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**THE MAKING OF THE MONSTROUS: FEMALE NAVIGATION OF THE
GALENIC HUMORAL MODEL IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND**

By

Brittany Lynn West

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
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ABSTRACT

THE MAKING OF THE MONSTROUS: FEMALE NAVIGATION OF THE GALENIC HUMORAL MODEL IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

By

Brittany Lynn West

This thesis will focus on the way the female subject was discursively produced within the Galenic-humoral model. There has recently been a move by literary and historical theorists to view this model one in which the subject may have the ability to fashion him/herself through moderation and self-control. In his recent work *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England*, Michael Schoenfeldt writes: "I stress the empowerment that Galenic psychology and ethics bestowed on the individual." Working in a different direction than those who have claimed the Galenic model to be one of repression, Schoenfeldt, "emphasizes rather that self-control authorizes individuality" (11). The arguments he makes are convincing, and it is easy to see that the discourse of the humors instilled a need for balance in almost all aspects of early modern life. Yet, I will that this is not true of all subjects, and move to show that women's physical bodies and place in the discourse of balance excluded them from the realm of self-fashioning through moderation or self-control. This created a situation in which women had to search for alternative ways to find the agency to fashion the self.

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I. Monstrous Exclusion: The Galenic Model of Self-control

In their introduction to *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture, Emerging Subjects*, Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dymphna Callagan discuss the way that female subjects are formed, and the essays in the work deal with “the production of gendered subjects” (1). These theorists assert that the Renaissance was a time in which the subject emerged, creating more emphasis on the individual and interiority. However, with this shift came new methods of controlling these individual subjects: “hence, just as the subject emerged as an increasingly bounded private self, various social mechanisms arose which also compelled its subjection” (4). Looking at the discourse of the passions and self-control, Renaissance and Enlightenment scholars often refer to the period as one in which the subject was born, during which interiority and self-fashioning became possible, creating a situation wherein the subject could be produced through new and interesting cultural shifts. According to literary critics such as Michael Schoenfeldt, the period is one in which the body and its workings were tied to a discourse of desire and of appetites that did indeed discursively produce a subject. Much of these ideas are formed around the work of Galen, a Roman physician and philosopher of Greek origin. Galen asserted that bodily temperature and composition affected the emotions, or passions of the soul (Schoenfeldt 9). The physical body was tied to psychological inwardness, creating subjects that were fashioned partially through physical make up and bodily realities.

The Galenic model of humors was one in which, ideally, the subject would maintain a balance of the humors in order that the emotions would stay in equilibrium. In his essay "Strange Alteration," Timothy Hampton asserts:

For Galen, every organ has its own innate character, and the stomach is a producer of heat, which transforms substances by 'cooking' or 'concocting' them. This in turn leads to an emphasis on the maintenance of heat, through which alteration occurs. Those parts of a given food which are not altered sufficiently are taken into the spleen as black bile and later circulated to help thicken the blood as needed. The parts which have been cooked adequately become yellow bile ('thin, added a comma? moist and fluid'), and are carried all over the body. Those which are overcooked ('having been roasted to an excessive degree') are considered 'abnormal' and are often described as 'corrosive' to the body. The key to health thus becomes maintenance of the proper level of heat in the body, in this way alteration is not excessive and the movement of the humors does not get out of balance. (276-277).

If one had too much of a certain humor, he/she could feel melancholy, sanguine, phlegmatic, or choleric. The passions, or emotions such as lust, love, and anger, were seen as a result of an imbalance in the humors. The Galenic system was also closely tied to food, as what one took into the body was seen as determining its humoral composition. Such a model encouraged moderation and balance, eschewing overindulgence as dangerous and threatening. A gluttonous subject was a monstrous and immoral one; self-control through physical and emotional temperance created a moral and responsible subject. Added a space While scholars originally saw the Galenic system as an oppressive and overbearing model wherein subjects were all seen as flat, their emotions or passions as a simple result of bodily composition, in recent years, more and is there a period in here somewhere? more theorists are coming to view the model as one in which the subject could fashion an individual self through moderation.

One point of this investigation is to examine the way in which the Galenic model intersects with ideas about fashioning the subject. In *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion*, early modern theorists Gail Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson anthologize a collection of works that examine the shifting paradigm of bodily emotion and desire, as well as the production of the subject:

Indeed, early modern psychology only partially shares the priority we place on inwardness, alongside very different conceptions of emotions as physical, environmental, and external phenomena...late Renaissance neurophilosophy revised Galenic models of emotions, refashioning the more volatile Galenic body into an arena of self-possession, volition, and executive control.
(15-16)

The early modern period was one in which the subject's psychology was not seen wholly as a product of the mind. The body, and the way it was believed to operate under the Galenic system, was thought to have a large influence over the subject's emotional and physical state. As Hampton says, "in pre-modern medicine, the generation and balance of humors binds the regimes of what we call physiology and psychology" (277). Critics are using the Galenic system to understand the body, sexuality, and desire because it is a model that ties together the mind and body in a way that reflects the discourse of the Renaissance period and provides a paradigm through which the subject is produced. The arguments of theorists such as Michael Schoenfeldt assert that the Galenic system allows the subject the agency through restraint. I will argue that although this may be true for some subjects, it does not necessarily apply to those who were gendered female.

