

Female Autoerotism in Twentieth Century

Sexology and Sex Research

NOUR ALSAOUB

PhD

University of York

Women's Studies

March 2015

Abstract

In this thesis I argue that female masturbation is still in some ways seen as problematic even though it is no longer represented as a basis for shame and sin. Historians have shed light on the vicious campaign against masturbation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but little attention has been dedicated to the twentieth century, beyond overviews of how ideas changed so that masturbation was no longer, allegedly, condemned. Although I will begin with a consideration of attitudes towards female masturbation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, my main focus will be on the twentieth century through an in-depth analysis of the works of the prominent sexologists and sex researchers: Havelock Ellis, Freud, Kinsey, Masters and Johnson and Shere Hite. I address specific problems in their arguments regarding female sexuality in general and female autoerotism in particular. I contend that these influential figures participated in the great confusion we have about female masturbation today. At first it was thought that excessive or prolonged masturbation led to psychological or sexual problems. When later sexologists tried to present masturbation in a better light, it continued to be, for them, an inferior form of sexual practice. Even when female autoerotism is advocated, it is justified by claiming that it leads to better "real sex". Finally, through a reading of recent popular culture, my study explores how sex researchers' attitudes towards masturbation influenced our own, resulting in a paradox: it is still a secretive practice and yet can be celebrated in women's magazines. In concentrating on the twentieth century I seek to substantiate my argument that the problems we have with masturbation did not stop at the end of the nineteenth century. My thesis is an attempt at presenting female masturbation as neither a disease nor a cure. It is a step towards a better comprehension of a wide-spread, mostly pleasurable, practice while avoiding both condemnation and overenthusiasm.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
List of Images	4
Acknowledgements	5
Author's Declaration	6
Dedication	7
Introduction	8
Chapter One	26
Before the Invention of Autoerotism: On the Horrors of Being a Female Onanist in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries	
Chapter Two	56
Havelock Ellis and the "Inevitable" Phenomenon	
Chapter Three	91
Freud's Unsolved Riddle of Infantile Masturbation	
Chapter Four	125
Masturbation as a Prerequisite for Married Life	
Chapter Five	154
In the Absence of a Sexual Partner	
Chapter Six	190
A Feminine Touch: A Study of Shere Hite's Work on Female Sexuality and Autoerotism	
Chapter Seven	223
Knitting Our Way to Orgasm: Contemporary Representations of Masturbation in Popular Culture	
Conclusion	266
Bibliography	274

List of Images

Image 1. Title page of <i>Onania</i>	29
Image 2. Title page of <i>Onanism</i>	39
Image 3. <i>Knit Your Own Orgasm</i> (1998) by Grizelda Grizlingham.	224

Acknowledgements

I am thankful for completing this project under the guidance of an exemplary PhD supervisor who worries about the personal, educational and financial wellbeing of her students. Her encouragement and insightful, logical comments on my work made a strenuous journey truly worth the effort. Learning from her as well as reading her books made me a better researcher, writer and feminist. Thank you, Prof. Stevi Jackson. My gratitude goes to Dr. Ann Kaloski-Naylor for her great help in correcting my work during the last, very hectic six months of my study. I thank her for her kindness and willingness to help at all times. Finally, my utmost thanks go to my family for their continuous moral, educational, and financial support. I am grateful to them for their unconditional, profoundly undeserved love, and for being a part of my life.

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own and has not been previously published. No part of the material has been previously submitted for a degree at The University of York or any other university.

For my mother and sisters
With love and endless gratitude

Introduction

Eve Sedgwick's phrase "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl"¹ raised eyebrows before the "transgressing" paper was even published. In his book *Tenured Radicals*, Roger Kimball cited Sedgwick's title as an example of "ideologically motivated assaults on the intellectual and moral substance of our culture" (Kimball, 1998, p. 11). Sedgwick's notorious phrase was seen as "oxymoronic, a scandalous yoking of some words which should never, ever belong in the same sentence" (Jones, 2004, p. 196). Sedgwick's ploy is believed to be intentional, however, as a way of creating ripples in the otherwise still pond of Jane Austen Studies (Jones, 2004, p. 196). Its importance lies not only in discussing Jane Austen's novels from a different angle, but also in raising the question: "why shouldn't a literary critic write about masturbation?" (Siegel, 2013, p. 436).

The controversy is not restricted to the field of literary theory neither is it limited to the halo which surround a figure like Jane Austen. At times, even examining the topic is considered a step too far. When Paula Bennett and Vernon A. Rosario's call for papers for their anthology on masturbation appeared in an academic journal, a reader could not restrain his anger and

¹ Sedgwick's paper compares the bedroom scene from Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* to Zambaco's case study of two little girls. For her the interaction between the sisters Elinor and Marianne Dashwood bears resonance with the dialogue referenced between the two little sisters in the 19th century case study. "Reading the bedroom scenes of *Sense and Sensibility*, I find I have lodged in my mind a bedroom scene from another document, a narrative structured as a case history of "Onanism and Nervous Disorders in Two Little Girls" and dated 1881" (Sedgwick, 1991, p. 827). This comparison sheds light on the importance of the identity of the masturbator which, according to Sedgwick, represents the "proto-form of modern sexual identity itself" (Sedgwick, 1991, p. 826).

wrote to the editor asking: whatever next? The outraged reader could not wrap his mind around how serious scholars and academics would deem such "vulgar and distasteful" topics as "medical attitudes towards masturbation (for God's sake!)" as worthy of examination (Bennett and Rosario, 1995, p. 1). In 1994, the Surgeon General of the United States, Joycelyn Elders, expressed her view that masturbation "is something that is part of human sexuality and it's part of something that perhaps should be taught" (as cited in Plante, 2014, p. 142). Because of this statement, she was fired by none other than Bill Clinton. Evidently the mere suggestion that the "vice" should be normalised is what constitutes crossing the line.

Elder's forced resignation did not go unheeded by scholars. The incident was cited numerous times (Rutter and Schwartz, 2012, p. 55), (Ogden, 2008, p. 52) and (Irvine, 2004, p. 1) as an example of how orthodox views of sexuality still prevail. The incident, however, was not enough incentive for researchers to devote a complete study to masturbation. The number of researches on masturbation is far from proportional with the prevalence of the practice. A basic search of the word "masturbation" in Ethos² yields no more than three results; two of which are related to literature and one to cinema.³ Other variations such as "autoerotism" and "solitary sex" do not come up with any results at all. A similar search on Amazon UK yields 522, but the vast majority of these are self-help books (on how to masturbate or stop masturbating), erotic stories, religion's views on masturbation, some

² <http://ethos.bl.uk/> British Library Ethos: e-theses online service.

³ *Keats, Modesty and Masturbation, The Secret Vice: Masturbation in Victorian Fiction and Medical Culture, and Masturbation, Sexual Logic and Capitalism: The Autoerotic in Contemporary American Cinema and Beyond.*

out-of-print books and repeated results. The remaining published studies on masturbation are far from popular. For a topic described as "inexhaustible" by Freud in 1912 (Freud, 1958, p. 254), we have not done very well.

Due to the Jocelyn Elder incident, the 1990s is a good time to place a marker regarding the problem of masturbation. The attitude towards Sedgwick's paper and Bennett and Rosario's anthology, which were also published in the 1990s, reveal that the issue is wider than a disagreement between the president and his Surgeon General. Thus was the attitude towards masturbation twenty years ago, but has it changed since then? Most importantly, what led to such an attitude? Scholars chose to concentrate on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries because it is then that autoerotism became a problem. It is argued that the campaign against masturbation began with the publication of the best-selling pamphlet *Onania* in 1710. Its author, an anonymous quack doctor, who was later recognised by Thomas Laqueur as John Marten (Laqueur, 2003, p. 32), accumulated riches by denouncing the sinful disease. Among the most important studies on the condemnation of autoerotism is *Masturbation: the History of Great Terror* (2001) by the Belgian historians Jean Stengers and Anne Van Neck. They argue that denouncing masturbation started because of John Marten's book and developed due to Tissot's influence on the Occident as a revered physician. Even though Tissot's book *Onanism* was influenced by *Onania*, Stengers and Van Neck argue, the physician is the one who is responsible for spreading the fear. Only towards the end of their study do the two historians discuss the decline of Tissot's influence. Apart from Freud, they

contend, scholars began to accept masturbation and this started with Havelock Ellis, who is represented by them as a "forerunner" (Stengers and Neck, 2001, p. 135). Although *Masturbation: the History of Great Terror* offers an excellent study of *Onania* and an even better one of Tissot and his influence, it presents the change in attitude hastily and briefly in an overview of the "shake of faith" (Stengers and Neck, 2001, p. 123) as they describe it.

An equally significant study of masturbation is Thomas W. Laqueur's *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation*. Again with this seminal book, the focus was on how the problem with masturbation started and why. Laqueur dedicates the last chapter of his study to "Solitary Sex in the Twentieth Century" (Laqueur, 2003, pp. 359-420). In this chapter he presents an overview of the attitudes towards masturbation and how Marten and Tissot's views were gradually discredited. This is the same approach which Stengers and Neck use, although Laqueur sheds more light on the persistence of negative attitudes. This comes as no surprise considering that he gave Freud the central position in his study. The reason why the belief in the injurious effects of masturbation did not come to an end in the twentieth century, Laqueur argues, is Freud: "The key is Freud" (Laqueur, 2003, p. 381). In addition to Freud, Laqueur presents noteworthy views on masturbation from writers such as educators, doctors, feminists, painters, and other psychoanalysts. However, those are almost always discussed in relation to Freud and what influence he had on their views and writings.

A Different Approach:

Instead of presenting a general overview of masturbation in the twentieth century, my study will focus on the main figures of sexology and sex research to examine how much attention they gave to the topic and how they dealt with it. A close reading of Havelock Ellis, Freud, Kinsey, Masters and Johnson, and Shere Hite will be introduced in order to analyse how those who aimed to shape our view of sexuality dealt with autoerotism. These names have been chosen based on the major influence they had on our understanding of sexuality for different reasons. Havelock Ellis is mentioned briefly in some studies on masturbation, but I believe his work deserves a more in-depth analysis considering that he was a pioneer in the field of sexology, and his seven volumes entitled *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* attest to his importance in the field. Unlike Ellis's, Freud's influence is almost undisputed so that no study on masturbation can overlook his work, and mine is no exception. Along with his fellow researchers, Alfred Kinsey provoked controversy when he presented a quantitative study of male and female sexuality. Masters and Johnson's influence is particularly manifested in our understanding of the female orgasm, and in general their works are still being taught to sex researchers and medical students around the world. Finally, Shere Hite is known for writing a best-selling feminist classic on female sexuality. In chronological order, despite the occasional contemporaneous publications, I will try to examine how the attitude towards masturbation developed or simply changed. These figures have influenced our attitude towards sexuality in general, so it is worth investigating whether

female masturbation was even one of the topics they wanted to examine. I will consider how they approached the issue and whether their views differ from each other and how. In addition to their works, some of their biographies or autobiographies will be scrutinised to discover more about their own relationship to sexuality and masturbation if possible in order to set their work in its historical and biographical context.

I have chosen to examine these key figures in the field of sex research because the other studies mentioned earlier were dedicated to the era in which masturbation was condemned vehemently and punished mercilessly. With the exception of the reaction caused by Freud's views on female masturbation, little attention is given to how masturbation was viewed by sex researchers in the twentieth century. I seek to observe how views on masturbation changed in the twentieth century and whether the change was gradual, linear or otherwise based on the works of the key figures who dedicated most of their years examining sexuality. It is useful to focus on them rather than present a survey of everyone and anyone who wrote about masturbation irrespective of their speciality. This is because with sex researchers, even a lack of interest in the topic of masturbation or how much attention they dedicated to it can be telling.

In addition to restricting their studies to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, scholars for the most part tend to lump male and female masturbation together. It is a common feature of the studies on masturbation I have mentioned. A study of female masturbation both from feminist and sexological points of view is overdue. From a sexual perspective, there are

differences between male and female masturbation in terms of technique, frequency, relation to orgasm, societal attitudes, etc. This complexity stems partly from the complexity of female sexuality in general. In addition to these differences, it is important to study female masturbation from a feminist point of view in order to establish how the topic was presented in a predominantly androcentric field of study. Consider Pat Whiting's words to the overconfident male sex researcher:

Women are tired of hearing men define what it is to be a woman - 'a real woman' or 'a complete woman', in their words. Few if any women would dare to describe what it feels like to be a man, let alone 'a complete man'. Yet men have been doing this for us since the dawn of organised society and, what is more serious, the bulk of women, until now, have accepted the male definition of their own sexuality, or at least pretended to. ... From our own position of growing awareness and consciousness of ourselves, we have no further need of male definitions of our sexuality; they are obsolete. From now on women want to hear from each other, to construct a body of knowledge which corresponds to reality. Let the male confine his fantasies and imaginings to accounts about his own sex. Brother, you have caused enough confusion already. Keep out.' (Whiting, 1972, pp. 189-190)

Some feminists may not share Whiting's views on the complete exclusion of men, but few would oppose to listening to a female voice trying to read into a female practice. "Sexuality has been seen as a potential danger to women, a source of oppression and exploitation, but it can also be a major source of

pleasure" (Jackson, 1993, p. 225). Given the misapprehensions surrounding female sexuality, it is understandable why women would want to take the matter into their own hands, or at least to try to present their own version of themselves among the domineering male voices.

Feminism and Sexuality:

Feminists' interest in studying sexuality is neither new nor difficult to comprehend. Women's sexual desires have always been controlled and restricted more than those of men. A man can frequent a brothel without any ill effects to his reputation; whereas women's characters are continuously judged and scrutinised. In the patriarchal society women's identities bifurcate into two distinct groups; angels and demons. Eve is expected to be a "respectable" and loyal wife in a monogamous relationship. She should care for her children and be dutiful to her husband. Lilith refuses to be subservient to one man and hence becomes the demon or prostitute. Adam, however, remains Adam. "The double standard of morality has entitled men to sexual freedoms denied to women. It has also divided women themselves into two categories: the respectable madonna and the rebarbative whore" (Jackson and Scott, 1996, p. 3). In light of this inequality, it is easy to understand why feminists decided to fight on the sexual front. While causing more harm than good to the feminist cause, the sexual revolution in the 1960s, contributed to furthering sexuality as a political issue (Jackson and Scott, 1996, p. 6). The "revolution" which caused women to be more subdued than free, eventually led them to question their own sexuality. They began to represent their sexuality as active rather than passive and influenced by men's desires.

They defied the prejudice against the licentious woman. Moreover, they challenged the culturally approved, aggressive nature of male sexuality. Heteronormativity began to be contested.

The notion that the clitoris rather than the vagina was the site for a woman's orgasm was hailed as progress by feminists. Through it they recognised how female desire was kept under lock and key by convincing women that they should seek an illusion called the vaginal orgasm. This was seen as a patriarchal tactic to control female sexuality and keep it dependant on the male. Acknowledging the clitoris as the seat of pleasure, meant that sexually speaking, "A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle." While some feminists employed this understanding of female sexuality in recognising other forms of pleasurable sex besides penetration, some decided to do away with men altogether. The idea of political lesbianism was born. Advocates of this movement believed that "The demolition of heterosexual desire is a necessary step on the route to women's liberation" (Jeffreys, 1990, p. 312). Opponents replied that if they want to have sex with men, then by God this is exactly what they are going to do. "Straight feminists, like gay men and lesbians, have everything to gain from asserting our non-coercive desire to fuck, if, when, how, and as we choose" (Segal, 1994, p. 318). This dissention further expanded the discourse around female sexuality. Feminists and gay scholars pioneered in familiarising the academic study of sexuality. However, for someone in the 70s, particularly a woman, studying sexuality was considered career suicide. This was the consensus in academe when Stevi Jackson, began her own work on sexuality. Such a

study was not taken seriously, and even when accepted to a certain degree was believed to be exclusive to psychologists and not sociologists. "When Stevi began research on teenage girls and sex in 1973, academics in her department reacted with either bemusement or ribald comments – and one told her that this topic was the province of psychology and not sociology" (Jackson and Scott, 2015, p. 2).

Despite the disapproval and bewilderment, the study of female sexuality and female autoerotism in particular is vital. For feminists, the importance of female masturbation lies in its autonomous and assertive nature. It is an indication that women are sexual beings who can enjoy themselves on their own. It enables us to think that women are not dependant on men sexually, and hence opens new horizons. According to Pat Jalland and John Hooper, female masturbation in the Victorian era was condemned for similar reasons. "Recognition of its existence was an acknowledgement of female sexuality, but of a particularly threatening kind — because it was autonomous and divorced from reproduction" (Jalland and Hooper, 1986, p. 217). The solitary nature of masturbation was considered hazardous for men and women, yet for the latter the situation is more complex. Female autoerotism defies the belief in the "asexuality" of women (Abramson and Pinkerton, 2002, p. 173). As such, a study of female autoerotism is particularly significant. An examination of an autonomous manifestation of female sexuality leads to a better understanding of female sexuality in general. Nonetheless, a discussion of autoerotism continues to

be fiercely avoided. Both sexes are "tight-lipped about it, women even more so than men" (Driel, 2012, p. 11).

A feminist's interest in examining female sexuality is far from extraordinary, and I certainly claim to be one. I am Syrian, however, and my interest in Western sex research might be bewildering for some readers. Many of the foreign students who choose to complete their studies at one of the renowned universities of the West end up writing about their own culture. A Western reader might expect a thesis which deals with the suffering of the Syrian woman from a female Syrian student. Reading about the exotic might enlighten and even entertain at times. My objective was completely different. I am totally aware that my choice might shock or disappoint, but it makes sense to me. Travelling to a different country and studying its culture rather than your own is totally understandable. Treating your thesis as if it were a learning journey for you as well as the reader seems logical. Additionally, when I write about the West, I can make my own decisions and analyses without the danger of tending to write what the West wants to hear. Still, being from a Christian background and gaining a B.A. in English Language and Literature made my connection to the Western culture somewhat stronger. Having said that, I do not adopt the position of a faraway observer. My thesis is not a view from the bridge and the Western theorist and human in general will not be presented as "the other" in my study. Yes, in my mind I live the dream of a world without borders, but that is another story.

Sexology and Sex Research:

"To speak of sexology is surely to invoke an obsolete science and a vanished world. The term brings to mind sepia-tinted images of earnest Victorian scholars labouring over lists of sexual perversions with the taxonomical zeal of an entomologist examining insects" (Felski, 1998, p. 1). Although the term itself is fairly neutral from a linguistic point of view, it tends to be linked with Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis. When Kinsey and Masters and Johnson are discussed, we tend to prefer the term "sex research". A modern reader might associate the term "sexology" with passing value judgment. According to this view, a sexologist would classify and condemn while a sex researcher would observe and analyse. A second view considers the two terms interchangeable.

"Sexology is defined as that body of knowledge that comprises the science of sex," John Money argues, "or, more precisely, of the differentiation and dimorphism of sex and of the erotosexual pairbonding of partners. Its primary data are behavioral-psychological and somatic, and its primary organs are the genitalia, the skin, and the brain" (Money, 1986, p. 569). The same can be said about "sex research". Hence, although I acknowledge the sensitivity some readers have towards the term "sexology" and the denotation it carries for them, I do not hold any disinclination towards "sexology" as a term.

Autoerotism and Its Nicknames:

The term "autoeroticism"⁴ was invented by Havelock Ellis in 1899 to mean "the phenomena of spontaneous sexual emotion generated in the absence of an external stimulus proceeding, directly or indirectly, from another person" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 11). Ellis explained that he felt the need to invent a new term which simply means solitary sex claiming that no other term in use could convey the meaning he had in mind. For Ellis, the word masturbation is too limited to cover all the aspects he aims to discuss in his study of solitary pleasure, the term self-abuse has a much wider remit, and the use of the word onanism is erroneous because it refers, as he believes, to *coitus interruptus* rather than self-pleasure. Ellis was not the only researcher who hoped to invent a new term which fitted this area of study, for he himself noted that terms such as "*auto-erastia*," "*geistige Onanie*," "*onania psychica*," "*monosexual idiosyncrasy*," and "*autophilie*" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 162) were coined, but each failed to cover the whole concept.

Ellis does not examine the morality behind the terms in his search for an appropriate term for his study. Thus the word masturbation is not excluded because some etymological studies reveal that it stems from the original Latin *manus* that stands for hand plus *stuprare* which means to defile (Rawson, 1995); it is definitely suitable for a narrowed down topic, yet it is not so for the wider topic that Ellis wants to analyse. The same applies to the word onanism which is not excluded because it carries the burden of Onan's sin, but simply since it is not fit for purpose. Thus, the transformation from the

⁴ Despite Havelock Ellis's differentiation, I will use the terms "autoeroticism" and "masturbation" interchangeably, unless otherwise stated.

common condemning terms to the apparently more approving, or at least, neutral, term that merely denotes a solitary stimulation of the genitals does not necessarily signify a sudden radical change in attitude towards the topic.

To trace the changes which the attitude towards masturbation underwent, it would be sensible to examine the transformation in regard to the nomenclature of the activity itself. There seems to be some confusion with regard to the choice of words used, for although the mysterious word "masturbation" is still in use, we seemed to have converted from self-abuse to self-pleasure. Some researchers avoid the usage of the word masturbation, at least in the title of their studies, due to the uncertainty that shrouds the origin of the word. While the somewhat neutral meaning self-handling exists, the condemning meaning of self-harm is also a possibility as the etymology of the word masturbation, or mastupration as it used to be called in the eighteenth-century pseudoscientific pamphlets shows. Of course, whereas the list of the synonyms of male masturbation seems to go on and on, the list of nicknames of female masturbation appears to be quite modest, in number that is. A man can beat the meat, bash the bishop, choke the chicken, spank the monkey, wank, frig, fap, or jack off, while a woman can only flick the bean, tap the gap, or jill off. The use of the word self-pleasure seems to be no more than a reaction to and a constant reminder of the self-harm stage. Additionally, pleasuring oneself appears to be a requirement rather than a description of the act itself; it presupposes a certain concept or assumes the existence of a specific state of mind which might not necessarily be present, thereby excluding what might be no more

than self-release or self-amusing, or even self-lullabying. Not to worry though, for an abundance of terms does exist. Terms like solitary sex are almost a literal translation of the term auto-eroticism which has a Latin prefix and Greek suffix. The term auto-eroticism, which was invented by Havelock Ellis, is still not popular or widely understood for laypeople despite having been used in academic circles for a long time. People know what each of the two parts of the term means separately, yet they do not seem to succeed at connecting the dots and surmising that this strange term refers to a familiar activity. Solitary sex is much clearer, yet there are two main problems with it. The first one is the sad undertone conveyed by the word solitary, and the second is the mere addition of the adjective solitary to the word sex gives the impression that sex is normally a social act, although the fact that masturbation has been upgraded to the level of sex is in itself a good sign. A slightly better term is solo sex which despite assigning an epithet to the word sex eliminates the melancholy aspect of the word solitary, although the pompous meaning it conveys of indulging in an extravagant act might prevent the term from being very popular among people despite being used frequently particularly in women's magazines.

Chapter Overview:

My thesis will trace the change in attitudes towards masturbation in the twentieth century focusing on key figures in the field of sexology and sex research. Before delving into the main body of the study, I will present an overview of the campaign against masturbation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Historians have examined this era and its chief

personages, but I will limit my reading of the texts to female masturbation which might shed light on unexamined areas in this era. This will be followed with a thorough reading of how Havelock Ellis, Freud, Kinsey, Masters and Johnson, and Shere Hite presented female autoerotism. I will conclude my study with an examination of contemporary sites of popular culture in order to analyse how the works of sex researchers influenced our attitude towards female masturbation today. A more detailed presentation of my study will follow.

In chapter one, I will present an overview of the attitude towards female masturbation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This study will be presented through an analysis of some of the major works which gave rise to the campaign against the practice. I begin the chapter with an examination of the infamous *Onania* by John Marten. The most crucial point for me here is the way the author dealt with female masturbation in particular. In order to discuss this point, I will concentrate on some examples stated by the author, or even letters sent to him, and his reply to them. This study of *Onania* will be followed by a brief analysis of the equally influential work *Onanism* by Tissot. Again, special attention will be given to the effects of masturbation on the female, according to Tissot. Before moving to the nineteenth century, I will refer briefly to another book called *Nymphomania*. My main focus in the nineteenth century will be the case study of two little girls by Dr Zambaco.

Chapters two through six will examine the lives and works of important figures in the field of sexology and sex research and how they presented

female masturbation. These will be Havelock Ellis, Freud, Kinsey, Masters and Johnson, and Shere Hite respectively. I will dedicate a section of each chapter to their lives and their own relationships with sexuality and masturbation when possible. The main focus, however, is their published works and how they presented female sexuality and female masturbation in their writings. Through the discussion of these researchers, I aim to examine any change in the attitude towards masturbation since the nineteenth century.

In chapter seven, I will examine present representations of female masturbation through popular culture. An analysis of Betty Dodson's famous work *Sex for One* will be presented. This will be followed by an exploration of some young adult novels, films, TV shows and women's magazine which dealt with the issue of female masturbation. Finally, I will examine a mobile phone application which encourages women to masturbate.

It is only through a detailed analysis of how the views on the topic of female masturbation changed ever so slowly, stood still, and at times even regressed throughout the twentieth century that we can better understand several vital points in the field of female sexuality. To begin with, we should be able to shed some light on the relationship between science and sexuality, and what physicians contributed, or failed to achieve, in this field of study. Additionally, considering that most researchers were male, it would be possible to better understand how they treated the topic of female sexuality without possessing first-hand knowledge of the topic. Conversely, we would be able to perceive what feminists added to the field of female sexuality and

what was improved, or merely changed, due to their contribution. Most importantly, I hope to examine the reasons why we are confused about our sexuality in general and masturbatory habit in particular. Are we truly as satisfied with the sexual side of our lives as we would like to believe? Are we comfortable with discussing masturbation without the blushing and the embarrassed smiles? If not, then why? What prevents us from achieving the state of contentment to which we aspire? These points are the basis of my research and they are what I would like to examine throughout the following pages.

Chapter One

Before the Invention of Autoeroticism:⁵

On the Horrors of Being a Female Onanist in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

The campaign against masturbation began in the eighteenth century with the publication of *Onania*. This pamphlet was the main culprit which fuelled the negativity against autoerotism in general. The fact that it carries Onan's⁶ name does not mean that it leaves women to their own devices. In this chapter, I will focus on how female masturbation was examined in both *Onania* and the equally important publication *Onanism*. What started as a form of psychological horror in the eighteenth century turned into gory one. Cauterisation and even mutilation began to be accepted as a form of cure. These two centuries might have been the most difficult times for a female masturbator.

Before delving into the analysis of the texts whose writers led the campaign against masturbation, let us shed more light on the person behind the term "onanism". Onan is one of the minor characters in the Bible, and apart from three other brief mentions, his whole story is mentioned in Genesis 38. Even in that chapter of the Bible, Onan's story is not the main plot. It is a detail in the story of Judah and Tamar, which is also a detail in the well-known story of Joseph and his brothers. When Joseph's brothers

⁵ The term "autoeroticism" was invented by Havelock Ellis.

⁶ Onan is a marginal Biblical figure. His story is mentioned briefly in the next paragraph.

conspired against him and decided to kill them, one of them, Judah, argued against it and convinced them to sell him instead. After the sale, Judah moved away from his brothers and married a Canaanite⁷ called Shuah. Judah and his wife had three sons: Er, Onan and Shelah. Er, the eldest son, married Tamar, but before having any children he was killed by the Lord because he was evil. No explanation is given here as to the nature of his sin. Judah commands his son Onan to marry his brother's widow in order to raise the father's offspring in his brother's name, although this kind of marriage became a law only later on in the Bible.⁸ "And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother" (Genesis 38:9). The expression "he went in unto" which is not very different from the original Hebrew in terms of the euphemistic expression also used in relation to Judah and his wife to give the meaning of consummating the marriage. The sins that remain in this extract are: disobedience to his father's order, pride and selfishness, in addition to spilling his seed on the ground. Laqueur argues that Onan's sin seems to be his interference with the Lord's plan for the messianic genealogy, which was to come from Judah, through spilling his seed rather than an accusation of being the first masturbator in history (Laqueur, 2003, p. 114).

⁷ The intermarriage with the Canaanites was discouraged; hence it is considered one of Judah's mistakes.

⁸ The law of the levirate marriage: "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her" (Deuteronomy 25:5). In addition to that, the firstborn child should taken the name of the dead husband. If the brother refuses to marry his brother's widow and impregnate her, she will take the shoe of his foot and spit in his face. In other words, his punishment is that he will bring infamy to his family.

Despite the anti-contraceptive meaning which the "sin" of Onan seems to be linked with, the eighteenth-century anti-masturbation frenzy was called "onanism" in order to caution people against the practice. Also, unlike what some readers might expect, women as well as men were condemned by the "sin" of spilling seed in vain. This is apparent in the title of the anonymously published⁹ book which marked the beginning of the anti-masturbatory campaign in Europe: *Onania, or the heinous sin of self-pollution, and its frightful consequences in both sexes considered, with spiritual and physical advice to those who have already injured themselves by this abominable practice*. The author of *Onania* himself acknowledges that although the sin was committed by a man, the term which is derived from his name still can describe, and condemn, the practice in both sexes: "I could not think of any other word which would so well put the Reader in Mind Both of the Sin and its Punishment at once as this" (Anon., 1718, p. III). As for those who may argue that the sin of Onan lies in his disobedience and refusal to impregnate his brother's widow, the author clearly says that he disagrees with them because God punished Onan for his defilement of his body rather than his noncompliance. In other words, "It was therefore the Thing he *Did*, rather than the Thing he omitted, which most displeas'd the Lord" (Anon., 1718, p. 3). Unfortunately, the author does not provide any justification for his theory, which seems to go against the interpretations of many Jewish and Christian authorities of the text,¹⁰ yet he quotes, at length,

⁹ The anonymous doctor who wrote *Onania* was believed to be Balthasar Bekker, yet Thomas Laqueur revealed that it is the quack doctor John Marten (Laqueur, 2003).

¹⁰ For more on this point, check *Solitary Sex* (Laqueur, 2003, pp. 111-168).

O N A N I A;
OR, THE
HEINOUS SIN
OF
Self-Pollution,
AND

All its Frightful Consequen-
ces, in both Sexes, Considered,

WITH
Spiritual and Physical A D V I C E
to Those who have already Injur'd themselves
by this Abominable Practice.

To which is Subjoin'd,

A Letter from a Lady to the Author, [very curious]
concerning the Use and Abuse of the Marriage-Bed,
with the Author's Answer.

*There shall in no wise enter into the Heavenly Jerusalem
any Thing that defileth, or worketh Abomination. Rev.
xxi. v. 27*

The Fourth Edition.

L O N D O N, Printed for the Author, and Sold by N. Crouch,
at the Bell in the Poultry; P. Varenne; at Seneca's Head near
Somerset-House in the Strand; and J. Ifed, at the Golden-
Ball against St. Dunstan's Church, Fleetstreet Bookfellers.
Price 1s. Stitch'd.

several verses from the New Testament which stress the Holy Spirit dwells in people's bodies. Furthermore, if the sin is about spilling seeds, you would expect it not to have anything to do with women, but in *Onania's* case, it does. However, a contemporary of the anonymous writer criticises this point in particular, for the reader should see "a Sin complicated of three other Sins; 1. Seed spilt in a married state [...] 2. Contempt and implacable Wrath, and hatred of his Brother [...] 3. A predeterminate, deliberate, and designed Resolution to hate his Brother" (Philo-castitatis, 1723, p. 13).

The importance of *Onania* lies not just in the number of editions through which this pamphlet ran, but also in the readers' letters that were added to the subsequent editions. The oldest edition we have of this book is the fourth one [1718] and it is in no more than 88 pages, yet the actual information ends in page 43, and from then on the author publishes a number of readers' letters with his answer to them in addition to a very long appendix which describes the medicines he asked his friend, the anonymous physician, to make, and places where the public can buy them. Along with the supplement which the author later added, the small pamphlet increased to a full-sized book that in the sixteenth edition [1737] was 342 pages. Although it is difficult to ascertain the authorship of these letters, the continuous success of the book and the willingness of the readers to pay the price of the larger volume, as well as the existence of a twentieth edition are there to reveal how influential the book actually was. Even a contemporary of *Onania* who chose to write a book under the title of *Onania examined and detected* as a critique to the famous book testifies that it "had so long made

so much Noise in the World, and had found so great Acceptance, as to require so many Editions in so short a Time" (Philo-castitatis, 1723, p. 1).

This was the first¹¹ book which ignited the fire to the otherwise dormant anti-masturbation movement in Europe, and therefore it is useful to consider what kind of information the author of *Onania* spread among his readers. The author defines masturbation in an interesting cluster of euphemisms: "Self-pollution is that unnatural practice, by which persons of either sex may defile their own bodies, without the assistance of others, whilst yielding to filthy imaginations, they endeavour to imitate and procure to themselves that sensation, which god has ordered to attend the carnal commerce of the two sexes for the continuance of our species" (Anon., 1718, p. 1). This ambiguity is intentional for the writer does not want to cause offence even to the "chastest ear" (Anon., 1718, p. iv). For him, those who have indulged in the practice will know what he means without any added clarification (Anon., 1718, p. 3). However, the meaning of this definition which stresses the sinful offence rather than a scientific description of the practice can still be inferred. As reproduction is the main goal for coition in Christianity,¹² the author argues, the practice which aims to achieve the

¹¹ According to Macdonald, three reasons indicate that *Onania* was the first text written on the dangers of masturbation. First, it only quoted the scriptures and no other references except a book on uncleanness. Second, this is evident from the religious tone of the author. Finally, the testimony of the author himself reveals that his work is the first on the topic. See (MacDonald, 1967, pp. 423-424).

¹² Despite this definition of masturbation, the author of *Onania* does not believe that married couples should abstain when conception is not possible. His opinion in this matter is explained at length in a reply to a letter sent to him by a woman enquiring about the defilement of a marriage bed. He explains that masturbation is a sin not because it involves a waste of seed but because "seed is wasted in a sinful manner" (Anon., 1718, p. 80). He justifies his view by referring to "nocturnal pollutions" which involve a waste of semen, and yet they are not a sin because they cannot be prevented (Anon., 1718, p. 80). Thus he does not condemn marital sex after conception or menopause (Anon., 1718, pp. 73-80), yet he does censure coitus interruptus (Anon., 1718, pp. 82-83). Can we conclude here that the

satisfaction of coitus without the burden of breeding is a sin. The difference between "self-pollution" and other sins like "fornication" and "adultery" is that self-pollution does not require a partner; the fertile imagination of the individual is all it needs. With pre-marital and extra-marital relationships, the author maintains, one can attribute the sin to "frailty" and "nature." This is not the case with masturbation for it "is a sin not only against nature, but a sin that perverts and extinguishes nature; and he who is guilty of it is labouring at the destruction of his kind , and in a manner strikes at the creation itself" (Anon., 1718, p. 11). However, the issue of self-pollution has not been discussed by other writers, as the author claims, for fear that their warnings would induce the innocent reader to embark on practices that they have never otherwise considered.

According to the author of *Onania*, three causes lead a person to indulge in the sin of self-pollution. The first is ignorance as some people continue to practice it simply because they are unaware of its ill consequences. The second cause is secrecy. Here the author gives the example of "lustful women" who masturbate while hiding behind a façade of modesty (Anon., 1718, p. 12). The third cause is impunity, and again here the author provides an example of female masturbators. "Lascivious widows" who refuse to remarry either because they want to preserve their wealth or freedom resort to masturbation because "in self-pollution neither the cautious, nor the covetous, imagine that they have anything to fear" (Anon., 1718, p. 13). The author's worry about a practice that is enjoyed away from

vicious campaign against masturbation was caused by a misinterpretation of a Biblical verse? It is a possibility, but not a definitive answer.

witnesses can be detected here, and so is the case for his opinion of women. Still, there is no need for speculations, for the author states his opinion unapologetically: "to imagine that women are naturally more modest than men is a mistake" (Anon., 1718, p. 15). MacDonald comments on the author's attitude towards women by referring to the example of *Pamela: Or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740) by Samuel Richardson,¹³ and adds "There is considerable emphasis in the *Onania* that women and girls are as bad as men, though only a few letters from women are printed" (MacDonald, 1967, p. 426).

As the book's full title shows, the writer of *Onania* published his monograph to warn both sexes against the horrendous results of onanism, yet the apparently male writer could not approach the subject without an embarrassment which is masked by insult. After discussing at length solitary sex in males, he reveals that it is not possible for him to tackle the issue in females in the exact same way because "It would be impossible to rake into so much filthiness, as [he] should be oblig'd to do, without offending chastity" (Anon., 1718, p. 21). Yet, he tries his hand at it, so to speak, and presents a list of "frightful consequences" which result from the practice. Indulging in self-pollution at a young age, the author contends, hinders her growth, exactly as it does in young boys (Anon., 1718, p. 18). The female masturbator's skin is either pale or darkened and unattractive. Her "retentive faculty" is damaged. She further suffers from hysteria, consumption, and

¹³ In this best-selling novel, the virtue of a maid called Pamela Andrews is rewarded when her master Mr. B proposes to her after his continuous attempts to seduce her.

*fluor albus*¹⁴ which can be a prelude to several other diseases. Barrenness is a common outcome of masturbation (Anon., 1718, p. 21). Finally, the most "shocking" symptom with which the author chose to conclude his discussion of masturbation in women is the possible loss of virginity: "many of them [...] actually deflower themselves, and foolishly part with that valuable badge of their chastity and innocence, which when once lost, is never to be retrieved" (Anon., 1718, p. 22).

Obviously, challenging these assumptions concerning women is not difficult for a modern reader, yet it would be more beneficial here to examine the criticism of a contemporary of the author. Philo-castitatis sees that the author in question seems to have "industriously... cast Dirt and Shame on Women" (Philo-castitatis, 1723, p. 88). Although the writer of *Onania*'s critique agrees that masturbation is a grave sin, he believes that the accusation which the author of *Onania* mentions will cause a virtuous woman of being suspected of practicing this vice, whereas this might not be the case. To begin with, he disagrees with the claim that self-erotism might break the hymen, whereas it can be violated for several reasons that do not compromise a woman's chastity. Furthermore, Philo-castitatis disagrees with the claim that while women appear to be virtuous they might be practicing the shameful vice of self-pollution in secret, for this will, again, make people suspect all women. Although some of the female sex, Philo-castitatis argues, are indeed a disgrace, women should still be respected, for "How much do we owe to them, ev'n our very Bodies? How much do they daily suffer, in

¹⁴ A Latin term which means white flow or leucorrhoea.

propagating of us into the World?" (Philo-castitatis, 1723, p. 90). This comment will definitely raise some eyebrows, since it evokes the image of women as demi-goddesses as opposed to demonic creatures, but never human, especially when the pronoun "us" is used to refer to the male readers who are human by default and for this they are the centre of the universe, yet it is important to draw a multi-dimensional image of the age keeping in mind that *Onania* was much more influential than any response it received.

All is not lost for masturbators. For ten shillings, they can buy a bottle of the "Strengthening Tincture" (Anon., 1718, p. 85) and for twelve a bag of the "Prolifick Powder" (Anon., 1718, p. 86). These "medicines" should be repeated as necessary until the "patient" is fully cured. Evidently, "All of Onania's dire warnings, it turned out, were a means to peddle a product—one of the many over-the-counter drugs whose advertisements filled the newspapers of the Georgian age" (Allen, 2000, p. 87). A medicine advertised on the pages of *Onania* was intended to be injected into the reproductive organs by men and women, yet the alleged physician who made the medicine stresses that it should be as hot as possible especially when taken by women: "It is to be used by Men 3 or 4 Times a Day, with a proper Syringe, and by Women with a Womb Syringe, as often; and if it be injected so hot as easily to be borne, especially by Women, the better" (Anon., 1718, pp. 85-86). The alleged cures for masturbation have always taken the form of physical torture of some sort. The writer of *Onania* was not satisfied by the numerous threats of perpetual pain and suffering in hell for the masturbator, the long habit of inflicting pain had to be started. The physical torment took

several forms throughout the ages from tying the hands to wearing special clothes that restrict the access to the sexual organ, and even to threats of castration for boys and actual clitoridectomy for girls, on which I will elaborate later. The perpetrator had to be punished, especially if it were a girl who dared to commit such an act, yet no justification was given as to why this practice is particularly dangerous in women.

In addition to the medicine, masturbators could ask for the author's advice in writing for a fee (Anon., 1725, p. 170). "The writers are mostly youths who bless the day they chanced to read the *Onania*, who give the author a close account of their ailments (which clearly are often true venereal diseases), enclose a guinea, and beg that the medicines be forwarded to them under plain cover" (MacDonald, 1967, p. 426). The majority of those who wrote to the author, inclosing a fee of one guinea, were men, yet the case of an eighteen year old girl stood out (pun intended). At the age of eleven, the girl was taught to masturbate by her mother's chamber maid.¹⁵ They enjoyed the practice as they lay in bed together, and for almost six and a half years they enjoyed the gratification it brought them. However, pleasure turned into fear when she noticed a strange protrusion. "For above half a year past I have had a swelling that thrusts out from my body, as big and almost as hard, and as long or longer than my thumb, which inclines me to excessive lustful desires, and from it their issues a moisture or slipp'riness to that degree that I'm almost continually wet" (Anon., 1725, p. 150). As a reply to the girl's predicament, the author hurried to add her problem to the long list

¹⁵ Although the maid masturbated at least as much as the girl did, she had no physical problems at all: "she ails nothing, is a strong wench of twenty seven" (Anon., 1725, p. 153). Yet, no comment is made by the author of *Onania* as to why the maid went unscathed.

of consequences which result from masturbation. This case, to which he referred as the "relaxation of the clitoris,"¹⁶ was common in female masturbators (Anon., 1725, p. 154).

