that after she refused to have sex with him 'he made no more to do, but knocked me down, 2 or 3 Times, and thump'd me, and bruised my Breast, and made my Face swell, and then he flung me a-cross the Bed, so as my Head hung down, and he tore my Legs asunder, and lay with me against my Will 3 times. I scream'd, and cry'd out, Murder; but he would lye with me. He did as other Men do, when they lye with Women, and I suppose that needs no explaining.'[61] If consent was withheld, the jury expected physical evidence of a struggle. As *unsuccessful* physical resistance to a rape was always apprehended as consent, testimonies had to emphasize a high level of male violence, which took the encounter away from the realms of normal predatory intercourse, and into the recognizably criminal behaviour of assault. The sexual element of the assault is glossed over in order to privilege the violence. However, in Matt's case this strategy was not effective and Ellis was acquitted.

Although the supposed purpose of the trial was to ascertain whether the accused committed a rape upon the body of the prosecutrix, it was in reality, a way to uncover the anticipated false allegation.[62] As material evidence was problematic, the strongest circumstantial evidence was the character of the prosecutrix herself. The jury was required to consider whether the prosecutrix was likely to make a false allegation. Was this woman honest? Was this woman likely to consent to sex? Yet the prosecution of rape inevitably sexualized the prosecutrix by compelling her to engage in

[60]Garthine Walker, 'Reading Rape and Sexual Violence in Early Modern England', p. 8.

[61]*OBP*, December 1731, John Ellis (t17311208-58).

[62]Edelstein, 'An Accusation Easily Made?', pp. 351–90. Edelstein argues that the shadow of malicious prosecution was raised specifically by the defendant in order to shift the focus of the trial from the defendant to the prosecution's case (p. 353).

discourse incompatible to proper female modesty. Within the courtroom, the unwilling female witness was forced to abandon the normal prohibitions and protocols placed upon her speech by the codes of proper femininity.

In a society where female character was synonymous with sexual continence, her reputation was destroyed as soon as the rape allegation was made, and with it her good character and the validity of her testimony. Not only would a truly virtuous woman have avoided rape in the first place, she would certainly have shunned the sexually explicit testimony demanded by the court. Modesty was predicated upon the public performance of accepted codes of sexual behaviour. As it was primarily a question of face, modesty was persistently dogged by a general anxiety about whether the appearance of virtue indicated the actual existence of virtue. An essentially superficial virtue, modesty continually threatened to prove itself nothing but appearance.[63] Rape testimony proved that the prosecutor's modesty was nothing but a performance, staged to secure the conviction of an innocent man. As sexual discourse and sexual honour were mutually exclusive, the testimony of the prosecutrix therefore could signify nothing but her guilt. In order to prove themselves raped, women were compelled to satisfy legal conditions which could only prove them unrapeable.

Part of the defence was therefore to sully the character of the woman who had brought the case. The prosecutrix's character was already compromised by the very fact that she had dared to bring the case in the first place, and that she was willing to speak in public about such delicate matters as sex. In order to capitalize upon the already compromised character of the rape victim, defendants frequently cast their accusers as prostitutes. The defence called witnesses to testify to the venality, venery and vindictiveness of the prosecutrix. Evidence of sexual licentiousness, drunkenness and cupidity were paraded before the jury, unhindered by the steadying presence of perjury as witnesses were unsworn.

In 1735, Edward Jones was accused of raping fifteen year old Sarah Evans. Witnesses appeared on behalf of the defendant who thoroughly blackened the character of the prosecutrix. The prisoner's half-brother, Samuel Jones testified: 'I have heard she is a loose Girl, and kept Company with a Barber that was Pox'd.' Sarah Olney, Jones's daughter, claimed that: 'The Girl has a very base Character, rather lewd than otherwise.' Ann Scott, whose relationship to the defendant or prosecutrix is not established by the *Sessions Papers*, claimed that: 'she had a loose Character, and would keep Company with any Man, tho' she did not know him, if he did but say, *Come Sal go*

[63]Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Fictions of Modesty: Women and Courtship in the English Novel* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 8–12.

with me.'[64] Despite contrary evidence to her character by other witnesses, and the fact that the defence witnesses were related to him, Sarah Evans was ultimately discredited when it was revealed to the court that she had a history of accusing rape, and had in the past taken out a warrant against her former master for an intent to ravish. The defendant was acquitted.

Any hint of prostitution compromised female testimony. In the unsuccessful prosecution of Jacob Wykes and John Johnson for a rape upon Ann Cooper; 'The Prisoner then called Persons to her Character, Mr. Jerrings deposed that she was a Common Woman, that made it her Business (as they call it) to Trap People, by pretending to be with Child by them, be Ravish 'd' and gave evidence to support his opinion that 'there was not so notorious a Woman upon the Face of the whole Earth'. Three officers of the court deposed against her, one alleging 'That she was the oldest Bite and oldest Whore we have, that she had ruin'd several that he knew, and made them run away from their Families.'[65]

The discretionary powers held by the investigating Justice of the Peace allowed him to settle the question of rape summarily by negotiating a suitable settlement for the victim, and eliciting an apology from her attacker; the judicial term 'making up', a term roughly analogous to our 'settling out of court'. Any association of the accuser with prostitution was therefore viewed with the utmost suspicion since monetary gain might be at the basis of her accusation. The investigation therefore included not only the events surrounding the alleged rape, but also the circumstances under which the prosecution was conceived and pursued. The possibility that an avaricious prostitute might bring about a malicious accusation for profit was always under consideration. Any evidence of pecuniary negotiation without the arbitration of the J.P. saw the trial end in acquittal. Daniel Collins, of St. Paul at Shadwell, was indicted for committing 'a Rape on the Body of Mary the Wife of Henry Powell, on the 14th of November last, But no Evidence coming against him, and it appearing to be a Contrivance to extort Money from him, the Jury Acquitted him, and the Court granted him a Copy of his Indictment.'[66]

Accusations of prostitution against girls of eleven, twelve and thirteen were also credible to jurors accustomed to seeing child prostitutes in London's poorer districts. In 1758, Sir John Fielding collected data on twenty-five arrested prostitutes, and their accounts testify that by the age of fifteen many girls had been walking the streets for three years.[67] For jurors, it was

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[64]*OBP*, December 1735, Edward Jones (t17351210-70).
[65]*OBP*, July 1718, Jacob Wilkes, John Johnson (t17180709-37).
[66]*OBP*, January 1721, Daniel Collins (t17210113-34).
[67]John Fielding, *A Plan of the Asylum or House of Refuge for Orphans and Other Deserted Girls for the Poor of the Metropolis* (London, 1758), p. 18 cited in Randolph Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution* (Chicago, London, University of Chicago Press), p. 116.

clear that even young girls could be motivated by carnal and financial desires equal to those of their older sisters. William Cunnington was acquitted after witnesses for the defence testified that the twelve-year-old prosecutrix Ann Williams, was a prostitute: 'Jenny Wademan and Margaret Norman deposed, that the Girl used to lie out o'nights frequently in Drury Lane, and Covent Garden, and that she told them, Gentlemen used to give her 6 d. and a Dram.'[68] Gin was a prominent feature in many sexual transactions, and marks the prosecutrix as a 'Gin Jenny', a prostitute who sold her body in order to fund her addiction. The purchase of a dram occasionally bought not only the body of the prostitute, but a room within which to seal the deal.[69]

The prostitute combined venality with venery, demonstrated scant regard for morality or honesty, and would swear away a man's life if denied a cursory payment. Her willingness to take the stand and disclose the dishonourable details of this sexual encounter disinclined the court to regard her case sympathetically. With each acquittal rape was re-written as consensual sexual intercourse, and replaced within the boundaries of normative heterosexuality. As a perversion, rape was consistently placed outside the boundaries of probability. It was so improbable as to become almost impossible.

Statutory rape

During the eighteenth century the age of consent was set at ten, and it marked the only material distinction between those females who were available for sex, and those who were forbidden. Although violation of a girl under ten was a capital felony regardless of the issue of consent, girls between 10–12 years old were considered separately; where there was consent, the crime was merely considered a misdemeanour.[70] Statutory rape, however, awarded no possibility of refiguring the rape as consensual intercourse. Yet fundamental contradictions arose between the institution of statutory rape and the way in which it was actualized in the courtroom. These contradictions demonstrate that female children were not totally distinct from female adults, and that all women were always already saturated with latent sexual desire. Female children exhibit all the characteristics of their

[68] *OBP*, September 1738, William Cunnington (t17380906-26).
[69] Jessica Warner and Frank Ivis, 'Gin and Gender in Eighteenth-Century London', *Eighteenth-Century Life,* 24.2 (2000), pp. 85–105, p. 95.
[70] On the legal history of the age of consent see Antony E. Simpson, 'Vulnerability and the age of female consent: legal innovation and its effect on persecutions for rape in eighteenth-century London', in G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (eds), *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 182–5.

sex, and it was anatomical maturity rather than psychological determination which differentiated a sexually available woman from one which was forbidden by law. To desire a child was therefore understandable, if less acceptable, than to desire a full-grown woman.

Statutory rape was a response to the perceived inability of a female child either to refuse or to resist male sexual advances and deemed particularly abhorrent because these girls lacked the physical strength to defend themselves against sexual attack. One judge who presided over the conviction of a child rapist commented that; 'In the annals of villainy and wickedness, there are few crimes which disgrace human nature more than rapes upon female children, whose tender age renders them unable to resist.'[71] However, the physical strength of a child aged ten or over was not questioned, and the same criteria were applied to 'women' irrespective of whether they were aged eleven or twenty-one.

The history of rape law suggests that statutory rape came into being to redress the problem of girls incapable of exercising rational judgment or discretion, and was initially set at twelve, the age at which a girl could marry.[72] The law aimed to protect children who may consent to sex, without being fully conscious of the implications, socially and morally, of their actions. The body and immature drives of a ten year old may therefore be desirous of intercourse, but the law determined that at such a tender age these dictates were not balanced by the ability to control those drives.

The ability to consent to intercourse was conferred upon girls on their tenth birthday. This new sexual self-determination loaded them with legal responsibility for their own virginity. By the early eighteenth century many authorities judged the age of criminal responsibility to be 14.[73] Although the practice of the courts did not always reflect contemporary legal theory, there were only four children under the age of fourteen sentenced to death between 1700 and 1750.[74] This mismatch between this later legal

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[71]*Human Depravity Displayed. Being An Account of the wicked and unnatural Crimes committed by Mr James R***y, a SCHOOLMASTER, Who is to take his Trial at the ensuing Old Bailey Sessions for ravishing a child only Eight Years of Age. Also, an Account of his Examination at Bow-Street* (London, n.d.), p. 2.

[72]Antony E. Simpson, *Vulnerability and the Age of Female Consent*, p. 183.

[73]Holly Brewer, *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law and the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority* (Chapel Hill and London, University of North Carolina Press, 2005), p. 182.

[74]*OBP*, October 1717, Henry Banister (a Boy of 13 Years of Age) (t17171016-1); *OBP*, February 1722, James Lanman (aged eleven) and Samuel Armstrong (aged thirteen) for shoplifting a silver snuff box (t17220228-19); *OBP*, April 1731, John Peaverly (a lad of about twelve years of age) for stealing from the till in the shop where he was employed (t17310431-75). An additional eight children had their crimes downgraded, indicted for feloniously stealing, the jury undervalued the goods to 10d. which reduced the felony to a misdemeanour, and they were sentenced to transportation rather than death.

responsibility for one's own actions, and the now seemingly premature responsibility for one's sexual actions was experienced only by female children.

Although children under fourteen could be convicted of a felony such as murder or theft, no male under the age of fourteen could be charged with perpetrating a rape. The capacity to rape was determined by male physical maturity. Blackstone writes: 'A male infant, under the age of fourteen years, is presumed by law incapable to commit a rape, and therefore it seems cannot be found guilty of it. For though in other felonies *militia supplet aetatem* [malice is equivalent to age], as has in some cases been shown; yet, as to this particular species of felony, the law supposes an imbecility of body as well as mind.'[75] For the male part in rape, the culpable inclination now coincided with the physical ability to perpetrate the crime.

For girls, the relationship between inclination and ability was much more opaque. The existence of statutory rape legislation attested to the possibility of intercourse with a girl under the age of ten. In the trial of Stephen Arrowsmith a member of the jury questioned the Law, proffering his professional opinion that rape could be completed on a child under ten: 'One of the Jury being an Apothecary, said it was his opinion, that a Child of those years could not be Ravished.[76] The Court responded unequivocally, that to question the viability of the offence 'did tax the Wisdom of a whole Parliament'.[77]

However, the plausibility of perpetrating a rape on a child under the age of ten seems frequently to have troubled the courts. Medical witnesses noted the absence of vaginal lacerations in order to indicate that full penetration could not have occurred, therefore disproving the allegations of rape. The surgeon in the prosecution of Thomas Gray for the rape of Frances Colomies (aged eight) commented 'that there had been no Laceration of the Part, without which it was impossible, there should have been any Penetration'.[78] The midwife in the prosecution of William Willis for a rape upon Phebe Shaw testified 'that the Neck of it [her womb] was turn'd quite out, which she thought must be done by a too early Copulation'.[79] To engage in intercourse with an immature girl was either impossible, or would occasion great physical injury.

This would suggest that the age of ten marked a physical transition from sexual immaturity to sexual availability. The proceedings of the Old Bailey

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[75] 1 Hal P.C. 635 cited in Blackstone Book 4, Chapter 15, 'Of Offenses Against the Persons of Individuals'.
[76] *OBP*, December 1678, Stephen Arrowsmith (t16781211e-2).
[77] *Ibid.*
[78] *OBP*, September 1735, Thomas Gray (t17350911-53).
[79] *OBP*, December 1715, William Willis (t17151207-52).

therefore imply that young girls were offered legal protection in order to safeguard their developing bodies. The age of consent pre-empted puberty and the onset of menstruation, which usually began in girls between the ages of fourteen and sixteen in eighteenth-century Britain.[80] However, as the links between reproduction and menstruation were not conclusively established, a girl's menarche would not have marked her as fertile or 'ripe' for intercourse and pregnancy.[81] In the minds of eighteenth-century medical theorists, sexual stimulation precipitated menarche rather than menarche sanctioning a readiness for sexual activity.

The gap between sexually-available and sexually-prohibited females was a legal construction, which was explicitly contradicted by the visual representation of little girls as miniaturized but perfect women, with all the curves and dimensions of the adult female body supplied by whale-bone and hoop when nature did not provide it.[82] Girls graduated from swaddling clothes at the age of two or three, into what were essentially small versions of woman's clothes, complete with corset and décolleté.[83] The legal category of child-rape, then, went against the grain of visual rhetoric of the sexualized child, rather than supporting socio-cultural practices.

Women were seen to be naturally acquisitive, with a material desire for fripperies, toys and pretty playthings, or a desire to feast upon a luscious treat and this desire led to vice.[84] It was suggested in some statutory rape trials that such temptations buy complicity. William Pheasant gave Deborah Wise a penny 'to let him do what he would to her', the second time he promised her a silver box and some silver pennies, which she never received and the third time he gave her 'Sugar Candy and Oranges'.[85] In the trial of

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[80]Alexandra Lord, 'The Great *Arcana* of the Deity' Menstruation and Menstrual Disorders in Eighteenth-Century British Medical Thought', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 73.1 (1999), p. 49.

[81]*Ibid*, p. 43.

[82]See Hogarth's paintings 'House of Cards' (1730) and 'The Children's Party' (1730) (National Museum of Wales). Joseph Francis Nollekens 'Two Children of the Nollekens Family Playing with a Top and Playing Cards' (1745) (Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection).

[83]Lloyd DeMause (ed.), *The History of Childhood: The Untold History of Child Abuse* (London, Bellow Publishing, 1991) [1974], p. 18.

[84]Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993); Neil Mckendrick, 'The Commercialization of Fashion' in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth Century* England (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982); Erin Mackie, *Market à l Mode: Fashion, Commodity and Gender* in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* (Baltimore and London, John Hopkins University Press, 1997).

[85]Pheasant was found guilty and sentenced to death. *OBP*, January 1699, William Pheasant (t16990113-1).

an unidentified man for a rape upon Bridget Stevenson Eliz Eyles, a servant who interrupted the rape after hearing Stevenson's cries, testified 'that After a Fit of Sickness the Child had, she ask'd her why she went in to be kist, she answer'd, that he entic'd her with Shells and other playthings'.[86] William Tankling promised four-year-old Anne Collings a cake.[87]

There was even the sense that culpability lies with a very young child rather than her abuser. A girl of six was whipped, and warned to stay away from Thomas Slade when a neighbour informed her parents that they had seen her being abused by the lad: 'her parents being inform'd of it, they whipt her, and charged her never to go near him again.'[88]

Conclusion

As we can see from contemporary comments, mainstream literature and pornographic texts, virginity was one of the primary tropes in eighteenth-century eroticism.[89] Violent defloration became paradigmatic, the epitome of seduction, representing a form of intercourse which was both typical and aspirational. From the aristocrat to the footman, 'first-time' sex with a struggle was perceived to be usual rather than perverse.

Simultaneously, the dissemination of rape trials through the *Sessions Papers* communicated to London's reading public the image of a 'rapeable' woman, the strongest precondition being virginity. Women found themselves in an impossible position; if they were virgins they provoked violent desire. If they became subject to unwanted sexual attention, and were overpowered, they could prove their innocence only by testifying to their purity, which was an impossible proposition as they were no longer virginal.

Any evidence that the alleged victim was sexually experienced compromised the prosecution.[90] Once a virginity was taken, women were thought unable to withhold consent because of their innate (and latent) sexual nature.

[86]*OBP*, February 1719 (t17190225-48).
[87]*OBP*, June 1750, William Tankling (t17500611-25).
[88]Slade was acquitted. *OBP*, September 1734, Thomas Slade (t17340911-6).
[89]See Tassie Gwilliam, 'Female Fraud: Counterfeit Maidenheads in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 1996, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 518–48; Corrinne Harol, 'Virgin Idols and Verbal Devices: Pope's Belinda and the Virgin Mary', *The Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 2005, pp. 41–59; Corrinne Harol, 'Faking It: Female Virginity and Pamela's Virtue', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction,* Vol. 16, No. 2, 2004, pp. 197–216.
[90]In the trial of Thomas Belsenger, 'Edward Meadowes (a Surgeon) deposed, that he was sent for to go with 2 Midwives to search the prosecutor, that she said she never knew Man before, and had the same Shift on then; that he saw no Symptoms of her Virginity, and believed she was a common Woman before. The Midwives were of the same Opinion'. *OBP*, October 1720, Thomas Belsenger (t17201012-38).

Rape was therefore not deemed probable and legal redress was more difficult to obtain. The transition from virgin to non-virgin was also a transition from woman to 'common Woman', and the sexual female was allied with the prostitute. Any hint of prostitution automatically indicated that the woman was consenting and therefore denied her the possibility of having been raped.

To men, the failure of so many rape trials to convict the defendant confirmed their belief in the malicious accusation, the carnality of the female sex and the duplicitous assumption of female modesty. The evidence provided by the trial reports confirmed their experience, and perpetuated the myths which allowed forced sex to be rewritten as seduction.

Through the procedures of the Old Bailey, women discovered a discontinuity between their experience of forced sex and the legal Truth of that experience, which rewrote the encounter as consensual, and therefore normal. The glut of acquittals indicated to London's women that rape legislation was largely unenforceable, and that rape was a regulated rather than a prohibited male activity.

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7

Morbid Parts: Gender, Seduction and the Necro-Gaze

Rebecca E. May

We rely on our bodies and can take for granted their physical stabilities. Flesh and bone seem incontrovertible facts, but in reality our bodies are battlegrounds; within the discourses of sex and gender, our biological necessities can be seized by interests not our own, both in life and after death. This paper examines several representations of corpses from the mid-eighteenth century through the mid-nineteenth century – amongst them, illustrations from fiction and poetry, medical textbooks, public executions, a travel narrative and prints, in order to address similarities between the masculinized medical gaze and the masculinized aestheticizing gaze, particularly when these gazes are directed at corpses. Bound together under the violent, gendered agenda of conquest, these gazes claim their objects of study in ways that can be described as either seduction or rape. Corpses are inscribed not just as inert flesh and tissue, but as malleable, feminine, pleasure providing and privilege affirming – as meant-to-be-opened beneath an inquisitive male gaze.[1] Donna Haraway has called feminization a process

[1]Mulvey is notable for her formulation of the male gaze and her related assertion that narrative cinema promotes men as lookers and action-makers and women as freezers of action, styled for erotic looking. Some critics take issue with Mulvey's insistence that the male gaze is one persistently anxious because of the threat of castration embodied in female lack while other critics attempt to address the potential for female spectators. My analysis, however, stands firm on the concept of the male gaze because the gazers in my texts are men. Moreover, it has been argued, especially by Clover and Williams that when women gaze, they are either made masculine or authorize their punishment. For Laura Mulvey's groundbreaking essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' as well as critical responses to it see E. Ann Kaplan (ed.), *Feminism and Film* (Oxford, University Press, 2000). Mulvey's essay first appeared in *Screen,* 16.3 (1975), pp. 6–18; see also E. Ann Kaplan, 'Is the Gaze Male?' *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (New York, Routledge, 1983); David N. Rodowick, 'The Difficulty of Difference,' *Wide Angle*, 5.1 (1982); Carol Clover, 'Her Body, Himself,' *Men Women and Chainsaws* (Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 21–64 and Linda Williams, 'When the Woman Looks,' Barry Keith Grant (ed.), *Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1996), pp. 15–34.

whereby one is made vulnerable, able to be disassembled and reassembled.[2] Whether sexed male or female, corpses in the following case studies are sliced open, prodded, massaged, posed or looked at in disconcerting manifestations of control and excitement.

The cases of these corpses prove that discourses of sex and gender can run bone deep, that the dead body can be forced into a position within discourses of power; reduction, instrumentalization, essentialization, and sexualization can be repeatedly acted out upon corpses even in the most unexpected of contexts. My examples come from more than only literature because the discourses that create gender and perpetuate power are not solely inscribed in novels and poems. Pleasure and control are wrested from corpses in multiple contexts throughout cultural history. Though only a handful of examples will be discussed below, the feminine, receptive corpse devoid of agency and conducive to titillation continues to manifest in forms such as snuff pornography.[3] All of these instances contribute to an ideology that romanticizes and sexualizes violence against women; in addition, they characterize an invasive gaze that invites bodily interaction as specifically masculine. Representations of the dead affect the ways that lived relationships structure pleasure and violence; the corpse embodies an ideal of receptivity, and similarly, living women are frequently valued for their receptivity and

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[2]Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York, Routledge, 1991), p. 166.

[3]Scholars and activists involved in the well-known anti-porn/anti-censorship feminist disputes have famously debated whether or not snuff pornography actually exists; a firestorm was ignited when a film called *Snuff*, which was marketed as accidentally catching the actual murder of a woman on film, aired in New York City in 1976 and a flurry of responses have followed, understandably maintaining their intensity in the aftermath of the internet. Anti-censorship feminists, such as Avedon Carol repeatedly assert that no 'authentic' snuff film has ever been found. On the other hand, Yaron Svoray claims to have seen and obtained several snuff films via an international black market based in various global war zones but had them confiscated, and he finally comes up empty handed. His insistence that his story is 'essentially true' except for changes made to protect others and for the sake of coherent narrative does not help to demystify the existence of such films. So while snuff's existence is still murky, I hardly see a reason not to consider computer-generated pornography that depicts the rape/torture/mutilation/murder of women as snuff. Avedon Carol (eds), 'Snuff: Believing the Worst' in Assister, Alison and Carol, Avedon (eds), *Bad Girls and Dirty Pictures* (Boulder, Colo., Pluto Press, 1993), pp. 126–30. Yaron Svoray, *Gods of Death* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1997), p. 1. Other excellent resources on the sex wars include Lisa Duggan and Nan D. Hunter's *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture* (New York, Routledge, 1995); Laura Lederer (ed.), *Take Back the Night* (New York, William Morrow & Co., 1980) and Linda Williams, *Hard Core* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989). For a post-sex-war theory of feminist unity, see Lynn S. Chancer, *Reconcilable Differences* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998).

passivity within patriarchal systems.[4] In other words, as artists, doctors, husbands, lovers or spectators watch corpses or dissect them or trade in them or draw them or ponder them, what takes place in the spectator can be a pleasurable sensation of dominance, of privilege. Elizabeth Bronfen explores this transcendental affirmation in detail. She writes:

> Gazing at the body of the dead, feminine Other serves as a form of self-touch or auto-eroticism, while the gaze of the anatomist is also already a form of touching the dead woman. It is as dangerous to her integrity as the physical contact that will lead to exposure and dissection…the texts the anatomist will produce as a result of this experience of death signify both the corpse and his inscription of it. They will be about her dead body but also about his signature, his gaze, his masculinity, his survival.[5]

While my argument gestures towards how these representations contribute to justifications of male violence against women, male bodies are implicated as well. Representations involving male bodies do not necessarily encourage a larger eroticized violence against men, but they do encode a form of masculinity that maintains its position of dominance in relation to 'lesser' masculinities. In cases involving male corpses, the act of penetration is demeaning, punishing and invasive because it is at the hands of a larger masculine force that feminizes a male body through the act of penetration. And so it is the process of being made sub-masculine, more feminine because penetrable, that categorizes the treatment of the male body. Historically it is important to keep in mind that bodies available for dissection were the disenfranchised: criminals, the poor, the unclaimed, the murdered. Beneath the umbrella of class and legal disenfranchisement, a pattern of treatment emerges whereby male bodies are generally depicted as raped and women's bodies are frequently described as seduced. Doctors submit bodies to processes of aesthetic preservation that, male or female, render the bodies into feminized testimonials of the gendered skill of medical men. Even in cases where bodies are taken down to component parts – livers, nerves, tendons – they emerge as feminized, beautiful, delicate.

My coinage of the term 'necro-gaze' is an embellishment of Laura Mulvey's 'male-gaze' and is meant to succinctly parcel together the erotic power and privilege differentials of a set of interactions with the dead. The necro-gaze delineates a masculinized gaze directed at a dead subject *or* directed as a

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[4]Jordanova argues as well that 'representational violence acts to permit, legitimize and even encourage actual abuse.' Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine Between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 61.

[5]Elizabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (New York, Routledge, 1992), pp. 11–12.

fantasy at a subject whom the gazer wishes dead for his benefit. Men in this paradigm hold the privilege of looking as well as the privilege of agency and action; they make meaning.[6] Whether doctors, lovers, thieves, husbands or artists, men in these examples direct their gazes at dead women (or feminized corpses). The dead objects are styled accordingly as passive or as objects that induce curiosity and excitement, even inviting their unveiling.[7] My usage of the terms 'sexualized' and 'eroticized' emphasizes the pleasure and excitement the gazer receives in working with the corpse or imagining the receptivity of the body. This pleasure may explicitly involve a sexually oriented desire, or the pleasure may involve a kind of heightened state resulting from an erotic sense of power or control in the conquest of another's body. The necro-gaze may displace the victimization of a raped or murdered woman onto the male perpetrator whose responsibility is negated by her inviting beauty; the necro-gazer may feel an educated liberty to penetrate and disassemble criminals for professional and aesthetic display; the necro-gazer may see laughing beauty in necrotic eyes; the necro-gazer may be unable to resist inert flesh that feels pleasurably receptive and passive to his advances. The necro-gaze encourages a masculinity that will conquer its feminine objects: wives, mistresses, corpses, criminals, etc. Whether in science or sex, this masculinized impulse is on its mission to own, to know, to possess, to consume and to represent.

'Porphyria's Lover' by Robert Browning, though late in the period (1842), provides at the outset a conceptual foundation for the work of this paper. The speaker's necro-gaze allows him to imagine that the resistant woman he loves can be made compliant. He describes how and why he murders her:

> …she
> Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
> To set its struggling passion free
> From pride and vainer ties dissever,
> And give herself to me forever.
> But passions sometimes would prevail,
> Nor could tonight's gay feast restrain
> A sudden thought of one so pale
> For love of her, and all in vain: (20–7)

In Porphyria's gaze the speaker claims he sees her love for him, so he resolves to freeze the moment. The speaker blames Porphyria's pride and

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[6]Mulvey, pp. 39–41.
[7]*Ibid*. Jordanova also points out, 'science and medicine were understood through sexual metaphors, for example by designating nature as a woman to be unveiled, unclothed and penetrated by masculine science', p. 24.

vanity as well as her refusal to sexually surrender to him in marriage for his raging, unstoppable desire:

> …I found
> A thing to do, and all her hair
> In one long yellow string I wound
> Three times her little throat around,
> And strangled her. No pain felt she;
> I am quite sure she felt no pain…
> I warily oped her lids: again
> Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
> And I untightened next the tress
> About her neck: her cheeks once more
> Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
> I propped her head up as before…
> And thus we sit together now,
> And all night long we have not stirred… (35–40, 42–7, 56–7)

The speaker's desire begins with his gazing at Porphyria. After his advances fail, his unrequited desire, fuelled by his gaze and by his assertion that *she* is the cause of his pain and at fault for it, erupts into a violent urge to bypass her resistance. He decides that she will be as beautiful and more useful to him dead. The necro-gaze compliments the speaker's privileged position to style Porphyria as he pleases – passive and receptive to his sexual advances. The act of strangulation here is no doubt erotic, not only because of the close bodily proximity and extended time it demands but because he uses her own hair. Literally, her beauty is her undoing. It is a weapon of seduction rather than a weapon of explicit violence. His assertion (twice) that she felt no pain frames the act as one of gentle seduction while it also draws attention to the speaker's selfish fixation on his emotional and physical pain. More important, however, is that Porphyria's beauty and sexual appeal remain in death. The speaker can have all of his lady with none of her resistance. Perhaps most interesting is that Porphyria's *dead* eyes are the ones laughing and 'without a stain.' This romanticizes her death in two ways. First, it implies that she does not shed tears of terror or distress during her murder, and second, the unstained eyes refuse the very real possibility that strangulation often causes blood vessels in the eye to burst; the distasteful logistics of biology are sanitized. Rather than disenfranchising her, death purifies her. Porphyria's *living* eyes were somehow stained to the speaker. This unclean female gaze ironically and monstrously inverts the speaker's own predatory gaze. Once she is murdered, however, she obviously cannot gaze back. Christine Quigley claims that the eyes of a corpse are unmistakable; they 'quickly become dulled and the pupils dilated; then the eyes become covered with a cloudy film and

flatten'.[8] The speaker's hallucinatory choice to describe Porphyria's dead eyes as laughing and dead skin as blushing serve to inscribe Porphyria as a woman whose beauty, whose purity and utility increase as her activity and free will are obliterated by a sexualized act of violence. Her agency – defined in this poem only in terms of her rebuffs – causes him pain. Thus, he replaces her with a woman idealized because she is stripped of that agency. As a man, he can alter her reality to suit his fantasy. *And* the whole thing comes off as an act of seduction.

About a century before Porphyria, William Hogarth's engravings provide a striking contrast to the seduction of Porphyria.[9] Hangings were public, and often bodies of criminals executed by hanging were placed on display and later turned over to anatomists for dissection. According to Ruth Richardson:

> …the 1752 Act's ordinances [which declared that anyone convicted of murder should be conveyed to a surgeon after execution] did in fact benefit both anatomists and artists…[the anatomist] William Hunter was an influential figure in the study of human anatomy in the eighteenth century.[10]

Dissection was widely viewed as a further insult after death, and so, unsurprisingly, examples abound in which the gaze of the anatomist is not only curious, but lecherous, even insatiable. Two of Hogarth's prints are of great relevance here: plate three from *Marriage a la Mode* (1745) and 'The Reward of Cruelty' from *The Four Stages of Cruelty* (1751). The plate from *Marriage a la Mode* (Fig. 7.1) depicts the husband in the house of a quack, presumably to seek treatment for the venereal disease(s) he has contracted extra-maritally. In typical Hogarth fashion, various objects clutter the frame, including a narwhal's horn, a printing press, shelves of jars, bones, hats, bricks, and a miniature gallows. In a case behind the young man, a cadaver

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[8]Christine Quigley, *The Corpse: A History* (Jefferson, McFarland & Company, Inc., 1996), p. 4.

