Engendering the Past

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New Interpretations

Contributors: Amanda Gavin, Robyn Skelton, Amy Watson, Aine O'Malley, Amber Stout, Corinne Groeneveldt, Jessica Albrecht and Anna McEwan

Foreword

New Interpretations

Welcome to the first issue of Engendering the Past; *New Interpretations*. This journal is created by a collective formed of postgraduate History students from the University of Glasgow. We reinterpret historical timeframes using gender as a tool of analysis. We maintain that gender is a useful tool of analysis not only for historical research but for a variety of disciplines. We were inspired to produce the journal as we felt there was a space needed for a theoretical gender approach in historical and various interdisciplinary postgraduate works. We chose to organise ourselves as a collective in order to avoid academic hierarchy and to open the journal to a wide range of international contributions from the postgraduate community. As a collective we reflect on the wider societal relevance of our research; we believe, as postgraduate students, we can make valuable contributions to debates in our field of studies.

We, as a collective, established the journal on the basis of providing a space for international, interdisciplinary postgraduate work on gender and sexuality:

> We are dedicated to examining gender across space and time, whilst understanding the meaning of gender depends on its historical and social context; the same can be said for sexuality and patriarchy.
>
> We encourage contribution from a variety of subjects. We maintain that an interdisciplinary approach is the future of academic culture.
>
> We hope to create an international community of postgraduate scholars committing their research to gender analysis.

Synopsis

Our first issue; *New Interpretations,* reflects some of our most distinguished research. In our individual fields of interest, we have used the analytical tools of gender, sexuality, and patriarchy to reinterpret the past. The volume will begin with Amanda Gavin's article, which explores male same-sex sexuality in Renaissance Italy. She analyses the responses to sexual encounters between males, and how this became a site for the construction of masculinities. Similarly, Robyn Skelton's contribution reflects on the experience and identity of Victorian women in same-sex unions. It comments on the ways in which nineteenth century society restrained women's sexuality, and the effect these 'romantic friendships' had on normative marriage. Continuing with the theme of homosexuality, Amy Watson's piece is a comparative look on the repression of homosexuality in England, the USSR and the United States, arguing that homosexual behaviour was oppressed first and foremost due to the want to protect normative, heterosexual masculinity. Aine O'Malley's article then continues with the theme of masculinity. Her piece explores how the First World War can be considered a turning point in the construction of a new, interwar masculinity, and how this compares to the prescribed masculinity of the Edwardian and Victorian period in England.

Following on from Aine's contribution, Amber Stout's work will focus on man-midwives and how the profession went from being a women-only space to one that medical men became a large part of, and in turn how this shaped women's involvement in childbirth. Corinne Groeneveldt's piece also looks at the traditions of childbirth. Her contribution examines the progression of the Churching ritual within Christianity from the early modern to the modern period, and how these changes are linked to the decline of religion in England. Jessica Albrecht's article explores two nineteenth century feminists as examples of the notions of reproduction and motherhood, gendered citizenship and suffrage in nineteenth century feminism in France. Similarly discussing themes of reproduction and biopower, Anna McEwan's piece reflects on the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and whether it was a free space for women. For this analysis, she explores reproductive legislation and cultural signifiers, which attempted to control women's sexualities for reproductive and political purposes.

Engendering the Past

Volume 1, Issue 1, March 2018

Contents

New Interpretations

Foreword *i*

Contents *iii*

Youthful Transgressions: Same-Sex Male Sexuality and Hierarchies of Masculinity in Renaissance Italy 1

Amanda Gavin

From 'Romantic Friendships' to Boston Marriages: Victorian Women in Same-Sex Unions 12

Robyn Skelton

Masculinity, Public Order and Family: The Opprobrium and Legal Prohibitions Directed Against Male Homosexuality in England, the United States and Russia c.1880-1960 23

Amy Watson

The Reconstruction of Masculinities from the Victorian and Edwardian Period into Interwar Britain 37

Aine O'Malley

Contributions to the Rise of Man-Midwifery in Eighteenth-Century England 45

Amber Stout

Exploring the Origins and Survival of 'Churching' in England, and the Implications of This Practice for How the Historian Should Look Upon Religious Change and Secularisation 54

Corinne Groeneveldt

Gendered Citizenship, Suffrage and Reproduction in the Writings and Lives of Nineteenth Century French Feminists Jeanne Deroin and Jenny P. d'Héricourt 66
Jessica Albrecht

To What Extent Can Sex Be Described as a 'Free Space' for Women in the East German Democratic Republic (GDR)? 78
Anna McEwan

End matter *iv*

Youthful Transgressions: Same-Sex Male Sexuality and Hierarchies of Masculinity in Renaissance Italy

Amanda Gavin

Abstract:

Between 1432-1502 as many as 17,000 males were incriminated for having sex with other males in Florence. Both Florence and Venice had special judiciary bodies that dealt exclusively with cases of sodomy during this period, and remarkably these records have survived almost in their entirety. As historical sources they map out an incredibly detailed landscape of sexual and gender practices that have proven to be fruitful for historians of sexuality and gender. This essay will examine the understanding of male same-sex sexuality through a gendered lens, drawing on R. W. Connell's theory of masculinities. During this period the biological sex of an individual was perpetually ambiguous and gender was not as closely associated with sex characteristics as it is in the present day. This essay argues that the responses to sexual encounters between males were conceptualised around gender, with these being an important site of constructing manhoods.

The homoeroticism of Renaissance artwork, such as Dürer's *The Bath House* (Fig.1), stands in stark contrast to the systematic persecution of men for engaging in same-sex relations in several European cities. Michel Foucault argued that modern sexual identity is a product of nineteenth century scientific and sexual discourses and before this period any notion of 'identity' in sexuality is an anachronism.[1] His thesis has perhaps had a reductive effect on the historiography as scholars search for the first 'genuine' gay man, which is now argued to be found in the eighteenth rather than the nineteenth century.[2] Arguably, the Western world is currently in the midst of a paradigm shift that has destabilised notions of a gender binary, with discussions of transgender and non-binary identities entering the public dialogue.[3] Previous scholarship has been reflective of contemporary constructions of gender that are firmly rooted in discourses of biological difference between the sexes. Gender ambivalence has been understood within the parameters of a fixed gender binary, with challenges to this interpreted as a dissolution of binary logic.[4] Renaissance medical discourses reveal a sex-gender system that is radically different from

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[1] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans., Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1978).

[2] Tom Betteridge, *Sodomy in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p.3; see Randolph Trumbach, 'London's Sodomites: Homosexual Behaviour and Western Culture in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Social History,* 11:1 (1977), pp.1-33; Randolph Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution: Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[3] For example, at the time of writing Scotland is currently conducting a public consultation on proposed changes to the Gender Recognition Act 2004 which would allow for a self-declaratory system for legal gender recognition, including non-binary people.

[4] Ann Rosalind Jones, Peter Stallybrass, 'Fetishising Gender: Constructing the Hermaphrodite in Renaissance Europe', *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity,* ed. by, Julia Epstein, Kristina Straub (New York: Routledge, 1991), p.105.

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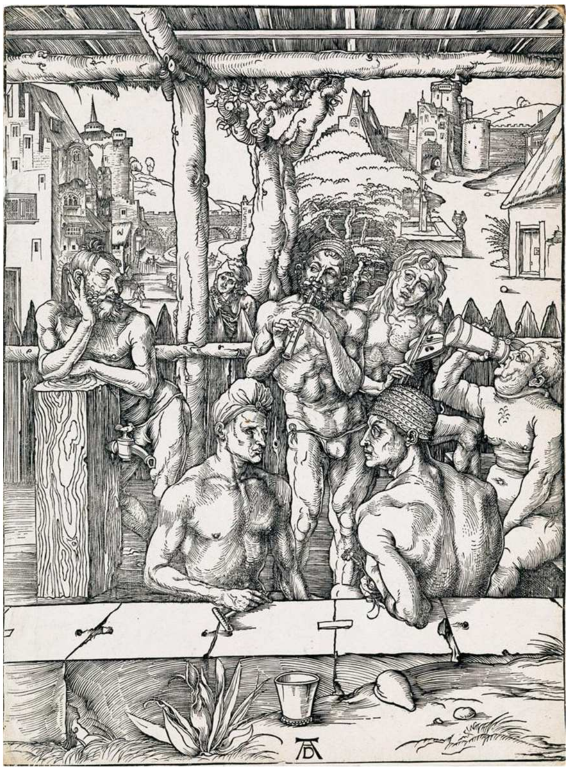
our own. However, our preoccupation with these discourses only replicate our own conceptions of gender. In early modern Europe, biological frameworks for gender were of secondary importance.[5] Sexuality was organised around gender rather than modern conceptions of orientation or identity. This article will largely draw on evidence from Florence and Venice, but they were not by any means unique in their systematic persecution of sexual activity between men.[6]

Fig. 1: Albrecht Dürer, *The Bath House*, Nuremberg (c.1496)



For example, Ghent and Bruges had comparable rates of persecution and in Cologne, there were several secret commissions intended to gather information on the 'unspeakable sin' but there

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[5] Ann Rosalind Jones, Peter Stallybrass, 'Fetishising Gender: Constructing the Hermaphrodite in Renaissance Europe', *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity,* ed. by, Julia Epstein, Kristina Straub (New York: Routledge, 1991), p.80.

[6] Male same-sex sexual activity was persecuted under the crime of 'sodomy' which was any illicit sexual act considered 'unnatural'; sex that could not result in pregnancy and bestiality were also considered sodomy. However, the most common form to be prosecuted was sex between men so it was likely the cultural connotation of the word in common usage; For attitudes outside of Italy see Mary Elizabeth Perry, 'The "Nefarious Sin" in Early modern Seville', *The Pursuit of Sodomy: Male Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe,* ed. by, Kent Gerard, Gert Hekma (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp.57-91; Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (New York: Columbia University Press,1982); Helmut Puff, 'Homosexuality: Homosociabilities in Renaissance Nuremberg', *A Cultural History of Sexuality in the Renaissance,* ed. by, Bette Talvacchia (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), pp.51-73.

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were no penal consequences.[7] Florence and Venice had special judiciary bodies that dealt exclusively with sodomy; the Office of the Night, which later became The Council of Ten in Venice. Remarkably, their records have survived almost in their entirety, mapping out an incredibly detailed landscape of sexual practices and attitudes. This article will examine the understanding of male same-sex sexuality through a gendered lens, drawing on R. W. Connell's theory of masculinities.[8] The central argument is that the responses to sexual encounters between males were conceptualised around gender, with these relations being an important site for the construction of manhoods.

Hegemonic masculinity can be understood as the legitimising force of patriarchy which guarantees the dominance of men and the subordination of women.[9] Few men can successfully embody hegemonic masculinity, but the majority of men enjoy the benefits of the patriarchal dividend.[10] Connell argues that homosexual masculinities are positioned at the bottom of the gender hierarchy amongst men, as they can be assimilated into femininity, with misogyny arguably at the root of homophobia.[11] However, heterosexuality as a prerequisite to a hegemonic masculinity is product of modern society. In the period, men who had sex with men were not excluded from hegemonic masculinity on those grounds and were able to achieve an ideal renaissance manhood without violating the gender order. The defining characteristics of manhood during this period have been heavily debated, but the conflicting evidence is in itself evidence of multiple masculinities that were continually being constructed and negotiated. Masculinity cannot meaningfully be reduced to a set of characteristics as it is a dynamic site of gender relations that exists both as a product and a producer of history. Valeria Finucci argues that it was paternity rather than sexual potency that came to be the essential quality of renaissance manhood.[12] Whereas, Sandro Cavallo finds that bachelorhood did not exclude men from holding public office, nor did fatherhood constitute the condition of achieving full manhood.[13] The socially and culturally dependent nature of gender suggests that searching for a singular ideal renaissance manhood is misplaced.[14] The analysis of manhood has been dominated by the paternalist head of household figure which has adhered to a restrictive definition of a 'household'.[15] Manhood did not necessarily constitute a patriarch. The past has been viewed through a heteronormative lens which has dealt with those outside of this pattern as 'others', placing them analytically on the fringes of the gender order rather than within it. The evidence from both Florentine and Venetian records indicate that sex between men was a somewhat common occurrence that was tacitly accepted socially and did not necessarily constitute a life-long orientation.

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[7] Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller, 'The Middle Ages', *Gay Life and Culture: A World History*, ed. Robert Aldrich (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006), p.71; Also see Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilisation* (U.S.A: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[8] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005).

[9] Ibid., p.77.

[10] Ibid., p.79.

[11] Ibid., p.78; R. W. Connell, 'A Very Straight Gay: Masculinity, Homosexual Experience, and the Dynamics of Gender', *American Sociological Review* 57:6 (1992), pp.735-751.

[12] See Valeria Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade: Masculinity, Paternity and Castration in the Italian Renaissance* (U.S.A: Duke University Press, 2003).

Early modern Italy was a patriarchal and patrilineal society which placed great importance on patrician women remaining chaste, but no such standard for men was expected.[16] However, sexual expectations for men were still largely defined in patriarchal terms. Men tended to marry relatively late in life, late twenties to early thirties, and this resulted in a prolonged state of adolescence where sexual transgressions were viewed as rites of passage on the way to full manhood.[17] Masculinity and male sexuality were closely related to the life-cycle and during adolescence, sex with mature men was viewed as part of their youthful sexual exploration. Mature men would be expected to assume the dominant role in sex, anally penetrating adolescent boys who were considered a passive partner. Sex with boys was acceptable within the cultural conventions as long as they subscribed to the hierarchy of age and sexual role.[18] The prescribed hierarchy essentially reproduced the patriarchal gender order, with the older man remaining the masculine and dominant force and the younger male being constructed as feminine and submissive. Religious discourses denounced this activity as sodomy, but at a lay level it appeared to have been tacitly accepted. The Dominican friar, Savonarola (1452-1495), preached that Florentine parents feared so much the pregnancy of an unmarried daughter that sons were encouraged to engage in the 'lesser evil' of sex with men.[19] In Florence, the patterns of sexual activity between men complemented the hierarchical social networks as they were organised along the lines of neighbourhoods and confraternities.[20] These relationships were part of the social fabric of the city, helping to articulate the boundaries between boyhood and manhood, and were far from being relegated to a fringe culture. Viewing these relationships with a rigidly binary conception of gender is not reflective of the societies in which they were created, where the dichotomy was perhaps less rigid than has been previously assumed. Informers reporting to courts often referred to adolescent boys within these relationships as 'being kept as a woman', sometimes even a 'wife'.[21] Furthermore, derogatory feminine terms were exclusively used against the passive partner, such as *cagna in gestra* meaning 'bitch in heat'.[22] The power dynamics of these sexual acts mirrored the existing patriarchy; the boys were gendered as feminine as a result of assuming a subordinate sexual position, not due to physical appearance. Gendering young boys as feminine allowed them to be constructed as objects of desire for older men. Despite engaging in sex with other males they were still able to benefit from the patriarchal dividend as their sexuality was framed by a gender hierarchy rather than sexual difference. When the gender roles were subverted, with older men assuming the passive position, a far more violent response was evoked from magistrates.

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[13] Sandra Cavallo, 'Bachelorhood and Masculinity in Renaissance and Early Modern Italy', *European History Quarterly* 38:3 (2008), p.377; also see Androniki Dialeti, 'Defending Women Negotiating Masculinity in Early Modern Italy', *The Historical Journal* 54:1, (2011), pp. 1–23.

[14] See Alex Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); 'the social practice of manhood was enormously diverse, contingent, and contradictory, influenced by and informing distinctions of age, social status, marital status, and context.', p.1.

[15] Cavallo, 'Bachelorhood', p.377.

[16] Women belonging to patrician families who were unable or unwilling to marry would usually join a convent. Nunneries were an attractive alternative to women who did not want marriage and there is evidence of same-sex relationships taking place at Italian convents; see Judith C. Brown, *Immodest Acts: The Life of a Lesbian Nun in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Similarly, monasteries during the period appear to have often had cultures of same-sex relations between male monks; see Randolph Trumbach, 'From Age to Gender, c. 1500-1750: From the Adolescent Male to the Adult Effeminate Body', *The Routledge History of Sex and the Body 1500 to the Present*, ed. by, Sarah Toulalan, Kate Fisher (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp.126-8.

[17] Michael Rocke, 'Gender and Sexual Culture in Renaissance Italy', *Gender and Society in Renaissance Italy*, ed. by Judith C. Brown, Robert C. Davis (New York: Routledge, 1998), p.168.

[18] Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.97.

The Office of the Night in both Florence and Venice, and later the Council of Ten in Venice, relied on informants for their prosecutions. In Florence, between 1432-1502, as many as 17,000 males were incriminated for sex with other males.[23] Michael Rocke finds that by the end of the fifteenth century, by the time most men reached 40, two in three had been implicated in sodomy.[24] Randolph Trumbach argues that this statistic was reflective of almost all Florentine men engaging in sex with other men at some point in their lives.[25] However, many of the accusations brought before the Office of the Night were never taken seriously or investigated and despite their authority to do so, magistrates were reluctant to enforce the death penalty. Perhaps, the humiliation of a political opponent or a troublesome neighbour may account for a proportion of the accusations. There was also financial incentives to hand over the names of sodomites which could be done anonymously.[26] Nonetheless, the Florentine records provide a rich source of testimony that give us a glimpse into the lived reality which was clearly at tension with conflicting moral codes; one from the Church which explicitly condemned any sexual activity they considered illicit and the other, a social acceptance of youthful sexual transgressions. The records highlight that sodomy was engaged in by people across the social stratum, from aristocratic men to barbers; yet those on the fringes of society - beggars and those supported by charity - were never implicated. The magistrates were clearly uninterested in these groups and targeted those who were responsible for the production of goods and the procreation of children.[27] Sexual activity that defied the dichotomy of feminine passivity and masculine dominance undermined the legitimacy of the patriarchy and threatened social disorder. Thus, magistrates appear to have focused their efforts on the 'pillars of society'.

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[19] Rocke, 'Gender', p.164.
[20] Helmut Puff, 'Early Modern Europe, 1400-1700', *Gay Life and Culture: A World History*, ed. by Robert Aldrich (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006), p.86.
[21] Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, p.107.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Rocke, 'Gender', p.166.
[24] Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, p.4.
[25] Trumbach, 'From Age to Gender', p.125.

The late age of marriage denied young men economic power as they required legal emancipation on the death of their father as an alternative source of autonomy, and even marriage did not always result in legal and economic rights.[28] When denied access to hegemonic forms of masculinity, alternative sources of power could be sought and manhoods constructed in relation to their peers. One of the most striking characteristics of the Florentine records is the proportion of sexual assaults that were carried out by groups of young men, typically between 3 and 6.[29] For example, in 1497, a 30 year old servant named as Costanza was sexually assaulted by a group of 14 youths.[30] The prevalence of assaults carried out by groups of young male assailants indicate that this was a site where manhood was actively constructed through sexual violence and demonstrating virility to peers. The sexual 'possession' of boys by groups of young men was not uncommon, with Savonarola writing in a sermon - considered to be based on Lorenzo de' Medici - that 'no well-favoured boy is safe'.[31] He details the kidnapping of 'wives and daughters' during 'great banquets', where they were taken through 'secret passageways to the rooms' and subsequently 'taken in the snare.'[32] Boys, girls and women were constructed as submissive, weak and therefore feminine and susceptible to men's attraction.

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[26] Hergemöller, 'Middle Ages', p.75.

[27] Ibid., p.73.

[28] Sandra Cavallo, 'Bachelorhood and Masculinity in Renaissance and Early Modern Italy', *European History Quarterly* 38:3 (2008), pp.380-1.