In order to explain what happens to the clitoris as a result of a continuous indulgence in masturbation, the author of *Onania* presents an ethnographic study with several examples of supposedly documented case studies. As is the case with similar out-dated studies, and perhaps predominantly fictitious cases, the examples range from the utterly ludicrous to the brutal. The author differentiates between the women who have an enlarged clitoris due to their "excessive lust and abuse of the parts" (Anon., 1725, p. 162), and those who "to their trouble and shame" (Anon., 1725, p. 162) have it from birth due to their no fault of their own. A case was reported of a woman who had a clitoris "as big and as long as the neck of a goose" (Anon., 1725, p. 164). Another noteworthy case was not caused by any form of sexual activity and yet caused problems to the woman who was born with it. She was described as "a most renowned and very honest virgin" (Anon., 1725, p. 163) in order to remove any doubt as the integrity of her character. However, her protruding clitoris "provoked her to venery, by only its

¹⁶ One peculiar characteristic of the writer of *Onania* is that he uses a preaching tone in the majority of his monograph, yet he feigns a knowledge in medicine, adopts a sales pitch, and even elaborates on eroticism when need be. Consider this section from the reply he gave to the young girl in question:

The clitoris [...] resembles a penis, and its end, like the glans of that; and as the seat of the greatest pleasure in man, is in the latter, so that of woman, is in the former, for therein is the rage and fury of love, and there nature has placed the peculiar seat of delight [...] for the penis, rubbing against the clitoris, in the act of coition, causes those excessive ticklings, and transporting itchings to each sex, that are not to be describ'd, anything near as well as felt. (Anon., 1725, p. 166)

Whatever happened to the man who wanted to protect unsullied readers by keeping information as vague as possible? An investigation of his character is outside the scope of my study, yet it would certainly be an interesting project.

unavoidable rubbing against her linen, as she moved, that it gave great trouble and affliction to her soul" (Anon., 1725, p. 163). Given her parents' approval, a competent surgeon removed the protrusion, and the woman was "cured and well ever after" (Anon., 1725, p. 163). Indeed, the writer has no qualms about surgical intervention in such cases: "in Creophagi, in Arabia, they circumcise the women that are so, by cutting away a certain apophosis of musculous skin, that descends from the superior part of the matrix, which suffers erection in coition" (Anon., 1725, p. 163). This approval of the practice on the part of the author of *Onania* is particularly significant because such surgical atrocities became common practice in the nineteenth century. The ease with which female circumcision is mentioned might be a hint at society's surrender to the authority of physicians even when they offer radical treatments. More on this sadistic practice will follow, but first I will shed some light on the famous physician who took the findings of *Onania* to a new level by transferring the authority on the matter from the hands of the quacks to those of experienced specialists.

Despite the disagreement concerning the identity of *Onania*'s writer, one thing can be deducted — that he cannot be a physician, otherwise he would have made the medicine for self-pollution himself instead of asking a physician friend for help, and he would have presented a more scientific piece instead of the continuous warning and censure he provides in his book, or so we would like to believe. Tissot was not very far from the truth when he said about *Onania*: "all the author's reflections are nothing but theological

ONANISM:

OR, A

TREATISE

UPON THE

Disorders produced by MASTURBATION:

OR, THE

Dangerous EFFECTS of Secret and Excessive
VENERY.

By M. TISSOT, M. D.

Fellow of the ROYAL SOCIETY of LONDON,
Member of the Medico-Physical Society of Basil,
and of the Oeconomical Society of Berne,

Translated from the last PARIS EDITION.

By A. HUMÉ, M. D.

Propriis extinctum vivere criminibus. GALL.

The THIRD EDITION, Corrected.

L O N D O N,

Printed for the TRANSLATOR; and Sold by
W. WILKINSON, under the Royal-Exchange.

MDCCLXVII.

and moral puerilities" (Tissot, 1781, p. 21). The same cannot be said about Samuel Auguste André David Tissot, the then-famous Swiss who published a number of works on health concerns and one of these is *L'Onanisme* which was published in French in 1760 and translated into other European languages.

In his preface, Tissot promises those who read *Onania* with a completely different experience, for the two books "happily" have nothing in common as he claims except a two-and-a-half page quotation which he took from there. "Such a rhapsody," he says, "could afford me no assistance" (Tissot, 1781, p. x). Nothing seems to be further from the truth for the author in fact dedicates a whole section to list the diseases caused by masturbation as they are mentioned in *Onania*. Moreover, he claims, contrary to what later researchers believe, that several other physicians tackled the problem of masturbation a long time ago and he even quotes them. However, the two historians Stengers and Van Neck studied each of the original sources he depends on and they realized that he twisted the meanings to prove a non-existent claim: "It is, however, only a sham. When one examines the texts and the authors mentioned by Tissot, each time going back to the original source—and we have done this carefully, taking them one by one—one notes that it is almost never a question of masturbation in the original texts" (Stengers and Neck, 2001, p. 68).

Unlike the author of *Onania*, Tissot dedicates a section in his book to "the effects of masturbation in women," albeit short and unfocused on women solely. This section adds to the full picture of how female autoerotism

was viewed in the eighteenth century; therefore, a full examination of it would be useful at this stage. To begin with, Tissot stresses that in addition to all the symptoms he examined in relation to men, women suffer from other diseases as well. We can categorize women's illnesses as mentioned in Tissot's book into four main groups. The first group contains the symptoms which affect women's physical appearance. Their whole body might become disfigured and their spine crooked. They lose their attractive plumpness and tend to have a rough, grey skin. In addition to the discoloration of their skin, their eyes lose their brilliance, their lips their hue and their teeth their whiteness (Tissot, 1781, p. 42). Thus, Tissot draws a completely disfigured image of the female masturbator that will be, as it seems, totally unattractive to the other sex. The writer here remembers to mention every single detail except the nose which will be included in the second group. Second I can list the physical diseases which include nose pain, stomach and back cramps, jaundices and ulcerations of the matrix. In addition to all these, Tissot, like the writer of *Onania*, also mentions the sexual disease leucorrhoea (Tissot, 1781, pp. 41-42). In the third category it's possible to include psychological disorders among which are hysterical fits and "shocking vapours" which both are primarily ascribed to women (Tissot, 1781, p. 41).

In the fourth and most important category I group the disorders which are related to women's sexuality. Masturbation, according to Tissot, causes *furor uterinus*¹⁷ in women rendering them no more than "lascivious brutes" (Tissot, 1781, p. 42). Quoting Dr. Bekkers, Tissot mentions another effect in

¹⁷ Tissot here uses the Latin equivalent of nymphomania; *furor uterinus* means womb fury.

relation to the female sexuality: "a female acknowledges, that this practice [autoeroticism] had gained so complete a dominion over her senses, that she detested the lawful means of assuaging the lust of the flesh" (Tissot, 1781, p. 43). In other words, the danger of autoeroticism lies in the dilemma that the masturbator becomes so addicted to the habit that she prefers it, as a means to relieving her sexual desire, to the legitimate way which is heterosexual marriage. In addition to the afore-mentioned effects, autoeroticism might result in the "extension and darting of the clitoris" (Tissot, 1781, p. 42). Although Tissot does not show the connection between the bigger size of women's clitoris and lesbianism, he mentions Sappho's¹⁸ "vice" stressing that it is not less dangerous than onanism.

Having discussed the two most influential books whose writers pioneered the anti-masturbation war in the eighteenth century, it is now useful to examine another book which, despite being lesser known, is closely related to my particular analysis of the female autoeroticism. Nowhere is the attitude toward women's sexuality clearer than it is in Bienville's *Nymphomania*. In this study, the physician Bienville warns young women against indulging in romantic novels and love songs, and advises them to avoid red meats, strong wines and liquors, and to eschew chocolate completely. Nevertheless, the treatise itself takes the pompous style of an eighteenth-century novel with its woe-is-me attitude. Thus, the maidens in distress burn with passion to the embraces of the long awaited lover. Being afflicted with this appalling malady, they do not remain passive; instead, they

¹⁸ Sappho was a Greek poet who lived on the island of Lesbos. The terms "sapphism" and "lesbianism" are derived from her name and the place she lived in.

make advances to men shamelessly and they get into furious passions if their advances are met with scornful rejection. If left to their sinful imagination, the young women fall into a state of delirium and ends up where lunatics are confined away from society.

Julia is one of the young girls who, according to Bienville, suffered the consequences of her "nymphomania." Instead of having an affair with a stranger, like the other women the physician tells us about, she resorts to masturbation "which usually conceals beneath the outward shew of virtue, and honour, the most abominable debaucheries" (Bienville, 1775, p. 174). She was sent away for some time until she was cured of her "distemper," yet the delirium returned to her when she found that her sister was happily married. Although, the physician's main objective when he included this story in detail was to stress that the physician should not only study his patients' bodies, but also try to examine their imagination, the topic of a family woman cannot be ignored. For him, Julia's imagination led to her tragic ending, yet her nymphomania began when she reached a marriageable age and her health deteriorated when she found out about her married sister. Indeed, Bienville mentions marriage and child-bearing as possible cures for nymphomania: "Pregnancy is frequently observed to remove the *Furor Uterinus*. The reason of this is, because the liquors contained in the *chorion*, and *amnios*, resolving themselves into vapors within the membranes, relax and soften the tunics of the *matrix*" (Bienville, 1775, p. 107). Thus, according to the writer, not only is it a trusted cure that is based on observation, it also has a scientific basis. He says here that if the tissues of a woman's

reproductive organs are relaxed, the biological cause of nymphomania, at least, will be dealt with. Nothing is mentioned about the pregnant woman's imagination, and the question of the psychological state during pregnancy, or what Bienville calls imagination, remains unanswered. Instead, he adds that to prevent a woman from going back to her malady, she should conceive again quickly. As for how marriage can cure nymphomania, the physician answers that marrying the man whom the nymphomaniac woman has a burning desire for can solve her "*metromania*" (Bienville, 1775, p. 107).

Women's choices appear to be limited indeed. When they have a sexual urge, men are advised to have sex with prostitutes instead of resorting to masturbation. Women's only choice, however, appears to be marriage and continuous pregnancies. When they decide to indulge in autoerotism, it was believed that women might become prostitutes. "Women of highly excitable temperaments so intensify their sexual ardor by self-indulgence, that they are apt to betray their longings to their male companions and thus many times give way to temptation, and are initiated into lines of prostitution" (Pierce, 1883 as cited in Mason, 2008, p. 29). Thus, presumably, a prostitute who used to be a masturbator is expected to cure a male masturbator when she could not cure herself.

Despite the fierce condemnation of autoeroticism in the eighteenth century, "It is only in the second half of the nineteenth century that sadism becomes the foremost characteristic of the campaign against masturbation" (Spitz, 1952, p. 499 as cited in Looby, 1995, p. 180). Some of the practices which Spitz refers to as sadism include: "clitoridectomy; blistering of the

thighs, genitals, and spinal region; cauterization of the spine and genitals; infibulation of the prepuce and *labia majora*; [and] circumcision" (Spitz, 1952, p. 505 as cited in Looby, 1995, p. 180). Probably after reading all the warnings against masturbation in some of the eighteenth century books, it will not come as a surprise that Western countries reached a stage in which anything and everything no matter how cruel and painful could be justified as a cure for the much dreaded practice.

When absolute medical sadism in the nineteenth century is concerned, one case study stands above the rest because it involves the "treatment" of two little girls. In 1881, Dr. Zambaco was asked to examine two girls in Constantinople and cure them of their excessive and continuous masturbation. It is evident from the case study the physician provides that the family was a wealthy one; hence they spared no expense in procuring the best medical help they could find for their children. Although he was a prominent physician in his time, the modern reader might only be familiar with Dr. Démétrius Zambaco as the husband of model Maria Zambaco (1843-1912). The couple lived in Paris and had a son and a daughter but their marriage did not last long. Maria took her children and went to London to begin an affair with Edward Burne-Jones who immortalised her in some of his paintings. In the *Dictionary of Artists' Models*, Dr. Zambaco is described in a single sentence: "Dr Demetrius Zambaco a Greek doctor, based in Paris, who specialized in venereal diseases" (Jimenez and Banham, 2001, p. 576).

Dr. Démétrius Alexandre Zambaco begins his comment on the case study in question by lamenting the situation in the Orient where men are

strictly forbidden from visiting brothels. Policemen reserve severe punishment for those who dare to obey "nature's demands" (Zambaco, 1986, p. 62) by seeking the company of prostitutes. Instead, Zambaco comments disapprovingly, other practices which defy "the laws of nature," (Zambaco, 1986, p. 62) like lesbianism and pederasty, are not punished by the government. This kind of attitude towards those who could have been no more than prostitutes' clients might, and often does, lead them to dangerous practices like masturbation. As far as the latter is concerned, Zambaco asserts, "it is impossible to concern oneself with this terrible habit and its disastrous consequences without mentioning Tissot" (Zambaco, 1986, p. 61). Not content with merely following the footsteps of the revered Swiss physician, Zambaco adds some "innovative" treatment to a fabricated ailment.

Despite his introductory note on the importance of brothels in quenching the desires of lusty, young men, Zambaco does not discuss masturbation in men, which makes his comments superfluous to his case study, but representative of his own as well as the values of his age. How would the existence of brothels or the lack thereof be advantageous in solving the "problem" of female masturbation? The answer cannot be lesbianism, because we have already established Zambaco's disapproval of it. In his case study he examines the ten-year-old girl X and her sister Y who is only six years old. X's habits and preferences are described in detail: she is moody, resorts to day-dreaming, enjoys dressing-up, and relishes "petty thievery" even though her parents could have bought her whatever she

wanted (Zambaco, 1986, p. 63). The reason she needed medical intervention, though, was that "she abused herself more and more in a thousand ways; with her hands, her feet, or any foreign object she got hold of. She rubbed herself on the corners of furniture, assuming certain postures, stiffening her body, etc., etc." (Zambaco, 1986, p. 65).

It is true that the most vicious aspect of this case study is the "treatment" of the two little girls, yet the direct quotes can be equally horrifying. Imagine the anguish of a ten-year-old child as she utters such statements as these:

"Why do you deprive me of such an innocent pleasure?" and shortly thereafter: "I know it's dirty, but it isn't anybody's business but my own. Leave me my pleasure! Even if it kills me, I don't care. I want to do it, and die. I want to!"

One day she prayed as follows: "Dear God, since my sister claims you are omnipotent, show me a way to do this without sinning." (Zambaco, 1986, p. 66)

"It's horrible to feel a great desire to do it and not be able to. It's enough to drive you crazy. I would be capable of killing anyone who got in our way. During those moments I am seized, as if in a trance; I see nothing, I think of nothing, I fear nothing and no one; nothing matters to me as long as I can do it!" (Zambaco, 1986, p. 68)

"I became enraged at everybody, even at God, who made me miserable by first giving me a taste of happiness. I became evil and

wanted to do as much evil as possible. I often thought of the devil, whom I called to my aid. He actually came, I saw him; he made the whole thing easier, because he helped me to feel detached from myself." (Zambaco, 1986, p. 69)

"If only I had not been born [...] we would not be the shame of our family [...] If only someone would kill me! What happiness! I could die without suicide" (Zambaco, 1986, p. 78)

The little girl is torn between "penitence" and defiance, seeking the help of God and the devil, all while battling with her death wish. Perhaps a little compassion would have helped, but the girl was not offered any. Instead she was forced to put an end to her masturbatory habit; nothing worked. "A pubic belt, a straitjacket, bonds, straps, shackles, the most assiduous surveillance merely stimulated them to invent new ways to masturbate by using guile and ingenuity" (Zambaco, 1986, p. 87).

Instead of realising that violence and force would not work with the girls, Zambaco thought that all they needed was an increase of dosage. A doctor from London advised him to resort to clitoridectomy and so he decided to experiment on the six-year-old sister first. At the beginning he threatened her with cauterisation by telling her clearly: "I will burn you with the large iron ax, and I will show no mercy" (Zambaco, 1986, p. 82). Indeed, terror was intended to be a part of the treatment. When that did not work, he proceeded to go through with the surgery. "I burned her three times on both labia majora, and once on the clitoris, and to punish her for her disobedience I cauterized her buttocks and loins with the dreaded large iron" (Zambaco,

1986, p. 82). Unsurprisingly, this form of torture induced a Pavlovian response in the little girl that even hearing Zambaco's footsteps would petrify her. "Little Y begins her horrors again. She howls like a wild beast when she hears me come; I give her some violent and extremely painful electric shocks on her genitals with the Clarke machine" (Zambaco, 1986, p. 84). Soon, he "cauterized the clitoris and the entrance to the vagina of both sisters" (Zambaco, 1986, p. 85). At that point, it seems, the guardians decided to put an end to the treatment. Zambaco does not give any justification for this decision but he declares that the little girl Y is fully cured while her elder sister continues to abuse herself as she did in the past. But she lives far away in the country, deprived of both medical attention and treatment" (Zambaco, 1986, p. 85). He attributed his alleged success in using cauterisation to three elements. First, cauterising the clitoris deadens its sensitivity and consequently lessens the desire to masturbate. Second, the inflammation caused by cauterisation makes the area painful to touch. Third, "fear at the sight of the instruments of torture, and the images that a red-hot iron produces in the imagination of children, should also be counted among the beneficial effects of electrical cauterization" (Zambaco, 1986, p. 88).

We know that the symptoms suffered by the two girls could not have been caused by solitary sex, so what triggered them? Allen suggests that "The two little Turkish girls tortured by Dr. Zambaco's cautery irons may have been brain-damaged, or they may have been acting out in response to parental sexual abuse" (Allen, 2000, p. 117). Sexual abuse in general by any adult cannot be overruled, yet any reference to "parental sexual abuse" in

particular might be due to the speculations of a modern reader. The only abuse which could be interpreted as sexual is the corporal punishment by the girls' guardians¹⁹ in the form of whipping. Indeed Zambaco mentions that "the whip was applied to her with so much force that her buttocks are striped with angry welts" (Zambaco, 1986, pp. 79-80). Brain damage is a possibility, but I cannot say I found enough evidence in the case study to support it. For children to be moody, jealous, vain or mischievous is not exactly abnormal. From the point of view of an adult, the dreamy world of children can be illogical, but the girls don't seem to have any cognitive disorder. However, there appears to be somatic basis for their symptoms. Zambaco refers in more than one occasion to an inflammation of the genitals (Zambaco, 1986, p. 77), and to "leukorrheal vaginal discharge" (Zambaco, 1986, p. 63) or "a thick, abundant, greenish-yellow discharge" (Zambaco, 1986, p. 77). He claims he treated the pinworms the girl had (Zambaco, 1986, p. 63 and 85). Nevertheless, the itchiness, swelling and abnormal discharge does not seem to be given any attention. Is it a possibility that the girls touched themselves because of the unbearable inflammation rather than sexual arousal? It is mentioned on several occasions how they inserted several foreign objects into their vaginas and this unhygienic practice might have led to the inflammation and itching. Of course, it is not possible to offer a diagnosis based on the case study alone, but one wonders if vulvitis²⁰ might have been a culprit. In light of this prospect, can we presume that the symptoms might

¹⁹ The parents seem to have been mostly away. There are many references to nurses, teachers, governesses and guardians, but the only reference to the mother is in the form of a letter she sent to her daughter.

²⁰ "It's unusual for young girls to have abnormal vaginal discharge before they've gone through puberty. If this happens, they should see a GP. A common cause is a type of vulvitis (inflammation of the vulval area), caused by a streptococcal infection" (NHS, 2011).

have improved simply by treating the inflammation and allowing the girls to masturbate in a safer way which does not involve unhygienic or sharp objects?

Zambaco's treatment of the girls was in no way pioneering or shocking at his time; occasionally physicians went even further. One of the most prominent nineteenth century gynaecologists who used clitoridectomy as a method for curing masturbation was Isaac Baker Brown (1811-1873). A fellow physician recorded how Brown performed the surgery and removed the clitoris:

Two instruments were used: the pair of hooked forceps which Mr. Brown always uses in clitoridectomy and a cautery iron.... This iron ... is somewhat hatchet-shaped. The clitoris was seized by the forceps in the usual manner. The thin edge of the red-hot iron was then passed round and round its base until the organ was severed from its attachments, being partly burnt, partly cut or sawn, and partly torn away. After the clitoris was removed, the nymphae on each side were severed in a similar way by a sawing motion of the hot iron. After the clitoris and nymphae were got rid of, the operation was brought to a close by taking the back of the iron and searing the surfaces of the labia and the other parts of the vulva which had escaped the cautery, and the instrument was rubbed down backwards and forwards till the parts were more effectively destroyed ("Obstetrical Society of London," 1867, p. 439 as cited in Kent, 1987, p. 118).

Destroying the sexual organs and suppressing a woman's desire seem legitimate enough for nineteenth century doctors, for when the social aspect of women's sexuality is at stake, resorting to such extreme measure becomes permissible. The duty of doctors becomes to redirect women's desires in the correct path; namely, prepare the woman to have a legitimate heterosexual marriage and give birth to children, or stifle the sexual desire altogether. As Laqueur argues, "The emphasis in the solitary vice should perhaps be less on 'vice;' understood as the fulfillment of illegitimate desire, than on 'solitary,' the channeling of healthy desire back into itself" (Laqueur, 1990, p. 229). Going back to clitoridectomy, the practice used to be regarded a cure for insanity, epilepsy and hysteria which are simply symptoms of masturbation. Thus, the link between the two dichotomous images of the asexual, hysterised woman and the social, healthy mother becomes more evident.

In order to put things into perspective, three dichotomies should be considered on the topic of masturbation. First, even though my study focuses on the problems suffered by female masturbators, men had their share of torture. Studies abound on the tormenting devices used to constraint the male genitals.²¹ Indeed, the abundance of such studies is one of the reasons I wanted to shed some light on the story from a female point of view. It is true that with masturbation, as is the case with other sexual issues, women are given fewer options and at times insensitive, patriarchal "solution," yet this does not mean that male masturbators never struggled. Second, it might be the case that rich people

²¹ For instance, check (Stengers and Neck, 2001, pp. 82, 111).

were subject to medical torture more than the poor, simply because the formers could afford it. This was probably the case with the two little girls "treated" by Zambaco. The family seemed to have a squad of helpers, and as far as they knew, they were probably providing the best medical attention money could buy for their children. Finally, masturbation in the country might have been given a form of freedom which could not have been shared by the inhabitants of the city. In the countryside, people could enjoy solitude away from the continuous surveillance of parental or medical authorities. These are elements which could have affected how the issue of solitary sex was treated in different milieus by different people. At some point in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some women might have masturbated without guilt or punishment, and perhaps without even knowing that what they did was a form of sex. They might have even believed that they discovered orgasms, and decided to keep the secret to themselves.

Having examined the beginning of the fierce campaign against masturbation, three questions linger with us: Why masturbation? Why was it condemned at that particular time in history? And what actually caused the symptoms blamed on masturbation? Due to its prevalence, masturbation was an easy target for physicians who were baffled by a wide array of inexplicable symptoms. These could have been caused by a venereal disease as MacDonald suggests (MacDonald, 1967, p. 430). More specifically, Allen provides gonorrhoea as a possible culprit (Allen, 2000, p. 116). In other cases, however, like that of the two little girls, Allen proposes brain damage or parental sexual abuse as likely causes for the girls'

symptoms (Allen, 2000, p. 117). As to the reason behind waging a war against masturbation at the beginning of the eighteenth century rather than any other time in history although the practice might have been discovered centuries before that, researchers provide some reasonable theories. Boys might have resorted more to masturbation towards the beginning of the eighteenth century because they began to have rooms of their own, they attended single-sex schools, married late and worried about becoming infected with syphilis (Allen, 2000, pp. 114-115). This interest in masturbation might have opened eyes and elicited fear. Another possibility might be that theorists and physicians were threatened by the solitary aspect of the practice. "It threatened the delicate ties of civil society that the Enlightenment worthies sought to strengthen to moderate the stark opposition of state and society. It represented the genie of selfishness unleashed by the new world of commerce and individualism" (Weeks, 2011, p. 114). The quacks and physicians who led the campaign against masturbation must have benefitted financially from their work, but they only succeeded because they appealed to the fear within their readers. The ambiguity surrounding the source of this fear will probably continue with the modern reader for a while. "In the realm of the history of ideas and mentalities, more than in any other field of history, one must become resigned to great gaps in knowledge" (Stengers and Neck, 2001, p. 121).

To conclude, this chapter has covered the anti-masturbation war which began in the eighteenth century with the publication of *Onania*, and how the treatises which were written on the subject influenced female sexuality in general.

In addition, I tried to shed some light on the practice of clitoridectomy which was used in the Western countries during the nineteenth century as a cure for masturbation. In an age when a statement like: "it appeared to me that the original cause of the disorder was too free an use of women and wine [*sic*]," (Tissot, 1781: 35) was made by a physician, one might wonder if including women in the study of autoeroticism is some kind of an improvement on merely considering them a disease or even a cure. According to the eighteenth century doctors, the excessive "use of women" exhausts men and causes them all kinds of maladies, and the "use of" prostitutes can be a cure for male autoeroticism. No, female masturbation was not condemned in the eighteenth century because onanism was a sin that Tamar, Onan's wife, shared with him as Adam and Eve shared the forbidden fruit. Including "both sexes" in *Onania* and dedicating a chapter to female masturbation in Tissot's *L'Onanisme*, as I hope the reader to infer from my study has been no more than a step that helped shape female sexuality as we know it today.

Chapter Two

Havelock Ellis and the "Inevitable" Phenomenon

"Reticence" is not the answer, declared the British physician in the preface to his extensive study on human sexuality. For Havelock Ellis, Western society was plagued by the "disastrous" habit of surrounding sexuality with secrecy, but that had to be changed (Ellis, 1918a, p. iv). His possible agreement with what Foucault calls the "repressive hypothesis" made him assert that the sexual instincts should be uncovered exactly as the Catholic Church did to them, but only from a scientific, rather than moral, point of view (Ellis, 1918a, p. v). This is why Ellis undertook the long, arduous task of presenting a comprehensive study of men's and women's sexuality to a bashful society in 1899. The first volume of these studies was entitled *Sexual Inversion*, yet Ellis presented a more thorough study that benefitted from the then recent research twenty years later under the title *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, making sure he rearranged and expanded on his volumes on the study of sexuality.

As a young boy of sixteen, Ellis "determined to make his life's work the exposure, the explanation, and the understanding of sex in all its manifestations" (Grosskurth, 1980, p. xv). To follow his dream, Ellis studied medicine at St. Thomas's hospital and it took him seven years, rather than the usual five required, to receive his degree. Although he had no interest in practicing medicine, Ellis acknowledged the importance of studying it on his

career in sex research. "If I had not been a duly accredited practitioner in medicine, surgery, and midwifery, I could never have gained a confident grasp of the problems of sex, I could never have set forth my own personal investigations and results in the volumes of my *Studies*, and I could never have found a decent firm to publish them" (Ellis, 1940, p. 137). Despite his rejection of the conventionality of marriage, he married Edith Lees, who was a writer, a proponent of women's rights, and a lesbian. Needless to say, their marriage was unconventional in every way. They lived separately for long periods and had other sexual partners openly. With regard to Ellis's sexual life, he was involved in urolagnia²², or undinism as he later called it in his *Studies*, as he stated in his autobiography, yet he added that it "never developed into a real perversion nor ever became a dominant interest" (Ellis, 1940, p. 68). However, his reference to one of the women he loved as Naiad, the Greek water nymph, indicates that it was not just a minor interest in his life.

Ellis's first encounter with a manifestly sexual experience was with nocturnal emissions which later developed to active masturbation: "The only form of auto-erotism which I had up till then experience—for a little later, when a dear friend told me that she had done so at times from the age of eighteen, I was tempted to experiment with the more active form—was in sleep..." (Ellis, 1940, p. 179). Indeed, Ellis and Olive Schreiner, whom he

²² He comments that he probably inherited this trait from his mother and he goes on to mention several incidents the most significant of which is when he was walking next to his mother at the age of twelve and she stood still and urinated. He believes that there was an element of exhibitionism in what his mother did. It should be noted that he was his mother's only son and his father used to travel extensively, which probably strengthened the bond between the mother and her son. One is tempted to remark that this might have been a perfect case for Freud, but unfortunately he never studied it.

was in love with before his marriage, discussed their habit of masturbation openly. In one of his letters to her, he alluded to his indulgence in solitary sex as he thought of her and he asks her if she did the same thing: "I was wondering if you did something & whether you did on Sunday, too, when you wrote at the end of your letter that you were going to lie on the bed" (Ellis as cited in Draznin, 1992, p. 84). Ellis used to count the number of times he masturbated by adding marks in his pocket book. In fact he informs her on a letter on 27 October 1884 (at the age of 25) that he experimented with bromide of potassium and found that it did actually control his desire to masturbate although it had a depressing effect on him (Ellis as cited in Draznin, 1992, pp. 182-183). In another letter to her he advises her not to indulge in the practice except if she could not resist it anymore: "You mustn't [deleted: be] make yourself naughty, my darling, —except when you can't help it. Does that make you sad? The letter you wrote yesterday said you were sad" (Ellis as cited in Draznin, 1992, p. 355). Obviously, both Havelock and Olive were very much occupied with the pleasurable side of their masturbatory habit as well as the painful side of continuously looking for ways to curb the addiction.

No wonder the young couple felt shame and used euphemisms to describe their masturbatory habit, for the age they lived in was not exactly permissive with regard to sexuality. Edward Carpenter, a friend of Ellis and a gay activist whose experience was included anonymously in Ellis's *Sexual Inversion*, describes the 'Victorian Age' as

a period in which not only commercialism in public life, but cant in religion, pure materialism in science, futility in social conventions, the worship of stocks and shares, the starving of the human heart, the denial of the human body and its needs, the huddling concealment of the body in clothes, the 'impure hush' on matters of sex, class-division, contempt of manual labour, and the cruel barring of women from every natural and useful expression of their lives, were carried to an extremity of folly difficult for us now to realise. (Carpenter, 1918, p. 321)

To counteract these social diseases, Ellis presents his therapeutic theory in his first book *The New Spirit*. For Ellis, new hope lies in the progression of science and the emancipation of women (Ellis, 1890, pp. 6-16). Indeed, these two axes defined the nature of Ellis's later works. His approach in *Studies* which was marked by the accumulation of data and the almost neutral presentation of it was considered scientific, and his attitude to women was considered feminist and subsequently adopted by several proponents of women's rights in his age.²³ Thus, Ellis was considered a pioneer who acknowledged women's right to pleasure and presented homosexuality as a matter of fact rather than a disease, which led to the trial of the publisher of *Sexual Inversion* and the publication of *Studies* in the United States instead of Britain. The same applies to his study of auto-erotism which he presented as an inevitable, widespread practice rather than a sin, yet he "was not quite

²³ The example we can mention here is Marie Stopes's popular book *Married Love* in which there are "8 mentions of Ellis and many direct quotations, including a whole page on the subject of (male) sexual restraint" (Nottingham, 1999, p. 151).

able to bring himself to give [it] an absolute carte-blanche" (Rowbotham and Weeks, 1977, p. 167).

Havelock Ellis set about his lifetime's project with the publication of *Man and Woman: A Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characters* in 1894. This book which discussed the physiological and psychological differences between the sexes presented a prolegomena for his studies on sexuality. Three years later, he published *Sexual Inversion*, the first volume of his *Studies*, in collaboration with J. A. Symonds who was a homosexual himself. Beginning with his somewhat tolerant study of homosexuality in the turn of the twentieth century was not a good idea. The book was considered obscene, the publisher was put to trial,²⁴ and nobody was able to defend the book. This trial had a bad effect on Ellis that he quoted what the judge said about the book in full in his autobiography: "You might at the outset perhaps have been gulled into the belief that someone might say that this is a scientific book. But it is impossible for anyone with a head on his shoulders to open the book without seeing that it is a pretence and a sham, and that it is merely entered into for the purpose of selling this filthy publication" (Ellis, 1940, p. 309). This, however, did not prevent Ellis from following his dream, for he lived long enough to publish his seven-volume study on sexuality, though he took the decision never to publish them in Britain again. Ellis completed his dream with the publication of the seventh volume of the *Studies* when he was 69, and his books, despite not being readily available to the public, were important enough in his age to deserve what one of his

²⁴ For more on the trial of Ellis's *Sexual Inversion*, see (Collis, 1959, pp. 102-108).

biographers said about them: "It is immaterial now whether the books are read. They are known to be there. That is enough. The monster is slain. The air has been cleaned. The stone has been rolled from the mouth of the cave" (Collis, 1959, p. 118). These monster-slaying books were published in the United States and they were revised, enlarged, and rearranged so that the study entitled *The Evolution of Modesty, The Phenomena of Sexual Periodicity, Auto-Erotism* becomes the first one in the series and *Sexual Inversion* second.

Despite devoting his life to the study of sexuality, Havelock Ellis does not believe that it is the sole incentive to people's actions. For him "The sexual impulse is not, as some have imagined, the sole root of the most massive human emotions, the most brilliant human aptitudes,—of sympathy, of art, of religion" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 282). However, he does consider sex "the central problem of life" (Ellis, 1918a, p. vi) partly because "the fate of nations rests ultimately upon questions of sex" (Ellis, 1934, p. 29). As such, the image he presents of female sexuality is a criterion by which we can justifiably evaluate his overall opinion of women and their rights.

Ellis's views on woman and sexuality are apparent in his discussion of solitary sex. Numerous resources are utilised by the writer to present the multi-dimensional concept he refers to by using the term "auto-erotism." Masturbation, as Ellis argues, presents only one façade of the complete image, and although it is the most examined aspect in the work of other researchers, additional practices like day-dreaming, nocturnal emissions,

narcissism, and the connection between autoerotism and hysteria should not be ignored in any complete study, according to Ellis.

The auto-erotic field remains extensive; it ranges from occasional voluptuous day-dreams, in which the subject is entirely passive, to the perpetual unashamed efforts at sexual self-manipulation witnessed among the insane. It also includes, though chiefly as curiosities, those cases in which individuals fall in love with themselves. Among auto-erotic phenomena, or on the borderland, we must further include those religious sexual manifestations for an ideal object, of which we may find evidence in the lives of saints and ecstasies. The typical form of auto-erotism is the occurrence of the sexual orgasm during sleep.

(Ellis, 1918a, p. 162)

Ellis's definition is wide enough to include several sexual desires and practices under one heading, yet it does exclude what he calls "the normal sexual excitement aroused by the presence of a beloved person of the opposite sex" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 161). Clearly, he does not hesitate to set the norm to which the wide spectrum of sexual practices he examines will be compared. He stresses at the outset that the heterosexual relationship is the standard because he does not just aim to present the wide range of sexual excitations as no more than variations without any verdict on his part. For him, it is important to "ascertain what is normal and what is abnormal, from the point of view of physiology and of psychology" (Ellis, 1918a, p. vi).

Indeed he goes as far as declaring that "In the absence of the desired partner the orgasm, whatever relief it may give, must be followed by a sense

of dissatisfaction, perhaps of depression, even of exhaustion, often of shame and remorse" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 257). For Ellis, the heterosexual relationship seems to be the "natural" thing; anything other than the satisfaction it brings will be marked by remorse. Going back to what Ellis says about the "aftermath" of practicing masturbation, some of the results seem out of place coming from someone who presents the scientific rather than the moral point of view as he stated in his preface. Feeling "shame and remorse" normally stems from a person's morality and their own conception of what is right and wrong. What is condemned in Ellis's text does not originate from the same morality that started the hubbub around the issue of masturbation in the eighteenth century. As a scientist, Ellis does not seem to be much concerned with Yahweh's punishment for Onan in the Old Testament (see chapter 1). Indeed, he does not even believe that Onan's masturbation brought about his fatal ending. What causes the masturbators' sense of guilt is their "unnatural" act that is enjoyed alone without the presence and participation of the partner of the opposite sex. Sex, as Ellis argues, does not revolve around the state of relief which orgasm brings, for the heterosexual relationship is the prerequisite for any enjoyment that does not bequeath a sense of bitterness.

"Ellis was among the pioneers of the theory of erogenous zones which were especially sensitive to sexual stimulation and claimed that whereas they were diffused over several areas of a woman, in men they were centralized in the penis" (Brome, 1979, p. 127). Indeed, he devotes a ten-page section of the seventh volume of his *Studies* to discuss how the notion

of the erogenic zones was created and how the meaning of the term developed.²⁵ Ellis argues that there are at least three erogenous zones in a woman: the clitoris, vagina, and nipple. In addition to these there are several secondary ones; "How numerous the secondary sexual centers in women may be is indicated by the case of a woman mentioned by Moraglia, who boasted that she knew fourteen different ways of masturbating herself" (Ellis, 1918c, p. 250). Thus, Ellis states, a woman can get sexual satisfaction in numerous ways and not just in coitus. His inclusion of the clitoral pleasure in his study gives a woman a chance to achieve autonomous orgasms that are not given by men and do not involve penetrational sex. Despite his belief in marriage and motherhood, Ellis is not one of the theorists we can blame for the decreasing focus on the clitoris. This will be discussed with more detail in the following chapter on Freud.

For Ellis the eighteenth and nineteenth century writers who led the campaign against masturbation were "well-meaning, but (on this question) misguided" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 249). He blames the author of *Onania*, Tissot, Voltaire, and Lallemand for the long tradition that continued to his time to cause misery and remorse. Quack doctors contributed to this tradition as well and they misled many young people (Ellis, 1918a, p. 249). The practice of masturbation, he argues, was blamed for myriads of diseases for a very long time with no tangible evidence. However, it is not to be understood here that Ellis's approach to the issue was radically different from that of the aforementioned authors. It is true that he does not regard masturbation as

²⁵ He also criticises those who know nothing about the term that they even attribute it to Freud (Ellis, 1928, p. 111). This is one of the examples that reveal the problematic relationship between Ellis and Freud.

the source of all evils, as they did, yet he does not exonerate the practice altogether.

The approach that he presents in his study is one in which he differentiates between moderate and chronic masturbation, and between masturbation in a healthy or frail organism. If a healthy person practices masturbation moderately, they could escape all the ill symptoms which are associated with the habit. "There appears to be little reliable evidence to show that simple masturbation, in a well-born and healthy individual, can produce any evil results beyond slight functional disturbances, and these only when it is practiced in excess" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 250). However, the same cannot be said about excessive masturbation, particularly so if the body is already feeble due to other diseases or bad habits. It truly seems that despite Ellis's attempt at freeing masturbation from the quack doctors' myths that surrounded the practice for years, "he could not entirely free himself of the myth that sex was a drain on a person's productive energies" (Rowbotham and Weeks, 1977, p. 167).

Thus, according to Ellis, even though he does not agree completely with the anti-masturbation campaigners, those who claim that masturbation is as safe as coitus are also in the wrong (Ellis, 1918a, p. 257). For him, excessive indulgence in auto-erotic practices does result in dire consequences, although even in this case the list of symptoms he presents is not as long as the one presented by the earlier authors. "The skin, digestion, and circulation may all be disordered; headache and neuralgia may occur... Probably the most important of the comparatively frequent

results—though this also arises usually on a somewhat morbid soil—is neurasthenia with its manifold symptoms" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 259).

The list does look shorter, yet it is not as harmless as it seems. A closer analysis of what Ellis means by the multifarious symptoms of the illness called neurasthenia will decidedly alter our optimistic view. Although both men and women who "overstrain their brains" (Ellis, 1930, p. 380) might suffer from this illness, according to Ellis, he also stresses that it is one of the "typical nervous disorders of women" (Ellis, 1930, p. 378). However, there seems to be no decisive definition of what this malady causes, but rather we are given an amorphous bulk of dangers which result from this unidentified disease:

The symptoms are, generally speaking, a weakness of the nervous system—including both brain and spinal cord—due partly to insufficient or inappropriate nutrition and partly to faulty development, showing itself by a tendency to over-action and irritability of the nervous system, morbid sensibility, and mental anxiety. It may present all degrees of intensity, and although it is not a definite organic disease, the neurasthenic condition is the soil on which organic nervous diseases may grow. (Ellis, 1930, p. 379)

In simple terms, neurasthenia causes a general weakness in the body and the nervous system, yet the danger lies in that like Pandora's Box, it contains all the evils of the world. There is no need to solve the mystery at this

stage;²⁶ suffice it to say that hysteria in Ellis's own words "is one of the chief of the more definite diseases to which neurasthenia may lead" (Ellis, 1930, p. 380). Herein lies the major problem which leads us to think that not much development has been achieved since onanism was first attacked, neither in the view on masturbation nor in the "hysterization of women."

Indeed, Ellis devotes a considerable section of his research on auto-erotism to the study of hysteria; an approach which was evidently criticised by Freud. Hence, Ellis explains what prompts him to include hysteria within auto-erotism:

Professor Freud, while welcoming the introduction of the term "auto-erotism," remarks that it should not be made to include the whole of hysteria. This I fully admit, and have never questioned. Hysteria is far too large and complex a phenomenon to be classed as entirely a manifestation of auto-erotism, but certain aspects of it are admirable illustrations of auto-erotic transformation. (Ellis, 1918a, p. 210)

To support his theory, Ellis presents a concise history of hysteria dating back to the Greeks who viewed it as a female disease that originates from the

²⁶ In his *Sex in Relation to Society*, Ellis dwells on the issue of whether a discussion of masturbation should be included in the sex education manuals for boys and girls. His own conclusion is that: "Whatever manual is now placed in his or her hands should at least deal summarily, but definitely, with the sexual relationship, and should also comment, warningly but in no alarmist spirit, with the chief auto-erotic phenomena, and by no means exclusively with masturbation" (Ellis, 1918d, pp. 81-82). Again, here Ellis stresses that a study of masturbation should be conducted in relation to the other auto-erotic manifestations. The tone of the manual should not be alarmist like the eighteenth-century pamphlets against onanism perhaps, yet they should caution the young readers. Ellis does not elaborate here, but if this pamphlet derives its "scientific" information from Ellis's study on auto-erotism, we should expect the warning to be against overindulgence in masturbation because it leads to neurasthenia. Herein lies the problem, for I wonder how it is possible to convey to the young persons what the effect of neurasthenia is. These manuals should be read at an age when every mental disturbance is referred to as craziness, which is eventually alarming enough.

womb. The first scientist who stated that hysteria comes from the mind and that it is an illness that affects both sexes, Ellis explains, was the French physician Charles Lepois in 1618. Since then several theories appeared as to the cause of the illness by authorities like Charcot and Freud.²⁷ The study of these numerous, and at times contradictory, views led Ellis to the conclusion that hysteria is related to "sex-hunger" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 232) and it is "most frequently found in adolescent young women who have yet had no sexual experiences" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 234).