[9]Unfortunately, Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* lies just outside the temporal scope of this paper (1747–1748), but it is brimming with necro-fantasies. Jolene Zigarovich performs a thorough analysis of necrophilic urges on both Clarissa and Lovelace's parts in her article 'Courting Death: Necrophilia in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*', *Studies in the Novel*, 32, no. 2 (2000) 111–27.

[10]Ruth Richardson also writes: 'The Act directed that a murderer should be sentenced immediately upon conviction, execution should follow within a maximum of two days and the body should immediately be conveyed to the surgeons' premises for dissection…The Act also decreed that the rescue, or attempted rescue, of a corpse from surgeons' custody would thenceforward be punishable with transportation'. Ruth Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute* (London, Penguin, 1988), pp. 36–7.

Fig. 7.1. William Hogarth, *Marriage a la Mode*, Plate III (1745)

stands, eyes partially closed while a skeleton leans close to its ear, one hand visibly hovering at the cadaver's genitals. Certainly these figures are meant to be a commentary on the potential deadliness of sexual relationships, and Hogarth's choice to place them in the doctor's house is an indication of the unreliable medical treatments available for sexually transmitted diseases, as well as the morbid nature of the doctor who would place such objects – clear failures of medicine – on display, for his viewing pleasure. Though the cabinet door stands open and the young nobleman's walking stick is held jauntily over his shoulder, drawing the viewer's eye directly into the cabinet, the fact that one door remains closed may indicate that only half the scene is visible; it is conceivable that the unseen half is even more 'inappropriate' than the skeleton and cadaver engaged in erotic flirtation. This macabre eroticism is unseen by the figures in the frame of the print, and as such, the viewer of the print provides the only invading gaze, implicating him or her in the necro-gaze. Viewers of Hogarth's print catch a glimpse of two bodies aesthetically positioned to excite curiosity and pleasure, thereby taking a knowing position in relation to the young man seeking treatment.

In 'The Reward of Cruelty', (Fig. 1.6) the body of criminal Tom Nero is dissected in an operating theatre full of doctors after having been cut from the gallows; the noose is still visible around his neck. In this case, a male corpse undergoes a feminizing rape-like humiliation at the hands of medical men;

the engraving depicts five penetrations. A hook has been screwed into Nero's skull to hold it still, his eye socket is gouged with a knife, the overseeing lecturer probes his abdominal incision with indifference, a surgeon's fingers probe Nero's opened chest cavity and finally another surgeon prepares to cut open his foot. The cadaver's mouth is open, almost as if it were screaming.[11] The surrounding doctors are engaged in various tasks – reading books, talking, sleeping.[12] Under the picture, we read:

> Torn from the Root, that wicked Tongue,
> Which daily swore and curst!
> Those eyeballs from their sockets wrung,
> That glow'd with lawless lust!
> His Heart expos'd to prying Eyes,
> To pity has no Claim:
> But, dreadful from his Bones shall rise,
> His Monument of shame.

Nero's skeleton will grace the anatomical theatre, as do the skeletons of two well-known criminals presiding over the scene. 'The Reward of Cruelty'

[11]Jonathan Sawday explores what he calls the 'culture of dissection' of the early modern period. He claims, '…the cultural history of the body suggests that a body which escapes its boundary…by allowing its tokens of interiority to emerge on the surface – tends to be constructed within widely different forms of representation as female, whatever the biological sex of the subject in question'. Additionally, it is important to keep in mind during this period that while all corpses were not female (indeed females were rare), all surgeons were male. Hogarth's engraving is uncanny in its scathing recasting of Vesalius's famous frontispiece to *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543). See Sawday for a very close reading of the image. While Hogarth's image is one of cruelty, horror and humiliation, Vesalius's finds transcendence in the opened womb at the centre of the theatre, 'Vesalius seems aware of us…it is for us…that he peels back the surface tissue of the female cadaver's abdomen, teasingly hinting at what the pages of his work will reveal in more and more detail'. While the female corpse at the center of Vesalius's work gazes directly at him, Tom Nero seems to scream in agony. *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, then, invites us into a realm of sequential revelation, while Hogarth's series is one of sequential rape. Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (New York, Routledge, 1995), pp. 9, 66–76.
[12]Anthea Callen explores the intersection of artistic and medical gazing, though her focus is largely on male bodies, homosexual desire and homosocial bonding as depicted in largely French paintings: 'The medical gaze…belongs within the hierarchal structures and spaces of professional life: a gaze inviting conformity, and consensus, and affirming the bonds of the group' (p. 676). She does however, consider how women's bodies fit into this paradigm as well: 'The context for this study is the more overt contemporary male preoccupation with female sexuality and femininity' (p. 672). See 'Doubles and Desire: Anatomies of Masculinity in the Later Nineteenth Century,' *Art History*, Vol. 26, No. 5 (2003), pp. 669–99.

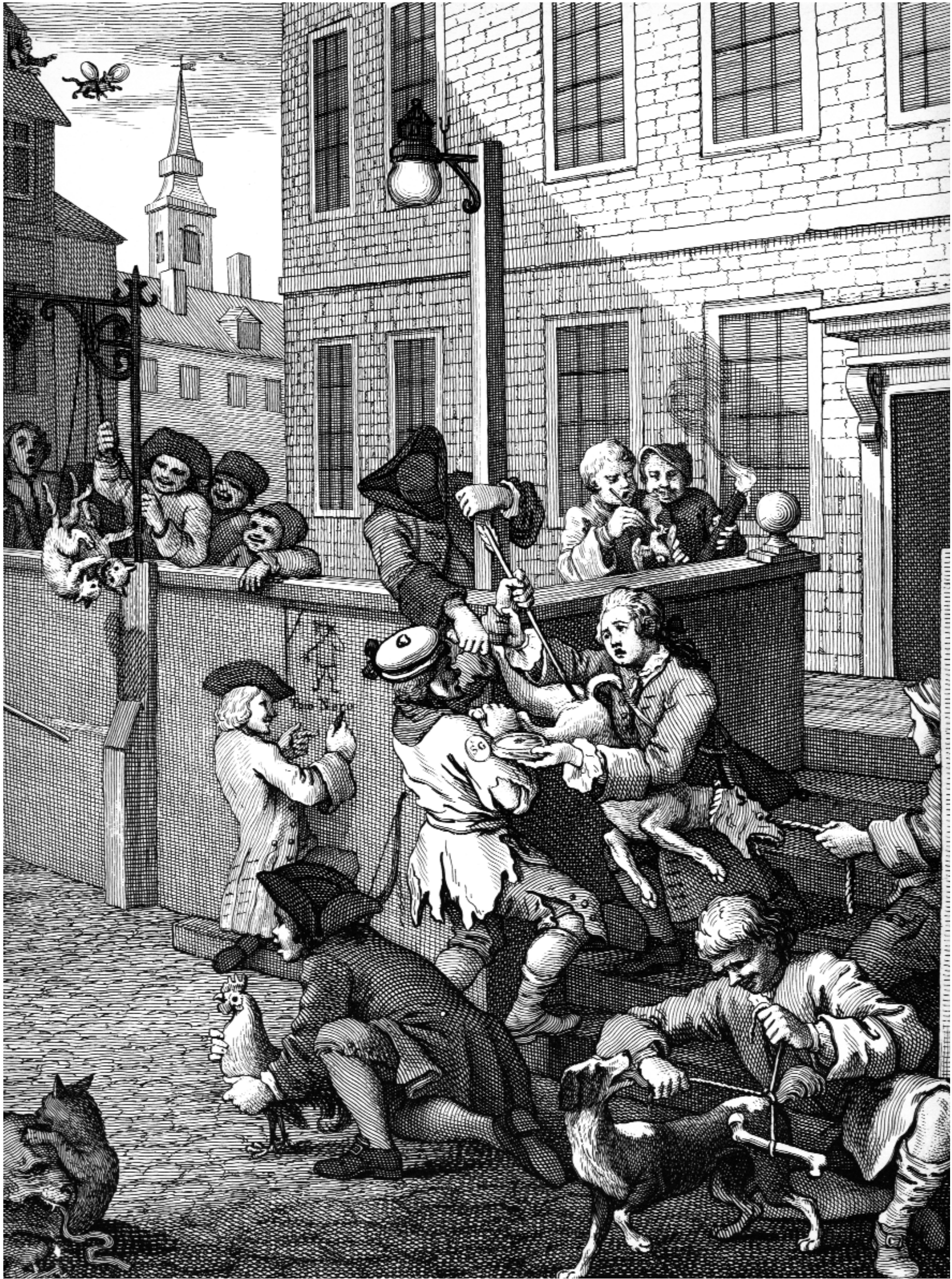

Fig. 7.2. Hogarth, William, 'The First Stage of Cruelty', *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, Plate I (1751)

depicts the cruel and greedy chaos of the masculinized medical gaze of men who disassemble human bodies more for sport than for any instructive reason. Their socially instructive lustful gaze is just another version of Nero's 'lawless lust' mentioned in the above verse. The prints preceding 'The First Stage of Cruelty' features men or boys viciously penetrating animals' genitals with objects (Fig. 7.2). Though plate III, entitled 'Cruelty in Perfection' does not feature such penetration at its enacted moment, it features the supine and mutilated body of one of Nero's female partners in crime (Fig. 7.3). In the

CRUELTY IN PERFECTION.

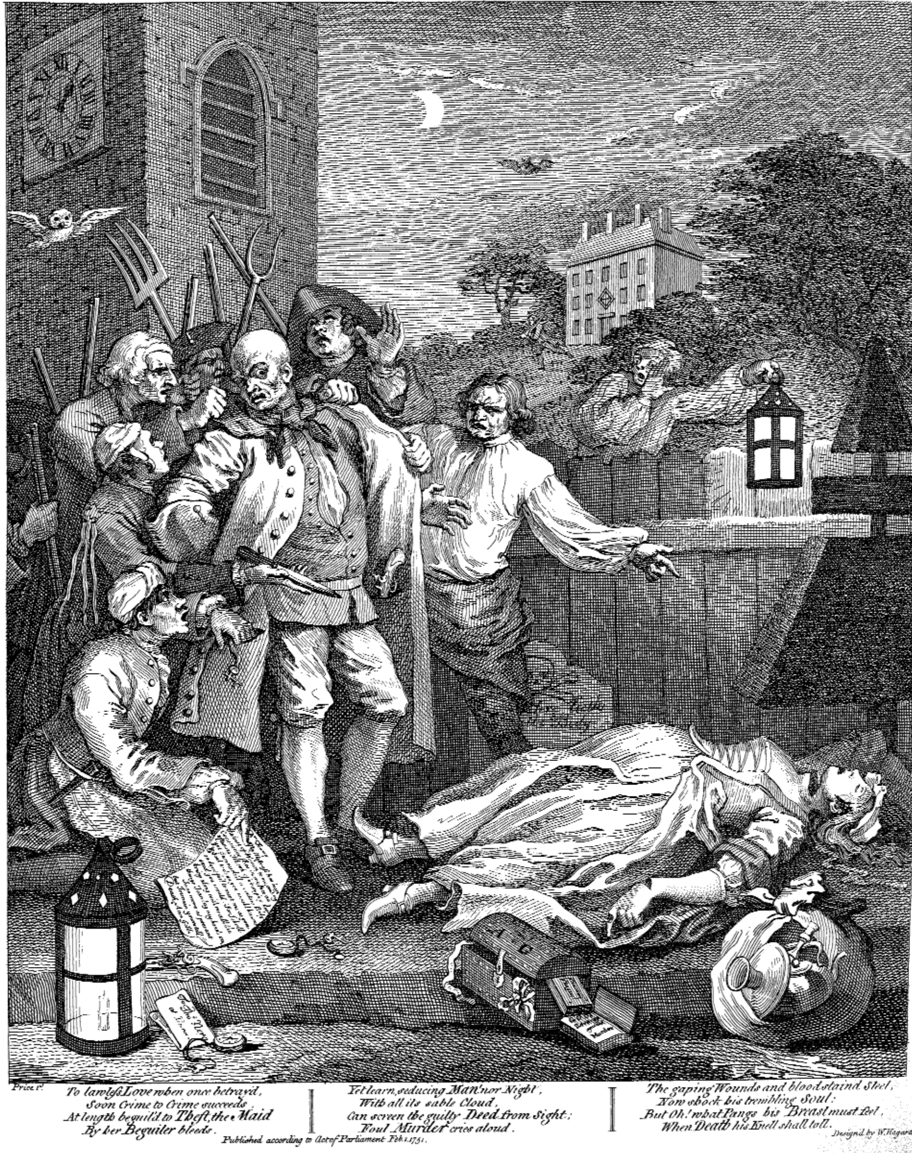

Fig. 7.3. William Hogarth, 'Cruelty in Perfection', *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, Plate III (1751)

image, a knife aligned with Nero's crotch angles menacingly towards the dead woman's genitals. 'The Reward of Cruelty' further portrays aberrant sexual penetration in the form of the anatomy theatre. Proper procedure, careful preparation and methodical exploration are dissipated in this image. The pot of boiling skulls and bones carries ominous overtones of cannibalism. The similarity between cannibalistic ritual sacrifice and medical anatomization of criminal corpses is clear. This image takes ocular consumption one step further to oral ingestion; both forms of consuming involve power, pleasure, control, excitement and an aberrant appetite.

A different form of the necro-gaze emerges when we examine narratives of women convicted of crimes and sentenced to hang. Whereas Nero's humiliation is one laden with explicit brutality, descriptions of Mary Blandy and Eliza Fenning brim with fashionable, feminine details that turn their final moments into dramatic narratives of sentiment.[13] Blandy and Fenning are characterized by their modesty, thrown into stark relief by their crimes. There is an aesthetics of suffering and death; the dying women emerge as beautiful, tragic and unable to protect themselves from being consumed and claimed by those watching. At the same time, they seem seduced by what will be their final performance. The crowd, the scaffold, the executioner provide a final moment of adoration punctuated by the immodesty of death.

Research on the history of hanging and public execution abounds. In *The Hanging Tree,* V.A.C. Gatrell alludes to how women sentenced to hang could awaken erotic feelings: 'To the male mind regressing freely into unchecked association, the bucking female body as it hanged could elicit obscene fantasies.'[14] The spectacle of the wronged woman pleading for her life or of the murderess getting her just desserts could elicit pleasure in the spectator, although responses, of course, were various. In some cases crowds protested the execution, but hanging days were also festival days. At a time when governing institutions were displaying torture and death in order to deter crime, people of all classes, ages and genders were turning out in large numbers to enjoy themselves at public hangings. Women and children were discouraged from attending public executions, but many went regardless. The public execution was consumed ardently by the public. Businesses closed down; people danced and sang and drank. The spectacle obscured the reality of execution.[15] But what would the crowd have been faced with?

[13]Blandy was executed in 1752, Fenning in 1815, which interrupts the chronological continuity of my argument. However, since they are my only examples of the necro-gaze and hanged women, I have kept their stories together for the sake of compressed analysis.
[14]V.A.C. Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People 1770–1868* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 264.
[15]*Ibid.*, p. 32.

Those about to die often wore fabulous clothes. Seeing women approach the scaffold dressed in stunning gowns, with their cheeks rouged, set the stage for the hanged woman to be consumed as a gendered, erotic spectacle. Additionally, the public hanging of a woman was a rare treat.[16] Mixed messages were transmitted: women must be protected; women must be punished. Despite this, many textual representations present us with descriptions of women who were enjoyable to watch as they went to the gallows.

Execution by hanging in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was not a speedy process: 'there was no nice calculation of body weights and lengths of drop in those days; few died cleanly. Kicking their legs, many choked over minutes.'[17] The body in pain is a body that betrays itself; torture often brings about confession. In this case, the torture is final, but in the moment of dying, the female body betrays itself. The private becomes public; legs thrash spasmodically, sounds gurgle from a constricted throat, hands strain against silk ribbons, the body expels blood, faeces, urine; the body's own weight becomes its enemy. Biology becomes a locus for the ideology of power, and at the same time, the 'proper' female body betrays itself in unladylike mannerisms. Elaine Scarry claims, 'as physical pain destroys the mental content and language of the person in pain, so it also tends to appropriate and destroy the conceptualization abilities and language of persons who only observe the pain'.[18] Similarly, the observer of the hanged woman does not articulate her pain – he cannot, really. Rather,

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[16]'Of the 1,232 people hanged at Tyburn in 1703–1772, only 92 were women; and of the 59 people executed in London in 1827–1830, only four were women, all murderesses'. Another source offers that 'of the bodies received at the Royal College of Surgeons between 1800 and 1832, only seven were female…Five of these left the College in relatively pristine condition, having received only the 'proper' dissection [sternum opened]. All but one of the five made valuable gifts, for these women were young and healthy when put to death, and there was much to learn on such subjects for dissection at a time when women were viewed, anatomically speaking, as being defined by their organs of generation'. *Ibid.*, p. 8 and Helen MacDonald, *Human Remains: Dissection and Its Histories* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 19–20.

[17]*Ibid.*, p. 7.

[18]While Scarry's claims are not specific to the gendered body in pain, it is helpful to make the distinction between the body in pain and the observer or narrator, who rather than lengthily describe the spasmodic body, chooses to beautify the process using the tropes of femininity. Terri Kapsalis' identification of gynecological examinations as sites of gendered performance and power differentials is also helpful in investigating the spectacle of the female body in a contemporary context. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 279. Terri Kapsalis, *Public Privates: Performing Gynecology from Both Ends of the Speculum* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1997).

he articulates her body in familiarly gendered terms. Even in torture, the female body retains its ample bosom, glowing hair and trim waistline. The effects of the properly modest female body, the body resisting sexual suggestion, colliding with the immodest eroticism of death at the hands of another is best depicted by Mary Blandy's execution.

Blandy was the well-educated daughter of a Henley-Upon-Thames attorney. She was sentenced to be hanged in 1752 for the murder of her father.[19] Blandy claimed that Captain William Cranstoun, her suitor at the time, had told her that he would be able to secure her father's favour and marry her if she placed a love philtre in her father's food. The philtre was actually arsenic, and when Mary's father became violently ill, she realized what she had done. She begged for his forgiveness, which he granted. Mary pleaded not guilty to the crime, claiming that she did not intentionally poison her father. Cranstoun fled the country, and although he was briefly pursued by authorities, he was never brought to justice. The details of this case, however, are less important than the descriptions of Blandy's execution. She is most notably remembered for asking her executioners not to hang her too high for the sake of decency. This final request was granted, though some sources show a discrepancy in what followed her hanging. Several sources, including this one, relate that she was placed in a hearse and taken to be buried, but two sources tell a different story. According to these, arrangements for a hearse had not been made, and after Blandy begged to be hanged decently, she was cut down and 'carried through the crowd upon the shoulders of one of the Sheriff's men in the most beastly manner, with her legs exposed very indecently for several hundred yards'.[20] The scene is also described in *The Newgate Calendars:*

> The night before her death she spent in devotion; and at 9 in the morning of the 6th of April, 1752, she left her apartment being dressed in a black bombasin, and having her arms bound with black ribands. The clergyman attended her to the place of execution with the utmost solemnity of deportment; and, when there, acknowledged her fault in administering the powders to her father…Having ascended some steps of the ladder, she said, 'Gentleman, don't hang me high for the sake of decency.' Being desired to go something higher, she turned about and expressed her apprehensions that she should fall. The rope being put around her neck she

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[19]This is the year of the ordinance that declared anyone hanged for murder should be taken to the surgeon afterward. See footnote 12.

[20]*A Genuine and Impartial Account of the Life of Miss M. Blandy* (1752) qtd. in William Roughead, *The Trial of Mary Blandy* (London, William Hodge and Co., 1914), p. 189.

> pulled her handkerchief over her face, and was turned off on holding out a book of devotions which she had been reading.[21]

According to this text, Blandy was placed in a hearse after being cut down. Other accounts describe her sighing and gently brushing aside the rope from her face.[22]

Blandy's request not to be hanged too high reveals that she was aware of her potential as an erotic, or at least indecent, spectacle. Her preoccupation with her modesty at the moment of her death almost draws more attention to her sexuality. Hanged high or not, Blandy's legs still would have thrashed in her death throes.

The Newgate Calendar edition of 1828 similarly describes Elizabeth Fenning on her way to the gallows:

> On the fatal morning, the 26th of July, 1815, she slept till four 'o' clock, when she arose after carefully washing herself, and spending some time in prayer, she dressed herself in a white muslin gown and cap. About eight 'o' clock she walked steadily to the spot where criminals are bound; and whilst the executioner tied her hands – even while he wound the halter round her waist – she stood erect and unmoved with astonishing fortitude.[23]

Gatrell relates a similar account of Fenning:

> Eliza appeared at the Debtor's door with two men to be hanged alongside her. Of the men we hear nothing in the reports, except that one of them wished her well and told her they should all three soon be happy. She was the figure people saw. She came out with the hangman's rope around her waist. She was dressed in a white muslin worked gown, and a

[21]*The Newgate Calendar or Malefactor's Bloody Register* (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1932), p. 495.

[22]Louis Blake Duff, *The County Kerchief* (Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1949) and Justin Atholl, *Shadow of the Gallows* (London, John Long, 1954) both qtd. in Howard Engel, *Lord High Executioner* (Buffalo, Firefly Books, 1996), pp. 214–15. See also *An Authentick Narrative of that most Horrid Parracide Committed in the Body of Mr. Blandy of Henley Upon Thames by his own Daughter Wherein Certain Material Circumstances preceding that inhuman affair, and Miss Blandy's Unparallel'd Behavior immediately after she poison'd her father, to the Time of her commitment to Oxford gaol is amply set forth* (New York, M. Cooper, n.d.).

[23]A. Knapp, *The Newgate Calendar*s (London, J. Robins and Co., 1828), p. 183.

> worked muslin cap, bound with white satin riband; she wore a white riband round her waist and pale lilac boots laced in front.[24]

All of the descriptions mention ribbons – black ones that bind Blandy's hands and the various ways that Fenning is bound – echoing not only the image of the hangman's rope that will strangulate her, but creating the image of a bound woman helpless while approaching her demise with dignity. Descriptions of the ribbons and dresses project femininity, death, restriction, confinement, and the shape of the body, and draw attention to the erotic nature of her final moment and the asphyxiating moment that follows; death agonies are mediated by familiar signifiers of feminine pleasure and consumption. Interestingly, Fenning's lilac boots stand in stark contrast to Blandy's modest request. Such boots set against the sea of her white clothing would have only drawn attention to her legs as she dropped and swang. Cruikshank's engraving of Fenning is a portrait of her in jail, 'the fullness of her breasts spectacularly emphasized' (Fig. 7.4).[25] Thus, in these cases of hanging women, death and fashion are strangely intermingled. The well-dressed woman is inscribed as feminine, modest, beautiful and about to be violated by the circumstances of her death, but seduced by the spectacle, she comes prepared to be 'the figure people saw'. The spectator observes a woman with all her visual and behavioural trappings, ravished.

Thomas Rowlandson's sketch *The Dissection* (1780) more explicitly satirizes doctors at executions as lecherous. It features doctors clustered around the bodies of several executed criminals. A few anatomists ogle and fondle the leg of a dissected and naked female corpse, offering commentary on a specifically masculine privilege that unites sexual liberty and death.[26] The Hogarth and Rowlandson sketches do not present a moment of necrophilic seduction, as Browning's poem, and as the Blandy and Fenning narratives did, but as satire they add an important element to this discourse. Prints satirizing the necro-gaze demonstrate a critical cultural awareness of the erotics bound up with medicalized-looking. Dissections, chloroform and anatomy lessons were all developments lauded as benefits to mankind, but the prints testify to the ideological ramifications being perpetuated as such

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[24]Gatrell, p. 355 paraphrasing from J. Watkins and W. Hone, *The important results of an elaborate investigation into the mysterious case of Elizabeth Fenning…*(1815), pp. 90–1 whose accounts are drawn from the *Examiner*, 16 April, 30 July, 13, 20, 22 Aug., 3, 18 Sept., 1, 15, 22 Oct., 5 Nov. 1815.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 356. William Hone, *Elizabeth Fenning, Executed 26th July 1815, on a charge of Poisoning the Family of Mr. Turner, taken from the Life in Newgate* (London, Fleet Street, 1815).

[26]Gatrell, p. 265.

Fig. 7.4. I.R. Cruikshank, *The Case of Elizabeth Fenning* (1815). With kind permission from the British Library

medical advances were heralded. Dissecting criminals, anticipating the execution of a woman, posing corpses in coitus: such representations attest to the pleasure in conquering and manipulating, as well as a profound arrogance accompanying the necro-gaze.

Doctors increasingly faced two problems as a result of the fact that bodies of executed murderers were the only legal ones available for medical dissection. Firstly, dissection was associated with criminal justice, and therefore it was widely viewed as punishment; secondly, with the increase in medical schools and professionals into the early nineteenth century, demand well-exceeded supply.[27] Public distaste for dissection was common, but at the same time, a proliferation of literature on the topic, delineating the anxieties, while reproducing scenes (whether realistic or imagined), indicates a curious appetite for dissection and stories about unscrupulous doctors. So what is the relationship between desire and disgust? Corpses, death, split body cavities are abject. They provide us with a glimpse of things violating 'natural' orders of seen and unseen, order and chaos. The body is fundamentally familiar and, when killed or opened, unfamiliar.[28] Abjection is a realm between two territories, a frontier of experience that is both appealing in its exoticism and troubling in its violations. The experience is one of transcendence and bodily grounding; the viewer can see beyond himself and simultaneously, safely, into himself.[29] Insistent masculine medical gazes, the greedy needs of the anatomical eye, were indeed sexualized, as indicated by the following from a pamphlet dated 1825:

> …who even among the practitioners of medicine, does not shudder at the mere contemplation that the remains of all which was dear to him, of a beloved parent, wife, sister or daughter, may be exposed to the rude gaze and perhaps to the INDECENT JESTS of unfeeling men, and afterwards be mutilated and dismembered in the presence of hundreds of spectators.[30]

The structure of the anatomy theatre, a subject of much artistic portrayal, including Hogarth's parody, introduces an element of performance to dissection. The body was subject not only to the gaze of the surgeon acting upon it but to the gazes of potentially a hundred men gathered to observe

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[27]Tim Marshall, *Murdering to Dissect: Grave Robbing,* Frankenstein, *and the Anatomy Literature* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 29.

[28]Barbara Creed, 'Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection,' in Barry Keith Grant (ed.), *Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1996), pp. 35–65.

[29]Sawday, pp. 106, 115, 160. On the bodily sublime as empowering, gendered, transcendent and uncanny, see also Elana Gomel, *BloodScripts: Writing the Violent Subject* (Columbus, The Ohio State University Press, 2003) and Deana Petherbridge and Ludmilla Jordanova, *The Quick and the Dead: Artists and Anatomy* (University of California Press, 1997), p. 100.

[30]A. Millard, *An Account of the Circumstances attending to the Imprisonment and Death of the late William Millard* (London, 1825), qtd. in Richardson, p. 95.

the dissection. The anatomist, as a male, is institutionally sanctioned to see and touch the body in more intimate ways than the individual will in his or her lifetime. The anatomist possesses educated knowledge, the means to open the body, sort through its contents and form some kind of 'socially beneficial' conclusion. The anatomist, even by virtue of his position of standing over the supine corpse, possesses privilege and power to act upon the body, to take it apart.

Misdirection of medicalized training leads us now to a most curious example of the necro-gaze found in the travel narratives of Barthelemy Faujas de Saint-Fond (1799). Amongst his many travels, he tells of his encounter with the personal cabinet of anatomist John Sheldon that contained a great variety of curious preparations.

> ...nothing in this collection interested me so much as a kind of mummy, which was very remarkable in two respects; first on account of the subject itself, of which I shall soon speak; secondly, with relation to the manner of the preparation, and the particular care with which it had been made. It occupied a distinguished place in the chamber where this anatomist usually slept; and he was particularly fond of his work.[31]

Faujas' word choice 'mummy' does not prepare us for the scene that follows in Sheldon's chamber:

> I was introduced into a very handsome bed-room; a mahogany table of an oblong form, stood in the midst of it, facing the bed.
>
> The top of the table opened by a groove, and under a glass-frame I saw the body of a young woman, of nineteen or twenty, entirely naked. She had fine brown hair, and lay extended as on a bed.
>
> The glass was lifted up, and Sheldon made me admire the flexibility of the arms, a kind of elasticity in the bosom, and even in the cheeks, and the perfect preservation of the other parts of the body. Even the skin partly retained its color, though exposed to the air.[32]

The scene is compelling for a number of reasons. First, we know that Sheldon keeps this young woman naked and in his bedroom. Even more shocking is Sheldon's encouragement, or his demand rather, for Faujas to physically lay hands on her arms, her bosom and 'the other parts of the body.' The ordering of this list of specific and generalized parts and the narrator's

[31]Barthelemy Faujas de Saint-Fond, *Travels in England, Scotland and the Hebrides; undertaken for the purpose of examining the state of the arts, the sciences, natural history and manners in Great Britain* (London, J. Ridgway, 1799), Vol. 1, p. 43.
[32]*Ibid.*, p. 44.

implied reluctance points to, not simply eroticized intimacy, but the possibility of sexual intimacy as well (even if the speaker does seem to guiltily elide the actual encounter). Faujas' narrative needs to be considered as a picture of what men with sufficient intellectual, monetary and educational means could have access to for their personal pleasures.[33] After revealing to Faujas his preparations for preserving such an elegant specimen, Sheldon moves to end the display:

> A sentiment of curiosity made me ask Sheldon at the moment when he was closing up the table, who this young woman was, whose remains he had preserved with so much care. He replied frankly, and without hesitation, 'It is a mistress whom I tenderly loved. I paid every attention to her during a long sickness and a short time before her death, she requested that I should make a mummy of her body, and keep her beside me – I have kept my word to her.'
>
> I was glad that Sheldon had not informed me of this circumstance sooner, for I confess I could not have avoided experiencing a disagreeable feeling at seeing a lover coolly describe the anatomical operations which he had made on the object of his most tender affection; on a charming young woman whom he had lost, and whose disfigured image could only excite him in the most painful recollections.[34]

What horrifies Faujas more than anything is that the anatomist's practice was executed in an emotional way rather than with the desired clinical detachment that would ensure that anatomists were impervious to viewing their objects of dissection, preparation, or here, embalming as sexual objects. In addition, the questionable behaviour of a man is displaced onto a woman – here, the mistress' request to be mummified – in an attempt to screen Sheldon's debasing pursuit of pleasure. The mistress's request, whether real or fabricated, deflects responsibility away from Sheldon. Rather than indicating what his education has permitted him to bring to reality via the necro-gaze, he is cast as a man who compassionately follows the final wishes of his mistress, protecting and preserving her in comfort and care.

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[33]Peter Wagner mentions in passing leather dolls lined with sponge: 'we can assume that eighteenth-century males with sufficient financial means could order life-size dolls for their private amusement'. Peter Wagner, 'The Discourse on Sex – or Sex as Discourse: eighteenth century medical and paramedical erotica' in G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (eds), *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 54. See also Jordanova's chapter on wax anatomical dolls in *Sexual Visions*, esp. p. 45 and Kapsalis' chapter 'Cadavers, Dolls and Prostitutes: Medical Pedagogy and the Pelvic Rehearsal'.
[34]Faujas, p. 46.