[29] Rocke, 'Gender ', p.164; 39% of sexual assaults against women in Florence between 1495-1515 were carried out by two or more men.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Girolamo Savonarola, 'Treatise on the Rule and Government of the City of Florence, Written at the Request of the Most High Lords of the City', *Selected Writings of Girolamo Savonarola: Religion and Politics, 1490-1498*, trans., Anne Borelli, Maria Pastore Passaro (Yale: Yale University Press, 2006), p.193.

The most harshly punished instances of sodomy were ones in which the hierarchy of age and normative sexual role were violated. Mature men assuming the passive position in sex with a younger man was one way in which the hierarchy of masculinities was subverted, but there are cases where masculinity was either denied by society or rejected by the individual. The scholarship has generally viewed these cases as oddities or as men who embodied an effeminate masculinity. Arguably the males engaging in sex with other males whilst 'cross-dressing' can be viewed as assuming social womanhood.[33] A sermon of Savonarola's reflects the tension between the lived reality of gender as opposed to Christian teachings:

> 'Young lads have been made into women. But that's not all: fathers are like daughters, brothers like sisters. There is no distinction between the sexes or anything else anymore.'[34]

The moral panic surrounding certain forms of same-sex relations between males indicate a gender order that was in crisis. With the difference between the sexes framed in a vastly different way from modern understandings, the biological underpinning of gender was not in the cultural logic and a lack of essentialist discourse on gender made it inherently fragile. Although Christian writings presented the gender binary as the 'natural order', this was evidently in conflict with a far more incoherent gendered reality. How same-sex male sexuality was framed provides some of the most illuminating insights into the underlying assumptions about gender in early modern Italian culture. In 1374, a barber around eighteen years old named Simeone appears in the Venetian records labelled as a 'passive' partner in sodomy. Traditionally the punishment for a man was cutting of his hands, which humiliated him as a worker, but Simeone was punished by cutting off his nose; a punishment usually assigned to women, as their value was perceived to be reliant on their beauty.[35] This does not indicate a subordinate masculinity but social womanhood as Simeone was treated as a woman. In 1354, the case of Rolandino Ronchaia was tried in Venice.[36] He is noted as having a more feminine appearance than masculine, with pronounced breasts which Guido Ruggiero interprets as a hormone imbalance, but perhaps what we would now consider intersex.[37] However, our concern with certain sex characteristics in relation to gender are reflective of our current point in history and were likely of less importance to pre-Enlightenment society. Rolandino was socialised as male and had married a woman, but it failed due to his impotence. Failure to gain an erection was grounds for a divorce in early modern Italy, where virility was an important aspect of manhood. [38] After his divorce, Rolandino moved to Padua where he established a sexual relationship with another male, assuming the passive role, and later returned to Venice having changed his name to Rolandina. She lived successfully as a woman and supported herself through sex work, where it is recorded that customers never discovered that Rolandina was male.[39] Rolandina's sexual transgressions were viewed as violations of the natural order in the same way that females assuming a dominant position in sex was also sodomy, but her ambivalent gender position was not the root of the anxiety. Women appear in the records less frequently for sodomy, perhaps due to the legal code punishing active partners more harshly, but they were still culpable. In 1598 The Ten condemned female sex workers for wearing male clothes in order to 'attract and ensnare young men'.[40] The inventory of a Venetian sex worker, Giulia Lombardo reveals that she kept male clothes in her wardrobe, likely to wear at the request of her male clients.[41] There was clearly a desire for sexual encounters with someone who could embody a form of masculinity whilst remaining a passive partner. Arguably, these individuals were engaging in a fluid practice of gender, moving from masculine to feminine.

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[32] Girolamo Savonarola, 'Treatise on the Rule and Government of the City of Florence, Written at the Request of the Most High Lords of the City', *Selected Writings of Girolamo Savonarola: Religion and Politics, 1490-1498*, trans., Anne Borelli, Maria Pastore Passaro (Yale: Yale University Press, 2006), p.193.

[33] For the theory of gender performativity and the subversive nature of 'drag' see Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York, Routledge: 1993).

[34] Quoted by Rocke, 'Gender', p.150.

Sex between men was framed within the gendered hierarchy. Men negotiated their sexual experiences through gender and were able to engage in sex with other men without necessarily compromising their masculinity. Dominance and sexual prowess could just as easily be demonstrated with subordinate male partners than with women. When men assumed passive sexual roles, they would seek alternative forms of masculinity or perhaps embrace femininity, as Rolandina did, and were positioned socially as a type of woman. The historical record maps a gendered landscape that is radically different from our own; the biological sex of an individual was perpetually ambiguous with the binary sex system very much a product of post-enlightenment Europe. Gender was not as closely associated with sex characteristics as it is today, where the binary system has been replicated in conceptualising 'homosexuality' as the opposite of 'heterosexuality'.[42] Early modern men, women and those beyond the binary had no comparable categories in which to understand their sexual experience. Ruggiero identified a 'homosexual subculture' in Venice, indicated by The Ten's growing assumption that homosexuality was associated with certain spaces; such as schools, apothecary shops and gymnasiums.[43] However, the men he identifies as engaging in a subculture had no language in which to conceptualise themselves as engaging in 'homosexual' activity or as being 'homosexual' men. As historians, we will never fully escape the trap of ethnocentrism as we will always be viewing the past through our own particular point in history, which can often lead to anachronisms. Many of the men implicated in these records would undoubtedly be considered homosexual if they were alive today, others would likely be viewed as having transgender or non-binary identities. Yet, by retrospectively categorising individuals using contemporary logic we remove them from their cultural contexts. They were conducting their gendered lives within a vastly different conceptual framework to our own and we must challenge our underlying assumptions about the nature of gender when interpreting the past.

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[35] Guido Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros: Sex Crime and Sexuality in Renaissance Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.121.
[36] Ibid., p.136.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Rocke, 'Gender and Sexual Culture, p.153.
[39] Ruggiero, *Eros*, p.136.
[40] N. S. Davidson, 'Sodomy in Early Modern Venice', *Sodomy in Early Modern Europe,* ed. by, Tom Betteridge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p.69.
[41] See Cathy Santore, 'Julia Lombardo, Somtusoa Meretrize: A Portrait by Property', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 41:1 (1988), pp. 44–83; Davidson, 'Sodomy', p.69.

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[42] See Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out* (London: Quartet Book, 1983), p.11.

[43] Ruggiero, *Eros*, pp.138-9.

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From 'Romantic Friendships' to Boston Marriages: Victorian Women in Same-Sex Unions

Robyn Skelton

Abstract:

This article analyses the experience and identity of Victorian women in same-sex unions, using nineteenth century Britain and America as a case study. By exploring literature written by women romantically interested in other women, this article comments on the repressed nature of women's sexuality, paying particular attention to those in same-sex relationships. It will evaluate the ways in which Victorian society responded to lesbian women, including their conceptualisation of 'romantic friendships', Boston marriage and gender inversion. Furthermore, this article uses theoretical concepts such as gender performativity, patriarchal equilibrium and patriarchal bargaining in order to compare the experience of women in same-sex unions to those within normative marriage. As well as arguing that women in same-sex relationships used normative marriage as a context upon which to measure and legitimise their own relationships, it will also consider the changes women in same-sex unions attempted to enforce upon women's civil liberties within Victorian society.

The lesbian identity has historically proven to be difficult to locate, with sexuality being conceptualised as a 'modern invention'.[1] Following the publication of Foucault's *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, the debate surrounding the history of homosexuality has accelerated in attempt to delineate 'the historical specificity of lesbian and gay identities'.[2] The discourse surrounding sexuality has transformed significantly since the nineteenth century, thus changing the ways in which historians approached the study of same-sex relationships. Defining same-sex couples of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the same way as modern homosexual identities is both inaccurate and problematic. Moreover, investigation into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has revealed that despite the pre-Foucauldian notion of 'sexual repression', there seemed to be the opposite of a censorship of sex but almost a compulsive obsession with sexual activity, with far-reaching evidence of same-sex couples within societal discourse.[3] Therefore, the study of modern same-sex couples proves to be an imperative focus of research for historians of sexuality.

This article will specifically investigate women in same-sex unions of nineteenth century Britain and America, examining the experiences of Anne Lister and Charlotte Cushman, in attempt to

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[1] H.G. Cocks, and M. Houlbrook, *The Modern History of Sexuality* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), p.6.

[2] M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality; An Introduction,* volume 1 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p.26.

[3] A. Clark, *Desire: A History of European Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p.2.

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determine the nature of same-sex relationships before the notion of lesbianism. By drawing on theoretical work by Butler, and Bennett among others, it will investigate how the framework of gender roles, patriarchy and gender inversion affected women in same-sex relationships. Furthermore, by examining the ways in which same-sex unions between women contrasted with heterosexual marriage, in addition to the perception of same-sex unions within the patriarchal order, this article will comment on the non-normative female sexual experience of nineteenth century society, and whether same-sex unions undermined or strengthened Victorian marriage.

Historians have faced considerable difficulty in their research on female relationships due to limited evidence acknowledging the existence of same-sex activity between women.[4] Whilst sodomy was an illegal and punishable crime, sex between women was not prohibited. Although there are a limited number of known cases where women were reprimanded for sleeping with someone of the same sex, such cases often impacted the lower classes, whereas relationships between middle and upper class women, drawing upon the de-sexualised notion of 'romantic friendships', were symbolised as fashionable and quite an attractive prospect[5]. As a result, historians lack public records to examine in this regard, severely limiting the evidence available to those researching women in same-sex relationships.[6]

Notwithstanding, historians have found means to explore the history of women's same-sex unions, drawing on fiction written for and by women in same sex-relationships.[7] Additionally, the use of contemporary diaries and letters have proved imperative to relative studies. A wealth of material written by women such as Anne Lister, a Yorkshire gentlewoman who expressed sexual and romantic interest in the same sex, evidences the ways in which these women explored their identities before the conception of lesbianism.[8] Conversely, such resources can prove difficult to analyse. In the case of Anne Lister, despite openly negating the notion of marrying a man, she still wrote her diary entries and letters in a specific code that disguised the explicit nature of her thoughts.[9] One commonly used instance found within her diary entries is the use of an 'x' in the margin when she experienced an orgasm.[10] It could be argued that this represents

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[4] A. Clark, *Desire: A History of European Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p.137.

[5] Ibid., p.137.

[6] Ibid.

[7] M. Vicinus, *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p.80.

[8] J. Liddington, *Female Fortune. Land, Gender and Authority: The Anne Lister Diaries and Other Writings, 1833-36* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1998), p.15.

[9] L. Moore, '"Something More Tender Still Than Friendship": Romantic Friendship in Early Nineteenth-Century England', *Feminist Studies,* 18:3 (1992), p.511.

[10] A. Clark, 'Anne Lister's Construction of Lesbian Identity', *Journal of the History of Sexuality,* 7:1 (1996), p.23.

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the repressed nature of same-sex relationships in Victorian society, or more accurately, the reticence practiced by many women is a direct reflection of the passivity enforced on women's sexuality in nineteenth century Britain and America. Women within middle-class marriages involving men were also required to confine their sexuality and preserve their dignity.[11] Sexual energy was decidedly a masculine characteristic enforced within Victorian marriage, with women expected to remain overtly non-sexual.

The discourse of women in same-sex relationships was initially demonstrated in work by Smith-Rosenberg as ranging from 'the supportive love of sisters, through the enthusiasm of adolescent girls to sensual avowals of love by mature women'.[12] Faderman emphasises the concept of 'romantic friendships' between women, which she notes were idealised within eighteenth and nineteenth century culture.[13] It was expressed as a world in which 'men made but a shadowy appearance', yet was overwhelmingly characterised by rigid gender roles enforced by patriarchal society and the need for 'performativity' within such gender roles.[14] Particularly prevalent within middle and upper class culture, as argued by Faderman and Smith-Rosenberg, romantic friendships were established as a result of gendered spheres remaining distinctly segregated.[15] By 'performing' their gendered roles in society women were able to find 'their own space' to develop private emotions as associated with womanhood, creating deeply devoted and intimate friendships.[16] This emotional intimacy seemed to develop for some into physically intimate relationships, where women were known to publicly show affection in the form of embracing and kissing each other. In some cases, women such as Charlotte Cushman - an American actress of the nineteenth century known for her romantic involvement with numerous women - evidenced sexual intimacy through personal testimony and letters sent to her female lovers.[17]

In the case of both exemplary women of this essay - Anne Lister and Charlotte Cushman - it is argued that they used the framework of heteronormative marriage as a means to characterise and

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[11] Vicinus, *Intimate Friends* (2004), xxix.

[12] C. Smith-Rosenberg, 'The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth Century America', *Signs,* 1:1 (1975), p.2.

[13] L. Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to Present* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1981), p.75.

[14] See Smith-Rosenberg, 'The Female World of Love and Ritual' (1975), p.2, for further discussion on men's involvement in romantic friendships, and J. Butler, *Undoing Gender,* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p.198-199, on an in-depth analysis of gender performativity.

[15] Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men,* (1981), p.75

[16] T.N. Swain, 'Unveiling Relations: Women and Women – On Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's Research', *Journal of Women's History,* 12:3 (2000), p.31.

[17] S. Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Marriage and Desire in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p.200.

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reinforce their own relationships. Marcus notes that it was not uncommon for some women in romantic relationships to seek some of the rights afforded by the state to normative Victorian marriages.[18] Through their own legally binding agreements and often the exchange of rings, women in same-sex relationships could avow commitment to their monogamous relationship, while sharing property and financial assets.[19] It is important to note that although such agreements appear to be influenced by Victorian marriage, a necessary distinction to make is the sharing of possessions. Rather than one of the partners assuming the role of 'husband' and thus both acquiring ownership of their joint possessions, the women were able to share their possessions together. Charlotte Cushman subscribed to this notion by, in her own words, 'marrying' one of her long-term partners, Emma Stebbins, creating a 'spousal bond and kinship network'.[20] Marcus notes that Cushman referred to Emma's father as her 'father-in-law', evidencing the fact that she considered their legal agreement a real and binding marriage.[21] Ostensibly, there were instances of female same-sex unions modelling their relationships upon normative partnerships, which is unsurprising given that the institution of marriage was deemed to be the pinnacle of Victorian relationships.

Drawing on available sources, historians have highlighted the significance of analysing expressions and language as means of exploring female same-sex unions. Their particular use of language, as suggested by Marcus, often reflects the paradigm of heterosexual Victorian marriage.[22] Women in same-sex unions often referred to themselves or their partners as 'hubbie', 'better half', 'spouse', or 'wedded wife', hinting at their reverence to the sanctimony of marriage.[23] This notion could be used to suggest same-sex unions between women supported and reinforced the institution of Victorian marriage. Yet, it could also be interpreted as an attempt to fit in with societal norms, using these norms to emphasise the women's commitment to their partner. Conceivably, due to the fact that marriage between women was not legally attainable in the nineteenth century, it is possible to suggest these women strived for the opportunity to officially and legally bind themselves as couples, affirming their status as monogamous partners. Their language is not necessarily reflective of their support for the institution for legal marriage but is just part of a societal context against which they could measure their own relationships. Thus, this notion limits the extent to which same-sex unions strengthened Victorian marriage. Women in same-sex unions used marriage as a framework to improve upon for their own relationships.

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[18] S. Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Marriage and Desire in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p.194.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., p.200

[21] Ibid., p.196-197.

[22] Ibid., p.201.

[23] Vicinus, *Intimate Friends* (2004), p.80.

Moreover, it is useful for the purpose of this essay to consider the ways in which society perceived women in committed relationships, often illuminating the discourse of same-sex unions compared to normative marriage. According to Bennett, throughout history a patriarchal equilibrium has placed not only men, but also powerful women, as the dominant force in society.[24] This can be demonstrated in nineteenth century Britain and America by analysing the framework of matrimony applied to romantic and sexual relationships. Faderman observes the use of the term 'Boston marriage', which originated from nineteenth century New England, to describe long-term relationships between two otherwise unmarried women.[25] She notes that often Boston marriages included women who were financially independent, thus indicating no need to marry a man to maintain their comfortable lifestyles.[26] This conviction is substantiated in the lifestyles of both Anne Lister and Charlotte Cushman. Anne Lister, after inheriting Shibden Estate, was recognised by society as a landed gentlewoman, thus granting her a noteworthy amount of personal and financial autonomy.[27] Cushman, successfully building her career worldwide as an actress, was also afforded significant financial and social independence.[28] Women in Boston marriages could likewise be associated with the likes of spinsters or 'Old Maids', mature women who were recognised as introverted and lacking in the sexual appeal necessary to secure a male companion.[29] Following the rationality of Victorian societal norms, these women did not require support from a masculine authority, and proved to be an exception to the gendered dynamic of marriage in patriarchal society. Consequently, this notion suggests women in same-sex unions or Boston marriages significantly undermined the institution of Victorian marriage, deeming it unnecessary for middle and upper class women to build a successful livelihood.

While same-sex unions undermined the traditional gendered sphere of power exhibited by nineteenth century heterosexual marriage, it is necessary to consider the ways in which Victorian society perceived such unions. Romantic friendships were frequently considered as a precursor to 'real' marriage.[30] This was often the case, with evidence supporting the fact that many women who were in intimate and loving relationships with other women had to invest in a 'marriage of convenience' for their own financial security.[31] In explaining the difference between societal tolerance and acceptance of same-sex unions, Clark denotes the metaphorical concept of 'twilight moments' in attempt to ascertain the genuine experience of women who loved women.[32] Clark argues that far from accepting same-sex relationships and unions, nineteenth century patriarchal society, in an attempt to reinforce the power and legitimacy of legal normative marriage, ultimately understood female relationships as a phase.[33] This notion confirms the extent to which marriage as a patriarchal paradigm shaped the experience of women in same-sex unions. Women, regardless of their sexual preference, were often confined by the institution of marriage, with their opportunities for careers, interests and control over their own bodies limited by their need to follow societal norms and marry a man. Yet, Adrienne Rich stresses the fact that it should not be assumed that women leaving same-sex unions for heterosexual marriage were choosing 'heterosexuality' over 'homosexuality' - albeit homosexuality or lesbianism as an identity did not yet exist.[34] Rather, she notes, these women 'submitted with faith or ambivalence, to the demands of the institution…but their feelings – nor their sensuality – were neither domesticated nor limited by it'.[35] By following Rich's assertion that women were in more control of their fate than initially perceived, it could be argued that women were using Victorian marriage as a form of patriarchal bargaining, in attempt to secure themselves future opportunities within the construct of marriage.[36] To a certain extent this suggests a challenge to Victorian marriage by undermining the traditional institution.

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[24] For further discussion on patriarchal equilibrium, see J.M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), pp.56-59.
[25] Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men* (1981), p.190.
[26] Ibid., p.191.
[27] C. Roulston, 'The Revolting Anne Lister: The U.K's First Modern Lesbian', *Journal of Lesbian Studies,* 17:3 (2013), p.269.
[28] Marcus, *Between Women* (2007), p.197.
[29] Donoghue, *Passions Between Women* (1993), p.127.

As previously discussed, there is evidence to suggest that the heterosexual population struggled to fathom the notion of two women sexually involved with one another due to women's imposed virtue and purity.[37] Thus, it was necessary for society to transpose female sexual relationships within the patriarchal model of society and its rigid gender roles. Subsequently, the late-nineteenth century witnessed the sexological conception of gender inversion.[38] Psychologist of sex Havelock Ellis wrote of 'sexo-aesthetic inversion', defined as a change in a person's sexual impulses towards those of the same sex. Ellis develops this further, defining the invert as a person whose 'tastes and impulses are so altered that, if a man, he emphasises and even exaggerates the feminine characteristics of his own person…and finds peculiar satisfaction in dressing himself as a woman and adopting a woman's ways'.[39] Felski observes the recurrent attempt to apply masculine characteristics to women in same-sex unions, often as an attempt for society to employ heterosexual attributes to relationships that do not fit the hegemony of 'normal' relationships between men and women.[40] Vicinus similarly maintains that the easiest way for a woman to explain her same-sex desire would be to present herself as man.[41]

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[30] Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men* (1981), p.196-197.
[31] Donoghue, *Passions Between Women* (1993), p.130.
[32] A. Clark, 'Twilight Moments', *Journal of the History of Sexuality,* 14:2 (2005), p.142.
[33] Ibid., p.141.
[34] Swain, 'Unveiling Relations', p. 3.
[35] Ibid., p.31.
[36] For the theory of patriarchal bargaining and its application to women outside of western discourse see D. Kandiyoti, 'Bargaining with Patriarchy', *Gender and Society,* 2 (1988), p.285.
[37] G. Freidman, 'School for Scandal: Sexuality, Race and National Vice and Virtue in *Miss Marianne Woods and Miss Jane Pirie Against Lady Helen Cumming Gordon', Nineteenth Century Contexts,* 27:1 (2005), p.53.