I move to show that the female body itself, along with its reproductive and sexual processes, was not understood, creating a situation in which women had more complex responses to injunctions of morality and self-control. In some ways, the Galenic model relegated them to the borders of a discourse of moderation, often making them appear monstrous. Valerie Traub, in her article "Gendering Mortality in Early Modern Anatomies," points out that charting a knowable body was certainly the focus of anatomists such as Vesalius. However the gendered body's inability to be completely knowable led to anxiety: "In their defensive construction of two apprehensible genders, anatomical illustrations function in the way Kristeva describes the mechanism of abjection: because certain unconscious anxieties, of which gender becomes the sign, are never completely excluded, no fixed boundary is secured, no stability of signification is attained" (46). In other words, the quest to know the body is that which contains the anxieties that have produced this need to know in the first place. The differences between the female and male bodies were uncertain, and many doctors and anatomists worked to make them concrete, safely stowed in a knowable system of signification. I will later examine this anxiety, especially about the virginal female body. In her work *Hymenuetics*, Marie Loughlin asserts that "this body and its unique hymeneal membrane are the object of anxious scrutiny and intense debate (29). Thus this bodily difference is key and should not be ignored or bracketed.add a period

In his book *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England*, Michael Schoenfeldt highlights the agency that the Galenic humoral system afforded to

the early modern subject, and while people were not necessarily thinking or acting consistently according to the Galenic model, the importance he placed on balance and body-soul connections were generally understood and known. Schoenfeldt's argument claims that, because the Galenic system depended on self-control through moderation, the system could actually grant agency: "I stress the empowerment that Galenic psychology and ethics bestowed on the individual." Working in a different direction than those who have claimed the Galenic model to be one of repression, Schoenfeldt, "emphasizes is emphasizes supposed to be in the quote? rather that self-control authorizes individuality" (11). The arguments he makes are convincing, especially his assertion in relation to self-fashioning through resistance, and it is easy to see that the discourse of the humors instilled a need for balance in almost all aspects of early modern life.

Yet by making his focus the universal subject, Schoenfeldt may unintentionally elide those subjects who were seen as less capable of self-control. Those who indulged too liberally in their appetites, or became gluttonous, were a danger to the equilibrium of the entire system. Some feminist critics have asserted that this gluttonous subject was often female. Liz Herbert McAvoy and Theresa Walters investigate the ways that gluttonous subjects are viewed and produced, claiming that a system of the moderated subject relies on the other, or outsider. McAvoy notes, "monstrosities...are always lurking in the shadows, at the border of selfhood and perpetually threatening to render the 'faire and excellent' subject a 'fowle and indecent...Monster'" should this be a tripple (4). The problem with the idea of agency in such a system is the problem of the

monstrous exclusion. Schoenfeldt risks ignoring those subjects without the ability to practice self-control: those subjects rendered monstrous. This monstrosity was a result of the inability to control one's emotions, passions, or bodily flow.

Schoenfeldt points out that the precarious humoral balance was reliant on what the body took in and excreted. Sickness, physical and spiritual, was caused by the improper balance of diet:

Under this regime, illness is not the product of an infection without but rather is the result of an internal imbalance of the humoral fluid. Although this account of behavior appears at once deeply materialist and incorrigibly determinist, in actual practice it was possible to manipulate the humoral fluids through diet and evacuation (3).

While this excerpt allots the ability to fashion the self to the individual through control of inner and outer bodily flow fragment When Schoenfeldt continues however. he points out that specific individuals had different compositions, with different bodily issues. The bodily flow of any individual will determine the foods/actions that need to be applied in order to maintain health and balance.

The choleric man, for example, is angry because he has too much choler. He needs to purge this excess, and/or assimilate substances that are cold and wet to counterbalance the hot and dry qualities of excess choler...(3)

Yet, the female body was hidden and unexplained in comparison to men's regulated and controlled bodies. There was more to be dealt with than the four humors. In a system where the controlled inner and outer flow of bodily fluids determined monstrosity, women's bodies had unexplained monthly cycles and a reproductive system that bred anxiety in the Galenic discourse. Their bodies

were made monstrous because they were the “other.” I will set out to show that writers such as Thomas Write and Richard Bancroft wrote about women in ways that suggested they might be incapable of self-control, that women sometimes fashioned monstrous bodies in ways that circumvented the Galenic system that rendered them helpless and devoid of agency, and that the female body, and the anxiety it produced, is one overarching reason that women were exiled to the boundaries of a discourse of equilibrium.

II. Women as Prey to Passions/Excess

Thomas Wright sees equilibrium as being a result of controlled passions. In *The Passions of the Mind in General*, Thomas Wright focuses on the passions and how they are best moderated. Wright attempts to make a place for women by suggesting that they can actually be the most transcendent subjects by fighting against their baser natures to control their passions and achieve self-control, stating that, “more prized which is worse inclined and best mortified” (Is something missing here? (120). This kind of woman is placed on a moral pedestal. Conversely, in Thomas Bancroft’s *The Glutton’s Feaver*, woman is gluttony, she is the monstrous personified. As the source of all sins, gluttony reigns in hell, “Here Gluttony, enrag’d for want of food, / Eates Enuies vipers, while the monster tires” (92-93). Through these two works, a case can be made that women constituted the borders of the Galenic system through a belief in their inherent lack of self-control; they became either transcendent or monstrous subjects; they inhabited the “the border of selfhood.”