Scientific, civilized man ideally looked, reduced, recorded and reasoned; he demystified.[35] William Hunter is famous for his statement that doctors must adopt a 'necessary inhumanity'. Clinical distance from the corpse is vital for the embalmer or student of medicine to emerge emotionally unscathed, or at least bolstered, from the first several attempts at dissection.[36] Thus, one would expect detached, clinical language in descriptions of the process. In reading Sir Charles Bell's textbook *A System of Dissections Explaining the Human Body with the Manner of Displaying the Parts…*(1809), however, we encounter language that we do not expect to find in medical textbooks; dissection approaches the status of mystical.[37] Bell's goal is to create a reference work to regulate the process of dissection and the preparation of specimens.[38] He hopes to maximize the visibility and efficiency of dissection in order to obtain the most helpful knowledge:

> In no department of science is attention to these two parts of study more indispensable, than in Anatomy; for while the details are intricate, they are often individually of the most serious importance to the life of man; and the general result, the economy of the human body, considered as a whole is highly curious and interesting.[39]

We notice nothing remarkable about this language – nothing erotic or violent. We do notice, however, that Bell claims the body is 'highly curious'; it sparks a curiosity in the medical student. Such curiosity is screened behind the desire to accumulate knowledge for the betterment of human medicine and

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[35]Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: The Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 17 and Jordanova, *Sexual Visions*, pp. 57–9.
[36]Quigley, p. 19 and D. Gareth Jones, *Speaking for the Dead: Cadavers in Biology and Medicine* (Dartmouth, Ashgate, 2000), p. 88.
[37]Sir Charles Bell *A System of Dissections Explaining the anatomy of the human body with the manner of displaying the parts distinguishing the natural from the diseased appearances and pointing out to the student the objects more worthy of attention during a course of dissection* (London, Leicester Square, 1809).
[38]Elsewhere, Bell more explicitly discusses the artistic value of corpses. He states: 'But it is only while anatomy is studied improperly, that it can excite disgust; when connected with the criticism of art, it affords very delightful subjects of investigation' and 'Instead of mechanical rules for drawing the face, I would recommend to the young painter to have the skull much in his hands, to observe the bearing of certain points, the ridge of the orbit, the prominence of the cheekbone, the angle of the jaw, as he turns it, and to draw from it in every possible variety of position'. The text contains, amongst other images, piles of skulls depicting various stages of human development; flayed human heads, dog's heads and horse's heads. Charles Bell, *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression in Painting* (London, Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1806), pp. 19, 47.
[39]Bell, p. xii.

welfare. It inspires the medical gaze and systematic medical penetration – a colonizing venture into new territory to catalogue and thus, master it. The curious impulse, combined with the privilege of the surgeon, results in a body made vulnerable, a body co-opted by masculine imperatives of aggression, invasion and penetration.[40] Bell's desires clearly exceeded the medical:

> He also prepared dissections for display either by preserving them or by casting them in wax. In addition to illustrating his own books, Charles was a collector of anatomical specimens, a museum keeper and a writer on anatomy and painting…As a surgeon who was active in teaching and in hospital work and as an anatomist, his skills were manual ones. And, as a museum owner, he was interested in making objects ready for visual display. His craft skills were those primarily associated with touching and looking.[41]

He stands as an excellent example of the intertwining of medical gazing and artistic gazing, though Bell was never accepted into the Royal Academy. Jordanova suggests that 'it is possible [members of the Royal Academy] feared that the hard masculine images of scientific and medical pursuits many of them were actively fostering would be jeopardized by an intimate association with the arts'.[42] While the preface of *A System of Dissections…* does not testify to the eroticization of corpses, subsequent chapters of it do, especially a chapter in which he details various methods for preserving human specimens for display:

> The most beautiful preparation of bone is the simple section of the cartilage, or apophysis, in young subjects, where the injection has run minutely, and while the nucleus of bone is still small and red with injection. This nucleus is seen lying in the middle of the cartilage, with the vessels crowding from the surface towards the centre, and terminating in the bone; or perhaps only a small and delicate artery is seen pushing into the centre of the cartilage, and terminating in a point the beginning of a future bone. The cartilages in this state, when cut in thin slices and suspended in spirits of wine, are beautiful…such preparations may be

[40]Barbara M. Benedict, *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 4 and Sawday, pp. 23–7.
[41]Ludmilla Jordanova, 'The Representation of the Human Body: Art and Medicine in the Work of Charles Bell' in Brian Allen (ed.), *Towards a Modern Art World* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995), p. 81.
[42]*Ibid.*, p. 88.

> infinitely varied, forming the most beautiful examples of the changes going on, not only in the bones, but by analogy, in the whole body.[43]

In reading Bell's description, one is so struck by his images of thin slices of cartilages floating in wine that one may lose sight of the fact that he is instructing young men in the literal disassembly of young human bodies. Dissection and preparation were processes that involved not only the skill of steady and precise hands but also an eye to intimately knowing the texture, colour, firmness and shapes of every square inch of the body. The surgeon's eye was the counterpart of the artist's eye; there is, in other words, an aesthetics to anatomization.[44] Bell's interaction with corpses is *more* intimate than the speaker in Browning's poem. Primarily, he is in a privileged position that gives him access to unexplored places of the body. Every bit of cavity is virgin territory. His concern with preparing perfect, pleasing and beautiful specimens is often repeated in this section of the work:

> There are many parts of the body which it is impossible to keep for any time in their original beauty, and these the most delicate and interesting; as the organs of the senses, and all the minute nervous parts, the villi of the intestines, the comparative anatomy of insects, the incumbated egg, &c. The ready demonstration of such delicate parts in the fresh subject is the truest test of the abilities of the practical anatomist; for there is more delicacy and nicety required in exposing these parts and more real benefit to be derived from it.[45]

We must keep in mind that such preparations were made for display and instruction. Bell makes clear, however, that the gazes meant for these bits of bodies are gazes with aesthetic standards.[46] The more beautifully preserved the specimen, the more the organs, nerves, etc. attest to the skill and mastery of their procurer. Such specimens, collected by the careful gaze and prodding knife, enable pleasurable violence in the relationships of curiosity, gazing and appropriating. Bell also lists tips for harvesting the most promising specimens – choose a youthful corpse, heat the body, inject care-

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[43]Bell, p. xxvii.

[44]See Richardson, footnote 10.

[45]Bell, p. xxxi.

[46]Thomas Pole also lauds the value of good specimens, 'The design of this work it still further to assist his studies by enabling him to make such preparations of the human body, when dissecting, as will hereafter made useful ornaments to his cabinet'. Thomas Pole, *The Anatomical Instructor*… (London, Couchman and Fry, 1790), p. xiii.

fully, massage injections gently to ensure proper penetration – all of which promote optimum receptivity on the corpse's part. Thomas Pole adds that 'great care should be taken to have everything in readiness, as the want of some one trifling thing will, now and then, frustrate the whole process, and, perhaps, ruin a valuable preparation.' The medical man and his specimen must work in harmony for preparations to be successful; time and setting is of the essence.[47] Moreover, the repetition of the words 'beauty' and 'beautiful' throughout establishes that the body and its parts connote femininity. Thus, the anatomist 'courts' the feminine specimen in ways that clearly parallel erotic seduction, to the ends of extracting what he needs for his personal pleasure and professional credit.

Bell's instructions for performing dissections resonate with language that is more than instructively descriptive. He writes of abdominal dissections:

> The dissection of the abdominal muscles is often the first a student sees; and if it be carefully done, he is astonished to find the fleshy mass of the body separated into so many distinct parts, and is pleased with the appearance of the muscles exposed in all their beautiful variety of shapes and colours, the smoothness of their surface, and their silvery expanded tendons.[48]

Bell's preoccupation with beauty, with 'ideal specimens' and 'silvery tendons' reinforces several important ideas about the relationship between gender and the necro-gaze. Firstly, as we saw in Browning's poem, Bell implies that the body is the initiating force. The body invites the inquisitive penetration of the practical anatomist. Secondly, though Bell only speaks of gendered distinctions when he gives instructions for the dissection of sexual organs, the body is presented as feminine because it is made to be laid open, harvested and placed on display. Finally, Bell's descriptions ooze with pleasure and excitement in manipulating and disassembling the body – placing any body that comes to him in a feminized and pleasure-giving position. It does not appear from his texts that Bell's necro-gaze is solely directed at women, rather the process of specimen preparation, as one of selection then seduction, renders those specimens feminine as it simultaneously enhances the masculine position of Bell.

The London Dissector (1810) also contains instructions on how to prepare aesthetically pleasing examples in an array of colours. Once removed from

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[47]*Ibid.*, p. 7.
[48]*Ibid.*, p. 39.

the body, parts should be soaked in wine, exposed to the sun and 'frequently looked at'.[49] Details for preserving a foetus are as follows:

1) The superior extremity is to show its bones, the progress of ossification and the cartilage to be formed into bone,
2) The lower extremity to expose the same circumstance,
3) The spine which forms a beautiful preparation,
4) The pelvis, not less elegant.[50]

Preparations of yellow and red are recommended most highly for the pleasing appearance. Once the foetus has been turpentined, one should 'hang it in a glass bell with a hook at its top'.[51] Soaking in spirits, injecting with beeswax and vermillion, hanging to dry in a bell, all of these procedures – called an 'art' in the title – detail a process delicate and tactile, full of almost culinary ingredients. The language of preservation demands first good specimens – for penises, it is recommended the larger the better, while with uteruses, it is cautioned that they only successfully preserve 1/10th of the time – but also with patience, dexterity and an eye for colour.[52] An anatomist is instructed to hold his scalpel like a pen or pencil.[53] The specimen will not only provide aesthetic instruction, it will reflect on its creator's talent in wielding that scalpel. The preserved foetus, uterus, penis, circulatory system is a lasting reminder of the pleasure taken from the anatomized body, reproducing the necro-gaze for potentially centuries to follow.

Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818) provides an additional literary example of a male scientific gaze, labouring in darkness, researching in death to bring forth a progeny from his laboratory. Shelley's novel draws on cultural anxieties about medicine and doctors who seek inspiration from the dead without an eye to the consequences. Victor Frankenstein's necro-gazing provides him with a spiritual, aesthetic epiphany. After spending many days and nights lying among corpses, he claims:

> I beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. I paused,

[49] Robert Hooper, *The London Dissector on the System of Dissection Practiced in the Hospitals and Lecture Rooms of the Metropolis…with an Appendix containing the Ruyschian Art and Method of Making Preparations to Exhibit the Structure of the Human Body* (Philadelphia, A. Finley & W.H. Hopkins, Ferrand, Mallory & Co., 1810), p. 304.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 314.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 313.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 316.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

> examining and analyzing all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life until from the midst of this darkness a sudden light broke in upon me – a light so brilliant and wondrous, yet so simple, that while I became dizzy with the immensity of the prospect, which it illustrated, I was surprised that among so many men of genius who had directed their inquiries towards the same science, that I alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret.[54]

Necro-gazing grants Victor the ability to reanimate flesh. His mind and his laboratory become the site of sexual union. His masculinity grants him access to education, to knowledge, to sanctioned necro-gazing. Eventually, from this position, he obtains knowledge allowing him to transcend the dependence on mother and womb. Victor's privilege allows him to conflate engaging with the dead, with his intellect, with his position as gazer, knower and cutter to make life. Victor affirms his masculinity and talents of innovation by gazing at corpses; in the decay of the body, he sees transcendent possibilities.

The dialectical relationship between life and art is thrown into striking relief in a short story published in the December 1831 issue of the *New Monthly Magazine*. 'The Victim' takes some fictional liberties with one of the most well documented scandals surrounding anatomy: the arrest and trials in Edinburgh of Burke and Hare in 1829.[55] Body-snatching was a long-standing worry in the city,[56] but Burke and Hare decided that rather than undergo the labour and inconvenience of digging up freshly interred copses, they could more easily find a victim to ply with alcohol and smother. The case received a great deal of publicity and not only were Burke and Hare demonized, Dr. Robert Knox – the doctor who used the corpses Burke and Hare provided – became synonymous with unscrupulous doctors who did not mind paying for corpses late at night and turning a blind eye to their origins. Interestingly, while Knox is listed in the court records as witness 44, the transcripts do not indicate that he was called to testify. Instead, David Paterson, the keeper of the museum belonging to Knox, testifies that he had orders from Knox to receive any package

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[54]Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818), Diane Johnson (ed.) (New York, Bantam, 1981), p. 38.

[55]Hare turned King's Evidence and so while the trial featured both men, only Burke was convicted of murder, subsequently hanged and publicly dissected.

[56]Brian Bailey argues that in the first decade of the nineteenth century, more than one thousand corpses were being taken from graveyards each year. Brian Bailey, *The Resurrection Men: A History of the Trade in Corpses* (London, MacDonald, 1991), p. 68.

brought by Burke or Hare; Paterson paid Burke and Hare; Paterson took the package and stored it. The court transcripts reveal a signifying absence in refusing to directly link Knox with Burke and Hare.[57] Outside of the court transcripts, however, survive stories about Knox that describe him as prurient in his treatment of his corpses, especially that of Mary Paterson. Mary was apparently so beautiful that Knox preserved her in spirits, displayed her to many students in his school, permitted her to be sketched and refrained from dissecting her for three months.[58] Knox's treatment of Mary and his failure to appear in court attest to his position of privilege. This privilege gives him pleasure *and* establishes Mary as an erotic object over which men may share their triumph as doctors, as men with uninterrupted access. She is frozen, aesthetically fulfilling her gendered destiny of granting masculinity pleasure on its own terms. While Knox conceivably received many bodies, Mary's beauty authorizes a textual treatment that proliferates sexualized detail and inspires fictional account.

'The Victim' tells the story of two medical students who receive a lady's body into the dressing-closet of their bedroom to dissect her.[59] Initially, they speak of her as the subject. One of the students peeks beneath the sheet covering her:

> …never till that instant had I seen aught that came so near to my most ideal picture of female loveliness; even though the last touches had been painted by the hand of Death. As the light of the candle fell on the shrouded figure before me, it composed the very scene that Rembrandt would have loved to paint, and you, my reader, to have looked on.[60]

Not only is the corpse beautiful *and* female, she is worth preserving through artistry. The narrator also implicates the reader in his voyeurism, simultaneously validating his own necro-gaze and assuring the

[57]*The Trial of William Burke and Helen M'Dougal Before the High Court of Justiciary at Edinburgh on Wednesday, December 24, 1828…* Jaques Barzun (ed.), *Burke and Hare: The Resurrection Men: A Collection of Contemporary Documents Including Broadsides, Occasional Verses, Illustrations, Polemics and a Complete Transcript of the Testimony at the Trial* (Metuchen, NJ, Scarecrow Press, 1974).
[58]Bailey, pp. 106–7 and Richardson, p. 96.
[59]Anonymous, 'The Victim', *New Monthly Magazine* (December 1831) Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick (eds), *John Polidori's The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre* (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 87–98.
[60]*Ibid.*, p. 91.

reader that such love-in-gazing is almost common sense. The scene continues:

> Her hair was loose and motionless, while its whole length, which had strayed over her neck and shoulders, nestled in a bosom white as snow, whose pure, warm tides were now at rest forever![61]

In one sentence, the narrator combines motionless, bosom and pure, the corpse's stillness with its sexuality, negating decay and idealizing her in this state. Several paragraphs later, after these close, erotic descriptions, the subject becomes instead the 'beauteous object…which afforded me a pleasure so mixed up with all that was horrid.'[62] The woman's body becomes a battleground; she embodies the narrator's discipline, his objectification of women, his desire to gaze upon her and possess her and even, perhaps his fear of active female sexuality. What is horrid to him is not death but rather her sexual subjectivity. Suddenly, she becomes even less than object: 'To me she was as nothing, less than nothing.' He completes his possession of her by kissing her, prying open her eyelids to behold the 'orb beneath…large and blue', sketching her and finally falling asleep on her exposed, inanimate breast.[63] The student first possesses her with his gaze; he then moves to touching and kissing her, finally inscribing her body in order to have a lasting access to her. His ambivalence is typical of the Freudian male subject caught in the throes of Oedipal anxiety. He desires her and yet fears her, simultaneously finding her breast pleasurable and repulsive. Her reduction to an object, to a nothing could indicate a hatred towards his mother that he is destined to play out with all women he encounters. His peeking beneath her eyelids also resonates with Oedipal anxieties of the child who wishes to demystify his mother's sexuality while fearing what he could find there.

The aesthetics of preserving the dead can also be found in various illustrations for anatomical texts. Though Vesalius's sixteenth-century text is well-known for depicting a corpse in increasing states of dissection capering through a field, anatomical illustrations of the nineteenth century are just as fascinating because they directly confront the claims made by sympathizers that anatomical artists divorced the displayed body from the messy process that got it there.[64] The anatomist was not the artist and the

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[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 91–2.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 92.
[63] *Ibid.*
[64] Brian Kennedy, 'Artists and Anatomists,' *The Anatomy Lesson: Art and Medicine, An Exhibition of Art and Anatomy to Celebrate the Tercentenary of the Royal Charter of 1692 of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland* (The National Gallery of Ireland, 1992), p. 13.

dissector not the drawer.[65] The artist was permitted to interpret the body that the physician laid bare, and the interpretations were often stylized, cleaned up versions of what the artist saw in the dissecting room. Joseph Maclise, however, is a stand-out exception to the divide between artist and anatomist. His manual *Surgical Anatomy* (the 1856 folio second edition) boasts 52 hand coloured plates all from Maclise's own sketches made after his dissections conducted in 'Hospitals and Museums in Paris, London and Elsewhere.[66] Plate III from the 1856 edition (Fig. 7.5) illustrates the feminized male body. The subject's hands are bound in front of him, relaxed; his head is thrown back, eyes closed, lips parted. Successive layers of skin, fat, muscle and bone frame his circulatory system and heart exposed from throat to diaphragm.[67] Plate X from the same collection (Fig. 7.6) shows us a male and female corpse. They face right; the male is on the right side of the female. Both figures' right arms are suspended above their heads, the bow of a string visibly tied around their wrists. Their hands are relaxed with almost balletic grace – the synchronicity, striking. The string continues out of the frame. The lifted arms reveal the incisions made beneath. The string around their wrists simultaneously signify a force that holds them and the fact that they cannot resist, even thought their faces indicate a post-mortem discomfort or modesty because turned away. The male's bicep occludes the female's face. At the same time it casts a shadow that throws the curve of her breast into high relief. The shadow is especially curious, as the chances of these two specimens actually being dissected in close proximity is a rare one. Yet the shadow visually insists that these two images were not merely juxtaposed one atop the other. Neither plate features genitals, though other plates in the manual prominently feature dissections of the penis and testicles. Several plates display rows of penises in varying states of dissection. The overwhelming number of these images serves as a reminder of the primacy of the male as well as the rarity of female dissection, though the seeming arbitrariness of genital inclusion or occlusion

[65]Except, as I have mentioned, in the case of Bell. While Bell did execute some of the drawings contained in *The Anatomy of Expression*, he apologizes for them in his preface and includes engravings made from sketches of others. Maclise, who will be discussed below, on the other hand explains that the engravings are from his own sketches of his own dissections.

[66]Joseph Maclise, *Surgical Anatomy*, 2nd edn (London, John Churchill, 1856), p. 1.

[67]Interrupting the male body can alter masculinity. The rash of amputations brought about by the American Civil War and Industrialization affected the construction of masculinity; men experiencing 'phantom limbs' or discomfort were medically diagnosed hysterical, and thus, feminine. Erin O'Connor, '"Fractions of Men": Engendering Amputation in Victorian Culture', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 39 (1997), pp. 742–77.

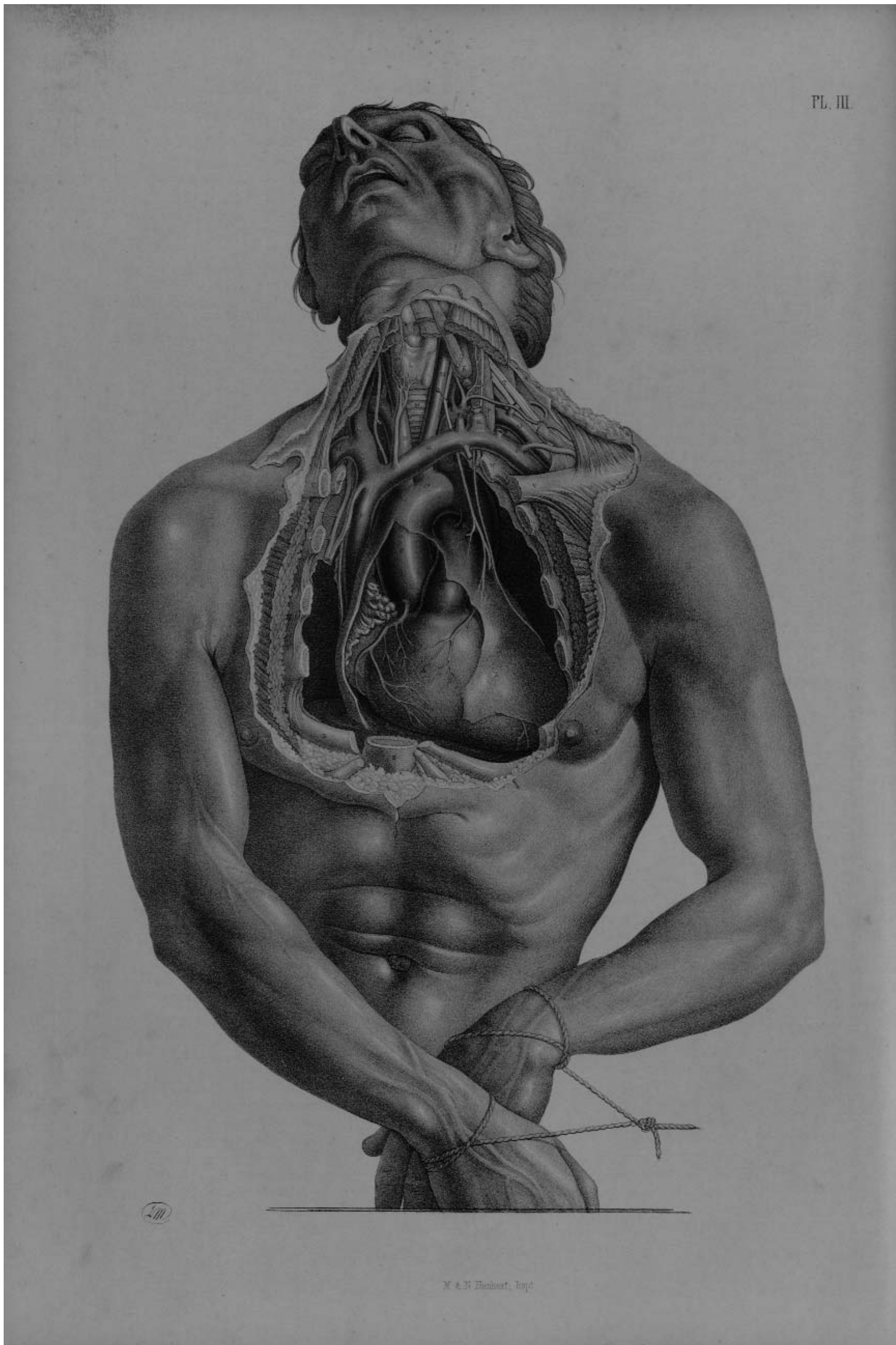

Fig. 7.5. Joseph Maclise, *Surgical Anatomy*. 2nd edn. Plate III, 'The Surgical Dissection of the Thorax and the Episternal Region. Deligation of the Primary Aortic Branches' (1856). From Rare Books Collection, with kind permission from Falk Library of the Health Sciences, University of Pittsburgh.

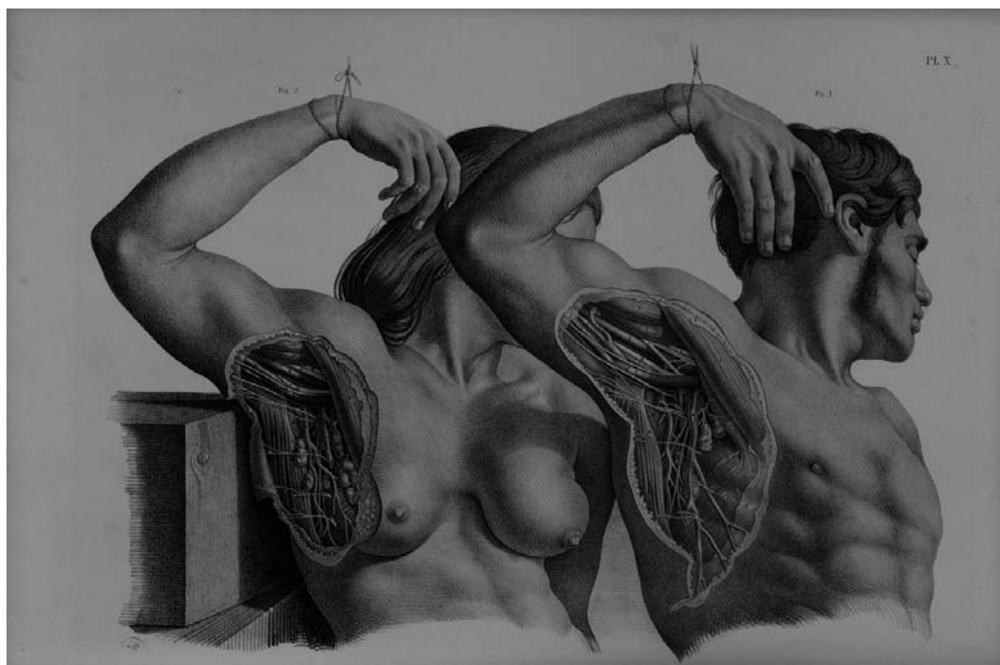

Fig. 7.6. Joseph Maclise, *Surgical Anatomy*. 2nd edn. Plate X, 'The Male and Female Axillae Compared' (1856). From Rare Books Collection, with kind permission from Falk Library of the Health Sciences, University of Pittsburgh.

is provocative. Maclise's images also graced other texts. For example, his engraving 'The Arteries Distributed to the Female Pelvis' appears in Richard Quain's 1844 text *The Anatomy of the Arteries of the Human Body*. In this image, the corpse is not flat on her back (Fig. 7.7).[68] Rather she rests on one elbow, a sheet artfully draped to cover her genitals. Her head is not in the artist's frame. Her jaunty pose and 'decapitated' head contrast with the square of skin neatly cut out of her torso. Her organs fully swell out of the gap. A surgical clamp lies on the ground pointing to where her upper thigh meets her buttocks. The scene overall depicts the corpse as flirty, and receptive, violently, albeit neatly, laid open. Her pose denotes relaxation and enjoyment denoting a seduction. Thus, the violence of dissection, the visual assay of the body, its handling, its opening, the abject liquidity of dissection is sanitized, beautified and made devoid of violence. The body's surface becomes little more than a veil to lift back in a procedure that does not disturb the body's integrity, its relaxation, even its enjoyment

[68]Richard Quain, *The Anatomy of the Arteries of the Human Body* (London, Taylor and Walton, 1844), Plate LIX.

Fig. 7.7. Joseph Maclise, 'The Arteries Distributed to the Female Pelvis' Richard Quain, *The Anatomy of the Arteries of the Human Body* (1844). With kind permission from the U.S. National Library of Medicine.

in yielding to the anatomist's tools.[69] Maclise's attention to shade, texture and detail – note the veins of the subject's arms in Plate III and the almost vaginal knot in the wood block adjacent the woman's armpit in Plate X – marry in a sublime verisimilitude. The subjects are ideal specimens; one wonders if Maclise actually had subjects so youthful, clean shaven, muscled, vital and free of the bloating and discolouration of decomposition.[70]

Though less 'stylized', *The London Dissector* similarly contains representations of clean-cut, attractive individuals with necks arched, eyes closed and heads thrown back, as if in ecstasy. All these images speak to the intensity not only of the artist's interpretation but also of the intimacy and privilege of the anatomist's gaze in general. Anatomists or anatomists' assistants sometimes tied those individuals' arms above their heads and posed their bodies both for accessibility and the aesthetic. The body cannot resist,

[69]On (female) Nature unveiling before (male) Science, see Jordanova, *Sexual Visions*, p. 55.

[70]In his preface, Maclise writes: 'We dissect the dead body in order to furnish the memory with as clear an account of the structures of its living representatives as if this latter, which we are not allowed to analyse, were perfectly translucent, and directly demonstrable of its component parts', p. 1. His articulation of dissection as a process whereby the body is made translucent is a substitute for his wishful fantasy of human vivisection.

cannot cover itself and is inscribed as pathetically making an attempt at modesty or giving in to the anatomist's advances.

Developments of ether and later chloroform had an understandably crucial impact on the field of medicine. Dr. James Young Simpson described the ways in which the etherized body provided no resistance to gynaecological examination.[71] The woman's unresisting state is pleasurable, useful and beneficial to more than herself. Once again, such a state (here corpse-*like*) is desired because it ensures that the male doctor can perform his proper penetrative act. Doctors also noted the sexual effects of chloroform. It was alleged that women became lascivious, even orgasmic under the effects of the anesthetic. At least one case was reported in which a doctor violated a young woman while she was unconscious; people had been asserting since the eighteenth century 'that encounters between medical men and female patients were inevitably sexual'.[72] Privileged access to female bodies cannot but be sexualized, and some doctors could not resist taking their liberties. Once again, the medical male possesses the privilege of socially sanctioned access to the most intimate of feminine spaces. Indeed, male doctors were often seen to be a threat.[73]

To conclude, then, necro-gazing is a pleasure-providing, self-affirming masculine affair associated with science, innovation and revealed knowledge. Uncovering the secrets held in the body, whether they are networks of silvery tendons or the ability to create life, provides excitement and sexual pleasure. The anatomist is bolstered and encouraged as survivor, as innovator and as one who knows how to read the feminine body as oracle.[74] Thus, institutionalized, socially sanctioned corpse gazing delimits a space for privileged males. Though death and femininity have gone hand in hand for a long time, these images that equate and romanticize receptivity with what it means to be female and invasive bodily adventure with fulfilled masculinity, continually embrace medical and artistic innovations. This discourse has appropriated romance, medicine, anatomy and physiology. The necro-gaze pervades institutions and art across time and locations, glorifying masculine epistemological imperatives towards gaining control and access to secret, intimate places for knowledge. Necro-gazing can be a process of rape or of seduction. The criminal body is raped as punishment, humiliation, indignity. The corpse can be seduced into unveiling her charms, giving up her

[71]Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 29.
[72]*Ibid.*, p. 39.
[73]Roy Porter, 'A Touch of Danger: the man-midwife as sexual predator' in Roy Porter and G.S. Rousseau (eds), *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 206–32.
[74]Bronfen, p. 8.

body willingly to glorify the gazer. He tends to her, cares for her, preserves her and displays her. However, the necro-gazer is in all cases glorified, bolstered, affirmed in his gazing. He maintains a position or power, superiority, continuity dependent on the corpse's relinquishing willingly or not itself into his hands. The necro-gaze can be inscribed as entertainment, as social criticism, as beauty, as instruction benefiting the entire social body. In all the cases we encounter forms of intimacy or eroticized closeness in tactility, in gazing, in manipulating, in stillness, in description, in some kind of masculine privilege to the body's private sectors accessible in their inertness or split open to reveal the submission beneath the skin.[75]

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[75]As Assister and Carol have asserted in *Bad Girls and Dirty Pictures*, 'Criticism has always been an important part of free speech…every feminist is, in her way, a critic of male supremacist culture. This holds true for pornography as with everything else; and, as with every other genre, criticism of pornography must not be equated with a reason to censor it', p. 152.