There are numerous examples of 'gender inversion' throughout nineteenth century Britain and America; Anne Lister referred to herself as 'a naturally masculine woman', whilst Charlotte Cushman often cast herself in male roles - most famously playing Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet* - stating that she 'was born a tomboy'.[42] Evidently, these women struggled to define themselves as having a sexual desire for the same sex whilst still maintaining their femininity. Accordingly, Butler's concept of performativity could be applied, but in the sense that they were performing to typically male gendered characteristics in an attempt to fit within the heterosexual model of marriage and relationships.

When examining whether same-sex unions strengthened or undermined Victorian marriage, it is crucial to consider the working relationship which developed between women in same-sex unions and those who contributed to early feminist movements. Whilst embracing the framework of legal marriage as a model for their sexual relationships with women, they often sought to reform the institution of marriage in attempt to improve women's status in Victorian society.[43] By legal definition, Victorian marriage up until 1857 was shaped by its resilience and indissolubility.[44] Yet, many historians associate marriage in the nineteenth century as vital to the patriarchal model of the British and American state, with Marcus stating that it 'mandated the

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[38] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (1978), p.43.

[39] A.I. Davidson, *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), p.35.

[40] R. Felski, 'Introduction' in L. Bland and L. Doan, *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1998), p.6.

[41] Vicinus, *Intimate Friends* (2004), p.80.

[42] Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men* (1981), pp.220-225.

[43] Marcus. *Between Women* (2007), p.2.

[44] Ibid., p.204.

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formal inequality of husbands and wives, since coverture dictated that they were legally one person, the husband'.[45] By transferring women's property, finance and personal belongings to their husbands upon marriage, women essentially became the property of the man, forfeiting the majority of their rights as individuals.[46]

With the growing feminist movement, however, women began to strive for reform in a variety of different spheres, and women in same-sex unions often used this platform in their attempts to amend marriage laws to include men and women of the same-sex. Hence, as Marcus states, there grew an affinity with same-sex relationships and marriage reform.[47] Moreover, as of 1856 a petition was submitted to the British government detailing the prerequisite of equality within marriage, and although this was initially only partially successful, it did start progress of a Civil Divorce Law which would be published the following year.[48] Women in same-sex relationships were significantly valuable in the petition, with the requisite for impartiality of those signing in support. Married women were unable to contribute due to the 'conflict in interest', thus women in romantic friendships or same-sex unions proved to be important participants to the activism of marriage reform. Evidently, women in same-sex unions proved to be invaluable in the reform of marriage, and furthermore, the protection of women's civil rights and liberties in married life. This overwhelmingly suggests that same-sex unions weakened the institution of same-sex marriage. Women in romantic relationships, whilst striving for marriage equality of those of the same sex, recognised that the matrimonial institution was flawed, thus merely employed it as a provisional framework for their own relationships.

Female romantic friendship is a concept that may initially prove difficult for the modern historian to interpret when compared to the contemporary lesbian identity. Yet, it is a subject of vast significance when analysing historical sexual discourse. Arguably having developed from a segregation of rigid gender roles, the nineteenth century women often established close and intimate relationships with their female counterparts. Habitually, normative Victorian marriage was used as a framework on which to base female same-sex unions, primarily to show women's commitment to life-long partners. Gender inversion was utilised by greater society, in addition to women within same-sex unions, to define relationships within the hegemonic model, somewhat

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men* (1981), p.181.

[47] Marcus, *Between Women* (2007), p.204.

[48] For further discussion on the 1856 petition submitted to the British government, see Marcus, *Between Women* (2007), p.204.

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undermining romantic friendships and strengthening the institution of Victorian marriage. However, an important distinction to make between Victorian marriage and same-sex unions was the notion of equality, which considerably weakens the notion of marriage. Within same-sex unions, women benefitted from an equality not experienced by their equivalents in normative Victorian marriages. Albeit, it could be argued that some women in Victorian marriages were 'bargaining with patriarchy', however for most women it was an experience of subordination.[49] Most importantly, same-sex unions played a significant role in the reform of marriage. Although same-sex unions strengthened Victorian marriage to a certain extent by modelling their relationship on patriarchal norms imposed by the institution, it is evident that they, in part, undermined normative matrimony by striving for women's equal rights within marriage.

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[49] D. Kandiyoti, 'Bargaining With Patriarchy', *Gender and Society,* 2:3, (1988) pp. 274-284.

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Masculinity, Public Order and Family: The opprobrium and legal prohibitions directed against male homosexuality in England, the United States and Russia c.1880-1960.

Amy Watson

Abstract:

In the period 1880-1960, vast changes took place regarding the identification of and attitudes towards male homosexual behaviour. This article seeks to examine the opprobrium and legal prohibitions directed against male homosexuality, using the Soviet Union, England and the United States as case studies. Male homosexual behaviour was restricted and repressed on the premise that it represented a threat to public order. Homosexuality was posited as a threat to national morality, a fear that was catalysed through concerns over international standing. Furthermore, it was depicted as anathema to traditional family values, and the reconstruction of masculinity around fatherhood that was occurring during this period. And as well as this, homosexuals were painted as a threat to national security and as political subversives. However, with all of these supposed threats to public order that the male homosexual represented, in actuality, repression of homosexuality is mostly drawn from the othering of homosexual behaviour as a form of non-normative masculinity, and wanting to protect and maintain tradition, hegemonic masculinity.

During the nineteenth century, attitudes towards male same-sex relations changed irrevocably as legal definitions of the homosexual began to take shape. Rather than being understood as a phase, homosexual behaviour morphed into an identity, and one that was perceived to be a threat to public order.[1] This piece will explore various justifications for the othering of male homosexuality. These include the want to maintain what was perceived to be social purity; to preserve the family unit; and the fear that homosexual men represented some form of security risk. The oppression of homosexuality was therefore justified as a protection against moral and national corrosion. However, this piece will demonstrate that, although homosexuality was repressed ostensibly through notions of maintaining public order; in actuality, the underlying concern was preserving the dominant constructs of masculinity. I will be utilising Connell's theory of 'hegemonic masculinity', where there are various types of masculinities, but those who stray from the 'normative definitions of masculinity' (such as homosexuals) are 'expelled from the circle of legitimacy.'[2]

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[1] J. Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (London: Quartet Books, 1983), p.11.

[2] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp.77,79.

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This article will examine three case studies: England, the USSR, and the United States (USA). For the English case, it will primarily be exploring the 1880s; when the Labouchere Amendment was passed which criminalised 'any male person who, in public or private, commits … any act of gross indecency with another male person.'[3] Even though there was previous legislation banning 'sodomy' under a 1533 Act, it is clear that the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act constitutes a significant turning point through the way in which male same-sex relations were categorised and legislated against.[4] In the case of Russia, I will mostly be examining post-revolutionary USSR, where the criminalisation of homosexual acts were overturned under Lenin, and then recriminalized under Stalin in 1933. This is a very useful case study for how Communist rhetoric was used to justify both the decriminalisation, and recriminalisation of male same-sex relations. Lastly, for the United States, I will largely be examining the post-1945 context whereby huge repression of homosexuality was justified through the Cold War context. Here, homosexuality was perceived to be equal to Communists as a threat to national security. In all three case studies, the repression of homosexuality was justified through an intention to preserve public order. However, it is clear that the construction of ideologies that perceived homosexuality as a threat to public order, lay in the insecurities felt about what homosexual behaviour meant for traditional masculinity. Although the preservation of public order is certainly a factor, the preservation of the dominant masculinity was an underlying and far more powerful causation.

Firstly, it is important to examine attitudes towards homosexuality as an example of social decay. In all three countries, homosexuality was repressed along with other forms of perceived social decay in order to preserve public order and national stature. The 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act included other provisions such as raising the age of consent for girls to sixteen.[5] Historians can therefore situate the legal prohibition of homosexuality within wider attempts to control and prohibit sexuality, particularly in young people. Judith Walkowitz has noted the 'social underworld' of sexual deviance that existed in Victorian Britain which politicians were

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[3] 'Section 11' *Criminal Law Amendment Act,* http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1885/act/69/enacted/en/print [accessed 11/02/18] (1885).

[4] H. G. Cocks, *Nameless Offenses: Homosexual Desire in the Nineteenth Century* (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2003), p.16.

[5] 'Section 5' *Criminal Law Amendment Act,* http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1885/act/69/enacted/en/print [accessed 11/02/18] (1885).

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becoming increasingly concerned over.[6] This is shown through legislation such as the Contagious Diseases Acts in the 1860s, which attempted to prevent the spread of venereal diseases in the army.[7] The legal repression of homosexuality in the 1880s should therefore be viewed in light of a wider concern over sexual depravity in British society. Similarly, in the USA, at the start of the Cold War, there were growing concerns over not only homosexuality, but the increase in incidents of promiscuity and extramarital sex which occurred during the Second Wold War. This was in the context of the 1948 publication of Kinsey's *Sexuality in the Human Male*, which indicated high rates of homosexual and extramarital sex. It claimed that the proportion of adult males who had had at least one homosexual experience was one third.[8] American politicians were therefore similarly concerned with the moral decay of their population and sought to restrict these aspects as much as possible. Women were encouraged to return to domestic environments, where sex was only accepted within the confines of heterosexual marriage.[9] It was believed that with the start of the Cold War, the nation had to be on moral alert and the nuclear family would be a safeguard against Communists and other subversives. In the USSR, along with the recriminalisation of homosexuality in 1933, there were also a string of other social reforms such as the recriminalisation of abortion in 1936. In all three instances, there was a restriction not just of homosexual relations, but all sex outside the parameters of reproductive, heterosexual marriage. It could be said therefore that these changes were related more to preserving public order and enforcing sexual purity, rather than protecting dominant masculinities. However, this article argues that these case studies represent examples not merely of trying to preserve public order, but also as attempts to repress what was thought to be subversive masculinity, as well as subversive femininity at the time. By legislating against prostitutes, abortion and homosexual behaviour, and simultaneously glorifying the breadwinning male and the domesticated mother and 'Angel of the House', this works to exclude strands of masculinity and femininity that do not fit into this paradigm. Therefore, although there were wider apprehensions about sexual purity, these came from underlying gendered concerns, and the restriction on male homosexuality

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[6] J. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p.4.

[7] Ibid., p.49.

[8] A. C. Kinsey, W. B. Pomeroy, C. E. Martin, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* (Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1948).

[9] E. Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), p.18.

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should be regarded as reactions to what was perceived to be a threat to normative, heterosexual masculinity.

In addition to criminalising homosexual behaviour in a bid to reduce sexual depravity in the population, the opprobrium of homosexuality was also justified through wanting to protect the family unit. As Weeks writes, 'the male homosexual has been seen as a threat to the stability of roles enshrined in the family.'[10] Particularly during the time of industrialisation in Britain, the family and the male breadwinner within this family unit was perceived as extremely important and a way to maintain the British Empire.[11] Both in the British and American contexts, there were many fears of internal decay, with a belief that this decay would go outwards and cause deterioration for the country and its international standing. For Britain, there was a concern that the Empire would go the same way as Rome – which was perceived to be in part due to the Roman population descending into 'luxury and idleness.'[12] British politicians therefore wanted to keep the country to the highest moral standards, and with this came concerns over sexuality. Homosexual relations were seen as anathema to traditional family life, and therefore became a threat. This threat was enhanced in the midst of what Hyam called an 'imperial crisis' in the mid-nineteenth century, which made Britain self-conscious that it might lose its empire.[13]

In the United States, a strong family unit was seen as something that could prevent moral transgressions, particularly through parenthood. Kimmel writes that 'physicians warned against femininized boys and spent tremendous energy in advising parents on proper socialisation to manhood' and they 'stressed the imperative of different child-rearing techniques for boys and girls.'[14] Thus, the family unit and parenthood became a key space in which to prevent homosexuality. This is in line with the idea that homosexual behaviour was a mental illness. The consensus coming from the medical professionals at the time situated homosexual behaviour as a psychological issue and a 'behaviour disturbance' – which was something that could be treated and prevented.[15] This emphasis on the family in the prevention of homosexual behaviour

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[10] J. Weeks, *Coming Out* (1983), p.5.
[11] R. Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality* (1991), p.1.
[12] J. Weeks, *Coming Out* (1983), p.20.
[13] R. Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality* (1991), p.201.
[14] M. S. Kimmel, 'The Contemporary "Crisis" of Masculinity in Historical Perspective' in *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies,* ed. by H. Brod (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), p.145.
[15] J. Weeks, *Coming Out* (1983), p.31.

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continued in the USA into the Cold War where deviance from 'normal' sexualities was blamed on poor child-rearing.[16] Freudian theory on homosexuality links to parenthood through his assertion that 'the central task that every little boy must confront is to develop a secure identity for himself as a man' and he did this by 'renouncing his identification with and deep emotional attachment to his mother and then replacing her with the father as an object of identification.'[17] This concept of the importance of child-rearing was emphasised in the Cold War where men were encouraged to spend more time in the home helping to raise their children. Tyler-May emphasises this when she asserts that 'fatherhood became a new badge of masculinity and meaning for the postwar man.'[18] Homosexuality was seen as something that manifested as a consequence of poor child-rearing and boy's over-dependence on their mothers.[19] A new type of American masculinity was born; that of the American father, who's responsibility was to ensure that their sons were raised correctly.[20] This redefinition of fatherhood as integral to masculinity, and homosexuality as something that occurs when a boy spends too much time exposed to femininity through his mother, and not enough time with the masculine father, isolated homosexuality from normative masculinity and manifested homosexual behaviour as an effeminate perversion.

In the British context, the othering of homosexual behaviour could also be attributed to industrialisation and growing women's employment. Kimmel writes that 'masculinity was increasingly threatened by the twin forces of industrialisation and the spread of political democracy.'[21] The increasing involvement of women in the labour market in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be seen as a challenge to traditional masculinity and its emphasis on the male breadwinner. Pleck highlights that with the male breadwinner being challenged, a new definition of masculinity emerged; linked not to employment status and the ability to make

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[16] E. Tyler May, *Homeward Bound* (2008), p.93.

[17] M. S. Kimmel, 'Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity' in *Theorising Masculinitie*s, eds. by H. Brod and M. Kaufman (London: SAGE Publications, 1994), p.126.

[18] E. Tyler May, *Homeward Bound* (2008), p.139.

[19] B. Epstein, 'Anti-Communism, Homophobia, and the Construction of Masculinity in the Postwar U.S.' *Critical Sociology,* 20.3 (1994), p.43.

[20] E. Tyler May, *Homeward Bound* (2008), p.139.

[21] M. S. Kimmel, 'The Contemporary "Crisis" of Masculinity in Historical Perspective' (1987), p.138.

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money, but rather with sexuality as the new benchmark of 'manliness'.[22] The switching definitions of masculinity around the male worker is also present in the Russian context, where women joined the workforce in huge numbers after the revolution.[23] A new definition of masculinity was needed, and thus one which focused on sexuality, rather than employment was constructed. This was mirrored in the United States, where the outbreak of the new non-militaristic Cold War and men's increasing involvement in the domestic realm meant that there needed to be a new benchmark of masculinity focusing on sexuality and fatherhood.[24] Sexuality as the new benchmark of masculinity set the groundwork for the isolation and othering of the male homosexual from traditional masculinity through the rejection of 'normative' male penetrative sex by homosexuals. Overall then, the emphasis on the family unit was supposedly to strengthen the morality of the nation and maintain public order. However, historians can see that definitions of hegemonic masculinity were being redefined in all three case studies, around heterosexual penetrative sex and the family. Homosexual relations were thereby seen as the ultimate betrayal of one's masculinity. In othering the homosexual, the concept of 'normative' masculinity was only enforced further.[25]

Another justification for the repression of homosexuality in these countries was that homosexuality was perceived as a significant security risk. This section seeks to prove that, although there were concerns that homosexuals were threats to the state, this came more from a fear of the other and perceived threat to traditional masculinity, than from any legitimate proof that homosexual behaviour constituted a security risk. Male same-sex relations were repeatedly scapegoated and repressed, particularly in the USSR and the United States during this period, and the opprobrium of homosexual behaviour was typified as being of national significance. After the 1917 revolution, the new Bolshevik regime overturned all tsarist criminal law. During the immediate post-revolutionary period therefore, homosexual relations were decriminalised. Under the entry for 'homosexuality' in the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* (1930), it explained that 'homosexual inclinations resulted from psychological anomalies, which bore no implication of guilt or criminal responsibility' and dubbed pre-revolutionary anti-sodomy legislation useless and

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[22] J. H. Pleck, 'The Theory of Male Sex-role Identity: Its Rise and Fall, 1936 to the Present' in *The Making of Masculinities: the new men's studies,* ed. by H. Brod (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), p.27.
[23] D. Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia* (2001), p.197.
[24] E. Tyler May, *Homeward Bound* (2008), p.32.
[25] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p.81.

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'psychologically damaging to homosexuals themselves.'[26] Thus, after the revolution, men who engaged in homosexual acts were constructed as psychologically unstable victims, and used as a tool to critique the tsarist system. However, in 1933, this all changed. The scientific rhetoric was overturned and replaced with one that justified Soviet legislative involvement in what they perceived to be a significant social problem. This new legislative involvement in homosexuality comes within the Stalinist context, where his purges of non-normative and 'counter-revolutionary' elements extended from political others, to social others as well. Homosexuality was included in this category. There is clear evidence to suggest that the recriminalisation of homosexual acts in 1933 came from wanting to preserve public order and regarding homosexuality as a security risk. In 1933, OGPU deputy chief wrote to Stalin seeking legislation against homosexual behaviour. He noted that:

> 'Pederast activists, using the castelike exclusivity of pederastic circles for plainly counterrevolutionary aims, had politically demoralised various social layers of young men, including young workers, and even attempted to penetrate the army and navy.'[27]

Stalin then forwarded the letter to the Politburo, adding that 'these scoundrels must receive exemplary punishment, and a corresponding guiding decree must be introduced in our legislation.'[28] These letters show that the 1933 legislation was a direct reaction to the perceived danger that male homosexual behaviour posed to the Russian state. Homosexuality began to be seen as a form of bourgeois corruption and something that needed to be dealt with so that it did not affect the next generation of Soviet workers. This was a complete upheaval of the pre-Stalinist attitude towards homosexuality. Englestein notes that homosexuality became seen as something that 'could not in every instance constitute a sign of diminished responsibility. On the contrary, such sexual habits signalled the perpetrators' underlying antisocial intentions.'[29] For the Soviet Union, these antisocial intentions were synonymous with counter-revolutionary activity. Homosexuality was depicted as being anti-communist and the vestiges of a 'decadent bourgeois morality.'[30] The conceptions of homosexual behaviour as a non-normative element that constituted a potential security risk, is linked to the enforcement of a prescribed Soviet masculinity; and wanting to stamp out variance in this.

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[26] *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* (1930), quoted in L. Englestein, 'Soviet Policy Toward Male Homosexuality: its Origins and Historical Roots' in *Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left* eds. by G. Hekma, H. Oosterhuis and J. Steakley (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1995), pp.168-169.