However, one thing that distinguishes Havelock Ellis from the writer of *Onania*, for instance, who did not like to dig deep into the question of onanism in women for fear his readers' chastity be endangered, is that Ellis devotes the larger part of his study to the female auto-erotic practices. Indeed, Ellis quotes at least two narratives in which women engaged in masturbation without paying any attention to the onlookers. One of them made use of the rocking movement of her sewing machine, and the other simply crossed her legs and reached orgasm sitting down in the train station thinking that her little adventure would not be detected by the other passengers. Ellis records his own observation of the latter:

Thigh-friction in some of its forms is so comparatively decorous a form of masturbation that it may even be performed in public places; thus, a few years ago, while waiting for a train at a station on the outskirts of a provincial town, I became aware of the presence of a young woman, sitting alone on a seat at a little distance, whom I could observe

²⁷ Ellis prides himself on being the first person who drew the British and American public's attention to Freud's first book *Studies of Hysteria* (Ellis, 1919, p. 195).

unnoticed. She was leaning back with legs crossed, swinging the crossed foot vigorously and continuously; this continued without interruption for some ten minutes after I first Observed her; then the swinging movement reached a climax; she leant still further back, thus bringing the sexual region still more closely in contact with the edge of the bench and straightened and stiffened her body and legs in what appeared to be a momentary spasm; there could be little doubt as to what had taken place. A few moments later she slowly walked from her solitary seat into the waiting-room and sat down among the other waiting passengers, quite still now and with uncrossed legs, a pale quiet young woman, possibly a farmer's daughter, serenely unconscious that her manoeuvre had been detected, and very possibly herself ignorant of its true nature. (Ellis, 1918a, p. 180)

Nowhere does Ellis fulfil his promise of unveiling the sexual impulse as well as he did in this passage. He observes the young woman's every move for well over ten minutes starting with her rocking movement to her orgasm and how she acted casually as if nothing happened. He further comments that she might be in reality unaware of her masturbatory habit. It is then a solitary act that can be performed in public without raising suspicion; herein lies the danger which should be revealed, controlled and eliminated.

After adolescence more women than men attain their sexual gratification through masturbation, according to Ellis, because at that stage of their lives more men have the chance to establish a relationship with the other sex. Although Ellis acknowledges the double standards, we can also

detect an adjustment to the Victorian pathological view of masturbation and the belief that women were incapable of achieving sexual gratification without the help of a man. However, one thing Ellis not only agrees with Tissot on but he actually quotes him on the issue that masturbation causes an aversion to heterosexual relationships: "In women I attach considerable importance, as a result of masturbation, to an aversion for normal coitus in later life" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 261). Laqueur, furthermore, quotes Havelock Ellis on claiming that excessive masturbation especially in "highly intellectual women" is the main cause for divorce (Laqueur, 2003, p. 378). However, what Ellis truly means is not the divorce between a husband and wife. Indeed, in a society where the female sexual desire is not even acknowledged, women mostly prefer tolerating the male's sexual advances instead of asking for divorce, and Ellis must have been completely aware of this. The problem here is that Laqueur only quoted the first part of Ellis's statement which ends in explaining that the divorce is "between the physical sensuous impulses and the ideal emotions" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 261). In other words, the female's excessive masturbation causes her sexual desire on the one hand and her "normal" feelings of passion for a man on the other to go in different directions. This separation, Ellis argues, causes "family unhappiness," yet no reference to actual divorce on basis of a woman's dissatisfaction with the sexual side of marriage is mentioned. Ellis alludes to the women's divorced desire and feeling only to explain why masturbation might lead to an aversion to marriage. His explanation, however, falls within his variations on the same theme. Masturbation leads to problems simply because it is not coitus.

Otto Adler who, according to Ellis, "has studied masturbation in women with more care than any previous writer," (Ellis, 1918a, p. 247) also states that masturbation can be one of the causes that lead to what he calls "deficiency in woman's sexual sensibility" or, to be more specific, *anesthesia sexualis masturbatoria* (Adler as cited in Robinson, 1919, pp. 53-54).

Women who resort to masturbation at a young age might not be satisfied with coitus, Adler states; hence they might indulge in solitary sex after coitus to get sexual gratification. Adler attributes this to two reasons: the first one is that the woman's sexual partner might not be able to cope with the speed and rhythm the woman is used to in her auto-erotic practice, and the second is that the image of the real sexual partner might not be comparable to the one which inflamed the woman's imagination when she masturbated. This sexual deficiency which is caused by masturbation is infrequent in men due to their active role in coitus. Thus, a man can concentrate on his own sexual gratification when he realises that he cannot satisfy his sexual partner, but a woman cannot. Accordingly, we can perceive the reason behind Ellis's focus on the consequences of women's auto-erotism, for, like Adler, he also believes in this active-passive relationship between men and women.

In all his studies, Ellis claims to present the truth and nothing but the truth that when his book *Man and Woman* was criticised by some "enthusiastic young feminists" as he called them (Ellis, 1930, p. vi), he simply attributed his results to nature: "We have to recognise that our present knowledge of men and women cannot tell us what they might be or what they ought to be, but what they actually are, under the conditions of civilisation"

(Ellis, 1930, p. 513). Feminists might demand female friendly results, but if nature guides the research in the opposite direction, then scientists must follow its lead. According to Ellis, some feminists might expect, or hope, women's status, talent and power to be equal to those of men, yet if nature says otherwise, then there is nothing to be done except acquiesce and comply. "In this, as in all other fields of science, it is our part to follow Nature whithersoever she may lead us, putting aside all thought of what we expected to find or what we wished to find" (Ellis, 1930, p. x). Nature is the power which decided that sex should be enjoyed within a heterosexual relationship, says Ellis, and it should be obeyed. As such, nature does not seem to have less supremacy according to Ellis than the God of the Old Testament as seen by the writer of *Onania*.

One of the things that distinguishes Ellis from other theorists on sexuality, including Freud, is that the healthy are his main focus.²⁸ The same cannot be said about Krafft-Ebing who studies the cases which were brought to the attention of the asylum or prison. His case studies belong to the files of criminology and his aim is to present what constitutes a therapy for the sadists, masochists, urnings (uranians; homosexual people), and others. Krafft-Ebing believes that men's sexual desire is naturally more than that of women; therefore his main focus is the study of male sexuality. A man woos a woman, hence he is active and she is passive sexually. If a woman chases men, she is definitely abnormal. For him masturbation is a kind of "excess"

²⁸ He says in the preface to his *Sexual Inversion*: "In, any case, however, it must be realized that in this volume we are not dealing with subjects belonging to the lunatic asylum or the prison. We are concerned with individuals who live in freedom, some of them suffering intensely from their abnormal organization, but otherwise ordinary members of society" (Ellis, 1918b, p. vi).

(Krafft-Ebing, 1893, p. 90) and avoiding masturbation is an advice he gives to most of his patients (Krafft-Ebing, 1893, p. 103). He does not devote a whole chapter to onanism, but the practice is condemned throughout his whole book *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Thus, if a homosexual man asks Krafft-Ebing to save him from his desire to his own sex, hypnosis is practiced to suggest to the "patient": "1. I abhor onanism, because it makes me sick and miserable. 2. I no longer have inclination toward men; for love of men is against religion, nature, and law. 3. I feel an inclination toward women; for woman is lovely and desirable, and created for man" (Krafft-Ebing, 1893, p. 341). With regard to females, who are supposed to have less sexual needs according to him, any sexual practice outside wedlock is even more condemned than any "excess" practiced by men. One of the most disturbing examples he gives is of the eight-year old child who started masturbating at the age of four. She spends her time talking to young boys and wishes to kill her parents so that she can indulge in sexual relationships with men as much as she desires (Krafft-Ebing, 1893, p. 38). Obviously, for him masturbation is the cause of all evils first because it is an immoral act (he stresses the role of Christianity in freeing people from the yoke of their "illegitimate" desires) and second because it leads to all kinds of sexual perversions especially if practiced at a young age.

Nothing is so prone to contaminate—under certain circumstances, even to exhaust—the source of all noble and ideal sentiments, which arise of themselves from a normally developing sexual instinct, as the practice of masturbation in early years. It despoils the unfolding bud of

perfume and beauty, and leaves behind only the coarse, animal desire for sexual satisfaction. If an individual, spoiled in this manner, reaches an age of maturity, there is wanting in him that aesthetic, ideal, pure, and free impulse which draws one toward the opposite sex. Thus the glow of sensual sensibility wanes, and the inclination toward the opposite sex becomes weakened. This defect influences the morals, character, fancy, feeling, and instinct of the youthful masturbator, male or female, in an unfavorable way, and, under certain circumstances, allows the desire for the opposite sex to sink to nil; so that masturbation is preferred to the natural mode of satisfaction. (Krafft-Ebing, 1893, p. 188)

Whereas Ellis condemns excessive masturbation in early age, Krafft-Ebing censures any auto-erotic practice before puberty. For Krafft-Ebing, the difference between heterosexual love and masturbation is similar to the difference between passion and crude, animalistic desire. Thus, if masturbation is practiced at a young age, the fire of "normal" desire towards the opposite sex is extinguished by the destructive wind of sensuality which ultimately controls the young onanist deeming it impossible for them to enjoy any form of excitation other than solitary sex. This is reminiscent of the example referred to earlier in which Ellis asserts that masturbation leads to the divorce between the sentiment and desire. This alleged divorce and the aversion to heterosexual coitus, however, are not the only ill consequences according to Krafft-Ebing.

Several of the "patients" whose cases are studied by Krafft-Ebing admit that they practiced masturbation without knowing the ill consequences which it results in. "Almost every masturbator at last reaches a point where, frightened on learning the results of the vice, or on experiencing them (neurasthenia), or led by example or seduction to the opposite sex, he wishes to free himself of the vice and re-instate his *vita sexualis*" (Krafft-Ebing, 1893, p. 189). Yet, the damage is done. The masturbator finds that his sexual desire towards women has diminished and his self-confidence has decreased "for every masturbator," Krafft-Ebing declares, "is more or less timid and cowardly" (Krafft-Ebing, 1893, p. 189). When he attempts coitus, he is struck by his "psychical impotence." No more attempts are made, yet the "patient" refuses to go back to his old masturbatory habit; thus his sexual desire to his own sex is developed. It is true that Krafft-Ebing's focus here, as indeed in most of his famous book, is on male sexuality, yet it gives the reader a somewhat clear idea of the conception between masturbation and homosexuality as he sees it.²⁹

For Ellis, Krafft-Ebing's belief that masturbation leads to several sexual perversions is erroneous and recent researchers no longer believe in it. Ellis admits that according to his studies more homosexual than heterosexual men indulge in masturbation, yet he attributes this to the difficulty of finding a homosexual partner in comparison to finding a partner of

²⁹ Krafft-Ebing's almost non-existent condemnation of prostitution is certainly noteworthy, especially when compared to his attack against masturbation. He mentions how his aforementioned "patients" visit brothels as if to put their sexual stamina to the test without any reference to venereal diseases, for instance. As a matter of fact, many of his case studies depend on the sexual act with a prostitute, for brothels seem to be of major importance as to revealing the real sexual orientation of the person. Indeed, the reader of *Psychopathia Sexualis* might get the impression that prostitution is a virtue in comparison to masturbation and homosexuality.

the opposite sex in heterosexual relationships. Thus, the "invert" resorts to masturbation which they believe to be "the lesser of two evils" (Ellis, 1918b, p. 276). Moreover, the female sexual "inverts" whose cases were studied by Ellis assert that there is no connection between masturbation and their attraction to the same sex. Besides, Ellis asserts, so many heterosexual women indulge in masturbation as well. However, according to him, there could be a connection between masturbation and homosexuality in certain cases: "I am certainly inclined to believe that an early and excessive indulgence in masturbation, though not an adequate cause, is a favoring condition for the development of inversion, and that this is especially so in women" (Ellis, 1918b, p. 277). Thus, Ellis accuses masturbation of preparing the suitable environment for homosexuality, although it is not the main reason for it. He further adds that "The sexual precocity indicated by early and excessive masturbation doubtless sometimes reveals an organism already predisposed to homosexuality" (Ellis, 1918b, p. 277). In other words, the persons who practice masturbation excessively at a young age reveal a predisposition to homosexuality. Thus, Ellis rather than severing the bond between masturbation and sexual inversion which is already established by Krafft-Ebing, he creates a two-sided correlation between homosexuality and early and excessive masturbation.

Perhaps Ellis's "natural" approach as Margaret Jackson calls it (Jackson, 1994, p. 106) is what prompted him to begin each topic in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* with an examination of every practice in animals and "lower races" or "savages" which are supposed to be closer to nature,

before he moves to the main study which focuses on the "civilised races."

The same approach applies to Ellis's study of auto-erotism which also includes a study of the practice in animals. One of the most significant examples he quotes is that of the female dog: "if the bitch, when in heat, cannot obtain a dog she pines and becomes ill. If a smooth pebble is introduced into the hutch, she will masturbate upon it, thus preserving her normal health for one season. But if this artificial substitute is given to her a second season, she will not, as formerly, be content with it" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 165). In other words, for this species masturbation can never be a satisfactory alternative for coitus. For the female dog, masturbation is a sedative that can be used for one time only after which it becomes completely ineffective. Ellis's example shows, at least, that masturbation is a natural practice that even animals indulge in, yet it has a cultural side. "His point is that the propensity to generate sexual pleasure on one's own is grounded in nature; the beasts do it. But it is also a product of culture. Auto-eroticism is greatly enhanced by that very faculty which makes us human" (Laqueur, 2003, p. 68).

Masturbation, according to Ellis, can be the product of people's imagination and many writers admitted that they practiced it. "That, at the present day, eminence in art, literature, and other fields may be combined with the excessive practice of masturbation is a fact of which I have unquestionable evidence"³⁰ (Ellis, 1918a, p. 266). This absolute trust in the

³⁰ Apart from the examples Ellis gives of famous men of genius who indulged in masturbation like Rousseau, Gogol and Goethe, he probably derived his knowledge on this matter from personal experience. His and Olive Schreiner's experience in masturbation are

relationship between solitary sex and the genius did not prevent Ellis from recognizing the number of smart women who practice masturbation: "I have been much impressed by the frequency with which masturbation is occasionally (especially about the period of menstruation) practiced by active, intelligent, and healthy women who otherwise lead a chaste life" (Ellis, 1918a, pp. 245-246).

"History of the Young Nour with the Frank," which, fortunately, does not refer to the name of the humble writer of this chapter, is one of the various resources which Ellis relies on in his study. It is supposed to be one of the stories of the *Arabian Nights*, yet it was nowhere to be found there despite my earnest quest.³¹ Its importance, however, stems from being included in Ellis's admirable study on females' utilisation of artificial penises and other objects to obtain sexual gratification: "O bananas, of soft and smooth skins, which dilate the eyes of young girls... you, alone among fruits are endowed with a pitying heart, O consolers of widows and divorced women" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 171). There is no consensus in regard to the inclusion of the study of sex toys within the topic of female masturbation. Laqueur, for instance, does not give the issue much attention because as he says "Depictions of women with dildos are less about masturbation than about what women are thought to do in the absence of the real thing" (Laqueur, 2003, p. 105). Jeffreys further criticises Ellis's claim that lesbians

his living example. Both of them were writers and he expressed his admiration for Olive's writing before he met her.

³¹ Several books like *Fundamentals of Human Sexuality* (Katchadourian and Lunde, 1980, p. 298) and *Sexual Tendencies* (Kerber, 2005, p. 114) quote the same passage from *Studies* without going back to the original text. It should be noted here, that Ellis refers in his *Studies* to the Burton translation, yet my attempts to find the alluded to passage in it or in other lesser-known translations have been unsuccessful.

make use of artificial penises, for as she says "The use of dildos is likely to have been as rare between women in the nineteenth century as it is in lesbian practice today" (Jeffreys, 1985, p. 109). These objections are unfounded for several reasons. To begin with, the study of sex toys is relevant because it is as widespread now as it has always been. Second, and most importantly, what Ellis refers to as artificial penises are not necessarily dildos, but rather any phallic-shaped object that can range from carrots to pencils, although the ebony, ivory and leather dildos are by no means recent inventions.

However, the alleged poem from *Arabian Nights* is clearly used by Ellis as a further support to his theory which presents masturbation as merely a reliever for those who cannot obtain a "normal" heterosexual relationship like young girls, widows, and divorced women.³² Indeed here, the comment of one of Ellis's biographers with regard to his study on sexual inversion seems to apply to his research on auto-erotism in which he seems to be "seeking support for something he already believed" (Grosskurth, 1980, p. 186). Moreover, Ellis's study of the habit of inserting objects like needles and hair pins into their urethras to obtain sexual gratification also goes to support his theory on the strong bond between pleasure and pain in women. In fact he goes as far as claiming that "more than nine-tenths of the foreign bodies found in the female bladder or urethra are due to masturbation" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 172). In addition to the pain-pleasure element, this habit, which requires surgical interference, also shows how far women can go in the practice of

³² Krafft-Ebing, who definitely agrees with Ellis on this issue, uses the expression *faute de mieux* with reference to masturbation several times in his study.

masturbation to gratify their sexual needs as well as how widespread and "inevitable" the practice is.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century which witnessed the publication of Ellis's sexological works also marked significant developments in the history of feminism. More women started to have the chance to achieve economic independence thereby liberating themselves from the patriarchal dominance of their society. "Increased job opportunities for middle-class women in the steadily growing spheres of education, after the 1870 Education Act in Britain, in clerical work and shop work, provided opportunities for women to maintain themselves independently of men" (Jeffreys, 1985, p. 111). It is at this time that Ellis chose to impose a heteronormative view of human sexuality. According to his theory, women should not attempt to imitate men blindly (Ellis, 1930, p. xi) simply because the sexes are very different, yet equal (Ellis, 1930, p. x). He does not want women to reach a stage in which their emancipation simply means "an escape from one cage into another and drearier cage" (Ellis, 1930, p. xi). Women's liberty, Ellis thinks, should not deter them from performing their motherly duties. Even nature itself as he concluded in *Man and Woman*, "has made women more like children in order that they may better understand and care for children" (Ellis, 1930, p. 522).

Having examined Ellis's utopia in which the sexes know their rights and duties as decided by the almighty Nature, it would be important to find out where masturbation fits within his world. As a practice that gives women pleasure, masturbation is tolerable in small doses that do not prevent women

from becoming wives and mothers. Indeed, Ellis was a revolutionary who stated that women have the right to pleasure (Ellis, 1922, p. 107) in a society that still believed in the sanctity of the wife, hence his approval of the moderate practice of masturbation for healthy persons. This practice, however, should not prevent women from enjoying coitus later on. Ellis does not set clear limits between what is considered normal or abnormal. This might be one of the reasons why Jackson describes his views on masturbation as "ambivalent" (Jackson, 1994, p. 117) which does not seem as an overstatement, despite her overall condemnatory views of him. For Ellis, masturbation is an inevitable practice that even animals resort to in the absence of a sexual partner. Single women also find the practice unavoidable, except if they are frigid, yet the orgasm they achieve from it is accompanied with a feeling of remorse, and their practice should not be taken to excess, otherwise it will prevent them from enjoying the "normal" relationship with a beloved person of the opposite sex.

Indeed, Ellis dedicates a section towards the end of his study on auto-erotism to some case studies that are, oddly enough, only females who practiced masturbation and suffered the consequences which range from exhaustion to actual pain. They certainly are reminiscent of the early anti-masturbation campaigners' horror stories, yet the danger in Ellis's stories is related to health rather than morality and the focus is on the inevitability of practice and how it can turn into an addiction. A recently married 29 year old woman used to indulge in the practice before getting married for lack of a better option, although she knew that she should put an end to it. She

describes her premarital experience with masturbation: "it came over me so strongly that I simply couldn't resist it. I felt that I should go mad, and I thought it was better to touch myself than be insane... I used to press my clitoris in... It made me very tired afterward—not like being with my husband" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 271). Unfortunately, no explanation is given here as to why she used to believe that it is not "good for her." However, the woman's experience is included to prove that coitus is more rewarding and less exhausting.

Probably the most disturbing case study he quotes in his research on female sexuality has to be that of "the nymphomaniac who experienced an orgasm at the moment when the knife passed through her clitoris" (Ellis, 1918c, p. 93). Ellis quotes this incident to show that pain was immediately turned into pleasure because of the craving on the part of the nymphomaniac for the sexual excitation on the one hand, and the strong stimulation applied to one of her erogenous zones on the other. Indeed, many feminists discussed this particular case study in relation to Ellis's belief that the female should be dominated and conquered by the male to achieve sexual pleasure. However, a detailed analysis of Ellis's concept of femininity and masculinity would be outside the scope of this chapter. What is relevant to my research is how Ellis did not hesitate to include a pleasurable example of clitoridectomy considering its controversial history in the West. The only other reference he makes to clitoridectomy in his *Studies* is when he discusses a certain ceremony practiced in the northern tribes of Central Australia where both circumcision and clitoridectomy are practiced, and the

girl who "winces or cries out during the operation is disgraced among the women and expelled from the settlement" (Beadnell, 1905, p. 965 as cited in Ellis, 1918d, pp. 87-88). No reference is made to the practice of clitoridectomy which was used as a cure for several illnesses in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century. My argument here, however, is not that Ellis supports the practice, for he advocates the right of women to pleasure and he recognises the importance of the clitoris as one of the erogenous zones. Nevertheless, the way in which he mentions clitoridectomy almost in passing without making any judgment is undeniably questionable.

It is not hard to understand why radical feminists like Sheila Jeffreys and Margaret Jackson were not much impressed by Ellis's attempt at liberating women. Jeffreys criticised his underlining the biological differences between men and women, his model of male dominance and female submission, and the way he presented mothers as superior to childless women (Jeffreys, 1985, p. 129). Indeed, she went as far as declaring that "Ellis's views can be recognised as staples of antifeminist ideology today." (Jeffreys, 1985, p. 129). Jackson, who had a similar opinion, added that "The sexological model of sexuality which Ellis constructed was in essence no more than the re-packaging, in scientific form, of the patriarchal model of sexuality which feminists were struggling to deconstruct. What feminists" had argued was political, Ellis redefined as 'natural' and therefore unable to be changed" (Jackson, 1994, p. 108). It seems that Ellis was so much enamoured with the "natural" that he forgot to question why in his own family "It was taken for granted that this studious son [Ellis] should have the best

possible education, but similar arrangements were never contemplated for any of his sisters" (Grosskurth, 1980, p. 11). He did not examine the effect this "arrangement" would have on the life of the girls and the gap it would leave between the sexes rendering it nigh impossible and futile to present a study on the difference between men and women. In an age, such as his, in which women were granted second class education and second class lives, it would be difficult to make claims such as men are more creative than women, as he alleged. It would be unfair to present the stereotypes of the domesticated female who prefers to stay indoors and rear the children and the wild male who prefers to explore and hunt as a matter of fact that simply exists in nature and hence should be accepted as it is. Perhaps the vast majority of women today would be infuriated by the way they were presented in his studies, yet he had his supportive feminists in his age.

However, at times the attacks against Ellis were somewhat exaggerated. Jeffereys, for instance, criticised Ellis's declaration that women have a right to pleasure which was simply regarded by her as an "eroticisation" for the woman who chooses to comply with the roles he gave her; that is choosing motherhood over "spinsterhood" or lesbianism (Jeffreys, 1985, pp. 137-138). It is true that Ellis's help to women was accompanied by an underestimation of unsocialised sex and a condemnation of frigidity and asexuality, yet it is a step forward for a considerable section of women; those who chose to be wives and mothers. For someone who wishes to dismiss heterosexuality altogether as Jeffreys, Ellis's revolutionary declaration is damaging or at best useless, yet the way I see it is rather different. For me,

Ellis helped women claim their erotic rights at a time when they were "the last to assert them" (Ellis, 1922, p. 112). He did open a window for them. As Paul Robinson puts it, despite Ellis's certain sexist views "As an early-twentieth-century figure concerned primarily with dispelling the myth of woman's sexual insensitivity, Ellis probably deserves our tolerance" (Robinson, 1976, p. 37).

What might prompt the modern reader to adopt a more tolerant view of Ellis is partly that he was appreciated by several feminists in his age and his ideas on marriage, motherhood and even eugenics were adopted in their writings. The American activist Margaret Sanger, who was also a friend of Ellis, regards him a pioneer who changed the way sex was viewed in his age: "He, beyond any other person, has been able to clarify the question of sex, and free it from the smudginess connected with it from the beginning of Christianity, raise it from the dark cellar, set it on a higher plane" (Sanger, 2004, p. 135). In addition to her appreciation for Ellis's own work, Sanger's gratitude for the man stems from his aid in her work on birth control. "Under his tutelage, Sanger reformed and expanded her belief that through the use of birth control, women could acknowledge their own eroticism, men could help fulfill it, and together they could produce children by mutual consent" (Katz, 2003, p. 95). Despite remaining within the field of heterosexual relationships exclusively, we can detect Ellis's desire to better women's lives in his age. Here, we can identify what might be considered a certain feminist, rather than antifeminist trait in his work. "Ellis also legitimized Sanger's commitment to birth control: her conviction that women could find fulfillment in their own sexuality, as well as freedom from the oppression of male desire,

by liberating themselves from the fear of unwanted pregnancy" (Katz, 2003, p. 95). What can be considered almost revolutionary in his age is his acknowledgment of the autonomously gratified sexual desire by women, as well as his wish to free them from the shackles of conventional marriage; something he materialised in the relationship with his own wife.

Despite the not very permissive attitude which Ellis adopted towards masturbation, some modern researchers decided to concentrate on the positive aspects of his study as well. Those considered Ellis as one of the pioneers who

challenged a world paranoid about the negative consequences of masturbation and repressed by Puritan, Jansenist, Calvinist, and Victorian sexual mores. Havelock Ellis (1859-1939) saw masturbation as a natural sexual outlet and absolutely essential in a Victorian society which promulgated the double standard for men, while paradoxically it repressed women and children as sexless persons. (Patton, 1986, p. 292)

These points are absolutely justifiable since Ellis criticised the anti-masturbation campaign which affected the way the young generation feared masturbation. It is also true that he stressed that masturbation is inescapable especially for women who cannot find a sexual partner with ease like men. Women who were seen as not troubled by sexual emotions, are very far from this misconception, as Ellis declared, and they have the right to enjoy their sexual lives.

Furthermore, in *Masturbation: the History of Great Terror*, which is mostly dedicated to condemn the allegations of the early campaigners against masturbation, Havelock Ellis is presented as a revolutionary who was ahead of his time. "Havelock Ellis would live long enough—until 1939—to see many of his ideas accepted and even become commonplace. At the turning point of the century however, he was a forerunner, a representative only of the avant-garde" (Stengers and Neck, 2001, p. 135). Indeed, this innovative aspect of Ellis's study on masturbation is the only one on which the writers choose to concentrate. Thus, Ellis is praised for challenging the norms by publishing his first volume of *Studies* in England at a time when such researches on sexuality which were not presented in a moralistic tone were considered obscene. He is also acclaimed for not referring to masturbation as a vice, but rather as a widespread practice that even intellectuals like Goethe and Rousseau indulged in. However, probably there is a consensus as to the significance of Ellis as a revolutionary in the field of sexology as a whole, yet with regard to the question of masturbation alone, I highly doubt it. Needless to say, his attitude towards masturbation is not as rigid as that of Tissot, say, yet what he contributed is not enough to represent him as a radical figure in the field.

In his book *The Modernization of Sex*, Paul Robinson does not only consider Havelock Ellis as one of the most influential modernists, but he goes as far as to claim that "Havelock Ellis stands in the same relation to modern sexual theory as Max Weber to modern sociology, or Albert Einstein to modern physics" (Robinson, 1976, p. 3). Robinson's study is particularly

appreciative of Ellis's nonpathological representation of both sexual inversion and auto-erotism. This can be detected, according to Robinson, through Ellis's inclusion of masturbation under one heading along with other practices like nocturnal emissions which were not considered sinful in the nineteenth century, thereby transferring some of their qualities to the condemned solitary sex. It can also be perceived through Ellis's claim that animals, lower and civilised races, and even geniuses practice masturbation. Moreover, Robinson considers that Ellis's focus on the auto-erotic habits on women in particular is aimed at somewhat absolve the practice which even chaste middle-aged women might indulge in. This does seem to me an overenthusiastic interpretation. Even though Ellis tries to present masturbation as an inescapable practice that is common among "nearly every race of which we have any intimate knowledge" (Ellis, 1918a, p. 166), he does not attempt to represent it as totally innocent. To begin with, even the writer of *Onania* states that even the seemingly chaste women practice masturbation to draw people's attention to the danger of the practice. To claim that being aware that respectable women indulge in it would make it more acceptable seems to me somewhat far-fetched. The same applies to grouping masturbation with more acceptable practices. The term auto-erotism was coined by Ellis to include a wide range of sexual practices which range from the somewhat tolerable involuntary nocturnal emissions to the public masturbation of the insane. It does not seem to me that this colossal collage called auto-erotism does any of its segments any good.

As Margaret Rhondda says about *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*: "Though I was far from accepting it all, it opened up a whole new world of thought to me" (Rhondda, 1933, p. 126). This sums up my first encounter with the science of sexology which took place when I first read Havelock Ellis's volumes on sexuality. With the publication of his extensive study, Havelock Ellis secured his place in history as the founding father of sexology. However, it is hard to overlook the pattern which Ellis follows in his study of female auto-erotism. His assertion that even animals practice masturbation but only in the absence of a sexual partner, his case studies which stressed the addiction to masturbation and the remorse and pain it results in, and his confirmation that the practice can lead to an aversion to marriage; all these point to one direction. Havelock Ellis's model of normal and abnormal sexuality does not seem to be a great development since *Onania*, his list of symptoms caused by what he calls "chronic" masturbation appears to be no more than a variation on the original eighteenth century attack, and his desire to unveil and consequently control the female auto-erotic practices which can be enjoyed under the nose of the unsuspecting male bystanders reveals his fear of the threatening mystery. His declaration that women have a right to sexual pleasure in a society which did not even believe in women's sexual instinct is certainly laudable. However, I do not see his study as a major development since the eighteenth century condemnations of onanism, and "his conclusions are not very far removed from Victorian horror" (Grosskurth, 1980, p. 223). His study is decidedly a step ahead, yet it is a short, shy step. I am not one of those who believe that sexology was a conspiracy against feminism; in fact, I do not doubt Ellis's desire to better

women's lives in his time, yet his unshakable trust in the heterosexual relationship as the ultimate and only perfect ending did so much unintended harm. All I can say is merely reiterate what he himself said about the campaigners against masturbation. I think that he was "well-meaning" but "misguided" by the heteronormative model that he sought to promote in his sexological studies.

Chapter Three

Freud's Unsolved Riddle of Infantile Masturbation

In his *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud acknowledges almost apologetically that the first part of the book which contains case studies seems like a collection of short stories (Freud, 1955a, p. 160). Indeed, this statement does not seem to be very far from the truth, and it can be added that it applies to most of his case histories and dream interpretation in general. Perhaps the appeal of psychoanalysis for many readers lies in the form in which the case studies are presented, for, as is the case with fiction, the exposition leads us to a climax and anti-climax. This climax is the riddle to which the psychoanalyst is required to provide a solution. Freud himself does not deny the fact that he has always been fascinated by the art of riddle-solving: "I felt an overpowering need to understand something of the riddles of the world in which we live and perhaps even to contribute something to their solution" (Freud, 1995, p. 681). Despite all this, Freud was irritated when Havelock Ellis called him an artist rather than a scientist³³ (Jones, 1961, p. 493). I believe that between acknowledging Freud as both a scientist and a stylist, as Peter Gay refers to him (Freud, 1995, p. xi), and "accusing" him of being

³³ According to Ernest Jones, Freud expressed his disapproval of Ellis's statement in a letter: "the most refined and amiable form of resistance, calling a great artist in order to injure the validity of our scientific aims" (Jones, 1961, p. 493). Also, Havelock Ellis's biographer, Phyllis Grosskurth, saw this as envy on the part of Ellis who, according to her, was jealous of Freud's success because Ellis was the one who presented Freud to the English speaking public and yet the latter became more celebrated than him (Grosskurth, 1980, p. 390). However, we see that Freud himself referred to Charcot as an artist: "He was not a reflective man, not a thinker: he had the nature of an artist—he was, as he himself said, a 'visuel', a man who sees" (Freud, 1962, p. 12).

no more than a "writer of fiction" in whose writings "everything fits geniusly [sic]," (Crews, 1998b, p. 282) the difference lies in whether the reader is convinced by Freud's evidence or is left with a big "why" instead. As my title to this chapter shows, I belong to the second category that is left with numerous unanswered questions that result from Freud's baseless assumptions. With regard to female masturbation, many such instances take place and these will form the basis for my argument.

Sigmund Freud was the eldest son from a third marriage of Jacob Freud who was 40 when Sigmund was born while the mother, Amalié was 20. The father had two sons from a previous marriage, and one of them had a son before Freud was born. Thus, Sigmund became an uncle before he was born. The best education was provided to the favourite son till he received a degree in medicine. He married Martha Bernays after a long betrothal that dragged for four years during which Freud's financial situation obstructed his marriage. Probably it was the famous French neurologist Charcot who led the way for the young Freud who travelled to Paris in order to attend the neurologist's lectures on hysteria and hypnotism. Freud's establishment of psychoanalysis, according to Ernest Jones, was not full of quick and sudden "discoveries" but rather marked by errors and corrections. He died in London to which he travelled to escape the Nazi prosecution which led to the incineration of his sisters five years after his death.

Detailed variations of the afore-mentioned paragraph appear in the biographical and semibiographical works about Freud. Unfortunately, however, so many particulars in Freud's life are left for contemplation and

assumptions at times, starting from the hidden details in his childhood to his love and sexual life. Jones has suggested that "in Freud's earliest years there had been extremely strong motives for concealing some important phase of his development — perhaps even from himself. I would venture to surmise", he writes, "it was his deep love for his mother" (Jones, 1958, p. 456). Indeed, the concealed information about Freud's sexual life does not only belong to his early years, but to his whole life, and it definitely pertains to secrets other than his affection for his mother. We know from Marie Bonaparte that when she asked Freud whether he was a virgin when he got married, his answer was 'no' (Appignanesi and Forrester, 1992, p. 27) and when she asked about whether he had extramarital affairs, he refused to answer. The question of the mysterious sexual life of the man who "unearthed" people's hidden secrets, adding his own touches to their stories at times, is still being pondered, and Dr. Maciejewski's discovery³⁴ that Freud shared a hotel room with his sister-in-law Minna Bernays on a vacation they spent together will not be the last of these attempts to reveal Freud's carefully hidden secrets.

³⁴ In 2006 an article was published in The New York Times about this discovery and how Dr. Maciejewski deduced from it that Freud had an affair with his sister-in-law (Blumenthal, 2006). However, Freud was defended vehemently in articles like (Hirschmüller, 2007) and (Lothane, 2007) in which defences like how the hotel was full and the couple were obliged to share a room, totally ignores how Freud used to invent incidents that were not really there in case studies. Indeed, when compared to Freud's assumptions, as in his assertion that Dora's fumbling with her purse reveals her latent desire for masturbation, Maciejewski's deductions seem logical enough. It has to be remarked here that the incident involving Freud and his sister-in-law is reminiscent of one of the scenes of Daniel Defoe's famous novel *Moll Flanders*. In that scene the protagonist sleeps next to a man who assures her that he will guard her innocence, yet the inevitable happens, so the heroine comments: "as wise men say, it is ill venturing too near the brink of a command" (Defoe, 2007, p. 168). Bearing in mind that her comment was from the *Old Testament* and the wise man she meant was Solomon, it is indeed curious that Freud could not remember this warning despite his dependence on religion with regard to several issues in his theories.

What we do know about Freud's sex life is gathered from some of his correspondence with his friend Fliess, but rather than answering our questions, it raises many more. In a letter to Fliess on 31 October 1897, Freud wrote: "Sexual excitement, too, is no longer of use for someone like me" (Masson, 1985, p. 276). Also, on 31 March 1900, he told his friend: "You know how limited my pleasures are. I am not allowed to smoke anything decent; alcohol does nothing for me; I am done begetting children; and I am cut off from contact with people" (Masson, 1985, p. 404). Bearing in mind Freud's theory on the aetiology of hysteria, it would be possible to include his own case with his wife as one in which contraception plays an important role. Freud says that unsatisfactory sexual pleasures like the ones resulting from coitus interruptus and masturbation are considered the noxae which affect the person's mental health. Indeed, with a view to Freud's contraceptive attempt, Webster's following theory about Freud's masturbatory habit would be understandable. In *Why Freud Was Wrong*, Richard Webster discusses the possibility that Freud was one of the patients described by Fliess as "the victim of ophthalmic migraines caused by 'onanistic abuse'" (Webster, 2005, p. 224). The reasons which Webster gives for his conclusion are Freud's suffering from the nasal reflex syndrome along with his migraines; both considered as resulting from masturbation according to Fliess. More will follow about Fliess's assumptions regarding masturbation through a discussion of his most tragic case; i.e. Emma Eckstein, but for now it seems plausible for me to infer from Freud's avoidance of coitus with his wife, for fear she gets pregnant, that he might have indulged in solitary sex himself.

Of the incomplete details in his biography, Freud's relationship with the women in his life is particularly noteworthy starting with the "Oedipus complex" he experienced in his childhood. According to one of his letters to Fliess on 3 October 1897 as a child of two or two and a half, Freud saw his mother in the nude on a journey from Leipzig to Vienna (Masson, 1985, p. 268). His control on both his wife³⁵ and youngest daughter Anna whom he chose to be his nurse in his last years is also significant. According to his very sympathetic biographer and friend Ernest Jones, Freud's views on women were that they should be "having as their main function to be ministering angels to the needs and comforts of men" (Jones, 1961, p. 474). A rather bizarre statement considering that Freud's youngest and favourite daughter, Anna, grew up to be a psychoanalyst who not only guarded her father's heritage and edited some of his works, but also developed her own theories of child psychoanalysis in particular. According to Freud, women's psychology is much more complex than that of men that he admitted not having the answer to the question: "What does a woman want?" (Jones, 1961, p. 474).

This view of women led ultimately to Freud's controversial attitude towards female sexuality. His opinion of female sexuality is given from a

³⁵ Probably the most evident example of Freud's control of his wife and the patriarchal view of the relationship between the husband and wife can be found in a letter he sent to her when they were betrothed: "From now on you are but a guest in your family. ... For has it not been laid down since time immemorial that the woman shall leave father and mother and follow the man she has chosen? You must not take it too hard, Marty, you cannot fight against it; no matter how much they love you I will not leave you to anyone, and no one deserves you; no one else's love compares with mine" (Freud, 1970, p. 41). Freud's reversal of *Genesis* 2:24 here is significant. In the original text, the man is the one who leaves his father and mother to live with his wife, but it seems that Freud had a difficulty in hiding his megalomaniac wish to be the primal father for everyone around him, starting with his family and ending with his followers.

male perspective par excellence. For Freud, while men see women as a castrated version of themselves, a woman "acknowledges the fact of her castration, and with it, too, the superiority of the male and her own inferiority; but she rebels against this unwelcome state of affairs" (Freud, 1961b, p. 229). What Freud seems to be including here is a reply to the expected feminist criticism of his view of women. Rebelling, he says, is simply a part of your sexual development. Freud adds to this statement, which is very reminiscent of the early discoverers' anthropological reports of the other races, a description of the practice which might hinder the development of the female; i.e. masturbation. Stimulation of the clitoris represents a tendency towards masculinity; thus, clitoral masturbation is a stage that a girl should outgrow. As Paula Bennett argues, Freud's phallocentrism which led to depriving the clitoris of being a power symbol also entails a condemnation of autonomous sexuality. "Without the clitoris, theorists have no physical site in which to locate an autonomous sense of female sexual agency" (Bennett, 1993, p. 256).

In his discussion of Oedipus Complex, Freud's main focus centred on the male sexual development. He only directed his attention to the different development of the females late in his life, starting from the 1920s till the early 1930s with the publication of "Female Sexuality" in 1931. For Freud the sexual development of the female is different from that of the male, hence his rejection of adopting the term "Electra Complex" (Freud, 1961b, pp. 228-229). Probably the most disturbing paper written by Freud with regard to his views on women has to be "Some Psychological Consequences of the

Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes." This paper, ironically enough, was read on his behalf by a woman—his daughter Anna— at the International Psychoanalytic Congress at Homburg in 1923. It is hard to fathom how an accomplished woman like Anna brought herself to declare "anatomy is destiny," and judging from women's anatomy, their destiny is to be impractical, emotional beings who are, in a word, inferior to men:

Their super-ego is never so inexorable, so impersonal, so independent of its emotional origins as we require it to be in men. Character-traits which critics of every epoch have brought up against women—that they show less sense of justice than men, that they are less ready to submit to the great exigencies of life, that they are more often influenced in their judgements by feelings of affection or hostility— all these would be amply accounted for by the modification in the formation of their super-ego which we have inferred above.

(Freud, 1995, p. 677)

Despite Freud's belief in what he calls masculine and feminine characteristics in both males and females and that pure masculinity and femininity are merely theoretical, he warns people against falling victim to feminists' allegations which claim that the sexes are equal. "We must not allow ourselves to be deflected from such conclusions by the denials of the feminists, who are anxious to force us to regard the two sexes as completely equal in position and worth" (Freud, 1995, p. 677). Freud's theory of the inequality between the sexes is based on his assumption that women's anatomy of which the most distinguished characteristic is their lack of a penis

leads to their feeling of inferiority and subsequent passing through many stages that they have to overcome in order to gain their femininity. "A girl to achieve this normal femininity makes three shifts in her development: from active to passive mode, from "phallic," or clitoridal, to vaginal aim, and from mother (lesbian/homosexual) to father (heterosexual) as object" (Neu, 1991, p. 227). This struggle is what eventually leads to their being inferior to men in "position and worth" (Freud, 1961a, p. 258).