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8
Religious Sexual Perversion in Nineteenth-Century Anti-Catholic Literature

Diana Peschier

> I saw the wicked evil priest I met at the confessional.
> Who told me that my eyes were glistening stars
> And that he loved me more than sacred things.
> And spoke with blasphemous tongue of holy saints,
> And said the virgin's eyes were dull to mine
> And wrung my hands with his greedy palms.[1]

During the second half of the nineteenth century, perversion and its assorted manifestations was used in propaganda directed against the Roman Catholic Church. This was not a new phenomena[2] but it reached almost hysterical proportions due to the re-establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in England and resulted in English Protestants describing Roman Catholics as 'perverts'. Convents were depicted as prisons, brothels and madhouses and were regarded as the locus for all kinds of perversions, sexual perversions in particular. The term 'pervert' was used in the context of the 'pervert' being led astray from 'true' religion, and applied to Protestants who converted to the Catholic faith but it carried with it overtones of sexual misconduct. It is therefore not surprising to find accusations that Roman Catholics were indulging in perverted and immoral sexual practices. The main perpetrators of these acts were priests and nuns, a section of society who led secretive lives, which lay them open to suspicion. Sometimes these perversions involved the laity, usually young, innocent girls, and sometimes perversions were hidden behind the convent or seminary wall. Some of these accounts were pure fiction; others purported to be 'true' facts. They came in different guises – in novels, in Protestant revelations, nuns' 'memoirs', ex-monks' exposés and confessional tales, which all fitted into a sub-genre of anti-Catholic literature.

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[1]'Anglicanus', *The Appalling Records of Popish Convents and the Awful Disclosures of Tortured Nuns* (London, E. Farah, 1865), p. 16.
[2]See Julie Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books: The Development of Pornography in Eighteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 126–60.

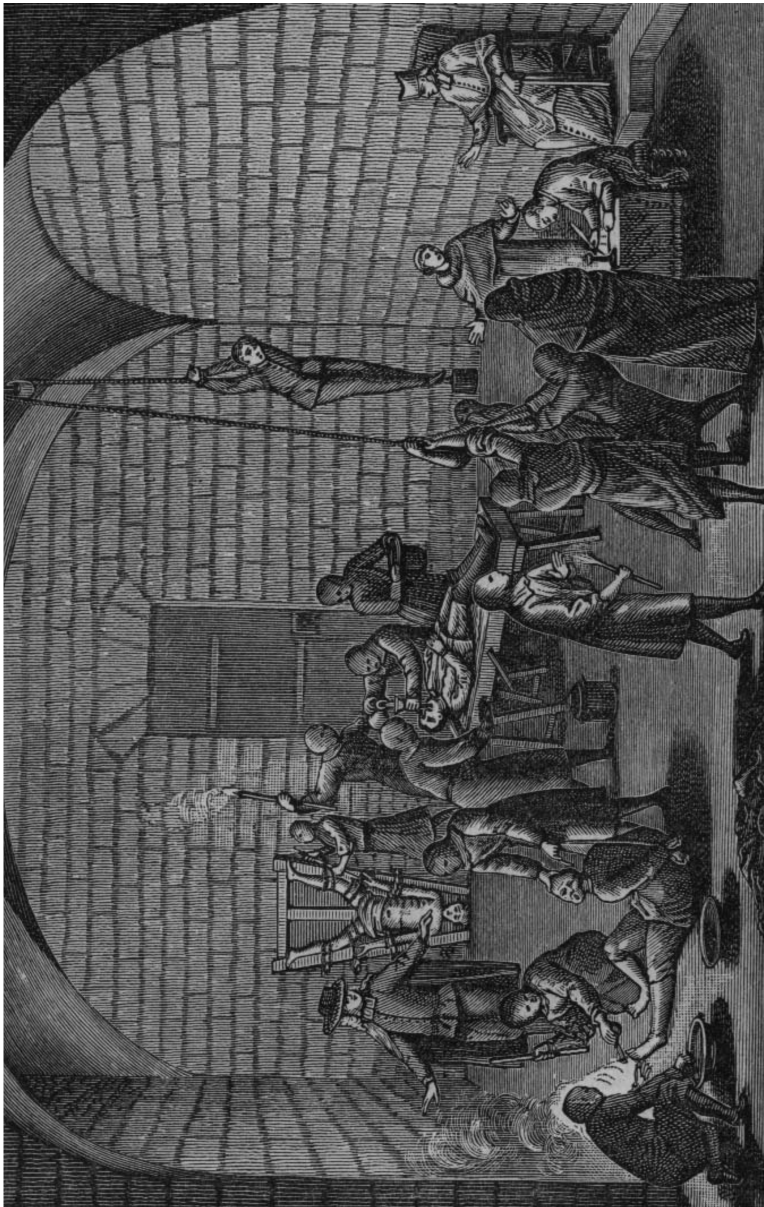

Fig. 8.1. J.J. Slocum, *Awful Disclosure of Maria Monk* (1839)

Novels, such as Rebecca Reed's *Six Months in a Convent* (1835), *Maria Monk's Awful Disclosures of the Holy Dieu Nunnery* (1836) (Fig. 8.1), and Edith O'Gorman's *The Fair Penitent, A Tale of the Confessional* (1863) became popular,[3] intended as warnings against the perils that can befall an innocent, young Protestant girl who converts to Roman Catholicism and enters a convent.[4] The idea that monks and priests, all unmarried, were the only men who were allowed to 'hold intercourse' with the unmarried women in convents had always excited the sexual imagination and provided prurient reading for the nineteenth-century Protestant male. This nineteenth-century genre of Convent Tales dealt with such subjects as seduced and debauched nuns, murdered infants, secret passages between monasteries and convents and old, ugly nuns torturing and murdering their younger sisters and frequently their unborn children. There is an obvious link between undertones of Victorian anti-Catholic literature and the Gothic novels of the previous century,[5] such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Ann Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* (1790); both writers had provided the necessary language to act as a key to understanding the danger posed by the ever increasing power of the Roman Catholic church in England. Many Gothic novels contained characters typical of anti-Catholic rhetoric with inveigling priests and recalcitrant nuns. Novels such as *The Fair Penitent*[6] and *Father Eustace*[7] included characters like the Revd. Oily Tongue, a ladies' man, and Sister Agatha, the devious nun who had a dubious sexual past. The main themes of sex and death were explored in various different ways in Gothic works and the later Victorian anti-Catholic novels, some of which concentrated on physical torture and were blatantly pornographic.

Protestants revealed their concerns about sexually dangerous Catholic clergy in *The Circular of the Protestant Electoral Union* (1866), which contained a column entitled 'Facts Worth Considering'.[8] According to the author, the piece came from a true story in 'the French papers' about a young female cleaner of one of the major chapels in Marseilles who was murdered by

[3]For example*, Maria Monk's Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery* was published in 1836 and, sold 300,000 copies at home and abroad by 1860, with the last edition in the British Library catalogue dated 1965; Rebecca Reed's *Six Months in a Convent* went into many editions from 1835 to 1878; and Edith O'Gorman's *Convent Life Unveiled* first published in 1871 and had its 37th edition printed in 1950.

[4]For further information on these two books see Nancy Lusignan Schultz, *A Veil of Fear: Nineteenth-Century Convent Tales by Rebecca Reed and Maria Monk* (West Lafayette Indiana, Purdue University Press, 1999), introduction, and pp. vii–xxiii.

[5]For a more comprehensive exploration of the links between Gothic novels and Catholicism, see Patrick O'Malley, *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance and Victorian Gothic Culture* (Cambridge, CUP, 2006).

[6]Author unknown, *The Fair Penitent, A Tale of the Confessional* (London, Elliot, 1863).

[7]Frances Trollope, *Father Eustace: A Tale of the Jesuits* (London, Henry Colburn, 1847).

[8]Anon, *Circular of the Protestant Electoral Union* (London, 1866).

seven priests. One day the girl did not return home as usual. Her father and mother applied to the priests, who told her parents that their daughter had left the chapel at the usual hour. Day after day elapsed and she did not return. The police made every enquiry and search but failed to obtain any information. One evening, a mason's labourer, returning home tired, went into the chapel, sat down behind a pillar and fell asleep; he was awakened by a light shining across his eyes. When he looked up he saw seven priests issue from the sacristy, each with a candle in one hand and a large knife in the other; they walked towards the altar, removed a large flag from the foot of it, then descended through the opening. Immediately after, he heard the voice of a young girl pleading for mercy and promising not to reveal what they had done to her if they would spare her life and let her go home to her mother. The reply was, 'Dead people tell no tales.' He then heard the clash of knives and piercing shrieks from the young girl, which became gradually fainter until they ceased. Soon after he saw the 'seven butchers' ascend from the hole with faces like demons and their clothes and knives covered with blood. Having replaced the flag, they returned to the sacristy. The mason waited until he could make his escape and fled the chapel. He related what he had seen and heard to the police, his workmates and the missing girl's parents. Half a dozen policemen accompanied by several hundred people proceeded to the chapel. The priests were all compelled to appear. The witness selected the seven murderers, the flag was removed and the policemen descended some steps. Beneath the chapel they found several cells and in one of them the mangled remains of the poor missing girl. One of the priests turned informer and they were all tried. Five were convicted.

This story contains a lethal cocktail of sex and death, which time and again proves particularly powerful in nineteenth-century anti-Catholic writing. The author concludes his 'facts worth considering' by saying, 'A lady told me last year that some time ago, when she was residing at N – d, she was told by someone connected with the convent there that eighteen of the prettiest young girls in it were about to become mothers.' He adds that, 'I was informed by one whose truth is beyond doubt that Priests from the Brompton Oratory enter the female convent, Grove Place, Fulham Road, at night, and issue from it early in the morning. No comment.'

Scandals and court cases were reported in order to reinforce the image of the perverted Roman Catholic and became a common Protestant strategy during the second half of the nineteenth century, used to denigrate their enemies. The priests as murderers, as well as sexual corrupters of young women, was a particularly common trope. The letters page of *The Evening Standard* (Wednesday January 25th 1865) contained the following letter from Alfred Smee to Sir George Grey:

> Sir, – I have again respectfully to call your official attention to the private burial ground belonging to the Oratory at Brompton, where

> there is no registry of burials, and where the names on the tombstones are falsified. Last year I petitioned both the houses of Parliament, where immediately after the facts became known an enactment was passed rendering the registration of every person buried in private ground compulsory. But the persons buried in the private grounds, which have obtained a license within the last few years are not registered, and no burial extract can be obtained… I must also respectfully submit, that for obvious reasons private burial grounds attached to monastic institutions for the reception of single women, especially of pregnant single women, should not be secret but open to the public.[9]

The fact that *The Evening Standard* should publish such a letter lent a certain credence to the notion of lascivious Catholic priests burying young pregnant girls in a private burial ground that might otherwise be lacking had the story appeared in a pamphlet or sermon. It also conjures up scenes of such depravity that not only could young women be so used by 'celibate' religious men, but also once they had served their purpose and become an embarrassment, they should be dispensed with in a cruel and calculating manner.

The perceived 'questionable activities' at the Brompton Oratory are dealt with more comprehensively in a publication entitled, *The Appalling Records of Popish Convents and the Awful Disclosures of Tortured Nuns.*[10] The author, who calls himself 'Anglicanus', refers to Alfred Smee's earlier letter in *The Evening Standard* and indicates that the Brompton burial ground is said to conceal the remains of nuns and their infants, '…murdered lest the mothers should divulge the crimes of their sanctified seducers, and the offspring of their HOLY FATHERS become the living witness of monkish profligacy under the vows of chastity.'[11] With only a limited amount of space available in the article, the author lists the perverted sexuality of the Catholic clergy declaring that throughout history, priests have had harems like eastern monarchs; that 'down to our time, the effect of the Romish Church's prohibition of marriage among the clergy has been the incitement of seduction, adultery, and prostitution, on the part of its members, and the female portion of their flocks.'[12]

Further Protestant revelations took a different angle, providing exposés of corrupted young nuns, disclosures of their punishments, and sexual ruination at the hands of monks and priests. The mystery of what went on 'behind the walls' of the monastery or convent has always been a sexually titillating subject and tales of seductions and licentious behaviour found a

[9] *The Evening Standard.* Wednesday January 25th 1865.
[10] See note 1.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

receptive audience, particularly amongst Protestant men. Nineteenth-century curiosity was therefore easily manipulated by the anti-Catholic propagandists to warn the British general public against the perverted practices of Romanists. In *Revelations of Modern Convents or Life in Convents on British Soil in the Closing Years of the Nineteenth Century. Intended as an Earnest Appeal to the British Public* (1899), the secretary of the Convent Enquiry Society, S.J. Abbott, explains his reasons for writing, 'It is time that the fulsome flattery about "Holy Nuns" and the bubble of convent sanctity with which Romanists are constantly exploiting conventual institutions were exploded; I have therefore endeavoured to lift the veil and prick the bubble.'[13] One way in which he seeks to do this, is by relating the story of an escaped nun, a case in which he claims to have been personally involved.[14]

The nun in question decided that she would escape from the nunnery where she had been a sister for about sixteen years. Finding herself alone in the convent grounds, she ran across a field, scaled a corrugated iron fence protected at the top by barbed wire and jumped down into the High Road. The clattering of her pantofles (sic) surprised local cottagers who, on looking out of their windows, were amazed to see a nun, attired in her habit, running towards the village. The sister went straight to the vicarage where she put herself under the protection of the clergyman who refused to give her up to the nunnery. Abbott relates her earlier history and explains what drove the nun to flee her convent. She had been educated as a Protestant but converted to Catholicism and became a nun. She had been happy at first until she discovered how corrupt her fellow sisters were. Abbott revealed the sordid position in which she found herself, 'It seems that the superior who had the management of the convent for some years did not pay proper regard for restraint between priests and nuns. The confessional adjoined the sacristy, having a door opening therein to.'[15] The nuns could therefore enter the sacristy without being seen by their fellow sisters. When the unhappy nun went to confession, her confessor, 'a red-faced-priest', proposed that she should break one of her vows with him but this so revolted her that she complained to her superior who, instead of offering her protection, rebuked her and declared that the priest was a saint and therefore it was impossible he would commit such a sin. Later, the mother superior herself suggested that the nun should comply with the priest's demands, a proposal she found shocking. Abbott implies that nuns who did not conform could be subject to horrendous punishments; some nuns

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[13]S.J. Abbott, *Revelations of Modern Convents or Life in Convents on British Soil in the Closing Years of the Nineteenth Century. Intended as an Earnest Appeal to the British Public* (London, John Kensit, 1899), p. 7.
[14]*Ibid.*, p. 56.
[15]*Ibid.*, p. 59.

were placed in solitary confinement in cells where they starved themselves to death or went mad; some simply disappeared. Others were subject to flagellation with cords, whips and cat-o-nine tails, or forced to wear iron chain armlets with spikes at each link pointing into the flesh.[16] The juxtaposition of sex and physical discipline is explicitly sexual sadomasochism and leads the readers into a realm of sexual fantasy related to Marquis de Sade. Nineteenth-century anti-Catholic literature made 'great play' of the dubious pursuits of nuns and the ritualistic practices of Romanists in which the liaisons between nuns and priests were perceived as not only immoral but also perverted. The Discipline, a whip, often believed to be embellished with steel spikes, was frequently described as an instrument of mortification as were other painful and humiliating penances. As Ronald Pearsall points out, 'there is a curious area where religious fustigation and sexual flagellation meet.'[17]

The anti-papal backlash in England, which was fuelled by the so-called Papal Aggression and the return of Cardinal Wiseman in 1850 as the newly appointed Catholic Archbishop of Westminster,[18] coincided with the celebrated case of Augusta Talbot the orphaned niece of Lord Shrewsbury. The girl's education and fortune had been entrusted to Dr. Thomas Doyle who arranged for her to be raised in a convent, 'The Lodge' at Taunton. Augusta rarely left the convent, only visiting her home once in seven years. After nine years at 'The Lodge', Augusta came out for twelve weeks and then returned to become a nun. Her decision to take the veil meant that the convent would 'inherit' her fortune, so her stepfather put up a petition because he believed that she was being forced to become a nun and break off all communication with her past life. Litigation ensued and Augusta was freed by the court and became engaged to be married, a much more suitable occupation for a Victorian girl. The case, which was brought by Augusta's stepfather Hon. Craven Fitzharding Berkeley, was widely reported in the national press.[19] This high profile lawsuit helped to fuel an already virulent interest in nuns and convents, which led to a demand for the government to regulate and supervise Catholic nunneries. During the debate on the Convent Bill it became clear that English Protestants were very mistrustful of celibate men and women who rejected the joys of married life. For Protestants, celibacy was unnatural, and the natural status for a man

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[16]*Ibid.*, pp. 61–72.

[17]Ronald Pearsall, *The Worm in the Bud: the World of Victorian Sexuality* (London, Pimlico, 1969), p. 340.

[18]For a more comprehensive overview of the background history of this period see Diana Peschier, *Nineteenth-Century Anti-Catholic Discourses: The Case of Charlotte Bront*e (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), Introduction, pp. 1–10.

[19]*Ibid.*, Chap. 1, pp. 18–20.

and a woman was in a marital relationship. Catholicism was frequently viewed in terms of sexual perversion and the church referred to as 'Mother of Harlots' and the 'Whore of Babylon' amongst other sexually explicit, derogatory epithets. Charles Kingsley (1819–1875) who wrote several works against the Catholic Church and its clergy was appalled by celibacy. He saw in Mariology an unnatural sexual practice dignified by the prostitution of the virgin.[20] The literature surrounding the practices of the Catholic Church in the second half of the nineteenth century became so graphic in its sexual content that it was obviously intended not merely as warnings to the 'true' nature of the Catholic clergy but also as titillating erotic material for the readers.

Nun's memoirs were supposedly undertaken to reveal the horrors of convent life to the English. One came in the form of a recalcitrant nun in *Convent Life Unveiled. Trials and Persecutions of Miss Edith O'Gorman – Sister Teresa De Chantal* (1871). O'Gorman was born in Ireland, the daughter of a wealthy landowner who left for America in 1850 and decided to stay there. She lectured in America in the 1860s and later visited England where she noticed the apathy and the ignorance of the Protestant public of the Catholic convent system. She therefore condensed the popular American edition of her biography in order to address the English public. Because of its cheapness, the book had a huge circulation throughout England going into thirty-seven editions. In her memoirs O'Gorman gives names, dates and 'facts' as proofs of the veracity of her testimony.

O'Gorman's exposition contains three popular tropes; the portrayal of an older senior nun as depraved; the sexual seduction of nuns by their father confessors; and the violent beatings of young children. As a young woman, O'Gorman entered a convent, but in her memoirs laments the fact; 'Ah mother, dear mother, better a thousand times for you and for me could you have seen me conveyed to the grave, than to the wrongs and sufferings that awaited me in the living tomb of the convent.'[21] The description of Mother Xavier, the Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity, New York, is typical of that found in much anti-convent literature, specifically the corruption of young nuns by older, more experienced women.[22] She is about thirty years old, urbane, polished in her manners and 'possessed of a large store of Jesuit strategy and plausibility.'[23] O'Gorman says of Mother Xavier,

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[20]See Robert Klaus, *The Pope the Protestants and the Irish* (New York, Garland publishing, 1987) particularly chap. IV, pp. 281–9.
[21]Edith O'Gorman Auffray, *Convent Life Unveiled. Trials and Persecutions of Miss Edith O'Gorman – Sister Teresa De Chantal* (London, Chas. Thynne, 1901) 28th Edition. First published 1871, p. 21.
[22]See Diana Peschier, *Anti-Catholic Discourses,* Chap. 5, 'Lifting the Veil'.
[23]Edith O'Gorman Auffray, *Convent Life Unveiled*, p. 27.

'She sought to work out my destruction as she had previously done to many a young nun before, who, if not living degraded lives in the convent, were filling early graves, or inmates of insane asylums.'[24] Another nun is described as 'the personification of a fiend'.[25] Other 'senior' nuns tormented her; they gave her the most distasteful work to do; they forced her to put her hands in hot lime as a penance; and she was compelled to prostrate herself to be walked on by other nuns. In the nineteenth century, it was a common Protestant belief that when a woman transferred her vocation of love for husband and family to love of the Roman Catholic Church and became a bride of Christ she became both victim and demon.[26] The perception that life in a convent was one of isolation and the suppression of sexual desire, conspired to create the idea of the evil nun. Women, particularly frustrated women, were thought to be capable of greater cruelty than men and the nineteenth-century writers of anti-Catholic literature exploited this perception.

True to form, the theme of debauched priests seducing innocent young nuns was explored. According to O'Gorman, after she discovered Sister Mary Joseph and a priest in bed together, the nun pushed her down the stairs. Another nun, the beautiful Sister Virginia, attracted the attentions of her confessor who, in order to make Sister Virginia yield to him sexually, shut her up night after night in a cellar infested with rats and mice, without air or light. This sent her 'raving mad'.[27] O'Gorman herself was the recipient of the unwelcome attentions of Fr. Walsh but her Mother Superior sent her back to her convent where Fr. Walsh attempted to drug and rape her.

Scenes of child beatings supplied a heated combination of corporal punishment, religious penance and sexual flagellation. O'Gorman describes the punishment of one orphan girl whom the nuns were looking after. A sister took the orphan to a cellar where 'she tied this little child, only about six years old, across a broken chair, stripped off her clothes and in a merciless manner applied the lash on the tender flesh which rose in purple stripes at every stroke'.[28] In another incident, a child was beaten so severely that her flesh rose in black and blue ridges; 'She sent one child for the leather strap, placed the little naked body across the bed and beat the child till the blood came.'[29] Another child who had stolen the nuns' gooseberries was sent mad after having been shut in a dark closet in the cellar where she was bitten by rats on her bare feet. Rather than mere warnings to the Protestant public against Catholic institutions, as professed by the author,

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[24] *Ibid.*, p. 90.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 56.
[26] See Samuel Day Phillips, *Life in a Convent* (London, A. Hall, 1848), p. 34.
[27] Edith O'Gorman Auffray, *Convent Life Unveiled*, pp. 79–81.
[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 45–6.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

the punishments described by O'Gorman worked as sadomasochistic anecdotes designed more to excite the reader and fit into representations of Victorian flagellation erotica.

Another 'memoir', *How Perversions are Effected, Or, Three Years as a Nun* (1874) was written by Charlotte Myhill and purported to be true. To add veracity to the story, G.W. Weldon, vicar of St. Saviour's Chelsea, states in the introduction, that it has been published as a warning to Anglican girls not to enter Roman Catholic convents. The main problem that Charlotte appears to have experienced was the cruelty of her fellow nuns, which was, at times, physically violent: 'I found myself in the midst of most violent women ... One day in a rage she [a jealous nun] threw the heavy top of a refectory table upon my back. I was under medical treatment for some time and suffer in consequence to this day.'[30] She says that she endured many bitter trials as a novice but they were nothing in comparison to those she had to endure as a professed nun; similar to other tales, she lists the atrocities: discipline with a cord of knots, an iron chain with sharp points worn tight around the waist, lying on the floor to be walked over by the sisters, and licking the ground in the shape of a cross. In further 'confessions of a nun' in *Priests and Their Victims or Scenes in a Convent*, imagery of sexual perversion is again connected with Catholic nuns and priests (Figs 8.2 & 8.3). Scenes of seduction, death, debauchery and pregnancy litter the pages, complete with the burying of unwanted babies in lime-filled pits.[31] The young nun, Agnes confesses, 'I have been tortured in almost every conceivable shape to make me yield. I have been compelled to submit, with my hands held firmly, to their disgusting toyings ...'[32]

The behaviour of confessing priests was of particular concern when their penitents were impressionable, young women. In his *A History of Auricular Confession*, Henry Lea notes that it was believed that insinuation by the confessor could lead a previously innocent penitent into the very sin that is 'suggested'. It was also recognized that the priest could be led into temptation by his own questions:[33] 'It is easy to imagine how great must be the strain on virtue when the priest, with all the passions of a man, has whispered in his ear from female lips the acknowledgement of lustful longings or of

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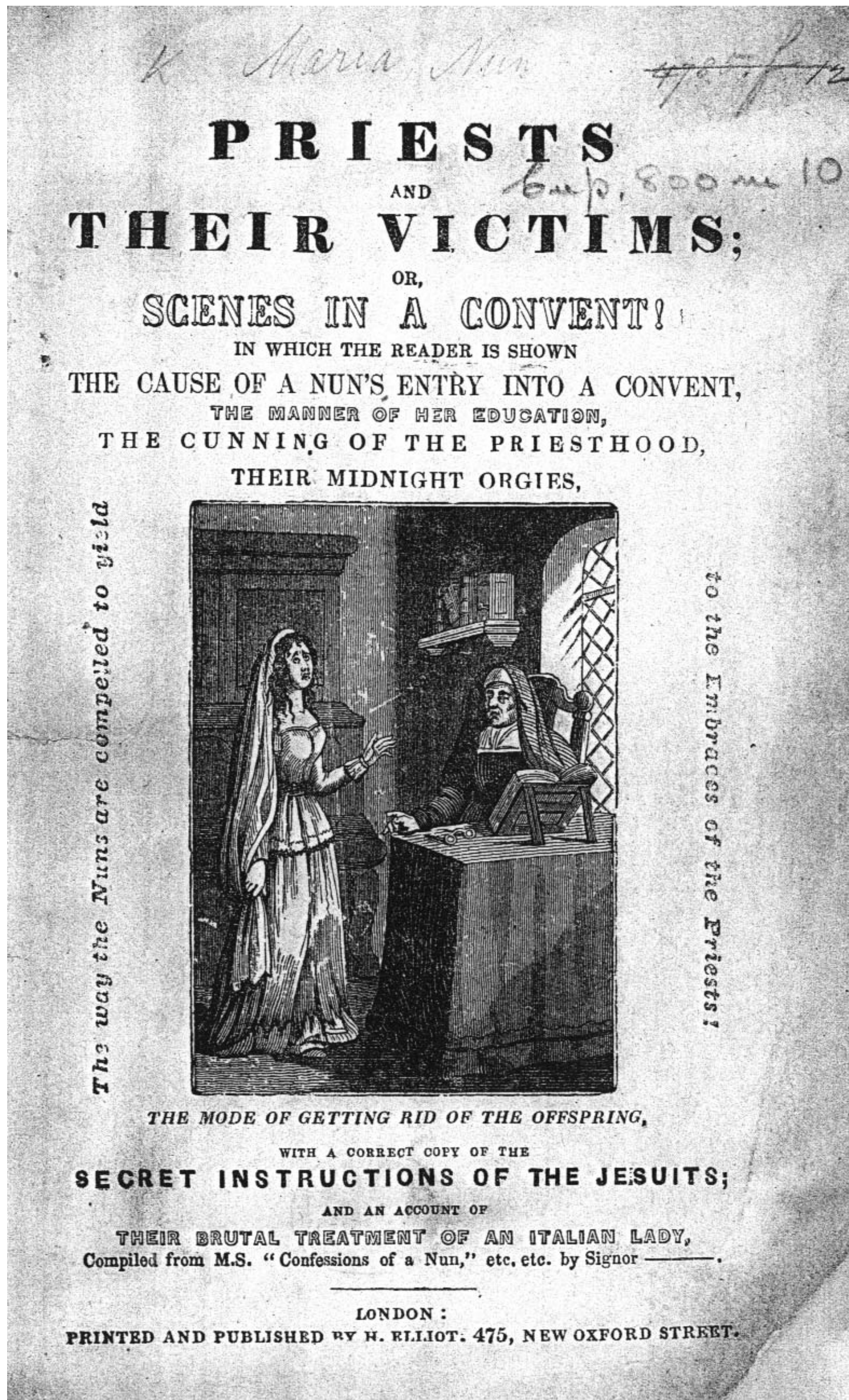
[30]Charlotte Myhill, *How Perversions are Effected, or, Three Years as a Nun* (London, M. Walbrook, 1874), p. 9.

[31]The escaped nun who makes her confession was referred to as Maria Nun, which is an obvious allusion to the Maria Monk, whose scandalous revelations of her convent in Canada was a best seller at this time. For a more detailed account of Maria Monk's story, see Peschier, *Nineteenth-Century Anti Catholic Discourses*, pp. 82–3.

[32]Viner, G.M. *Priests and Their Victims or Scenes in a Convent. Compiled from a Manuscript, 'Confessions of a Nun' in Possession of the Compiler* (London, H. Eliot, 1850), p. 8.

[33]Henry Charles Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church* (London, Swan and Sonnenschein & Co., 1896), pp. 378–9.



PRIESTS
AND
THEIR VICTIMS;
OR,
SCENES IN A CONVENT!
IN WHICH THE READER IS SHOWN
THE CAUSE OF A NUN'S ENTRY INTO A CONVENT,
THE MANNER OF HER EDUCATION,
THE CUNNING OF THE PRIESTHOOD,
THEIR MIDNIGHT ORGIES,

The way the Nuns are compelled to yield
to the Embraces of the Priests!

THE MODE OF GETTING RID OF THE OFFSPRING,
WITH A CORRECT COPY OF THE
SECRET INSTRUCTIONS OF THE JESUITS;
AND AN ACCOUNT OF
THEIR BRUTAL TREATMENT OF AN ITALIAN LADY,
Compiled from M.S. "Confessions of a Nun," etc. etc. by Signor ———.

LONDON:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY H. ELLIOT. 475, NEW OXFORD STREET.

Fig. 8.2. 'Maria Nun', G.M. Viner, *Priest and their Victims*, c. 1850. With kind permission from the British Library

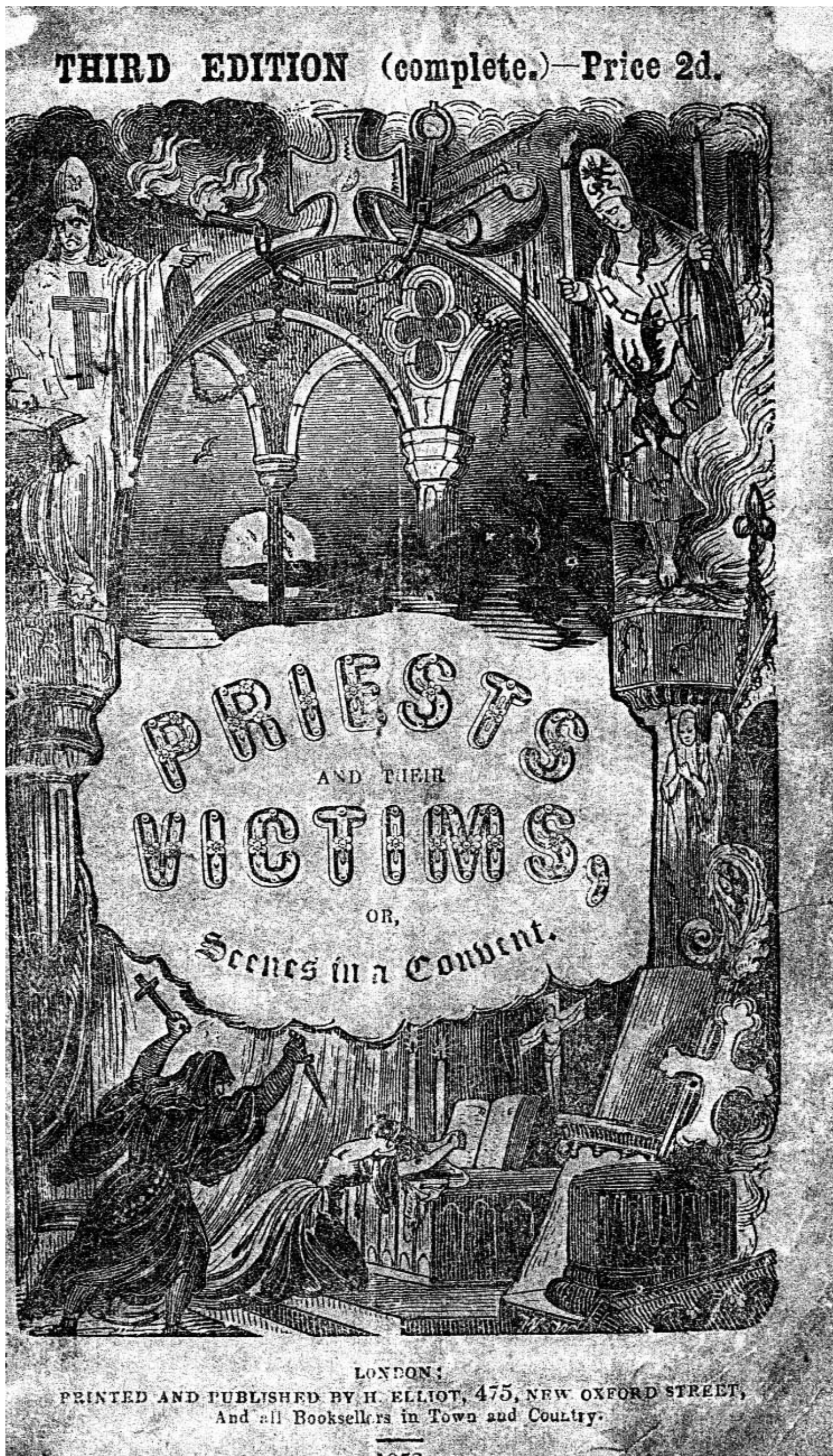


Fig. 8.3. *Priest and their Victims*, c. 1852, 3rd edition. With kind permission from the British Library

temptation unresisted.'[34] Lea adds that in view of the acknowledged dangers, it was no surprise that the seduction of women in the confessional had always been a source of anxiety to the church.