[27] 'Iagoda letter to Stalin' (15 September 1933) quoted in D. Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p.184.

[28] 'Stalin letter to Kaganovich' (1933) quoted in D. Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia* (2001), p.184.

[29] L. Englestein, 'Soviet Policy Toward Male Homosexuality: its Origins and Historical Roots' (1995), p.172.

Ironically, whilst the Communists in the USSR were dubbing homosexuality a product of bourgeois decadence, the United States was concurrently associating homosexuality with communist subversion. In his various works, Johnson has outlined and examined the 'state sponsored homophobic panic' which occurred in the early Cold War United States.[31] This 'Lavender Scare' was directly linked to the Red Scare of the early 1950s through the way in which homosexuals were used as examples of security risks in government in addition to Communists. Homosexuals were systematically searched for and dismissed or excluded from jobs in government on a large scale. The logic of the Lavender Scare was that American strength in the fight against communism depended on the strength of traditional, masculine men to stand up to communist threats. It was believed that a moral weakness and lack of masculinity would lead to a weak foreign policy, and that 'sexual degeneracy would make individuals easy prey for communist tactics.'[32] The notion that homosexuals constituted security risks became so potent that even the term 'security risks … often functioned as a euphemism for homosexual.'[33] In early Cold War America, both Communists and homosexuals were seen as subversive elements in society. However, homosexuality was depicted not merely as something that was a threat to masculinity, but as a potential political security threat. Johnson notes that homosexuals and Communists were linked through the way in which both 'seemed to comprise of hidden subcultures, with their own meeting places, literature, cultural codes, and bonds of loyalty. Members of such sub-cultures were feared to have a loyalty to one another transcending that toward their class, race, or nation.'[34] Therefore, as well as being sexually othered in this time, the homosexual was also politically othered and said to be a security threat in the Cold War context. Furthermore, Tyler May highlights 'to escape the status of pariah, many gay men … locked themselves in the stifling closet of conformity, hiding their sexual identities and passing as heterosexuals', thereby only bolstering notions of traditional masculinity further.[35]

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[30] P. Pollard, 'Gide in the USSR: Some Observations on Comradeship', in *Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left* eds. by G. Hekma, H. Oosterhuis and J. Steakley (1995), p.186.

[31] D. K. Johnson, 'America's Cold War Empire: Exporting the Lavender Scare' in *Global Homophobia: States, Movements and the Politics of Oppression* eds. by M. L. Weiss and M. J. Bosia (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), p.56.

[32] E. Tyler May, *Homeward Bound* (2008), p.91.

[33] D. K. Johnson, 'America's Cold War Empire: Exporting the Lavender Scare' (2013), p.58.

[34] Ibid., p.63.

However, even with the political concerns of homosexuals being security threats for the government, it seems clear that this was founded on the idea of homosexuality as a threat to traditional heterosexual masculinity. Repression of homosexuals did not just occur in government spheres, but in American society at large, where homosexuality was presented as a sexual and social threat, not just a political one. For example, in 1956, a magazine called *Dare* published an article titled 'Will "Fruits" Take Over?' with lines such as '*Dare* believes the people should know the truth about homosexuality in the United States today, lest we become a nation of deviates tomorrow.'[36] There were also other articles such as 'Ten Ways to Spot a Homosexual', as well as a Public Service video entitled 'Boys Beware', which was a 'stranger-danger' video for young boys, but with a man as the sexual predator.[37] These sources show that for many Americans, the primary threat posed by homosexuality was to traditional masculinity and 'normal' sexuality. They feared the potentially corruptive influence of homosexuality on American youth, in particular young boys, who were of prime importance as they would be the generation who would fight for capitalism and continue the American way of life. Epstein emphasises, 'the popular literature on homosexuality reflected concerns not only about difference or deviance in general, but more specifically about deviance from accepted norms of masculinity.'[38] The common tropes of these sources demonstrate that homosexuality was seen as a perversion, but one that was potentially contagious and represented a security risk, as well as a threat to hegemonic masculinity.

In conclusion, it is clear that in all of these three case studies, the repression of homosexuality was ostensibly justified through preserving public order. Homosexuality was posited as a symptom of moral decay in society, and a threat to the traditional family unit. As well as this, the male homosexual himself was labelled a threat to national security and a subversive element politically as well as socially. However, underlying the opprobrium of homosexuality in each

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[35] E. Tyler May, *Homeward Bound* (2008), p.13.
[36] 'Will the "Fruits' Takeover?' *Dare* (1956), p.28.
[37] W. Levine, '10 Ways to Spot a Homosexual', *Whisper* (1958), p.25 and 'Boys Beware', *Sid Davis Production* (1961), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17u01_sWjRE [accessed 10/02/18].
[38] B. Epstein, 'Anti-Communism, Homophobia, and the Construction of Masculinity in the Postwar U.S.' *Critical Sociology,* 20.3 (1994), p.42.

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country is the idea that homosexuality was foremost a threat to normative masculinity. By focusing on the 'gender-transgressive homosexual', governments attempted to set boundaries between 'normal' and 'subversive' sexualities, and clearly defined the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity.[39] As Weeks described, after the Labouchere amendment of the 1880s, 'a modern homosexual identity had been forged.'[40] This homosexual identity was a target to gendered repression through its construction as anathema to hegemonic masculinity. Taylor writes that 'male homosexuals were seen as less aggressive and strong, … poorer leaders' as well as 'less calm, less dependable [and] less honest… than the male heterosexual.'[41] Creating and othering a homosexual identity, and declaring it a social evil, security risk, or threat to the family; was done ostensibly to preserve public order. However, the fact that homosexuality was even viewed as a disruptive influence to public order, stems from the idea that homosexuality was excluded from the prescribed masculinity, and it therefore became a non-normative element and ultimately a threat.

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[39] D. Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia* (2001), p.142.

[40] J. Weeks, *Coming Out* (1983), p.11.

[41] A. Taylor, 'Conceptions of masculinity and femininity as a basis for stereotypes of male and female homosexuals' in *Homosexuality and Social Sex Roles* ed. by M. W. Ross (New York: The Haworth Press, 1983), p.39.

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The Reconstruction of Masculinities from the Victorian and Edwardian Period into Interwar Britain

Aine O' Malley

Abstract:

The following article will argue that masculinities in the interwar period became far more flexible than those of the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Fatherhood and domesticity played an important role in the reshaping of masculinity as well as religion, intersectionality and hobbies. A letter to the *Times* highlights how lawn tennis was deemed acceptable to play amongst young men. In addition to newspaper articles, this article will use Alfred Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps* (1935) to interpret the new, more flexible masculine norm such as the main character's caring attitude towards women. Some aspects of the Edwardian and Victorian masculinity remained in the interwar period, for example, physical fitness and being a breadwinner, however much had changed. An example of this is the use of cosmetics due to the emerging 'cosmetic industry'.

The interwar period in Britain (1918-1939) represented a pivotal point in the construction of gender identities after the fracturing and reshaping of masculinities during the First World War (WWI). Martin Francis argues that after WWI masculinities became more domesticated and family centred as the idea of what a man should be moved away from the public sphere and towards fatherhood and the private sphere.[1] He argues that fathers were present in the home in the Victorian period yet they would only spend time with their older children.[2] This article will explore the ways in which domesticity in the interwar period made for both a new flexible masculinity, in which men could be 'the domesticated male' and a return to what could be described as rigid Victorian and Edwardian masculinities, in which they simply resumed their breadwinner role.

The use of cosmetics, the aftermath of the war and the role of religion will also be explored in the ways in which a new masculinity was formed. The use of primary materials such as letters to the *Times* and the film, *The 39 Steps* (1935, Alfred Hitchcock) will provide contemporary opinion and will be used alongside secondary materials and theory. Raewyn Connell has argued that hegemonic masculinity is defined in relation to femininity, it is a system that places a certain type of man above others, normally based upon race, class and, particularly, sexuality.[3] The work of Francis and Matt Houlbrook argues that masculinity is defined by historic context. This suggests therefore, that due to the historic

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[1] Martin Francis, 'The Domestication of the Male? Recent Research on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British Masculinity', *The Historical Journal*, 45:3 (2002), p.637-638.

[2] Ibid., pp.639-640.

[3] Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), p.68.

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poignancy of the interwar period, hegemonic masculinity would change, thus changing gender relations, suggesting flexibility within interwar masculinity.

The use of cosmetics by men in the interwar period has been studied by Houlbrook, who highlights that men who were caught in possession of cosmetics could be 'proved' guilty of sexual deviance or transgression and this evidence was certainly used in cases of importuning. Possession of a powder puff or rouge would be used as proof of intent to imitate a woman and therefore this person was assumed to have homosexual desires.[4] Of course the assumption of sexual orientation and sequential persecution appears to be rigid, however men in possession of cosmetics would suggest an element of flexibility to masculinities, the rise of such use Houlbrook attributes to the 'emergence of the "cosmetic industry"' after WWI.[5] Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity is interesting in this context as it would suggest that the subversion of gender performances was used as a sign of sexual orientation for contemporary law enforcers.[6] Indeed a solicitor in 1936 saw these men as:

> 'a type of moral pervert who seemed to delight in imitating persons of the opposite sex, not only in dress and speech but in regard to the use of powder and the carrying of such things as powder puffs and rouge.'[7]

There is significance in the desire to subvert these performances as men who did not conform to socially acceptable forms of masculinity saw an outlet in the form of cosmetics. These men were not trying to be women, they were merely rejecting gender norms. These cases are an example of non-normative masculinity and they are also victims of hegemonic masculinity.

Despite cosmetics still being considered effeminate by interwar standards, there appears to be some change as to what was deemed to be acceptable in regards to masculinity. Whilst standards of masculinity seem absurd by modern standards, an item as unassuming as mittens, for example, are described in a *Times* article as being acceptable. The 'selfishness and gloating' that the cold brings is no longer deemed necessary to masculinity, stating that 'the fact is that it is by no means disagreeable to be warm oneself and see others with blue fingers.'[8] It was not only by maintaining warmth that men could now enjoy mittens without fear of losing status, but also through sporting practice such as lawn tennis, which was deemed an 'effeminate game' by a self-described 'Old Etonian' who wrote to the *Times* in

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[4] Matt Houlbrook, 'The Man with the Powder Puff' in Interwar London', *The Historical Journal*, 50:1 (2007), p.148.
[5] Ibid., p.170.
[6] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), p.173.
[7] Houlbrook, 'The Man with the Powder Puff', p.149.
[8] 'Mittens', *Times*, 7 January 1920, Section 15, p.15.

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1920. This did not stop younger men from pursuing 'the trophies and the tea parties of this effeminate game.'[9] When questioned, the reported response from younger men was 'You are the most dreadful snob we ever met. We intend to do exactly as we like.'[10] This suggests a generational divide between what was considered acceptable for a man to pursue and what was not, this very difference suggests a new masculine ideal and one that was more flexible. The use of the word 'effeminate' is especially relevant to Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity as it suggests that the writer deems lawn tennis as not acceptable based on its relation to femininity. This highlights a conflict in the ideal masculinity.

With lawn tennis deemed acceptable by interwar standards of masculinity, it is no surprise then that there was a movement towards the re-modelling of masculinity in regards to an increased domesticity. As previously mentioned, Victorian fathers had a presence in the house but this new domesticated male was 'not merely of normative masculinity, but of interwar national identity.'[11] The recreation of a national identity was deemed a crucial factor in recovery after WWI. Indeed, Francis states that 'the late Victorian "flight from domesticity" had become impaled on the barbed wire of the Somme'.[12] This suggests that the traditional ideal of masculinity was abandoned after WWI as it had been used as a tool to recruit men to the frontlines and was blamed for the loss of such men. *The 39 Steps* is an example of how patriotic masculinity adapted during the interwar period from frontline action to covert espionage.[13] The hero, Richard Hannay, is reluctantly enlisted to prevent a top military secret from leaving the country, that is not to say that his mission is without violence, guns are used as a threat towards Hannay. *The 39 Steps* is an example of how historical context can define masculinity as Hannay himself uses cunning wit and persuasion to escape the violence, rather than retaliating. Contrastingly, Francis argues that during the interwar years the opposite is true in film and literature; violence and physical strength were the weapons of choice of the hero.[14]

The role of the domesticated man and especially of the father was particularly important to the Cantenian Association; a wining and dining club open only to middle class Catholic men. There was an emphasis on being a loving husband and father, and both contributed to the ideal Catholic masculinity.[15] This is evident in the words of Thomas Locan, a founding member who advised his members:

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[9] 'Mittens', *Times*, 7 January 1920, Section 15, p.15.
[10] Old Etonian, 'The Manners of Young Men.', *Times*, 3 August 1921, Section 6, p.9.
[11] Francis, 'The Domestication of the Male?', p.641.
[12] Ibid.
[13] *The 39 Steps* [film] directed by Alfred Hitchcock (1935).
[14] Francis, 'The Domestication of the Male?', p.644.

> 'In your domestic relationships we look to find you, if husband, affectionate and trustful; if father, regardful of the moral and material well-being of your children and dependants; if son, dutiful and exemplary; as a friend, steadfast and true. These qualities will dignify our Association and extent its benign influence.'[16]

A present father figure was typified as integral to the masculinity prescribed by the Cantenian Association in order to raise Catholic children. Indeed, the Association set up 'The Children's Fund' as a way to fund the school fees and scholarships of children of the Cantenian's as well as enabling the funding and expansion of Catholic secondary schools.[17] The role of the family and of domesticity were key in providing the religious guidance of these children by including a domestic element of masculinity the Cantenian Association represented a more flexible style of masculinity compared to the Victorian ideal of the 'flight from domesticity'.[18]

The newly domesticated male as described by Francis is shown to be a natural progression away from the 'unrestrained and visceral masculinity in public life.'[19] Francis attributes this to the changing nature of politics and how it was conducted away from the rowdy hustings and towards the use of radio.[20] This reflects the public sphere of politics invading the private sphere, therefore becoming accessible to the domesticated man which would suggest a flexible masculinity. From the 1880s, the Conservative Party had been rebranding itself as the party of the family, which was further enforced in 1918 due to the addition of the partial female electorate.[21] The addition of female voters and the use of radio enabled politics to enter the private sphere which redefined politics and masculinity within the political sphere. This is an example of masculinity defined by historical context.

The new domesticated man perhaps was not all that different from Victorian ideas of hegemonic masculinity and it should be seen as perhaps a way of maintaining patriarchy. As John Tosh argues, the

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[15] Alana Harris, 'The People of God Dressed for Dinner and Dining? English Catholic Masculinity, Religious Sociability and the Cantenian Association', in *Men, Masculinities and Religious Change in Twentieth Century Britain*, ed. by L. Delap and S. Morgan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.55.
[16] Alana Harris, 'The People of God Dressed for Dinner and Dining? English Catholic Masculinity, Religious Sociability and the Cantenian Association', in *Men, Masculinities and Religious Change in Twentieth Century Britain*, ed. by L. Delap and S. Morgan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.55-60.
[17] Ibid., p.72.
[18] Francis, 'The Domestication of the Male?', p.640.
[19] Ibid., p.642.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.

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institution of marriage is maintained through hegemonic masculinity and used to enforce patriarchy.[22] Connell states that domestic abuse is a serious issue within patriarchy and that male perpetrators can often feel justified in their violence.[23] This is highlighted in *The 39 Steps* in which the deeply religious older husband and his young wife live in rural Scotland, the wife is from Glasgow and dreams of returning to the city, however, her husband disparages her ambition. He uses his religion as a means to keep her secluded and isolated on the farm, asserting that 'God made the country'.[24] We see him hit his wife as she reveals that she helped Hannay escape. Hannay even suspected that this may happen if she helped him suggesting that this was normal behaviour of a husband, even a pious one. His words and his actions are contradictory as during grace he asks 'and continually turn out heads from wickedness and worldly things'. His masculinity is represented by his religion and rural environment, which is in stark contrast to Hannay's more urban and caring masculinity.

The new idea of male domesticity was not necessarily so widespread as the idea of the male breadwinner was still used as the framework for unemployment relief.[25] After WWI preference was given to ex-servicemen, however, ex-servicemen with families were of a higher priority.[26] This highlights how preference of relief, or deservedness, was granted through the framework of the male breadwinner. There was even the case of one single ex-serviceman who allowed another ex-serviceman with a family to take his job offer. Indeed 'Home life, marriage and children were the very things that veterans had been told they fought for in the First World War.'[27] This was an attempt to return to what was considered 'normal' prior to the war and 'to distance British society from the public and private traumas of the war'.[28] This was certainly an attempt to return to the Victorian masculinity. Indeed, Marjorie Levine-Clark argues how the entire British welfare state 'defined the full male citizen as a heterosexual married man with dependants.'[29] This is clearly a rigid pre-war hegemonic masculinity.

As in the Victorian period, there was still an emphasis on the restriction of alcohol connected with interwar masculinity. Despite being a wining and dining club, members of the Cantenian Association had a restriction of two drinks per meeting which was later reduced to one.[30] There was a general movement towards a healthier lifestyle altogether. The fit male body was vital to the empire and a link was made 'between manliness, physical fitness and patriotism in interwar Britain.'[31] WWI highlighted a need to raise the standards of the soldiers and this patriotism was interpreted to the extreme as the 'cult of imperial manliness, sportsmanship and athleticism of the late Victorian and Edwardian era was appropriated by the British Union of Fascists.'[32] As Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska argues, this 'celebration of imperial manliness' highlights the continuation of gender expectations from the Victorian era through to the mid-twentieth century.[33] This is an example of the continuing rigidity of standards of masculinity. Yet, there would seem to be some flexibility within these standards as due to the trends within physical fitness, working and middle class men could maintain standards as gymnastics and weightlifting did not require large amounts of space.[34] This meant that the activities were affordable and accessible.[35] These standards of masculinity are clearly defined by trends within the context.

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[22] John Tosh, 'Hegemonic Masculinity and the History of Gender' in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, ed. S. Dudink, K. Hagemann and J. Tosh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) p.46.
[23] Connell, 'Masculinities', p.83; Sylvia Walby, 'Theorising Patriarchy', *Sociology*, 23:3 (1989), p.214.
[24] *The 39 Steps* (1935, Alfred Hitchcock).
[25] Marjorie Levine-Clark, 'The Politics of Preference: Masculinity, Marital Status and Unemployment Relief in Post-First World War Britain', *Cultural and Social History*, 7:2 (2010), p.233.
[26] Ibid., p.233.
[27] Ibid., p.234.
[28] Marjorie Levine-Clark, 'The Politics of Preference', *Cultural and Social History*, 7:2 (2010), p.235.
[29] Ibid., p.235.
[30] Harris, 'The People of God Dressed for Dinner and Dining?', p.61.

The role of physical fitness in masculinity was not just patriotic, it was also spiritual. The concept of 'muscular Christianity' was also important to men's status, the activities of the Cantenian Association expanded to include sporting activities such as cricket and golf matches. The Association also saw an interest in the scientific 'management of the body.'[36] The discourse surrounding 'muscular Christianity' emphasised the education of character, this had its origins in the military during the late Victorian period but had been adopted by the Quaker community. Despite being pacifists, they sought the involvement of 'muscular Christianity' through the British Scouts.[37] This suggests that the concept of 'muscular Christianity' was so important to British masculinity during the interwar period that the Quaker community even participated in it despite their oath of pacifism. This suggests a harsh rigidity to masculinity and a return to Victorian and Edwardian hegemonic masculinity.