In the paper on anatomical difference between the sexes, Freud discusses what takes place when little girls make the inevitable "discovery" that they lack the boys' "superior" organ: "They notice the penis of a brother or playmate, strikingly visible and of large proportions, at once recognise it as the superior counterpart of their own small and inconspicuous organ, and from that time forward fall a victim to envy for the penis" (Freud, 1995, p. 673). Not only does the little girl make the discovery, Freud argues, but she also decides then and there that her clitoris is inferior to the larger counterpart of the boys. The big difference between the sexes, according to Freud, lies in their reaction to the aforementioned "discovery." When little boys "discover" the difference between their genitalia and those of girls, they do not make a decision immediately. Instead, they almost enter a stage of denial, for they try to shake off the image of the "inferior" organ. Only when they are threatened with castration, do they start to make comparisons. This conclusion on the boys' part might end in critical consequences on their future; it might "permanently determine, the boy's relations to women: horror of the mutilated creature or triumphant contempt for her" (Freud, 1995, p.

674). The behaviour of "the mutilated creature," as the young boy would describe her according to Freud, on the other hand, is not characterised by the boyish irresolution: "She makes her judgement and her decision in a flash. She has seen it and knows that she is without it and wants to have it" (Freud, 1995, p. 674). The girl's penis envy leads her to her "masculinity complex" when she tries to act like a man as a result of her awareness "of the wound to her narcissism, she develops, like a scar, a sense of inferiority" (Freud, 1995, p. 674). Thus, the image is completed; not only that of the alleged differences between the sexes, but also of the imposed symbolic concept of the clitoris which transformed from a castrated penis into a "wound" and a "scar". As Karl Abraham says in his paper "Manifestations of the Female Castration Complex" which Freud describes as "unsurpassed" (Freud, 1961b, p. 241): "The female genital is looked upon as a wound, and as such it represents an effect of castration" (Jones, 1961, p. 3). He adds: "The primary idea of the 'wound' is re-animated by the impression created by the first and each succeeding menstruation, and then once again by defloration; for both processes are connected with loss of blood and thus resemble an injury" (Jones, 1922, p. 7).

However, the most important result of the girl's discovery of the inferiority of the clitoris and her consequent penis-envy is her aversion to masturbation. What Freud calls "narcissistic sense of humiliation" leads the girl to turn away from her pleasurable auto-erotic habit because she "realises" that masturbation is a masculine game in which she cannot "compete with boys":

it appeared to me nevertheless as though masturbation were further removed from the nature of women than of men, and the solution of the problem could be assisted by the reflection that masturbation, at all events of the clitoris, is a masculine activity and that the elimination of clitoridal sexuality is a necessary precondition for the development of femininity. (Freud, 1995, p. 675)

Freud attributed the afore-mentioned conclusion to his "realisation" that while men resort to masturbation as a "way of escape" without any qualms, women develop an aversion to it immediately after their discovery of the anatomical differences between the sexes and subsequent penis-envy, and if their attempt to put an end to it fails, they continue to fight it throughout their lives. Thus, rather than being considered a sexual practice, Freud refers to masturbation as no more than a stage in girls' development. It is not only a "way of escape" that they loathe to resort to, but also a stage they should overcome in order to move from the inevitable masculine stage thereby developing their femininity.

The result is, according to Freud, that "women regard themselves as having been damaged in infancy, as having been undeservedly cut short of something and unfairly treated; and the embitterment of so many daughters against their mothers derives, ultimately, from the reproach against her of having brought them into the world as women instead of as men" (Freud, 1995, p. 593). This 'cursed art thou my mother for making me a woman' is

probably the female version of the Jewish prayer³⁶ in which men thank God for not creating them women. Also, the female, according to the Freudian psychoanalysis, laments that her mother did not make her a boy. Thus, as failed men, women continue to harbour grudge against their mothers, and not their fathers.

It does seem to me that Freud builds his whole theory of female sexuality on the single assumption that a young girl will admire and covet the male organ of a young boy as soon as she sets her eyes on it. As such, the female theory with its intricate set of conclusions and inferences seems like a colossal inverted pyramid of which the apex is too weak to support the base, exactly like Freud's theory on Da Vinci's homosexuality. In his study of Da Vinci, Freud acknowledges the fact that the biography of the famous painter is inadequate, yet he constructs his whole theory on a memory, which Freud deems to be a fantasy, narrated by the painter: "It seems that I was always destined to be so deeply concerned with vultures; for I recall as one of my very earliest memories that while I was in my cradle a vulture came down to me, and opened my mouth with its tail, and struck me many times with its tail against my lips" (Freud, 1910, p. 82). From this "phantasy," Freud concludes at least two main closely related interpretations; the first one being the significance of the tail as a sexual symbol of the male organ and the second that the ancient Egyptians represented the mother as a vulture in their hieroglyphics. When combined with the little that is known about Da Vinci

³⁶ Siman 46:4: A person must say the Blessings *shelo asani goy* (Who did not make me a non-Jew), *shelo asani aved* (Who did not make me a slave), and *shelo asani isha* (Who did not make me a woman) every day. Although Freud did not come from a particularly religious family, his views on women seem to have been affected by his Jewish background to a certain degree. For more on the effect of Judaism on Freud's writings see (Roith, 1987).

who was an illegitimate child whose father married another woman and left the child in the care of his biological mother, then took the child to his house, because his wife couldn't have children of her own, thereby bringing another motherly figure into the picture; namely that of the stepmother. Thus, Freud not only concludes that Da Vinci was a homosexual, but he also presents analyses of the painter's masterpieces according to what he thinks of his relationship with his mother and stepmother was. However, the fantasy which Freud builds his entire theory on is fallaciously quoted by him, for the bird which Da Vinci talks about is a kite and not a vulture. Consequently, all Freud's assumptions about the cultural reference of a vulture and its bearing on Da Vinci's life are fallacious. Thus, as David E. Stannard argues, "Freud built most of his analysis in the manner of an inverted pyramid, the whole structure balancing on the keystone of a single questionable fact and its interpretation; once that fact is shown to be wrong, and removed as support, the entire edifice begins to crumble"³⁷ (Stannard, 1998, p. 208). The same applies to Freud's theory on female sexuality.

In her article "On the Social Construction of Female Sexuality," Stevi Jackson questions the cornerstone in Freud's theory on female sexuality.

³⁷ The discovery that Freud made a mistake with regard to the vulture was made by Oskar Pfister in 1913. With regard to this mistake which resulted from a problem with translation, James Strachey claims that all was not lost, and Freud's theory still holds value despite the major blunder. He argues that the part of Freud's theory in which he presents an interpretation for the bird that put its tail in Da Vinci's mouth is still valid; this fantasy, he claims, still needs an explanation and this is what Freud represents. Also, with regard to the myth of the vulture and how the Egyptians connected it with the image of the mother, Strachey states that Freud's discussion on the connection between the vulture and mother is important in itself irrespective of its relation to Da Vinci's case (Freud, 1910, p. 62). Even if we agree with Strachey here on the validity of these two points, we have to admit that Freud's theory on Da Vinci collapsed simply because Freud's interpretation of Da Vinci's paintings cannot depend on the phantasy in which the bird put its tail in his mouth solely, for many of Freud's clues are related to the image of the mother. As for the importance of Freud's discussion on the Egyptian myth of the vulture and even if it is correct in itself, it is still not related to Da Vinci's case in any way.

This first look on the small boy's penis, according to Freud, acts as a determining factor according to which several aspects of the young girl's life are affected, yet Freud's scenario remains debatable to say the least:

... why should the little girl covet the boy's penis in the first place? It is more likely that she will regard the male genitals as an ugly protuberance rather than as something desirable, and see her own body as whole and complete. Why should she then decide that her own organ is inferior for masturbatory purposes? It is unlikely that she will see her clitoris as a truncated penis, even if she is aware of its existence, which she need not be to engage in infantile styles of masturbation. In all likelihood she will come to the conclusion that the penis is simply a urinary organ, and in respect of this function it is true she may feel some envy. (Jackson, 1999, p. 34)

The questions which are raised by Jackson above justifiably examine the ability of a young girl, who is probably no more than three or four years old, to deem her clitoris inferior to the penis although it is completely functional in masturbation. The alternative might be that the young girl is envious of the penis as an excretory organ rather than a sexual one. As a result to this different reading of the girl's understanding of her first interpretation for the function of the penis, questioning all the conclusions which Freud reach at as a subsequence for this assumption becomes plausible. These include Freud's theory on the intricate and problematic development of women's sexuality, a woman's condemnation of her mother for being created a female, and her inability to develop superego characteristics comparable to those of

the superior male. "In making pronouncements on femininity, Freud never looked beyond the fixed concepts and categories he imposed upon his observations. His obvious prejudices, made clear in his use of language, distort his analysis. The female is a mutilated male; that which is masculine is normal and unmysterious, while things feminine are seen as aberrations, as enigmas" (Jackson, 1999, p. 35). This prejudiced presentation of women's sexual development on the part of Freud, coupled with his focus on anatomy rather than the influence of culture is what causes his theory on female sexuality to collapse, exactly like his reading of Da Vinci, as soon as the fragile cornerstone, on which all the theory is built, is put to the test. Indeed, with view to all these biases and inaccuracies in Freud's theory on female sexuality, Macmillan's view which holds that the theory was not just wrong, but completely superfluous seems perfectly justifiable:

It seems to me obvious that Freud was not describing his female patients so much as putting forward the stereotyped view of women typically held by men of his time and social outlook. The "facts" he wanted to explain were certainly not clinical facts and were hardly facts at all. The secondary developmental transformation has a similar status. Given a "masculine" starting point, the changes were more or less demanded by the end point, and failure to confirm them was almost inevitable. Freud's account of the psychosexual development of the female is not so much wrong as totally unnecessary.

(Macmillan, 1991, p. 520)

The conclusions which resulted from this "unnecessary" theory along with Freud's prejudice against any sexual practice which he considered as not satisfactory both shaped Freud's view of female solitary sex whether in his direct condemnations of the practice or in his case studies, as we will see as our examination of these two evolves.

With regard to masturbation, it would be advantageous to examine the paper entitled "Contributions to a Discussion on Masturbation" (1912) which sums up Freud's views on masturbation and it was the result of the discussion held in the Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society. James Strachey states that the meeting included fourteen members including Freud and the discussions lasted for nine days from 22 November 1911, to 24 April 1912 (Freud, 1958, p. 241). Several points were raised in these discussions among which are the sense of guilt which follows masturbation and what its origin might be, the injurious effects of the practice, the importance of phantasies in masturbation, and the relation between it and actual neurosis. Freud regrets not being able to shed more light on female masturbation in the afore-mentioned discussions, although he admits that it deserves a "special study" (Freud, 1958, p. 247). Freud divulges that he disagrees with Stekel, on whom more will follow, who believes that "the injuriousness of masturbation amounts to no more than a senseless prejudice which, purely as a result of personal limitations, we are unwilling to cast off with sufficient thoroughness" (Freud, 1958, p. 250). Unlike Stekel, Freud believes that masturbation is pathogenic and its injuriousness falls into three categories:

organic, psychical, and what he calls "Afixation of infantile sexual aims... and a persistence of psychical infantilism" (Freud, 1958, p. 252).

Indeed, it is clear from Freud's studies that he has always believed in the injuriousness of masturbation and there is no reason to believe that this view was altered at any point in his life.³⁸ In one of his letters to Fliess, he describes masturbation as "the one major habit, the "primary addiction," and it is only as a substitute and replacement for it that the other addictions — to alcohol, morphine, tobacco, and the like—come into existence" (Masson, 1985, p. 287). In this letter he also stresses the connection between masturbation and hysteria which was his major focus during his relationship with Fliess, and later he shifts the connection to neurasthenia. Moreover, when Freud's second son, the then adolescent boy Oliver, approached his father to enlighten him with regard to his fears about masturbation, the father's reply was no more than a condemnation of the practice and cautioning against indulging in it; an incident which, according to the son,

³⁸ It should be referred here to the point which was raised by Masson in his book *The Assault on Truth*, for he stated that Albert Hirst (Emma Eckstein's nephew) mentioned how Freud had helped him alleviate the feeling of guilt he had over his masturbation during the analysis which took place in 1910 by informing him that the practice was harmless. (Masson, 1998, p. 247). However, this obviously contradicts Freud's condemnatory views on masturbation as mentioned in his letters to Fliess, for instance, prior to 1910, as well as his views in "Contributions to a Discussion on Masturbation" which were expressed only one to two years after the alleged incident with Albert Hirst. More on the analysis of Albert Hirst can be found in Lynn's "Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis of Albert Hirst" in which it is further claimed that Freud asked the then sixteen year-old Hirst to assume the position in which he masturbated during the analysis (Lynn, 1997, p. 74). It is an odd incident that does not fit within Freud's published views on masturbation; therefore, it is hard to include it as a proof of Freud's change of heart with regard to the topic in question. Can we blame it on the young boy's confused memory as Freud used to do with his patients? Unfortunately, no decisive answer can be provided here. However, it is possible that in this particular case, Freud decided that the young Albert's masturbatory habit did not exceed what he called the "usual amount" (Freud, 1966, p. 197). This is because, like Havelock Ellis who differentiates between chronic and permissible masturbation, Freud also seems to believe that excessive masturbation is what leads to mental problems. Here we cannot but ask with Stekel: what is the limit beyond which masturbation becomes harmful? Neither Ellis nor Freud gave us a specific answer to this question.

impaired the boy's relationship with his father (Sulloway, 1992, p. 185).

Masturbation is certainly one of the sexual practices which Freud likes to unearth in his patients' past. Thus, the practice is in the background in several of his case studies which is reminiscent of Krafft-Ebing's method of blaming masturbation, among other practices, for all forms of ills. For Freud, the injuriousness of masturbation stems from that it should not "be equated with sexual activity in general: it is sexual activity subjected to certain limiting conditions" (Freud, 1958, p. 251).

Emma Eckstein was one of Freud's early patients and a masturbator, according to the father of psychoanalysis, yet it is understandable why she did not receive as much attention as Dora, say, or the Rat Man. One of the few references we can find to her person is found under the name Irma in *The Interpretation of Dreams* within one of Freud's dreams. In the first dream which Freud submitted for interpretation, he saw his young patient, Irma, in a large hall with other guests. He blamed her for not accepting his "solution" and he tells her "If you still get pains, it's really only your fault" (Freud, 1953a, p. 107). She replied that the pain in her throat and stomach was choking her. Sure enough, when he examined her mouth, he found inside a white patch and some grey scabs which looked like the turbinate bones of the nose. Freud asked Dr. M and his friend Otto to examine her as well, and they seemed to be in agreement as to the origin of her ailment; it was the injection which Otto gave to Irma with an unclean syringe. This wish-fulfilling dream on the part of Freud aims to absolve his friend Fliess from his almost deadly malpractice with this same patient.

The story began with the friendship between Freud and an otolaryngologist called Wilhelm Fliess (1858-1928). This friendship lasted around five years during which the two men exchanged letters in which they discussed their scientific projects. Fliess had the notion that an operation on the nose could be the solution for some of the people's sexual problems and Freud allowed him to put his theory to practice with his patient Emma. Masson, who first brought the case of Emma to the public's attention, found in Freud's copy of Fliess's book *On the Causal Connection between the Nose and the Sexual Organ* the marked passage: "Women who masturbate are generally dysmenorrheal. They can only be finally cured through an operation on the nose if they truly give up this bad practice" (Masson, 1998, p. 57). Needless to say, not only the operation, which aimed at curing Emma from masturbation, failed disastrously but it almost caused the patient's death because Fliess forgot half a metre of surgical gauze inside her nose. Despite Freud's feeling of guilt, he esteemed his friend³⁹, Fliess, and desired to blame this mishap on anyone, even the patient herself, to absolve him. Indeed, even in his waking life, Freud blamed Emma's haemorrhage in one of his letters to Fliess on her desire for Freud and wish to be near him (Masson, 1985, p. 186). Indeed, Freud went as far as mentioning, in a letter to Fliess, a number of incidents in which the patient in question had hysterical bleeding. Before menstruating, she had nosebleeds and later when she grew up she welcomed her menstruation with happiness just because it was a proof that the headaches she had were real. However,

³⁹ In a letter to Ernest Jones, Freud admits that there is "some piece of unruly sexual feeling at the root of the matter" with reference to his relationship with Fliess (Freud and Jones, 1995, p. 182).

there is a curious example mentioned by Freud about Emma with regard to her bleeding. In a letter to Fliess on 24 January 1897, he writes:

Imagine, I obtained a scene about the circumcision of a girl. The cutting off of a piece of the labium minor (which is even shorter today), sucking up the blood, after which the child was given a piece of the skin to eat. This child, at age 13, once claimed that she could swallow a part of an earthworm and proceeded to do it. An operation you once performed was affected by a hemophilia that originated in this way.

(Masson, 1985, p. 227)

This strange scene invokes in Freud, as he mentions to Fliess, an image of a cult with devils and witches, yet unfortunately he does not dwell on it as much as it deserves. Several questions can be raised here about the scene. Is it a dream, a memory, or a fantasy? And, most importantly: is it related to Emma's masturbation? One might link this painful scene to masturbation because of the vicious way in which the practice used to be "cured" in the West in the nineteenth century, yet because Freud did not investigate further, it is hard to reach a decisive interpretation.

One might expect Emma Eckstein to lose her confidence in psychoanalysis after a fatal, unnecessary operation, yet the apparently "highly suggestible woman," (Wilcocks, 1994, p. 97) as Robert Wilcocks rightly calls her, not only trusted the two physicians judgement blindly, but she also started practicing psychoanalysis herself. Freud's influence on Emma can be seen through her own book *The Question of Sexuality in Child-Rearing* as translated and quoted by Masson:

Masturbation is an insidious enemy for the child. Unnoticed and unsuspected, it slinks into the nursery and works away there, assiduously and with no hindrance, at its goal of destroying the youth and strength, both physical and mental, of its victims. These victims were exposed to it because the appointed guardians of the child did not repress the danger, or had not even learned to see the danger.

(Eckstein as cited in Masson, 1998, p. 245)

Masson claims that although Freud's and Eckstein's views on masturbation seem to be horrendous, they were in fact "in advance of most of the views on masturbation of the time" (Masson, 1998, p. 247). Indeed, nothing seems to be further from the truth for Freud's claims are no more than a continuation of the tradition of blaming masturbation for all sorts of evils, as we will see in the following case studies. Evidently, in her monograph, Eckstein claims that the child's fight with their masturbatory habit is worthy of being taken to the battlefield, for she bemoans: "Few are so lucky that they emerge from this battle the victor through their energetic will and the practice, begun early on, of self-control." However, in a comment that may reflect her own unhappy experience she adds: "Most people torture themselves in mental agony, which they keep a closely guarded secret and which grows even stronger until it poisons their life" (Masson, 1998, p. 246). Whether Emma actually complained to Freud of her masturbatory habit or merely of her menstrual pain, or he led her to believe in its dangers is uncertain, yet it is definitely worthy of contemplation particularly in light of her last statement (Wilcocks, 1994, p. 91).

Such a catastrophic experience like that of Emma's sheds a different light on Freud's image as an innovator in the field of sexology. Indeed, as Frederick Crews puts it: "Butchery of the nose instead of the clitoris, uterus, or ovaries can hardly be counted as progress" (Crews, 1998a, p. 6). Not only does his treatment of Emma's case remind the readers of the work of the early sexologists, but it rather takes us further back in history to the clitoridectomy practiced in the West in the second half of the nineteenth century to "cure" the "unwholesome" practice of solitary sex. "[Freud's] adherence to, and active implementation of, Wilhelm Fliess's idea of corrective nasal surgery for "reflex neuroses" in the sexual sphere aligned him, however uneasily, with the already discredited crackpots of the 1870s who had treated "hysterical" women through gynecological mutilation" (Bonomi, 1997 as cited in Stannard, 1998, p. 6).

Emma was not the only patient who was accused of being a masturbator. Ida Bauer, who was given the name Dora by Freud, was one of the patients whose problems were blamed on masturbation among other things. She was born on 1 November 1882 and she was the second of the two children of Philipp and Katharina (Appignanesi and Forrester, 1992, p. 147). Because she lived with her family near Freud, her father, who was also one of Freud's patients, chose to send the then eighteen year-old girl to him for analysis. The father was the dominating figure in the family and the girl was very attached to him, according to Freud (Freud, 1953b, p. 18). The mother, on the other hand, was obsessed with cleaning and housework and not close to the daughter. What prompted the father to urge Dora to consult

Freud was a suicidal letter he found in the girl's room, and although he knew that she had no genuine desire to commit suicide, he was alarmed by the letter. According to Freud, Dora suffered from hysteria and had the symptoms: "dyspnoea, tussis nervosa, aphonia, and possibly migraines, together with depression, hysterical unsociability, and a *taedium vitae* which was probably not entirely genuine" (Freud, 1953b, p. 24). The family was acquainted with another family to whom Freud gave the name Herr and Frau K. Dora claimed that Herr K made advances to her and she started pressuring her father to end his relationship with Frau K. with whom she suspected he had an affair. Dora's case has been the centre of numerous studies that criticised Freud's choice to blame her illness on her relationship with her father and Herr K., thereby ignoring her previous infatuation with Frau K., and the unkind father whose main objective was to let Freud convince her to stop asking him to end his relationship with Frau K. However, for the purpose of my study, I will limit myself to Dora's history with masturbation and Freud's treatment and views on the practice.

On one occasion when Dora visited Freud for analysis, she was wearing around her waist a small purse that she kept playing with; she would open it, close it, and put a finger in it and so on. Freud interpreted these automatic and unconscious movements not just as a desire to masturbate on the part of the young girl, but he also accepted them as a proof that Dora actually masturbated in spite of her denial of indulging in the practice.⁴⁰

"Dora's reticule, which came apart at the top in the usual way, was nothing

⁴⁰ Freud does not take the credibility of his patients for granted, and in women he is doubly suspicious: "The insincerity of women starts from their omitting the characteristic sexual symptoms in describing their states" (Freud, 1966, p. 217).

but a representation of the genitals, and her playing with it, her opening it and putting her finger in it, was an entirely unembarrassed yet unmistakable pantomimic announcement of what she would like to do with them—namely, to masturbate" (Freud, 1953b, p. 77). As Frederick Crews puts it, "If, for example, the proposition that childhood masturbation underlies adult hysteria is justified by citing Dora's fiddling with her purse... no non-Freudian needs to surrender his or her doubts, since in both cases the 'proof' appeals to transformational rules unique to psychoanalysis" (Crews, 1998b, p. 278). The "proof" which Freud presents here that almost amounts to a confession from Dora does not depend on any other theories except the ones put forward by psychoanalysis. For those who are not absolute believers in the power of psychoanalysis, Freud's interpretation of Dora's fiddling with her purse remains an assumption rather than a proof or a silent confession. This absolute belief in the role played by sexual symbols on the part of Freud was questioned as early as 1913 by Knight Dunlap who argued that every single object in the universe can be viewed as a sexual symbol of some sort: "All natural and artificial objects can be turned into Freudian symbols. We may explain, by Freudian principles, why trees have their roots in the ground; why we write with pens; why we put a quart of wine in a bottle instead of hanging it on hooks like a ham; and so on" (Webster, 2005, p. 294).

Dora's is one of the cases in which Freud not only appears as a "confessor," but also as an "inquisitor" or a "policeman," as Webster argues. His interpretation of her fidgeting with her purse is a stark example of the way he pushed the vulnerable young girl into the pathway he wanted and

imposed his theories on her. "Freud treated Dora as a deadly adversary. He sparred with her, laid traps for her, pushed her into corners, bombarded her with interpretations, gave no quarter, was as unspeakable, in his way, as any of the people in her sinister family circle, went too far, and finally drove her away" (Webster, 2005, pp. 197-198). Indeed, in Dora's, as in many other case studies, the conviction appears to be clear as daylight in Freud's mind as does his patient's "guilt". "He appears to decide in advance that his patient is guilty of a particular action, thought or desire, and then to interpret replies to his intensive questioning in such a way that his suspicion is substantiated" (Webster, 2005, p. 199). On this unfounded interpretation several accusations are made to the practice which Dora supposedly indulged in. Freud blames bed-wetting, leucorrhoea, and gastric pains on masturbation in Dora's case study. With regard to bed-wetting which lasts beyond what is considered normal, Freud says: "Bed-wetting of this kind has, to the best of my knowledge, no more likely cause than masturbation, a habit whose importance in the aetiology of bed-wetting in general is still insufficiently appreciated" (Freud, 1953b, p. 74). Freud's efforts in this field are still unappreciated simply because they are not shared by physicians. Although some still believe in the psychological factor in causing bed-wetting, yet even in this case it is blamed on anxiety rather than masturbation. In the majority of cases, however, bed-wetting results from the late development of the bladder control mechanism or from heredity. Furthermore, Freud confirmed that "It is well known that gastric pains occur especially often in those who masturbate" (Freud, 1953b, p. 78). Does he depend here on the writings of Tissot? Or is this conviction passed to him from his friend Fliess

who also shares his hatred for masturbation? It is hard to say where Freud got the idea that masturbation actually causes abdominal pain. In addition to this, he assured Dora that "the occurrence of leucorrhoea in young girls pointed primarily to masturbation, and [he] considered that all the other causes which were commonly assigned to that complaint were put in the background by masturbation" (Freud, 1953b, p. 76).

This leucorrhoeal discharge could also be related to hysterical vomiting, according to Freud. To prove this, he cites the case of a fourteen-year-old girl who suffered from hysterical vomiting. The Viennese physician who was consulted in her case asked her whether she had a sexual relationship with a man. The girl was so outraged by his question that she even narrated the incident to her mother with indignation. Later on, when she visited Freud, he discovered that she had been masturbating for a long time, and the reason for her vomiting is her leucorrhoeal discharge. Even when she put an end to her habit, the feeling of guilt never left her and she started to blame herself for every misfortune in her life (Freud, 1953b, pp. 24-25). Thus, masturbation "has a harmful effect not only by producing neurasthenic symptoms, but also because it keeps the patients under the weight of what they feel to be a disgraceful secret" (Freud, 1962, p. 275). With regard to this obsessional feeling of guilt, there is a case study which was referred to more than once by Freud. It is related to a girl who suffered from what Freud called "obsessional self-reproaches." Whenever she read articles in the paper about criminals or murderers, she would blame herself for their crimes, although she was fully aware, at the same time, that she could not have

taken a part in such crimes. Her physician's inquisition led to the real source of the girl's remorse. It was that "she had allowed herself to be led astray by a woman friend into masturbating, and had practised it for years, fully conscious of her wrong-doing and to the accompaniment of the most violent, but, as usual, ineffective self-reproaches" (Freud, 1962, pp. 55-56). Thus, according to Freud, masturbation does not only lead to leucorrhoea, but also to obsessional self-reproach that can result at times in hysterical symptoms like vomiting. Luckily, however, it seems that the girl in question was fully cured within few months of "treatment and the strictest surveillance." (Freud, 1962, p. 56). Needless to say here, what is meant by the "strictest surveillance" involves preventing the girl from going back to masturbation under any circumstances.

Despite the feelings of sympathy which the case of Dora raises within us for all the theories which Freud applied to her life without any clinical evidence, we have to admit that the young girl was fortunate enough not to be a part of Fliess's experiments with nasal surgery, although she probably was according to Freud a suitable candidate, and also because she was strong enough to reject Freud's interpretation of her case and put an end to the therapy after three months only. The same cannot be said about Freud's daughter, Anna, who spent her entire life in her father's shadow. Being a psychoanalyst herself, Anna was able to publish an article entitled "Beating Fantasies and Daydreams" which echoed her own experience with regard to masturbation. In this article, Anna referred to her own experience as a child who used to make up what she called "nice stories" in reference to her

phantasies and this continued in her adolescent years. However, as one reaches the age of eighteen, masturbation and phantasies become unacceptable (Young-Bruehl, 1988, pp. 59-60). Despite being autobiographical, this article is not the outcome of Anna's studies only, for it has its origins in her father's famous essay "A Child is Being Beaten" in which a reference to his own daughter's case is made. Freud argues that the beating fantasy goes through three phases. The first one can be represented by: "My father is beating the child whom I hate," the second stage is: "I am being beaten by my father," and the final one is categorised by imagining unknown children being beaten by someone other than the father and the child who is fantasising on this is merely an onlooker (Freud, 1955b, pp. 185-186). Freud discusses in this paper the relationship between these fantasies and masturbation along with the feelings of guilt which accompany the practice and the masochistic desire. It is evident in Anna's paper that she believed in her father's theory almost blindly although she admits that the masochistic fantasies were not clear in her head. "Brought up to believe that her father was a scientist of genius who had invented a technique for revealing hidden parts of the mind, Anna Freud was simply not equipped for scepticism" (Webster, 2005, p. 414). Unlike Dora who could not accept Freud's imposed theories, the dutiful daughter Anna completely ruled out the possibility that her father might be fabricating, rather than reawakening, memories that were not there in the first place. She herself frequently interpreted children's fantasies and daydreams in relation to the alleged guilt over masturbation (Webster, 2005, p. 422) thereby simply following the footsteps of her father.

Freud states that "the prevention of masturbation in both sexes is a task that deserves more attention than it has hitherto received" (Freud, 1962, p. 278), if we want to prevent neurasthenia before it happens. Indeed, Freud completely agrees with Havelock Ellis who blames neurasthenia on masturbation, but unlike the latter, Freud seems to devote more time to defining the term and differentiating between several kinds of neuroses. Freud divides Beard's⁴¹ neurasthenia, which he describes as one that covers a "confused jumble of clinical pictures" (Freud, 1995, p. 15) into anxiety neurosis and neurasthenia proper. "Neurasthenia proper, if we detach anxiety neurosis from it, has a very monotonous clinical appearance: fatigue, intracranial pressure, flatulent dyspepsia, constipation, spinal paraesthesias, sexual weakness, etc. The only specific aetiology it allows of is (immoderate) masturbation or spontaneous emissions" (Freud, 1962, p. 150). In simpler terms, the neurasthenia that results from excessive masturbation and frequent nocturnal emissions has several symptoms like tiredness, skull pain, indigestion, constipation, numbness and impotence. Neurasthenia, as we saw with Havelock Ellis, used to be blamed on exhausting the brain with too much intellectual work (Ellis, 1930, p. 380), yet Freud believes nothing of the sort. For him the source of this illness is merely sexual, and those who suffer from it "have been grossly neglecting and damaging their sexual life" (Freud, 1962, p. 272). What he refers to as a damage to the sexual life involves replacing coitus, which is considered the normal sexual outlet, with

⁴¹ George Miller Beard (1839-1883) was the U.S. neurologist who first introduced the term neurasthenia.

masturbation or spontaneous emissions that are described by him as a "less adequate unloading" (Freud, 1962, p. 109).

Although Freud's representation of neurasthenia is clearer than that of Havelock Ellis, yet the symptoms of the "illness" itself remain questionable.

From a scientific point of view all Freud's theories about the sexual aetiology of neurasthenia were, it need scarcely be said, completely spurious. Not only were the poisonous effects which Freud attributed to masturbation and coitus interruptus entirely imaginary, but the syndrome of neurasthenia itself was the product of medical fantasy and ignorance. By far the most intriguing aspect of Freud's idiosyncratic theories about neurasthenia, however, is their historical genealogy. For the opinion that masturbation, and all other forms of non-procreative sexual activity, were harmful and wrong clearly has its origins not in nineteenth-century medicine at all but in Christian theology. (Webster, 2005, p. 189)

As a disorder that stems out of practicing non-productive sex, which Freud considers as unsatisfactory, neurasthenia is simply non-existent. Therefore, Webster searched for the origin of Freud's claims in Christian teaching which condemned solitary sex and led to the publication of such pamphlets as *Onania*. Moreover, Kinsey considered that Freud's ideas on masturbation were a perpetuation of the Talmudic tradition (Kinsey *et al.*, 1953, pp. 170-171). Whether Freud's notions on masturbation are based on his religious views or on his attempt to form a theory that can be applied to almost anyone is not the issue here; rather it is that Freud did not have his study of medicine

in the background when he waged his war against solitary sex. As for those patients who have no memory of ever practicing masturbation, the solution is always there, for the psychoanalyst is the only one who can unearth those distant memories and at times even invent them if need be.

Having examined some of the views expressed by Freud on masturbation, it would be advantageous to compare them to the opinion of his friend Stekel who was a part of the discussion on masturbation, as we saw earlier. In his forward to *Auto-Erotism: A psychiatric study of Masturbation and Neurosis*, Emil A. Gutheil presents Freud's friend and fellow psychoanalyst, Wilhelm Stekel (1868–1940), as a pioneer who changed people's attitude towards masturbation long before Kinsey (Gutheil as cited in Stekel, 1951, p. 2). Indeed, while Freud still maintained that masturbation leads to neurasthenia, Stekel Believed nothing of the sort. Instead, he argues that if any ill symptom is experienced by the masturbators, it should be attributed solely to their misconceptions about the habit. However, "If the harmless character of the auto-erotic act is clearly explained, or if the masturbator happens to have escaped the usual inhibitions, no depression follows the practice; indeed, we hear repeatedly that after an auto-erotic act the subject feels refreshed and relieved of morbid anxieties and compulsions" (Stekel, 1951, p. 42). In other words, if no misapprehensions accompanied the practice, no ill symptoms would result from it. Thus, "All the harm is generated through autosuggestion by the feelings of anxiety" (Stekel, 1951, p. 130). This anxiety is what leads some masturbators to experience headaches or exhaustion after the practice,

which might lead them to resort to abstinence. Herein lies the problem, Stekel argues, for those who deny themselves sexual gratification are the ones who truly suffer; not the ones who indulge in an innocuous habit like masturbation.

Probably, if Stekel's study of masturbation stopped here, he would have been considered a real pioneer, but instead it went on to reveal more prejudices and misconceptions, the most serious of which is that, like Freud, Stekel believes that masturbation is an infantile habit and not simply a variation of sexual practices. "Masturbation is always a regression (Freud) back to the level of infantile sensuality. It even replaces the first and the strongest gratification known to man: the pleasure of sucking. I have repeatedly found among masturbators the phantasy that the penis stands for the nipple that is being milked. Masturbation among men is frequently called milking" (Stekel, 1951, p. 190). Noticeably, like Freud, Stekel does not give much attention to the issue of masturbation in females although his case studies include some women. Apart from this, his allusion to masturbation as an "infantile" habit shows that it is something which children can outgrow. Indeed, according to Stekel, it is possible to give up the habit of masturbation in some cases:

Masturbation is a return to infantile gratification. It is a symptom of psychic infantilism, characteristic of the neurotic. At the right time the child abandons its childish ways if properly trained to assume the role of an adult. But this is not to be achieved through taboos and threats;

it is a question of education and of growth through freedom, such as may be attained through psychoanalysis. (Stekel, 1951, p. 205)

That is to say, if parents and educators refrain from warning their children against masturbating, the practice might go away without effort. In fact, one of the reasons why children are attracted to masturbation lies in parents' warnings against it thereby transforming it into a desirable taboo (Stekel, 1951, p. 202).

Another defence Stekel utilises to put an end to the attack against masturbation involves quoting certain case studies⁴² in which the habit was considered the lesser of the two evils. A case that was brought to the attention of Stekel after being charged of a criminal act involves a married 56 year old man (Stekel, 1951, pp. 50-52). The person in question started to masturbate at a young age and started having coitus at the age of 13. Due to his sexual craving, he kept resorting to prostitutes and masturbation even after marriage. His phantasies during his auto-erotic habit involved young girls, yet he managed to resist the temptation to actualise them despite the availability of childhood prostitution, according to the man in question. However, three years before his visit to Stekel, he decided to abandon masturbation because of the diseases it causes. Because of his abstinence from the habit, he could not resist his desire any longer. He became completely impotent with his wife and had nothing on his mind except the company of young girls, which, achieved, finally brought charges against

⁴² It should be noted here that Ernest Jones questions Stekel's scientific integrity with regard to his case studies which, as Jones insinuated, are thought to be made up. This, however, can be ignored here, because Stekel, like Havelock Ellis, seems to present case studies that suit his conclusions rather than deriving conclusions from his observations.

him. Thus, in this case, Stekel comments: "Masturbation was a safety valve and a protection for this man. At the same time it served as a protection to society" (Stekel, 1951, p. 52). The same applies to another case in which masturbation was the protection against homosexuality. Thus, Stekel deduces, "masturbation is, at least, a lesser evil than the means whereby mischievous meddlers attempt to combat it" (Stekel, 1951, p. 204).

To conclude, I agree with the Freud who declares that the research on masturbation is "inexhaustible" (Freud, 1958, p. 254) and that female masturbation requires a "special study" (Freud, 1958, p. 247), yet the Freud who blames diverse symptoms on the practice will not be able to convince a modern reader. Accusing masturbation of causing bed-wetting, abdominal pain, menstrual pain, leucorrhoea, hysterical vomiting, obsessional self-reproaches and neurasthenia is no more than a groundless and out-dated view. Moreover, I believe that Freud's condemnation of women's auto-erotism is twofold; partly because it belongs to the sphere of autonomous, asocial sexuality, and partly because what applies to female sexuality in general also applies to this practice. One has to admit, however, that it is hard to resist the wiles of a talented fiction writer like Freud, for "Freud as literary magician is immeasurably more deft than Freud as mental lawgiver" (Crews, 1998b, p. 282). Thus, the man who solved the riddle of the Sphinx could neither represent a satisfactory study of female masturbation⁴³ nor find

⁴³ "It has been a matter for regret, too, that we have not been able to pay as much attention to female as to male masturbation; female masturbation, I believe, is deserving of a special study and in its case it is particularly true that a special emphasis lies on the modifications in it that arise in relation to the subject's age" (Freud, 1958, p. 247).

out what women truly wanted.⁴⁴ Perhaps, associating himself with Tiresias instead of Oedipus would have helped.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Raising such a question is in itself an insult to a woman's intelligence; it marginalises her and represents her as not only mysterious but also subhuman, which indeed fits within Freud's misconceptions about women and the theory on female sexuality which resulted from his prejudices.

⁴⁵ In Greek mythology, Tiresias is a blind prophet who was transformed into a woman for seven years. He was the one who revealed to Oedipus that he killed his father.

Chapter Four

Masturbation as a Prerequisite for Married Life

Despite the generality of the all-inclusive title *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, Kinsey's study only presents data which is based on white females from ten American states. Following the publication of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948, the research on females was conducted in the subsequent years and published in 1953 as a quantitative study based on the sexual experience of around five thousand women. The face-to-face interviews were conducted by the four researchers: Alfred Kinsey, Wardell Pomeroy, Clyde Martin and Paul Gebhard exclusively, which was supposed to be reassuring⁴⁶ for the women who agreed to share their most intimate sexual experiences with the world. The study initially included eight thousand women, yet, as is explained in the book, many of the statistics were not included in the final publication because the number of the participants from

⁴⁶ Although Kinsey interviewed many applicants who were willing to participate in his sex research, he chose only the ones whom he approved of. According to his biographer Gathorne-Hardy, the researcher "had to be a man. [Kinsey] was often urged to have a woman interviewer for women and a black one for blacks. On that basis, Kinsey said, he should have prostitutes for prostitutes, criminals for criminals, drug addicts for drug addicts, and so on" (Gathorne-Hardy, 1998, p. 238). One might enquire here, if gender were so insignificant a factor in determining sexual trends and orientations, as to why it was solely elected as the major criterion in dichotomising Kinsey's study. Moreover, if race did not make a difference, why were black women excluded from the study on female sexuality under the pretext that the number of black women was not enough to form a group? Also, why did Kinsey encourage his fellow researchers to have a homosexual experience in particular, since all these classifications of human sexuality did not make a difference for him? It is important to bear in mind that Kinsey as well as his co-authors had sexual relationships with some of the interviewees. Predominantly, the most sexually active ones, males and females, were possible objects of the researchers' sexual attraction. This reveals that objectivity was not one of the factors on which Kinsey based his choice of his fellow-researchers who had to be a copy of himself: married, handsome, clean-shaven, and preferably with homosexual experience. Only Gebhard's moustaches ruined the picture, since he refused to shave them despite Kinsey's pleas.

a certain group, i.e. black women, was not adequate to base the conclusions on. Women who took part in this study were categorised into groups according to their age range, educational background, marital status, religious background, parental occupational class, subject's occupational class, rural-urban background, decade of birth, age at onset of adolescence, geographic origin, and occupations of husbands of female subjects where applicable. Building their work on these divisions, the four researchers studied pre-adolescent sexual development, masturbation, nocturnal sex dreams, pre-marital petting, pre-marital coitus, marital coitus, extra-marital coitus, homosexual responses, and animal contacts.

Before we delve into our study of Kinsey, it would be advantageous to try to answer his co-author, Wardell Pomeroy's question: "How was it possible for a sickly religious boy who grew up to be a serious college student with an obvious talent for biology and an abysmal ignorance of sex—how did this young man evolve into a world authority on sexual behavior who could be mentioned in the same breath with Freud?" (Pomeroy and Kinsey, 1972, p. 21). Indeed, according to the biographer, Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, the young Kinsey was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, on 23 June 1894 into a Methodist family that is "so strict they could, doctrine apart, have been described as Calvinists" (Gathorne-Hardy, 1998, p. 7). The obsession with strict religious, morals led Kinsey's father to impose them not only on his family but on the neighbourhood as well, which made his family unpopular and his young son the target for bullying. Add to that the compendium of poverty-caused illnesses which the young Kinsey suffered and you will know

why his childhood cannot be considered a happy one. Due to an improvement in the family's financial situation, they moved to the village of South Orange when Kinsey became nine years old. The change of environment and diet brought with them better health for the young Kinsey who began to enjoy the fresh air in his countryside walks. It was at Columbia High, that Kinsey started to take an interest in biology, owing to the enthusiasm of his biology teacher. However, Kinsey's father wanted him to study engineering at the Stevens Institute, as the father himself did. Although this was far from Kinsey's interests, it actually took him two years to stand up to his father and defy his will. The young man's dream was to study biology at Bowdoin College, and he not only fulfilled his dream but was registered as a junior because of his two years at Stevens Institute. In April 1920, Kinsey found a post as a lecturer at Indiana University, Bloomington in the zoology department. During that same year, he met Clara Bracken McMillen, or as he nicknamed her Mac, the graduate chemistry student who was to be his wife. The adventurous honeymoon which was spent in the mountains did not go as planned due to what was diagnosed afterwards as a thick hymen that needed a small operation in order for the marriage to be consummated.⁴⁷ It is true that Kinsey's main interest was taxonomy which led him to spend around twenty years collecting gall wasps so that he became the world expert on this

⁴⁷ The incident was definitely frustrating for the young couple and particularly for Kinsey whose honeymoon experience affected his later work on sexuality. "Certainly the damage brought about by endlessly delayed coitus, for both men and women, was to be one of the leitmotifs of Kinsey's later work" (Gathorne-Hardy, 1998, p. 60). Also, it is important to connect this incident to Kinsey's notion, on which more will follow, that pre-marital experience, contrary to the widespread conviction, enhances the chances of enjoying a successful married life. Perhaps, if Mac had an earlier experience, she would have saved her honeymoon as well as her husband from all the exasperation and vexation they had to endure.

tiny insect due to his diligence in trying to collect a colossal collection, yet his interest in sex was not an overnight decision and shift in interest as Pomeroy's earlier question might lead us to believe. In fact even during the time he spent at the Young Men's Christian Association, he used to answer boys' questions about sexuality. "At one summer camp an adolescent boy confessed to Kinsey that he was masturbating too much. Kinsey knew there was only one thing to do. He took the boy into his tent and together they knelt by the bed roll while Kinsey prayed that God would help them both stop" (Gathorne-Hardy, 1998, pp. 39-40). Indeed, we are told that he was still defying the urge to masturbate at the age of twenty (Gathorne-Hardy, 1998, p. 24). However, Kinsey's first step into the world of sex research began in 1938 when he was chosen to instruct the marriage course at Indiana University.