Confessional tales provided another excuse for explicit sexual discourse. Since discussion of sex was encouraged in the Catholic confessional, Protestant men argued that this exposure to sexual conversation was extremely dangerous for innocent females. At the same time, the exposure of exactly what went on in the confessional gave these same men (in the form of the male reader) a perverse erotic satisfaction by providing a type of voyeuristic opportunity. One book by an ex-Roman Catholic Priest, Fr. Chiniquy, *The Priest the Woman and the Confessional* (1878) plays on the fears of husbands and fathers that their wives and daughters are in danger of being debauched by the priest in the confessional. He condemns the 'abominable questions' put to women at their confession by their confessors, admitting, 'Were husbands cognizant of one-tenth of what is going on between the confessor and their wives, they would rather die, see them dead, than degraded to such a degree.'[35] Chiniquy reveals his own experiences when he was a Catholic priest and maintains that it was a torture to him to confess sins. He sees the priest as the 'vilest seducer' while women faint in the confessional box as a result of having to speak about sexual matters. He blames the church for his past deeds; 'my infallible church was mercilessly forcing me to oblige those poor, trembling, weeping, desolate girls and women to swim with me and all her priests in those waters of Sodom and Gomorrah'.[36]

Chiniquy tells the story of Mary, a pupil in a convent school whose confessor perverted her through his probing with questions about sexual matters. Soon she began to enjoy the 'dirty talk', he seduces her, and they live together in 'the most sinful intimacy' for more than a year. Eventually Mary returns home and tries to reform but her new, young confessor starts the questions again and corrupts her. She confesses, 'I have done things with him which I hope you will never request me to reveal to you for they are too monstrous to be repeated, even in the confessional, by a woman to a man.' Before Mary dies of her shame, on her deathbed she confesses to Chiniquy, 'I pity the poor priests the day our fathers will know what becomes of the purity of their daughters in the hands of their confessors. Father would surely kill my last two confessors if he could know how they have destroyed his poor child.'[37] The liaisons between priest and confessor are presented as perversions of the relationships between husband and wife. The story of Mary ends with a fur-

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[34]*Ibid.*, p. 380 this quotation is attributed to Gregory the Great at the end of the sixth century.
[35]Fr. Chiniquy, *The Priest the Woman and the Confessional* (London, W.T. Gibson, 1878), p. iii.
[36]*Ibid.*, p. 8.
[37]*Ibid.*, pp. 20–1.

ther warning about lascivious priests, as one of the priests who seduced Mary calls Chiniquy to his bedside as he is dying. The priest confesses that he has destroyed 95 of his female penitents. Chiniquy warns, 'Very few priests escape from falling into the pit of the most horrible moral depravity the world has ever known, through the confession of females.'[38]

Chiniquy asserts that once a woman has been perverted she becomes as lascivious as the male. Furthermore, once a woman has experienced the seduction of the confessional, it becomes like a drug to her: 'She has drunk the poisonous cup filled by the *Mother of Harlots* and see she has found the wine of her prostitution sweet. She will henceforth delight in her spiritual and secret orgies.'[39] The assumption here is that once a woman's sexuality has become aroused she becomes a dangerous, passionate being, the only chance of redemption is in death. The Victorian ideal of the passive woman whose function was marriage and procreation and whose education was to bring out her natural submission to authority, was set against the image of the insatiable whore. Male concerns about female sexuality underlined that they were either facilitators of continence or incontinent. In his book on Victorian sexuality, *The Dark Angel*, Fraser Harrison indicates how the writers of this literature managed to depict two such different representations of the female character. He argues that in a patriarchal society male sexuality was credited with impressive powers and no woman could be entirely indifferent to a man's sexual attention or unaltered by it. Traditional medical thinking maintained that whilst in men sexual desire was inherent and spontaneous, in women it lay dormant until aroused. Once aroused, female ardour could not be cooled; such was the magic of the male touch.[40] With this general perception the writers could build numerous perversions on to a basic mistrust of celibate men and women. This view of female sexuality was in line with eighteenth and nineteenth-century thinking about women in general, and concerns about female insatiability. Victorian psychiatrists feared uncontrolled female sexuality, which they believed to be a major symptom of insanity in women.[41] This therefore added to the fire in the arguments as men were already worried about irrepressible, sexual females. Chiniquy indicates the power of the Catholic Church over its female followers, 'It is through woman that the Pope wants to conquer the world. It is supremely important that he should enslave and degrade her by keeping her at his feet as his footstool, that she may become a passive instrument in the accomplishment of his vast and profound scheme.'[42]

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[38]*Ibid.*, p. 33.
[39]*Ibid.*, p. 63.
[40]Fraser Harrison, *The Dark Angel. Aspects of Victorian Sexuality* (London, Sheldon Press, 1977), pp. 31–3.
[41]For further explanation see: Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830–1980* (London, Virago Press, 1987), pp. 74–8.
[42]Fr. Chiniquy, *The Priest, the Woman and the Confessional*, p. 58.

To address Protestant concerns, a men-only meeting was convened at the Shoreditch Tabernacle on the 10 January 1895 to discuss the dangers of the confessional. It was reported that 1,700 men attended and that the assembly was presided over by the Rev. W. Cuff. At the meeting the large crowd of men heard about the shameful questioning in the confessional and decided that it was nothing less than 'tampering with womanly virtue, undermining English family and home life, and generally lowering and degrading the moral standard of the nation from every point of view.' The men took the view that, 'Not allowed to marry themselves, the Priests of Rome are turned loose like wild beasts upon the community to gratify their passions at the expense of the peace of other men's homes and to the ruin and demoralization of their wives and daughters.'[43] The confessional was perceived as an affront to their masculinity, the priests usurping their position of head of the family. A priest was seen to 'groom' a girl in order to seduce her. He would work on the passions by 'a graduated scale of literary and pictorial excitement.' The 'unsuspecting confidence of girlhood prepared him for an easy prey.'[44] In 1860, *The Times* reported that forty-year-old, attractive Don Gurlino of Turin had seduced upwards of thirty-three young girls whom he 'violated' in a 'foul and atrocious manner' by putting to use his own personal attraction and spiritual guidance by means of the confessional: 'Both influences were skillfully brought to bear in the exciting privacy of the confessional. All the opportunities it affords of gradually, yet surely, tainting the mind were employed with too fatal a success. The wretch was, it appears, in the habit of accompanying his oral temptations with the appliances and means of obscene books and lascivious prints to heighten their effect.'[45]

The imagery of the 'budding flower' being tainted and ruined by mature priests reflects the Victorian obsession of defloration of young girls. Brothels offered young virgins for sale and a man might pay to deflower her in an environment where he would be able to enjoy her screams of pain.[46] The image of a young, innocent girl being debauched in the confessional by her

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[43]*Ibid.*, p. 26.
[44]Robert Steele, *The Priest in the Confessional: A Warning with Evidence Against the Immorality and Blasphemy of Priests in Absolution* (London, The Author, 1877), p. 38.
[45]*Ibid.*, p. 38.
[46]For an example of how this idea developed, see: W.T. Stead, 'Maiden Tribute', pp. 4, 5, 8, 'The Brothel Keeper', in *Pall Mall Gazette* (London, 1885) cited in Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London* (London, Virago Press, 1992), p. 101; Ronald Pearsall, *The Worm in the Bud*, p. 350, states: 'the exploitation of young girls is the most repellant aspect of Victorian sex'. In Ivan Bloch's *Sexual Life in England* (1938 edition) a woman in the West End is reported as saying that 'in my house you can gloat over the cries of the girls with the certainty that no one will hear them besides yourself' a statement confirmed by other sources.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST.

"*For England, Home, and Beauty.*"—*Old Song.*

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ANTI-PAPA," &c.

A SOUL-TRAP OF SATAN.

"When the people become convinced that the Confessional is simply a soul-trap of Satan, and the well of all spiritual pollutions, the popular mind will revolt, and the system will be overthrown."—*Dr. Fulton, of New York.*

WILLIAM WILEMAN, 27, Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, London, E C.

Fig. 8.4. Thomas Godfery Jack, *Beauty and the Beast* (1899). With kind permission from the British Library

father confessor therefore fed into an established Victorian fantasy. An example can be seen in Thomas Godfrey Jack's book *Beauty and the Beast: A Soul Trap of Satan* (1899) (Fig. 8.4), in which a young, innocent girl is debauched in the confessional by her father confessor, the girl portrayed as a passive victim. He writes, 'fancy a young and guileless girl on her knees before an old and libidinous priest, he questioning her meanwhile from the impure catechisms of Dens and Liguori [Roman Catholic theologians]'.[47] The frontispiece of the book provides a picture of an innocent girl confessing to a fat, leering priest with a representation of the devil behind him and a serpent sliding from under his cassock; the serpent is an obvious phallic representation, rising with its mouth open revealing its forked tongue in an overtly suggestive manner. Jack writes, 'Into this early paradise of our nature the Romish Priest enters like Satan into Eden, and then farewell forever all that engaging frankness and sweetness which so endear the young to those of maturer age. The budding flower has been tainted and blighted, and can never be what it was before.'[48] Condemnation of such activities came in the form of Rev. M. Hobart Seymour who expressed his concern over conniving priests entrapping poor unsuspecting girls: 'I know not a greater cruelty, I know not a more unmanly outrage, than to take a young girl – a young, tender, innocent, generous, confiding, loving, warm-hearted girl – of fifteen or sixteen years of age, and ask her to sign away all the flower and blossom of her future life …'[49] His exaggerated rhetoric seems to be hewn from the Gothic horror 'where every vice of earth and every crime of hell is perpetrated, and where the shriek of outraged innocence, and the death sighs of a broken heart, are suppressed and stifled within the walls, and never can be heard in the outer world'.[50]

The critics of Catholicism at this time agreed that enforced celibacy was a root cause of sexual 'perversion' in the Roman Church. In *Popery in its Social Aspect: Being a Complete Exposure of the Immorality and Intolerance of Romanism* (1856), the author ruminates: 'the monastic life, in itself, is peculiarly adapted to promote unhallowed thoughts and desires. Occupation is the natural condition of man … the priesthood, who are encouraged to sin by the facility of absolution from their fellow priests, cannot enjoy abstinence from the occasion of sin. Brought by their very profession into close contact with females in the confessional, they converse with them on the grossest subjects that are unfit for human ears. Bound by un unnatural law

[47]Thomas, Godfrey Jack, *Beauty and the Beast: A Soul-Trap of Satan* (London, William Wileman, 1899), pp. 4–5.
[48]*Ibid*., p. 4.
[49]Rev, Hobart Seymour, *Convents or Nunneries a Lecture in Reply to Cardinal Wiseman* (London, Seeleys, 1852), p. 17.
[50]*Ibid*., p. 22.

of celibacy – placed in circumstances in which their animal passions naturally become ascendant – with females in the confessional, nuns in the cloister at their disposal – is it not likely that immorality will ensue?'[51]

Nineteenth-century, anti-Catholic propaganda used accusations of sexual perversion to drive home its message, and fuelled current suspicions about Catholics as perverted monks, nuns and priests. This can be found in an extensive collection of this type of literature,[52] including more mainstream articles and novels, albeit in a much less barefaced appearance.[53] Such propaganda worked on existent fears of the population and often incorporated existing scandals and concerns. It exemplifies some of the more blatant attacks on the Roman Catholic Church as aspects of the lives and behaviour of nuns, priests and monks were elaborated upon. Outrages and so-called revelations of the convent, the monastery or the confessional box were employed as educative literature for young impressionable women. Other perceived sexual dangers inherent in Catholicism were manipulated into salacious material for the consumption of the Protestant, Victorian male for his edification and titillation.

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[51]Rev. R.P. Blakeney, *Popery in its Social Aspect: Being a Complete Exposure of the Immorality and Intolerance of Romanism* (London, Hamilton Adams & Co., 1856), p. 245.

[52]Also see Rachel McCrindell, *The Convent: A Narrative Founded on Fact* (London, Aylott and Jones, 1848); Jules Michelet, *Priests Women and Families* [sic], Translated from the French by C. Cochs (London, Longman Brothers, Green and Longman, 1846); David Bryce, *The History of the Confessional Unmasked. The Liberty of England Imperilled by the Confessing Priest* (London, The Protestant Evangelical Mission & Electoral Union, 1873); L.H. Tonna, *Nuns and Nunneries: Sketches Compiled Entirely from Romish Authorities* (London, Seeleys, 1852).

[53]For example, see Charlotte Brontë, *Villette* and Francis Trollope, *Father Eustace.*

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Tropics of Sexuality: Sexual Excesses and 'Oriental Vices' in the British Raj

Pashmina Murthy

One of the myths surrounding the birth of Lord Ayyappa suggests that he was born of the union of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu/Mohini. In order to obtain the divine nectar or ambrosia, the gods had to enlist the aid of the demons in churning the ocean of milk. To thwart the demons from drinking the nectar and gaining immortality, Lord Vishnu took the form of Mohini, a beautiful and seductive enchantress. His/Her ploy was successful – the demons were distracted, and the gods consumed the ambrosia amongst themselves. Lord Shiva saw Mohini and was filled with desire for her. They embraced, and the result of this union was the birth of Lord Ayyappa, who is also known as 'Hariharasuta' – the son of two fathers.

The myth, which might be read as a resolution of same-sex love, is merely one of the many legends surrounding the birth of Sri Ayyappa, whose temple is located in Kerala, southern India. More intriguing is the fact that only men or women who do not menstruate – either young girls who have not reached puberty or women who have already reached menopause – are allowed to enter the temple. This practice is emblematic of a more prevalent attitude, one that entered into the performance of daily life during successive cycles of colonialism and reached its climactic point with the British rule in India: that of the cult of male homosociality and the corresponding fear and denigration of female sexuality.

The attitude of the British towards Indian sexuality in the nineteenth century is perhaps best encapsulated in the words of Georges Hardy speaking to a group of potential functionaries in 1929, 'L'homme reste homme tant qu'il est sous le regard d'une femme de sa race'[1] ('A man remains a man as long as he is under the gaze of a woman of his own race.') Hardy's words are striking on several accounts – not only do they signal the importance of race and gender in demarcating boundaries of acceptable sexuality,

[1]Quoted in Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002), p. 1.

but they posit the European woman as the European male's only salvation from the contagions of the tropics.[2] In other words, men are likely to stray and fall prey to the fantasized sexual excess of the eroticized East.[3] At the same time, the cautionary words also established women as the medium through which colonial relations were maintained.[4] While the social condition of women might have reflected the ideological and material conditions of society, colonialism created and perpetuated an essentially male homosocial environment in which a woman was paradoxically a necessary and dispensable component. More significantly, however, Hardy implicitly cautions the functionaries of the real danger: the threat of being unmanned.

The native woman was exoticized and demonized in equal measure. Her sexuality was imagined to be wild and uninhibited but also ferocious. Cynthia Humes believes the demonization of the goddess Kali from 1820 to 1840 to be concomitant with the creation of particular stereotypes about Indian women in contrast to British women. She explains that the demonization 'reflected developments in the 1840s, when more British women

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[2]Michèle Cohen discusses the changing associations of the 'domestic' sphere in late eighteenth-century England. Where once it was relegated strictly to the 'private', the domestic realm became an 'idealised space for the production of a virtuous and moral nation'. In relation to Hardy's words, the terms 'domestic' and the 'virtuous' shift from being attributed to all women to being a specific characteristic of European women. Cohen, 'Manliness, Effeminacy and the French: Gender and the Construction of National Character in Eighteenth-Century England' in Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen (eds) *English Masculinities, 1660–1800* (London and New York, Longman, 1999).

[3]The figure of the nabob in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century India exemplified the contamination of the British body. During this romanticized orientalist period of British occupation, many English officials such as David Ochterlony, mimicked the upper-class north Indian lifestyle (Ochterlony was reputed to be accompanied by his thirteen wives when he went out for a stroll each evening). It was commonplace to have at least one Indian mistress; there are several romantic tales of the love between English officials like William Hickey or Job Charnock and their Indian wives/mistresses. Moreover, 'becoming native' or the process of Indianization also extended to such mundane tasks as grooming. For an excellent analysis of the way the body (both of the British male and of the Indian) was perceived and moulded to suit the image of the empire, see E.M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c. 1800–1947* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press; Malden, MA: Blackwell Press, 2001).

[4]Revathi Krishnaswamy concurs with this assumption by delineating women as the lens through which interactions between colonizing and colonized men are conducted. She adds, 'Nineteenth century colonial ideology and politics are marked by the historic emergence of womanhood as the most powerful signifier of colonial superiority [...] The social status of women thus became the ultimate and unequivocal measure of civil society', *Effeminism: The Economy of Colonial Desire* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1998), p. 47.

emigrated to serve as suitable mates for British men, thus preserving British males from cavorting with, if not marrying, Indian women. The darker Hindu woman was marginalized as a sex partner and imagined as the uncontrolled "native." This was in explicit contrast to an idealized Mem Sahib, the white "Madam Sir" whose chastity and patriotism were proof of her proper role as facilitator to the Sahib in the colonialist project.'[5] While the overarching narrative with the rise of evangelicalism signified the European woman as the site of morality and virtue, the secondary importance accorded to European women in the British Raj indicates the presence of other, more surreptitious, narratives that had to remain concealed. As Georges Hardy cautioned, European women had to keep strict vigil on their men. Moreover, they were also viewed as vessels of reproduction that had to produce more 'manly' men to serve the empire and thus, indirectly aid in the colonial mission.[6] Fewer settlers now adopted native practices or married native women. By mid-nineteenth century, the British became increasingly settled in their role as colonizers, and the presence of European women aided in widening the social distance between the settlers and the natives.

Indian society in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British discourse is varyingly characterized as 'degenerate', 'primitive', and 'despotic'. The timidity of native[7] men was reconfigured as effeminacy and unaccompanied native women in public places were labelled 'vagrant', revealing a concern for fluidity in the signifiers of masculinity and femininity. The labelling showcased the impossibility of acceding to virtue; the immorality of the Indian subject was construed as having its origin in religion and false idolatry. Religious movements like that of Bhakti and certain spiritual forms of goddess worship favoured a feminine identification, even among its male worshippers. The Indians seemed to be charged with precocious and excessive sexuality with practices such as polygamy, child marriage, and concubinage. From the perspective of the British, the sexuality of the Indian

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[5]Cynthia Ann Humes, 'Wrestling with Kali: South Asian and British Constructions of the Dark Goddess', *Encountering Kali: in the Margins, at the Center, in the West*, in Rachel Fell McDermott and Jeffrey J. Kripal (eds) (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2003), p. 161.

[6]Another possibility, as Macmillan adds, was that their presence in India would serve to augment their husbands' careers: 'the old joke among the men was that the only way to get on was to make yourself useful to other men's wives or to have a wife who was useful to other men'. The eighteenth-century toast in British India of 'a lass and a lakh a day' was replaced by a heteronormative and exclusive British family model. The practice of marrying Indian women or of having Indian mistresses began to be frowned upon; Margaret MacMillan, *Women of the Raj* (New York, Thames and Hudson, 1988), p. 52.

[7]My use of the term 'native' interchangeably with 'Indian' is to retain the historical specificities of early nineteenth-century official discourse.

was always already an excess or a deviance – in other words, a perversion – and permeated all aspects of native life.[8]

The argument that perversion is an indispensable step in the development of subjectivity establishes the importance of perversity in understanding social relations.[9] However, by this estimate, perversity is still a stage in psychic development as opposed to being a necessary category of social structure. Moreover, the category of the 'pervert' is an all-male bastion which finds its counterpart in exclusivity in the female 'hysteric'. Taking an opposing track, I suggest that in the exemplar of the Indian colony, where the perceived sexuality of the native was already connoted as 'perverse', perversity itself becomes normalized and the society is perceived as one suffused with pleasure and enjoyment without the constricting effects of the law of restraint. The colonial relationship demarcates normative sexual relations, and indeed, sexual patterns of behaviour, and it does so not at the level of class or gender, but at that of race. What I aim to show in this article is that the terms coined in medico-judicial discourse of the late nineteenth century to identify sexual irregularities are already and continually performed in the colonial dyad. The nomenclature *per se* is irrelevant; however, the delineation of sexual practices in the late-Victorian period betrays the need to reify and contain difference in a recognizable alterity. More importantly, though, it allows for a partial access to particular realms of pleasure that are otherwise taboo; it allows for the self to become dangerously 'Other'.

While the play of alterity does not necessarily lend itself to neat compartmentalization or binaries whereby one is the negative image of the other, colonial representations, at the discursive level, appear often to emphasize and propagate a dichotomous and hierarchical structure of racial characteristics and behaviour. Stoler touches upon one such dichotomy in her

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[8]In an analysis of prostitution in nineteenth-century Bengal, Sumanta Banerjee describes the change in perceptions of prostitution with the arrival of nineteenth-century capitalism. He explains: 'In the ancient puranas and mythology of India (from which Hindus derive their religious inspiration), the prostitute is allotted a well-defined position bereft of any moral reproach. In the Padma-purana, for instance, we are told that in the war between the *devas* (gods) and *asuras* (demons), women who were ravished by their enemies were asked to follow the life of prostitutes at the royal palaces or at temples, or in Brahmin households!' (p. 23) In the nineteenth-century however, prostitutes became subject to 'moral and legal boundaries' (p. 22) and were excluded from the rest of the society as 'outcasts' (*ibid.*). Interestingly, Banerjee claims that it was only after this change that predominantly 'rootless and displaced women' became prostitutes and that violence against women increased in the state (p. 30); Sumanta Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitute in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (Calcutta, Seagull Books, 2000).

[9]Here, I am referring specifically to a collection of essays by Molly Anne Rothenberg, Dennis Foster, and Slavoj Žižek (eds), *Perversion and the Social Relation* (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2003).

assertion that the 'demasculinization of colonized men and the hypermasculinity of European males are understood as key elements in the assertion of white supremacy'.[10] For the project of colonialism to truly succeed, it has to generate and sustain the myth of imperialism – that of a contact between a superior and an inferior race – and it does so at the level of the political, the social, and the cultural.[11] 'White supremacy' must constantly assert itself to conceal its own vacuity. Rather than settling into a fixed set of identifications, the interstices of masculinity play with notions of sameness and difference. The effeminization of colonized males paradoxically brings into being their masculinization, while the virility of British men is perpetually haunted by the spectre of being emasculated.

The colonial paradigm in British India demonstrates Spivak's idea of 'worlding' that transforms the largely economic enterprise of imperialism into a civilizing mission. The alterity of the colonized, albeit necessary, is softened by rendering the native pliable. The meekness of the Indian male, hitherto a sign only of gentility and refinement, also gets denigrated as pusillanimity, allowing him to be signified as racially and culturally inferior, and consequently, ready to be moulded and civilized.[12] Parama Roy reveals in this urge for cultural transformation a more surreptitious desire for knowingness. She observes that 'somewhat uneasily linked to this notion of native permeability, malleability, and lack of essence is the notion that the native is an opaque entity who must be known, categorized, and fixed in the most complete way possible [...] It is in order to constitute the native, then, as a knowable entity that impersonation, surveillance, and interpellation by a colonial observer are necessary.'[13] The panopticism that Roy alludes to, however, also appears to conceal within its fold a surreptitious layer of

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[10]Stoler, p. 46.

[11]The semantic difference between 'imperialism' and 'colonialism' has often provided fodder for debate among historians. In 1902, J.A. Hobson differentiated between the two terms in the degree of aggressiveness contained within each. In comparison to imperialism that entailed the actual conquest of territory, Hobson believed colonialism to be more of a cultural enterprise. Edward Said reverses Hobson's formula by demarcating imperialism as 'the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory' from colonialism, which he saw as a 'consequence' of imperialism entailing the actual settlements in this foreign territory (*Culture and Imperialism*, p. 9). While I agree with Said's delineation of the terms, I think the larger framework of empire-building often brings about a semantic slippage between the two, such that 'colonialism' cannot be divorced from the attitudes it engenders or is engendered by.

[12]For a more detailed analysis of the shifts in how femininity-in-masculinity was perceived, refer to Revathi Krishnaswamy, *Effeminism: The Economy of Colonial Desire* and Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*.

[13]Parama Roy, *Indian Traffic: Identities in Question in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1998), p. 31.

homoeroticism. Knowing the Indian male entails, then, being able to locate his masculinity in a sort of fixity. But the shifting signifiers of masculinity – wherein it was the virile Rajput male, and not the effeminate Bengali, who was often the one suspected of engaging in homosexual practices – insert an uneasy indeterminacy in categorizing the native male.[14]

Masking masculinity or feigning femininity?

The fear that fuelled the panopticistic enterprise rose during the course of the nineteenth century. Lurking beneath the surface of the colonial interaction was the threat of insubordination, of native revolt, and of the overthrow of British power. This apprehension crystallized into a fear that native men wanted to sully the purity of white women – an alarm that became construed as the 'Black Peril'.[15] The panic grew so strong that during the mutiny of 1857, unfounded and unverified 'atrocity rumors'[16] of European women raped and mutilated and their babies murdered took on a life of their own. The imagined construct of the Indian male as the sexual predator raping European women (thereby, in a sense, emasculating European men) seems part of the back and forth movement in the interstitial passage between virility and effeminacy. As Stoler argues, 'Although novels and memoirs position European women as categorically absent from the fantasies of European men, these very men imagined their women to be desired and seductive figures to others.'[17] The fantasy of being unmanned by the native men was projected onto the asexual figure of the British woman.[18]

Both Indian and English women were primarily a conduit through which a homosocial discourse – one that was moreover characteristic of the British-Indian colonial encounter – could be made possible. The Orient represented sexual thrills, dangers, and transgressions in the British imagination. The exoticism of the native women was matched by the sensuality of the Indian men. But this sensuality and the perceived homosexuality threatened to demasculinize the British men. India presented a contradiction from the

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[14]Krishnaswamy, p. 32.

[15]Stoler, p. 58.

[16]Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, *Crime and Empire: The Colony in Nineteenth-Century Fictions of Crime* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 138.

[17]Stoler, p. 58.

[18]British women married to officials in India were viewed at times in a desexualized vein as women who upheld morality and decorum. MacMillan indicates that 'married women were allowed to be experienced in the ways of the world, but they always had to remain ladies (which meant, at least before the First World War, not wearing imitation jewellery, perfume, or make-up' (*Women of the Raj*, p. 52). Rather tellingly, among the prescriptions for unmarried girls who came to India was that they should be innocent and 'perhaps even boyish' (*ibid.*)

basic assumptions concerning homosexuality; while one of the traits implicitly understood as signifying homosexuality was effeminacy,[19] in India it was the virile Rajput who was suspected of homosexual practices and who was, nonetheless, the most eroticized. The shifting signifiers of masculinity confounded the British, who struggled to classify and fix constructs of sexuality in a recognizable otherness. Krishnaswamy agrees, adding: 'Homosexual yet manly, heterosexual yet effeminate, Indian masculinity injects a fearful indeterminacy into the economy of colonial desire.'[20] The only way for the British to reaffirm hypermasculine white supremacy was by symbolically emasculating the virile Rajput males. Faced with a curious mix of desire and revulsion for the martial races, the British needed to persist with the construct of native men as effeminate. Only by insisting loudly on the 'unmanned' native men – an effeminacy that was moreover reconfigured as contagious – could the colonizers maintain the appropriate social distance between themselves and the people they ruled.

The British seemingly took pains to sustain the construction of India as a place where the masculinity of the British men was at stake. On the one hand, northern India fell squarely in the 'sotadic zone' demarcated by Sir Richard Burton, reifying the colony's link to homosexuality.[21] On the other hand, all the sexual pleasures and excesses that the tropics promised forebode the destruction of British manhood; the native female prostitutes embodied the dangers of venereal diseases and 'the prospect of homosexuality was revealed in guarded terms by the authorities whenever there was talk of excluding prostitutes from cantonments'.[22] The colonized land and its people thus seemed to conspire to emasculate the British male.

In a similar vein, Indian men were purposely denoted as effeminate, so that the British, especially the soldiers who were posted in India, could affirm and assert their own virility and power.[23] In fact, concomitant with narratives of the native soldiers' brutality toward Europeans at the time of the mutiny were tales of the virility of the native women. Indian women in

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[19]Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 93.

[20]Krishnaswamy, p. 32.

[21]The 'sotadic zone' borrows its name from Sotades, a Greek poet. Burton believed that homosexuality was much more likely to be known, tolerated, and practised in the sotadic belt, which included most of the east (parts of Turkey, India, and East Asia, among others); Richard Burton, *The Erotic Traveler*. Ed. Edward Leigh (New York, J.E. Putnam's Sons, 1966), p. 28.

[22]Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics, 1793–1905* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1980), p. 162.

[23]In the first census taken in 1881, there were 145,000 Europeans in a population of 250,000,000. By designating Indian men as effeminate, then, some of the fear of ruling a vast, uncivilized, and therefore potentially unruly culture would be dissipated.

positions of power were said to incite their soldiers to commit some of the worst crimes imaginable. The Queen of Jhansi, according to a report in the Bombay Times, commanded her men to rape and torture British women.[24] These tales adequately showcased the powerlessness of the native men in stark comparison to the masculinized women. In addition, it drove home the point that native women were not to be consorted with either since they had the ability to strip away one's masculinity.

Interestingly, the figure of the female child prostitute presented an unusual problem. On the one hand, child marriage and prostitution (especially among child widows) formed part of the local culture. But the very presence of the sexual child defied the model of 'the innocent child' that began to take shape in England in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.[25] There exists a curious interstitial overlap between childhood and adulthood as it appears in the child prostitute and the child bride in nineteenth-century India. In England, the age of consent until 1861 was designated as 12. It was increased to 13 in 1875 and again to 16 in 1885.[26] In the context of colonial and, indeed, even pre-colonial India, the very notion of who constituted a child depended less on one's age and more on the role being played. Since at the time of marriage the bride and groom would often be between the ages of three and ten, the bride would not be sent to live with her husband and in-laws until puberty or generally until the age of around 12. At this point, both would cease to be considered children and would become adults. Hence, adulthood was often determined by whether the boy was capable of impregnating his wife and the girl was capable of conceiving and carrying a child. By way of example, Sumanta Banerjee cites an interview conducted by a Bengali newspaper in Calcutta in 1851 with a '12-year-old child widow'. Unable to lead the austere life demanded of her as a widow, she fled but was deceived by her neighbour and sold to a brothel for just five rupees.[27] What is missing in this account is the indignation often demanded at the violation of a child's rights and its purity;

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[24]Quoted in Krishnaswamy, p. 67.