There was undoubtedly a class element involved with masculinities, such as the elitism of the Cantenian Association. Due to the affordability of make-up in this period, working class men in the interwar period could participate in the use of cosmetics.[38] This is significant, as Connell argues that

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[31] Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Building a British Superman: Physical Culture in Interwar Britain', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41:4 (2006), p.596.
[32] Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Building a British Superman: Physical Culture in Interwar Britain', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41:4 (2006), p.697.
[33] Ibid., p.597.
[34] Ibid., p.598.
[35] Ibid., p.598.
[36] Harris, 'The People of God Dressed for Dinner and Dining?', p.61.
[37] Mark Freeman, 'Muscular Quakerism? The Society of Friends and Youth Organisations in Britain, c.1900-1950', *The English Historical Review*, v125:514 (2010), p.651.
[38] Harris, 'The People of God Dressed for Dinner and Dining?', p.55; Houlbrook, 'The Man with the Powder Puff', p.148.

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masculinities intersect and interact with each other, based upon class and race.[39] Arguably, the legal persecutors were, at the very least, middle class. During the trial of 'William K' the court heard that when searched, 'face powder, scented handkerchiefs, and two photographs of himself in woman's costume were found', William K. was a hotel porter and therefore a member of the working class.[40] Thus, the trials are an example of the middle classes imposing their ideal masculinity upon the working classes and persecuting those who do not fit their model of masculinity. This is the hegemonic masculinity theorised by Connell and is an example of rigidity within interwar expectation of the man.

Masculinity of the interwar period certainly moved away from and was more flexible than Victorian and Edwardian masculinities as characterised by domesticity with the importance of family and a redefinition of what was acceptable. The findings from the *Times* articles are of particular interest to the field of masculinity, these letters are from individual members of the public and, therefore, do not necessarily represent the views of the general public at large. Yet, they still represent a useful insight into what was deemed acceptable for men. These letters demand the further study of opinions and interpretations in interwar masculinity and of masculinity by historians. The use of films for the study of masculinity is also important. Film reviews could be of interest to scholars as these give material on the reception of the film, which may provide some interesting insights for the study of masculinities. The study of masculinities in the interwar period is important for understanding British national identity. In such a disparate context, masculinity as a tool for analysis enables us to understand notions of gender norms and how gender was constructed.

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[39] Connell, 'Masculinities', p.75.

[40] Houlbrook, 'The Man with the Powder Puff', p.149; Ibid., p.149.

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Contributions to the Rise of Man-Midwifery in Eighteenth Century England

Amber Stout

Abstract:

Up through the seventeenth century, childbirth was a mysterious occasion, dominated and managed by and for women with its own rituals and ceremonies. However, the social and professional dynamic of the birthing process began to shift in the eighteenth century with the seeds of change being planted even earlier. Male practitioners started to make their way into midwifery beyond their previous boundaries of being called only for emergencies and complications. 'Forceps and fashion' have been the long-standing explanation for this rise of man-midwifery in Britain. While both factors certainly have their rightful place in the process and deserve their own evaluation, some historians argue that there were other factors at work. Ironically, the efforts of women themselves brought men into the birthing chamber and, by the end of the eighteenth century, male practitioners were using the title 'man-midwife' and had gained a permanent role in the childbirth process. This article discusses and evaluates some of these alternative and complementary factors that paved the way for male midwifery practitioners in eighteenth century Britain.

Prior to the eighteenth century, childbirth was a mysterious occasion, dominated and managed by and for women with its own rituals and ceremonies. As discussed by Adrian Wilson in *Ritual and Conflict: The Social Relations of Childbirth in Early Modern England,* childbirth belonged to women and midwives managed the process. An entirely separate space, usually in the mother's own home, was prepared especially for the birthing process. The curtains were drawn closed, a fire was stoked, the caudle was bubbling, the mother's female relatives, friends, and neighbours, known as 'gossips', were in attendance, and the midwife was assisting the mother and helping to make her comfortable throughout labour.[1] The midwife was the authority figure in childbirth, only receiving help from the gossips and sometimes a midwife-in-training. The midwife would only call on a male practitioner, or surgeon, in the event that a difficulty presented itself in labour. However, the social and professional dynamic of the birthing process began to shift in the eighteenth-century with the seeds of change being planted even earlier. Male practitioners started to make their way into midwifery beyond their previous boundaries. 'Forceps and Fashion' have been the long-standing explanation for this rise of man-midwifery in Britain. While both factors certainly have their rightful place in the process and deserve their own evaluation, some historians argue that there were other factors at play. Though this article attempts to discuss and evaluate some of these alternative and complementary factors

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[1] Adrian Wilson, *Ritual and Conflict: The Social Relations of Childbirth in Early Modern England,* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), pp.157-158.

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that paved the way for male midwifery practitioners in eighteenth-century Britain, it is certainly not an exhaustive list.

One of the earliest factors that contributed to the rise of man-midwifery was the end of ecclesiastical licensing for midwives. While some historians have argued that episcopal licensing of midwives was ineffective, and enforcement was sporadic, others view licensing and its subsequent disintegration as an important factor in the development of man-midwifery. Indeed, some suggest that the ecclesiastical licensing system and its subsequent breakdown was more significant in the erosion of midwives' role in society than has been previously suggested. Prior to receiving a license, midwives were required to take an oath that set forth obligations that reached beyond ecclesiastical concerns. Some examples of these demands are as follows: '[the midwife] will not use instruments or mutilate the foetus...will not aid in abortions...will not extort an unreasonable fee...will maintain patient confidentiality...must report other midwives that do not conform to standards...must treat other midwives with respect and cooperation'.[2] Doreen Evenden argues that in attempting to enforce the licensing of midwives, the Church is simultaneously acknowledging the 'midwives' control and expertise' in their practices.[3] However, once the breakdown of the licensing system began, midwives lost the only professional legitimization they had. Despite all of the undergone training, testimonials collected, and money saved by midwives in hopes to apply for a license, the ecclesiastical system of licensing had ceased to exist in London by 1720.[4] As the role of the church diminished, so too did the status attached to licensing.[5] While licensing was not crucial to the midwife's level of expertise and ability to perform, it was a factor which ensured she received societal respect and status.

Several historians bring to light another important factor that facilitated the rise of man-midwifery in the eighteenth century. Adrian Wilson argues that by 1750 a clear divide was forming in the collective culture of women.[6] Both Wilson and Jean Donnison see this schism as an indirect consequence of the onset of the agricultural revolution and, in turn, of industrialization. As is well

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[2] Doreen Evenden, *The Midwives of Seventeenth-Century London,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.28.
[3] Evenden, *The Midwives of Seventeenth-Century,* p.29.
[4] Ibid., p.174.
[5] Ibid., p.175.
[6] Adrian Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery: Childbirth in England 1660-1770* (London: UCL Press Limited, 1995), p.186.

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known, the developments made during the Agricultural Revolution allowed for greater production with less reliance on manpower, thereby freeing up a large number of the population to work in other realms of industry.[7] This is believed to have helped to perpetuate industrialization, thereby resulting in the 'commercialization of domestic activities'.[8] Such activities included spinning, weaving, baking, and so on, which had typically been done by women in their homes.[9] Women whose husbands and fathers prospered from this shift found that their daily lives and their roles in society began to change.[10] Wives of the tradesmen and farmers who prospered from these shifts in agriculture and industry found themselves participating in work less than ever before.

Furthermore, Adrian Wilson dates an increase in literacy among London women to somewhere between 1680 and 1730, evidenced by their ability to sign their names.[11] Moreover, proof of their ability to read is evident in the increasing number of items written for and by women, such as women's almanacs; between 1690 and 1750, at least 13 women novelists emerged on the literary scene.[12] Their novels were connected with women as writers, readers, and subject matter. Wealthier women, having been freed from the binds of domestic labour due to industrialization, found themselves with more time for leisure, and therefore, more time for reading. Most of the women of the lower classes did not have the luxury of literacy nor would they likely have had access to, or the time for, the newly printed novels. Thus, the divide was born and two separate spheres of women were formed: 'the old traditional, oral culture, characteristic of the lower orders, and a new, fashionable, *literate* culture, the culture of 'the ladies', visible among the aristocracy and the wealthy middle classes'.[13] This had implications for the female midwife's role in childbirth.

With the schism evolving between the two cultures of women, there remained one common connection; childbirth and the need for a midwife. In particular, the female midwife was a constant reminder to the ladies that they were still women and still subject to the same pains, fears, and

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[7] Jean Donnison, *Midwives and Medical Men: A History of the Struggle for the Control of Childbirth,* (New Barnet, Herts: Historical Publications, 1988), p.34.
[8] Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery,* p.190.
[9] Ibid., p.186.
[10] Donnison, *Midwives and Medical Men,* p.34.
[11] Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery,* p.186.
[12] Ibid., p.186.
[13] Ibid., p.186.

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dangers that their 'humbler sisters' went through.[14] In an effort to sever any remaining ties to the lower classes, the ladies began to eschew traditional midwives in favour of man-midwives. In effect, men-midwives became a symbol of status and wealth due to the high fees typically charged. Thus, the employment of men-midwives in the birthing chamber became quite fashionable among upper class ladies, and soon, middle class women were doing their best to follow suit. From this perspective, 'the making of man-midwifery was the work of women'.[15]

As aforementioned, midwives only called for the assistance of a male practitioner when a difficulty presented itself. Often, a woman would endure several days of difficult and painful labour before the male practitioner arrived and either the mother, the child, or both were at death's doorstep. By this time, the child was presumed to be dead and the surgeon went to work on extracting the dead baby in order to save the mother's life.[16] In the case of an obstruction by the head, the surgeon would perform a craniotomy on the baby with a crochet, an obstetrical tool with a sharp hook on the end.[17] Essentially, the skull of the baby was mutilated and pulled from the birth canal so that the rest of the body could be removed.[18] As one could imagine, this would be a traumatic experience for the mother and likely all others in attendance. Through these experiences, fear of the male practitioner and his obstetrical implements developed, as even though the number of difficult births was small, fears that dangers could arise were real.

Another force had been at work for nearly a century which would eventually help to secure a spot for men in the birthing process. As the secret of the Chamberlen forceps became public in the first half of the eighteenth century, male practitioners who applied them skilfully in difficult labours were now able to save the mother and the child. The last of the Chamberlen physicians died in 1728, leaving the secret of the forceps open to others within the profession.[19] Edmund Chapman, a surgeon who newly arrived in London was one of the first to jump at the opportunity. In 1735, he published his "Treatise" which included an engraving of the obstetrical instrument and an

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[14] Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery,* p.191
[15] Ibid., 192.
[16] Ibid., p.50.
[17] Ibid., p.57.
[18] Ibid., p.50.
[19] Ibid., p.109.

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announcement that he was willing to teach others how to use it properly.[20] As more lives were saved, the news spread to expectant mothers through word of mouth and their fears subsided. However, Adrian Wilson discusses how a reversal in women's perspectives of difficulties in childbirth may have helped men and their forceps to advance. A *self-perpetuating system of fear* developed, involving 'the bodily processes of birth, the prevailing arrangements for its management, and the available technology'.[21] Once women had knowledge of the possibility of their children's lives being saved with forceps, their threshold for difficulty plummeted.[22] They began to fear going into labor without quick and easy access to a male practitioner and his forceps, and, therefore, male practitioners were called sooner and more frequently.

The forceps allowed the male practitioner to effectively save both mother and child in an obstructed delivery. Therefore, surgeons were called sooner in the case of difficult deliveries, because women feared the outcome less.[23] By allowing the delivery of live babies, the forceps effectively broke the cycle of fear women faced and thereby blurred the boundary between midwives and male practitioners. However, difficult births did not occur often and most of the births were normal and still managed by midwives. In some cases, man-midwives, having had limited access to normal births, would make 'indiscriminate, frequent, and "injurious" use' of the forceps.[24] While the publication of the design of the forceps certainly helped to accelerate the rise of man-midwifery, they cannot be considered as a standalone factor. The use of the forceps was constrained within the old framework, with midwives still managing the majority of births and male practitioners responding only to emergency calls.

Several historians also discuss the implications of Enlightenment thought and reasoning on the future of midwifery. Traditionally, midwifery had been referred to as an 'art' and a 'mystery'.[25] However, with the rise of scientific and rational thinking, the secrecy that had surrounded childbirth since ancient times was beginning to evaporate. Midwifery as a whole had long been considered a mystery, with knowledge of the childbirth process withheld from others (namely men), and because prior to the Reformation, childbirth was associated with religion and revelation.[26] Donnison goes even further back and discusses the mystery lying with the ancient beliefs of 'Mother Nature', female deities, and women being closer to the earth and therefore better capable of healing.[27] However, as a new wave of philosophy arrived, with the Enlightenment encouraging rational thought and scientific inquiry, men were quick to point out their superior ability to demystify the process. The body began to be viewed as a machine, and therefore birth became seen as nothing more than a mechanical process.[28] Since men believed they were far more capable of rational and practical thinking than women, they also believed that they were more qualified to work with the machine.[29]

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[20] Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery,* p.109.

[21] Ibid., p.50.

[22] Ibid., p.164.

[23] Ibid., p.97.

[24] Evenden, *The Midwives of Seventeenth-Century,* p.181.

[25] S.S. Thomas, 'Early Modern Midwifery: Splitting the Profession, Connecting the History', *Journal of Social History,* 43 (2009), p.123.

Interestingly, Thomas connects the evolution of the language of birth to the rise of scientific thought and to the rise of man-midwifery. He notes that by 1690, the word 'business' was being used to describe midwifery.[30] Thomas argues that the use of *business* in describing childbirth signifies a change in the perception of the process and the management of it; it evidenced a mercantilist point of view which is not surprising for a city like London during that time. Here, Thomas quotes from Mary Fissell's *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England:* 'pregnancy was compared to a merchant voyage. The woman's body was like a ship, enclosing valuable cargo'.[31] If this ship is viewed as a machine, it is meant to be loaded and unloaded by men.[32] Further, the use of the word 'science' in describing the birthing process also emerges at the end of the seventeenth century. Whereas *art* implies having foundations in tradition and habit, *science* implies rational thinking and an understanding of theory that underlies a particular practice, obviously setting up male practitioners for the takeover.[33] As Evenden argues, 'by the 1750s, midwives' traditional, practical skill proved no match for the claims of the male midwife, waiting in the wings with his shiny instruments and promises of 'scientific expertise'.[34]

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[26] Thomas, 'Early Modern Midwifery', p.124.
[27] Donnison, *Midwives and Medical Men,* p.12.
[28] Ibid., p.33.
[29] Ibid., p.59.
[30] Thomas, 'Early Modern Midwifery', p.125.
[31] Mary E. Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.247.
[32] Thomas, 'Early Modern Midwifery', p.125.
[33] Ibid., p.126.
[34] Evenden, *The Midwives of Seventeenth-Century,* p.175.

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Another factor in the rise of man-midwifery was the development of lying-in hospitals. In London, these hospitals started to emerge around 1745. Sir Richard Manningham had established a lying-in infirmary slightly earlier, in 1739, but it effectively disappeared from the record around 1747.[35] Doreen Evenden argues that the lying-in hospitals proved to be crucial in the ascendency of male practitioners.[36] While most of the hospitals employed a midwife, her role was intentionally subordinate to the roles of the male practitioners who founded and ran the hospitals. The midwife-matron was responsible for the day-to-day running of the hospital, management of the nurses, and supervision of the diet and laundry of the patients.[37] Essentially, she was a housekeeper reporting to the men who ran the hospital. Subscribers' visits and the dissemination of hospital pamphlets outlined the staff hierarchies and the need for proper medical supervision of patients.[38] Furthermore, Margaret Versluysen stresses that the lying-in hospitals aided the progress of man-midwifery by allowing male practitioners frequent and easy access to normal births.[39] If male practitioners were to step into the role of the midwife, it was necessary to extend their knowledge and practice beyond complex and dangerous births to the management of normal births. Versluysen notes that: 'Although the rules and orders of the institutions stated that medical men in theory primarily attended complicated cases, in practice the hospital books...show that medical men attended a considerable number of routine deliveries'.[40] Doreen Evenden suggests that hospitals further assisted men in their takeover by taking mothers out of their homes. She argues that as long as women were giving birth at home, midwives had control over the birthing process and would call upon male practitioners only if needed.[41] However, once birth was transferred to the hospitals, it fell under the control of men. In this way, the lying-in hospitals helped men acquire a universal control over the practice of midwifery.

By the end of the eighteenth century, male practitioners were using the title 'man-midwife' and had

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[35] Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery,* p.114.

[36] Evenden, *The Midwives of Seventeenth-Century,* p.175.

[37] Margaret Versluysen, 'Midwives, Medical Men and 'Poor Women Labouring of Child': Lying-in Hospitals in Eighteenth-Century London', in *Women, Health and Reproduction,* ed. H. Roberts (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p.38.

[38] Versluysen, 'Midwives, Medical Men and 'Poor Women', p.39.

[39] Ibid., p.38.

[40] Ibid., p.39.

[41] Evenden, *The Midwives of Seventeenth-Century,* p.183.

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gained a permanent role in the childbirth process. The rise of man-midwifery coincided with the demise of Church licensing of midwives and the rise of rationality, science, and machines. While 'forceps and fashion' were certainly important contributions in their rise to the top, they were not the only steps along the way. The demise of ecclesiastical licensing took away the legitimization and status attached to midwives' practice and the evolution of a more scientific and rational approach to understanding childbirth pushed women back into the shadows even more. The development and publication of the Chamberlen forceps, coupled with the establishment of male dominated lying-in hospitals, would prove to be crucial enough to blur the boundaries between the role of the midwives and that of the male practitioners. Further, the efforts of women themselves in bringing men into the birthing chamber created a new and permanent role for the male practitioner.

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Exploring the Origins and Survival of 'Churching' in England, and the Implications of This Practice for How the Historian Should Look Upon Religious Change and Secularisation

Corinne Groeneveldt

Abstract:

This article discusses the churching ceremony, popular throughout early-modern England and still performed until the 1960s, and looks at the reasons why it has remained a ritual that was used for so long by women after childbirth. The origins of the ceremony and the way in which it was viewed as a purification ceremony to shame women into getting churched have been discussed by some, however, others have argued that childbirth, lying-in and churching were times when women enjoyed a period in the company of other women away from the world of men. However, this article argues that the matriarchal pressure on daughters is often overlooked as the reason why many women got churched. The ritual started to fade away near the end of the 1960s; this decline can be used to look at the way in which women have been posited as the reason for the decline of Christianity in the Western world since the mid twentieth century.

The churching ceremony was originally described as a ritual of purification. Found in both the Catholic and the Protestant churches, it was popular throughout early-modern England and remained popular thereafter: it declined somewhat during the Restoration, but this lull was temporary.[1] There is substantial evidence of the survival of the ceremony well into the twentieth century, as many new mothers were still being churched after the Second World War.[2] The origins of the ceremony and the way in which it was viewed as a 'purification rite' to shame women into getting churched have been discussed by some. Others have argued that childbirth, lying-in and churching were times during which women enjoyed a period in the company of other women, away from the world of men. They believe women chose to get churched as it offered a comfort to new mothers after the frightening experience of childbirth.[3] However, the matriarchal pressure on daughters is often overlooked as the reason why many women got churched, even though this

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[1] Adrian Wilson, *Ritual and Conflict: The Social Relations of Childbirth in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), pp.201-202.
[2] Ibid., passim.
[3] Ibid.