Following his marriage course, Kinsey started working on his project with the help of his fellow researchers under the sponsorship of The Rockefeller Foundation. Scientists and laymen alike were filled with anticipation at the prospect of reading a study that presented a comprehensive view of human sexuality. The sex researchers, however, shrouded their work with secrecy that only fuelled people's imagination and excitement.

From the beginning, however, there were certain things about the study that disquieted many of us. There was an aura of secrecy about it that seemed quite unnecessary for a scientific work in progress, and along with the hush-hush a certain almost exhibitionistic need to stir

up questions and curiosity about the contents of the report, which increasingly resulted in a plethora of rumours, jokes, hints of great truths to be revealed, and almost a frenzy of public concern as the time for publication drew near. (Ginsburg, 1954, p. 30)

The long-awaited *Kinsey Reports*, as they are referred to, became best-sellers which procured a wide spectrum of reviews that ranged from total disapproval of the study, as presenting America as nothing but a filthy society, to an appreciation of a much needed post-war research about human sexuality, and everything in between. According to Miriam Reumann, the criticism of *Kinsey's Reports* fell into one of four categories: "religious, moral, nationalistic, or psychoanalytic" (Reumann, 2005, p. 26). Some men of religion disapproved of Kinsey's studies which, as they viewed them, concentrate on the physiological side of sexuality while completely obliterating the emotional side. For them, love was utterly non-existent in the *Reports* thereby endangering the morality of the family and subsequently the society as a whole. Those who censured Kinsey's studies from a nationalistic point of view argued that the belief that there is no difference between what is normal or abnormal would lead to the destruction of the American civilisation. The final category of critics included psychoanalysts and psychiatrists who realised that all the studies on human sexuality which thrived in their fields of study were completely left out, ignored and at times simply dismissed by Kinsey. On the other side of the spectrum were those who admired the *Reports* "for reasons ranging from its contribution to

scientific knowledge to its potential to liberate Americans from hidebound sexual norms" (Reumann, 2005, p. 27).

Despite the mixed reviews with which Kinsey's *Reports* were received, many researchers appreciated the effort exerted in what was considered an innovative work. The psychiatrist, Iago Galdston, who had several objections against Kinsey's studies like most psychoanalysts and psychiatrists, preferred to begin his critique with a word of appreciation for the research that aimed to correct the attitude in which human sexuality has been viewed for two thousand years: "There is a saying in Russian that when a bear dances the wonder is not how well he dances—but that he dances at all. Something of this wonder is inherent in Kinsey's book, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female*" (Galdston, 1954, p. 40). Presenting such a study to the world was a grand feat in itself even from the point of view of those who had a bone to pick with Kinsey and his fellow researchers. However, this was not the only advantage of introducing these sex studies. Kinsey, who majored in taxonomy (collecting and classifying organisms), used the same skill which prompted him to collect thousands of tiny insects from the wilderness, in studying the different manifestations of human sexuality. He used the enormous amount of data he collected to correct the notions which most people had as a result of their religious background as well as their readings in psychoanalysis. Kinsey realised that females reach orgasm in 95 per cent of their masturbatory activity and they are capable of reaching orgasm in just seconds, which reveals that females are not frigid or slow to reach orgasm as people used to believe. He blamed women's frigidity on the male's

ignorance of the female anatomy. Men's inability to recognise that the clitoris as well as the *labia minora* are the most sensitive organs in the female body is the chief factor behind women's failure to reach orgasm in coitus.

Furthermore, Kinsey concluded from his collected data that the time of the maximum "erotic responsiveness" for women is not during ovulation. Thus, females are considered different from most other mammals in which oestrus and ovulation coincide thereby maximising the chances of reproduction. In human females maximum responsiveness which is marked by the abundance of vaginal mucus secretions takes place before or after the menstrual period.

Some of the women who masturbate only once in a month do so in the period just before or immediately after menstruation. Evidently the human female, in the course of evolution, has departed from her mammalian ancestors and developed new characteristics which have relocated the period of maximum sexual arousal near the time of menstruation. (Kinsey *et al.*, 1953, p. 610).

It is important to note that Kinsey's commencement of sex research was at a time when "the definition of 'masturbation' in Webster's... was 'self-pollution'" (Gathorne-Hardy, 1998, p. 95). Indeed one of the reasons why Kinsey undertook the mission of presenting such a monumental research is the ignorance surrounding matters of sex even in the circle of university students. Kinsey and his fellow researchers' findings on masturbation, among other things, were presented not only in the *Reports* but also in several publications like *Girls and Sex* by Wardell B. Pomeroy, who was a

co-author of both *Reports* on human sexuality. After the death of Kinsey in 1956, Paul Gebhard was chosen to be his successor as the director of the Kinsey Institute, which induced the disappointed Pomeroy to concentrate on his own work. He practiced sex therapy in New York, wrote several books about human sexuality, and later became dean of the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality in San Francisco, California. It would be advantageous to examine the information presented in his book *Girls and Sex*, which is not only based on his work with Kinsey, but also aimed at the sex education of the adolescent girls which makes it doubly important. Unlike many books on sexuality, including the *Reports*, masturbation in *Girls and Sex* is not discussed towards the beginning of the book, but rather in chapter nine between the discussion on heterosexuality and homosexuality. Adopting such a structure might be aimed at severing the bond which Freud established between self-stimulation and the infantile. Indeed, Pomeroy stresses towards the beginning of his chapter on masturbation that "studies show that girls who learn to have orgasm through masturbation have an easier time in responding to intercourse than those who do not" (Pomeroy, 1971, p. 109). He further emphasises that the only harm that can result from self-stimulation of the genitals results from either the irritation caused by excessive friction or a minor infection due to inserting unhygienic objects into the vagina or even the urethra. No scientific evidence can support the belief that masturbation can in actuality lead to the numerous diseases which are blamed on the practice. For Pomeroy, those who still accept the liability of auto-erotism for causing all kinds of ills "would have to accept the notion that facial spots, poor posture, dullness of mind, cancer, stomach upsets, sterility,

headaches and kidney trouble, among other ills, are the result of masturbation" (Pomeroy, 1971, p. 109). The opposite is true. According to Pomeroy, masturbation has several advantages, as long as it is enjoyed in private, the most important of which is the pleasure it provides whether the girl reaches orgasm or not, in addition to teaching a girl how to reach orgasm which will be beneficial for her during coitus. Minor advantages are also involved in auto-erotism including "the fact that there is no danger of venereal disease or of pregnancy; that it does no harm to her or anyone else; that it offers a variety of sexual experience and provides a way of developing one's fantasy life" (Pomeroy, 1971, p. 110).

However, Kinsey's claim that the psychological factor has an influence on men more than it does on women is definitely noteworthy. Pomeroy reiterates this notion by claiming that there is a major difference between masturbation in boys and girls and this is what girls think during the masturbatory act. He claims that the girls who think during masturbation in many cases imagine nothing but a romantic environment, marriage, or simply being with a boy. They might think of an earlier experience like kissing a boy, but unlike boys who tend to develop their sexual fantasies and take them to the level of genital contact, many girls do not seem to be interested in such scenarios. The girls who actually have fantasies, according to Pomeroy, find their ideas which might involve a desire to have sex with a relative or a wish to be raped quite disturbing. However, Pomeroy declares that almost a third of girls think of nothing in particular when they masturbate with the exception of concentrating on the sensation itself. Now, bearing in mind his statement

that "the average girl has a climax in less than four minutes" (Pomeroy, 1971, p. 113), it is somewhat difficult to fathom how as many as 33% of women think of nothing but the pleasurable sensation for four minutes. This is almost as improbable as believing that a grieved person who lost a parent, say, would think of nothing except sadness. Such a conclusion in Kinsey's study might have resulted from women's refusal to narrate such intimate fantasies to a stranger or even their inability to admit it even to themselves. From the notion that women are not affected by the psychological factor of fantasy and that they prefer actual intimacy to the prospect of watching other couples have sex resulted the immensely exaggerated belief that most women are not interested in pornography or are unaffected by erotic art.

With regard to fantasy, it seems that women according to Kinsey are inferior to men. He even laments the fact that despite that they started to have careers and participate more in the social life, their erotic imagination still needs improvement. Kinsey told a journalist in 1948 that some girls are interested in sexuality simply because of the social factor of attending shows and enjoying car rides with amusing company. Sexual intercourse for such girls is taken as a part of the deal and nothing more. For Kinsey, the sex drive is more related to boys than girls (Jones, 1997, pp. 678-679). Many female readers were not satisfied with the way in which he presented female sexuality to the world. Those included the ones who tried to prove that women were not sexually inferior to men and also those who thought that Kinsey's figures were exaggerated. Some female readers also contested the fact that the women who were willing to give their sexual history to male

researchers were truly representative of average women. The novelist Kathleen Norris believed that the five thousand women who contributed their most intimate sexual secrets came from questionable backgrounds. For her, what she called "Genuine women" would not talk about their sexuality (Reumann, 2005, p. 99).

Despite those not so favourable views of Kinsey's work, it would be important to note that he was aware of the cultural effect on his findings regarding human sexuality. When comparing the sexuality of males and females towards the end of his *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, he acknowledged the fact that his results are definitely influenced by years of discrimination against women.

In view of the historical backgrounds of our Judeo-Christian culture, comparisons of females and males must be undertaken with some trepidation and a considerable sense of responsibility. It should not be forgotten that the social status of women under early Jewish and Christian rule was not much above that which women still hold in the older Asiatic cultures. Their current position in our present-day social organization has been acquired only after some centuries of conflict between the sexes. There were early bans on the female's participation in most of the activities of the social organization; in later centuries there were chivalrous and galante attempts to place her in a unique position in the cultural life of the day. (Kinsey *et al.*, 1953, p. 567)

Of course, here the inferiority of the social status of women is blamed on the Judeo-Christian tradition,⁴⁸ which cannot be considered a comprehensive view of the issue. However, it is understandable in view of what we know about the hatred which the young Kinsey harboured against religion. The point remains that his acknowledgment of the cultural effect of discrimination against women on his studies is definitely laudable. Kinsey, also, acknowledges the influence of culture with regard to another issue which is how acceptable a certain sexual orientation is in certain cultures. For instance, although marital coitus is acceptable and endorsed in almost all cultures, it is not allowed for Catholic and Buddhist priests. Homosexuality, on the other hand, which is attacked in many cultures, is allowed to Buddhist priests, as Kinsey argues (Kinsey *et al.*, 1953, pp. 320-321).

As was said earlier, an important category of critics of Kinsey's Report include psychiatrists and psychoanalysts, whose work on sexuality was completely ignored or at times misinterpreted and consequently rejected by the four sex researchers. Kinsey rejects completely the idea of infantile masturbation which is presented by Freud, even though, as some psychoanalysts explain, he appears to have misunderstood the concept totally. Kinsey stated that he is aware of the presence of adults who do masturbate and yet they cannot be considered immature. However, as a psychiatrist explains, Kinsey does not show an understanding of what Freud meant by infantile. "[Freud] had in mind the individual to whom heterosexual

⁴⁸ "Kinsey told Pomeroy that he could neither forget nor forgive his father's stern and guilt-inducing morality, nor the agony it had caused him for so long. The most basic force behind his sex research was deeply personal and extremely simple and it lies here: that no one else should have to suffer as he had suffered" (Gathorne-Hardy, 1998, p. 24).

relations were possible and available but who, for neurotic reasons, preferred to masturbate. Such an individual is infantile and immature, at least in his sexual behaviour" (Galdston, 1954, p. 43). In this sense of the word, it does seem that Kinsey, surprisingly, agrees with Freud. That is because he explains that some men resort to auto-erotism simply to run away from their real life in which heterosexual coitus is not readily available. "It is now clear that masturbation is relied upon by the upper level primarily because it has an insufficient outlet through heterosexual coitus. This is, to a degree, an escape from reality, and the effect upon the ultimate personality of the individual is something that needs consideration" (Kinsey *et al.*, 1948, p. 515). Pomeroy, in his *Girls and Sex*, also stresses the idea that boys and girls because of nonsexual reasons. "Boredom, frustration and loneliness are motivations. Sometimes they do it because they have a poor opinion of themselves, don't know how to get along with the other sex, or find themselves in constant conflict with parents. If they are under great pressure at school, boys particularly tend to masturbate more" (Pomeroy, 1971, pp. 114-115). Pomeroy explains to such persons who indulge in auto-erotism for reasons other than sexual arousal, that masturbation provides no more than a temporary relief of the problem. However, to put an end to such problems, girls and boys should resort to counselling rather than masturbation. This would have been a perfectly acceptable advice if the word sex was used instead of concentrating on masturbation. Some people, young or old, might resort to all kinds of sexual contacts for nonsexual reasons and not just to masturbation. The concentration on self stimulation not only re-establishes the severed bond with Freud through his notion of infantile sexuality, but also

shows how despite their claim of the contrary, the four sex researchers did in fact set heterosexual coitus as the standard. This is manifested in Pomeroy's listing not knowing "how to get along with the other sex" (Pomeroy, 1971, p. 114) as the incorrect reasons for resorting to masturbation.

Kinsey preferred to exclude matters of the heart from his study so much so that he was associated with the anti-Romantic Marquis de Sade: "He is not so unqualified a sexual materialist as was the Marquis de Sade, but he sought above all else to separate human sexual experience from its elaborate emotional associations" (Robinson, 1976, p. 194). Still, I believe that Sade had a passion of his own for his sadomasochistic passion was the force which motivated all his works; the same cannot be said about Kinsey who, it seems, was not driven by such a passion or indeed any other passion. One of the most notable examples in relation to this particular notion is his including a woman's description of her three-year-old daughter's masturbation

Lying face down on the bed, with her knees drawn up, she started rhythmic pelvic thrusts, about one second or less apart. The thrusts were primarily pelvic, with the legs tensed in a fixed position. The forward components of the thrusts were in a smooth and perfect rhythm which was unbroken except for momentary pauses during which the genitalia were readjusted against the doll on which they were pressed; the return from each thrust was convulsive, jerky.

There were 44 thrusts in unbroken rhythm, a slight momentary pause, 87 thrusts followed by a slight momentary pause, then 10 thrusts, and

then a cessation of all movement. There was marked concentration and intense breathing with abrupt jerks as orgasm approached. She was completely oblivious to everything during these later stages of the activity. Her eyes were glassy and fixed in a vacant stare. There was noticeable relief and relaxation after orgasm. A second series of reactions began two minutes later with series of 48, 18, and 57 thrusts, with slight momentary pauses between each series. With the mounting tensions, there were audible gasps, but immediately following the cessation of pelvic thrusts there was complete relaxation and only desultory movements thereafter. (Kinsey *et al.*, 1953, pp. 104-105)

This description was given as a part of Kinsey's attempt to argue that masturbation during childhood is "normal" and "quite frequent," which can be considered a transformation in attitude since Freud, but it might be helpful to shed some light on Kinsey's methodology with regard to the mother's description of her daughter's masturbatory habit. The woman who gave that detailed description of her observations was granted Kinsey's approval of her report, for she was described as an "intelligent mother."⁴⁹ She is probably intelligent because she was able to present the kind of data which sex researchers themselves might like to present, for observation has to be a more accurate method than interviewing. This is because with observation the possibility of exaggerating or hiding details is eliminated; however, this

⁴⁹ Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, one of Kinsey's biographers, reveals that this woman was a Bloomington mother and the doll which the young girl used to masturbate was a teddy bear. Bloomington is the city in which Kinsey lived and followed his teaching career at Indiana University. However, no other information is given about the mother in question.

can only be if the subjects were completely oblivious to the fact that they are being watched and their actions are observed and recorded. This was possible in the case of the "intelligent" mother because she recorded the actions of a child. The issue here is that the child does not appear as an active subject; her masturbatory habit is recorded in details while she was "completely oblivious to everything" and most probably without her permission. This clashes with Kinsey's endeavour to argue that adult-child petting does not result in ill consequences simply because some children encourage it. Apart from the point that presenting a sexual encounter as not having side effects is not exactly comforting, the problem of presenting the child as an active participant was not very successful in Kinsey's study, and the shockingly detailed observation of the "intelligent" mother ended up raising many questions and doubts instead of presenting a basis for the valid argument that masturbation is "normal" in children.

To answer some of these questions, it would be expedient to examine some of the data presented in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in which Kinsey tried to reveal the "scientific" facts about children's sexuality for the first time. He argues that despite the lack of ejaculation in pre-adolescent boys and girls, orgasms have been recorded of children as young as five months old in boys and four months old in girls. The manifestations of these orgasms, according to Kinsey, develop from genital tension to bodily tension which might become intense enough to induce "violent convulsions of the whole body; heavy breathing, groaning, sobbing, or more violent cries, sometimes with an abundance of tears" (Kinsey *et al.*, 1948, p. 161). In

extreme cases which make around 3 per cent of the pre-adolescent boys "extreme trembling, collapse, loss of color, and sometimes fainting of subject" (Kinsey *et al.*, 1948, p. 161) might occur, although this is more frequent in girls. In the notorious table 34⁵⁰, Kinsey presents an example of multiple orgasms in pre-adolescent boys within a certain time frame. It is true that only the "higher frequencies" are presented in this table, yet some of the examples in it are definitely noteworthy. According to the table, an 11 month old boy orgasms 14 times within 38 minutes, a 4 year old orgasms 6 times in five minutes, a 13 year old orgasms three times in 70 seconds. Even more striking examples include the 4 year old and 13 year old who both orgasm 26 times within 24 hours, and the 10 year old who orgasms 14 times in 24 hours. Under table 32, Kinsey mentions that the time was recorded using a second hand or stop watch (Kinsey *et al.*, 1948, p. 179). Dr Judith Reisman, who first drew the public's attention to what she considered child molestation in Kinsey's study, discussed two main issues only the second of which is of any concern to my study. The first issue to which most of Reisman's attack on Kinsey was devoted is related to paedophilia and whether pre-adolescent sex should be legalised or not. Important as this issue is, it is not related to my current chapter. Only the second issue which is related to what she termed "scientific fraud" in Kinsey's Reports is closely related to my research.

⁵⁰ A 30-minute documentary entitled *The Children of Table 34* was produced by Family Research Council to discuss Kinsey's chapter on "Early Sexual Growth and Activity." According to Family Research council website: "The video *The Children of Table 34* reveals how the flawed Kinsey 'science' is still being used to promote a pedophilic agenda, and is dedicated to the children who were forced to suffer at the hands of this sordid agenda." <http://www.frc.org/dvdvideo/children-of-table-34-dvd>.

Naturally, the data which is recorded in table 34 was not recorded by the boys and infants themselves, and they were not simply memories recalled by adults about their own childhood sexual habits; the figures were made by adults observing, and at times having sexual contacts with, the children and recording their findings immediately using pens, papers, and stopwatches. Furthermore, the adults, whose experiments were used in Kinsey's study, were "trained" to do so as Kinsey himself stated: "Some of these adults are technically trained persons who have kept diaries or other records which have been put at our disposal; and from them we have secured information on 317 pre-adolescents who were either observed in self masturbation, or who were observed in contacts with other boys or older adults" (Kinsey *et al.*, 1948, p. 177). Thus, going back to the "intelligent mother," it would be possible to understand how she was capable of recording the smallest details about her daughter's masturbatory habit; she was definitely trained to do so by Kinsey himself. Judging from the extremely detailed description of the daughter's masturbatory habit, the mother had to be standing there in close proximity to the child for she was capable of even watching the look in her eyes, she was counting the thrusts and timing how further apart they were, then recording these details immediately, for it is difficult to remember all these figures and narrate them to the sex researcher afterwards. It remains to be deduced whether the mother kept watching the child in order to be there and start recording at the right time, whether the child always masturbates at the same time, or if the doll used in masturbation was introduced by the mother to encourage the child to masturbate. It is difficult to find out which scenario of the three took place, and I will not adopt

Judith Reisman's conviction that "masturbation in a young child may follow from prior sexual molestation" (Reisman and Eichel, 1990, p. 81). However, what makes a reader doubt such narrations are the outrageous figures introduced in table 34, for how would a child in a normal situation reach 26 orgasms in 24 hours? Apart from the moral dilemma here which might rise from the experiment of prompting a four year old boy to have this large number of orgasms in what appears to be a sleepless day, or even manipulating the genitals of the young boy to cause such results, it is hard to take these numbers into consideration for they were not recorded in the usual conditions. They were definitely recorded under the continuous pressure of an adult holding a stopwatch in his hand and recording the results in his notebook immediately. What might add to the reader's bafflement is that exact same experiment was repeated with a 13 year old boy under the same pressurised conditions. Of course here, the teenage boy was fully aware of the presence of the adult as well as what he was doing.

Another noteworthy example is Kinsey's claim that "there are females who report masturbating to orgasm as frequently as a hundred times in an hour" (Kinsey *et al.*, 1953, p. 199). Unfortunately, this allegation is not accompanied by any explanation, leaving the astounded reader to wonder about this herculean feat of masturbating to orgasm once in every 36 seconds for a whole hour without intervals. What adds to the stupefaction resulting from reading this statement is the plural "females" which suggests that this practice is in actuality shared by more than one rather than being a single phenomenon, and that he claims that it was a state of masturbation to

orgasm which rules out the possibility that this high number might have resulted from what he calls multiple orgasms. However, Kinsey does not forget to add that "such exceedingly high rates are never approached by the male" (Kinsey *et al.*, 1953, p. 199). Thus, the results are not only compared to those presented by males, but they are also exaggerated or minimised to present women as superhuman or subhuman at times in comparison with the standard male.

"There is a tendency," Kinsey says, "to consider anything in human behavior that is unusual, not well known, or not well understood, as neurotic, psychopathic, immature, perverse, or an expression of some other sort of psychologic disturbance" (Kinsey *et al.*, 1953, p. 195). It would seem that this is exactly what he aims to disprove throughout his studies on males and females alike. Despite the modern reader's tendency to agree with such a statement, the "scientificity" of Kinsey's data and the interpretation thereof should still be examined. Probably as a reaction to the misconception that masturbation in females prevents them from enjoying marital coitus, Kinsey argues that, according to the statistics he based on his female interviewees, those who masturbate before marriage find marital coitus satisfactory more than those who never masturbate. The problem with this conclusion is that establishing this correlation between these two practices exclusively oversimplifies the issue. A woman who never masturbates might not find her marriage satisfactory but that does not mean that she will never find gratification in extra-marital coitus, for instance. Even the technique which the woman and her sexual partner implement does make a difference as to

how gratifying the intercourse is, which makes it hard to generalise. Thus, Kinsey's claim seems to be an attempt to defend a practice which has been condemned for years, *i.e.* masturbation, rather than a realistic inference which is based on facts.

Kinsey is definitely aware of the possibility of having several factors at work in the correlation between masturbation or pre-marital petting to orgasm and marital coitus. "Selective factors are probably involved. The girls who respond to orgasm in pre-marital petting are probably those who are basically most responsive, and they, therefore, are the ones who are most likely to make better sexual adjustments after marriage. But we are inclined to believe that causal relationships are also involved" (Kinsey *et al.*, 1953, p. 265). The marriage counsellor Emily Mudd is one of the several researchers who disagree with Kinsey on this point. She refers to the case of a young couple who waited till they were married to have a full sexual relationship, yet they had no problem in establishing a successful marital relationship soon after their marriage. The marital relationship worked fine although the girl had no previous experience in masturbation or in pre-marital petting. Another couple had a satisfactory sexual relationship before marriage and yet the girl stopped reaching orgasm after marriage (Mudd, 1954, p. 140). Mudd comments on her own experience in marriage counselling saying: "Personally, I do not believe that any hard and fast recommendation of what is a 'healthy attitude' or 'healthier' behaviour can or should be super-imposed on any individual against his own judgment and inclinations" (Mudd, 1954, p. 141). What she is probably referring to here is Kinsey's attempt to impose his

own ideas of the importance of having a pre-marital experience in order to better your chances of procuring better marital coitus. Although Kinsey claims not to believe in what is called normal or abnormal in sexuality, he does present pre-marital coitus, or any orgasmic experience, as the recommended norm. He makes the claim that pre-marital experience can teach the girl how to reach orgasm after marriage although he does not think that coitus and orgasm should be spontaneous as is the case with mammals. This is only one side of the problem. The other side refers to what many researchers criticised in Kinsey's Reports and that is depending fully on the quantitative rather than qualitative method, especially in relation to his study of the orgasm. For him, measuring how satisfactory a relationship is depends on the number of orgasms reached and not on the quality of those orgasms. As Eli Ginzberg puts it, "Satisfaction can never be assessed solely in quantitative terms. The person who eats the most is not necessarily the person who derives greatest satisfaction from eating" (Ginzberg, 1954, p. 187). In other words, not all orgasms are equal. When Kinsey tried to prove that females can reach orgasm in a short time exactly like males, in the cases when they do not try to postpone their sexual climax, he should have referred to the quality of these orgasms and not just treat the issue as if it were a race between the two sexes. He is justified in trying to change people's views concerning female frigidity, yet in eliminating the quality aspect he simply underlined one point at the expense of another equally important one.

Although Kinsey appears to be trying to expunge the boundaries which separate the normal from the abnormal, what he does in reality is simply shift the abnormality from certain practices to others. Celibacy is one of the most condemned choices according to Kinsey, for even though he admits that not all unmarried females are considered a danger for society, he does condemn them and state that they should not be given the chance to ruin the sexual lives of youth:

When such frustrated or sexually unresponsive, unmarried females attempt to direct the behavior of other persons, they may do considerable damage. There were grade school, high school, and college teachers among these unresponsive or unresponding females. Some of them had been directors of organizations for youth, some of them had been directors of institutions for girls or older women, many of them had been active in women's clubs and service organizations, and not a few of them had had a part in establishing public policies. Some of them had been responsible for some of the more extreme sex laws which state legislatures had passed. Not a few of them were active in religious work, directing the sexual education and trying to direct the sexual behavior of other persons. Some of them were medically trained, but as physicians they were still shocked to learn of the sexual activities of even their average patients. If it were realized that something between a third and a half of the unmarried females over twenty years of age have never had a completed sexual experience, parents and particularly the males in the population might

debate the wisdom of making such women responsible for the guidance of youth. (Kinsey *et al.*, 1953, pp. 526-527)

It would be interesting to find out how "the males in the population" would learn whether the unmarried female teachers were responsive or not. Should unmarried females be prevented from teaching, being physicians, working at women clubs, or even the legal system as a pre-emptive measure?

Alternatively, should they be examined or fill out a questionnaire to reveal whether they are sexually responsive or not? Apparently, Kinsey takes his infatuation with marriage to a whole new level in this cautionary passage, and he treats it almost as if it were a test for a female's aptness for taking part in a large number of professions. Needless to say, many parents today would prefer the unresponsive, unmarried female to many of the adults who provided information about children's sexual habits in *Kinsey's Reports*.

Indeed, many of the parents who have the chance to watch the documentary *Secret History: Kinsey's Paedophiles* and notice how Gebhard, a co-author of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, laughs when he mentions the word paedophilia and treats the issue lightly, many parents I say would prefer the unmarried females to the four researchers themselves. Whether this attitude on the part of parents today is justifiable or not is an issue that my chapter will not cover, yet it is undeniable that they go to great measures in order to protect their children from the paedophile and not the unmarried female. Kinsey's point here seems to be his assumption that celibates are necessarily neurotic. To this the Professor of Economics, Eli Ginzberg replies that "continence need not lead to neurosis or psychosis, and there is no

known relation between continence and work performance. Many who have regular sexual experiences are seriously disturbed in their work and in other aspects of their lives" (Ginzberg, 1954, p. 188).

It is important here to examine what the notion of marriage involves for Kinsey since he chose to replace all the standards which have been used to measure the normalcy of the sexual acts with only this one; that is, how beneficial any sexual tendency is in married life. According to Kinsey, women were "identified as married if they were living with their spouses either in formally consummated legal marriages, or in common-law relationships which had lasted for at least a year" (Kinsey *et al.*, 1953, p. 53). Thus, not only the legally married couples are studied within the field of marital coitus, but also those who have been living together and having a sexual relationship for a year as a minimum. However, this classification does not seem to correspond with how Kinsey defined marriage outside his books. To begin with, he insisted, as I mentioned earlier, that his fellow researchers should be married. He encouraged his daughter to marry her fiancé as soon as possible that when the latter requested to postpone the wedding for financial reasons, Kinsey offered to help in order to hasten the marriage. Kinsey himself remained married to the same woman till his death, unlike his father, who despite his alleged piety, ended up divorcing Kinsey's mother and leaving her destitute. Obviously, what is meant here is a legal, life-long marriage and not just a year's relationship. However, Kinsey was neither interested in monogamy nor exclusivity. Kinsey as well as his fellow researchers had sexual intercourse with men, women and with each other.

Even Kinsey's wife had sex with some of the researchers who worked with her husband with his approval, encouragement, and even under his suggestion. At one time, Mac, Kinsey's wife, joined her husband, Pomeroy and Gebhard on a trip, and she had sex with both Kinsey and Pomeroy. Her husband asked Gebhard whether he would like to have sex with Mac commenting: "You don't tell someone you don't want their wife" (Gathorne-Hardy, 1998, p. 300). According to the biographer, "Mac was perfectly willing, and perfectly passive" (Gathorne-Hardy, 1998, p. 300). Indeed, even the extremely sympathetic biography written by Gathorne-Hardy could not represent Kinsey as a family man. He did grieve for the death of his son and to be honest he does not appear to be an evil father or husband, yet the characters of the wife and children are extremely flat to the point of making them almost peripheral. We are told that Kinsey worked at his project for 14 or even 16 hours per day which only left time for him to have dinner with the family. Mac used to call him twice; once to tell him that dinner is ready and another time to tell him that he should go home to sleep. Clearly, this was not an extremely happy marriage.⁵¹ Indeed, putting all the pieces together one might venture to say that marriage for Kinsey was no more than a sham behind which he hid his bisexuality. Marriage ensured respectability in the

⁵¹ According to Kinsey, three quarters of the cases of divorce are caused by sexual problems. It is interesting to consider Kinsey's own marriage in view of this statement. The marriage was started with sheer ignorance in sexual matters on the part of the 20 year old bride and the 27 year old groom. Indeed, according to James Jones, Mac's knowledge of sexual matters at the time of her marriage can be summarised by the word "none" (Jones, 1997, p. 170). The honeymoon predicament which prevented the couple from consummating their marriage for several months, added to the confusion. After almost 30 years of marriage, Kinsey complained to Gebhard that his wife was less interested in sex than he was. At a certain point in their marriage, Kinsey and Mac had separate rooms despite sharing the same sexual partners (Gathorne-Hardy, 1998, p. 289). Unfortunately, we are not told whether Mac enjoyed the company of other sexual partners who were not acquaintances of Kinsey, yet we know that this strange relationship called marriage did not end in divorce.

society which did not accept having homosexual relationships openly.

Indeed, when the biographer met Kinsey's daughters and they were in their seventies, he commented that "they were considerably shattered by the still recent revelations about their parents' private lives" (Gathorne-Hardy, 1998, p. 445). Even the daughters who were taught to accept nudity at home could not accept their parents' open marriage. Such a lifestyle might not shock or disturb the modern reader, yet accepting such an insignificant marriage as the standard to which sexual acts are compared might be difficult.

At a certain point in his biography of Kinsey, Pomeroy makes the much-quoted statement: Kinsey "would have done business with the devil himself if it would have furthered the research" (Pomeroy and Kinsey, 1972, p. 198). Some of the people he dealt with could have earned that epithet in fact without much exaggeration. These include, to name but a few, Mr. Green who provided Kinsey with much of his information on child sexuality and Vierek who was both a case study and one of Hitler's admirers. However, the problem in studying Kinsey lies within dealing with the devil in Kinsey himself. It was easy and understandable for any reader in the 50's to criticise the *Kinsey Reports* from a moralistic point of view. Today's reader or critic, however, has to stress the point that their critique does not stem from their conventionality or tendency to preach, but rather from serious inaccuracies that abound within the *Reports*. Two main issues were discussed in this chapter in relation to these mistakes. The first one includes Kinsey's study of child sexuality in which he depended on questionable sources in obtaining his information and consequently presented implausible

data. The other one is related to Kinsey's establishment of marital coitus as the new standard to which other sexual contacts including masturbation should be measured.

Kinsey did in fact change the view in which both homosexuality and masturbation are considered. He corrected the notion that masturbation is harmful, for the only harm, according to Kinsey, stems from the feeling of guilt which parents impose on their children. Moreover, he tried to prove that, unlike what Freud claimed, female masturbation does not have a bad effect on marital coitus. He further established that vaginal orgasm does not exist, and that the sensitive areas in the female genitals were the clitoris and *labia minora* only. However, what might seem as a huge leap in Kinsey's work from that of Freud is not in fact so. The idea of the infantile sexuality that lingers through the practice of masturbation in adulthood is still there but presented in a different packaging.

Conclusively, despite the huge number of interviews which Kinsey and his fellow researchers conducted and the monumental amount of data they examined, it would seem that their whole work was based on their attempt to prove that every sexual act is normal. In other words, their conclusions might have preceded their research. "Kinsey, of course, does not advocate libertinism. He doesn't advocate" anything. He allows his figures to do that for him. But his figures are like puppets, and he pulls the strings" (Galdston, 1954, p. 45). In addition, and instead of abolishing the "standard" to which earlier researchers used to measure sexual practices, they simply introduced others like marriage, for instance, to which many sexual acts, including

masturbation, were put into perspective. Thus, between the early writers who bashed masturbation as a heinous sin and terrifying illness and those who, like Kinsey, applauded the practice as a cure and preparation for the married life, we miss the chance of finding an objective study that discards assumptions and focuses on reality instead.

Chapter Five

In the Absence of a Sexual Partner

In his *Modernization of Sex*, Paul Robinson argues that Masters and Johnson's contribution to the study of sexuality includes several vital themes that range from their work on sexual inadequacy to sexuality in aging persons (Robinson, 1976, p. 120). However, their chief influence remains, arguably, the way in which their almost feminist views were presented not just on female sexuality but also sexuality in general. Many feminists considered that the writings of Masters and Johnson were emancipating for several reasons. To begin with, they liberated women from the shackles of the idea of vaginal orgasm, for those who did not experience it used to consider themselves as inadequate and immature. They also debunked the notion that men are more sexual than women when they revealed that unlike men, women are capable of multiple orgasms. Besides, they corrected the old view that the clitoris is no more than a counterpart of the male organ.

When Virginia Johnson applied for the position of an assistant of Masters, she had no conception of what her future career would involve. At the time, she believed that Masters' work is related to how to resolve fertility problems in married couples. After all, Virginia, like many girls in her generation, knew absolutely nothing about sex, and her mother's lesson about pregnancy, added to the ambiguity of the matter instead of clarifying the issue in the little girl's mind. When she had sex for the first time at the

age of fifteen, both she and her young boyfriend were virgins. Despite taking place in a car, the first experience was not unpleasant for the young girl, whose ignorance of the matter did not render her antagonistic to the question of sexuality. She left home at the age of sixteen and never returned. She had several lovers with whom she shared her sexual adventures. Indeed, she had a sexual relationship with every man she dated, and she never had any problems with orgasming. By the time Masters offered her the work as his assistant, Johnson had married and divorced two or three times⁵² for several reasons. Having a family was something she aimed at, and with her second, or third, husband she had a son named Scott and a daughter called Lisa. Masters was not mistaken when he gave her the job simply because, according to the way he paraphrased it, she knew where babies came from. As a boy, Masters had a troubled relationship with his father whose ill-temper forced the mother to assume two characters; a tender one with the family and a submissive one with her husband. As is the case with Johnson, Masters heard the birds and bees talk from his father, but the latter's profuse sweat and embarrassment only added to the boy's perplexity. The bewildering sex "education" he received, added to the fact that he was banished from home by his father, did not prevent the young boy from ending up as a self-built person who managed to study medicine and chose to work as a sex researcher. Because marriage was a precondition for any respectable sex researcher, Masters married someone he did not have any feelings for. The couple had fertility problems at the beginning because of

⁵² Virginia Johnson might have had a short 2-day marriage which she mentioned at some point, then denied later (Maier, 2009, p. 27).

Masters, who due to embarrassment, tried to blame it on his wife at first. However, his knowledge helped him and he managed to have children despite suffering from a low sperm count. According to Masters, he offered the position of an assistant to his wife but she preferred to stay at home to bring up her children. This is something which Johnson regretted later on, for her long work hours prevented her from being a part of her children's life.

At the beginning of his sex research, Masters' work included meeting prostitutes, simply because in the conservative society he was living, they seemed to him as the only experts on the question of sex. In addition to interviewing them, Masters used to watch them through peepholes. His work with prostitutes made him realise how little he knew about female sexuality, which gave him the idea of having a female partner. However, he knew that no matter how valuable the information he obtained from prostitutes was, they were not representative of the average American female population. Although he was aware of Kinsey's work, Masters was critical of the method which depends on interviewing rather than observation. Thus, in their work, Masters and Johnson depended on the usage of especially manufactured artificial male organs with average women who accepted to be volunteers. Their experiments gave them the chance to observe not only the smallest details of the female orgasm, but also where the lubrication in the vagina came from. Thus, the couple were capable of correcting some of the misconceptions which were believed at the time before observation was implemented as the main method in sex research.

Even though Masters prevented the researchers who worked under his supervision from having sexual relationships with the "patients" and with each other, he had an affair with Johnson under the pretext that it is just an experiment and no emotions were involved. Apparently, he gave no heed to the advice he gives to his readers to the effect that the disadvantages of an extramarital affair almost always outweighs the advantages and in the majority of cases it ruins the marriage. This is exactly what happened in his case, for he chose to end his long marriage to get married to Johnson, again with no emotions involved neither on his part nor on hers. Masters knew that his marriage to Johnson would end once he walked the aisle (Maier, 2009, p. 238), and it did because he wanted to be reunited with the love of his life at the age of 79. Six years after his marriage to his beloved, Masters died of Parkinson's disease after presenting several studies on sex research and sex therapy with his partner Johnson who spent her old age trying to avoid all the publicity which surrounded her and her partner for a very long time.

Although Johnson did not have a degree of any sort, her role in the research involved more than convincing respectable young women to be volunteers in sex research. She has always been aware of the double standards in the American society and how they affected the personalities of the women who had to lead a life of duplicity to say the least. Although Masters was the leading figure and sole authoritative voice in the research, Johnson's influence cannot be overlooked. One of the instances in which the two voices of Masters and Johnson are clearly heard separately includes their discussion with other researchers which is published under the title

Ethical Issues in Sex Therapy and Research. When one of the researchers discussed how masturbation was condemned although it does not interfere with procreation simply because no matter how enjoyable solitary sex is, women still prefer coitus, Johnson dismissed the idea. She further considered the notion as a prejudiced misconception that had nothing to do with what women truly want (Masters *et al.*, 1980a, pp. 49-50). Unfortunately, relying on marital coitus as a standard, as we will see shortly, prevented the couple from developing an idea that could have been considered a real advancement in the study of female masturbation. Furthermore, Johnson's statement contradicts with what is confirmed in *Heterosexuality* which is supposedly written by her in collaboration with Masters and Kolodny: "many women prefer intercourse to masturbation because it gives them additional sensual benefits such as being held and being kissed and also makes them part of a spontaneous give-and-take" (Masters *et al.*, 1994, pp. 176-177). This, perhaps, could be attributed to the claim made by Kolodny to the effect that Virginia Johnson read none of the books which carried her name.⁵³

It would be beneficial to examine here how the issue of female sexuality in general was discussed in the writings of Masters and Johnson. According to Johnson, female sexuality had been defined for a long time by men who do not understand women in the first place (Maier, 2009, p. 181). However, it remains to be understood that what appears to be revolutionary feminist ideas presented by Johnson had to be curbed by Masters who never abandoned his male chauvinism (Maier, 2009, p. 244). Because the couple's

⁵³ "Of the several books that bore their names jointly, [Kolodny] later claimed, 'I don't believe Gini ever read any of them'" (Maier, 2009, p. 304).

works were celebrated by eager feminists who appreciated the voice of a medical authority that destroyed the notion of the vaginal orgasm, Masters and Johnson's "virtues" with regard to female sexuality were heightened and discussed repeatedly. However, in some instances, the couple's attitude to feminism and female sexuality appears to be questionable.