In the introductory chapter of his work, Schoenfeldt cites Levinus Lemnius on women and their lack of self-control: "women are subject to all passions and perturbations...a woman enraged is beside herself and hath not control over her self, so that she cannot rule her passions or bridle her disturbed affections, or stand against them with force of reason and judgment... For a woman's mind is not as strong as a man's" (36). Lemnius continues to explain that women's lack of self-control is due to their natural body composition, telling his reader that their lack of reason is inherent to the female body. While Schoenfeldt clearly disagrees with the view that women are unable to practice self-control, these assertions, since they illustrate how women were discursively produced in early modern England, have large import for his thesis. He claims that the Galenic model is not as repressive as has been claimed in the past; instead he views it as a tool for self-fashioning through self-control and moderation.

However, if women were discursively produced as subjects without recourse to self-control, where do they fit into Schoenfeldt's assertion? Almost immediately after recognizing the "asserted inferiority of women," and acknowledging that the discourse of inwardness is "frequently gendered," Schoenfeldt moves on to elide these differences, and speak of self-fashioning in general, without noting the important implications of the gendering of such discourse. The work as a whole focuses on the works of men: "I could not find an example of a woman writer practicing the philosophically rigorous and literarily intense engagement with physiological inwardness that marks the four canonical male writers under examination" (38). This in itself should be a red flag. Why

aren't women using the model to write? While looking at the universal subject is productive and innovative for Schoenfeldt, perhaps the place of women, and the monstrous, requires inquiry. It is necessary to examine women's explicit and inherent disqualification from the Galenic system, their methods of living outside such a system, and the ways they coped and avoided the limitations that the discourse of sexuality and gender would attempt to place on their corporeal differences.

Steeped in the discourse and common beliefs of the day, Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the Mind in General* works to illustrate the ways that women are both included and excluded from the discourse of moderation; they are made to inhabit its borders. While he tries to make a place for women and speak to a universal subject, the language in his work is invariably gendered: he personifies the passions as female, and women find themselves again on the borders of his discourse and selfhood. The irony is that the place that Wright attempts to make for women is the very place that renders the Galenic model one of repression, one that finds them existing on the edges. Wright first acknowledges that the discourse of inwardness ? hold women to be inconstant, and easily swayed by passions. He quotes many common witticisms and proverbs, clearly illustrating that women are assumed to be incapable of self-control. One shows the reader that women are believed to be the ultimate example of inconstancy:

What is lighter than smoke? The flame,
Than flame? The wind,
Than wind? a woman, more

Than her nothing I find (119).

Wind and flame are both intemperate and volatile elements. Wind blows hot and cold, while a single flame can be easily extinguished or grow into an enormous fire. By comparing women to these elements, Wright highlights the common view that women were unpredictable and shifting. Yet, while Wright seems to believe that these common beliefs hold some truth, he wants to move beyond the common assumptions that women are shift in tense? completely without self-control. He does this by creating a situation in which women represent not only the worst, but also the best subject in the realm of inwardness. Women are personified as swayable passion, but also as the reigning queen of self-control: reason. While this may seem to be a progressive move to include women, it actually creates a situation in which women constitute the borders of the self.

Wright's model personifies all of the parts of the mind and spirit that work together to harness and control the passions. All of these parts: the soul, the passions, the senses, and reason, are referred to as "she;" they are all personified as female. While this may seem to place women in the discourse of the passions in a way that allots them self-control, it is misleading. The soul is female because it can be swayed by the passions, the senses because they are bodily and often seductive, and the passions because they are the very emotions that move the soul, and women are more likely to indulge in them. However, it seems extremely strange that reason is seen as female. After all, women are usually painted as inherently irrational.

The fact that reason is personified as female reveals the complexity behind women's existence on the borders. For Wright, reason is the "Queen" that must rule over the passions, and harness them for good. It is placed on a pedestal. This is one border of self-control, the perfect and complete management of the passions, and, indeed, this may be a place that is almost impossible to inhabit. Yet if women are to find a place, it must be on this pedestal-like border. They are considered the best possible product of such a system: "Yea, if they be ill inclined and refrain those affections, questionless the greater is their commendation, for the husbandman deserveth more praise if he manure well a thorny soil than fertile field, so that women ought to be more prized which is worse inclined and best mortified" (120). In other words, women who are able to surpass their inherent lack of self-control, and become the "prized" self mentioned here, are the best possible example of self-control because they must work harder than men to attain such an accomplishment. Woman constitute the worst and best possibilities in the discourse of inwardness, they inhabit the borders/the edges of this language of selfhood, which in some ways reproduces the angel/whore dichotomy.

III. Fasting and Feasting

"O gluttony, it is to thee we owe our griefs!"