[25]Although child prostitution undoubtedly existed in England in the same period, it only became an issue after W.T. Stead's exposé, 'Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon', in 1885. Catherine Robson has questioned Stead's own positionality in the whole investigation and the ways in which his desire comes into play in her book *Men in Wonderland: The Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentleman.* Similarly, Judith Walkowitz has addressed these questions and questioned its narrative itself which equates a 'sexual scandal' into a 'social drama' worthy of national news. Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[26]James R. Kincaid, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (New York and London, Routledge, 1994), p. 70.

[27]Banerjee, p. 79.

when contrasted with the indignation evoked at other heinous practices towards female children, such as female infanticide, child sacrifice, and even the devaluation of the female child in certain communities, the acceptance of child prostitution and child marriage exposes a schism between the official discourse and the prevalent attitude.[28]

The official East Indian company line of non-interference in Indian culture ensured that legislations against several practices that the British found troubling were not passed until after mid-nineteenth century, in the aftermath of the mutiny when Queen Victoria became the Empress of India. For instance, in 1872, the British government in India proposed several measures prohibiting prostitutes from bringing up small girls because it was feared they would simply recruit them into their ranks. However, these measures were opposed by the Bengali bourgeoisie on grounds that it would be impossible to tell the natural children apart from the foster children, and in the absence of a general registration of births, it would not be possible for the prostitutes to furnish proof of the children's birth. This proposal was dropped in favour of a plan to punish those brothel owners who abducted children and forced them to enter the trade. According to a report by John Lambert, Police Commissioner of Calcutta, in 1894, Kulsum Raur, a Muslim brothel owner, and her relatives were prosecuted for abducting fourteen Hindu girls between the ages of seven and fourteen. The girls were returned to their parents, but in the case of four of these girls, the parents refused to take them back 'because they had lived in a brothel owned by a Muslim!'[29] What is of interest here is that it is not the child's sexuality or lack of sexual purity that is of concern to the parents, but the contamination inherent in this mixing of class, caste, and religion.

Legislation concerning prostitution, including child prostitution, occurred almost simultaneously with laws being passed in England for the same. The simultaneity can be largely credited to the 'proto-feminist consciousness'[30] in England that sought to implement similarly progressive measures in the colonies. Child marriage, on the other hand, was a distinctly Indian phenomenon tied to traditions and religious practices. The British administration was, therefore, initially unwilling to interfere in what constituted

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[28]Banerjee, in his writings on prostitution in Bengal, comments extensively on the presence of young girls in brothels. Contrary to popular perception, these girls were not all daughters of prostitutes. Often, they were bought by brothel owners from poor parents, especially during tough economic times such as famines (there were thirty famines between 1851 and 1900). In addition, Banerjee also mentions the barter trade between parents and brothel owners – in exchange for a farmer's daughter, the farmer was given the prostitute's boy, the belief being that neither would be of any use to his/her natural parents (pp. 92–3).

[29]Banerjee, p. 171.

[30]Mukherjee, p. 138.

the private life of the natives.[31] However, the British might conceivably have had an ulterior motive in eventually passing legislation against child marriage; rumours abounded that early consummation led to, what Lord George Hamilton termed, 'that special Oriental vice'[32] – homosexuality. A causal relationship was wrought between effeminacy and premature consummation, such that premature consummation would not only lead to effeminacy in men, but that the reverse would also hold true: effeminate men would be more likely to consummate prematurely.[33] Within such circular logic, it would seem but natural that any offspring to result from such a union would be frail and unhealthy. In fact, Lord Curzon attributed child marriage to be the cause of homosexuality. Confiding to Lord Hamilton, he claimed, 'A boy gets tired of his wife, or of women, at an early age, and wants the stimulus of some more novel or exciting situation.'[34]

Homosexual desire becomes incompatible with the largely heteronormative Victorian ideals. Shiploads of English women being sent to India in the first half of the nineteenth century to find their husbands became a way to not only check settlers from 'going native' but also to rein in Englishmen engaging in homosexual encounters. The desire to make young girls visible, in suppressing female infanticide and in establishing schools exclusively for girls, was never about deflecting sexual curiosity from the largely invisible native woman onto the body of the young girl, but it might have aided in displacing uncomfortable sexual longing for the native male onto the more comfortable and only female alternative: that of the prepubescent, boyish figure of the young girl. The young girl becomes the ideal figure because she is pure and virginal; her virginity is prized by men who, in contrast to the terrifying phantasm of the *vagina dentata* of the mother figure – owing to her incarnating the sexualized energy or *sakti* of the mother goddess – prefer her immature physical form to mature female genitalia. Sarah Caldwell hypothesizes that sexual relations with a prepubescent girl functions as a resolution to two problematic aspects of male Oedipal desire: 'unconscious fear of his mother's sexuality (in which he is powerless and will be engulfed) and his desire for sex with his daughter (who is herself his property, powerless, an extension of his own body, and boyish

[31]The extent to which the British government in India actually refrained from intervening in the religious and cultural practices of the Indians is, of course, debatable. If, on the one hand, the British abolished *sati* in 1829, they did not pass legislation against female infanticide until 1870. Not only is there a schism in when legislation was actually passed against the various horrific practices, the very selectiveness of the intervention itself questions the adherence to the official policy of non-interference.
[32]Quoted in Ballhatchet, p. 120.
[33]Krishnaswamy, p. 67.
[34]3-12-1902, MSS Eur F111/161. Quoted in Ballhatchet, p. 120.

in appearance; a narcissistic object)'.[35] However, even beyond the unconscious fear of female sexuality, the young girl provided an outlet for a problematic homoerotic attachment: she was almost the same, but not quite.

In devaluing and vilifying women, the culture inadvertently metamorphoses into a masculine homosocial space. In fact, the *Manusmriti* or the *Laws of Manu* – which has often been posited as having defined the parameters of Hindu thought and practice – states at one point that a woman should not enjoy any independence: 'In childhood a woman should be under her father's control, in youth under her husband's, and when her husband is dead, under her sons'.'[36] The *Laws of Manu* held women to be slaves to sensory gratification who therefore needed a man to protect them from waywardness and from themselves. In the light of such terrible myths, Manu's injunctions that the woman always be under the control of the man can be seen to derive from masculine fears of the woman's uncontrollable sexuality and her own potential to emasculate him.[37]

Bengal's cult of pleasure

Despite the image of sexual excess and deviance, Brahmanic Hindu culture was preoccupied with prohibitions against various forms of contamination or pollution.[38] Where mainstream Hinduism delineated the parameters of social and religious structures and relations, one of the more notorious and

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[35]Sarah Caldwell, *Oh Terrifying Mother: Sexuality, Violence and Worship of the Goddess Kali* (New Delhi, Oxford UP, 1999), p. 220.

[36]*The Laws of Manu*. Trans. Wendy Doniger and Brian K. Smith (Kolkata, Penguin Books, 1991), p. 116.

[37]Sarah Caldwell's observation on the predominance of the phallic mother in the male imagination is supported by G.M. Carstairs, who proposes that ideally, 'woman is regarded as a wholly devoted, self-forgetful mother, or as a dutifully subservient wife, who is ready to worship her husband as her lord. In fact, however, women are regarded with an alternation of desire and revulsion. Sexual love is considered the keenest pleasure known to the senses: but it is felt to be destructive to a man's physical and spiritual well-being. Women are powerful, demanding, seductive – and ultimately destructive. On the plane of creative phantasy, everyone worships the Mataji, the Goddess, who is a protective mother to those who prostrate themselves before her in abject supplication, but who is depicted also as a sort of demon, with gnashing teeth, who stands on top of her male adversary, cuts of his head and drinks his blood. This demon-goddess has the same appearance as a witch – and that brings her nearer home, because *any* woman whose demands one has refused is liable to be feared as a witch who may exact terrible reprisals.' (p. 170); 'Hindu Personality Formation: Unconscious Processes', in T.G. Vaidyanathan and Jeffrey J. Kripal (eds), *Vishnu on Freud's Desk: A Reader in Psychoanalysis and Hinduism* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 165–84.

[38]*The Laws of Manu* details the social duties and obligations to be performed by members of the different castes and classes. It gives one of the most comprehensive ideas of social structures and the injunctions that maintained those structures.

secretive sects within Hinduism sought to subvert those very structures. Tantrism is perhaps most notorious today in popular culture as synonymous with sexual practices. The extent to which yogic sexual intercourse within a ritualistic context is an integral component of Tantrism is questionable, with some tantrikas attributing very little importance to it. In contradistinction to mainstream Hinduism, however, Tantrism does appear to entail the transgression of boundaries of decorum and propriety within a ritualized setting and discards binary understandings of the world such that the line between good and bad or between the sacred and the profane is blurred. Engaging deliberately and unabashedly in the dark underbelly of Hindu life, tantrikas (practitioners of tantra) are often maligned by many Hindus. The invisibility of tantrikas in recent decades is a far cry from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, when they enjoyed tolerance in Bengali society, if not acceptance. Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the spiritual guru of Swami Vivekananda, was one of the most famous religious personages of early- to mid-nineteenth century Bengal and was also rumoured to have been initiated in tantric practices. While his disciples and followers at the time may not have been so numerous as to receive particular mention, Ramakrishna is, having lived during most of the Victorian era in the seat of British power, the quintessential symbol of the manner in which a religio-cultural movement arises and is established within the framework of a distinctly socio-political event – the continuing subjugation of the Indian peoples at the hands of the British.

In a region which already celebrated the festival of the great goddess Durga each year, Ramakrishna truly popularized the cult of the divine feminine. Femininity in the Indian cultural imagination is invested with the dual image of the sacrificial and benevolent mother on the one hand and the sexually voracious and devouring predator on the other. Unlike the western paradigm of the virgin and the whore, however, the female in India can be at once one and the other. She is the pure virgin, but she always embodies the possibility of turning into the predator once she discovers her own sexuality. This becomes most evident in the mythified representation of the mother goddess. Seen as the benevolent and protective Parvati or Durga, she is also transformed into Kali, whose wrath can only be contained once her thirst for male fluids (blood, semen, and saliva) is appeased. In her avatar as Bhadrakali, she is depicted as a beautiful and dangerous unmarried, virgin girl. Her virginity creates desire and anger for which she must be placated with male life-fluids.[39]

It is perhaps not by chance that Kali came to occupy such a prominent position in nineteenth-century British discourse. Representing the most ter-

[39]Sarah Caldwell treats this subject in detail in her book, *Oh Terrifying Mother: Sexuality, Violence and Worship of the Goddess Kali*. Analysing the motif of the thirst for male fluids, she says: 'This fluid fertilizes and cools the hot female womb but weakens and drains the man who gives it…even to the point of death. The motif of drinking blood is clearly a symbolic displacement of the intake of semen by the vagina, and in some stories…the two fluids are interchangeable', p. 164.

rifying aspect of the divine feminine energy, Kali is depicted as a fierce warrior possessed with a voracious sexuality that can be appeased not only through intercourse with her divine consort, Siva, but also through the consumption of her (male) foes' blood and other (male) fluids. No wonder then, to the British, Kali personified, as Cynthia Ann Humes claims, 'the most extreme, sexual, and irrational embodiment of the worst tendencies inherent in the essentialized Indian mind'.[40]

Kali regales in the destruction of her foes, wearing a garland of their skulls around her neck and fashioning a skirt from their severed hands. At the same time, her purported pre-eminence over Siva – as illustrated in the image of Kali standing on the prostrate form of her consort – was read as proof of the aggression of the Indian woman, sexually and otherwise, thereby revealing the impotence of the Indian male.[41] The demonization of Kali in the early nineteenth century in missionary tracts, government records, and in the popular British imagination fulfils a dual purpose: to resignify the Indian male as effeminate, and to highlight the destructive sway that Indian women hold over their men, as suggested in Hindu mythology.

Among the various sects within Tantrism/Hinduism, of particular interest to this paper are the Sakta and Bhakti traditions, which are not necessarily disparate or mutually exclusive philosophies and practices. Sakti, literally signifying 'power', refers to the divine feminine energy and is usually associated with Kali/Durga, the consort of Siva, although the female deity of any community might be said to personify Sakti. In the Bhakti cult within the Vaisnava strand of Hinduism, the devotee, whether male or female, visualizes himself as Radha, the consort of Krishna.[42] While there sometimes exists a demarcation between the larger Vaisnava and Saiva traditions and even among their

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[40]Cynthia Ann Humes, pp. 149–50.

[41]The image shows Kali with her tongue sticking out standing on the prostrate form of Siva. Mainstream Hinduism has interpreted that image as Kali sticking her tongue out in shame for stepping on her husband. In Tantrism, however, the same image has sexual connotations with the dominant Kali sticking her tongue out in ecstasy.

[42]In talking about both the Bhakti and the Sakta traditions, I am being extremely reductive. My goal, however, is merely to point toward a few commonalities among two of the numerous sub-sects of Hinduism and to put forward a larger theoretical framework. In fact, Bhakti, which entails loving worship on the part of the devotee is often intertwined with Sakta worship. In her detailed and nuanced analysis of goddess worship in Bengal, June McDaniel believes that 'while emotional bhakti tends to be the most important form of goddess worship in West Bengal, we see in more urban areas a mixture of devotional love and Vedanta philosophy, which may be called universalist Shakta bhakti or Shakta Vedanta'. June McDaniel, *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls: Popular Goddess Worship in West Bengal* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 188. For a more in-depth look into these two traditions, refer to Karen Pechilis Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti*; Wendell Charles Beane, *Myth, Cult and Symbols in Sakta Hinduism: A Study of the Indian Mother Goddess*; Narendra Nath Bhattacharyya, *History of the Sakta Religion.*

sub-traditions, at the base of the Sakta and Bhakti worship lies the understanding of the plasticity of gender.

Anticipating a Butlerian analysis, the mode of worship within these two traditions reveals the social construction of gender and the inherent fluidity of sexualities. As Revathi Krishnaswamy argues persuasively, regardless of whether the deity is male (as with Krishna or Siva) or female (for instance, Kali), the (usually) male devotee rejects his masculinity in favour of a feminine identification. In the case of the Bhakti worship, Krishnaswamy adds, 'the stance of the ideal devotee is identical with the stance of the ideal woman, for the goal of the bhakta is to become completely open to being penetrated and possessed by the male deity'.[43] Although this assumes and imposes a heterosexual exemplar,[44] there exists a conflation between the erotic and the mystical, where the line delineating one from the other is not only blurred but is, perhaps, absent.

The complexity of this mystico-erotic devotion is further heightened in different forms of goddess worship. Krishnaswamy puts forth one point of view:

> The bias toward femininity in the stance of the worshiper is also an effect of the nature of the deity when it is visualized as female. Except in Tantrism, in which a fairly straightforward erotic relationship is entertained between male worshiper and female deity, most other forms of goddess worship are driven by a need to avoid an erotic union that is apprehended as annihilation. To avoid the fate of lascivious demons, beings typically dominated and killed by the goddess, male worshipers sometimes become transvestites or even eunuchs, just like the bhaktas of male deities. Thus, the male worshiper must become female either to unite with a male god or to avoid uniting with a female mother goddess.[45]

Krishnaswamy's classification of demons, transvestites, or eunuchs puts forth one perspective. But, as we see with Ramakrishna, the devotee as lover is merely one of the many states in which worship can be performed; Ramakrishna's preferred states were those of the child or the handmaiden.[46] Moreover, to posit a 'fairly straightforward erotic relationship' in Tantrism is perhaps debatable. Although the ritual practice of *maithuna* or sexual intercourse (in the case of the Vaisnava tantric cults, that could also take the

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[43]Krishnaswamy, p. 42.
[44]*Ibid.*, p. 42.
[45]*Ibid.*, pp. 42–3.
[46]For an in-depth look into Ramakrishna's life and detailed analysis of his ideology, refer to Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Kali's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the life and teachings of Ramakrishna* (Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1995).

form of *parakiya* or sexual intercourse with somebody else's wife) is one of the five ritualized practices which every initiate is rumoured to have engaged in and the most notorious one, the eroticism contained in the practice is bound in layers of mystical discourse that discourages – ideologically, at any rate – separating one from the other. However, performing the rituals of the five m's was often open to abuse; Ramakrishna frequently evinced disgust at the blatant and unashamed manner in which other tantrikas, such as the Kartābhajās, took pleasure in consuming wine (*madya*), meat (*mamsa*), and fish (*matsya*) and showed desire while practicing *maithuna* (yogic or tantric sexual union).[47]

Ramakrishna Paramahansa's ideology is closely allied to that of the bhakti cults, which Krishnaswamy refers to, in the malleability of gender and the worship of the divine feminine energy or Sakti. But where the bhakta chooses to transform his own sexuality, Ramakrishna also desexualized the goddess and effaced her erotic energies in favour of a benign maternal benevolence: woman, not as the lover of the tantrika, but only as mother, devoid of all erotic charge.[48] Nevertheless, the absence of the boundary between the religious and the erotic domains would be gradually pathologized throughout the Victorian era. Hugh B. Urban explains this shift in perceptions as a change in the official line from the Orientalist viewpoint of the late eighteenth century, which entertained a romantic conception of native culture, to the 'Indophobic view' of the Utilitarians.[49] He adds, 'British middle- and upper-class sensibilities of the late nineteenth century insisted on the proper separation of religion and sexuality: excessive religious celibacy and sexual licentiousness were both considered dangerous perversions. They came increasingly to

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[47]For a thorough analysis of the Kartābhajā sect, refer to Hugh B. Urban, *The Economics of Ecstasy: Tantra, Secrecy, and Power in Colonial Bengal* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2001). According to Urban, Ramakrishna, who directed most of his ire towards the Kartabhajas, thought of them as '"bitches" or "whores" (*magi*), who engaged in sexual rituals, perverse relations with small boys, and other unspeakable acts' (p. 10). Urban adds, 'Since its origins, the Kartabhaja tradition has been pervaded by controversy and scandal, centering largely around the question of Tantric sexual practices – above all, the practice of *parakiya* love, or intercourse with another man's wife. Throughout the newspapers and popular literature of the nineteenth century, the Kartabhajas are ridiculed for their decadent morality and their fondness of women, wine, and pleasures of the flesh' (p. 162).

[48]Although now in a post-Freudian and post-Oedipal context, the figure of the mother as exempt from any erotic investment requires greater analysis (especially within a heterosexual exemplar), I would argue that the cultural particularities of nineteenth-century India and religious asceticism in Hinduism necessitate a different mode of study. Refer to the section on 'Theoretical Interventions: Anticipating Psychoanalysis?' for a more detailed examination of this issue.

[49]Hugh B. Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2003), p. 47.

regard only one form of sexual relation to be proper and healthy – namely, heterosexual marriage.'[50] Implicit, perhaps, in this critique is the racial component, wherein only the monogamous white heterosexual marriage could be considered healthy. Polygamy and the luxury of keeping a harem, which, although not a ubiquitous practice among the Indians, had characterized the imitative lifestyles of many a nabob in the late eighteenth century, was certainly on the wane. But the stereotype of the excessive sexuality of the natives co-existed with awesome stories of asceticism and religious celibacy; however, both were vehement rejections of monogamy and the institution of marriage.

The homosocial/homoerotic encounter that necessitates the exclusion of women is reflected not only through the day-to-day interaction of the colonial dyad, but also through the ostensibly unrelated modes of religious worship. Perhaps the most striking indeterminacy that Ramakrishna and other religious personages of his stature injected into Western understandings of mysticism was that pleasure was not routed through the more acceptable channel of asceticism but through a brazen sensuality. Ramakrishna may have been married, but when he didn't view his wife as a *sakhi* (friend) with whom, his own gender effaced, he would worship Krsna, he would worship her as the mother goddess. His attitude towards women appears emblematic of a larger cultural trait wherein marriage constituted the socially acceptable course but was sometimes accompanied with a denigration and/or desexualization of the woman.

Parama Roy also locates Ramakrishna's ideology within a disregard of women and wealth. He conflated lust and a greed for monetary pleasures in the term *kaminikanchan*, which Roy defines as 'woman-as-seductive-figure and gold'[51] and signified this as a hindrance in the path to truth. 'For Ramakrishna, attachment to wealth or to woman in this sense constituted the two most potent forms of enslavement to which the (heterosexual) male was subject. Of the two, *kamini* – for Ramakrishna, almost always a powerful, sexually voracious, and irresistible figure – was the more dangerous and therefore to be guarded against by vulnerable and exploited males.'[52] By portraying thus the dangers facing heterosexual masculinity, Ramakrishna rejected the conventional state of the married heterosexual male. Spiritual practices made acceptable those 'perversions' that were being continually performed in colonial India – the fear of the sexually insatiable woman was but a mask for a more pervasive and prevalent homosocial investment.

June McDaniel has characterized the particular strain of goddess worship that Ramakrishna engaged in as part of 'Shakta universalism'. She explains,

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[50]*Ibid.*, p. 57.
[51]Parama Roy, p. 95.
[52]*Ibid.*, p. 96.

'In its philosophy, Shakta universalism is a transformation of Shakta classical tantra, with the addition of devotional bhakti. The general outlook remains, with the goddess as infinite consciousness, who in her formless (*nirguna*) aspect is ultimate and a great ocean, but in her *saguna* form likes worship, especially puja and visualization. In Shakta universalist practice, however the philosophy recedes into the background and bhakti comes to dominate – both for the goddess as *Brahman* and for Ramakrishna himself.'[53] However, the strong undercurrent of eroticism that flowed through Ramakrishna's mode of worship or bhakti at times embarrassed his own disciples. In fact, his most well-known and well-regarded disciple, Vivekananda, appeared to have appropriated some of the Western criticisms levelled at Hinduism by seeking to create a new Hinduism – one that would be modelled on the likeness of a monotheistic Christianity. Accordingly, his new masculine Vedanta had little to do with worship of the Goddess and rejected the androgyny favoured by Ramakrishna.[54]

Dressed in ochre robes, Vivekananda espoused a Vedanta that privileged renunciation and the worship of a formless Absolute over the excitable and animated manner that his own guru, Ramakrishna, employed in worshipping the pantheon of gods. Vivekananda's new Hinduism was intellectual and contemplative as opposed to emotional and mystical. He rejected the eroticism encompassed in the myths of Krishna and Kali; instead, he inverted the Sakta belief in the dominance of the feminine principle (*prakrti*) by advocating the primacy of Siva over Sakti and of *purusa* over *prakrti*. In so doing, while Vivekananda succeeded in creating an ideal of Hinduism that was more palatable to the taste of the British rulers, he also, perhaps inadvertently, ensured a normatized and normalized male homosocial space.

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[53]June McDaniel, p. 191.

[54]Another possibility is that the masculinization was the new image of nationalism. Hugh Urban suggests that 'In striking contrast to Ramakrishna's Tantric tendencies, erotic visionary experiences, and childlike devotion to the Dark Mother, Vivekananda promoted a strong, virile, and masculine ideal of a reformed Hinduism that could meet the challenge of the West' (*Tantra,* p. 154). I believe, however, that this image of nationalism could not be as successful primarily since it appropriated the images and terms of the colonizer and tried to translate it in one's own idiom. As the movement for decolonization was to later show, the symbol of nationalism, Gandhi, would reject the Western model of militant nationalism and mobilize resistance specific to Indian practices and beliefs. Nevertheless, as McDaniel points out, the period from around 1890 witnessed the rise of 'religious nationalism' in Bengal. By the first decade of the twentieth century, 'Kali and Durga became the goddesses of revolution, and devotees worshiped them for strength' to oppose the colonizers. 'Secret societies were organized by revolutionaries, who laid their weapons at the altars of Kali temples, and between the years of 1908 and 1917 over one hundred British officials were killed or wounded by members of such societies.' McDaniel, p. 181.

Theoretical interventions: anticipating psychoanalysis?

There is a tension in the image of the goddess as mother and as lover. When Freud put forth his ideas on the oedipal complex, he normatized aggressive heterosexual masculinity in the guise of a son who actively desires his mother. The little boy's own desire for his mother, as Freud demonstrates in analysing the oedipal conflict, is ultimately thwarted by the fear of castration at the hands of his rival in her affections – the father. Several Indic psychoanalysts, however, have contested the universality of the oedipal complex, arguing that the castration dread does not exist among Indian males.[55] As early as 1928, Girindrasekhar Bose claimed that the fear of being castrated was supplanted in the Indian male by a castration wish, a wish that was born out of a natural desire to be a woman. Identifying cultural forms of play among Hindu children – including 'playing the wife' and playing with dolls – Bose insists that it is the wish to be castrated which becomes a normative part of the sexuality of the male child in India, the castration dread only occurring much later as a defense against this wish. The universality of the castration complex has often been emphasized by Freud, and he also opposed Bose's theory on the same grounds. Freud's model, however, does not appear to take cultural specificities of child-rearing into account. In the Hindu/Indian paradigm, the child, particularly the male child, almost never experiences frustration or deprivation – his wishes are never thwarted. Suckling is prolonged to two or two and a half years, but there are instances where the child is not weaned until the age of four.[56]

Bose's theory of wishes contains an essential duality. He believes that the satisfaction of a wish ineluctably leads to the development of its opposite wish. Articulating his conception of wishes within the oedipal framework, he claims that both the male and the female Hindu child must undergo a two-step process of action-identity and ego-identity with parent figures.[57]

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[55]Gananath Obeyesekere offers a socio-cultural interpretation for this crucial difference by locating the necessity of halting the mother-son dyad to the Western individualistic work ethic of capitalist enterprise. In contrast, the Hindu male – usually from a joint family structure – must suppress any display of individuality in the interests of collectivity and to uphold, using a term from Kakar, the 'communal conscience'. For a more detailed analysis, refer to Obeyesekere's essay, 'Further Steps in Relativization: The Indian Oedipus Revisited', in T.G. Vaidyanathan and Jeffrey J. Kripal (eds), *Vishnu on Freud's Desk: A Reader in Psychoanalysis and Hinduism,* pp. 147–62.

[56]For a more detailed analysis of Hindu child-rearing practices, refer to Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World: A Psycho-analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India* (Oxford, OUP, 1978) and G.M. Carstairs, 'Hindu Personality Formation: Unconscious Processes' and Stanley N. Kurtz, 'Psychoanalytic Approaches to Hindu Child Rearing: A Critique', pp. 185–215 both in T.G. Vaidyanathan and Jeffrey J. Kripal (eds).

[57]For a closer look at Bose's theory, refer to his essay, 'The Genesis and Adjustment of the Oedipus Wish', in T. G. Vaidyanathan and Jeffrey J. Kripal (eds), *Vishnu on Freud's Desk: A Reader in Psychoanalysis and Hinduism*, pp. 21–38.

In the first step, the child experiences identity of action with the mother, the primary care-giver. He/She plays an active role, literally playing the maternal role towards its mother, thereby adhering to the imitative function of action-identity. The satisfaction of this role leads naturally to an ego-identity with the mother whereby the father becomes the object of interest. It is at this stage that the male child evinces a wish to be castrated. In the case of the girl, because the psycho-sexual constitution favours a feminine attitude, she remains at the level of ego-identity with the mother. For the male child, on the other hand, the passive feminine attitude towards the father will in turn direct him once again to the two-step process of action-identity and ego-identity, which culminates in his identification with the father by taking the mother as the object of interest. Only through the completion of both forms of identity can the child appreciate the relationship between the parents and his/her relationship with them.

However, Bose cautions us that the feminine attitude is often fraught with the possibility of maladjustment. If the girl remains fixed at this libidinal stage, she fixates on her father as the object-cathexis, and the choice of a husband may be determined by some of the father's characteristics being present in the prospective suitor.[58] In the male child, fixation at this same stage of feminine attitude could lead to the development of passive homosexuality later on. The fixation becomes pathological and the castration wish metamorphoses into a castration fear. The fear can only be combated through the two-step process. The analysand must first perceive action-identity where he takes on the active role of the father towards his own father. From being the castrated figure, the son must become the castrating figure by regarding the emasculated father or father-figure as a woman.

[58]Christiane Hartnack cites a psychological study by Manisha Roy in Bengal which reveals the importance accorded to father-daughter relationships ('Vishnu on Freud's Desk: Psychoanalysis in Colonial India'), pp. 81–106. Hartnack adds: 'the importance of a girl's father as the "first" man in her life, whom she has to give up when she joins her husband and his father, grandfather, brothers, cousins, uncles, and other relatives in his home. Her own firstborn son is of major importance to her emotionally, as he helps her to redefine her position in her husband's alien family.' (p. 96) The significance of the father – in stark contrast to Freud's insistence on the importance of the mother – has seeming important consequences for the birth of the child. Female infanticide is largely the result of complete devaluation of the female child in favour of the male. As A.K. Ramanujan notes, Hindus have traditionally believed that fathers are reborn as sons, once again privileging the birth of the male child ('The Indian Oedipus'), pp. 109–36; religious texts like the *Yogattatva Upanishad* contain some of these complex attitudes towards family relations: 'That breast from which one sucked before he now presses and obtains pleasures. He enjoys the same genital organs from which he was born before. She was once his mother, will now be his wife, and she who is now wife, mother. He who is now father will be again son, and he who is now son will be again father.' (p. 133) in T.G. Vaidyanathan and Jeffrey J. Kripal (eds), *Vishnu on Freud's Desk: A Reader in Psychoanalysis and Hinduism*.

During the ensuing stage of ego-identity, the father's feminine role is transferred to the mother. The oedipal love for the mother is resignified as sympathy for the woman and the complex is adjusted. Both the desire to be a woman and the desire to turn the father or the father-figure into a woman can also be seen to arise from the socio-historical context in India.

Bose articulated his theory and published his case histories in the first three decades of the twentieth century, at a time when India was still part of the Raj although the British Empire had slowly begun to sing its swan song. In other words, while Britain still held India in its grip, that hold had started to loosen with strong dissent and nationalist rebellions like the Non-Cooperation movement and the Civil Disobedience movement. Christiane Hartnack suggests that the wish to be emasculated is but the psychic response to this historical moment. The desire to be a woman for the Bengali bourgeoisie, which comprised most of Bose's clientele, meant a desire to shelter oneself in the protected space of the *zenana*, an all-female world which the bellicosity of the British could not touch. She infers, 'Bose's therapy can thus be interpreted as a man-to-man interaction intended to establish a masculine identity in an environment where, in the public sphere, British officials ridiculed men for being effeminate, and men were dominated at home not only by their elder male relatives but also by their powerful mothers.'[59]

The need to become the castrating or emasculating figure becomes more complicated. While individuality had to be subsumed in the interests of collectivity and the joint family structure in a patriarchal culture, there was a need to conquer the super-ego given the stresses induced by the colonial rulers. Defying the paternal interdiction imposed by the colonizers – including the European powers as well as the androcentric Mughal colonizers – also represented a psychic subjugation of the ruler. The seizing back of one's own country and affirming self-rule becomes in this analytical vein an assertion of one's own masculinity at the expense of that of the ruler. In the Freudian understanding of the castration complex, the anxiety associated with castration characterizes the final crisis of the Oedipus complex and is a critical stage in achieving identification with the father. Unlike Freud's theory, then, it is not the fear of being castrated which forces the Indian boy to identify with the father but rather the ability to defy the father and castrate him.

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[59]Christiane Hartnack, 'Vishnu on Freud's Desk: Psychoanalysis in Colonial India', p. 88. Ashis Nandy, in an excellent analysis of the prevalence of *sati* ('Sati: A Nineteenth-Century Tale of Women, Violence and Protest', pp. 304–38), argues that the practice of even such horrific acts as *sati* offered a way for the 'passive people,' impotent in the face of imperialism, a way to assert adherence to rituals and tradition. Closely aligned in my view to Hartnack's observation cited above, *sati* and other 'antisocial' practices like *thuggee* and human sacrifices become social responses meant to simultaneously defy authority and define one's own social difference; T.G. Vaidyanathan and Jeffrey J. Kripal (eds), *Vishnu on Freud's Desk: A Reader in Psychoanalysis and Hinduism.*

The polymorphous perversity of the infant must necessarily be subjugated by the oedipal conflict and paternal interdiction and ultimately replaced by 'normal' reproductive genital sexuality. But the pleasures of the polymorphously perverse might be available to the adult as well since they remain entrenched in the psychic structure.[60] Referring to Foucault's and Dollimore's argument of perversity as a 'discursive construct generated to define normative life', Rothenberg and Foster suggest that 'the purpose of this construct may be less to implant an arbitrarily generated perversity than to provide cover for the specific pleasures that sustain and threaten the law'.[61] But, if in the Indian paradigm, we are arguing for the complete absence of the castration fear, the boundary separating the normative from the perverse disintegrates. To reiterate an earlier point, the society now has access to various realms of pleasure and enjoyment without the constricting effects of the law of restraint or the *Non/Nom du Père*. And it is at this stage that the imperial relationship becomes imperative in the delineation of normative sexual relations, and indeed, sexual patterns of behaviour. The transgressive acts of the indigenous peoples (polygamy, child prostitution, child marriages etc) would appear to bring this paternal law and interdiction into being.