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pressure was part of everyday life for many until after the Second World War. The ritual started to fade away near the end of the 1960s, and we can use this decline to analyse the way in which women have been 'posited' as the reason for the decline of 'Christianity in the West since the Second World War'.[4]

In early modern England, childbirth and the subsequent lying-in (or confinement) normally lasted about a month and was a collective social event in a reserved female space, which has important implications for the account of patriarchal relations. It was a time when women expected to offer support to each other as they witnessed each other's agonies.[5] The mother-to-be would invite her female friends, relatives and neighbourhood 'gossips'.[6] Meanwhile, the father-to-be would prepare to spend his time elsewhere.[7] The woman here was 'moving into a different social space: away from the world of men,... and into the world of women.'[8] Childbirth was a ceremony in which women 'abolished male... authority, albeit temporarily'; childbirth and the confinement period were an opportunity to enjoy separateness and the exclusivity of female solidarity.[9] Adrian Wilson sees this as an instance of 'female counter-power'; a control over a ritual in which very few men had a say.[10] This is evidenced by Samuel Woodforde when he writes about his wife's second childbirth in 1664:

> 'They have got my wife out of her bed according to the country fashion; what they will do with her my God I cannot tell... Here is now in the house old Goodwife Tailor the midwife, Mrs Norton, Mrs Katherine and my cousin Joan Smith. The Lord make them helpful to thy poor handmaid.'[11]

The midwife, present from the first signs of labour, was the authority figure during childbirth, and was the only person touching the genitalia of the woman in labour. The other women would offer support by way of providing alcoholic caudle to deaden the pain, warm compresses and encouragement. These were needed, as it was not uncommon for women at that time to be in labour for several days. The midwife's equipment was very minimal prior to the nineteenth century, and she had few tools to help the woman progress.[12] She would only call on a male practitioner, or surgeon, if she felt that the life of the mother or her child were in danger.[13]

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[4] Lynn Abrams, 'Mothers and daughters: negotiating the discourse on the 'good woman' in 1950s and 1960s Britain', in Nancy Christie, and Michael Gauvreau (eds.), *The Sixties and Beyond: Dechristianisation in North America and Western Europe, 1945-2000* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2013), p.60.
[5] Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1999), p.186.
[6] Adrian Wilson, *Ritual and Conflict,* p.153.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., p.154.
[9] Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination,* p.187.
[10] Adrian Wilson, *Ritual and Conflict,* p.212.
[11] William Coster, 'Purity, Profanity, and Puritanism: The Churching of Women, 1500-1700', *Studies in Church History*, vol. 27 (1990), p.378.

In early modern England, childbirth was often a frightening experience; at the time it was regarded as something that a woman had to survive, rather than experience. Confinements were, for many women, 'dangerous, painful and unpleasant'.[14] Lack of general health care, poor diet or hard physical labour are amongst many reasons why pregnancy was viewed as a 'hardship'.[15] Both the infant mortality rate and the maternal death rate remained high until the early twentieth century.[16] Part of the problem was the lack of antenatal care, and the fact that midwives were not required to receive formal training in England until the Midwives Act of 1902.[17] To further add to the fear and pain women suffered in childbirth, effective anaesthetics were not available to anyone before the mid-nineteenth century 'and for poor women until considerably later.'[18]

After the birth, many early modern women practiced a period of lying-in, which seems to have varied on 'either side of the biblical norm of forty days', where, at first, only other women visited mother and child [19]. Over the period there was a gradual relaxation on the restriction of male visitors.[20] It is important to stress that lying-in may not have been universal; it is likely that it had only been the upper classes who could afford to stay home. William Coster believes it is not uncommon to 'find the view that the poor 'bring forth without great difficulty and in a short time after rising from their bed, return to their wonted labour', while the rich 'partaked of die Divine Curse after a more severe manner''.[21]

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[12] Stephen Wilson, *The Magical Universe: Everyday Ritual and Magic in Pre-Modern Europe* (London and New York: Hambeldon and London, 2000), p.165.
[13] Elizabeth Roberts*, A Woman's Place* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1984), p.107.
[14] Ibid, p.104.
[15] Stephen Wilson, *The Magical Universe,* p.150.
[16] Roberts, *A Woman's Place,* p.104.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Stephen Wilson, *The Magical Universe,* p.166.
[19] Ibid., p.254.
[20] Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination*, p.187.
[21] Coster, 'Purity, Profanity and Procrastination', p.379.

He also brings attention to the belief, which did not have any precedent in canon law, that women who had been in childbirth were 'excluded from religious fellowship for a period of one month'.[22] When the lying-in period was over, typically after a month, the new mother would have a churching ceremony which was the only means by which, following childbirth, a woman could return to her community church.[23] Though the practice of lying-in did not necessarily last until the day of the churching ceremony, many women did adhere to a period of confinement between the birth and the churching.

Churching was an ecclesiastical ceremony where a woman who had recently given birth was re-introduced into religious and social life 'by means of a special rite'.[24] The biblical origins of churching lie in Leviticus 12, but more directly through the story of the purification of the Virgin in Luke 2. Luke 2:22 states that 'when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord'.[25]
As the verse highlights, Mary completed a 'purification' ritual after birth. She and Joseph then brought Jesus to Jerusalem, 'to present Him to the Lord'.[26] The fact that this purification ceremony was still being performed in churches many centuries later, indicates a low general opinion of pregnancy, childbirth, and women. Coster posits that 'the rite, its trappings and focus were almost penitential'.[27] Indeed, this is apparent as shame, discipline and exclusion were found in many branches of the Christian church in early modern England.[28] For centuries, Eve's disobedience was a legacy used to criticise a woman's sexual health, pregnancy, and childbirth.[29] For example, superstitions about menstruating women and the dangerous powers they might exercise remained embedded in English culture during the Victorian Era, and continued to surface until the twentieth century. Anthony Fletcher discusses an account of a letter published in *The Lancet* in 1974, a weekly

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[22] Coster, 'Purity, Profanity and Procrastination', p.380.
[23] Ibid., p.377.
[24] Natalie Knödel, 'The Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth, commonly called The Churching of Women', *The University of Durham* (April 1995), p.1.
[25] The Bible, 'Christ Born of Mary', *Bible.com* <https://www.bible.com/en-GB/bible/114/LUK.2.nkjv> [accessed 24/11/2017].
[26] Ibid.
[27] Coster, 'Purity, Profanity and Procrastination', p.384.
[28] Margaret Houlbrooke, *Rite Out of Time: A Study of the Churching of Women and its Survival in the Twentieth Century* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2011), p.137.
[29] Ibid.

medical journal, which discusses flowers wilting in the hands of menstruating women.[30] Childbirth essentially rendered a woman impure, much like menstruation.[31] The example from 1974 makes the fact that the churching ritual survived the religious 'upheavals' of the sixteenth century unsurprising, as it indicates that there continued to be the belief that, after giving birth, women were 'both unclean and unholy'.[32]

The biblical precedents led to the adoption of the rite of purification into liturgy around the eleventh century.[33] However, Coster proposes that the universality of similar rites could suggest that the introduction of this ceremony 'was a response to popular feelings, rather than the imposition of a new ceremony on an increasingly Christianized society'.[34] Keith Thomas's *Religion and the Decline of Magic* argues in a similar direction and posits that it would be a more justified view to understand the ritual of churching as 'the result of superstitious popular opinions rather than as its cause'.[35]

It would be easy to argue that the churching of women was personally insulting.[36] During the ceremony, women were seated in a special churching pew at the front of the church in full view of the congregation. The pew was 'like a huge box', and must have made churching a terrifying experience for the person concerned'.[37] But this perhaps ignores the evidence that many women continued to conform with the ceremony as 'a social necessity'.[38] In the 1950s, sociologists working in East London found that over 90% of mothers still participated in the ceremony.[39]

This brings us to the core of the debate concerning the nature of the churching of women; between those who see it as it was titled in the 1552 Prayer Book, as 'The Thanks Giving of Woman After Childbirth',' and those that view it as 'The Order for the Purification of Women', seen in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer.[40] Thomas concludes that, in early modern England, popular superstitions, the magical elements of Psalm 121; 'the sun shall not burn you by day, neither the moon by night', the wearing of a veil, and Puritan objections to the rite suggests we can speak of a ritual of purification.[41] It was these magical and superstitious elements that were criticised by the Puritans, as they believed the churching ritual to be 'an unreformed purification', while at the same time arguing that churching was a patriarchal instrument for the desecration of women.[42] Some scholars see churching 'as a cultural response to the fear of women, and as a man-made instrument for their control'.[43] In his essay on churching, Coster concludes that the rite, its trappings and focus were a reflection of the mistrust of women.[44] Others, like Thomas, consider churching an unpopular practice to which the majority of woman surrendered.[45]

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[30] Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination,* p.63.
[31] Stephen Wilson*, The Magical Universe,* p.253.
[32] Coster, 'Purity, Profanity and Procrastination', p.377.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Knödel, 'The Thanksgiving of women after childbirth', p.3.
[36] Coster, 'Purity, Profanity and Procrastination', p.386.
[37] Ibid., p.383.
[38] Ibid., p.386.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., p.382.

However other scholars, like Susan Wright and Adrian Wilson, believe that many women used the churching ceremony as an opportunity to socialise and celebrate with their female friends.[46] This argument shifts the attention away from men to the experience of the women themselves; a way of comfort after the fears of pregnancy and childbirth.[47] Adrian Wilson, who has gone even further in this direction, contends that 'neither the newly delivered mother nor the women who accompanied her to church behaved "as if they felt her to be impure"'.[48] Churching instead was a social gathering and the conclusion of the lying-in period. For Wilson, churching was a ceremony where women resisted patriarchal power and a regained a sense of power over their bodies and their lives.[49] He evidences that, after the Reformation, when the Protestant church changed the medieval Catholic title of 'purification' ritual to 'the thanksgiving of women after childbirth', and when Puritans saw the change as a 'token gesture' for something that was part of the old, Catholic ways, women continued to get churched. [50] Even women who could not necessarily afford the offerings given to

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[41] David Cressy, 'Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women in Post-Reformation England' *Past & Present*, 141 (1993), pp.106-46, pp.108-109.

[42] Ibid., p.110.

[43] Cressy, p.109.

[44] Coster, 'Purity, Profanity and Procrastination', p.386.

[45] Ibid., p.109.

[46] Susan Wright, "Family Life and Society in Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Century Salisbury" (Univ. of Leicester Ph.D. thesis, 1982), p.154.

[47] Houlbrooke, *Rite out of Time,* p.131.

[48] Cressy, 'Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women', p.110.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Adrian Wilson, *Ritual and Conflict,* p.175.

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the church for churching, or the subsequent celebration of such, did still have a churching ceremony.[51]

It is argued, however, that many women might have felt pressured to have a churching ceremony due to expectations from matriarchal figures. These not only include mothers, grandmothers and other female family members, but also neighbours and the town's gossips.[52] Margaret Houlbrooke agrees, that 'by insistence, example, powerful expectation, persuasion, or occasional threats', mothers and grandmothers saw to it that new mothers got churched.[53] For many women, their mothers' advice was the main reason for women to get churched and this strong influence lasted well into the twentieth century. Peter Willmott and Michael Young still found a churching rate of 95% in East London in the late 1950s.[54] Even up until the early 1970s, all but one woman in a large British maternity ward took up the offer of being churched by an Anglican minister.[55]

From the 1960s onwards, however, we do start to see a gradual disappearance of 'the construct of femininity', which previously positioned women as dependent, self-sacrificing, and 'not in control of her own body'.[56] Whereas before, mothers had great influence over their daughters' lives; girls now left the home for training or studying and in turn became less socially isolated.[57] Daughters were pursuing paths different from their mothers and ceased to live their lives as just pious, 'good' women.[58] This was regarded by the Church as a rejection of Christian values, but for the women themselves, the religious discourses of femininity, such as the rituals previously practiced by their mothers, 'had been reduced to a series of platitudes... to present the correct face to the world'.[59] Callum Brown believes gender to be central to the debate on religious decline in the West, as women were numerically dominant 'among church members' in the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, and piety was primarily located in the domestic sphere.[60] The 'feminizing of the secularisation process' might be the key to explain religious decline as, from the 1960s, it had to

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[51] Adrian Wilson, *Ritual and Conflict,* pp.178-179.
[52] Ibid., p.112.
[53] Houlbrooke, *Rite out of Time,* pp.127-128.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Adrian Wilson, *The Magical Universe,* p.203.
[56] Ibid., p.80.
[57] Houlbrooke, *Rite out of Time,* p.128.
[58] Abrams, 'Mothers and Daughters', p.79.
[59] Ibid., p.80.
[60] Ibid, p.60.

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compete with 'alternative sources of identity for women'; found in the workplace, through education, and in the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s.[61] No longer did a woman's life revolve around family and the home. Instead, they became free to pursue lives that their mothers were never able to pursue before, and 'religion ceased to provide a framework' for the way women lived their lives.[62] One of the justifications of churching, its offer of comfort after the dangers of pregnancy and childbirth, had already been undermined by the improvements in the management of maternity and childbirth from the early twentieth century onwards, and after the Second World War these improvements had reached most women in England.[63]

The decline of religion was concomitant with the decline in the number of women who were churched and Houlbrooke believes it is arguably one of the clearest symptoms of how we should look at the growth of secularisation in the last quarter of the twentieth century.[64]
The church did continue to be treasured by many women, however, even its members 'were allowing the ceremony of churching to fade away'.[65] Some clergy had already re-worded the phrase and started using 'bless' rather than 'church' in the 1950s.[66] Houlbrooke points out that, because the written record is incomplete, it is hard to measure the rate of churching decline.[67] However, through clerical comments, personal impressions and parish statistics, we can determine that the old rite of churching changed for good and 'modern ceremonies' took its place.[68] The liturgy of the Church of England saw a revision in 1980 and 2000, where the churching rite was replaced by the new thanks giving service, which appears to be more joyful and inclusive; a well-deserved celebration of the achievement of giving birth.[69]

As discussed, childbirth, lying-in and churching were all part of a female ritual, where women could support each other as they witnessed the other's agonies. This created a 'female counter-power' that

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[61] Abrams, 'Mothers and Daughters', p.60.
[62] Ibid., p.80.
[63] Houlbrooke, *Rite out of Time,* p.131.
[64] Ibid., p.132.
[65] Ibid., p.133.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid., pp.132-136.
[69] Ibid., p.136.

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provided women with control over something which was not ruled by men.[70] Adrian Wilson argues churching was a ritual not imposed by men, but rather by women; women wanted to take part in the rite, as it 'legitimized and completed the wider ceremony of childbirth.'[71] We cannot deny, however, that churching was called a purification ritual, in which a woman was brought back into the fold by way of cleansing her in front of the congregation, as posited by William Coster. Nonetheless, as Margaret Houlbrooke has argued, matriarchal opinions also added to the pressure for women to partake in the churching ceremony; women still enjoyed close proximity and frequent association with their mothers until the late 1950s.[72]

In the early 1960s, we start to see a change in the way in which people experienced religion; women became less dependent on the church and the influence of their mothers and grandmothers. Instead, professional skills replaced the reassurances of the church. The rates of infant mortality and maternal death declined due to better hospital facilities and trained midwives and doctors, in addition to a focus on antenatal care.[73] Gender is central to the debate on religious decline in the West, as it was women who were the majority of those attending churches in the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, and the feminine quality of Christian religiosity 'identified women as the moral core of the family and society'.[74] Religion was replaced by 'personal identity formation' in the period after the Second World War and ceased to be the sole marker to identify oneself with.[75]

The churching rite was written out of the Church of England's liturgy in the revisions of 1980 and 2000.[76] For centuries, the disobedience of Eve was a legacy with which to frame many strictures against women, among which the ritual of purification.[77] The decline of the churching rite is surely one of the clearest indicators of how the historian should look at evidence that suggests gender was a major factor in the growth of secularisation in England.[78]

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[70] Adrian Wilson, *Ritual and Conflict,* p.212.
[71] Ibid., p.210.
[72] Houlbrooke, *Rite out of Time,* p.127.
[73] Ibid., pp.131-132.
[74] Abrams, 'Mothers and Daughters', p.60.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Houlbrooke, *Rite out of Time,* p.133.
[77] Ibid., p.137.
[78] Ibid., p.132.

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Gender-based prejudices are still found in many branches of the Christian church today.[79] However, with the demise of the purification rite in England, the churching ritual was replaced by ceremonies that were aimed at celebration instead of shame.[80]

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[79] Houlbrooke, *Rite out of Time,* pp.137-138.

[80] Ibid., p.138.

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Gendered Citizenship, Suffrage and Reproduction in the Writings and Lives of Nineteenth Century French Feminists Jeanne Deroin and Jenny P. d'Héricourt

By Jessica Albrecht

Abstract:

This article analyses the writings and lives of Jeanne Deroin and Jenny P. d'Héricourt as examples of the notions of reproduction and motherhood, gendered citizenship and suffrage in nineteenth century feminism in France. Relating each to canonical male thinkers, historiography has failed to view Deroin and d'Héricourt together and to take them seriously as thinkers in their own right. Therefore, this article uses the concepts of *gendered agency* and *reverse discourse* to look at the relation between Deroin's and d'Hércourt's individual gendered experience and their feminist aims. Their example demonstrates that the discourse of suffrage and citizenship in nineteenth century France was inherently gendered; concomitantly gendered experience was linked to the discursive power relations. This reveals why it was possible and necessary for feminists to relate to the dominant discourse of sexual difference to articulate their feminist demands. It justified the need for women's citizenship, suffrage and equal rights by positively re-evaluating women's qualities connected to motherhood and sentiment; and viewing reproduction as the fulfilment of a citizen's duty to be rewarded with citizenship.

> 'I claim the rights of woman, because it is time to make the nineteenth century ashamed of its culpable denial of justice to half the human species.'[1]

These are the words of Jenny P. d'Héricourt (1809-1875). She and Jeanne Deroin (1805-1894) were two of several French feminists of the mid-nineteenth century who derived from the utopian socialist and religious movement Saint-Simonianism. Both in their distinct ways, claimed full citizenship and the equality of rights in a political society which was after the Revolution of 1789, underlined by an invisible though universal male citizenship, enshrined in the *Code civil.*[2] In those times, sexual difference was perceived as a natural fact causing this very exclusion of women from the political sphere, based on the 'weakness of their bodies and minds', as well as viewing women as capable solely of reproduction and domesticity.[3] Nevertheless, this notion of reproduction became one of the key arguments in the feminist fight for equal rights and citizenship, since sexual difference was 'an ontology not possible to dismiss.'[4] Though, at the same time as it restricted, it also created the basis for feminism in nineteenth century France by

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[1] Jenny P. D. d'Héricourt, *A Woman's Philosophy of Woman or Woman Affranchised: An Answer to Michelet, Proudhon, Girarding, Legouve, Comte, and Other Modern Innovations* (New York: Carleton, 1864), p.x.

[2] Robert Nye, 'Women, Work and Citizenship in France since 1789', *Gender & History,* 19:1 (2007), p.186; Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), p.18.

[3] Joan Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p.ix.

[4] Nye, 'Women, Work and Citizenship in France since 1789' (2007), p.186.

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enhancing the identification as one sex and thereby shaping a feminist consciousness.[5] After a brief overview of the context of Saint-Simonian feminism and of the lives and writings of Deroin and d'Héricourt, this article will attempt to balance the correlation of the individual lives and the broader political impact of these feminists, striving to deepen the understanding of gendered agency as well as reverse discourse in the struggle for equal rights and female citizenship in nineteenth century French feminism.

Saint-Simonianism, based on the writings of Henri Saint-Simon (1760-1825), flourished from 1825 under the leadership of Barthèlemy Prosper Enfantin and came to be 'the first influential socialist school in France' until it was banned in 1832 for 'offences to public morality', challenging the double standard and advocating free love and extra-marital sexual relationships.[6] Enfantin preached the equality of both sexes, paralleling an androgynous God (Father and Mother); 'the man and the woman, this is the social individual… this is the basis for the morality of the future.'[7] Furthermore, the movement was concerned with divorce rights and the emancipation of women, though claiming the inherent difference as well as complementarity of both sexes.[8] Male rationality and female sentiment, even though radically different, were seen as the fundamental unit of society, resulting in a positive re-evaluation of women's assumed qualities and their social role.[9]

Saint-Simonian notions of the complementarity of the two sexes influenced several feminists. For instance, Jeanne Deroin used their language to reverse society's exclusion of women of the public sphere due to motherhood and reproduction by declaring them as the most important works of all which should be rewarded with citizenship: 'Child-bearers are rights-bearers!'[10] Moreover, Saint-Simonianism provided French feminists with the possibility to print articles in the magazine *Le Globe* or to launch their own, *La Femme Libre*, edited by Jeanne Deroin, which solely featured female authors who signed their articles only with their Christian name, abandoning their surname as a sign of female suppression.[11] Deroin, for example, used Jeanne-Victorie as her

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[5] Ibid.; Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (1984), p.18.