Geoffrey Chaucer

Some theorists do work to examine those subjects who constitute the border. In their book *Consuming Narratives*, Liz Herbert McAvoy and Teresa

Walters write about the ways that women are rendered monstrous. They explore the way in which appetites shape the subject: “when the body is conceived of as a cultural locus of meaning, discourses of race, class, sexuality, motherhood, spirituality, and the nation may also be mapped onto the body as a function of its appetites” (3). Their work notes that while some critics see potential for self-fashioning in the Galenic model, that this was not necessarily possible for women, as, “the female body in particular is rendered monstrous through its association with excessive appetite” (9). For McAvoy and Walters, this monstrosity is what indeed constitutes the normative subject as its other. The monstrous, in its potential for danger and excess, allows the moderated citizen his normality, and the right to consider himself included within the borders of the Galenic discourse. The idea of appetites is also very clearly tied back to food. The Galenic model was, in the beginning, mainly a way to decide what should be eaten to control the inner humors. While in the early modern period, the Galenic model becomes a way to look at balance and moderation in all areas of life, it is still very closely tied to the material food one eats:

Food, therefore, becomes a primary means by which the external world is ingested and controlled. If it is not controlled, the food becomes the controlling factor by means of this same internalization, whether in the ingestion of the host in medieval times or in the overindulgent banqueting represented in the Stuart court masque in the early modern period. Such an ingestion of the external becomes synonymous with empowerment and, like the externalizing and re-internalizing of the dangerous monstrous appetites examined earlier, is crucial to the formation of an individuated but social ‘self’ (6).

Food then, and the physical appetite for food, has a very real tie to the way the subject shapes him or herself. Excessive consumption of food, which

represented not only a lack of control of the appetite for food, but a tendency to overindulge in many ways, was a danger to a system, and a self, that depended upon moderation. It could lead to the subjects rendering as gluttonous, and subsequently, as monstrous.

This is exactly what happens to the female subject in Thomas Bancroft's *The Glutton's Feaver*. Woman is personified as the sin of gluttony. Should this read, The sin of gluttony is personified as woman, which is shown to be a monster. Moreover, gluttony is presented as the sin that leads to all other sins and brings the soul into communion with the Devil and into hell. Woman then, as the embodiment of gluttony, threatens to mire the entire moral system by corrupting moderation with her gluttonous ways, and by tempting and manipulating men into hell. Published in 1633, *The Glutton's Feaver* is the story of a gluttonous man who falls asleep on a pleasant sunny day and wakes to find himself in hell. Once in hell, he learns that his gluttonous ways have placed him there. He is surrounded with other gluttons, but this is not enough for hell, where Gluttony, personified as a female demon, needs more souls to devour. "Here Gluttony, enrag'd for want of food, / Eates Enuies vipers, while the monster tires / On her owne heart; here in a freshing flood" (92-4).

The female personification of gluttony is also seductive, manipulative and inconstant. She lures men with earthly pleasure, disguising the consequences of the souls indulgence until it is too late. Not only does she ensnare souls into the sin of gluttony, she leads them down the path to complete moral wreckage. It is important to note that it is gluttony, the sin of overindulgence, which leads the

soul into other forms of sin. While the other sins the speaker identifies: lust, envy, and wrath, are portrayed as male, they are presented in a chain reaction in which Gluttony is the beginning. Gluttony devours Envy, while Lust drowns in Envy's wreckage while Wrath requires Lust's blood. Gluttony instigates the entire chain of deadly sins. This illustrates just how dangerous the monstrous female appetite could be to morality and balance. Moreover, her monstrosity is more dangerous because she is female. Her seductive female form draws the soul in, changing just as soon as she has successfully ensnared her prey:

Damn'd hagge, that all in mischief hast out gone,
Whose very breath infects all vitall aire!
Seuen-headed monster, that to senslesse stone
Dost turne the heart, and sinke it in despaire,
To th'vgliest shape transform'st the creature faire!
How haue I troden all thy flowery, sweet,
But cursed paths, that in this dungeon meet! (232-238)

On Earth, Gluttony is a "creature fair," and her paths are "flowery, sweet." Yet once in hell, Gluttony shows herself to be a "hagge" and reveals herself as a "Seuen-headed monster."

The female then has two models to follow, either she can be placed on a heavenly pedestal in having succeeded against all odds to control herself, or she can be rendered monstrous through her appetite. Women were closely associated with appetite and considered prone to inordinate passions, the very things that transformed the self into the monster. Women could use this discursively produced monstrosity as means to gain some control over their

spiritual and material selves. While women were not perhaps intentionally thinking about the Galenic model, the discourse affected their daily lives. As Caroline Bynum's work will show, women did realize that manipulating their bodies and bodily flow could change the course of their discursive and material lives. Bynum's work, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, investigates the ways in which women could fashion themselves by producing, spiritually and physically, a monstrous self. By focusing on women's relationships with food and their physical bodies, she asserts that women had the ability to deploy the unusual and grotesque in order to control their circumstances. Bynum explores the ways that women found agency through food, despite their supposed inherent inability to practice moderation and self-control. By rendering their own bodies holy, or monstrous, or even both, women were able to take some control of their own discursive and material selves, Bynum illustrates this through the story of Lidwina, a woman who becomes a spiritual figure, and is able to defy authority through her fasting and food refusal. Working from the borders of self-hood, they? Lidwina? could create spaces in which they could fashion selves and lives outside social norms. Bynum focuses mainly on the ways that women use food to construct the self. However, they do not do this through moderation, but in other ways. Many women fasted, rejecting moderation and the Galenic model in favor of abstinence.