'Perversity' thus forms the basis of the Indian male's identification with the aggressor. Using Freud's line of inquiry, if it is castration desire which occurs among Indian males *vis-à-vis* their fathers, this would delay (if not entirely obviate) the formation of the superego, given that castration fear in the male child is an almost necessary pre-determinant. Similarly, identification with the aggressor, as conceptualized by Anna Freud, occurs predominantly when the superego is still in the early stages of development. The complete absence of what is varyingly called the moral law, the voice of conscience, or the superego grounds all behaviours in perversity. Such identification moves away from being a defence mechanism since the external threat, though very real, is nevertheless desired. Moreover, within a psychoanalytic framework, the Indian male's behaviour takes the form of heteroaggression seemingly to engage specifically in the pleasure of being shamed; the paternal law, the moral law, and the difference it seeks to bring into being thus increases *jouissance* instead of setting limits to it.

Conclusion

Early Indic psychoanalysts believed the effeminacy of the Bengali male to be a direct result of British oppression. This might have certainly been a plausible theory, especially when considered in light of the stereotypes and essentialisms that pervaded colonial thought and the pathologizing of effeminacy. However, the relationship between the European presence in India – or for the

[60]*Perversion*, p. 3.
[61]*Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

purpose of this paper, the specific presence of the British – and the rise of a male homosocial worship in Bengal might have been correlational rather than causal. More likely, the British presence facilitated the perpetuation of a masculine homosocial – indeed, homoerotic – environment in India. Ashis Nandy asserts that the 'polarity defined by the antonymous *purusatva* (the essence of masculinity) and *naritva* (the essence of femininity) was gradually supplanted, in the colonial culture of politics, by the antonyms of *purusatva* and *klibatva* (the essence of hermaphroditism). Femininity-in-masculinity was perceived as the final negation of a man's political identity, a pathology more dangerous than femininity itself.'[62] Through a constant subjugation of peoples, colonialism brought this femininity-in-masculinity into focus, only to revel in it, punish it, suppress it, and finally re-create and reinforce it.

Both, the allegedly effeminate Bengali male and the virile Rajput male were available for homosocial exoticization.[63] At the same time, the British male stationed in India was equally eroticized, both at home and in India. Whereas the nabob – whose performance of distinctly Indian customs of bathing and dressing was seen to lead to an emasculating 'indianization of the body'[64] – was openly ridiculed, the British romanticized intimate contact with different cultures in the tropics as creating, what Hyam has termed, a 'sensual class of Britons', free from the confines of convention.[65] Concurring with Hyam, Cyndy Hendershot adds that the perception that most Englishmen in the empire were making 'a tour of exotic bordellos' was often true.[66] It is important to note here that only British soldiers (many of whom belonged to the lower classes in Britain and thereby comprised the 'white poor') were provided facilities for engaging in sexual relations with Indian women; in fact, such contact was perhaps even encouraged in order to preserve their virile energies.[67] On the

[62]Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 8.
[63]Following Sedgwick's model, I am including both homophobia and homoeroticism within the homosocial continuum.
[64]Collingham, p. 22.
[65]Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 91.
[66]Cyndy Hendershot, *The Animal Within: Masculinity and the Gothic* (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1998), p. 165.
[67]It was with this aim in mind that the notorious Cantonment Act came into effect in 1868. Commenting on this, Banerjee claims, 'The Cantonment Act reflected the nineteenth-century capitalist concern about how to keep the body (of the labourer) fit for its optimal functioning and productivity. English Victorian society was obsessed with hygiene, longevity and physical exercises. In this framework of thinking, the body (of the mercenary soldier) could not be allowed to be dissipated in promiscuous whoring and reckless drinking – which used to be the norms among soldiers and officers in 18th century India. Such practices had to be replaced by an ordered structure of sexual behaviour, out of the sheer necessity of keeping fit the main pillar of the colonial administration – the Army', p. 68.

other hand, British officials were dissuaded from establishing intimate contact with native women as that would diminish the social distance[68] and hierarchy and, consequently, white prestige, which had to be upheld at all times. Regardless of the health risks posed by soldiers visiting prostitutes, it was still deemed more socially acceptable than the alternatives: masturbation and homosexuality. Masturbation, according to the surgeon-general in 1888, was thought to result in mental and physical disorders, and the phobia surrounding homosexuality was so great that it was never actually discussed; Kenneth Ballhatchet discloses that homosexuality was only referred to in 'oblique terms' because it was 'despised as unmanly' and 'dreaded as a threat to military discipline'.[69] The urgency with which means were provided for the sexual release of the soldiers suggests, however, that homosexuality was more than just a possibility or a threat.

The colonial archives reveal the tensions and vulnerabilities of the empire; even as administrators attempted to legislate and hold steadfastly to their ideals of virtue and evangelization, the sanctimonious uproar over various native transgressions betrays the concern over and the allure of the personal and the perverse. The need to control, separate, and classify entails the concomitant need to have those boundaries thwarted, transgressed, and flaunted. Legislations and punishment were thus as much about containing perversity within certain boundaries as they were about having perversity seep through or spill over the boundaries.

The pleasures of shaming are also related to, what Foucault refers to as, the 'perpetual spirals of power and pleasure'.[70] Within this almost symbiotic interplay of power and pleasure, both the settler and the native are equally implicated. We can trace, through these legislative and judicial documents, the pleasure of shaming the native into submission. But the pleasure enjoyed in exerting power is often matched only by the pleasure in evading it. The permutation holds true as well; the pleasure of pursuing and of resisting entails power in equal measure. And it is this constant network, or spiral, of power and pleasure which transforms the colonial relationship from a rigid binary of domination-submission or master-slave into a fluid and permeable *va-et-vient* between the two.

There is a compelling case for the pleasures intrinsic not only in Sadism and Masochism (in both their avatars as sexual practices and literary works) and other contemporary practices, but also in religious asceticism.[71] It might,

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[68]Ballhatchet, p. 164.

[69]Quoted in Ballhatchet, p. 10.

[70]Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Vol. 1*, Trans. Robert Hurley (New York, Vintage Books, 1990), p. 45.

[71]For a more in-depth analysis of the pleasure inherent in various practices, refer to Karmen MacKendrick's *Counterpleasures* (Albany, SUNY Press, 1999).

however, be difficult to divorce the idea of pleasure from its socio-historical context. Analogous to the intertwining of power and pleasure, not only is there pleasure in transgression but pleasure itself is transgressive. Excessive pleasure, sexual or otherwise, demands to be pathologized precisely so that it can be transgressed. The material reality of colonialism and the socio-historical conditions in the nineteenth century created an environment which attempted to control pleasure only to give it free reign. After all, is a normatized and normalized pleasure any pleasure at all?

One of the problems with conceptualizing 'perversity', and indeed our very use of the term, is our dependence on psychoanalysis as a hermeneutic tool. If perversity was delineated specifically for men, and women were the sole proprietors of the term 'hysteric', that would seemingly be based upon traditional constructions of masculinity and femininity. But the binary disjunctions of female/passive/masochist and male/active/sadist are rejected in the Indian paradigm, as seen through the passive, inert body of Siva and the 'virile', aggressive posture of Kali. Does that mean we must now come up with a new theoretical framework that takes into account cultural particularities? Or can it, instead, suggest the flimsiness, and even imperialism, of late nineteenth-century medical and psychoanalytical nomenclature?

My goal in asking these provocative, although some might well be rhetorical questions, is to point towards the necessity of having categories loudly proclaimed as 'perverse' in order to be able to gain access to pleasure and also have it denied. The boundaries of acceptable behaviours and sexualities were required precisely so that those boundaries could then be overstepped.

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10
Chinese Sexuality and the Bound Foot

Sandra Adams

You held my lotus blossom
In your lips and played with the
Pistil. We took one piece of
Magic rhinoceros horn
And could not sleep all night long.
All night the cock's gorgeous crest
Stood erect. All night the bee
Clung trembling to the flower
Stamens. Oh my sweet perfumed
Jewel! I will allow only
My lord to possess my sacred
Lotus pond, and every night
You can make blossom in me
Flowers of fire.

Huango, O (1498–1569)[1]

Footbinding became the most sexualized objectification of women in Chinese history, while creating a distinct aversion in Western observers. Despite much prurient attention to Indian and Arab women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, western travellers simply did not see Chinese women as erotic. The Chinese desire for lotus feet developed gradually around AD 950 until the practice was outlawed in 1912,[2] and seeming held Han Chinese men in sexual thrall. Yet it was these tiny feet which became the very element which protected Chinese women from the salacious gaze of the west. From

[1]Rexroth, K., trans., http://bopsecrets.org/rexroth/translations/chinese.htm
[2]The edict notwithstanding, binding did not cease overnight. Gladys Aylward visited distant regions for her local mandarin in order to convince women to desist from binding in the nineteen thirties. Burgess, Alan, *The Small Woman* (NY, E.P. Dutton, 1957). Anecdotal evidence suggests that binding was still going on in the 1950s.

nineteenth-century representations of footbinding in English writings we can gain an understanding of the significance of the bound foot to the Chinese themselves, and the western revulsion towards them. Contrary to inferences drawn by sensationalist rhetoric of recent decades, evidence does not support any suggestion that a tiny foot might have been superior or even equal to the vagina in the average Chinese bedchamber. The real story of their erotic context during this period is shrouded in the silence of Confucian modesty, yet clues do exist which help to illuminate the mystery.

Prior to the nineteenth century, images of China were highly positive, sometimes verging on utopic, the majority being provided by Catholic missionary orders. Perhaps the best known of early travellers, Marco Polo (1254–1324) was very impressed by Chinese culture but, surprisingly, never mentioned footbinding. The Jesuits, who first arrived in the sixteenth century, were so liberal towards the Chinese and their practices that the Pope caused the order to be dissolved in China during the eighteenth century.[3] In contrast to the open-mindedness of earlier times, Protestant missionaries were to arrive in great numbers in the nineteenth century, characterized by narrow-mindedness and zealotry. Though they made relatively few converts, they were to contribute in great measure to negative attitudes towards the Chinese which remained up to the twentieth century. The Protestants also picked up on footbinding as proof of the barbarity of the 'heathen Chinee' – a common epithet,[4] and judged that the Chinese needed to be 'civilized' and 'saved' by Christianity.

Origins of footbinding

The origins of footbinding are to be found in myth and popular folklore. The legendary empress who founded the tradition was said to be a 'fox fairy',[5] a fox in the guise of a beautiful woman who used the excuse of binding her feet to cover up her paws. Protestant missionary the Rev. J. Macgowan tells us, 'This insane and hideous custom', originated with T'a Ki, the famous concubine of the Emperor Show Sin, last ruler of

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[3]Notably so-called 'ancestor worship'.

[4]Successive waves of missionaries starting with the Nestorians in the seventh century, followed by other major orders in the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries sent glowing accounts home. Other travellers including Marco Polo (thirteenth century) were to do the same. See: Treadgold, Donald W. *The West in Russia and China: Religious and Secular Thought in Modern Times* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1973), 2 vols. And MacKerras, Colin, *Western Images of China* (UK, Oxford University Press, 1989).

[5]Fox fairy stories abound in traditional Chinese literature. The supernatural powers of these creatures account for all kinds of otherwise inexplicable occurrences but especially those concerning love.

the Chow Dynasty (B.C. 1146).[6] History credits her with responsibility for the downfall of the Chow dynasty[7] and in trying to account for her power, later generations sought for answers in the supernatural. Macgowan took up the crusade against footbinding from his first arrival in Amoy. Indeed, in his view, it was partly by eradicating this 'unnatural' custom that England would 'save' China.[8]

Another version is related by the writer Alicia Little who married at the advanced age of 40 and accompanied her merchant husband Archibald to China. She asserted that the most popular myth circulating was that of P'an-fei, a favourite of the Emperor Ho-ti (A.D. 89–105), of the Chi Dynasty, who was so beautiful that golden lilies sprang out of the ground wherever she stepped: 'hence the name of "golden lilies" for the hideous goatlike feet Chinamen so strangely admire'. It is said that Ho-ti loved P'an-fei so much that he had golden lotus flowers strewn in her path for her to walk on.[9] Alternatively, Little offered another explanation that the favourite wife of a king of the Sung Dynasty (AD 970), Niao-niang, used to tie strips of coloured satin round her feet till they resembled a crescent moon or bent bow in order to please her husband who liked to see her posing or dancing upon golden lotus flowers.[10]

Yet Justus Doolittle (1866), who arrived in China in 1850 with the American Board, Fuchou Mission (in Fujian) claimed that most people gave little thought to the origin of the custom to which they were in thrall. It was his belief that Tak-ki, an empress of the Shang dynasty (c. 1500–1100 BC), originated the custom because she had club feet and wished to disguise the deformity. She prevailed upon her husband to require all the court ladies to bandage their feet so as to make them seem like hers.[11]

Modern Chinese historians unanimously ascribe the origin of footbinding to the last monarch of Southern Tang (937–975 AD), whose name was Li Yu (also known as Li Hou Zhu). There is no formal record but historians cite a passage from Zhou Mi's *Refined Talks of Haoran Studio*, vol. 2 in which he states that Li ordered the erection of a golden lotus six feet high for one of his concubines, Yao Niang, to dance upon. He bade her to bind her feet with silken bandages until they became tiny and bulged like the crescent moon. The lotus was decorated inside with coloured clouds so that the

[6]Macgowan, Rev. J. *Sidelights on Chinese Life* (London, Kegan Paul, Trench Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1907), p. 61.
[7]Eberhard, Wolfram, *A History of China* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948).
[8]His other concern was infanticide.
[9]Little, Mrs Archibald, *Intimate China* (London, Hutchinson & Co., 1899), pp. 91–2.
[10]Little, *Intimate China*, pp. 92–3.
[11]The Rev. Mr Justus Doolittle, *Social Life of the Chinese*, Vol. 2 (London, Sampson, Low Son & Marston, 1866), p. 197.

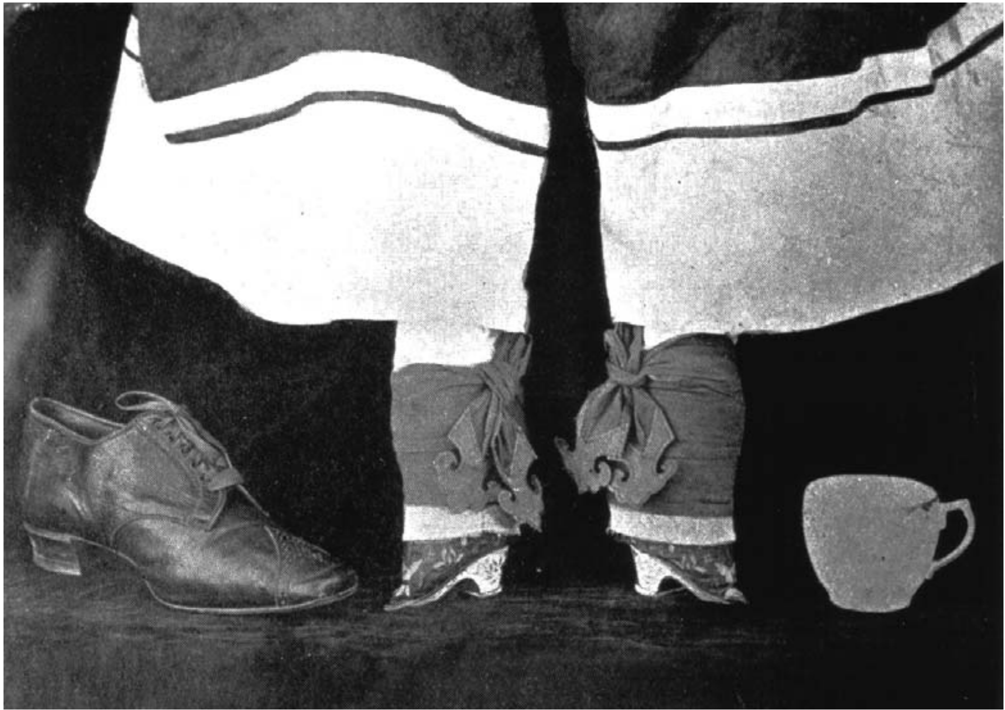

Fig. 10.1. Lilies and cup, Rev. J. Macgowan, *How England Saved China* (1913)

dancer appeared to be soaring to the skies. The performance was widely praised and thenceforth such tiny feet were regarded as beautiful (Fig. 10.1).[12]

Footbinding certainly began at court and was quickly taken up by the aristocracy but it is a mistake to think that in subsequent generations only the wealthy were involved (Fig. 10.2). Ample evidence demonstrates that even the lowliest *Han* peasant aspired to a tiny-footed wife. However, some groups never bound including the Hakka, the Cantonese boat women and the Manchu who conquered China in 1644 and remained in power until 1912. 'The dominant race in the empire, the Manchu Tartars, do not allow their women to bind or cramp their feet. It unfits a beauty for entrance into the Imperial harem ...' Doolittle asserted.[13] He later observed that 'Concubines or inferior wives, hired servants and female slaves, generally have large feet.'[14] Commenting on Fujian province, he estimated that a 'large proportion' of women in the countryside and six or seven tenths of those

[12]Deng Zhi-cheng, *Two Thousand Years' History of China* (Beijing, China Book Bureau, 1958), vol. 3, p. 419. Trans. Prof. Ye Fei Sheng.
[13]Doolittle, *Social Life of the Chinese*, p. 198.
[14]Doolittle, p. 202.

Fig. 10.2. Family of literati, Alicia Little, *Intimate China* (1899)

in the suburbs had natural feet but that in the city of Fuchau some nine tenths of women had bound feet.[15]

Herbert Giles, who was in the consular service and became Professor of Chinese at Cambridge in 1897, noted little girls 'become very shy on the

[15]*Ibid.*, p. 201.

subject, [of footbinding] and will on no account show their bare feet, though Manchu women and others with full-sized feet frequently walk about unshod, and the boat-girls at Canton and elsewhere never seem to wear shoes or stockings at all'.[16] On the other hand, he saw small-footed women carrying heavy burdens, working in the fields and employed as nurses for small children.[17]

Lieut. F.E. Forbes, R.N., Commander of HMS Bonetta, also observed that the Manchu did not bind but that most of the 'Chinese' did and further pointed out that 'the Empress herself wears rationally large feet'.[18] Mrs Little arrived at the same conclusion: 'It is a popular error in England to suppose that binding the feet is a mark of rank in China. In the west of China women sit by the roadside begging with their feet bound. In the far north, where women do field-labour, they do it, poor things! kneeling on the heavy clay soil because they cannot stand upon their poor mutilated feet'.[19] (Fig. 10.3) Mary Gaunt, an Australian travelling in China gave similar testimony in 1913, explaining that she had noticed that although a donkey could be bought cheaply to turn a grindstone, 'usually it seemed that it was the women of the household who, on their tiny feet, painfully hobbled round, turning the heavy stone …'[20] Also testifying on working women with small feet, Isabella Bishop was surprised that she had 'seen them walk thirty li [about a third of a mile] in a day … The hobble looks as if it must be very painful, …'[21]

The practice of binding feet amongst the very poor varied across China and writers were in agreement with regard to the areas. The Rev. Samuel Wells Williams, missionary and scholar who spent twelve years in China is another who observed that women who worked on the boats in Canton, as well as domestic servants, normally had natural, or unbound, feet. He noted that foreigners arriving in Canton were often surprised that there were few 'little footed celestials' to be seen, that 'inland parts of the country show a different aspect', but that virtually all women in Shantung had their feet bound to some degree.[22] At Chusan hospital, the surgeon, Mr William Lockhart who spent twenty years in China as a medical missionary with the British Mission, offered unequivocal evidence as to the classes of women who

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[16]Giles, Herbert, A. *Chinese Sketches* (London, Trubner & Co., 1876), p. 106.
[17]Giles, Herbert, A. *The Civilisation of China* (London, Williams & Norgate, 1911), pp. 105–6. Giles also compiled an English-Chinese dictionary.
[18]Forbes, F.E., *Five Years in China* (London, Richard Bentley, 1848), p. 270.
[19]Little, Intimate China, p. 91.
[20]Gaunt, Mary, *A Woman in China* (London, T. Warner Laurie Ltd., n.d.), p. 168.
[21]Bishop, Isabella, *The Yang Tze Valley and Beyond* (London, John Murray, 1899), p. 240.
[22]Rev. Mr Samuel Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom* (NY, John Wiley & Son, 1871, f.p. 1848), vol. 2, p. 40. This monumental work went through many editions and, being considered authoritative, was influential in disseminating ethnocentric and negative attitudes towards the Chinese in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Fig. 10.3. Bandages off, Rev. J. Macgowan, *How England Saved China* (1913)

visited him regarding their feet. All of them, he stated in his 1840 report, had bound feet, though some were less compressed than others. He added that while binding is universal at Chusan, at Canton and Macao,[23] many women had natural feet. He noted that strong healthy women were frequently seen walking 'with readiness' and apparently without pain and that others walked miles to reach the hospital and returned on the same day.[24]

Observers gave detailed and harrowing accounts of the process. Mr William Lockhart (1861) explained the first stage:

> The practice is begun when the child is from six to nine years of age; if after the latter age, the suffering is proportionately increased. Long bandages of cotton cloth, an inch in width, are folded round the foot and brought in a figure of eight form, from the heel across the instep, and over the toes; then carried under the foot, and round the heel, and so on, being drawn as tight as possible. This process is not effected without much pain, accompanied by bitter lamentation from the sufferer. The feet remain for a long time very tender, and can ill bear the pressure in walking; sometimes there is great swelling of the foot and leg, caused by the ensuing inflammation.[25]

The figure-of-eight binder forces the four smaller toes towards the centre, underneath the foot. The big toe is left free but bound tightly so as not to become fleshy. This all works towards the narrowing of the foot. After about one year it is time to shorten the foot for which purpose the back of the heel is forced under the foot towards the 'ball' of the foot, buckling or breaking the bones above the arch. A slot is thus formed across under the centre of the foot. Alicia Little's description is helpful for she was a witness at many unbindings:

> Directly after binding, the little girl is made to walk up and down on her poor aching feet, for fear mortification should at once set in. But all this is only during the first year. It is the next two years that are the terrible time for the little girls of China; for then the foot is no longer being narrowed, but shortened, by so winding the bandages as to draw the fleshy part of the foot and the heel close together, till it is possible to hide a

[23]The small peninsula of Macao was ceded to the Portuguese from the sixteenth century until 1999 and, as such, was always less susceptible to customs of the mainland. Furthermore, during the early years of the colony, Chinese workers were required to return to 'mainland' China every night, being forbidden to have homes in Macao.
[24]Lockhart, William, *The Medical Missionary in China, a Narrative of Twenty Years Experience* (London, Hurst & Blackett, 1861), p. 337.
[25]*Ibid.,* p. 334.

half-crown[26] piece between them. It is, indeed, not till this can be done that a foot is considered bound.[27]

Reasons for footbinding

Whilst the origin of the custom of binding the feet of little girls is obscure, by the nineteenth century it had been practised for nine hundred years and was thus an integral part of the Han Chinese psyche so that acceptance of the norm was neither discussed nor questioned. Westerners, however, searched for meanings for the mutilation and proposed two: as a preventive against 'gadding' and as a requirement for marriage. A third, sexual dimension was hinted at but never explored because discussion of the tiny feet or sex was taboo.

While some westerners such as Wells Williams proposed that feet were crippled to prevent women from 'gadding',[28] Herbert Giles took the trouble to refute the 'generally received opinion that the Chinese lame their women in this way to keep them from gadding about'.[29] According to Alicia Little, in the many conversations she had had with the Chinese upon the subject, she had never 'heard this reason alleged or even hinted at'.[30] The only noteworthy exception is the story quoted by twentieth-century researcher Howard Levy about the Sung philosopher, Chu Hsi (1130–1200 AD) who served as governor in Chang Prefecture, Fukien; in his view 'that women there tended to be unchaste and to indulge in lewdness'.[31] According to Levy, Chu Hsi ordered that all women's feet be bound to an excessive degree which would hamper them in moving about. This was intended to change their alleged immoral habits so that they could only get about by leaning on canes and would thus prevent them from running off.[32] Chu Hsi appears to be following his own version of Confucian principles for Confucius lived between 551 and 479 B.C. and provided advice on correct and modest female behaviour, but this was some 14 centuries before footbinding began. The modern concept of footbinding as a male conspiracy to keep women crippled and submissive is an anachronistic view with little or no support in historical records.[33]

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[26]Half a crown was two shillings and sixpence in old sterling (pre 1969) which is equivalent to twelve and a half pence in decimal currency.
[27]Little, *Intimate China*, pp. 93–4.
[28]Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom*, p. 38.
[29]Giles, *The Civilisation of China*, p. 106.
[30]Little, *Intimate China*, p. 91.
[31]Levy, Howard S., *Chinese Footbinding: The History of a Curious Erotic Custom* (NY, Walton Rawls, 1966), p. 44.
[32]*Ibid.*, p. 44.
[33]Ko, Dorothy, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers. Women and Culture in Seventeenth Century China* (California, Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 148.

Fig. 10.4. Man and wife, Alicia Little, *Intimate China* (1899)

The main purpose, accepted unanimously by westerners and Chinese alike, for binding girls' feet was that it was essential for an advantageous marriage. The tinier a woman's foot, the less she was capable of moving around or doing work in the home. Thus the three inch lotus befitted a girl only for a life of idleness which only the extremely rich could afford (Fig. 10.4). In this way, the wealth and status of a family was reflected in the

size of its women's feet. As Doolittle pointed out, 'families whose daughters have small feet are enabled to marry them into more respectable and more literary families those whose feet were of the natural size'.[34] That a girl would be déclassée if her feet were natural is well supported. Isabella Bishop, (née Bird), who wrote and travelled until her marriage to a doctor ten years her junior at the age of fifty and again, after his early death until she was seventy, records that a woman with 'big feet', as they were called, 'is either denationalised or vile: a girl with unbound feet would have no chance of marriage, and a bridegroom finding that his bride had large feet when he expected small ones, would be abundantly justified by public opinion in returning her at once to her parents.'[35] Bishop tells of the butler's daughter aged seven who was having her feet 'bandaged' for the first time, and was being tortured but bearing it 'bravely in the hope of getting a rich husband'.[36] The traveller, Ida Pfeiffer asserted that 'The value of a bride depends upon the smallness of her foot.'[37] Mary Gaunt bewailed the lot of Chinese women and asks 'Would any woman dare deprive her daughter of all chance of wifehood and motherhood by leaving her feet unbound?' It is not the prettiness of her face which is important but the tininess of her feet, she tells us. The worst taunt which a bride may have to bear[38] is not that she is ugly but that her feet are not small enough.[39]

Macgowan utilized the popular discourse of melodrama to communicate a 'real' situation which he and his wife witnessed. One day, he and his wife

[34]Doolittle, *Social Life of the Chinese*, pp. 201–2.
[35]Bishop, Isabella, *The Yang Tze Valley and Beyond*, pp. 240, 241.
[36]Bishop, *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither*, p. 66.
[37]Ida Pfeiffer, *A Lady's Voyage Around The World*, trans. Mrs Percy Sinnet (London, Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1851; Repr, UK, London, Century, 1988), 26. The monkey, she says, was excellent, the parrot, however, was less tender and savoury. A married woman with two grown-up sons, she was travelling alone because her husband, 24 years her senior, was too old to accompany her. Having spent most of her married life in penury, she had ever nursed the ambition to travel. When she set off around the world in 1846, she concealed her real intention from her family, saying that she was going only to Brazil. She was gone for two and a half years.
[38]The practice of reviling the bride took place on her wedding day when it was customary for all and sundry to drop by to scrutinize the bride in her new (inlaws') home. On this day she had to sit, immobile and expressionless and endure any vulgarity or coarseness the onlookers chose to mete out, including comments on her feet. Now commences an abominable ceremony known by the name of Nao-sin-fang, that is to say ribaldry, in all the coarseness conveyed by this word. During three days and nights, all may come in to see the bride, and pour out in her presence the most impertinent remarks. Henry Doré, *Chinese Customs*, trans. M. Kennelly (Singapore, Graham Brash, 1987, fp. 1911 in French), p. 57.
[39]Gaunt, *A Woman in China*, pp. 173–4.

were much distressed to hear shrieks of agony coming from a neighbour's house. It was sure to be a girl having her feet bound, his wife told him.

> A little, girl, about seven years old, was lying back in a chair whilst her mother firmly gripped one of her ankles and with a long cotton bandage was winding it tightly round her foot ... The pain was so excruciating that the child's face was flushed with agony, and, clutching the mother's arm, she was crying out: 'Oh! stop, stop! I shall die, I shall die with pain...'

Finally, they could bear the screams no longer and his wife resolved to plead with the child's mother to stop, but the mother answered:

> You ask me to give up binding my girl's feet, but the one who would protest with all her might against that would be the little one before you ... if I were to grant her request, a few years hence there is no one who would indulge in more bitter thoughts about me than she herself would do ... Her life would become intolerable to her, and she would be laughed at and despised and treated as a slave-girl...[40]

Observers collectively condemned the practice and both missionaries and lay persons made attempts to prevent it. Grace Stott, her husband and others of the British China Inland Mission, set up a school alongside an anti-footbinding society. As an encouragement to parents, they offered to take on a few girls at the expense of the school but with the caveat that their feet be unbound. One family which accepted the proviso later reneged on the bargain and professed themselves concerned that the girl would never find a husband so that she must be sent home. Grace Stott told them that they must, then, collect the girl themselves and repay all expenses so far incurred by the child. Of course, the family was unable to do so and the girl stayed put. Stott declared: 'we should have the right to betroth them to those whom we thought fit persons, and that the parents should have no power to betroth them without our consent...' which we might consider today to be an abrogation of both the rights of the family and of the girls themselves. One of Stotts' reasons was that having made some male converts they felt it mandatory to provide them with Christian wives since the influence of 'heathen' wives was apparent in 'coldness of heart' and 'utter indifference to spiritual things'.[41]

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[40]Macgowan, *How England Saved China* (London, T. Fisher, 1913), pp. 24–7.
[41]Stott, Grace C., *Twenty-six Years of Missionary Work in China* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1898), Ch. V.