[6] Julian Strube, 'Socialist Religion and the Emergence of Occultism: A Genealogical Approach to Socialism and Secularization in 19th-Century France', *Religion*, 46:3 (2016), p.364; Pamela Pilbeam, *Saint-Simonians in Nineteenth-Century France: From Free Love to Algeria* (London: Palgrave, 2014), p.62.

[7] Prosper Enfantin, 'Extrait de la parole du Père dans la réunion générale de la famille, le 19 Novembre 1831', *Oeuvres des Saint-Simon et d'Enfantin, XLVII* (Paris, 1878), pp.114-119, tr. Karen Offen.

[8] Evelyn L. Forget, 'Saint-Simonian Feminism', *Feminist Economics*, 7:1 (2001), p.80.

[9] James F. McMillan, *France and Women. 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.81.

[10] McMillan, *France and Women. 1789-1914* (2000) p.87; Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer* (1996) pp.58, 71.

[11] Pilbeam, *Saint-Simonians in Nineteenth-Century France* (2014), p.64; Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (1984), p.65; Karen Offen, *European Feminisms 1700-1950. A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 99.

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pseudonym. Later on, she launched other papers such as *La Voix des Femmes*, which lasted until June 1848, *La Politique des Femmes* and *L'Opinion des Femmes*.[12] Deroin and others participated actively in the February Revolution of 1848. She was arrested in on 29 May 1850 and accused of refusing 'to accept that married women should be subject to the control of their husbands'[13]. In 1852, she was exiled and from then on lived in London, meanwhile she was still in communication and discussion with French feminists and anti-feminists of that time.[14] Jenny P. D. d'Héricourt, born as Jeanne-Marie-Fabienne Poinsard, was also affiliated with Saint-Simonian feminism. After studying philosophy and medicine in the 1830s, she was involved in the feminist activism of 1848, where she met Jeanne Deroin.[15] Thereafter, in 1860, she published her most famous book *A Woman's Philosophy of Woman, or Woman Affranchised* and emigrated to Chicago in 1864 where her book was translated by American feminists.[16]

The fact that both women were situated in similar political and intellectual circles, contrasts with the historiography on French feminism in the nineteenth century which separates Deroin and d'Héricourt in its narrations. Deroin is mostly associated with feminist periodicals as well as her active involvement in the 1848 revolution and her subsequent candidacy for National Assembly in 1849; whereas d'Héricourt's story is closely linked to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, since her well-known publication is labelled as "An Answer to … Proudhon".[17] This failure of historiography to view these women together suggests that they have not been taken seriously as thinkers in their own right, but instead have been discussed in relation to the more canonical male thinkers. However, since there are several links between those two women, both biographic through their shared activism in 1848; and discursive over their shared controversies with Proudhon. [18] This article will use a joined examination of Deroin and d'Héricourt to apply the theoretical concepts of *gendered agency* as well as the *reverse discourse*.

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[12] McMillan, *France and Women. 1789-1914* (2000) p. 85.

[13] McMillan, *France and Women. 1789-1914* (2000), p.89.

[14] Felica Gordon and Máire Cross, *Early French Feminists, 1830-1940: A Passion for Liberty* (Cheltenham: Edward Ergar, 1996), p.5.

[15] Alice Primi, 'Women's History According to Jenny P. d'Héricourt (1809-1875), 'Daughter of her Century', *Gender & History*, 18:1 (2006), p.153; Jenny P. D. d'Héricourt, 'Madame Jenny P. d'Héricourt', in: *The Agitator* (8 May 1869), reprinted in: Karen Offen, 'A Nineteenth-Century French Feminist Rediscovered: Jenny P. d'Héricourt, 1809-1875', *Signs*, 13:1 (1987), p.153.

[16] Primi 'Women's History According to Jenny P. d'Héricourt (1809-1875), *Gender & History*, 18:1 (2006), p.152.

[17] Furthermore, Deroin usually solely appears in publications on French feminism or feminist writings of the nineteenth century in general, while several distinct articles on d'Héricourt are written, see Arni and Honegger (2008), Offen (1987), and Primi (2006) as examples.

[18] In her alleged autobiography, d'Héricourt characterizes Deroin as 'so sweet and courageous' and describes both their efforts in 1848 as different, thought nevertheless complementary; see: Héricourt, 'Madame Jenny P. d'Héricourt', p.153; Notably, although seldom mentioned, Jeanne Deroin argued with Proudhon, mostly because her candidacy in 1849 'drew down [his] wrath'; see: Offen, 'Madame Jenny P. d'Héricourt', p.153.

The basis for *gendered agency* is the thought that the way one acts or is able to act in society is related to one's bodily perception as a gendered being. Various scholars acknowledge the importance of the body for identification, communication and experience in general.[19] The social world is made of bodies and their interrelation; moreover, individuals recognise others and are recognised by them through their bodies. The body is the *medium of culture*. Therefore, a subject in society is always an embodied subject which perceives its surrounding world and acts in it as an embodied being; there is no disembodied subject which controls an exterior body.[20] According to Judith Butler and others, bodies in society are recognised as gendered bodies.[21] Consequently, subjects are gendered embodied beings acting in discursive limitations which restrict the subject's agency to an embodied and concomitant *gendered* agency. In other words, subjects as embodied beings can perceive the social world and act in it only in a gendered way, hence, social/discursive agency is always gendered. Through the combined study of Deroin and d'Héricourt this article evaluates the relation between their distinct individual gendered experience and their feminist aims and impact.

As adherents of Saint-Simonianism, Deroin and d'Héricourt carried on their visions of the equality of the sexes regarding sex, marriage and divorce. [22] Nevertheless, due to their personal experiences as women in nineteenth century France, this shared ground was modified in their individual feminist agendas. Jeanne Deroin, on the one hand, was concerned with marital equality. She states that any man 'who is not sufficiently generous to consent to share his power' is not considered as a possible choice for a husband, since women should not be obliged to submit to them; and even celibacy would be preferred to an unequal marriage symbolising slavery. [23] As illustrated above, this bid for marital equality and her refusal to take on the name of her husband were the reasons why Deroin was convicted in 1850. On the other hand, d'Héricourt assumed marriage to be the end of love, after all 'in marriage, woman is a serf.'[24] Then, the existing marriage laws would cause the alienation of the couple, since 'the wife *belongs*

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[19] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
[20] Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p.165; Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p.20; Alexandra Howson, *Embodying Gender* (London: SAGE, 2005), p.58.
[21] For the discursive link of sex and gender see: Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discoursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993), passim.
[22] for Deroin, see above; for Héricourt, see: Primi, p.38.
[23] Jeanne Deroin, 'Appel aux femmes', in: *La Femme Libre*, 1 (1832), p.1, tr. Karen Offen.
[24] Héricourt, *A Woman's Philosophy of Woman or Woman Affranchised*, pp.ix, 252.

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to the husband; she is in his *power*.'[25] Therefore, to strengthen marriage, the right to divorce must be granted, during which 'the wife should be as free as the husband.'[26] Thus, in spite of their shared intellectual origins, Deroin and d'Héricourt differ in their views on marriage and divorce. Research on d'Héricourt suggests that the reason for her great reluctance to marriage in general lay in her own experience with marriage and not being able to divorce.[27] In her own words: 'When twenty years old she was married to a young man, who, under the guise of honesty, was a libertine and a base hypocrite. After four years of sorrow, she left him and returned to her mother.'[28] Whereas for Deroin, there is no indication of an unhappy marriage.

Then again, Deroin's main concern was for women to obtain equal rights and suffrage grounding on full citizenship, which she justified with women's ability to reproduce and be mothers[29]. In other words: fulfilling a citizen's duty.[30] Since 'liberty, equality, and fraternity have been proclaimed for all', Deroin declared, 'the mothers of your sons cannot be slaves.'[31] She considered women as entitled to equal rights carrying out 'the sacred role of maternity' for the sake of a peaceful and harmonious society, which can only develop if 'the mother of humanity [will be] regenerated by liberty.'[32] Moses explains Deroin's focus on motherhood with her being a mother of three children by 1848.[33] Nevertheless, d'Héricourt, who did not have any children, viewed reproduction as one of the "functions" of women which should result in rights given by the state.[34] Since the woman 'is the creator and preserver of the race', they all 'shall one day *have rights because they have duties*.'[35]

As these examples illustrate, the gendered experiences of Deroin and d'Héricourt as married women in nineteenth century France probably influenced their opinions regarding marriage and divorce. However, even though having children may have effected Deroin's stress on motherhood, the concept of gendered agency does not solely explain d'Héricourt using the same language and arguments as her contemporary.

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[25] Ibid. p.275.
[26] Ibid., pp.282-283.
[27] See: Offen, 'A Nineteenth-Century French Feminist Rediscovered', passim; Primi, 'Women's History According to Jenny P. d'Héricourt', passim; and others.
[28] Héricourt, 'Madame Jenny P. d'Héricourt', p.152.
[29] Jeanne Deroin, 'Aux Citoyens Français!', in: *La Voix des Femmes*, 7 (1848), pp.322-323, tr. Karen Offen.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Jeanne Deroin, *Almanach des Femmes* (1852), translation in: Gordon and Cross, *Early French Feminisms, 1830-1940*, pp.136, 138.
[33] Moses, p.134.
[34] Héricourt, 'Madame Jenny P. d'Héricourt', p. 152; Héricourt, *A Woman's Philosophy of Woman or Woman Affranchised*, p.225.
[35] Héricourt, *A Woman's Philosophy of Woman or Woman Affranchised*, p.227; Jenny P. D. d'Héricourt, 'De l'avenir de la femme', in: *La Ragione*, 3 (October 1855), p.62, tr. Alice Primi, 'Women's History According to Jenny P. d'Héricourt (1809-1875), 'Daughter of her Century', *Gender & History*, 18:1 (2006), p.153.

Therefore, this article will now analyse their discursive overlap with Proudhon to expand the concept of gendered agency by discursive possibilities and boundaries.[36] As illustrated above, the radical difference of the sexes was then the dominant discourse, shaping social and economic structures as well as ideals of womanhood and femininity. The suppression of women's rights was justified by the supposition of the fundamental difference between the sexes; simultaneously disparaging female attributes in relation to their ability to engage within economy and politics. This differentiation was grounded on bodily distinctions, determining identities by linking woman's role to her natural ability of reproduction; marriage and maternity were seen as a duty and the woman's ideal.[37] One major voice in this anti-feminist discourse was Pierre-Joseph Proudhon who reinforced the subordination of women by illustrating women's physical, intellectual and moral inferiority; which were all based on the bodily difference of the sexes. Men, 'the complete human being', would inhabit a 'virile energy' resulting in the 'fact of life that… the physical inferiority of woman is the product of her *non-masculinity*.'[38] The main difference lay in women's inability to produce a seed, resulting in the lack of idea, thought and genius.[39] For this reason, woman's place is in the family and the household, since she is only a passive being, 'lacking its own goal', with no other 'reason to exist other than in the couple and the family.'[40] Hence, women are reduced to motherhood and a passive part of reproduction which was the cause of their subordination. Nevertheless, man and woman are complementary, represented in man's public and woman's private work (in the household). The latter is not inferior to the former as such, rather are they 'necessary to one another as the two constituent principles of work.'[41] Though not equalling man and woman in general, it does lead into the question whether women should be considered as citizens.[42] Proudhon recognised the increase of the fight for women's emancipation, describing it as a:

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[36] Here, "discourse" is not limited to language, but means all practices (forms of linguistic actions) which produce what they name.
[37] Lynn Abrams, *The Making of the Modern Women: Europe 1789-1918* (London: Longman, 2002), pp.18-24, 69.
[38] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, 'De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église (1858), in: *Oeuvres complètes de P.-J. Proudhon*, tr. Karen Offen.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, 'Système des contradictions économiques, ou Philosophie de la misère' (1846), in: *Oeuvres complètes de P.-J. Proudhon*, pp. 196-99, tr. Karen Offen.
[42] Proudhon, 'De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église'.

> 'feminine indiscretion [which] has caught fire; a half-dozen inky-fingered insurgents obstinately try to make woman into something we do not want, reclaim their *rights* with insults, and defy us to bring the question out into the light of day.'[43]

According to Proudhon, this requested emancipation would backfire and result in woman's misery and legalised servitude.[44] Due to the irreconcilable differences between the sexes, he would rather exclude women from society than grant them emancipation.[45]

As a consequence, he got into an argument with Jeanne Deroin at the time of her activism in 1848, and especially when she ran for National Assembly in 1849.[46] Deroin asked the Democratic Socialist Electoral Committee to support her candidacy, since the democratic socialists vouched for the 'complete and radical abolition of all privileges of sex, race, birth, caste, and fortune.'[47] This, she argued, is why her candidacy should not be excluded 'in the name of a privilege of sex that violates the principles of equality and fraternity.'[48] Whereupon Proudhon 'in the name of public morality and of justice' encouraged all to protest against her attempt.[49] Deroin replied, likewise 'in the name of public morality and in the name of justice' precisely because woman is equal though not identical to man, society is in need of women's engagement, to fill the 'necessary elements that are lacking in man.'[50] Saying this, Deroin used the ideas formerly articulated by Saint-Simonians and, whilst repeating his words, reversed Proudhon's argument:

> 'It is especially this sacred function as mother, which some insist is incompatible with the exercise of a citizen's rights… This is why women have been declared incapable – and this is why they must demand the right to intervene in order to aid stout-hearted, intelligent men to transform this politics of violence and repression, which… causes all suffering and social misery.'[51]

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1866), p.275, tr. Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), p.152.

[46] See their letters in 1848 and 1849, accessable: https://contrun.libertarian-labyrinth.org/jeanne-deroin-to-proudhon-january-1849 and https://contrun.libertarian-labyrinth.org/proudhon-to-jeanne-deroin/.

[47] Jeanne Deroin, 'Aux Citoyens membres du Comité electoral démocratique et socialiste', in*: L'Opinion des Femmes* (10 April 1849), tr. Karen Offen.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, 'Protestation du *Peuple* contre la candidature de J. D.', in: *Le Peuple* (12 April 1849), tr. Karen Offen.

[50] Jeanne Deroin, 'Réponse à Proudon', in: *La Démocratie Pacifique* (13 April 1849), tr. Karen Offen.

[51] Jeanne, Deroin, 'Mission de la femme dans le present et dans l'avenir', in: *L'Opinion des Femmes* (10 March 1849), tr. Karen Offen.

A similar observation can be made regarding d'Héricourt. One chapter of her book is dedicated to Proudhon; there she published several letters of him and herself, followed by a discussion of his main arguments, including those illustrated above.[52] She agrees with his assumption that women are inherently different from men, though they do not need each other as complement; woman and man themselves are already complete.[53] Furthermore, in d'Héricourt's opinion, woman is the one producing the germ, rebutting Proudhon's 'scientific' argumentation.[54] D'Héricourt likewise stressed reproduction as the significant difference between the sexes which engenders in distinct sexual attributes and moralities; men are 'harsh, rough, without delicacy, devoid of sensibility and modesty.'[55] Conversely, women are 'naturally gentle, loving, feeling, equitable, modest.'[56] Thus, women are the reason for social progress and should be granted the same rights as men.[57]

As the historiography suggests, Proudhon's argument illustrates the dominating discourse at that time in France. In this discourse, the correlation of power structures, citizenship and suffrage; as well as male dominance in politics, science and philosophy in general, and knowledge in addition to the biological distinction of the two sexes; created the discursive truth about man and woman, their specific attributes and the associated political and social subordination of women. Thereby, women were produced as the 'other', the opposite of men's own identity. The purpose was to create a positive identity for men, which, cannot exist on its own, but needs to be maintained by an exterior other, the pure negative.[58] Deroin and d'Héricourt, as examples for nineteenth century French feminism, were part of this discourse and operated in the same power relations. They adopted its language, but *reversed* its meaning, hereby contesting the established truths.[59] Women and men were perceived as distinct sexes; their main difference regarded as reproduction. Nevertheless, for them, motherhood and reproduction had positive connotations, seen as the fulfilment of a citizen's duty, and, therefore, no reason for the subjugation in marriage or for the rejection of suffrage and citizenship.

As illustrated, the concept of *gendered agency* alone does not adequately solve the problem of the relation between Deroin's and d'Hércourt's gendered experience and their feminist aims. This is due to the fact that their gendered experience is still individual, though tied to the surrounding discourse. These discursive boundaries, on the one hand limit them, and simultaneously give them the opportunity to *reverse* it by adapting its language and filling it with reversed and positive meanings. As a consequence, their example demonstrates that the discourse of suffrage and citizenship in nineteenth century France was inherently gendered; concomitantly gendered experience was linked to the discursive power relations. Examining Deroin and d'Héricourt jointly, made it possible to recognise the influence of their individual and discursive gendered experience on their impact on nineteenth century feminism in France. It revealed why it was possible and necessary for feminists to relate to the dominant discourse of sexual difference to articulate their feminist aims. This justified the need for women's citizenship, suffrage and equal rights by positively re-evaluating women's qualities connected to motherhood and sentiment; and viewing reproduction as the fulfilment of a citizen's duty, consequently to be rewarded with citizenship.

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[52] Héricourt, *A Woman's Philosophy of Woman or Woman Affranchised*, pp.33-118.
[53] Ibid., p.79.
[54] Ibid., pp.78, 227.
[55] Ibid., pp.227-228.
[56] Héricourt, *A Woman's Philosophy of Woman or Woman Affranchised*, pp.227-228.
[57] Ibid.
[58] See: Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction* (London: Penguin, 1978), passim; Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978), passim.
[59] Similar: Foucault, p.101; Said, passim: the concept of *reversed orientalism.*

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To what extent can sex be described as 'a free space' for women in the East German Democratic Republic?

By Anna McEwan

Abstract:

This article is inspired by the work of gender and sexuality historian, Dagmar Herzog. This article examines Herzog's statement; that in East Germany sex could be a 'free space' for East German women in an otherwise restrictive society. As well as commenting on the political significance of East German women's sexuality, the article considers three additionally important factors relating to sex as a free space for women in the GDR: the GDR's sexual revolution or evolution, (using East German film to gain insight into contemporary sexual norms); the writing of GDR sexologists' on the physical act of sex; and, lastly, prostitution. Using Biopower as a theoretical framework, this article argues, overall East German women's sexuality can be understood as another aspect of life that the communist regime sought to regulate and control.

According to Dagmar Herzog, sex in the East German Democratic Republic, 1949-1990 (GDR) was 'a crucial free space in [an] otherwise profoundly unfree society'; however, Herzog questions whether this was a 'genuine democratic achievement' or another means of state control.[1] Envisaging the GDR as a free space for sexuality presents a paradox as many associate the GDR with oppression; a land of grey high rise apartments with the Stasi lurking at every corner. Yet, in oral testimony gathered by historians such as Josie McLellan, the regime's former inhabitants often remember the GDR fondly in regards to their sexual experiences. The purpose of this article is to examine Herzog's statement in relation to the experience of East German women. Firstly, it is important to understand the context of the GDR's legislation regarding women and the effect on women's sexual freedoms. This article examines three additionally significant factors relating to sex as a free space for women in the GDR: the GDR's sexual revolution or evolution, the physical act of sex, and prostitution. I maintain that despite aspects of these phenomena allowing sexual freedom for women, above all, women's sexuality had a political purpose in the GDR.

Regarding the historiography on the history of sexuality, Herzog's contribution is outstanding. Her 2005 publication, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* has

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[1] Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth Century Germany*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), p.188.