To present an image of what "female dysfunction" might feel like, Masters and Johnson invite the male reader to view the world from a female's perspective:

Imagine, for a moment, that men lost interest in sex when they became preoccupied with receding hairlines or bulging waists. Imagine just how much enthusiasm men who reached orgasms only once in every fifteen or twenty sexual encounters would muster at the prospect of erotic interludes with their partners—especially if the women involved had orgasms on every single one of these occasions. ("Was it good for you?" the women would ask in the mellow afterglow of their sexual release; the men would be left either to lie, to risk alienating their partners by telling the truth, or to reconstruct their notion of sexual fulfillment in terms of closeness, passion, or tenderness.) Almost inevitably, we could expect that many of these men would begin faking orgasms in order to convince their partners that they were responsive and enjoying something that they were expected to enjoy. Or imagine, if you can, a world in which men were socialized with the notion that they were to save themselves sexually for that special woman; that premarital sexual involvement might sully

their reputations; and that marital sex was primarily a duty that they had to perform whether they liked it or not. Finally, think about how men would feel if they were constantly vulnerable to sexual victimization and assault at the hands of women, especially if they were walking outside alone, or wearing provocative clothing, or if they just seemed to be "asking for it." (Masters *et al.*, 1994, p. 169)

This is a baffling quotation indeed, for although Masters and Johnson appear to urge men to experience the suffering of women in a patriarchal society, a reader might go through an experience similar to that of the horror film effect. The emotional catharsis that results from watching horror films is experienced by the male reader of the quotation when he realises that if he were a woman, his life would have been miserable, but thankfully he is a man. In the supposedly feminist passage several assumptions about normality are embedded. Women are presented as trapped in their physical appearance, continuously looking for any signs of age advancement, and dreading the loss of their sexual appeal. They also appear to have a big problem with their ability to orgasm which reaches no more than 5-6.66% of all their sexual encounters. When they do not climax, they resort to faking an orgasm, risk distressing their partners by telling the truth, or even be simply satisfied with intimacy and closeness since the ultimate goal of sexual encounters; i.e. orgasm, is unattainable for them. Virginity is recommended for them if they wish to be married, and even when they do they are not rewarded by a sexually fulfilling relationship with their husbands, but by one in which sex has to be endured rather than enjoyed. The misery does not

end there, for women are always susceptible to grave dangers which present themselves in the form of merciless rapists who always manage to lay the blame on the victim. One might wonder here what kind of human beings we end up if she spends her life either in fear of being ravished, or in burning need to please all the time. Men are asked to put themselves in the shoes of women who aim to please and yet get nothing in return, which sheds light on Masters and Johnson's view of normality. Their view is unflattering for women, to say the least. In the scenario created by them, females appear as no more than "damsels in distress" who continuously depend "on the kindness," or lack thereof, of men. Moreover, the word "premarital" is also used although Masters and Johnson are aware that it refers to the inevitability of marriage, yet no attempt of replacing the word is made and it is used liberally throughout their books. The quotation is merely an example of what appears to be a feminist approach for some, to the degree that the two researchers were accused of being biased against men at times (Morrow, 2008, pp. 131-132), yet those feminists who are not interested in the life of a good wife might have a bone to pick with Masters and Johnson.

Despite some of these unfavourable views, it is important here to shed some light on the undeniable feminist celebratory reception which immediately followed Masters and Johnsons' publication of *Human Sexual Response* in 1966. The most significant, even ground-breaking, reaction expressed by feminists in the aftermath of the spread of masters and Johnsons' work has to be the famous essay "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" by Anne Koedt. The essay which was circulated almost like a

political pamphlet among feminists following its publication in 1968, not only completely dismisses the idea of a vaginal orgasm, as its title clearly indicates, but it also blames those who helped popularise the fake concept of purposefully marginalising women's role both in the sexual act and in society. Even for a modern reader, it is not difficult to fathom why Koedt's polemic on the concept of the vaginal orgasm became so popular. The essay criticises Freud's theory on female sexuality, which first presented the differentiation between the clitoral and vaginal orgasms and blaming the former of being immature, and accuses the psychoanalyst of building his theory on his own prejudice against women rather than an actual study of the female anatomy. Despite the lack of evidence, Koedt argues, researchers chose to ignore the fact that women stressed their need for a clitoral stimulation when they masturbated, and reached the conclusion that women were simply frigid. Those Freudian researchers ignored the anatomical evidence which reveals that the vagina is devoid of sensory nerves, while the clitoris "has no other function than that of sexual pleasure" (Koedt, 1973, p. 202). What about those women who reported experiencing vaginal orgasms? For Koedt, they were simply faking it in order to fit within the category of what is considered "normal" women, or they are ignorant as to the female anatomy and where their orgasms originated from.

The importance of Koedt's short and focused essay lies in the fact that it does not only discuss the nonexistence of the vaginal orgasm, but it also places the "myth" within the patriarchal society that aims at putting women in their place by systematising and sublimating their sexual desire. The essay

reaches its climax in the conclusion which considers that men maintained the myth of the vaginal orgasm on purpose. For this, Koedt presented six reasons that explain the persistence of Freud's theory on female sexuality. Among these is men's desire to control women by suppressing their sexual pleasure in order to maximise their own sexual freedom. For men, women acknowledgement of the clitoris as the centre of their sexual pleasure might make them more "expandable" sexually or even become lesbian or bisexual, since heterosexual vaginal sex is no longer sought. What men aim to do is privilege their own desire over that of women by keeping the penis as a symbol of masculinity and power as well as preferring penetrational sex and imposing it on women whose sexual desire is not even taken into account.

In her essay, Koedt drew on the writings of Kinsey and Masters and Johnson who emphasised the importance of the clitoral orgasm. For many feminists, the finding of Masters and Johnson with regard to female sexuality opened a new horizon. What was believed to be frigidity in women became no more than a dysfunction that could be cured by introducing certain techniques. With the correct stimulation of the female clitoris, Masters and Jonson argued, women could be as responsive as men and could reach orgasm within a short period of time. It was on such conclusions that Koedt and others build their view of an autonomous female sexuality.

If psychoanalytic experts had made the vagina into a synecdoche for mature and healthy femininity, feminists in the late 1960s sought to make the clitoris the marker of the liberated and autonomous woman. To break out of male-defined notions of female pleasure, Koedt and

others embraced the clitoris as a potentially unsituated site of sexual expression in women. Koedt was one of the first feminists to theorize clitoral sexuality as a form of sexual expression tied neither solely to heterosexuality nor homosexuality but to a kind of female sexuality that lay beyond or beneath social designations. The "discovery" of the clitoris as potentially unaligned to any specific sexual identity proved enormously useful to feminist sexual theories and constituted a major break in American sexual thought. (Gerhard, 2000, p. 450)

Despite building her whole view of feminism on Masters and Johnson's research, the outcome of Koedt's essay is definitely not one of the findings of the famous sexologists. Throughout their career, Masters and Johnson aimed at solving the problems of heterosexual couples through the introduction of certain techniques, cures like vaginal dilators, and even group meetings. Despite referring to homosexuality not so unfavourably in their studies, one can safely say that Masters and Johnson's research was devoted to bettering the sexual lives of heterosexual couples. Feminists such as Koedt are the ones who drew conclusions from the concept of the clitoral orgasm which concentrated on their autonomy as far as sexuality is concerned, which led the way for radical feminists who viewed heterosexuality as anti-feminist. Furthermore, Koedt's focus on orgasm as the ultimate outcome of a sexual relationship was not shared by Masters and Johnson who believed that "Nonorgasmic sex can produce tremendous warmth and closeness, as well as passion, and under some circumstances it may be satisfying and fulfilling in its own right" (Masters *et al.*, 1994, p. 65).

Koedt maintained that "We must begin to demand that if certain sexual positions now defined as "standard" are not mutually conducive to orgasm, they no longer be defined as standard" (Koedt, 1973, p. 199). She argues that while "mutual enjoyment" is stressed for married couples, it is not mentioned whether this relationship should result in climax or not. Thus, Koedt defines what she considers "standard" as anything that is inductive to mutual orgasm. Although Masters and Johnson mostly concentrated on orgasm in their studies, they also acknowledged that some women enjoy the intimacy of the sexual act even without an orgasm.

Notwithstanding this celebration of Masters and Johnson's findings by enthusiastic feminists, the couple were not the first researchers who confirmed the nonexistence of the vaginal orgasm; Kinsey presented this view to the public in his *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* more than a decade earlier: "The literature usually implies that the vagina itself should be the center of sensory stimulation, and this as we have seen is a physical and physiologic impossibility for nearly all females" (Kinsey *et al.*, 1953, p. 582). Unluckily, however, this important finding was hidden amidst the more "shocking" outcomes of his studies, such as the high percentage of homosexuals and the notion that no less than fifty per cent of the married females resort to extra-marital relationships. "Kinsey's refutation of vaginal orgasm was temporarily lost in the totality of his sensational revelations about the range of sexual behavior, but the conclusions drawn a decade later by Masters and Johnson escaped no one" (Buhle, 1998, p. 216).

Furthermore, the "solution" which masters and Johnson presented for the lack of female satisfaction was far from resorting to autonomous sexuality:

Marriage manuals concentrated on clitoral stimulation 'as the basis of adequate coital foreplay' when the 'infinitely more important question' was how to address the clitoris in its own right. Men didn't appreciate this, and vainly went for 'the deepest possible vaginal thrust' followed by 'spastic deep vaginal entrenchment' during ejaculation. Wrong! said Masters and Johnson. But despite these devastating insights they still baulked at the full separation of penetration from the independent interests of the clitoris, because, they argued, vaginal thrusting stimulated the clitoris by 'traction exerted on the wings of the minor labial hood' which enables them in turn to locate the vagina as the 'primary physical means for heterosexual expression for the human female'. Vaginal and clitoral orgasm, for them, became the same thing. (Campbell, 1980, p. 10)

Whether Masters and Johnson regarded vaginal and clitoral orgasm as one and the same is outside the scope of my chapter. Suffice it to say that their "cure" for female frigidity involved "training" heterosexual couples and teaching them how to give and receive pleasure by concentrating on foreplay, and transforming penetrational vaginal sex from a practice which focused on the pleasure of men and attempt at reawakening the non-existent vaginal orgasm, into a practice that could pleasure men and women simultaneously. Nowhere in Masters and Johnson's books do they encourage women to desert men and enjoy their sexual liberty. Their whole

practice of sexual therapy for couples is there to verify their notion of how they think sexual encounters ought to be, and these do not involve resorting to lesbianism.

The celebratory feminist welcome of Masters and Johnson's theories was not unanimous, despite being dominant. Sheila Jeffreys was one of the opposing voices who did not hail the celebrated sex researchers and saw the sexual revolution which they brought with them as no more than a strengthening of the male supremacy. She analysed Masters and Johnson's books and sex therapy methods only to conclude that what appeared as an emancipation of women was in fact a fortification of their yoke. Jeffreys criticised their sex research which depended on female surrogates, of whom more will follow, and prostitutes at the beginning of Masters' work. According to her, prostitutes were interviewed and examined specifically because they can bring any man to orgasm within a short time and without any difficulty. This was the role, Jeffrey argues, which women were supposed to fulfil with their husbands. This is why Masters and Johnson implemented what they called the "squeeze technique," to "cure" the men who experience premature ejaculation, and insisted that this method is more successful when used on men by their wives. On the other hand, vaginismus, which refers to women's inability to engage in penetrational vaginal sex, is "cured" through the utilisation of different sizes of vaginal dilators. Thus, Jeffreys concludes, "The wife [...] has to use techniques derived from practice in prostitution to cure her husband" (Jeffreys, 1990, p. 137), whereas she has to become "active pornographic model of male sexuality in which various unlikely objects are

inserted into women's orifices" (Jeffreys, 1990, p. 138) in order to "cure" herself. Jeffreys also criticises Masters and Johnson's advice for the wives to practice the squeeze technique on the husbands at the time when they are menstruating to devote this time for the pleasure of the male, regardless of what she desires. The image of the emancipated woman according to Masters and Johnson, as Jeffreys thinks, is that of the wife who can satisfy her husband more professionally. The man, however, should always be dominant to play his proper role in procreation.

Jeffreys makes some viable and important points although her argument is affected by her attitude as an advocate of political lesbianism. Her claim that Masters and Johnson's sex therapy methods cause women to assume "the role of useful and uncomplaining hole" (Jeffreys, 1990, p. 139) is a severe condemnation of heterosexual women as much as it is a criticism of the work of Masters and Johnson. Her eager defence of inserting fingers into the vagina, although it is a form of penetration of the "hole" can only be viewed in terms of her unconditional enthusiasm for lesbian sexuality. The polemic argument that the fingers are more sensitive and cause more pleasure than the "blunt instrument of the penis" (Jeffreys, 1990, p. 141), hence fingering is discouraged for fear it might transform women into lesbians, is subjective and not scientific. However, criticising the methods of sex therapy is definitely valid, because regardless of whether it was practiced during menstruation or not, although this adds to the displeasure, sexual practices are transformed into exercises and assignments that should be rehearsed everyday in order for the "treatment" to be successful. Sexuality is

turned into a full-time mission in which women in particular are pressured to succeed and achieve the ultimate, earth-shattering orgasm. It is like a sex camp, and this does not refer to a retreat in which you can indulge in sexual activities for pleasure's sake, but rather an experience that is similar to boot camp, or even math camp, which can be torturous to many.

The use of surrogates in Masters and Johnson's work formed another major gender-related problem in their research. The couple chose to receive help from female surrogates to "cure" some of the dysfunctions of those men who could not have a partner. The surrogates were female volunteers who had some experience in sexual relations and were willing to have sexual meetings with the male "patients" for a fee. Needless to say, the idea of using surrogates was problematic for many. To begin with, the whole idea seemed as no more than a fancy term for prostitution. Besides, although Masters and Johnson were fully aware that they would be accused of duplicity because they only used female surrogates, they insisted that surrogates are only possible in the case of males because females have the need for a long-term, emotional relationship, while men do not (Masters and Johnson, 1970, pp. 155-156). This is another example of Masters' and Johnson's acceptance not only of the double standards in society, but also of the widespread stereotypes of males and females. Using the help of surrogates caused a big problem for Masters and Johnson when a man claimed that the couple were prostituting his wife, and the idea became harder to defend because of the spread of AIDS. However, despite all the

problems, Masters and Johnson continued using female surrogates even after they claimed that they stopped.

Masters and Johnson's attempt at justifying their use of female surrogates, and not male ones, only succeeds in making their bias against women clearer.

A man places primary valuation on his capacity for effective sexual function. This is both valid and realistic. His sexual effectiveness fulfills the requirement of procreation and is honored with society's approval, thereby providing support for the cultural idiosyncrasy of equating sexual function with masculinity. Even prior exposure to a "sex is sin" environment does not preempt this primary valuation. As a result, a man usually regards the contribution made by a partner surrogate as he would a prescription for other physical incapacities. Further, he is able to value a woman who makes such a contribution. For him, the restoration of sexual function justifies putting aside temporarily any other value requirements which might exist. (Masters and Johnson, 1970, pp. 155-156)

According to this claim, both nature and society approve of men's domination of women because they have a major role in reproduction, hence the sex therapists do not aim at correcting the male's conviction that his masculinity relies on his sexual potency, but simply encourage it by providing female surrogates. They maintain that a man appreciates a female surrogate because he treats her as a prescription. In other words, men, according to Masters and Johnson, cherish women when they objectify them, exactly as

they have always cherished the prostitutes who have "cured" them by giving them pleasure. Indeed, the two sex therapists contradict themselves continuously in their books especially with regard to feminist concerns, yet nowhere do they contradict themselves, as well as logic, as they do in this feeble justification. A reader can easily detect that they have nothing to say with regard to this blatant bias which raises questions instead of addressing them. One might question, for instance, the fact that Masters and Johnson worked hard on rescuing women from their "ignorance" in sex matters, whereas they approved of man's misconception and biased view of his own sexual role, and called it "valid and realistic." It is peculiar that the couple did not try to rid women of their "ignorance" with regard to accepting male surrogates, and it is even more peculiar for someone who has such biased views to be a feminist at the same time.

According to Morrow, the notions presented in Masters and Johnson's research on sexual dysfunction "are not simply based on objective discoveries by value free scientists but that they have been implicitly constructed with reference to dominant Western beliefs and values about sexuality," and their work "represents the medicalisation of 'deviant' sexual response and rests on questionable essentialist, heterosexist and gender biased views of sexuality" (Morrow, 2008, p. 115). Morrow argues that Masters and Johnson depended on what is called a "biomedical model" in which the body is considered a machine and any disease, or dysfunction in this case, is simply a breakdown. There were biases on many levels in Masters and Johnson's study of sexual dysfunction. To begin with, they

considered orgasm to be a part of the successful sexual cycle and they even chose only volunteers who had no problems with reaching orgasm. However, the most blatant bias in their work is gender-related. In Masters and Johnson's study, the category of premature ejaculation only applied to men, and even though they were aware that what they called rapid orgasm in women existed, they chose not to focus on it, for according to them it was not a major problem, unlike the male equivalent. This attitude, according to Morrow, reveals a traditional rather than scientific view of sexuality. In the Western society, the man has the "duty" of maintaining his erection until his partner reaches her orgasm, whereas a rapid orgasmer can apparently simply tolerate her male partner's approach even when she is no longer interested. Another gender bias in Masters and Johnson's work is that the category of male impotence in men does not have an equivalent in women, primarily because, according to them, erection is vital in men only. Thus, their view "not only makes intercourse central, but reflects the cultural stereotype of women as the recipients of male action and desire, but whose own desire is secondary" (Morrow, 2008, p. 129). The third bias is that Masters and Johnson do not present a male equivalent of the female primary orgasmic dysfunction. Thus, instead of studying ejaculation in females and orgasm in males, and the female orgasm is simply believed to correspond to ejaculation in males. The fourth bias, according to Morrow, lies in not presenting a male dysfunction that is equivalent to the female situational orgasmic dysfunction.

Morrow's research unveils the problem with the work of Masters and Johnson which considered penetrative sex in married couples as the standard according to which what they termed dysfunctionality should be measured. However, Morrow's study lays so much emphasis on the importance of masturbation in Masters and Johnson's research without referring to the fact that it is still considered inferior to coitus. Indeed, he considers that the mere inclusion of "masturbatory orgasmic inadequacy" on the part of Masters and Johnson only started making sense because the attitude towards masturbation changed. "Lack of masturbation to orgasm only became a problem when people changed their views about masturbation and began to regard it as a healthy and desirable activity" (Morrow, 2008, p. 134). This is true, yet Morrow's study might give the impression that the appreciation of masturbation in Masters and Johnson's research is greater than it actually is.

With the exception of the 23-page chapter on "Solitary Sexual Behavior" in *Sex and Human Loving*, no major study is devoted to masturbation in Master and Johnson's books. Several references to masturbation are made in other studies always in conjunction with other sexual practices. We have certainly gone a long way since John Marten and Tissot, because the "heinous" practice which was believed to be the source of sin and misery, is now believed to be no more than a "normal" sexual act that most people resort to without dire consequences. Indeed, the attitude change appears at first to have moved 180 degrees from "masturbation is abnormal" to "not masturbating can be normal too." "People who have never

masturbated, while in a statistical minority, should certainly not be made to feel abnormal. People who choose not to masturbate — whether or not they've tried it, whether or not their choice is based on religious conviction, personal preference, or some other consideration — have every right to their decision without any intellectual browbeating by self-proclaimed experts in sexual health" (Masters *et al.*, 1982b). Even though the non-masturbators are in the minority, Masters and Johnson argue, they should not be compelled to change their attitude, whether it is built on their religious belief or simply lack of desire. Indeed, a section of the chapter on masturbation is devoted to the history of the condemnatory attitude towards solitary sex, and how it led to the implementation of "treatments" that ranged from special diets to the use of chastity belts and even clitoridectomy.

Masters and Johnson's "defence" of autoerotism is started in a fashion that is reminiscent of Havelock Ellis and Kinsey; simply declaring that even animals masturbate. The two researchers maintain that despite the considerable change in the attitude towards masturbation, some of their clients expressed feelings of guilt for practicing it and even fear that it might cause health problems. The notion of what is considered excessive or normal resurfaced, and Masters and Johnson felt the need to address it, although it had been corrected and presented to the English-speaking world as early as 1951 by Wilhelm Stekel (Stekel, 1951). According to them, there are four reasons why some people still have some problems with the idea of masturbation. These include the misconceptions that masturbation is "sinful," "unnatural," "immature," and it hinders the development towards a healthy

sexual life. As a retort to the last point, Masters and Johnson argue that the opposite is true. "There is mounting evidence that *lack* of masturbatory experience may lead to psychosexual problems such as impotence or anorgasmia and learning about masturbation is a central feature of many sex therapy programs" (Masters *et al.*, 1982b, pp. 289, emphasis in the original).

Unfortunately, what appears to be an absolving of the long-condemned solitary sex is no more than a shift of the blame. To begin with, the advice not to condemn those who do not masturbate does not stem from a respect to the non-masturbators' choice, but rather an instruction to abstain at their own risk. The "mounting evidence" which shows that not masturbating can cause various forms of sexual "dysfunction" despite being attributed to "sex therapy programs" in general, and not those practiced by Masters and Johnson only, is not contested in any way. Thus, a sex therapist might ask you nowadays: "[do] you masturbate properly?" (Heath, 1982, p. 52). The pathology and sinfulness of solitary sex have mostly disappeared, yet the pressure on you to perform better in your sexual life still exists. We no longer suffer shame and guilt, yet what Stephen Heath calls a "sexual fix" has replaced all that. Now, if you do not masturbate, there is a "cure" for your case. This is not to say, of course, that autoerotism is accepted in its own right without conditions or restriction. For Masters and Johnson, masturbation is a "normal part of sexual *development*" (Masters *et al.*, 1982b, pp. 282, emphasis mine). It is only a stage that is practiced by either a young person or an adult who does not have another option. Some of the situations in which masturbation can be beneficial include "people without

partners, including the elderly," and "persons whose sex drives are greater than their partners' at a particular moment" (Masters *et al.*, 1982b, p. 289). In other words, solitary sex can be advantageous in the absence of a sexual partner, or if one partner is more aroused than the other. Even in the second case, it is well-known that Masters and Johnson advise sexual partners to engage in sexual activity together even if one of them does not have the desire to do so. They argue that "it's perfectly reasonable to accommodate your partner's needs when you're not feeling particularly in the mood — after all, this isn't very different from what you might do if your partner was hungry and asked if you'd make them a sandwich" (Masters *et al.*, 1982b, p. 459). As such, masturbation does seem to be treated as a last resort, so what if a person masturbates even though other options are obtainable? They state that: "Some experts believe that masturbation is 'immature' only when it is *exclusively* and *compulsively* practiced even though other outlets are easily available" (Masters *et al.*, 1982b, pp. 289, emphasis in the original). In other words, the only difference between Freud's theory and what recent "experts" believe is that for Freud masturbation in adult years is infantile in general, which for experts it is only immature if other outlets are available. The other outlets here are obviously believed to be superior to solitary sex, and resorting to the inferior option when one can have a "normal" sexual life is puerile.

Masters and Johnson definitely stress the importance of studying female autoerotism when they assert that the number of women who masturbate, since Kinsey's study, is increasing due to several reasons.

However, my main criticism of Masters and Johnson's representation of masturbation is concerned with two major notions. The first one is related to the idea that although the couple appears to defend autoerotism and present it as no more than a healthy sexual expression, they never forget to mention that it is no more than a stage in a person's sexual development; hence it is discussed in relation to sexuality in adolescence. The second notion is that masturbation is defined as a form of "sex without a partner," (Masters *et al.*, 1982b, p. 283) which confines the practice to the position of an alternative that people might resort to in the absence of a sexual partner. With regard to this second point, autoerotism is discussed in relation to sexuality in older persons, for the two researchers seem to recommend it if the spouse is either deceased or incapable of aiding the masturbator for any other reason such as illness.

As a stage in a person's sexual development, the influence of masturbation is discussed in *Homosexuality in Perspective*. Masters and Johnson refer to the case of a lesbian who was punished by her parents for masturbating when she was young, and the punishment caused her to end up only masturbating when hiding in the closet with a feeling of guilt. Another lesbian felt ashamed of masturbating in front of her partner who tried to encourage her by masturbating in front of her, but to no avail. In these cases, solitary sex is examined in the same way in which Krafft-Ebing and Freud analysed the masturbatory history of their "patients." Although Masters and Johnson do not condemn the act itself, unlike the former researchers, masturbation is discussed in relation to the effect which it had on the future

socio-sexual development of the females in question. Moreover, in the case of homosexuals only, the ability to masturbate is considered a criterion by which sexual dysfunction in males and females is measured. Thus, unlike a heterosexual female, the lesbian is not considered to have any dysfunction if she responds to masturbation and cunnilingus (Masters and Johnson, 1979, p. 315).

In *The Pleasure Bond*, solitary sex is examined as a possible solution in the absence of the spouse. This book records some of the discussions that Masters and Johnson had with married couples, thereby aiming to answer the questions of the wider population who can read the book and get an answer for some of the most popular enquiries about sexuality. One of the spouses interviewed poses the question of how even though masturbation is no longer considered harmful, people still refuse to admit doing it. As a reply, Masters and Johnson suggest that the practice is acceptable in small doses and for several reasons:

Many married men and women masturbate on occasion, for good reason and with no harm done. We discussed some of the circumstances—sickness, separation, impulse, what have you?—and I will add a medical reason. We know that many women will masturbate with the onset of their menstrual cycle if they are having dysmenorrhea—severe cramps. An orgasmic experience frequently will relieve the spasm of the uterus and the cramps will disappear. (Masters *et al.*, 1980b, p. 70)

As Bill Masters explains, there is nothing wrong with masturbating on impulse for married couples. Even when there is no reason at all for it, masturbating in marriage remains acceptable. Other occasions for masturbation, as he argues, include the time when a woman is menstruating. The couple may resort to masturbation if one, or both of them, do not desire coitus, and some women try it as a cure to alleviate menstruation cramps, which according to Masters does not work for all women. Men may also resort to masturbation during the illness of the wife, in the last stages of pregnancy, or even after childbirth.⁵⁴ In this case, even masturbation seems to undergo a process of heteronormalisation in order to make it more social and consequently more acceptable. Moreover, solitary sex is only recommended occasionally; when it is practiced more often, a sex therapist's help is required to correct the whole marital relationship: "we are talking about occasional incidents. If we find an established masturbatory pattern of some significance, we then look into the relationship itself" (Masters *et al.*, 1980b, p. 69).

Masters and Johnson confirm that for some women reaching orgasm with masturbation is easier than reaching it with coitus. Furthermore, they argue that the women who can have multiple orgasms reach them through masturbation more than they do with a partner. They attribute this to two

⁵⁴ Masters' discussion of men's masturbation during menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth is followed by an assertion that what he says also applies to women. Unfortunately, it is hard to think of a scenario in which this is possible until science makes it possible for men to give birth. Of course, he might be simply referring to the possibility that both men and women might masturbate during a woman's pregnancy, yet the two situations do not seem to be equal here. Menstruation and pregnancy are clearly discussed as obstacles for the woman in this context. Moreover, it is one of the examples in which William Masters in particular tries hard to appear as supportive of women's rights as possible. Does he succeed? I highly doubt it.

reasons. The first is that the woman might become distracted because she has to concentrate on her partner's pleasure and not only on her own. The second is that she might be more experienced than her partner at giving pleasure to herself. However, they never fail to applaud sexual intercourse for being superior, from an emotional point of view, to masturbation. To prove their point, they quote the belief of a woman who prefers coitus to solitary sex even though it makes her orgasm only rarely: "When I want an orgasm, I masturbate. When I want to feel close and loved and cared for, nothing beats intercourse, even though it rarely makes me come" (Masters *et al.*, 1994, p. 65). As can be detected from their argument, solitary sex is no more than a mechanical sort of relief for women's sexual tension. Apart from the closeness and love, women enjoy with coitus, Masters and Johnson confirm that, according to their research, even the quality of coital orgasm is better than that of the masturbatory one. They claim that "most women enjoyed their coital orgasms more than their more intense masturbatory orgasms" because the "subjective pleasure of orgasm consists of more than the intensity of its physical reflexes" (Masters *et al.*, 1994, p. 177).

It is indeed ironic how Virginia Johnson dismissed all Freud's work by calling it "a perfectly ridiculous bunch of stuff. Utterly idiotic, ridiculous stuff" (Maier, 2009, p. 215). The claim that, with the help of Masters, she liberated women from the wrongs of Freud's theory is equally ridiculous, with the added disadvantage that, unlike Freud's studies, theirs is wrapped with what might look that a feminist friendly wrapping. Women, according to Masters and Johnson, still have to attempt to reach the superior coital orgasm. It is no

longer believed to be vaginal, yet it is considered better than the masturbatory one. Solitary sex in adult years is not considered immature anymore, yet it lacks the emotionality and closeness that a heterosexual intercourse can give. Hence, Masters and Johnson's emancipation of women from the myth of the vaginal orgasm was simply by giving them another objective to aim at; namely, the coital orgasm. As for the women who cannot reach orgasm except through masturbation, Masters and Johnson give them the option of either counselling a sex therapist, or live a state of divorce between the emotional and the physical, exactly like the woman who masturbates to orgasm and has coition to be loved. If the woman can have an orgasm during masturbation but not when she is with a partner, a visit to the sex therapist might be beneficial with solving the problem she might have with the relationship itself, or with her own self-image and appreciation of herself.⁵⁵ However, if she decides to derive her pleasure from solitary sex only, even though other outlets are readily available, then she is just acting immaturely.

In a case study that does not differ considerably from the horror stories about masturbation, the practice was linked with mania.

A 37-year-old sociology professor was taken to a psychiatrist after she suddenly disrobed at a faculty meeting and began masturbating. The psychiatrist discovered that she had canceled all of her office hours for the past several weeks and had squandered some \$25,000 from a

⁵⁵ "It is not unusual to find that women who have orgasms during solitary masturbation but not with a partner are troubled about issues of personal attractiveness and sexual self-worth" (Masters *et al.*, 1994, p. 179).

research grant she had received earlier that semester. The diagnosis of mania was easily established. (Masters *et al.*, 1994, p. 346)

If the sociology professor was replaced by a governess or a school teacher and the research grant with inheritance money, the story could have easily belonged to the eighteenth or nineteenth century. This alarming possibility that one might end up stripping and exciting herself in front of an audience is not new nor is it unfamiliar for a modern reader. It is however remarkable that the two other case studies with regard to mania include a respected man who resorts to prostitutes and a married woman who travels to Las Vegas and has indiscriminate sex with strangers.

Nevertheless, despite, or perhaps because of, its mechanical and purely physical value, solitary sex, according to Masters and Johnson, constituted a possible step in the process of "curing" what they called sexual dysfunction rather than being simply one of the manifestations of sexual autonomy. The main objective, however, was improving marital heterosexual encounters and training couples to make their coitus conducive to orgasm.

For Masters and Johnson, masturbation was primarily important for its contribution to marital intercourse. In their therapy program, they advised couples to share with each other their masturbation techniques so that they could have better intercourse. Women who did not have orgasms were taught to reach orgasm through masturbation as a first step; then they made a "bridge" to intercourse. Masters and Johnson also recommended masturbation as a way of keeping in shape for intercourse, and they predicted dire physical

effects from prolonged abstinence from sex, particularly in the elderly.

(Irvine, 2005, p. 65)

Solitary sex was considered as no more than a preparatory exercise for the big test, which is coitus. Just as they instructed couples to explore each other's bodies, concentrate on the sensory rather than the sexual at first, Masters and Johnson also taught couple to experience orgasm through autoerotism in order to overcome their problems with marital sex. Indeed, this method of exploring masturbation as preliminary step towards coitus was further developed by several sex researchers to "cure" anorgasmic women.

In "The Role of Masturbation in the Treatment of Orgasmic Dysfunction" (1972), LoPiccolo and Lobitz describe the nine-step masturbation program which they developed after relying on the findings of Masters and Johnson. The program aims at "curing" women, yet it should be followed by couples. The first step in the treatment includes instructing the female to explore her body after bathing, examine the genitals, and train the pelvic muscle by tensing and relaxing it repeatedly. The following week, the female is advised to explore her genitals by touch without arousing herself. Next, she is instructed to try to discover which part of her genitals is more pleasurable. With regard to this step, the sex researchers confirm that all their clients attest that the clitoris is the centre of pleasure, which is in accordance with the findings of Kinsey and Masters and Johnson. With the fourth step, females are taught by a female therapist to begin the solitary stimulation of the clitoris. If the orgasm is not reached, the female is advised in the fifth week to "increase the intensity and duration of her masturbation.

She is told to masturbate until 'something happens' or until she becomes tired or sore" (LoPiccolo and Lobitz, 1972, p. 168). She is also encouraged to fantasise or use pornographic books or pictures until orgasm is attained even if the process lasts for 45 minutes. If the orgasm is still not reached, the female is advised to resort to vibrators. "In our most difficult case to date, 3 weeks of vibrator masturbation, with daily 45 min vibrator sessions, was required to produce orgasm" (LoPiccolo and Lobitz, 1972, p. 169). Although each step should last a week, it appears that the LoPiccolo and Lobitz were willing to give this sixth step more time because it is the last stage which involves solitary practice. In the seventh step, the female is told to masturbate in front of her husband in order for him to find out which techniques should be utilised to make her reach orgasm. Then the husband is instructed to use either a vibrator or a manual stimulation on his wife, depending on the method preferred by her. In the ninth and final step, couples are instructed to have sexual intercourse while the husband stimulates his wife's clitoris either manually or with a vibrator as before. If the female reaches orgasm at this stage, the treatment is considered successful.

LoPiccolo and Lobitz claim in their article that they used the directed masturbation program with eight cases and in all of these the women were successful in reaching orgasm, although two of them could not climax during coitus but only when they were stimulated by their husbands. Four of the six successful cases no longer needed to be stimulated by their husbands and they reached orgasm with coitus alone. This program appears to be at least an improvement of Freud's theory on female sexuality which advises adult

women against indulging in solitary sex in order to achieve the superior vaginal orgasm instead of the infantile clitoral one. Indeed, the two researchers begin their article by absolving masturbation of all the ills that were attributed to it and presenting it not only as a harmless but also therapeutic practice. Although the first three steps of the program appear to be advantageous for the women who were taught to be ashamed of their bodies and reluctant even to look at their genitals, the remaining steps present some problems. To begin with, treating masturbation as an assignment to the point of having to practice it for 45 minutes every single day for three to five weeks renders it torturous or tedious rather than pleasurable. Most importantly, however, considering autoerotism as no more than a step on the way to achieve "success" in coitus establishes that heterosexual vaginal intercourse is the ultimate goal, which is in effect not very different from referring to masturbation as infantile. LoPiccolo and Lobitz seem to consider the four clients who no longer needed masturbation and derived their pleasure from coitus solely as an added success. It is true that autoerotism is not considered an obstacle anymore, yet the almost transcendental transformation from a masturbator to a participant in socio-sexual activities is still there, and it is definitely reminiscent of Freud despite the enthusiastic affirmation that it is the exact opposite.

In addition to being a part of sex therapy sessions, masturbation is recommended by Masters and Johnson to replace the other high risk sexual practices that can transmit HIV (Masters *et al.*, 1994, p. 403). Moreover, solitary sex is endorsed in the case of the elderly who do not have partners,

whose partners are ill, or even the married ones. "Besides being a convenient and pleasurable form of sex, masturbation provides a useful outlet for elderly persons who have no sexual partners (or whose partners are incapacitated by illness). In addition, many married older persons masturbate, too" (Masters *et al.*, 1994). Here, of course, masturbation is not the best option. As for the elderly, they can practice masturbation in small doses when they are married, exactly like any young married couple. It is also allowed if the partner is bed-ridden or dead, if the person cannot attain any other sexual outlet.

To conclude, it is important to examine the popular view that Masters and Johnson's "attention to the importance of the clitoris, masturbation, and woman's sexual pleasure placed woman at the center of sexual thought and dramatically changed views about woman's sexuality" (DeLeon, 1994, p. 272). Although their importance in the field of sexuality research to date is undeniable, yet the "dramatic change" they caused is not necessarily a good one. Going back to what the historian Paul Robinson thought of their work is definitely relevant here. In his *Modernization of Sex*, Robinson considered Masters and Johnson's work on sexuality to be progressive mainly because of their celebration of female sexuality as well as their attitude towards masturbation. According to him, the two researchers "complete the autoerotic revolution launched by Ellis and carried forward by Kinsey, stating the case for masturbation in its most extreme form" (Robinson, 1976, p. 142), especially in the case of females. Their praise of female masturbation as a better provider of intense orgasm for women "liberated women from their

sexual dependency on men" (Robinson, 1976, p. 142). Robinson's overenthusiastic celebration of Masters and Johnson's feminism and defence of masturbation could be due to two factors. To begin with, his study only examines the two publications *Human Sexual Response* and *Human Sexual Inadequacy*. As he himself mentioned, these two books are not devoted to the study of masturbation although the practice is discussed on several occasions. Their more recent books, which were published after Robinson's book, elaborate on their view of masturbation and clarify the relationship between solitary sex and other sexual practices, the most important of which is heterosexual intercourse. Even though Robinson is aware that the two researchers devoted their studies to couples rather than individuals and this contradicts with what he regarded as a celebration of masturbation, he chooses not to examine this issue further. The second problem is that he only examines how progressive their discussion of masturbation is within the context of a society that only approved of masturbation gradually. It is true that there is a major difference between the pamphlets that warned people against the dangers of masturbation on one hand, and the work of Masters and Johnson which encouraged people to masturbate on certain occasions on the other, yet our enthusiasm should not make us ignore the shortcomings. Furthermore, Robinson's concept of feminism is not necessarily shared by many feminists. From the outset, he confirms, a reader can detect Masters and Johnson's feminism through the fact that the two authors' names were mentioned together on all their publications even though it is evident that Masters was the senior researcher. As for the content, he considers that their concentration on female sexuality, except

with regard to dysfunctions, reveals the feminist traits in their work. Even their method of sex therapy which makes a woman as responsible for the sexual pleasure of the couple as the man is regarded as one in which more authority is given to the woman. The problem here is that a feminist might be looking for the truth and not just seeking an indulgent view of women on the part of researchers and scientist. Thus, it might be more important for a feminist to know how much Virginia Johnson actually participated in the writing of the books, and whether she deserves to be mentioned on the book as a co-author. The presentation of Masters and Johnson as a couple helped popularise their work, hence it is not necessarily a feminist conviction but also a marketing strategy. For Robinson "Feminists have welcomed Masters and Johnson as enthusiastically as homosexuals welcomed Kinsey. Their enthusiasm has not been misplaced" (Robinson, 1976, p. 151). Indeed it has been definitely misplaced. Unlike Kinsey who concentrated on homosexuals deliberately, Masters was surprised by feminists' celebration of his work.⁵⁶ Those feminists, unlike what Robinson confirmed, were celebrating their own interpretation of Masters and Johnson's research rather than the research itself.

Because Masters and Johnson's main focus was on heterosexuality, relationships, and marriage, the study of solitary sex was not given much attention. Their advice for partners to have sex even when one of them is not in the mood reveals their tendency to make a person sacrifice in order to

⁵⁶ "The feminist endorsement of Masters and Johnson surprised many, none more so than Masters himself [...] Masters still looked at women in a most traditional way. He expected females to defer to him, just as his mother and his wife, Libby, had most of his life" (Maier, 2009, pp. 244-245).

save their marriage or relationship. The question of the high percentage of divorce is addressed to try to find out how sex therapy can help; an ironic thing considering that Masters was divorced twice and Johnson three or four times, and their last unsuccessful marriage was to each other. Amid all this, one has to fish out the few statements which the couple utter concerning masturbation, only to come up with a view that is contradictory to say the least. What appears to be a defence of autoerotism is no more than an attempt at putting it in its place as a stage that a person should outgrow or a temporary alternative for what are considered real sexual encounters when no partner is available. Due to this representation of solitary sex, one might legitimately ask: have we simply shifted the guilt over masturbation from sin and disease to loneliness and misery, instead of eradicating it altogether?

Chapter Six

A Feminine Touch: A Study of Shere Hite's Work on Female Sexuality and Autoerotism

William Masters knew that in order for his work to be influential and reach a wider audience, he needed a female helper, and Virginia Johnson was just that. Although she was there to provide the female point of view, Masters' voice was the authoritative one in their work. Their research turned out to be massively successful, yet more female voices were still needed in the field of sex research. Shere Hite provided one that could not be overlooked. Even though I have a bone (or several) to pick with Hite from a feminist point of view, I knew I had to dedicate a part of my study to her research. Hite is by no means the only female sex researcher,⁵⁷ yet due to being the author of a best-seller which incited controversy, her *Report* on female sexuality became an influential reference which gave women the chance to stop, rethink, and even regain their own sexuality away from the domineering "guidance" of the male. This kind of freedom, as is the case with every other kind, was not absolute. Hite's work can be viewed as a continuation of and in some instance improvement on Kinsey's and Masters and Johnson's research. As for her methodology is concerned, Hite did away with numbers and published her questionnaire along with her research, unlike Kinsey who not only relied heavily on statistics but kept his sources confidential. Also, unlike Masters

⁵⁷ Other women who contributed to the field of sex research include Leonore Tiefer and Ellyn Kaschak.

and Johnson, Hite gave her respondents the chance to express their views anonymously. For these reasons, it would be beneficial to shed some light on a researcher who entered the sex research scene with a bang and a lot of male booing.

To begin with, I will shed some light on the researcher's life. On the cover of her autobiography, Shere Hite appears as tragic heroine in a fairy tale, with an almost sad look in her eyes and a large bouquet of crimson roses in her arms that match the colour of her lips. The subtitle *Voice of a Daughter in Exile* also shows what kind of argument we should expect from the book. Both the cover and title reveal much about the content of the book and prepare the reader for filling in the gaps and reading between the lines rather frequently. However, it is important to shed some light on Shere Hite's life because she, like the other sexologists I examined in my study, is guilty of imposing what she herself experienced in her life on her conclusions from her research. Hite repeatedly compares herself to celebrated public figures in order to draw the reader's attention to her own predicament.