Marriage, bound feet and respectability were inextricably linked. Archibald Colquhoun, special correspondent for the *Times* in the Far East,[42] asserted that no respectable man of the higher class '(say the sons of a "blue button" official)',[43] would dream of marrying an unbound woman and that tiny feet are the ambition of every woman.[44] Francis H. Nichols also linked marriage, respectability and tiny feet observing that in Shensi a natural-footed woman would be looked upon as peculiar 'to an extent that would make her the object of dislike and ridicule in the village where she lived… . Were any Shensi mother to refrain from subjecting her daughter to the agonies of crippled feet she would be condemning her to a life of humiliation and sorrow and perhaps of disgrace.'[45] The mincing steps of a tiny-footed woman, said the Australian *Times* reporter, George Morrison, 'show everyone that she is a person of respectability'.[46]

J.H. Gray, Archdeacon in Hong Kong, whose book, *China* (1878), was highly influential, adduced similar conclusions to the writers above. He further pointed out that the Hakka and Tartars were nomadic peoples while the Chinese were people of the soil and said that some have argued that the Chinese bind women's feet in order to emphasize the difference between themselves and these other races.[47] The concept of racial distinction is one with which historian Dorothy Ko concurs: 'in its heyday, the aura of footbinding reinforced the glory of the Chinese imperium; on women's bound feet stood the unbearable weight of exclusionist and supremacist attitudes that justified imperial conquest of non-Han Chinese territories.[48] For Ko, the reason for footbinding 'links it to ideals of civility and culture (*wen*), the highest value in the Chinese cultural world.' Ko's understanding illuminates the reasons for the practice and equates it with Chinese concepts of selfhood and civilization. In the Ming period, following the Manchu conquest, 'footbinding became the terrain on which the ethnic and cultural

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[42]Colquhoun had been Deputy Commissioner in Burma, Administrator of Mashonaland, South Africa, and had been distinguished by the Royal Geographical Society as well as having numerous publications about his travel experiences.

[43]The rank of officials was denoted by buttons of different colours.

[44]Colquhoun, A., *Across Chryse* (London, Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1883), p. 205.

[45]Nichols, Francis H. *Through Hidden Shensi* (London, George Newnes Ltd., 1902), p. 134.

[46]Morrison, *An Australian in China* (London, Horace Cox, 1892), 14. Morrison was related by marriage to Mary Gaunt, author of *A Woman in China*; she clearly modelled her title on his.

[47]Gray, John Henry, *China a History of the Laws Manners and Customs of the People*, Vol. 1 (London, Macmillan, 1878), p. 233.

[48]Ko, Dorothy, 'The Body as Attire: The Shifting Meanings of Footbinding in Seventeenth Century China', *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 8, No. 4. http://iupjournals.org/jwh/jw8-4.html

boundaries between the Han Chinese and the "Other" were being drawn'.[49] Sartorial regulation delineated status clearly and unequivocally to such an extent that each new dynasty would hasten to promulgate its own regulations for official 'uniform'.[50] Viewing footbinding as 'attire' situates the practice in the Chinese cultural context in contrast with anachronistic western concepts of gender and space. Ko's hypothesis that footbinding, as attire or bodily concealment, was part of the prestigious Confucian value of *wen* offers the most satisfying explanation of its commanding position in society as a symbol of national identity separating 'us' from the barbarian Manchu.

Westerners have never ceased to question how footbinding could have endured for so many centuries. Twentieth-century historian Fan Hong writes 'The body is a site of enormous symbolic imagination. Its culturally defined deformities are stigmatizing, while at the same time its culturally defined perfection brings praise and admiration.' Footbinding functioned as a tool of social control, creating social boundaries, expressing clear-cut social relations and supporting social morality. Female chastity was both expressed and enforced by lily feet.[51] Ko further suggests that footbinding was undertaken in order to mark sexual difference:

> The age when girls started to have their feet bound coincided with the age when boys moved out of the women's quarters to enroll in lineage schools or begin instruction with private tutors. From that age on, sexual differences were accentuated; not only were children taught that the two sexes differed constitutionally and occupied distinct stations in life, but they were also taught to look different. Through footbinding, the doctrine of separate spheres was engraved onto the bodies of female children.[52]

Chinese female sexuality

Chinese sexuality remained an undisclosed and unmentionable secret, as a result of obsessive prudery which dominated Chinese society during the Ch'ing or Manchu Dynasty. As Van Gulik remarks, 'They showed a nearly frantic desire to keep their sexual life secret from all outsiders.'[53]

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[49]*Ibid.*
[50]*Ibid.*
[51]Fan Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom. The Liberation of Women's Bodies in Modern China* (London, Portland, Frank, Cass, 1997), p. 45.
[52]Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, p. 149.
[53]Van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, preface.

The seclusion of women noted by visitors in the nineteenth century appears to have begun during the Yuan dynasty (1279–1367 AD) during Mongol rule by the successors of Genghis Khan. Billeting of Mongol soldiers, who despised the Chinese and saw them only as a conquered nation to be looted, led Chinese householders to fear for their women. Confucianist ideals of female chastity and seclusion became strengthened to a high degree and the obsessive privacy and prudery noted by nineteenth-century observers probably has its roots in this tumultuous period. During the Ch'ing dynasty (1644–1911 AD), strict censorship was enforced which sent erotic and pornographic works underground so that the sex handbooks of earlier times became almost part of sexual folklore, known of and written about, but no longer available.

Chinese sexuality was based on a logic without the guilt characterizing sexual life of Christian cultures, and stemmed from ancient cultural concepts which were almost as fixed as nature itself. Sex manuals, dating from as far back as 200 A.D. offered detailed instruction on the 'Art of the Bedchamber.' Not to be confused with erotic or pornographic works, these illustrated handbooks were serious and devoid of frivolity. Until the later part of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), when they gradually became rare, these sex handbooks provided details of how best to enjoy sexual congress and how to prolong lovemaking by many hours. Instruction included how to strengthen the male member, how to excite the lady, how to control ejaculation both by mental discipline and by physical constriction of the urethra, and how to 'make the semen return'. A silken band was tied at the base of the penis which served the purpose of preventing semen from escaping and stimulating the woman's clitoris at the same time.[54] A jade or ivory circle placed at the base of the penis and attached to the waist by a ribbon served the same purpose.

The mystical Taoist philosophy held that only through self-restraint would inner peace be achieved. Abandonment to pleasure would result in bodily harm and ill health. Considered an essential aspect of both male and female health, sex and the dual cosmic concepts of *yin* and *yang* featured in Taoist and Confucian philosophies, both of which offered explanation and prescription governing sexual union.[55] According to Tao, a man's *yang* essence needed to be at its apex when he ejaculated and, in order to develop this, frequent intercourse with different women, without emitting semen, was essential so as to supplement his *yang* with *yin*. The irrational fear of

[54]*Ibid.*, pp. 279–82.

[55]The female element *yin* is analagous to water whilst the male, *yang*, corresponds to fire. The *yang* principle, fire, easily flares up but is put out by *yin* (water) which itself, once hot, is slow to cool.

loss of essence due to over use of the libidinous force is exemplified in this standard cautionary verse quoted in Chapter One of *The Golden Lotus*

A sweet girl of eighteen years,
Her breasts are soft and white –
But below her waist she carries a sword
That will behead all foolish men.
Although one does not see
Their severed heads roll,
Imperceptibly she will drain your bones
Of the last drop of marrow.[56]

During the Manchu period (1644–1911), Confucian values of restraint and propriety became the prevalent cultural force for both men and women (Fig. 10.5). These ideals gradually drew Han Chinese away from overt sexual license and women's lives became even more prescribed than previously. As Fan Hong points out women were: 'handicapped by inferior property rights, disenfranchisement and poor education, all because of their alleged physical and mental weaknesses'.[57] Some 1,400 years after his death, neo-Confucian ideals not only informed thought on the proper conduct of women but became exaggerated. The so-called *Five Classics* prescribe the major components of women's education as:

1. An appreciation of the state of subjection and weakness in which women were born.
2. A knowledge of the duties of a woman when under the power of a husband.
3. The unlimited respect due to a husband, and the constant self-examination and restraint necessary to achieve this.
4. A recognition of the obedience due to a husband and to his parents.
5. An awareness of the qualities which render a female lovable, divided into those relating to her virtue, her conversation, her dress and her occupations.[58]

Licentiousness was frowned upon and salacious materials publicly, at least, eschewed by respectable men. At this time the dignified *shuyu,* akin to Japanese *geisha* could not be further from the image of the lascivious sex-worker. These women were valued for their companionship, culture and

[56]Quoted in Van Gulik, R.H., *Sexual Life in Ancient China* (Netherlands, E.J. Brill, 1961), p. 288.
[57]Fan Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom*, p. 45.
[58]*Ibid.*, p. 52.

Fig. 10.5. Manchu girl and Han girl (c. 1890)

the ambient atmosphere which they created; sex was of secondary importance. While their fortunate sisters were enjoying a refined existence, naïve country girls were being lured to the bright lights in hope of a better life but were ending up trapped in mud huts outside Shanghai or in floating canal boats. Brothels and cheap hotels blossomed along main roads and 'innocent' travellers were lured into opium houses and even private houses to the horror of contemporary literati. As for the western client, it was said that only Cantonese prostitutes would service them.[59]

Restrained by the teachings of propriety, women had no choice but to accept masculine ideas and one such was that the tiny foot was an unparalleled adornment, difficult to attain, rarely seen and impossible to access. Men were urged to appreciate the years of pain which a tiny footed woman had experienced for their pleasure but, at the same time, this was a pleasure for both to share. 'Each part of a man's or woman's body secretly serves to spur on sexual desire', writes an essayist quoted by Levy.[60] However, this is not to imply that Chinese males all partook of an unusual 'fetish'. Chinese connoisseurship literature such as described in Levy's work is often misrepresented by modern writers as though describing life in the typical home. In fact, the erotic scenes depicted take place in material describing brothels or in novels and thus need to be considered firmly within those environs.

Notable among erotic novels is the most famous and oft-banned Ming dynasty classic, *The Golden Lotus,*[61] *which* offers a glimpse of the Chinese sexual fantasy world. The novel eulogizes the beautiful golden lilies of the heroine and features tiny shoes in numerous vulgar pranks played by lower class characters though it does not mention them in the many, detailed accounts of sexual congress. In this extract, following a bout of lovemaking, Golden Lotus tries to excite her lover to begin again:

> The slender fingers were teasing the warrior lying between the loins. That which was tired after battle and clothed in silver seemed indeed weary but not yet entirely vanquished … . 'why not get down on your knees and ask him a favour?' [asks Hsi-men].
> Laughing, his mistress contemplated it. Then she knelt down and laid her head on his leg, seizing the band of the breeches restraining the longed-for warrior thus discovered … . she was playing with it, pressing it to her tender cheeks, warming it with her hand, finally setting her lips to the mouth of the frog and kissing it. Immediately the warrior, in fiery

[59]Henriot, Christian (trans. Noel Castelino) *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai: A Social History, 1849–1949* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001).
[60]Levy, Howard, *Chinese Footbinding*.
[61]Egerton, Clement (trans.), *The Golden Lotus, from Chin P'ing Mei* (London, George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1939), Vol. 2, Ch. 28, 1.

> anger rises up; the head is rubbed, the eye glows with passion, the tuft of hair stands on end, his manhood stands erect.[62]

Hsi-men indicates no fear of loss of his vital essence despite his many exploits both inside and outside his household, bearing out the contention that the Taoist sex handbooks warning against sexual license were no longer available to the majority at the time when the novel was written.

As Peakman remarks, '[E]rotica does not necessarily tell us about people's actual experiences. Some of the more explicit material is fantastical; how far these fantasies were indulged in reality is difficult to determine.'[63] Peakman's remarks on pornography in eighteenth-century England are no less applicable to Chinese pornography yet the works of both Levy and Van Gulik are often cited, out of context, as 'proof' that the Chinese in general had raucous sex lives. Never mentioned is the fact that Van Gulik's work refers to the period *before* 1644 and Levy's information comes mainly from erotic and pornographic literature.

Erotic feet

Erotic play passed through a number of stages and it is here that the tiny lilies had their place; manipulation of the golden lotuses in no way replaced vaginal penetration as Van Gulik affirms, 'I have never seen or read about any picture that showed a woman's uncovered feet.'[64] Erotic pictures which he did see dating from the seventeenth century were, he says, copied as 'vulgar pornographic pictures'[65] in China's port cities during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They were not, in other words, contemporary images.

The Lotus shoot was inaccessible and its mystery enhanced its appeal.[66] Washed in the secrecy of the boudoir and only to be seen peeping from beneath a woman's garments, they symbolized the beauty of perfect womanhood and inflamed male imagination and lust which was thus transferred from the tiny foot upwards to the forbidden 'Jade Gate'.[67] So what

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[62]Egerton, Clement (trans.), *The Golden Lotu*s, translation from Latin passages are my own.

[63]Peakman, Julie, *Mighty Lewd Books; the Development of Pornography in Eighteenth-Century England* (Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 8.

[64]Van Gulik, p. 218.

[65]*Ibid.*, p. 332.

[66]Sexual behaviour was unfathomable in the Ming and Qing dynasties, writes Zhao Shiyu. That there is a paucity of documentary evidence regarding sexual norms is incontrovertible and one notes that even the Chinese scholar Zhao Shiyu is forced to resort to novels in the section entitled 'Marriage and Sex' (in the Ming and Ching Dynasties) in *The Chalice & the Blade in Chinese Culture; Gender Relations and Social Models*.

[67]Levy, p. 32.

was the mystery hidden by yards of bandage and tiny, embroidered slippers where the tiniest feet were most prized and were not larger than three inches in length?[68]

On the physical role of tiny feet in lovemaking, Levy's 'essayist' informant explains:

> The organs are usually concealed and not easily seen, and so unusual thoughts can be imagined about them … since our race has the added wonder of being able to play with the Golden Lotus, the order of preludes to the sex act is increased and desire blazes up that much more intensely … The woman's tiny foot is probably more mysterious than her private parts. The man lusts to see her privates; though difficult to see, they are often exposed in young girls. If one has wives and concubines, their sexual organs can be sought out and rubbed at all times. But once binding starts, even the young girl must keep the foot concealed.[69]

With the 'possible' exception of her husband, a woman would never let a man see or touch the flesh of her foot; the potency of this symbol meant that just one rub was enough to excite. 'The foot, moreover, was at the end of the lowest extremity, and after rubbing it one's hand easily extended upward towards the private parts.[70] The woman became aroused because her feet were normally concealed, regarded with some awe and even hidden from a servant's view 'except possibly when binding. And then one day, rubbed and played with in a man's hands, the sexual effect was like an electrical charge between them.'[71]

Focus on shoes (Fig. 10.6), labelled *retifism* in the modern period, often took the form of group drinking games using the shoes of a favourite prostitute. One such game was called 'The Raft' in which the prostitute with the tiniest shoes had them removed and a wine cup placed in one while the other was placed in a basin. The lady then became the Secretary and hobbled about in her stockings offering the basin to each guest at a distance of about eighteen inches. The guest lobbed lotus seeds, red beans or similar objects into the shoe using a special technique involving thumb, forefinger and middle finger. Each man had five tries and at the end of the game, the Secretary prescribed drinking penalties to those with the least hits. In another variant, clients drank from a cup placed in the shoe but were handicapped by complex counting games and the requirement that

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[68]A Chinese inch measured slightly larger than an imperial inch.
[69]Quoted in Levy, pp. 151–2.
[70]*Ibid.*, p. 152.
[71]*Ibid.*

Fig. 10.6. White and green shoes compared (c. 1880)

they hold the shoe in various awkward positions.[72] These games could take up to six hours. It would seem the primary purpose was to engage in risqué behaviour whilst drinking a lot. Yet such detailed accounts of brothel games in which bound feet are eulogized in remarks about their size, shape and smell, only appear in erotica around the nineteenth century according to Van Gulik. Dorothy Ko warns that, far from demonstrating contemporary attitudes, these accounts signalled the end of footbinding since it would have been unthinkable to write such vulgar prose about the eulogized golden lilies before this time.[73]

As is to be expected in pornographic materials, some descriptions are for men with special preferences such as those who want to suck unbound feet or even sniff and lick smelly ones. One modern sensationalist account is misleading: 'Like other fetishists, the Chinese were so afraid of the vagina as a dangerous, castrating organ that they could only feel erotic toward the woman's foot–mainly her big toe.'[74] The writer then goes on to paraphrase one of Levy's anecdotes in the guise of a description of typical sex-play and referring to the manipulation of the 'penis-toe' as the 'focus of the man's

[72]Levy , pp. 121–2.
[73]Ko, *The Body as Attire*.
[74]DeMause, Lloyd, ' The Universality of Incest', *The Journal of Psychohistory*, Fall 1991, Vol. 19, No. 2 http://www.psychohistory.com/htm/06a1_incest.html, May, 2007.

perversion'. The putative 'Chinese' could not enjoy intercourse without first 'kissing, sucking, and inserting the foot in the mouth until it filled both cheeks, either nibbling at it or chewing it vigorously, and adoringly placing it against one's cheeks, chest, knees, or virile member'.[75]

Nobody imagines that twenty-first-century specialist erotic material describes the sexual preferences of the majority and this was equally true of nineteenth-century Chinese erotica. 'To be provocative, a pair of small feet had to be covered by binder, socks and shoes, dredged with perfume and fragrant powder, and then hidden under leggings and skirts. In other words, foot-binding's aura derived from concealment of the physicality of the foot. It was defined by ornamentation and coverings – the essence of the civil culture of *wen* ...'[76] Indeed, Van Gulik found bound feet to be a strictly taboo subject and observed that artists dared go no further than depicting a woman beginning to fasten or loosen bindings.[77] He noted that erotic picture albums showed that women kept their feet covered during sexual congress with 'shoes and leggings' taken off only inside the 'curtained couch',[78] and the bandages only when they were exchanged after bathing.[79] The sage Fang Hsün writes:

> Do not remove the bindings to look at her bare foot, but be satisfied with its external appearance. Enjoy the outward impression, for if you remove the shoes and binding the aesthetic feeling will be destroyed forever.[80]

John Byron, author of *Portrait of a Chinese Paradise* (1987),[81] has been studying and collecting Chinese erotica since he lived in China in the nineteen eighties. Bound feet were, he says,

> [a] culturally conditioned source of sexual arousal, but the disfigured feet were not themselves involved in the sex act. Men would caress the small shoes in the course of sexual congress, but they would not use the flesh of the feet in any way. I have never seen any evidence that in a literal or physical sense the flesh of the small, disfigured feet were touched by the

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[75]*Ibid.*
[76]Ko, Dorothy, *The Body as Attire.*
[77]Van Gulik, p. 218.
[78]Beds for the better off were like a room within a room – The bed itself was inside a wooden enclosure which had enough room for a basin and small table.
[79]Van Gulik, p. 222.
[80]Quoted in Levy, p. 112.
[81]John Byron (a pseudonym) is a sinologist, author and collector of Chinese erotica. He was with the diplomatic service in China from 1981–1984.

> male during intercourse. In short, bound feet were not comparable to the vagina, which the male would penetrate; they were more akin in Western terms to a see-through bra or some kinky leather underwear etc. that would arouse the male, but not physically feature in the congress between the male and female.[82]

Footbinding was not, as some modern writers allege, a fetish. The lily foot was forbidden fruit and added a dimension to lovemaking which the natural foot could not offer but, as Byron confirms, this was an addition to, not a replacement for 'normal' intercourse. A fetish is, by definition, an 'unusual erotic inclination.' He who did not find the tiny foot exciting would have been unusual. Foot fetishism is 'a pronounced sexual interest in the lower limb or anything that covers portions of them. Thus the allure normally attributed to erogenous zones is literally translocated downward so that the fetishist response to the foot is the same as a conventional response at seeing genitals.'[83] Viewing and playing with the (bound) tiny foot was one step on the way to the genitals above and a prelude to penetration, not a replacement.

The myth of the fetishised foetid foot

Writer and academic, Wang Ping offers her own grandmother as an example on the subject of odour of the bound foot:

> Yet death seeps through the bandages, strong and odorous, no matter how much perfumed powder a woman sprinkles on her feet. The lotus foot is known for its peculiar odor. It is a smell of the living flesh being discontinued by a deadly bondage, a smell of life and death, of dirt and purity fermenting and brewing in exuberance within a tightly compressed space. Men are either totally repulsed by or addicted to this odor, [sic] but no one can ignore it. The interplay between the illusion of immortal beauty on the surface and the constant reminder of violence – decay, pain and deformity of the naked feet – from underneath brings eroticism into its final sense, that is, death.[84]

Yet examination of over 100 nineteenth-century texts yields not a single allegation of a characteristic bad odour from bound feet. Dr Lockhart did

[82]Private correspondence between author and Byron: also see Byron, John, *Portrait of a Chinese Paradise, a Study of Late Qing Dynasty Erotica* (London: Quartet Books, 1987).
[83]Brame G.G., Brame, W.D. & Jacobs, J., *Different Loving: The World of Sexual Dominance and Submission* (London, Arrow, 1996).
[84]Wang Ping, *Aching for Beauty. Footbinding in China* (NY, Anchor Books, 2000), p. 24.

mention a gangrenous foot but this is in a case of footbinding gone badly wrong.[85] Nineteenth-century observers unanimously expressed disgust and horror at footbinding so it is certain that olfactory offense would have been added, readily, to the catalogue of castigations if such were the case. Yet not a single contemporary observer examined noticed a terrible odour from bound feet. The washing ritual was an important one in the homes of the comfortably off as was bathing generally; as Levy and others point out, the feet were held outside of the bath itself and were bathed in a separate bowl with alum and perfumes added to the water.[86]

A late nineteenth-century apologist from Nanking who wrote an extended essay on the virtues of the tiny foot ridiculed the idea that bound feet smelled bad:

> Those who oppose footbinding take the strange cravings of a few and make a sweeping generality to cover everyone … That the foot has odor (sic) comes about not from its being small but from a failure to wash it. Any foot, bound or not, will smell if it is not washed. This includes both sexes … [a wife or concubine] washes the foot in fragrant, heated water and spreads perfumed powder over it …/ [T]he defect of undue perspira-

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[85]Lockhart, *The Medical Missionary in China*, p. 338. ‘Luh Akwong, an interesting little girl from Honan, seven years of age, was brought to the hospital. Agreeably to a custom that has prevailed in China for thousands of years, the bandages had been applied to her feet, occasioning excessive suffering, which after the lapse of a fortnight, became insupportable, and the parents were reluctantly compelled to remove the bandages, when, as the father represented, the toes were found discoloured. Gangrene had commenced, and when she was brought to the hospital, it had extended to the whole foot. The line of demarcation formed at the ancles, [sic] and both feet were perfectly black, shrivelled and dry, and nearly ready to drop off at the ancle-joint [sic]. Both feet soon after separated, leaving the stumps healthy, the granulations rapidly covering the bone, and new skin forming at the edges. She was soon afterwards taken home, and the last time she was seen, the stumps were rapidly healing. Since the occurrence of this case, others of a similar nature have been heard of,’ … Dr Parker’s report is also quoted in full in the Repository, Vol. xvii, Jan–Dec, 1848, pp. 141–2.

[86]Apart from the obvious possibility of poor hygiene or disease, we propose a malady which may affect any foot as an alternative to the concept of a lifetime of odiferous and suppurating bound feet. Unpleasant odour arising from sweat, termed bromohydrosis, may affect feet or armpits and contrary to common belief, it is not sweat which causes odours but the bacteria that convert the odourless sweat into butyric acid (which smells like sour butter) and methane-thiol (which smells like cheese). This is a common condition which affects both women and men. The bacteria proliferate especially in warm, moist airless conditions such as inside one’s sock (or binding) and washing, antibacterial soaps, deodorants etc. only mask the smell, they do not cure the problem, it is not one of poor hygiene – or footbinding.

> tion was overcome by wearing sleeping shoes in bed. These not only suppressed odor, but fascinated men with their beautiful embroidery and hidden fragrance of perfume. Men loved to go to bed with women wearing red sleeping shoes ...[87]

Some sources even attested that the skin of the foot did not deteriorate and age along with the skin of the face. In conversations with Chinese scholar Lu Mei Yi, Professor at Lushan Women's College in 1995, I found her in agreement on this according to her own research into difficult to access Chinese sources. From personal observation of an eighty-four-year-old lady's feet in Lushan Province, I can testify that they were smoother than her face, soft and honey-coloured with no sign of sores and certainly no odour. These feet, I believe, were examples of what would have been considered particularly beautiful lilies.

Aversion of foreigners

Nineteenth-century observers were unanimous in rejecting any claims to beauty of face or figure in Chinese women. Chinese women do not feature either in written or pictorial materials, unlike their Indian and Arabian sisters whose exotic, sensual 'otherness' acquired mythical status. Two specific practices made the Chinese women particularly unattractive to foreigners: the way they walked as a result of footbinding, and their chalky white make-up. Bound feet were seen as symbols of suffering and were wholly repugnant to the westerner who could neither appreciate the beauty of tiny feet nor the unfamiliar gait which their feet imposed upon women. Doolittle spoke of the 'uncouth appearance' of lily feet.[88] George Morrison inexplicably attacked Japanese women while at the same time suggesting that, though unpleasant to western eyes, the gait of Chinese women was preferable to that of the Japanese:

> The small feet of the Chinese women, though admired by the Chinese and poetically referred to by them as 'three-inch gold lilies,' are in our eyes a very unpleasant deformity – but still, even with this deformity, the walk of the Chinese woman is more comely than the gait of the Japanese woman as she shambles ungracefully along with her little bent legs, scraping her wooden-soled slippers along the pavement with a noise that sets your teeth on edge. 'Girls are like flowers,' say the Chinese,

[87]Quoted in Levy, pp. 152–3.
[88]Doolittle, *Social Life of the Chinese*, p. 198.

> 'like the willow.' It is important that their feet should be bound short so that they can walk beautifully with mincing steps, swaying gracefully, and thus showing to all that they are persons of respectability.[89]

Charles Gutzlaff, missionary and scholar, commented: '[N]othing so much adorns the fair sex, as small feet,' he says. 'To an unpractised eye, the feet have more the appearance of malformation than anything else,' and, 'it produces a hobbling gait.'[90] Ida Pfeiffer (1797–1858) had met Gutzlaff in 1847 on the China leg of her *first* voyage round the world and concurred with his opinion. She likened the gait of the ladies to the waddling of geese and did not understand what she called this 'peculiar' species of beauty.[91] Around the same time, Lieutenant Forbes remarked: 'In order to walk, some of these beauties are constrained to totter with the help of a stick, which, with a white powder, used to blanch their countenances, called for the following verse, from an inspired poet:- 'Pale as rice, and graceful as the bamboo.'[92] He admitted finding the Chinese 'hopelessly alien'.[93] Traveller Tradescant Lay explained: 'In walking, the body reels from side to side, so as never to appear upright.'[94] Colquhoun, spoke in terms of 'club foot … that deformity' and 'the monstrosity of compressed feet'.[95] Even the compassionate Alicia Little wrote of 'the hideous goatlike feet Chinamen so strangely admire,' they are, she says later, 'abortions' (Fig. 10.7).[96] Another traveller, Constance Cumming, also noticed around 1886 'their poor little "golden lily" feet, reduced to the tiniest hoof,' which often rendered its refined owner unable to walk at all. Cumming observed that women with the most prestigiously small feet relied on an *amah* (female servant) to carry them piggy-back style.[97]

The pulchritude of Chinese women was questioned in every way by western observers. They were no less reviled for their use of cosmetics than they were for their bound feet. Wells Williams noted that on special occasions 'the face is entirely bedaubed with white paint, and rouge is

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[89]Morrison, *An Australian in China*, p. 14.
[90]Charles Gutzlaff, Rev., *China Opened* (London, Smith Elder & Co., 1838), 2 Vols, p. 480.
[91]Ida Pfeiffer, *A Lady's Voyage Around The World*, p. 50.
[92]Forbes, F.E., *Five Years in China* (London, Richard Bentley, 1848), p. 270.
[93]Edward Said's classification of the Oriental in the western mind in *Orientalism* (NY, Pantheon, 1979).
[94]Tradescant, Lay G., *The Chinese as They Are; Their Morals, Social and Literary Character* (London, William Ball, 1841), p. 32.
[95]Colquhoun, *Across Chryse*, 205.
[96]Little, *Intimate China*, pp. 91–3.
[97]Constance F. Gordon Cumming, *Wanderings in China* (London, Blackwood & Sons), p. 65, 2 vols.

WOMAN'S NATURAL FOOT, AND ANOTHER WOMAN'S FEET BOUND TO 4½ INCHES.

Fig. 10.7. 4.5 Inch Foot, Mrs Archibald, *Intimate China* (1899)

added to the lips and cheeks, giving a singular starched appearance to the physiognomy. A girl thus beautified has no need of a fan to hide her blushes, for they cannot be seen through the paint, her eye being the only index of emotion.'[98] In 1882, Robert Douglas of the British Museum and Professor of Chinese at King's College, London, described the face of a 'bedizened', lady as being a 'miserable sight' with a 'plastered complexion' cheeks which are 'ruddled' and artificially painted eyebrows and lips. These were, he opined, 'repulsive'.[99] Colquhoun described a 'Chinese belle' as having cheeks like almond flowers, lips like peach blossom, waists like the

[98]Wells Williams, *Middle Kingdom*, p. 41.
[99]Douglas, Robert, K., *China* (London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1882), pp. 124–5.

willow leaf and footsteps likened to the lotus flower, commenting that the 'Chinese have a certain perverted turn of invention'.[100]

Conclusion

Footbinding developed from a fashion at the court of the emperor and grew to symbolize status for women while representing an index of gentility. Ancient Confucian principles which dominated Chinese culture insisted upon modesty and subservience. Bound feet became mandatory if a girl were to make a good marriage and her feet were also connected to her sexuality. Kept hidden, the tiny feet exuded exoticism and mystery. However, they were no more a fetish for most Chinese men than a female thigh is for a westerner. Disdain for Chinese women on the part of western men may be accounted for in part by footbinding, which they found offensive and singularly unattractive.

Respectable Chinese women remained chastely tucked away from the prurient western gaze in the nineteenth century but this was not due to any special respect accorded to them nor to any assumption of their asexual or elevated status. Contemporary evidence clearly demonstrates that bound feet, whilst an extraordinarily potent symbol of female sexuality and desire to the Han Chinese, were, due to the cultural context, a beautiful adornment which enhanced lovemaking but in no way replaced vaginal penetration.

That western males found the Chinese aesthetic repugnant may well have been viewed as an advantage by respectable women yet this, too, was used negatively by the west to detract from China and Chinese womanhood. Their small feet attracted only opprobrium and were held up as symbols of repression and cruelty, which, coincidentally, mitigated against any possibility that China might be treated as an equal by the west. It is ironic that the very icon of Chinese superiority in their own eyes, was the same symbol which relegated China to barbarian status in the eyes of the west.

Chinese reformers were well aware of this western weapon so that the revolutionaries were to turn it against their own people to force the changes which, they believed, would empower the nation. The image of woman had to change. She should no longer be weak, vulnerable, a pretty ornament tottering on her lily feet in impractical silk shoes. She had to be educated out of her dependence and 'barbarity' and take her place in society, unsupported by either her *amah* or tradition. After the fall of the Manchu in 1911, the lily-footed were publicly ridiculed and foot inspectors had the right to tear off their bindings if they ventured on the street. Many women

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[100]Colquhoun, *Across Chryse*, p. 205. Colquhoun, incidentally, is word-for-word the same as Wells Williams on the subject. Either he is quoting the former or they are both quoting from the same source.

suffered the terrible humiliation of having their most secret and private part exposed and were then left lying, unable to get up and walk away unaided.

The élite, whose feet had been tiniest, could never unbind for mutilation was too complete and the feet would not support the weight of the body if let out. Eventually, official recognition of the plight of these previously most envied of women, forced regulations permitting them to continue to bind – for they truly had no choice if they were to walk at all.

Those who had previously held the highest status, in a tragic reversal, now had the lowest. At least six years of agony were required to create a perfect golden lotus but now, overnight, the lily-footed became pariahs. To the reformers, the weakness and debility of the lily-footed paralleled the weakness and debility of China, unable to shake off the domination of the west.[101] As Chinese society itself was changed by fiat and by revolutionary thought, women were gradually to be transformed beyond recognition to fit the new vision. Heavenly virtues of propriety, vulnerability, fragility and dependence, symbolized and exaggerated to an extraordinary degree by lily feet, were replaced by the requirement that women hold up their own half of the universe, symbolized now by 'liberated' feet.

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[101]For information on the history of the Chinese anti-footbinding movement see: Lu Meiyi and Sheng Yongfu, *The Chalice & the Blade* (Beijing, Social Sciences Publishing House, 1995), Ch. 10.

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