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inspired this article.[2] Herzog argues the GDR's leaders hoped to show their citizens that only socialism provided the best conditions for long-lasting, true love. Signifying difference from Western sexual change in the 1970's, Herzog maintains that rather than a sexual *revolution*, the GDR experienced a gradual *evolution* of sexual freedoms in the 1970s. I will henceforth use the term evolution when referring to this event. Herzog's 2011 publication offers comparison between the GDR's sexual evolution and West Germany's sexual revolution as well as offering insight into sexual developments in the twentieth century such as prostitution, sexual violence and the HIV crisis.[3] McLellan's 2011 publication utilises oral testimony alongside statistical analysis providing a detailed understanding of sexual practices in the GDR.[4] Considering women's sexual experiences post-communism, Ingrid Sharp's 2004 work investigates the negative effects German reunification had on East German women's sexual freedoms.[5] Similarly, Susan Gal and Gail Kligman's 2000 edited volume, particularly their chapter on abortion rights after the *Wende (Turning point)*, offers comparison with women's reproductive freedoms in the GDR to restrictions East German women faced in the newly reunified Germany.[6] Donna Harsch's contribution to the study of women in the GDR is also extremely insightful and her 2007 publication holds particularly valuable insight to the social conditions of women in the GDR.[7] Harsch's recent review in the *German History Journal* also explores reproduction.[8] However, Harsch nega to explore women's experiences in the most private sphere: the bedroom. This piece engages with existing literature on women's social position in the GDR while investigating the relationship between their social position and their sexual freedoms. In this respect, Katharina von Ankum's work is significant as it was written in 1993 providing the reader with a near contemporary understanding of women's role as 'political bodies' in the GDR.[9] Regarding writing on sexuality written inside the GDR, East German sexologist, Siegfried Schnabl's *Mann und Frau Intim* allows access to contemporary thoughts on sex inside the GDR.[10]

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[2] Dagmar Herzog*, Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth Century Germany*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), p.188.

[3] Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth-Century History,* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2011).

[4] Josie McLellan*, Love in the time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR,* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2011).

[5] Ingrid Sharp, 'The Sexual Unification of Germany', *Journal of the History of Sexuality,* 13:3, (2004).

[6] Susan Gal and Gail Kligman eds., *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[7] Donna Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family and Communism in the German Democratic Republic,* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[8] Harsch, 'Die Wunschkind Pille: Weibliche Erfahrung und Staatliche Geburtenpolitik in der DDR', *German History*, 34:2, (2016).

[9] Katharina Von Ankum, 'Political Bodies: Women and Re/Production in the GDR', *Women in German Yearbook,* (1993).

[10] Schnabl, *Mann und Frau Intim,* 5th edition, (VEB Verlag Volk und Gesundheit: Berlin, 1972).

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When investigating sex as a free space for East German women, it is necessary to consider legislation regarding women. Soon after the GDR's conception the Law for the Protection of Mother and Child and Rights of Women was introduced in 1950.[11] Significantly, the law viewed women's rights in relation to the maternal role and secured women's right to work, equal pay and established maternal authority in families. Protective legislation was also introduced for pregnant working women and generous financial incentives for large families were provided.[12] Although aspects of this law appeared progressive, in reality the policies addressed:

> 'the stagnating population growth due to war losses and emigration to the West…women were as crucial for the continued existence of the GDR state in their function as child bearers as they were as workers.'[13]

Thus, reproduction was portrayed by the regime's leaders as symbolic of women's commitment to socialism; it was their duty to produce the future of the developing republic. Hence, as part of the 1950 law, and owing to the regime's pro-natalism programme, abortion was made illegal.[14] Restricting women's power over their pregnancies can be understood within the framework of Michel Foucault's theory of Biopower.[15] Foucault maintained the individual's body was a site of control and a means to affect state control. He believed both socialist and capitalist states had embraced Biopower. In reference to the Soviet Union, he suggested their belief in the biological right of the state to take or allow life was evident in the killing of political opponents and criminals.[16] The theory of Biopower is evident in the GDR's control of the female body to aid economic and demographic concerns. Thus, until the legalisation of abortion in 1972, women were at the centre of the state's interests as they held the power to create or indeed, abort, the socialist state's future. This put extraordinary pressure on women who were already struggling to manage the double burden of work and family. The state attempted to prevent illegal abortions by introducing family counselling services to register pregnancies.[17] Furthermore, in the GDR's early years, contraception, though not illegal, was not easily accessible or guaranteed to be effective. In this sense, for women in the GDR, the only guaranteed assurance to prevent pregnancy was to completely avoid sexual intercourse. Thus, I suggest that legislation regarding

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[11] Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic,* p.134.

[12] Ibid, see pp.134-136 for further details on protective legislation and monetary incentives to encourage large families.

[13] Von Ankum, 'Political Bodies', p.4.

[14] Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic*, p.143.

[15] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France*, (New York: Picador, 2003).

[16] Ibid, p.261.

[17] Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic*, p.141.

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women and abortion in this era was premised on providing a strong Socialist future generation, but in actuality, it curbed women's sexual desire owing to the fear of pregnancy.

There were exceptions to the illegalisation of abortion, for example, medical risk to the mother and child or eugenic risk; which although rarely enforced could legalise abortion in the case of incest.[18] In reality, both categories remained ambiguous, moreover, petitions appealing for legal abortions were unanimously rejected, according to Harsch.[19] During the 1960s there was increasing liberalization regarding the abortion law; and economic constraints in particular, pushed the regime to consider new legalisation.[20] In 1965, a commission found women were often working shorter hours to account for child care and household duties.[21] In 1972 abortion was formally legalised in the GDR; a significant turning point for the socialist state and for East German women. However, Ankum believes it was not the consideration of women's self-determination that reversed the regime's decision on abortion; instead, legalisation of abortion 'was ultimately decided in favour of production, which happened to coincide with women's right to self-determination.'[22] The country's economy, similar to others in the Soviet bloc, was struggling to provide for the needs of modern life. Therefore, concerned for the GDR's economic needs, the regime legalised abortion to ensure women could fulfil their role as workers. Ankum also believes the legalisation of abortion was a political power play from the GDR; seeing the 'visible struggle' of West German women in their campaign for legal abortion, the GDR tried to assert its moral superiority to West Germany through abortion's legalisation.[23] However, despite the legalisation of abortion, maternal pressures such as the burdens of being and becoming a mother, existed for East German women until the state's collapse in 1989.

It is necessary to examine the impact of sexual evolution in judging whether sex was a free space for East German women. To gain contemporary insight I will be using East German film as a case study for measuring women's sexual freedom. During the Erich Honecker era, beginning in 1971, there was a gradual sexual evolution in the GDR following policy change such as the decriminalisation of homosexuality and abortion.[24] Women, ever more economically independent, became 'increasingly confident subjects with strong negotiating power vis-à-vis both their male partners and the state.'[25] Women's confidence translated into a desire for sexual enjoyment without fearing repercussions such as pregnancy and judgement. The 1973 East German film, *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* (DLPP) portrays the young single mother, Paula, who is frustrated with her lack of sex life: 'Sleep, work and again sleep and back in bed at nine.'[26] Instead of staying in bed, Paula goes to a night club to find a man; here, she meets her neighbour, Paul, who, due to his failing marriage, is also sexually frustrated. Soon after their meeting they have sex. Paula demonstrates female agency through prioritising her sexual needs by the way in which she is also pursued by Saft, a much older man offering a home and financial security. However, Paula goes against her sensibilities and pursues love and passion with Paul. When the pair make love, Paula is often overcome with emotion and in one scene she is transported to a 'dream world', symbolising the pleasure she experiences with Paul. Over three million East Germans viewed this film and it remains a cult classic, suggesting the resonance of the film with East German women, as well as men.[27] I believe the film revealed to East German women the sex lives women were already having, or could have. However, soon after the film's release it was banned, indicating measuring women's sexual freedom in the GDR is complicated; sexually liberal attitudes towards sex were not uniform and instead developed gradually. The film broke many East German taboos, moreover, the film's embrace of sexual themes was perhaps too explicit for the authorities; its music is laced with innuendos such as: 'Go to her and let your kite soar / Hold her tight and let your kite soar.'[28] Despite the authorities' disapproval of the film, it revealed East German women's freedom in pursuing sexual relationships, even if these were non-conventional for the time, indicating sex could be a free space for East German women.

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[18] Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic*, pp.151-153.
[19] Ibid, pp.148-149.
[20] Von Ankum, 'Political Bodies', p.9.
[21] Ibid, p.12.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid, p.9.
[24] Officially, homosexuality was decriminalized in the GDR in 1968.

McLellan writes, during the Honecker era, youthful sex was not viewed negatively, however this was only within 'the coupling of sex with love and sex with heterosexuality.'[29] Even among the young, a specific type of sexual relationship was encouraged; sex within loving, heterosexual relationships resulting in marriage and children. In DLPP, Paula exemplifies the sexual freedom women could experience in the GDR. However, the film also, perhaps indirectly, reveals the regime's expectation of what sex should result in; Paula wants to have a child with Paul to solidify their love and devotion to each other. She is distraught to discover having another child would put her life in danger: 'So I can't have a child with the only man who means something to me.'[30] Ultimately, Paula's decision to have a child with Paul results in her death during childbirth. Therefore, considering sex as a free space for women using DLPP, it is evident that lurking behind sexual evolution lay a political agenda:

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[25] Herzog, *Sex After Fascism,* p.188.

[26] *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* [film], directed by Heiner Carow, (DEFA, 1973). Authors note*:* all translations in this text from German to English are my own.

[27] Sebastian Heiduschke, *East German Cinema: DEFA and Film History*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). p.103.

[28] *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* [film], directed by Heiner Carow, (DEFA, 1973).

[29] Josie McLellan*, Love in the time of Communism,* p.26.

> 'Sex was a useful way of offering young people "a bit of freedom" allowing the regime to appear to be on the side of the young while still pursuing its own agenda of a peaceful population and a healthy birth rate.'[31]

Therefore, sex can be seen as another method of enforcing loyalty within the population; sex would result in a loving relationship and simultaneously tie the couple together to socialism. Herzog succinctly summarises this principle citing the SED's 1963 youth memorandum, 'true love belongs to youth the way youth belongs to socialism.'[32] Again, Biopower is useful in understanding women's sexual freedom. In the 1970's, abortion was legalised resulting in greater female sexual enjoyment; evident in the character of Paula, a single mother who has a sexual relationship with a married man. Despite the moral confusion surrounding their relationship outside of marriage, relating to Biopower the relationship is acceptable as the pair hope to have children together during a time when demographic concerns were of central importance to the GDR. However, Paula's death in childbirth could also be interpreted as a form of punishment for her sexual freedom. I believe the climate of sexual evolution did offer women sexual freedom, but the authorities expected sex to take place in loving relationships between loyal citizens resulting in marriage and children. Women might have had greater freedom over their sexual choices, but they were still to consider the state's concerns; producing children for socialism's future underpinned much of the GDR's principles on sexuality.

Considering the concept of sex as a free space for East German women, leading East German sexologist, Siegfried Schnabl's ideas on the physical act of sex are of significance as he stressed the importance of female pleasure. As previously explored, women experienced sexual freedom from the 1970s onward; for Ina Merkel and Diane Kent women had abandoned the 'Cinderella myth'; instead they expected more from their men believing they could have greater equality in the GDR.[33] One of the best-known publications on sex in East Germany was sexologist Siegfried Schnabl's *Mann und Frau Intim*, which had eight editions published during the regime demonstrating its value as a guide for normative sex under socialism. This essay refers to the 1972 edition and his complete works from 1992. Schnabl stressed the importance of female pleasure in sex; famously, he wrote about women's right to orgasm.[34] In both editions, Schnabl includes several diagrams of female genitalia and prompted men to pay attention to women's clitoris where women derive most pleasure.[35] Schnabl also encouraged men to be more aware of the emotional aspects of sex believing them to be at the centre of women's sexual pleasure during intercourse:

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[30] *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* [film], directed by Heiner Carow, (DEFA, 1973).

[31] McLellan*, Love in the time of Communism,* p.30.

[32] Herzog, *Sex After Fascism,* p.196.

> 'Women's sexuality is more closely integrated in the relationship than the man, it is more dependent on the quality and emotional intensity (of the act) and on their mental state.'[36]

It seems that Schnabl's writing reflected societal change; in 1980 42% of young women stated they achieved orgasm almost every time they had intercourse while another 43% stated they experienced orgasm at least half of the time.[37] Despite Schnabl describing sex's purpose as 'pleasure and delight', his writings also reflected the GDR's vision of suitable sex under socialism.[38] The political merit of Schnabl's work is obvious as he wrote that sex was only meaningful through the love of two people.[39] Furthermore, the instructions Schnabl described only illustrated intimate relations between men and women:

> 'At orgasm and before his approach, women and men usually have a desire to cling to each other, and often, depending on their temperament, a soft or clear sigh or cry expresses their highest bliss.'[40]

Thus, Schnabl echoed the regime's encouragement of sexual relations within loving heterosexual relationships. Sex was a normal, and to a degree celebrated, part of life in the GDR, however, it was emphasized that sex must be part of a committed relationship. Schnabl even warned of the dangers casual sex could cause women's health:

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[33] Ina Merkel and Diane Kent, 'Another Kind of Woman', *Gender, Politics and Society*, 24:25, (1991-1992). p.6.
[34] For detailed discussion on the function of female orgasm and how to produce female orgasm: Siegfried Schnabl, *Die Lust des Liebens: Frau und Mann Intim*, (Ullstein: Berlin, 1992), pp.80-88, pp.214-220.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Siegfried Schnabl, *Die Lust des Liebens: Frau und Mann Intim*, (Ullstein: Berlin, 1992), p.35.
[37] McLellan, *Love in the time of Communism*, p.84.
[38] Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, p.213.
[39] Schnabl, *Mann und Frau Intim,* 5th edition, (VEB Verlag Volk und Gesundheit: Berlin, 1972), p.268.
[40] Schnabl, *Die Lust des Liebens*, p.66.

> 'Women who have sex with changing partners are more likely to become infected with cervical carcinoma than sexually abstinent women and women with steady partners.'[41]

However, despite the regime and Schnabl's attempts to curb this behaviour, many women and men did have sex outside of committed relationships. In the early 1970s, 10% of students and 9% of young workers revealed having sexual relationships with more than one person simultaneously, which suggests an increase in infidelity.[42] This article does not discuss homosexuality in the GDR, however through depicting heterosexual relationships as the sexual norm, those in homosexual relations were othered and deemed outside of the normative sexuality.[43] Evidencing contempt towards homosexuality, Schnabl described contemplation of sexual intercourse with the same sex, suggested one's sexuality was on a false path.[44] In part, this was due to the stress Schnabl laid on penetrative intercourse suggesting reproduction was a central part of sex.[45] Therefore, it can be claimed lesbian women did not experience sex as liberating due to the stigma attached to same sex relations. I argue that the encouragement of female pleasure in sex allowed many women to experience sex as a free and enjoyable space in an otherwise unfree society. However, underpinning sexual relationships in the GDR was a heterosexual norm and considering Foucault's theory of Biopower one can question the political dynamics behind the stress on heterosexual sex.

Focusing on prostitution in the GDR reveals that, despite the state's claims that the practice did not exist, the state actively participated in the sexual exploitation of women. Prostitution, according to GDR doctrine, was unnecessary as women were economically independent and loving marriages were encouraged by the regime:

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[41] Schnabl, *Die Lust des Liebens*, p.95.
[42] McLellan, *Love in the time of Communism*, p.96.
[43] For discussion on homosexuality in the GDR, see: McLellan, *Love in the time of Communism,* pp.114-144.
[44] Schnabl, *Mann und Frau Intim,* p.289.
[45] Ibid, p.277-278.

> 'Today there are only a few purchasable girls in the German Democratic Republic with changing clientele, and even the respectable form of selling oneself to an unloved man for a lifetime has become a great exception.'[46]

The regime viewed prostitution as a barrier to progress, both ideologically and physically; the spread of venereal diseases was particularly concerning to the regime.[47] Tighter controls against prostitutes were introduced in the 1950s, however prostitution was not officially illegal until 1968.[48] Since then, Paragraph 249 stated that prostitution was punishable by up to five years in prison. Despite these strict measures, Sharp notes that there was a reluctance to prosecute against prostitution.[49] It could be argued that the regime afforded women a degree of sexual freedom through the lack of persecution, allowing women the right to decide what to do with their bodies. Moreover, East German women could also benefit materially from prostitution; while informing on Western men, women received luxury goods and experienced 'glamourous adventures.'[50] Therefore, despite risks, prostitution could be lucrative. Falck estimates 3,000 women earned their living as prostitutes, however, despite this small number, I believe prostitution illustrates an example of sex as an unfree and constraining space for East German women.[51] Foucault's principles on technologies of power are significant relating to prostitution in the GDR. Foucault defined two ways to control the body: discipline and regulation; discipline 'manipulate[s] the body as a source of forces that have to be rendered both useful and docile.'[52] Regulation was a means to define and centralise that discipline. Falck describes the 'marriage of convenience' between the Stasi and prostitutes; prostitutes provided vital information for the secret police through informing on political enemies. As many of these women were vulnerable, they were exploited to carry out the Stasi's work in exchange for police protection. Biopower's value is evident once more in the GDR's sexual culture as women's bodies were recruited as political tools for the state. Thus, the state used sex as a 'weapon' against both its population and its enemies; all while publically stating prostitution did not exist in the GDR.[53]

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[46] Uta Falck, *VEB Bordell: Geschichte der Prostitution in der DDR,* (Christoph Links Verlag: Berlin, 1998). p.59.
[47] Sharp, 'The Sexual Unification of Germany', p.6.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., p.7.
[51] Falck, *Geschichte der Prostitution in der DDR*, p.19.
[52] Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, pp.249-250.
[53] McLellan, *Love in the time of Communism,* p.84.

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> 'Attention to the history of sexuality…alters our assessment of classic topics in East German historiography…it furthers our understanding of GDR's citizens' gradual accommodation to life under SED communism.'[54]

Incorporating sexuality into studies of the GDR offers insights into the regime's most private place; the bedroom. Herzog offers an incredibly insightful history of sexuality through the GDR's citizen's bedroom activities. Examining Herzog's statement, that sex was a free space for women in the GDR, prompts several questions: Was increasing sexual freedom for women a democratic achievement? Or was sex another aspect of life the GDR sought to control? To summarise, I have illustrated how sex can be seen as a free space for East German women. Through focussing on individual phenomenon such as legislation, sexual evolution, sex itself and prostitution we can find instances of sexual freedom for women. However, there was almost always a political function behind this freedom. In comparison to women in West Germany, East German women had greater emancipation; they were provided support from social care services, sexually fulfilling relationships were also encouraged and women's financial independence meant women did not sell themselves into marriage.[55] Men were taught by leading sexologists to consider women's needs resulting in new sexual pleasures for women. Prostitution still existed in the GDR, though on a small scale. These factors illustrate instances of sexual freedom for women in the GDR, however female sexuality also had a pronounced political purpose in the GDR. This is shown through the way in which female sexuality was only encouraged within the confines of married heterosexual and reproductive relations. This points to the idea that the sexual evolution should be seen in light of the state's attempts to increase reproduction, rather than from any legitimate ideology supporting female emancipation. This relates to Foucault's theory of Biopower as the GDR sought to control women's sexuality to produce children for the regime. Overall, female sexuality can be seen as another method used by the GDR to control its citizens hence even within citizens' intimate sex lives a normative model was presented to which loyal socialists were encouraged to follow.

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[54] Herzog, *Sex After Fascism,* p.188.

[55] For discussion of sexuality and morality in West Germany see: Chapter 1 and 3 of Herzog's *Sex After Fascism.*

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