Through abstaining from food, women were able to lift themselves up from a system so steeped in ideas of bodily equilibrium, changing the ways their bodies functioned both discursively and materially. Many of these women

became decimated; their bodies stopped producing fluids; they halted the Galenic flow of their bodies and even rejected the body as the source of the soul or self: "One strain in medieval moral teaching thus associated fasting with a kind of practical (not philosophical) dualism. According to this strain, abstinence was the rejection of body. Moreover, there is some reason to argue that women were more drawn to fasting than men because women were especially associated with the evils of the body, which needed to be punished or expiated." Moreover fasting was not only to reject moderation, and to fashion the self, but actually an "effective way of manipulating the environment in a world in which food was a woman's primary resource" (217-218). As Bynum shows through medieval women's stories, monstrosity through fasting was a way of changing one's circumstances.

This is most evident through the story of Lidwina. According to Bynum, Lidwana was an extremely spiritual woman of power who lived in the fifteenth century. Lidwina wished to expel her physical attractiveness, and to reject the role society imagined for her, and through rendering her body monstrous, was able to do so: "we also learn that Lidwina was upset to discover that she was pretty, she threatened to pray for a deformity when plans were broached for her marriage..."(125). Lidwina understood then, from a young age, that the body, and what could be done with it, was a determinate for the life she would live in the future. She was eventually in a skating accident, which left her paralyzed and deformed. Her hagiographers reported that her body "putrefied so that great pieces fell off" and her body eventually gave off "bits of skin, bone, and

entrails”(125). These pieces of her body, which gave off a “sweet odor,” were considered holy. Lidwina embraced her deformity, embellishing and molding herself to it. As a result, people saw her as a kind of spiritual leader; they came to her to receive healing and spiritual council. Lidwina was able to not only escape a life of marriage through rendering her body monstrously holy; she was able to gain power to bypass religious priests. When a priest came to give her communion, the only food she would eat, Lidwina challenged him, saying that the host he brought her was not consecrated. In retaliation the priest refused to allow her communion. Christ himself came to Lidwina and gave her the Eucharist with drops of holy blood upon it. Lidwina was able to deploy monstrosity in a way that gave her a life as a single woman, a public charitable figure, and someone with a voice to question even the authority of men.

Lidwina is one of many women in Bynum's research, but her story contains common factors that are found in many of the accounts of fasting women. The first is the refusal or inability to eat, to use fasting to control one's social circumstances. Bynum tells the reader that, “by means of food, women controlled themselves and their ...bodily functions, sensations, fertility, and sexuality” (193). Indeed, by refusing to consume food, women could stop their menstrual flow and fertility, controlling their body physically, and through this, their social functions. For many women, fasting led to visions, which Bynum asserts that women often had at times when domestic chores needed done. These women rendered their bodies monstrous because they were placed outside the normal spaces of selfhood. They halted the flow of the elements

within their bodies; many were reported to stop exuding fluids whatsoever, including sweat and tears. Sometimes they would heal the sick by sucking the oozing puss from their wounds. These women were no longer considered fit to perform normal social functions. Certainly a body that is falling apart, that sheds its entrails, that emits no fluids, and ingests pus is grotesque, but it is also allowed a certain agency. These women were placed outside society, made to exist on its borders, but from this position, they were able to fashion themselves as they choose, even if to some, they appeared monstrous. However, it seems that one must move past this appearance of monstrosity and ask why women were rendered monstrous, and move to discover what differences women possessed that made them outsiders to the prevailing discourse of appetite and consumption.

IV. Bodily Sources of Anxiety and Insecurity

"The passive condition of Womankind is subject unto more diseases and other sortes and natures then men are: and especially in regarde of that part (the womb) from whence this disease which we speak of doth arise."

- Edward Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse Called the Suffocation of the Mother*.

If Women were excluded from the Galenic model, one must question why. Why was it that writers like Wright and Bancroft saw women as consumptive beings incapable of self-control? I have stated before exclusion was due to the reproductive system and the way it effectively rendered women different than men. But more than the anxiety caused by the reproductive system itself,

menses etc, was men's inability to make said system knowable. If men could not place markers of concrete knowledge on the female body, then they had no way to know exactly how the female body worked, and women had the ability to "fake it:" or to pretend to be or act out the signs of virginity and faithfulness. From the hiddenness of women's unseen genitals to the mysteries of virginity and childbirth, women were unknown entities. They and their inner processes were unknowable and unquantifiable; they become seen as dangerous because their bodies were not something that could be made into a concretely identifiable entity. This anxiety came at a time when the body itself was becoming a knowable object. Valerie Traub tells us that anatomists such as Estienne and Vesalius were working to chart the female body partly due to anxiety, and that "fraught with instability and incoherence, early modern anatomies...remind us that the limits of knowledge are also lodged within constructions of a gendered body. Anxiety about the relation between gender and matter, matter and knowledge...remain palpably discernible to the reader who turns their pages." The instability of the gendered body created a situation, as Loughlin will show with the hymen, in which anatomists attempted to make the female body a concretely knowable object.

Women's bodies, and by association women, were considered unpredictable, unstable. Women were excluded from the Galenic model because of bodily differences that became discursive realities. Several theorists have written about the anxiety and fear that engulfed men's views of women. Much of the reproductive workings of women were largely misunderstood, and historians

and literary critics have worked to explore just how unknown women's bodies truly were. The Galenic system was not simply concerned with what went into the body as food, but also with what came out of it as waste. The female body was decidedly different as it included flows and processes foreign to the male body. It can be clearly seen through the works of the early modern period that there was a strong male ambition to make the female body, with its sexual and reproductive processes, concretely ascertainable and knowable.