Some people may (consciously or unconsciously) want to see me fail or 'fall', because my life runs counter to mythology, and the double standard which decrees that if a woman is sexually overt (writes about sex, for example, or says women have a right to sexual pleasure and self-expression) , she must 'pay the price'. She can have fun for a while, but eventually, she will become 'neurotic', 'unhappy' or, like Emma Bovary, be destined to die! For example, Marilyn Monroe is 'OK' now, liked and accepted, loved, because she died, she paid the

price for her 'sin' of sexual provocativeness. Madonna has not yet 'paid', and this makes her dangerous in some quarters and unpopular. Have I increasingly paid the price for speaking sexually? I have been exiled, made to suffer financially and emotionally. (Hite, 2000, pp. 135-135)

Shere Hite claims that Marilyn Monroe and Madonna's overt expression of their sexuality made them threatening and unaccepted exactly like her. This is for her what constitutes a tragic heroine whose only "flaw" is her explicit manifestation of her sexuality, but is this claim even close to reality? This is highly doubtful. I do believe that both Marilyn Monroe and Madonna were, and still are, very celebrated. However, the question that might be relevant here is whether actresses, singers, or even female sex researchers should be celebrated for their qualifications as candidates for the position of "sex symbols" or for their talents, education, or experience in their respective fields.

Hite's mother became pregnant with her first-born baby, Shere, when she was a teenager. At that time, the young mother was secretly married to Shere's father for no more than a month after which he left to participate in World War II. When he came back home, the couple divorced and their baby remained with her grandparents. She was more like a younger sister to her mother than a daughter. At the same time, she was afraid of the mother she never knew very well because of an incident that took place when Shere was six or seven years old. The young mother picked her daughter from her grandparents' house and took her swimming. Shere Hite describes in details

the sexy black bathing suit her mother was wearing and how attractive she was that several men were following her around. Due to all this attention and flirtation from the admiring men, the young mother did not notice when her daughter almost drowned in the swimming pool. "I was going down, down, down, and my feet still were not touching the bottom. It was a mistake. I was in twelve feet of water, I was only about seven years old, and I couldn't swim. I remember being on the bottom of the pool, and thinking, my mother will be here in a minute to get me, she is a great swimmer, she makes beautiful dives and has strong arms" (Hite, 2000, p. 27). Unfortunately, the heroic mother figure that Shere was expecting never arrived, and the little girl was saved by a female lifeguard instead. This incident was doubly painful for her because the reason why she jumped into the water in the first place was to impress her mother.

Hite was fascinated by her mother in a different way from which the children who are privileged to live with their mothers feel. She saw her from afar as an unhappy woman with extremely attractive beauty and athletic body. Shere lived with her mother and stepfather for almost a year when she was nine years old. The mother used to spend the whole day with her friends while the young Shere took care of herself. At her age, she was left to prepare her own school lunch and iron her clothes, prepare the formula for her newly born brother and feed him too, while her room contained no more than a used army cot to sleep on. Hite does not relate these cruel incidents with bitterness or hatred towards her family, for, according to her she loved her brother and enjoyed playing with him. However, she had to return to her

grandparents' house because her mother divorced her new husband, and she took only her son with her. Later on, Shere was pained to know that her young brother remembered absolutely nothing about her and about the time they spent together. Hite's affection towards her brother is particularly significant with regard to how she criticises the society which looks up to the model of the holy family in which there is no place for a daughter. This concept of how important the example of the holy family it is to the society which celebrates the son and shuns the daughter is re-iterated too many times and taken too far in Hite's books.

Later, when Hite's grandparents divorced after a marriage that lasted thirty five years, she lived with her grandmother. However, the reader will perceive from the way she started her book with a description of her sadness after her grandfather's death, they will notice that she definitely prefers him to her grandmother. Although she lived with her grandmother, her relationship with her grandfather was not severed and he was the one who paid her university tuition fees (Hite, 2000, p. 80).

Like many other girls, Shere Hite discovered masturbation on her own when she was young, and although it caused her some apprehension, she appreciated the way she was introduced to sexuality:

One of those evenings, a strange desire began to creep over me, a deep craving that seemed to be coming from inside my body, or all around inside, somewhere I could not reach. I soon discovered that the sensations could be increased by moving my legs around, with my body pressed against the bed. If I grasped my pillow, facing down, I

could get the best feeling. I began to pull my body against the bed until, instead of ending, the feeling grew and grew and became more and even more insistently demanding. I pulled and twisted against the bed, gripping the mattress with one hand. But no matter how hard I pressed myself against the bed, my body cried out for more. It was a sweet torture. I did not know what it was. One day, doing this, I felt a wonderful explosion deep inside my body. The pleasure was like an electric shock between my hot, writhing legs. I loved it. I wanted to do it over and over, and I did, again and again.

Now I did it every day. But soon I worried: had I broken something inside my body? What was it I was doing? Since no one had ever told me anything about their having such an experience or such a physical feeling, or loving to rub themselves, maybe it was unnatural. I began to wonder if God (He, as I thought of him) could see me. I was sure He could, as He could see everything. And if it wasn't right, would He stop me, would He punish me somehow? But He never did. (Hite, 2000, pp. 24-25)

The description Shere Hite gives of her first sexual experience is not different from that of many young girls particularly in her time. The way she discovered masturbation on her own, like many girls, and the way she experienced some remorse and fear of the unknown in a time when many parents did not discuss sexuality with their children, all this is almost typical of girls at the time when Hite was young between the 1950s and 60s. Even those parents who were "adventurous" enough to have the birds and the

bees talk with their children concentrated on the reproductive part of the process within a marital relationship and decided to sweep the pleasurable part of it under the rug. However, far from leaving bad memories of nightmarish qualms and terror in the mind of the adult Shere Hite, she recalls the experience with complete satisfaction. Like many young people, the guilt over masturbation was not strong enough to end the immensely pleasurable experience. Indeed for the longest time, masturbation and guilt walked hand in hand which caused the complicated view of autoerotism we have today. Partly anguished and partly excited by risk, young people continued a practice that might have angered the society as well as any deity it worshipped. They might have vowed to themselves not to masturbate and yet they did over and over again.

These first ecstatic sexual feelings, in that white room with the moist fragrant air, lying on the bed with the white voile curtains swaying in the breeze at the open window, the soft summer sounds drifting in, and enveloped in the lightness of the room's pale and airy colours with the faint rustling of the green leaves out-side: all this is beautiful in my memory. This was a wonderful way to discover my sexuality — not hearing about it first through pornography or seeing naked bodies displayed for profit on every newsstand, but just alone in my room, in my own bed, finding my own sensual self. (Hite, 2000, pp. 25-26)

It is doubtful that Hite as a young girl was aware of all these illusory, acoustic, and olfactory experiences when she practiced autoerotism in the privacy of her room in the past. It does seem that certain elements of

projecting our present experiences on our childhood memories are at work here. In our attempt at creating a reality that addresses and gratifies our present selves we embellish our memories to say the least, thereby creating a new version of past events. "This version," as Gagnon puts it, "will be full of denied absences and illusory presences, of voices strangled and ventriloquism practiced; it will add up to truths and fancies masquerading as each other." In order to write our autobiographies, we defragment our human memories so that every piece of our past experiences fits perfectly within a narrative which might not have existed in the past. "This creation of a plausible past must submit to at least two kinds of demands of the present, first to the contemporary selves that will recollect the past, and second to the present-day fashions of making autobiographical sense" (Gagnon, 2004, p. 1).

Apart from the added elements from fairy tales that probably did not exist in reality, like the sweet breeze that moved the curtains and trees alike, that represent the young Shere as a living embodiment of *Alice in Wonderland*, the point about the readily available X-rated material remains relevant today as it was forty or fifty years ago. Anti-pornography feminists will certainly agree with Hite's condemnation of "exposing" children to such questionable material, yet the ironic detail remains that Shere Hite herself displayed her naked body for money.

When Hite was young, she worked as a waitress in a "sleazy" restaurant for a "sexually provocative" boss, as she described him (Hite, 2000, p. 81). She describes how he harassed her by pushing ice cream into

her mouth in front of his wife. When she became a university student, she worked as a secretary, and again her boss was "sexually aggressive" (Hite, 2000, p. 80). This is how she justified her work as a model; she simply needed the money and enjoyed the glamour. However, she never forgets to romanticise the experience by stating that she may have been enamoured with being photographed because her grandfather cherished a picture of her and placed it on his desk. Again, in her modelling years, she was sexually harassed by the photographers (Hite, 2000, pp. 89-90). The problems did not end there, because one of her nude photos which were taken for *Playboy* were used against her by the magazine when she published her books on sexuality, and they called her study the Hate Report.

During her last years in modelling she appeared as a brainless blonde in an advertisement for a typewriter. The advertisement angered some feminists who protested in front of the typewriter company, and to their surprise the model herself was among them. The transition from the girl who used to pose nude for money to the one who defends women's rights vehemently against those who defame the image and intelligence of women, including herself, is vague and unintelligible. She does claim that the transition was not so sudden because she has always been aware of the double standards, yet her autobiography tells a different story about someone who submissively fits within every stereotype about women, and yet decided to become an enthusiastic feminist overnight. Shere Hite does refer to herself as a radical feminist. She does not seem to approve of the idea that all feminists should be lesbians; she even calls this exclusion a kind

of "snobbery" (Hite, 2000, p. 97). Hence, she is not a political lesbian and she even had several heterosexual relationships in her life including a marriage that lasted around fourteen years.

Although she has a master's degree in history, Shere Hite directed her attention to sex research and published several studies on this topic that were attacked for several reasons, which prompted her to migrate to Germany and give up her American citizenship. In 1985 she married a younger German pianist who shielded her from the severe criticisms of the media. At one point, she relates how she was sexually harassed by the TV reporter Bill Paley, who not only insisted on telling her about his early sexual experience even though she was not interested, but also asked her about her own sexuality and proceeded to show her his sexual organ. Hite simply describes her meeting with Paley as "macabre yet funny," although it is in her own terms a "perfect example" of "sexual harassment" (Hite, 2000, p. 212).

Every sexologist, sex therapist or sex theorist approaches the study of sex with a particular objective in mind. Some were driven by their love for truth or appreciation of science and others aimed at presenting a somewhat revolutionary research that could change how their society viewed sexuality. Instead of being objective scientists, many sexologists viewed themselves as reformers in a backward society which did not appreciate the importance of sex. Their histories "were self-congratulatory tales, narratives of progress — stories in which sexologists cast themselves as the heroes of reform and assumed that the cause of sexual emancipation and sexual science were

one" (Waters, 2006, p. 53). Shere Hite was motivated to undertake her study by her dissatisfaction with all the other sex studies which, for her, imposed their opinions on women instead of deriving their results from their responses.

Women have never been asked how they felt about sex. Researchers, looking for statistical "norms," have asked all the wrong questions for all the wrong reasons – and all too often wound up *telling* women how they should feel rather than *asking* them how they do feel. Female sexuality has been seen essentially as a response to male sexuality and intercourse. There has rarely been any acknowledgment that female sexuality might have a complex nature of its own which would be more than just the logical counterpart of (what we think of as) male sexuality. (Hite, 1976, pp. 11, emphasis in the original)

Hite clearly implies that the sexologists, who were mainly males, strived to make female sexuality no more than a reaction to male sexuality. Their results did not stem from what women actually said, but from what they wanted them to say. My previous analysis of other sexologists and sex researchers would back up her point. In response as to why a certain woman chose to fill in Hite's questionnaire, she said: "I answered because I feel the women's point of view should be publicized. I have read many of the sex books available, and they are all written of the male, for the male, and by the male. I would like to ask Dr. Freud how many orgasms Mrs. Freud had?! And Dr. Reuben is another one." (Hite, 1976, p. 49). Of course, I do not propose that males should refrain from studying female sexuality and restrict

themselves to that of their own biologically determined sex only, but the field of female sexuality can always benefit from the research of a woman. A woman might be able to shed some light on areas totally ignored by men or even present a different interpretation of any collected data. Together, men and women could present a more enriched study of sexuality which is not dominated by the views of one gender only. Limiting the study of female sexuality to male researchers might lead us to a skewed view of female desire that only exists as a reaction to the male libido and not as an autonomous passion which could meet its climatic release in the physical and even fantastical absence of a male.

Hite's study claims that it reflects women's real experiences and views on their sexuality. Unlike Kinsey and Masters and Johnson who depended on interviews as well as observations in their studies, Hite preferred to send questionnaires. This preference was based on her conviction that women's movement in the 1970s debated numerous issues, but female sexuality was not one of them (Hite, 2000, p. 103). Hite was a participant in a group which advocated women's rights, and she suggested they hold a conference about female sexuality. When the other women in the group shied away from discussing their sexuality in public, Hite decided that the anonymity of a questionnaire would help those women express their feelings and desires. She wrote the questions, distributed them, and read them aloud in a conference. Few attendants were indignant about the forwardness of such a project, but Hite decided to go through with it, and so her research on female sexuality began.

This decision was appreciated by some women who favoured answering the questions privately and anonymously. One of the most remarkable answers given by a participant as to why she chose to reply to the questionnaire sheds some light on her attitude towards other studies in the field of sexuality: "I believe it's terribly important for all women to know what most other women experience not just what the more sexually free women experience, like those who don't mind relating publicly their experiences, or who could manage to perform in a laboratory situation. I don't believe those more uninhibited women represent the general female population" (Hite, 1976, p. 44). In other words, this lady could not trust the views of the "uninhibited" women who were interviewed by Kinsey or observed by Masters and Johnson simply because these women are not like her. For her it is easier to write about your sexuality anonymously rather than speak or even perform in front of researchers. Whether this opinion is shared by many women or not is an issue that needs further study, but the main concern remains that the males and females who find some discomfort with talking about their sexuality or having sex in front of other people are not represented in some of the most famous studies on sexuality. This is not to claim of course that anonymous questionnaires are the best possible methods in sex research or that the unreserved women who took part in sex research should be blamed in any way, but this point is definitely noteworthy.

One hundred thousand copies of the questionnaire were sent to women all over the United States starting from 1972 and answered by more than three thousand women. The questionnaire was mailed to some

women's groups at the beginning. Shortly after that, several magazines encouraged women to write and ask for a copy, and numerous churches' newsletters included notices about it. At first, Hite's project was not financed by any grant as she simply relied on a free press to produce copies of her questionnaire. However, mailing the questionnaire to participants nationwide was costly. Hite published her early findings in a book entitled *Sexual Honesty by Women for Women*, and the advance she received for it helped her finance her work. She also borrowed money from friends, and in order to pay her debts she relied on the sales of her *Report on Female Sexuality*.

In the questionnaire, the questions are divided into five sections: orgasm, sexual activities, relationships, life stages, and the ending which gives participants the chance to include any other information on their minds in relation to female sexuality. For the readers of the book, Hite includes another version of the questionnaire at the end of her publication, yet the original version is conveniently provided at the beginning. This is one of the advantages of this study, for whereas the way people were observed and interviewed in other studies remains a mystery to us, including the questionnaire here makes a reader a part of the experience.

However, Hite's methodology in her *Reports* was not appreciated by many critics. Although she tried to adhere to the scientific approach which is approved by other researchers by presenting a study that mixed the quantitative with the qualitative approaches, she did away with the numbers completely and focused on women's views and feeling instead. Because Hite did not rely on statistics in her research, her low response rate should be

somewhat tolerated. Indeed, she explains how she resorted to using words like "most," "many" and "some" to convey the prevalence of a certain practice or the lack thereof. For Liz Stanley, the critics who attacked Hite's study used her methodology as a pretext for undermining a research that did not provide results they approved of. "Hite's methodological departures from survey conventions provide a convenient stick with which to beat her, but the basic reason for the critical response is what are for many unpalatable and so unacceptable substantive results" (Stanley, 1995, p. 226). Hite's research was viewed as biased simply because it presented the world from women's point of view. That was not something that could be socially accepted back then. Her approach which put the marginalised women's views and feelings in the centre raised a few eyebrows within the predominantly scientific field of sex research.

Two main issues were stressed repeatedly with many critiques of Hite's work. The first one is her use of a questionnaire and the low return rate of less than 4 per cent. The drawbacks of a study that not only employed the anonymous answers of women without interviewing them face-to-face, but also did not receive a considerable number of replies; those drawbacks were stated in Masters and Johnson's *Human Sexuality*. For them the low return rate means that the study does not represent all women in the United States. Furthermore, a study that utilises survey is destined to be biased simply because the replies are likely to be from those who have a problem with their sexuality, and not from the contented or even neutral ones.

Survey studies are also influenced by volunteer bias. The Hite Report, a national survey of female sexuality, obtained 3,019 completed questionnaires out of about 100,000 distributed. It is not likely that this small response rate (less than 4 percent) provided a representative sample of all women in America. Further-more, the researcher had no way of knowing the characteristics of the 96 percent of her sample who did not respond. It is possible that people with sexual problems are more apt to complete a sex questionnaire because of their problem, and people with little sexual experience might avoid participating in such studies because of embarrassment. (Masters *et al.*, 1982a, p. 22)

Again, Hite's low return rate is criticised in her study *Women and Love*. In an article entitled "A Sociologist Looks at Women and Love," Janet Lever censures Hite's methodology severely and on so many different levels on the pages of *Playboy*. "To illustrate how unscientific Hite's report is, consider this: Social-scientific reports are typically based on a 60-65-percent return of questionnaires. A return rate of less than 50 percent prohibits the study from being published in respected journals. The Hite study is based on a four-and-a-hail-percent response rate—a truly abysmal rate of return" (Lever, 1988, p. 43). How response rate influences the accuracy of a certain survey is a debatable issue. It used to be considered an important factor that decided whether a study ought to be taken seriously or not, but recent research shows that the difference between studies with low response rates and others with high ones is negligible in reality. Hite did not have a captive

audience; hence, her low return rate is perfectly understandable. It depended on how willing women were to take the time to respond to a questionnaire sent to them by post. What should be taken into consideration here as well is that with the kind of questions Hite asked in her questionnaires, it is perfectly understandable that many women were not comfortable with elaborating on their deepest secrets. It is important to remember here that Hite did not only ask about opinions and generalities, but she also asked about specific details that probably many women were not comfortable with talking about, albeit anonymously. These same details, however, are among the most important qualities of Hite's studies; the replies she received about the way women masturbate remain relevant even. What I agree with here, however, is that Hite's research is indeed not representative of the American woman in general, and she as a researcher should have acknowledged this herself rather than presenting her study as the most comprehensive book on female sexuality that has ever been written.

The second issue that was criticised more than once in Hite's work is her lack of scientific backing in the field of sex research. Again, the fierce criticism is on the pages of another adult magazine; *Hustler*. The article entitled "The Hite Report Exposed" was accompanied by several not-so-flattering pictures of Hite in her "modelling years" only four years before she sent her famous first questionnaires to American women. The writer Tim Conaway begins his critique by discrediting Hite and dwarfing her by comparing her to "scientists" like Kinsey and Masters and Johnson. After all, she only had a Master's degree in history and no experience in the field of

sex research. "Would you have your plumbing installed by a chef? Would you trust a carpenter to perform surgery on you? We doubt it. Yet many American women are buying—and believing—a sex study done by Shere Hite, a former history student, whose work is marred by a feminist bias" (Conaway, 1977, p. 72). The writer hails Kinsey, Masters, and Johnson as "great scientific researchers," yet it is important to note that they do not belong to the same field of study; Kinsey was a biologist and Masters a gynaecologist, while Johnson did not have a university degree at all. The complexity here lies in the fact that sexuality has been studied from different perspectives because at the beginning nobody had an experience in sex research anyway. Even though some fields of study seemed to monopolise the study of sexuality, the fact remained that it was a topic that could be analysed by different scientific fields. Sexuality is not exclusive to the human biology; it can be studied from a historical, sociological, and yes, a feminist point of view. Considering that Hite's study does not revolve around sexuality in the past, it is safe to say that Hite presented her point of view not as a historian but as a feminist. As such, a study of sexuality is perfectly legitimate. Perhaps Hite's study could have been more beneficial if researchers from different fields participated in it, considering how extensive it is, yet it is unreasonable to dismiss Hite's study simply because it was based merely on her work. In her *Women and Love*, she did mention that nine people helped her sort the data, but unfortunately we know nothing about their credentials.

Like Stanley, Leonore Tiefer believed that the afore-mentioned attacks on Hite's work had nothing to do with how scientific or otherwise her methodology is. Hite's feminist views were under fire here and not her sex research per se.

What was all the fuss about? Why did anyone care what methods Shere Hite used? The litmus test of rigor was hauled out for Shere Hite because her book was of by, and for women's interests, it challenged sexism and heterosexism, and it therefore mobilized the resistance of the sexological "establishment." In this case, the invocation of methodological purity was a brushfire to distract attention from content and usefulness. (Tiefer, 1995, p. 109)

In other words, Hite's *Reports* were under fire not because of their scientificity or lack thereof, but simply because they represented another image of heterosexuality; one that does not fit within the rules of the patriarchal society. In Hite's books, women, rather than researchers, were given the chance to voice their own opinions using their own words. However, as Liz Stanley mentions, Hite's voice was the most authoritative voice in her *Reports*. She was the one who read her respondents' answers and chose what was worthy of quoting and what was only good for discarding.

Hite argues that her texts are marked by the complete separation of data and statement from interpretation, that her textual 'voice' appears only in relation to interpretation?' In my view this is really not convincing, for it begs the crucial question of 'who selects', who

selects in what is deemed significant and interesting, around what topics and themes, and using what quoted passages from respondents' writings. That is, there is both an acknowledged authorial presence — 'I interpret, but you have the data' — and a denied researcher presence — 'I select the data'. (Stanley, 1995, p. 230)

This problem with Hite's research has definitely affected the quality of her work to a certain degree, because we are reading what she deemed valuable. Nonetheless, the plethora of views represented in Hite's study remains an invaluable source for sex researchers and feminists alike.

In his critique of Masters and Johnson's work, Ross Morrow takes this appreciation of Hite's methodology even further by comparing it to other researchers' work. According to Morrow, while Masters and Johnson focused on the physiological data to determine whether the men and women they examined were healthy or suffered from a dysfunction. "There seem to be few studies which actually ask people to define sexual problems in their own terms. Shere Hite is one of the few researchers to have done this" (Morrow, 2008, p. 139). Thus, instead of focusing on physiology alone, Hite chose to ask her volunteers about their views. This is what led to a more accurate approach that does not only base dissatisfaction with sex on whether a person is sexually "dysfunctional" or not, but also on their feelings, desires, and the incompatibilities they might have with certain sexual partners.

For many feminists, Shere Hite's research was a breath of fresh air in an otherwise polluted environment of assumptions and speculations about female sexuality.

Looking back to that time now, it remains quite curious that given our commitment to explorations of the mundane and the marvelous, we devoted so little time to open and direct discussion of sexual pleasure. While we spent many meetings talking about our bodies and their particularities, the erotic contours of our imaginations remained buried in layers of propriety and ambivalence. Face to face, when it came to describing our desires, we were strangely mute. Our discussions of sex were barely audible.

In print, however, we were brave. There was the vaunted rediscovery of the clitoris and its many pleasures. With the full force of feminist analysis to support us, we declared with relief and then authority that vaginal orgasms were a myth, that our fears of being inadequate women were groundless. From its lowly position as a second-rate alternative to partner-sex, masturbation rose in our collective esteem and consciousness to a political epiphany. Even if we never went to Betty Dodson's workshops, or answered Shere Hite's questionnaires, most of us felt better knowing that we were like other women and other women were like us. Masturbation became the symbol of autonomous feminist sexuality, a logical reconciliation of our bodies and our lives, and a necessary foundation for knowing what was erotically satisfying.' (Webster, 1992, p. 385)

One of the advantages of Shere Hite's research on female sexuality lies in its representing, if not fully examining, several valuable statements by women who, for once, were given the chance to represent their sexual needs

and problems rather than being represented by others. One of the participants in Hite's study expresses her frustration with how the recent studies in sexuality messed up her sexual life further instead of helping her achieve relief and satisfaction. "Sex in the best of all possible worlds? My clitoris would be in my vagina, for Christ's sake, so I could come when I fuck!" (Hite, 1976, p. 227). Clearly, Masters and Johnson's studies were not very helpful for this female; instead of giving her the assurance that she can achieve orgasm during coitus, they also conveyed to her the idea that things do not come naturally and her sexual relationship with her partner might need therapeutic sessions in order to achieve their maximum potential. Another participant in Hite's study voiced her frustration in more details:

"When a woman says, 'I have clitoral orgasms from manual manipulation or cunnilingus, but I never have orgasms from stimulation by my husband's penis, and we're unhappy about it,' and she is told, 'There is only one kind of orgasm, the vaginal orgasm is a myth, so since you're having orgasms, you don't really have a problem, *you only think you do*,' I don't see how the woman's problem has been solved." (Hite, 1976, pp. 255-256, emphasis in the original)

For someone who wants to have an orgasm during penetrative sex, the ground-breaking refutation of the myth of the vaginal orgasm does not provide an answer, but rather complicates the problem even further. Unfortunately, this criticism applies to Shere Hite exactly as it did to Kinsey and Masters and Johnson. The notion that clitoral stimulation is needed to achieve orgasm seems to have been discovered over and over again by

Kinsey, Masters and Johnson, and Shere Hite who claims that "When [she] documented that most women need and enjoy clitoral stimulation to orgasm, at a time when it was universally believed that a Real Woman should orgasm from vaginal stimulation, this caused a storm" (Hite, 2000, p. vii). Although, Hite tries to represent herself as a sympathetic feminist who acknowledges the full array of women's desires and problems, she ends up reaching the same conclusions that the earlier sexologists found.

Addressing whether it is acceptable for women to have a sexual relationship with their male partners without having an orgasm, Shere Hite seems to go round and round in circles only to go back to square one.

The right to orgasm has become a political question for women.

Although there is nothing wrong with not having orgasms, and nothing wrong with empathizing with and sharing another person's pleasure, there *is* something wrong when this becomes a pattern where the man is *always* having an orgasm and the woman isn't. If we make it easy and pleasurable for men to have an orgasm, and don't have one ourselves, aren't we just "servicing" men? If we *know* how to have orgasms, but are unable to make this a part of a sexual relationship with another person, then we are not in control of *choosing* whether or not we have an orgasm. We are powerless.

Isn't this just like the traditional female role-watching and nurturing, always acting as helpmates to the lives of others? Isn't it the same sense of martyrdom and self-sacrifice that women have always, shown in other aspects of personal and family relations? We are the

sensitive and understanding ones, while men are the physical and mechanical experts who "get things done." In sex, supposedly, men know what to do: they initiate and carry out the main activities. We "respond" to them. But what men have generally initiated has had little to do with our needs for orgasm. And even worse, being necessarily passive gives us no sense of our strength and autonomy. It is time we reclaimed our own bodies, and started to use them *ourselves* for our own pleasure. (Hite, 1976, pp. 137-138, emphasis in the original)

The bottom line is that it is definitely not acceptable for women not to have an orgasm in a heterosexual relationship. Needless to say, as is the case with Masters and Johnson who represent not having an orgasm in a relationship with a man as a treatable illness, Hite does the same with the added censure that a woman who accepts that might be sacrificing her body's pleasure to the enemy who has always subjugated her. I wonder whether the woman who disliked the refutation of the vaginal orgasm myth feels any better after reading Hite's invitation to revolt against her own inadequate sexual performance, which seems to hinder women's liberation in some way.

Hite herself criticises Masters and Johnson for causing the women who do not reach orgasm during coitus to feel dysfunctional or ill, yet she does not hesitate to provide her own treatment for the problem:

To have an orgasm during intercourse, there are two ways a woman can increase her chances, always remembering that she is adapting her body to less than adequate stimulation. First and most important,

she must consciously try to apply her masturbation techniques to intercourse, or experiment to find out what else may work for her to get clitoral stimulation; or, she can work out a sexual relationship with a particular man who can meet her individual needs. (Hite, 1976, p. 301)

Thus, as was the case with Masters and Johnson and their followers who employed masturbation as a sort of technique that forms the first step towards learning how to achieve orgasm during coitus, Hite sees that in both masturbation and coition, the same kind of stimulation is used, in women; therefore autoerotism can be a useful form of practice.

One of the most notable questions in the questionnaire is related to Hite's definition of what she calls asexual. "If you are currently *asexual* or *celibate* (that is, you have no sexual relations except perhaps masturbation), how do you like this way of life? Would you recommend it to other women? How long do you plan to remain asexual?" (Hite, 1976, pp. 17, emphasis in the original). These questions do not seem to be well thought-out and they have several problems on so many levels. To begin with, asexuality and celibacy are represented as one and the same thing, but indeed they are very different. While asexuality is the lack of sexual attraction, celibacy is the choice to refrain from engaging in any sexual activity for personal or religious reasons. A celibate does not have to be asexual although it does help if they are. An asexual person who practices celibacy for religious reasons for instance cannot be tempted by any sexual attractions from the same or other sex. "That celibacy in some forms of religious life is often so difficult to

uphold attests to the fact that many celibates are not necessarily asexual. They may eventually stray and engage in some form of sexual behaviour, because their sexual attractions and inclinations are so strong and overwhelm their values." (Bogaert, 2012, p. 19). Asexuality is not a "way of life" that can be "liked" or "recommended to other women." All a reader needs to do to comprehend the degree of erroneousness here is replace the word "asexual" with "heterosexual," "homosexual" or "bisexual." A question of how long a person plans to have a certain sexual orientation will not be met with answers but with raised eyebrows and justifiably so. The word asexual in Hite's questions should be replaced with the word celibate because evidently what she means by the word has nothing to do with asexuality. Another problematic word is "relations" for it seems that Hite considers masturbation one of the sexual relations. I believe this was simply a mistake on her part among other mistakes she made in a topic she knows nothing about, but referring to masturbation as one of the sexual relations in general reflects some of our problems with the practice. Viewing it as a "relation" is mostly no more than an attempt at romanticising and socialising the practice in order to make it unanimously accepted. Instead of accepting autoerotism for what it is, we prefer to embellish it and represent it as a form of relation with the self.

It does seem that, for Shere Hite, the importance of masturbation lies in its efficacy as to making women reach orgasm even when it is harder for them to reach it in a sociosexual relationship.

Masturbation is, in a very real sense, one of the most important subjects discussed in this book and a cause for celebration, because it is such an easy source of orgasms for most women. Women in this study said they could masturbate and orgasm with ease in just a few minutes. Of the 82 percent of women who said they masturbated, 95 percent could orgasm easily and regularly, whenever they wanted. Many women used the term "masturbation" synonymously with orgasm: women assumed masturbation included orgasm.

The ease with which women orgasm during masturbation certainly contradicts the general stereotypes about female sexuality—that women are slow to become aroused, and are able to orgasm only irregularly. The truth seems to be that female sexuality is thriving—but unfortunately underground. (Hite, 1976, p. 59)

What is truly unfortunate here is that what seemed like an endorsement of masturbation ended in a completely different tone. If masturbation is indeed enjoyed in the underground world of sexuality, one has only to wonder as to what happened to the breezy, fairy-tale-like environment in which the author herself enjoyed her masturbatory adventure when she was young.

Having discussed some of the problems with Hite's approach to masturbation and female sexuality in general, it is important to note that her research can be still applauded for several reasons. Because Hite's research gives women the freedom to share their views, instead of representing them merely by numbers in statistics, she asks her readers for more details. She

does not simply ask about the number of times, but she enquires about the how as well.

12. What do you think is the importance of masturbation? Did you ever see anyone else masturbating? How did they look? Can you imagine women you admire masturbating?

13. Do you enjoy masturbating? Physically? Psychologically? How often? _____. Does it lead to orgasm always, usually, sometimes, rarely, or never? _____. How long does it/do you usually take? _____. How many orgasms do you usually have? _____.

14. How do you masturbate? Please give a detailed description. For example, what do you use for stimulation – your fingers or hand or the bed, etc.? Exactly where do you touch yourself? Are your legs together or apart? What sequence of events do you do? (Hite, 1976, pp. 14-15)

As was the case with other sexologists, the questions of how often one masturbates and if masturbation leads to orgasm are again asked by Hite. However, she does not stop there for her work is not restricted to numbers. She asks women to express their views on masturbation and to explain how they do it themselves. Of the women who replied to Hite's questionnaire, 82 per cent said they masturbated and 95 per cent of those reached orgasm easily and whenever they wished. Indeed, for many of those the correlation between masturbation and orgasm was so strong in their minds that they

thought every act of masturbation included orgasm. Despite the physical enjoyment of masturbation, fewer women enjoyed it psychologically. Some used to feel guilty about it, some continued to feel guilty, and others enjoyed it fully without any qualms. Normally, according to Hite's study, the older and more educated women belong to the third group.

Those who feel guilty about masturbation admit that they do enjoy it physically because it leads to orgasm but the cultural influence on their sexual lives affects how they feel about it. "Psychologically, they felt lonely, guilty, unwanted, selfish, silly, and generally bad. Other words that were frequently used included 'uncomfortable, adrift, uneasy, pathetic, ashamed, empty, cheap, dirty, self-centered, silly, disgusted,' and 'self-conscious'" (Hite, 1976, p. 62). One woman said: "To me, masturbation seems lonely, childish, self-absorbed; everything I'd rather *not* have as part of my sex experience. I do it sometimes, but I wouldn't brag about it in public" (Hite, 1976, pp. 62, emphasis in the original). The importance of these epithets lies in the fact that they make us even more aware of the influence of sexologists and sex researchers on the way the society views masturbation. The practice is condemned from a moral point of view, which is evident from the "shame and "guilt" women feel about it. Furthermore, it is rejected because it does not fit within what social human beings are expected to do. Hence, masturbation gives some women a feeling of "loneliness," "selfishness" and even being "unwanted." Additionally, it makes some women feel "childish" when they resort to it simply because, as Freud convinced them, this is not how grown women should reach an orgasm. One of Hite's respondents

explains that the "literature" impaired her psychological enjoyment of masturbation even though she does not feel guilty about it: "It's not so much that I feel I am doing something 'dirty,' but it does tend to reinforce my fears of being 'frigid' or just fucked up (I'm afraid I've been terribly influenced by all that 'literature' that says if you masturbate but can't orgasm during intercourse, you are very screwed up)" (Hite, 1976, pp. 62-63). A woman is expected to enjoy a climax which is granted to her by the male within a "meaningful" relationship. Anything outside this is frowned upon and condemned. A woman attributes her gradual acceptance of masturbation to her realisation that even a relationship with a man can be miserable too: "Psychologically, it's a little lonely, sometimes, but then, so is making love with a person who doesn't love you" (Hite, 1976, p. 65).

While most women were capable of enjoying masturbation physically but not psychologically, some were able to discard their feeling of guilt and inadequacy and therefore started enjoying masturbation again. These were the ones that sought reassurances and received them from sex research and even from the church. As young girls, they feared being "caught" by their parents who did not teach them anything about their sexuality, but in their adult years they discovered that it is a widespread practice with no ill effects. A woman confessed to a priest and he told her that the practice was not a sinful one and that everybody does it (Hite, 1976, pp. 66-67). These reassurances were successful in getting some women out of the vicious circle of pleasure and guilt which they were lost in as young girls. Some women in Hite's sample enjoy masturbation fully, however even in their

praise of the practice some prejudices and misconceptions can be perceived.

A woman relates her experience:

Masturbation is one of the sacred rituals that women can enjoy amongst themselves. I say it is 'sacred' because it is *self*-initiated, *self*-controlled, and *self*-gratifying—coming from a position of strength. It is not only about a physical or emotional (they are inseparable) closeness to one's own body, but a conquest of all the fears that families and men have instilled in women about their bodies and sexual dependencies. Try it you'll like it. (Hite, 1976, pp. 69, emphasis in the original)

This woman's attitude might look like a commendable and freeing one, but indeed it is the exact opposite. Viewing masturbation as a "reaction" against the misconception implanted within women about their own sexuality may not be such a positive move. Instead, women should try to search for what pleases them regardless of what the patriarchal society teaches them.

Considering the female sexuality as a reaction to that of the male is the main issue women had to overcome, and it does not matter what kind of a reaction it is; it is still a form of "sexual dependency" that we are better off without.

The triumph is not with the act of masturbation itself but with being able to accept it in spite of all the warnings and misconceptions. As one of Hite's respondents rightly concludes: "Given the historic horror of our culture for masturbation, I suppose being able to masturbate and not be upset by it in others is some small degree of freedom" (Hite, 1976, p. 76).

At the other end of the spectrum, there were some women in the sample who did not enjoy masturbation at all; neither psychologically nor physically. Of course, it is understandable that although the majority of humans masturbate, some have no interest in it whatsoever. However, reading the responses of some of those who do not enjoy it, we notice that in some cases they base their attitude on the prejudice they have against it as a practice which is frowned upon socially considered as inferior to sex with a partner.

When examining women's responses regarding the methods women use to masturbate, Hite found that the most common way is the stimulation of the clitoris by hand. However, she also found that only 1.5 per cent of the women who replied to her survey masturbated by inserting an object or a finger into the vagina. When studying the same issue, Kinsey found that 20 per cent of women resorted to vaginal insertion. In most cases, women masturbate lying on the backs and only 5.5 per cent do it face down. Some women employ objects like pillows and chairs, and around 3 per cent masturbate by pressing their thighs together rhythmically.

To sum up, I do not consider Hite's *Report* a faultless study on female masturbation or female sexuality in general. It is evident from the outset, even from the kind of questions Hite asked that she wanted to guide the study into a certain path, and indeed as Stanley says, Hite was the one who chose the passages that should be highlighted and those which were less significant. However, Hite's research remains among the indispensable resources on female sexuality, due to its attempt at voicing women's opinions

and desires without a direct influence from the researcher. Because of this relative freedom given to women, the Report remains a great read into what women want rather than what researchers impose on them.

Chapter Seven

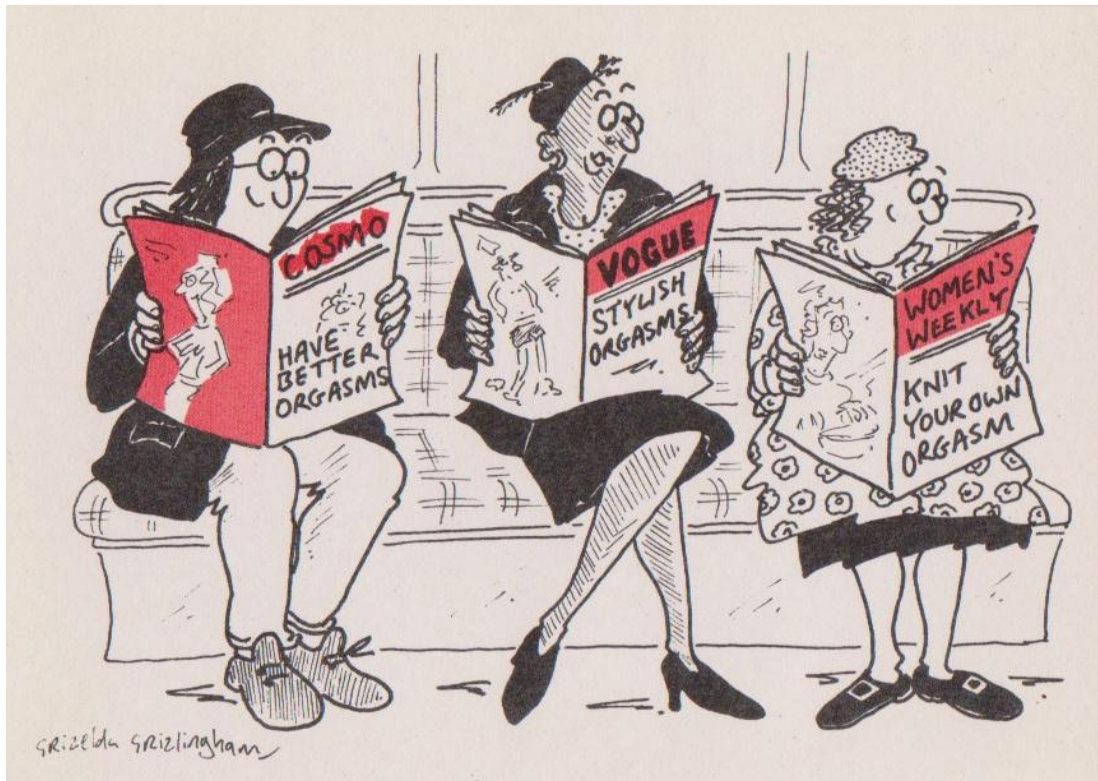
Knitting Our Way to Orgasm:

Contemporary Representations of Masturbation in Popular Culture

There is a noticeable difference between Kinsey's *Reports*, say, and the *Reports* written by Shere Hite when it comes to reading experience. Kinsey conveys his conclusions through statistics, tables, maps, calculations and charts, while Hite simply chooses and edits the experiences of women as she received them with some added, easy-to-read comments of her own. Unlike Kinsey who wanted to show that the study of sexuality could be serious and scientific, Hite focused on writing about women for women⁵⁸ thereby contributing to making sex research accessible to laywomen and not just specialists. Hite's work on sexuality eases the way out from the pages of physicians, biologists and psychoanalysts to the media employed by writers, directors and artists. This transition is important because it is only through a study of popular culture are we able to shed some light on how the public deals with the idea of female masturbation. Only through a study of the popular, are we capable of tracing how all the studies I have examined in my previous chapters affect what I will metaphorically refer to as the "average" women, for a lack of a more realistic term, hence my choice of the title of this chapter. Knitting, which is one of the most traditionally feminine activities, is

⁵⁸ A portion of *The Hite Report on Female Sexuality* was published under the title *Sexual Honesty, by Women, For Women* in 1974 (Hite, 1976, p. 5). Furthermore, Hite's Report, according to the author, sold over twenty million copies as of 2000 (Hite, 2000, p. 131).

also a metaphor within psychoanalysis⁵⁹ for female masturbation. With this image in mind, I could not resist envisaging a woman knitting the names of all those who affected her view of masturbation from Ellis to Hite, in the habit of Madame Thérèse Defarge (Dickens, 1868), while knitting her way to orgasm. However, rather than being obsessed with revenge and killing, my knitter is simply aware of the studies which affected her thought and is critical of them.



Knit Your Own Orgasm (1998) by Grizelda Grizlingham. Reproduced with kind permission of the artist.