The anatomy of the female body, with its complex and intricate reproductive system, was a great source of anxiety to men in the Renaissance. In her work *Hymenuetics*, Marie H. Loughlin studies the male obsession with the hymen, and the need to make virginity a knowable reality: "Because the social position (i.e., natural position) of the adult Renaissance female is as a married woman, anatomical and physiological discourse treat the virginal body with a great deal of thinly disguised anxiety" (28). She (the female?) explores the transitional roles that women played in their movement from virgin to reproducing wife and seems to point to the hymen as a kind of knowable site between this transition: "yet although English Renaissance culture is wholly involved in constructing the virginal body as transitional, as naturally and physiologically intended for marriage, the anatomical search for the hymen also seeks to create a fixed and absolute body that can be defined as virginal in and of itself" (30).

The need to define the body as virginal, to place it in a concrete category, was the impetus behind many of the studies Loughlin cites. Even those anatomists who denied that the hymen was a definite factor in determining

virginity sought to find a way to show that there was a way to effectively make sure a woman was a virgin. Ambroise Pare, in an anatomical observation found in *The Workes of that famous Ambrose Parey*, states that the hymen is certainly a myth.

In som virgins or maidens in the orifice of the neck of the womb there is found a certain tunicle of membrane called of antient writers Hymen, which prohibitith the copulation of a man, and causseth a woman to be barren; this tunicle is supposed by manie, and they not of the common sort onely, but also learned Physicians, to bee, as it were, the enclosure of the virginitie or maidenhead. But I could never finde it in anie, seeking all ages from three to twelv, of all that I had under my hands in the Hospital of Paris (31).

Here, it is clearly evident that Pare believes the significance placed on the hymen to be a mistake. This mistake is one that Loughlin asserts he views as dangerous, as the hymen should not be used to make accusations or as evidence on which to base legal arguments.

The hymen however, is more than a body part. It represents a reality of anxiety and fear surrounding women's ability to lie or trick men concerning their virginity. Even if the hymen itself is disputed as an anatomical reality, its discursive reality is evident. Loughlin notes that while Pare asserts that the hymen is not indicative of virginity, he cannot ignore its discursive significance and symbolic reality. There is still the need to be able to state whether or not a woman is a virgin and to show what signs can indicate virginity. So while denouncing the hymen as fictional and specious, Pare cites other signs which can reveal a woman's virginity or lack thereof. Loughlin illustrates Pare's

acceptance of the hymen's social function at the same time as she notes his denial of its reality:

he constructs the virginal body as bearing other signs of innocence, transforming the hymen into a physiologically normative narrowing or 'glewing together' of the vagina, which frequently tears and bleeds 'at the first time of copulation.' The sign of virginity does not disappear from the female body but is simply given a new structure and position...Pare's radical claims teeter between his experimentally based refutation of the hymen's existence as the claustrum virginalis and his culturally based acceptance of its function (32).

Within the Galenic system, with its emphasis on flow in and out of the body, female virginity would be different than male. If the hymen was in place, a man could be assured that no one else had entered. Female chastity was not only more expected than male, it was a changing of the body, a penetration into the body. The quest for knowledge to determine the status of female virginity is concerned with this penetration, and its ability to be measured.

Moreover, it wasn't simply virginity that caused anxiety; the female role in sex was also confusing, and often rendered women monstrous. In her article "Bloodsuckers: The Construction of Female Sexuality in Medieval Science and Fiction," Bettina Bildhauer, writing about the medieval period, explains her assertion that women were looked upon as a type of vampire:

According to medieval medicine, as synthesized in the *Secrets of Women*, all women are considered to be vampiristic insofar as they constantly suck out men's 'lifeblood' (semen), with their vaginas during intercourse. Semen, the male seed, is described as being a specially processed kind of blood...Semen is far superior to its female equivalent, menstrual blood...Women however, too cold to

produce this precious liquid themselves, must obtain it through sex in order to gain strength, but as a result they leave men drained and cause them to die prematurely... (105).

Sex with a woman than, could be considered sex with a kind of monster. The woman is a tempting monster, but one that, given into too often, can kill.

Bildhaur, although writing about the Medieval period, argues, applicably to the Renaissance, that the source of the fear of women was gluttonous and unbalanced sexual desire. Indeed, she asserts that if a man is able to control his partner's desire, to direct her sexual instincts where he needs them, then the danger is diffused. It is only when the male allows the female passion to reign that he must fear for his life (106).

Bildhaur also suggests that it is the flow of fluids in and out of the body that creates the fear of the female:

The choice of the term 'sucking' to describe how women drain men's vitality expresses the pull, the force, of female desire and her greed and hunger for semen, and it correlates with the concept of human beings as containers of fluid....there is also a strong parallel drawn between sexual intercourse and breast feeding. Milk, like semen, was also thought to be processed blood (in this case menstrual blood). Logically then, one might consider breast-feeding as also being a comparable moment of dangerous bloodsucking during which the mother is in danger of having her own life-blood drained by the baby. In this scenario however, what we find is that if anyone is endangered,(add comma?) it is again the suckling baby who is also considered to be threatened by the polluting substances of the mother....it is the male, or male identified party that is threatened.(106-107)

Women were feared to have too great a greed to safely intake, and their uncontrolled nature made the substances, which they excreted, potentially poisonous.

This anxiety came at a time when the body itself was becoming a knowable object. Theorists like Hillary Nun and Johnathan Sawday have worked to chart the phenomena and vivisection and the theatre of the anatomy. What I would like to note is the focus on the female body parts that could not be known. The hymen has already been mentioned above; Loughlin points out several times that the hymen was usually a focus of the dissection of female bodies, and that charting its location was a priority. The womb also received a large amount of attention. Valerie Traub notes the way that anatomists often gendered the female corpse by showing the womb in plates of vivisection. She notes that Vesalius, in his drawings, works to classicize both the female and male body, yet asserts that classic representations represent male power, as the female body: “was represented...as naturally grotesque- permeable, transgressive, always in need of enclosure and containment” (54). Estienne, on the other hand, eroticizes women and focuses especially on the womb: “The first plate depicts a pregnant woman, her belly the visual center of the illustration...the second plate focuses on the womb, with the woman’s legs spread wide, her vulva completely exposed...other plates show the woman carrying within the womb a fetus or twins” (81). The female body and the womb were exposed in an attempt to make them knowable. In this attempt, the female body was “in need of enclosure and containment.”

IV. Woman as the Unknowable Actor

Reflect on the whole history of women: do they not have to be first of all and above all actresses? Listen to physicians who have hypnotized women; finally, love them- let yourself by "hypnotized by them"! What is always the end result? That they "put on something" even when they take off everything.

Woman is so artistic.

-Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*.

One way in which the anxiety about women's unknowable bodies was exposed was through theater. The discourse of the day saw women as unable to practice self-control over their passions and desires; it is natural that ideas, which permeated culture and found their way into the works of anatomists and philosophers, could also be found in plays. I have already explored the idea that women have a more complex place in the Galenic humoral model, as the ideas about balance and moderation that sprang from it intersected with common ideas about women's inveterate passions and inconstant nature. This trend can be clearly seen in the works of Wright and Bancroft, both of whom view moderation as paramount while finding women intemperate. Both these writers viewed women as easily swayed by the passions. Both Thomas Middleton's *The Changeling* and William Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* explore the fear underlying the uncertainty of women's virginity due to the frail nature of female self-control. Both playwrights explore the idea that women may have the ability to pretend to be virgins. In both plays, the male characters search for a way to locate a concrete knowledge of their partner's virginity. For Alesmero, a potion in his pharmacy will locate and produce signs of virginity; for Posthumus, a bracelet will

reveal all. In neither of these works does the woman's word stand for her virginity. In a Galenic humoral system where women are inconstant and unable to practice self-control, their virginity must be quantifiable, as is the indented effect of Alesmero's potion to discover Beatrice's true status: "(Quote?)give the party you suspect some of glass M, which upon her that is a maid makes three several affects" (44-5). Both men need assurance by some outside source that produces a "truth" untainted by women's unsteady passions.

Marjorie Garber in her article "The Insincerity of Women," searches for the cause of this male mistrust in female honesty as regards sexuality. By exploring Beatrice-Joanna's sexuality in *The Changeling*, she illustrates the fact that a man can never truly know women's sexuality; in essence, every part of female sexuality can be constructed within the female herself. In Middleton's work, a woman who is not a virgin is able to convince her future husband that she is, simply by acting and producing the signs he expects to see. Beatrice, having slept with the man she paid to kill her first husband, discovers that Alesmero plans to use a potion to discover whether or not she is a virgin before he marries her: "'Give the party you suspect the quantity of a spoonful of water in the glass M, which, upon her that is a maid, makes three several effects: 'twill make her incontinently gape, then fall into a sudden sneezing, last into a violent laughing; else dull heavy and lumpish'" (4.1.46-51). Knowing she will fail this test, Beatrice takes some of the potion and gives it to her virginal servant. Discovering the symptoms that ensue, laughing, blushing, and so forth, Beatrice simply repeats them for Alesmero, ensuring that he believes her to be a virgin.

Garber uses the idea of orgasm to examine this concept. She sites the famous scene in *When Harry Met Sally* in which Sally upsets Harry's firm ideas that he has pleased every woman he has ever been with:

Harry: What are you saying, that they fake orgasm?

Sally: Most women at one time or another have faked it.

Harry: Well they haven't faked it with me.

Sally: How do you know?

This question, "How do you know?" is paramount. This is exactly what Middleton and Garber are pointing towards. How do you know? According to Garber and Middleton, there may not be a way. Garber says this is because woman is an actress. "The particular case of orgasm only serves to epitomize the power that actors derive from this "female" capacity to withhold, to dissimulate, to test the boundaries of the real" (365). What is truly striking is that in all of man's attempts to find out the true status of woman, he is often fooled by the very thing he believes will tell him the truth. Alesmero is fooled because he looks for the truth in symptoms that can be acted out by anyone.

Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* also deals with the issue of woman as a (add) knowable being. While Posthumous originally trusts Imogen, he is deceived because he places his trust in the material reality of Imogen's bracelet and allows himself to be persuaded by the ruling discourse on women's sexuality. Due to his willingness to believe that no woman can be trusted to speak truth, he does not look to Imogen herself to discover her loyalty, but is instead tricked into acting as if lies were reality. Loughilin identifies Imogen's transitional and uncertain status as the root of anxiety:

However, if in *The Faithful Shepherdess* Clorin's conflicted body generates moments of stabilizing, symbolic defloration, then in *Cymbeline*, Imogen's body can be seen to produce similar moments, born out of similar anxieties. As that social and anatomical anomaly, the virginal wife, Imogen exists throughout most of the action as that transitional, liminal body that so disturbs the sexual economy...(63).

In other words, Imogen is problematic because her sexual status fits into no defined category. She is wife, yet she is also virgin. Posthumous's exile results in a situation in which their marriage remains unconsummated. An unconsummated marriage leaves room for doubt and worry. Iachimo is able to plant doubt in Posthumous's mind by pointing out the fragility of women's self-control, "You may wear her in title yours; but you know, strange fowl light upon neighboring ponds. Your ring may be stolen too, so your brace of unprizable estimations, the one is but grail and the other casual. A cunning thief or a ???? that way accomplished courtier would hazard the winning both of first and last" (1.4.72-76). Iachimo is easily able to create unease by reminding Posthumous that women's promises are "casual." Moreover, Iachimo places the ring on the same level as Imogen; both are easily won and lost. Just as a ring is there for the stealing, so is Imogen. The comparison suggests that woman has the same amount of will and determination as the cold metal which Posthumous wears around his finger. While Imogen later becomes represented by the bracelet, here she is already placed on the level of object. This is not simply Iachimo's doing as Posthumous also seems to equate Imogen with the ring. If she is faithful, the ring stays on his finger, if not, the ring will be given to Iachimo.

It is important to note that while both Alesmero and Posthumous have different motivations for testing Beatrice and Imogen, both men submit their lady to a test. Alesmero doubts Beatrice's virginity, and therefore tests her; this is a logical sequence. However, it is notable that when Posthumous enters into contracts with Iachimo to test Imogen, he seems to have complete faith in her loyalty. However, he is very willing to allow her to be tested in order that her status as a chaste and loyal woman may become public and quantifiable:

Posthumous: I embrace these conditions; let us have articles betwixt us. Only, thus far you shall answer: if you make your voyage upon her, and give me directly to understand you have prevailed, I am no further your enemy; she is not worth our debate. If she remain unseduced, you not making it appear otherwise, for your ill opinion and th'assault you have made to her chastity, you shall answer me with your sword.

Iachimo: Your hand, a covenant. We will have these things set down by lawful counsel, and straight away for Britain...I will fetch my gold, and have our two wagers recorded.

Posthumous: Agreed. (1.4.127-13138).

This legal sounding contract is one in which Imogen's status as a sexual being will be established. While at this point in the work Posthumous does not doubt Imogen's loyalty, he does acknowledge Iachimo's wish to place Imogen in a concrete category. It can be noted as well that this is an attempt to establish her definitive value by placing her into a knowable space. Loughlin believes that this is perhaps the main purpose of the bargain scene: "In the context of Imogen's problematic body, this scene is less the confident construction of woman as 'the enabling of male discourse' than it is a series of fractured and provisional attempts to stabilize Imogen's social and anatomical value"

(64). In other words, Imogen must become knowable before she can be correctly placed in the world of male discourse. This bargain becomes a metaphorical search for Imogen's hymen or her status as a discursive female being. As Posthumous himself points out, her value is everything or nothing; the scales will fall one way or the other when her level of chastity is known. Imogen must be placed in a knowable category. Indeed, the resolution of the play depends on her virginity.

V. Conclusion: Monstrosity and Fluidity

It seems that the Galenic humoral model of physical and spiritual health, in its emphasis on moderation and self-control, often intersected with common ideas about women to create a situation in which women lived a complex relationship to complex injunctions against their passions and assumed nature. Women's unknowable bodies caused (add) an anxiety that kept them from finding a place in a discursive system of balance. Rather, women found that it must be manipulated. It seems that this model, necessarily and logically, excluded women or relegated them to its borders. Some women, like the fasting women written about by Caroline Bynum were able to deploy a conception of the monstrous. By living in a way that some would consider grotesque or deformed, and choosing to operate from the "border of selfhood," some women found themselves able to live outside discursive and social norms. While these cases are certainly not representative of all, or even most women, they offer an interesting and new way to look at ideas of the grotesque and the monstrous. These women were able to combine the monstrous with the transcendent; by

experiencing or accepting a life on the borders, these women were able to fashion a self and even to question authority.

The Galenic model, its focus on balance, (add) is not simply a model that is either repressive or agency granting. The nuances of any discourse that produces the subject are almost infinite. Men may have been granted agency, but largely, women were not. When looking at the production of the subject, looking at the universal subject, as Michael Schoenfeldt does, might produce new and interesting observations. However, we need to be careful that when looking at a universal subject, we do not unintentionally elide real and discursive differences. As Traub, Kaplan, and Callaghan assert, “we believe that processes of interpellation are variable and often at odds. Thus we strive...to delineate the possibility of multiple agencies...” (5). The variables need to be taken into account. While regulating the workings of the body could regulate the Galenic humors, it is important then to note that the body itself is variable. The female body, as a source of anxiety and fear, was not available for regulation and moderation. Instead, women had to manipulate a system that afforded them little agency or power.

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