⁵⁹ My title is not an implied endorsement of the sometimes-exaggerated way of interpreting symbols in psychoanalysis. Alan Dundes mentions an anecdote which can be counted among the folklore of psychoanalysis with regard to this symbol in particular. While a psychoanalyst was giving a lecture, he is annoyed by a woman knitting in the front row, so he tells her: "Don't you know that knitting is a form of symbolic masturbation?" She replies: "When I knits, I knits, and when I masturbates, I masturbates [sic]" (Dundes, 2003, p. 39). I prefer the symbol of the knitter as the weaving Moirai who seal the destiny of human beings. Similarly readers can determine the destiny of sex researchers and even kill them metaphorically in order to reach their own conclusions.

With the introduction of popular culture into my study, I have to admit that I am departing my comfort zone, yet happily treading unfamiliar grounds. To answer the question: "where do we stand now regarding the issue of female masturbation?" I chose to resort to popular culture for its immeasurable importance in giving us a more accessible image of ourselves as well as the world around us. A reading of popular culture is essential "if only because a wide popular cultural literacy can be extraordinarily useful in engaging with other people (the civic ideal); but mostly because the success of popular culture is a direct result of what it teaches us about ourselves. And it is a democratic imperative to understand what that is" (Hermes, 2005, p. 159). Although she stresses its importance, Joke Hermes establishes from the outset that defending popular culture is not an easy task (Hermes, 2005, p. vii). Defining the term is more difficult still. John Storey aims at presenting the different attributes which might constitute what is called popular culture. It could be a culture which is preferred by many people (Storey, 2014, p. 5), the opposite of high culture (pp. 5-8), mass culture (pp. 8-9), produced by "the people" (p. 9), influenced by the struggle between the ruling forces and the subordinates (pp. 10-12), or marked by the end of the elitist differentiation between what is elevated and what is popular (p. 12). However, the reason behind my choice of popular culture is that it reveals the thought on which the present relationship with masturbation is built. "Popular culture is a site where the construction of everyday life may be examined. The point of doing this is not only academic — that is, as an

attempt to understand a process or practice — it is also political, to examine the power relations that constitute this form of everyday life and thus reveal the configurations of interests its construction serves" (Turner, 2003, p. 6 as cited in Storey, 2014, p. 11).

Through this analysis of Anglophone popular culture, I will try to shed some light on the problems we currently have with female masturbation. This chapter will begin with a reading of the work of Betty Dodson. As a celebrated artist and sex educator whose name became synonymous with female masturbation, Dodson presents several significant ideas on female masturbation, yet there are also some problems with her work. My investigation into Dodson's oeuvre will be followed by a reading of some young adult novels and an examination of how masturbation is defended in these texts. I then turn to adult popular culture, identifying a number of films, TV shows and women's magazines which present problematic views of female masturbation. Finally, I move on to very current popular culture, and discuss the technological aspect of female masturbation as presented in a dedicated mobile phone application. My choice of these representations of female masturbation is based on their contribution to the topic at hand and how they focus, intentionally or unintentionally, on their skewed view of auto-erotism.

Is the Skeleton Still in the Cupboard?⁶⁰

Once dubbed "The Mother of Masturbation" (Dodson, 1996, p. 5), Betty Dodson's contribution to the subject of female masturbation is difficult to overlook. Her views on masturbation first appeared in a monograph and then an article in *Ms. Magazine* (Dodson, 1996, p. xi). This article further developed into the feminist classic *Liberating Masturbation* which in turn was revised and entitled *Sex for One: The Joy of Selfloving*. In her 1996 revised edition of this famous book, she declares "With this revision of *Sex for One*, I am releasing myself from a promise I made twenty-five years ago: my feminist commitment of liberating masturbation has been accomplished" (Dodson, 1996, p. xiv). Yet, if this were the case, why is she still running workshops, answering questions on a dedicated website, and even appearing regularly on her business partner and fellow sex educator's YouTube channel? To answer this question, let me first shed some light on Dodson's work and ideas.

Her contribution to the field of sexuality started, and was partially triggered, by her divorce which ended a far from satisfactory sexual relationship. Her husband was a "premature ejaculator" and only "sneaky masturbation [...] got [her] through marriage" (Mirk, 2014, p. 161), but the relationship ended when the husband confessed that he had fallen in love with his secretary. On her own for the first time and in her thirties, she was dismayed to discover that she was dependant on men both sexually and financially. Following her divorce in 1965, she rediscovered enjoyable partner

⁶⁰ I owe my choice of this subtitle to my recent read of the novel *Cakes and Ale: or, the Skeleton in the Cupboard* by W. Somerset Maugham.

sex with an experienced and liberated man she referred to as Blake in her book, though his real name was Grant Taylor (Castleman, 2002). In *Sex for One*, she elaborates on how Taylor educated her sexually by experimenting with different positions and even showing her pornography; a genre which later gave her the idea of teaching women about the shape of their genitals. However, at first Dodson wanted an exclusive relationship with her lover. He had other thoughts. The couple starting dating other people, but while it was easy for him to find new women, Dodson suffered before she managed to embrace a polyamorous life style. On her website, she describes how frustrating it was for her to have casual sex with men, but she was determined to succeed. "I looked into the bathroom mirror and renewed my commitment to becoming an independent woman who was no longer dependent upon one man for my orgasms, money, security, or happiness. Just then, I felt the first warm rush of my period. My pact had been sealed in blood" (Dodson, 2009a). Her erotic art was partly the reason she was introduced to New York's cultural underground. "I must have had sex with a thousand men and women," she says, "it was a wild time. But in hindsight, I was also exploring sexuality, preparing for my life's work as a sex educator" (Castleman, 2002).

In the 1970s, Dodson started her work on sexuality at first just with women. She ran a slideshow of pictures of female genitalia. The pictures were taken of some her friends who agreed to be a part of an experiment, and the venture proved very successful. Dodson wanted to show women who were led to believe that their vulvas were "nasty, ugly, smelly, and

shameful" that they were "beautiful" (Castleman, 2002). She encouraged women to hold mirrors in order to discover the shapes of their own genitals, and then view pictures of other women's vulvas to be aware of the variation. Soon, she also started what she called Bodysex Groups which were workshops in which she taught women how to be acquainted with their genitals, masturbate, reach orgasm and love themselves. What started as a female only class developed and, despite her initial apprehension, Dodson ran a workshop for men as well. The sessions continued to be single-sex with the exception of the workshop leader, for Betty Dodson still had the difficult task of teaching men how to masturbate in the men-only classes. Because of her contribution to the field of sexuality, Dodson was awarded a PhD⁶¹ in 1994. At present, and despite being in her eighties, she is still running workshops at her residence and answering questions on her website with the same zeal and vigour she has always exhibited. It is easy for any viewer of her videos or reader of her several interviews to perceive why this charismatic and lively character enjoys such fame and respect.

As far as her thought is concerned, many of her ideas on masturbation and female orgasm are noteworthy. However, despite Dodson's progressive ideas on masturbation, contradictions abound. "I used to say masturbation leads to sex, but now I know masturbation *is* sex. The next time someone asks, "When was the first time you had sex?" the

⁶¹ "When I first self-published *Liberating Masturbation*, I was joking when I said I would have to award myself a degree in masturbation. Then in 1994, I received a PhD in Sexology from the Institute for Advanced Study in Human Sexuality (IASHS) in San Francisco," Dodson explains, "My thesis was a self-published book about masturbation, a video documentary about the Bodysex workshops and a list of all the books on sex that had referenced my information on female self-sexuality. All those years of running masturbation workshops constituted unique fieldwork" (Dodson, 2011).

appropriate response would be your first memory of masturbation, not the first time you had partnersex" (Dodson, 1996, p. 6, emphasis in original). She goes on to criticise the writers who, despite not believing in the old myths about the dangers of masturbation, present it merely as an alternative for partner sex: "most of the current books and articles about sex, while deploring the frightening old myths about masturbation, still damn it with faint praise. Worst is the implication that masturbation is an okay substitute for something better" (Dodson, 1996, p. 6). However, immediately after this argument, Dodson lists the "benefits" of masturbation which, among others, include its being a good substitute for relationships, thereby committing the same mistake she criticises in others. Quoted at length due to their significance is a long list of "benefits" of masturbation according to Dodson:

Aside from its importance as a form of sexual self-help, the benefits of masturbation are many. Masturbation provides sexual satisfaction for people unable to find partners. It's a way for teenagers with irrepressible sex drives to have orgasms without the possibility of pregnancy or contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Masturbation also provides a sexual outlet for couples when they are separated, when one partner is ill, when one partner is not interested in sex, or when either partner cannot get enough stimulation to reach orgasm through sexual intercourse.

Masturbation can also be done with a partner (or partners) as a valid alternative to intercourse; sharing masturbation is an important addition to the sexual repertoire of couples. Masturbating prior to

partnersex is a way for men to eliminate sexual urgency and rushing. It also provides safe sexual satisfaction during the last stages of pregnancy, and can give relief from menstrual cramps. Masturbating to orgasm is relaxing and helps induce sleep. Finally, and certainly a consideration these days, masturbation is the basic form of safe sex. (Dodson, 1996, pp. 6-7)

It is highly doubtful that a substantial number of people consider the possibility of catching a venereal disease before deciding on masturbation instead of coitus. Despite all the condemnation, autoerotism has always been practiced, yet the majority of people do not choose to do away with sexual intercourse altogether. Although, condoms helped prevent the spread of these infections, not so many people seem to have considered masturbation as a way out of the AIDS epidemic, for instance. Indeed, when Masters and Johnson suggested sexual abstinence as a solution for a dangerous disease that could be transmitted to another person even through a deep kiss (Masters *et al.*, 1988, p. 95), the audience was not convinced and the book was considered flawed (Maier, 2009, pp. 324-325). Masturbation is an option, yet it is not usually seen as an alternative to sexual relationships.

A study conducted between 1997 and 1998 on low income African American women from the Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota aimed to examine the alleged benefits of masturbation in HIV prevention presented remarkable results. The mean age of the participants was 34.3 years and because of their age they were considered at risk of HIV. The study

depended on face-to-face interviews with the women. In the two-hour interviews, women were given 409 questions with mostly fixed choice rather than open-ended essays. The participants were asked about their masturbatory habit, its frequency and the possible guilt surrounding it. "Do you ever masturbate?" and 'Have you masturbated in the last 3 months' (both coded 'yes' or 'no'). The third item was rated on a 5-point scale and asked how often respondents felt guilty after masturbating (1 = almost never, 2 = occasionally, 3 = about half the time, 4 = often, and 5 = almost all the time)"(Robinson *et al.*, 2002, p. 90). The answers were compared with what constituted safe sex behaviour as using condoms and monogamous relationships. The results showed no correlation between guilt over masturbation and condom use or the number of sexual partners (Robinson *et al.*, 2002, pp. 92-93). However, "Women who masturbated (during their lifetime or in the last three months) were more likely to report engaging in three of the four unsafe sexual behaviors examined: having multiple partners, being in a non-monogamous relationship and engaging in high-risk sexual behaviour" (Robinson *et al.*, 2002, p. 93). For the researchers who conducted this study, results were quite surprising. When reflecting on the correlation between masturbation and high-risk sexual behaviour, they attributed it to the notion that interest in masturbation reveals a high sex drive which translates into the desire in engaging in more sex but not necessarily safe sex (Robinson *et al.*, 2002, p. 97). This study reveals that the assertion that engaging in masturbation protects against HIV might be no more than an assumption that requires further inquiry.

Indeed in her own life, Dodson further contradicts her earlier ideas about the importance of masturbation in its own right. In her seventies, she fell in love with a young man called Eric and ended up having a relationship with him which lasted several years. During the time she was with Eric, and as a reply to a severe critique on promoting masturbation, Dodson replied: "some career masturbators end up a lot happier than some traditional academics" (Dodson, 2007). Here she refers to her relationship with a young man later in life, for as a feminist, she is aware of the power ties and how older men are allowed to have relationships with younger girls while older women are not given the same privilege to find a younger man. However, the implication here is that a heterosexual relationship is a happy ending for the masturbator. Before meeting Eric, Dodson's sexuality went through different phases for "after the group sex parties of the '60s and '70s, she spent the '80s bisexual but mostly lesbian. In the '90s, she returned briefly to heterosexuality but eventually decided to go solo" (Castleman, 2002). Her masturbation phase was far from unsatisfactory, yet it came to an end when her "prince charming" showed up (Dodson, 2007). "After living as a committed self-sexual single for nearly two decades," Dodson reflects, "retracing my steps through another heterosexual love affair was unexpected, demanding, and also delightful" (Dodson, 2007).

Despite the contradictions, Dodson goes on to attribute more benefits to autoerotism. "Since so many of us are afflicted with self-loathing, bad body images, shame about body functions, and confusion about sex and pleasure, I recommend an intense love affair with yourself" (Dodson, 1979, p. 166).

What she is implying is that instead of addressing the issues we have with ourselves and the erroneous or demeaning expectations of our society regarding how a potential sexually active person should look, we can simply masturbate. This either suggests that those who cannot have any socio-sexual activities can resort to the inferior option called solo sex, or that masturbation is a form of practice that will eventually correct your misconceptions about sexuality and love to end up having a "real" sexual relationship with a partner. Starting with the latter, claiming that the practice of masturbation is actually capable of solving the issues people have with their bodies is an exaggeration. Any amount of relief or sexual glow will not magically transform an introvert into an extrovert. It is possible, that for those who never masturbated and never had orgasms with a partner, beginning to experiment alone and succeeding in reaching a climax, the practice would clarify some of the issues they have with the concept of pleasure. However, it would be an overstatement to claim that solo sex is an intensive course in sexology. No matter how much masturbation is practiced, more remains to be acquired when another form of sexual activity is initiated. We certainly have taken long strides since Freud's claim that masturbation can prevent women from enjoying the real deal that is vaginal orgasm with a partner. However, a credible approach would be to assert that masturbation would not interfere in people's other sexual activities, instead of making the exaggerated claim that solo sex is the only Kama Sutra one will ever need. Dodson's suggestion that masturbation is the best practice that allows people to explore their bodies (Dodson, 1996, p. 4) is not accurate in many cases because the practice itself does not necessarily involve holding a mirror and

examining the genitals at leisure, and an exploration of one's genitals does not have to be visual. Women masturbate in so many different ways that do not necessarily involve manual stimulation, and some also masturbate with their clothes on. Thus, Dodson's example might not be illustrative of a person's experience with sex. "When I first started dancing again (as an adult) I practiced for several months alone in front of a mirror until I had enough confidence to dance with my friends at a discotheque" (Dodson, 1979, p. 168). If a young girl is worried about her first sexual experience, advising her to masturbate first might not be the answer because no amount of practice in front of the mirror will ensure not stepping on someone's foot in a discotheque. This brings us to the other option of dancing alone simply because one cannot have a dance partner. Granted that recommending masturbation for those who are not interested in having sexual partners is a good idea, the same cannot be said about those who desire to have a sexual partner. Masturbation is not a substitute for heterosexual or homosexual relationships. If a girl cannot have a sexual partner because she does not fit within what is considered a desirable female, her problem will not be solved through masturbation. It is true that an orgasm would provide a relief for her sexual need, yet the need for a sexual partner will not miraculously vanish. Looking at masturbation as no more than an inferior alternative for "real" sex would simply add to the masturbator's tension and misery and would also magnify the person's low self-esteem for their inability to have a relationship. Only when the umbilical cord which connects masturbation with "real sex" is severed are we capable of accepting and/or enjoying masturbation for what

really is; a separate sexual practice that neither requires a campaign against it nor a treatise on its benefits.

However, Dodson goes as far as to refer to masturbation as "selfloving" in the title of her book and she even dedicates a chapter of it to what she calls "Making Love Alone" (Dodson, 1996, pp. 141-161). In this section, she recommends an eight-step program in order for people to have a "love affair" with themselves. The program begins by looking in the mirror and professing one's love to oneself, and then it proceeds to taking a hot bath, appreciating the body without body shaming. Dodson then recommends a self-massaging followed by discovering and loving one's genitals. The last three stages include dancing in front of the mirror, setting the scene for a lovemaking session by using candles and music, for instance, and finally "take your time and be a gentle lover for yourself" (Dodson, 1996, p. 152). This image of a long and possibly romantic masturbatory session is reminiscent of how the comedian Louis C.K. views female masturbation. "Women seem to like masturbating. They put flower petals on the pillow. They're like: Ah, me" (C.K., 2006). But, is this long preparation of the body and the self-loving nest really necessary? Should every masturbatory act be amorous and every orgasm intense? Another comedienne, Sarah Silverman, mentions masturbation in her song "Perfect Night" featuring Will.i.am. Her perfect night is all about staying at home, enjoying a movie, ordering some food and masturbating. "Tonight is the night I'm gonna celebrate/ Stay at home, order in, watch a movie, then masturbate" (Silverman and Will.i.am, 2013). This song is meant as a light-

hearted parody of a song which celebrates a night out, but it does present an unusual image of a female masturbator without the rose petals, soft lighting, and romantic music. The paradox here is that it is an unusual image simply because there is nothing special about it. Hence, it is a step, and "broader change will probably come once we get used to the idea that many women are doing what Sarah Silverman is — just touching ourselves as part of a low-key Saturday night on the couch" (Friedman, 2013).

The exaggerated advantages which are attributed to masturbation simply add to the problem instead of solving it. Claiming that autoerotism is the first and main step in people's sexual lives is a generalisation that automatically excludes those who had socio-sexual activities and never masturbated or those who prefer a relationship rather than solo sex.

Masturbation is our primary sex life. It is our sexual base. Everything we do beyond that is simply how we choose to socialize our sex life. Under ideal circumstances, there would be no set or prescribed way in which we would sexualize. Our sexual preferences would naturally be multifaceted, varied and independent, and would include a combination of all living things. Socially institutionalized dependent sex is depersonalizing. Masturbation can help return sex to its proper place—to the individual. (Dodson, 1979, p. 174)

Under "ideal circumstances," there would not be a definition for what the "proper place" of sex should be. Whether a person's sex life is socialised or individualised should not be a problem, and there should not be a plan or a first step from which sexuality is instigated and taken into one direction or

another. A polygonal sexual life should be accepted, yet there is no reason for presenting it as the norm or imposing it on those who are not inclined to be omnisexual. To claim that masturbation changes people's outlook to life is to blow things out of proportion. Although, shame and secrecy are unnecessary when the practice is safe and universal, discussing it publically, despite being perhaps entertaining among friends, would not solve all our problems. "By making no secret of our masturbation, we challenge those who have a stake in our repression, who perpetuate the conspiracy of grim silence. By openly advocating masturbation and debunking myths about it, we become less intimidated and more confident about ourselves and our bodies"(Dodson, 1979, p. 174).

Now we can go back to the original question about the reason why Dodson is still on the scene as a sex educator and masturbation advocate, despite her assertion that her work was completed almost 20 years earlier. As a start, I will not rule out the commercial aspect⁶² of Dodson's work,

⁶² The commercial aspect of Betty Dodson's work is difficult to ignore; readers of her books and visitors of her website are bombarded with advertisements of more books, DVDs and workshops which are not free. The website sells not only the famous Bodysex Workshop DVD, but also videos of mostly women and sometimes men having sex, like the Carlin Ross and Liandra Dahl video in two parts which has been pirated and published on different pornographic websites. The Bodysex Workshops fee is \$1200 by cheque, \$1000 by cash, or \$800 for students, and considering that around 9-15 women meet in every session, more than \$10000 would be gained in ten hours over the weekend. Dodson also provides private coaching sessions for one day for the fee of \$1200. Additionally, she started along with her current business partner Carlin Ross, a Kickstarter project and raised over \$20000 to make another Bodysex Workshop documentary which she could sell. The project was successfully funded on 13 July 2011 <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1453011374/betty-dodsons-bodysex-group>. You can even buy Betty's Vaginal Barbell for \$125 from Amazon or from Dodson's website, and it might give you all the orgasms you have been craving. Furthermore, to celebrate the female genitals, vulva heart jewellery can be bought from Dodson's page on Etsy. Fans could also make donations of \$50-\$1000 to the now public charity Betty A. Dodson Foundation. Apparently, according to Laura Roberts "those who cry sell-out are clearly just jealous that she was able to pay her bills writing dirty little stories" (Roberts, 2009). Although Roberts here was talking about Anaïs Nin, her article was understood to discuss the lives of a female sex writers in general and it was quoted by Betty Dodson on her website (Dodson, 2009b). Unfortunately, nothing can be said to dodge the

although the sexual aspect is much more important for my purpose.

However, the reason she resumed her work on sexuality is partly due to the confused way people deal with their bodies and desires. "The public discourse about sex is either blathering on and on about 'abstinence only' or promoting excessive, pornified crap about 'mind-blowing orgasms.'" "While sex is used to sell everything, sweet little is being done to promote sexual skills that would actually benefit people," she concludes, "I'd say the public discourse is flashier, but people are more repressed, unfortunately."

(Henderson, 2009). Her view of sexuality is not far from truth regrettably, but even in her eighties, Dodson is eager to interact with young people and teach them about their sexuality. "On the website, oooo, we're cookin'. We're putting out the information that these kids really need. I get up in the morning and I can't wait to get to the computer. I'm 83 years-old and I am dealing with thousands of people [...] My bliss and my ecstasy are helping these kids find some answers to their sex problems" (Mirk, 2014, p. 165). Of course, by "kids" here, Dodson does not refer to children as such, for they are not normally her targeted audience, but mainly to women younger than she is. However, discussing masturbation in young adults is one way to explore society's acceptance of the practice or the lack thereof. I therefore turn my attention to young adult fiction.

jealousy accusation, but so is the accusation of turning masturbation into a prosperous business when taking all the involved merchandise into account. Stevi Jackson justifiably attributes the rise of the sexual therapy movement which promises to "cure" our sexual problems while making a lot of money to the way we strive to shield children from sexuality (Jackson, 1982, p. 160). Thirty years later, this is still the case, and it is doubtful whether we will stop pumping money into sex therapy any time soon.

"Don't Think of a Pink Elephant"⁶³

Defining young adult fiction is not a simple task. Although some adult readers still view it as superficial romances and mysteries, the genre, for the most part, can be regarded as well-written novels which appeal to adults and teenagers alike. These novels generally share the same characteristics, Donald R. Gallo argues (Herz and Gallo, 2005, pp. 10-11). They normally have teenagers as the main characters; adults play minor roles or are the antagonists in some cases. The novels are narrated by young adults and not reminiscing adults. The length of young adult fiction is normally shorter than its adult counterpart, and it has a simpler plot, simpler or fewer literary elements, easier vocabulary and a more upbeat tone.

I endeavour to discuss female masturbation in young adult fiction. My choice is based on the notion that such novels, which are aimed at adolescent girls, tend to be didactic for the most part and hence convey messages about sexuality which sex education manuals cannot deliver. After all, masturbation does not fit within the category of reproduction and does not usually lead to venereal diseases, which makes it an inconsequential topic for the writers of sex education books. Some young adult novels succeeded in delivering messages about sex to adolescent girls. The popularity of such novels does not necessarily denote that they are mindless reads; instead, it insures the message, whether negative or positive, reaches a larger number of girls. Indeed, a novel like *Forever* by Judy Blume, for instance, was once

⁶³ When economist George Lakoff tells his cognitive science students, "Don't think of a pink elephant", they cannot stop thinking about it. However, I owe the choice of my subtitle to *Disturbing the Universe* (Trites, 2000, pp. 88-89) as I will explain later on.

referred to as "a manufactured sex manual thinly disguised as a novel" (Ludwig and Abrams, 2013, p. 63). In order to study young adult fiction, I will examine the important article "'My Slippery Place': Female Masturbation in Young Adult Literature" by Katy Stein in detail and then assess her argument before moving to other examples I chose from adolescent fiction. I found these examples with the help of readers' lists of books on masturbation, and discussions of the topic on young adult author's forums. Because autoerotism is not as popular as it is expected to be in young adult fiction, some authors expressed their dissatisfaction with the rarity of this topic while providing examples of novels which discussed it. On Goodreads, readers voted on books on masturbation. I relied on these two sources to find the examples I needed to support my argument. I read several of these examples before I found what presented an elaborate and positive discussion of masturbation, but more on this will follow.

Stein presents in her article a discussion of the different ways in which autoerotism is portrayed in young adult fiction. For Stein, despite their rarity, there are negative as well as comparatively positive representations of female masturbation in young adult fiction. The negativity in some portrayals of female masturbation, as she argues, stems from either their adherence to the "patriarchal constraints" or their "troubling constructions" (Stein, 2012, p. 420). As examples of young adult novels in which the authors present a picture of masturbation which can be accepted by a patriarchal society, Stein discusses *Ready or Not* by Meg Cabot and *Dangerously Alice* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. In Cabot's novel, the protagonist Samantha is taught how

to masturbate by her older sister Lucy. "Look, it's easy. Get in the bathtub. Turn the water on. Scoot down to the end of the tub, until your you-know-what is under the running water. Then pretend the water is the guy, and let it—" (Cabot, 2006, p. 109). The sister not only portrayed masturbation as a sexual encounter with a boy, but she also referred to it as practicing "making love" (Cabot, 2006, p. 109). Despite being shocked by her sister's advice, Samantha tries masturbation and discovers that it works. Her "practice" is justified when she has sex with her boyfriend David. "Of course, the climax of the novel occurs when Samantha and David have sex, thereby justifying all of her "practicing" not only to the reader, but to Samantha herself" (Stein, 2012, p. 417). At a certain point when Samantha suspects that her boyfriend does not want to have sex with her anymore, she laments all the "practice" she did in preparation for her sexual encounter. Justifiably, Stein interprets this as a depiction of Samantha's feeling of guilt due to her masturbation which is considered worthless if not conducive to having sex with a boy. Similarly, in Naylor's *Dangerously Alice*, the protagonist describes her masturbation as the consummation for the foreplay her boyfriend started when she was with him in his car. "My own fingers caressed my breasts under the blanket. Then my stomach, then between my legs, and finally I finished what Tony had begun in the car" (Naylor, 2012, p. 147). Alice's masturbatory act is represented as if it were caused by her boyfriend's touches rather than her own. By representing it as such, Stein argues, the author acknowledges the passivity of the female and her subjugation by the male who starts and controls the sexual act. "In positioning masturbation and female sexuality in such terms, these books fail to acknowledge the

transgressive and empowering potential of masturbation, through which a character can recognize and locate her own identity and independence" (Stein, 2012, p. 418).

The second negative kind of representation of female masturbation, as depicted by Stein, is related to what Thomas Hine calls the "teen mystique," (Hine, 2000, p. 111 as cited in Stein, 2012, p. 418) and the example here is Ibi Kaslik's *Skinny*. In this novel, the rebellious teen is Holly who is the younger sister of an anorexic, troubled young woman. "I stick my finger inside myself, till I can move the tip of it around. When I pull it out, a jolt of pleasure. I do it again. Hey. It's a little button, a tiny electric button. Then I spread my legs wider, my pelvis just out of the water, arched, and I rub the top again till the feeling gets more golden" (Kaslik, 2004, p. 73). Unlike other protagonists in teenage fiction, Holly does not represent the average girl. "The mystique encourages adults to see teenagers (and young people to see themselves) not as individuals but as potential problems" (Hine, 2000, p. 11). Holly is an unlikable and unstable character whose actions are deemed perilous and unacceptable by an adult reader. In the novel, she even betrays her sister by kissing her boyfriend (Kaslik, 2004, p. 155).

With the more positive representations of female masturbation in young adult fiction, Stein differentiates between "institutionalized" and "individualized" masturbation. In "institutionalized" masturbation "the language used to describe sex and the sanctioned spaces in which it is discussed are not areas of liberation, but are instead institutionalized and

restricted, merely granting an illusion of linguistic freedom" (Stein, 2012, p. 420). Two popular novels fit within this category: Judy Blume's *Deenie* and Phyllis Reynolds Naylor's *Alice on Her Way*. Both *Deenie* and *Alice* present an image of the average American teenage girl and as such the authors provide through them a message about the "normalcy" of masturbation. When students are encouraged to ask any questions they have during a sexual education class, *Deenie* asks anonymously: "*Do normal people touch their bodies before they go to sleep and is it all right to do that?*" (Blume, 2003, p. 79; emphasis in original). The answer she gets assures her that: "it's normal and harmless to masturbate," and not just for boys but "for anyone ... male or female ... The myths that some of you have heard aren't true. Masturbation can't make you insane or deformed or even give you acne." (Blume, 2003, p. 81). Similarly when *Alice* in Naylor's novel is signed up for a class on sexuality run by their church, masturbation is discussed among other topics. The teacher assures the students that masturbation is "a healthy way to release tensions, and it only becomes a problem if you feel guilty about it or you do it to the exclusion of other things" (Naylor, 2005, p. 267). Stein argues that these assurances in the two novels only reveal the society's problem with masturbation. In these novels, masturbation and sexuality are not discussed at length and cannot be considered among the main topics examined by the authors.

One issue to consider when criticising a novel like *Deenie* for focusing on the normalcy of masturbation, I argue, is that Blume's work was beneficial in some cases. Lara M. Zeises, who is also a writer of young adult fiction,

describes how her reading of *Deenie* as a young girl of ten helped alleviate the worry about her masturbatory habit. "After all those years of practice! There was a name for what I was doing! Masturbation! In retrospect, I realize that what I was feeling wasn't so much happiness as relief. Someone else was doing it, too. A lot of some-ones, it seemed. I mean, if there was a name for it, there's no way I was alone. I couldn't be, if it was in a book" (Zeises, 2009, p. 80). Indeed, the author of *Deenie*, Judy Blume, was reported to say: "If I could have read *Deenie* at 12, I could have known that other kids masturbate and God I would have been relieved" (Telford, 2004, p. 40). This relief by young girls was not met with a similar attitude from parents and schools. This novel, which was published in 1973, is known for being banned due to its discussion of masturbation.⁶⁴ Later in 1980, Blume was advised by her editor to delete a passage of her novel *Tiger Eyes* to avoid any controversy. The passage was about masturbation. She was asked to do that because, as she eventually realised, "masturbation is far more threatening than intercourse in a book about young people" (Foerstel, 2002, p. 138). Begrudgingly, Blume had to publish her novel without the passage in question despite the illogicality of society's verdict of what is considered taboo and what is not.

The second kind of portrayals of masturbation in young adult fiction is what Stein calls "individualized" and it is, as she admits, very rare within the genre as it "offers a far more complex and progressive portrayal of the behavior" (Stein, 2012, p. 423). The example here is Beth Goobie's *Hello*,

⁶⁴ "Typically, *Deenie* is mostly remembered as being one of the most banned books of the twentieth century because of its frank discussion, and subtle depiction, of masturbation" (Tracy, 2008, p. 33).

Groin which offers a good discussion of the protagonist Dylan's sexuality and her struggle with admitting to the world and to herself that she is a lesbian. Despite her fear of divulging her sexual orientation, Dylan is an assertive and smart teenage girl who is not afraid of questioning adults' view of the sexual organs as something filthy rather than simply a part of a girl's body and ultimately her identity as well. Dylan's journey towards an acceptance of her sexuality and the times she masturbates along the way are "empowering" rather than conforming to the society and its disturbed view of sexuality (Stein, 2012, p. 424).

Despite being an informative article which exhibits extensive knowledge of teenage fiction, there are some problems with Stein's work. First, she begins her article with a differentiation between how the society views male and female masturbation. "In young adult literature and in Western society in general, male masturbation usually is considered a facet of a healthy libido," she contests, "but despite the American sexual revolution and the work of scholars in gender studies which seeks, in part, to liberate sexual activity and sexuality from restrictive and troubling ideologies, female masturbation—and especially teen female masturbation—still inspires anxiety and even fear (Stein, 2012, p. 415). It is true that male masturbation is more accepted than female masturbation. Indeed, masturbation is considered a predominantly male activity; yet claiming that in males masturbation is welcomed and encouraged is an overstatement. Presenting this dichotomy as if it were the difference between night and day is an oversimplification of a history of condemnation of both male and female

masturbation. It is definitely more censured in women partly due to the complexity which surrounds female sexuality in general and the imposed notions of the patriarchal society we live in, but the claim that in men it is simply the sign of "a healthy libido" is not a statement with which I can agree completely.

To put things in perspective, let us touch on the issue of male masturbation very briefly. In Judy Blume's *Then Again, Maybe I Won't*, the thirteen-year-old protagonist Tony is petrified when he has his first wet dream. He starts picturing his family's disappointment and even what the housekeeper Maxine will think when she changes the sheets. He goes as far as admitting: "I don't think I'll ever be able to look at Maxine again" (Blume, 2014, p. 98), and indeed he keeps avoiding her until the end of the novel, wondering if she knows about his secret. This takes us back to what I mentioned about masturbation not being approved by society in the case of boys. Tony's fear might be groundless, but it does reflect the secrecy with which young boys like to shroud their masturbatory habits in order to avoid facing society's reaction. At no point in the novel was Tony warned against masturbation. Instead, he was reminded several times by some adults that whatever he is feeling is considered "normal," and as was the case with female masturbation, the need for these assurances indicate that there is a problem. As Roberta Trites explains in her *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*, "reassurances to teenagers that their actions are normal still start from the assumption that someone thinks their actions are not" (Trites, 2000, p. 88). This is one of the major topics on

which my current chapter, and indeed the thesis as a whole is based; examining why those assurances are still provided to young readers in the twenty-first century.

Again with regard to male masturbation, the issue is discussed in one of the BBC's factfiles with a picture of a young man's torso with his hands hidden under the covers and above a toilet roll with several crumbled tissues, along with a warning which says: "strong content." At the beginning, in bold font, young men, and women presumably, are assured that "Masturbation is perfectly healthy and normal and lots of people do it. Thinking of trying it yourself? Help is, ahem, at hand..." ("BBC Factfile: Masturbation,"). The assertion that masturbation will not harm the reader is definitely noteworthy here. Indeed, most of the short Factfile discusses whether or not there are bad effects to masturbation.

Is it wrong to masturbate?

Not at all. It's a perfectly natural way of exploring your body and discovering what feels good for you. Most boys masturbate most days. The peak age for male masturbation is 17. It may happen less often after that. Fewer girls masturbate every day.

Not everyone masturbates. So there is no need to do it if you'd rather not.

Is it bad for my health?

No. Masturbation won't make you go blind or insane, give you spots, stunt your growth, or turn you into a slag either!

In fact, it can be good for you as it helps relieve stress and causes your body to release endorphins (pleasure hormones) which make you more relaxed. It can help us sleep. It may even help our genitals keep in top working order.

Masturbation is also the ultimate in safe sex. ("BBC Factfile: Masturbation,")

Readers are not continuously assured, when their minds are already at ease. However, when the fear or risk is present, we keep assuring ourselves. For instance, only in the parts of the world where there is fear of sectarianism, do we see people in demonstrations carrying signs with a cross and crescent. Those who carry these placards would elaborate on the beauty of cohabitation in their countries, but the reality is different. The fact that such assurance still exists is a sure sign that there is a problem. In a play that dwells on the aftermath of the civil war in Lebanon *Failure*, one of the characters posed the rhetorical question which is still quoted today: "If you are truly brothers, why do you keep repeating it?" (Rahbani, 1983). Cohabitation among different sects is continuously discussed because it is problematic in some countries; where it is not an issue, people simply take it for granted. The same applies to masturbation. The assurances that it is a "perfectly normal" practice are a constant reminder that there is a problem. Even if the BBC advice was meant for adolescent boys and girls, we still have to examine this need for assurance, because we have to find out from where those young people inherit the feeling of guilt over masturbation? Is it from their parents or grandparents? Or, are we assuming that children are

born with these feelings because masturbation is intuitively unnatural? Trites comments on a similar incident in young adult fiction in which the heroine is urged not to be ashamed by alluding to the famous pink elephant example: "The passage reminds me of an injunction against thinking about pink elephants: we cannot help it once we have been told not to" (Trites, 2000, pp. 88-89). Similarly, we cannot stop thinking of the normalcy of masturbation, or the lack thereof, when we are continuously urged not to worry about it because it is deemed "normal".

The second issue with Stein's article is that it overcomplicates an already complex problem⁶⁵ by juxtaposing several heterosexual characters with a single lesbian one. *Hello, Groin* does not discuss masturbation per se. It is the story of a girl's desire to fantasise about girls when she masturbates without guilt until she could admit to the world and to herself that she is a lesbian and that she is in love with her best friend. Hence, a reader might wonder if the problem is with heterosexuality in general and not just in the way masturbation is portrayed. Stein herself admits that some of her examples "may seem to chastise heterosexual-identified women who find sexual pleasure with males" (Stein, 2012, p. 418), but adds that this is not her intention. However, the way her examples are presented are somewhat problematic. Even the novels she quotes might have some overlooked merits. For instance, it is positive that Deenie discovers masturbation on her own (Blume, 2003, p. 52) and even though she uses it to sleep, it is still sexual. In *Ready or Not*, Lucy tells her younger sister that some boys at

⁶⁵ For a discussion of the rift between lesbian and heterosexual feminists and the difference arguments surrounding the disagreement in question, please check *Heterosexuality in Question* (Jackson, 1999, pp. 2-27) and *Christine Delphy* (Jackson, 1996, pp. 14-25).

school believe that all girls do is think and talk about them, but she masturbates to romantic novels and a male actor she likes (Cabot, 2006, pp. 110-111). However, despite their scarcity, more positive discussions of masturbation do exist and I will present one.

As an example of a positive representation of masturbation and female sexuality in general, I choose to examine the young adult novel *Anatomy of a Boyfriend* by Daria Snadowsky. Having not had any relationships with boys, the seventeen-year-old Dominique falls head over heels in love with Wesley who is only a year older than she is. The interest appears to be mutual, so they meet, talk, and have sex for the first time. However, a year after going to different universities, the long-distance relationship doesn't work for Wesley and he decides to break up with Dominique. She is left devastated, but she eventually starts to move on with her life. This synopsis might make this novel seem like a usual first love heart-breaking story, which it certainly is, but the protagonist's exploration of her sexuality is decidedly noteworthy. Gradually, throughout the novel, Dominique starts to discover her sexuality. She analyses her first kisses, touches, fellatio and coitus. She describes her physical as well as emotional status during everything and she does not hide any apprehensions or embarrassments during the encounter with the opposite sex. The problem for Dominique is that she couldn't reach an orgasm. At first, she tried to masturbate and although she felt good, she could not climax. When her boyfriend asks her about whether she ever reached an orgasm, she replies in the negative and comments: "I'm embarrassed to admit I've been touching

myself every day in the shower this past week, trying to psych myself up for this. It got to the point where it felt good, but never Oh God-ly. I can't figure out what I'm doing wrong. Maybe I'm just thinking about it too much, or I haven't been turned on enough when I'm by myself" (Snadowsky, 2008, p. 121). She does not share her fears with her boyfriend, but she continues to worry about it. At a certain point when Wesley performs oral sex on her for around ten minutes, she even fakes an orgasm. "What if I'm frigid? Or what if all my nerve endings down there just don't work? I was always scared I damaged myself that time in seventh-grade gym class when I was walking across the balance beam and tripped, falling straight down onto it with my legs at either side. Maybe I'll never come, ever" (Snadowsky, 2008, p. 191). When her best friend Amy implies that she can reach an orgasm without the help of the boyfriend, she replies that sharing it with him would make it "more special" (Snadowsky, 2008, p. 132). However, things do not work out as planned and the break-up takes place before she shares her climax with the person she loves. After consoling her friend for days, Amy decides to give her friend Dominique a special Christmas gift, but she asks her not to open it until she returns back home. The present turns out to be a personal massager. At first, Dominique is puzzled by it, but soon after, she puts it to good use. "My heartbeat quickens, and I hold my breath. Suddenly it's as if a huge passageway opens up down there and all my body's energy is racing toward it. Then, an eruption. My hips thrash up and down like crazy, and I grunt as if I have just been kneed in the stomach" (Snadowsky, 2008, p. 251). Masturbating and reaching an orgasm for the first time opened new horizons for Dominique. It made her rediscover her own body in a way she

never experienced before. "It's like I have just discovered a new color, or have finally grown into my skin... it's so...all over the place, like a combination of receiving a foot massage, jumping on a trampoline, getting tickled, rolling downhill, and peeing after holding it in for three hours. Imagine all that concentrated into a few divine seconds" (Snadowsky, 2008, p. 253).

Of course a teenage novel does not have to present a full discussion of masturbation and sexuality to be deemed positive; any mention in-passing without lingering to analyse the normalcy, guilt, or even empowerment would be an improvement. The problem with the concept of empowerment which Stein uses in her article is that it is very similar to that of normalcy. Stressing the "benefits" of masturbation and its empowerment to women indicates that there is a problem with it and possibly with women's sexuality. For a woman to be able to reach an orgasm on her own used to be considered very satisfactory in the seventies of the last century mainly due to Freud's blunder, but at this point, it is common knowledge. It might be satisfactory, rather than empowering, for some women to reach an orgasm on their own. Exaggerating the powers of masturbation is a form of justification for a practice which needs as much justification as coitus does; none. The argument in *Anatomy of a Boyfriend* is not whether Dominique becomes "empowered" by her masturbation to orgasm, but simply her joy for reaching one. We never find out if she managed to reach an orgasm with any man afterwards, or indeed if she even had any relationships. By the end of the novel, she did not forget about her ex-boyfriend; she merely started the first steps in her new life without him. However, this novel represents

masturbation as it should be: an autonomous activity which leads to orgasm without preparing women for "better real sex" and without necessarily giving them the illusion that they became stronger. The main problem with young adult fiction remains, however, its avoidance of the topic of masturbation in the first place. Consider what Zeises says about the rarity of autoerotic scenes:

The stigma still attached to female masturbation makes me sad, not just because I am an author of teen fiction, but also because I am a girl. And let's admit it: girls don't talk to one another about beating off because they're made to feel embarrassed about the act itself. Even today, when middle schoolers are experimenting with blow jobs at the back of their school buses, most teen girls would rather die than confess they do the solo deed. After all, masturbation is supposed to be a boy's game, isn't it? I guess this is why I always remember *Deenie* as that book about masturbation, even though proportionally the topic takes up maybe 2 percent of the entire novel. Yet just having that little bit of information—that tiny confirmation that I was far from alone—was so important to me. Not just the ten-year-old me, either. The thirty year-old me, rereading *Deenie* for the first time in at least fifteen years, is still comforted by the knowledge that yes, it is normal, and yes, other girls do it, and no, I am not bad, dirty, wrong.

And I definitely will not go insane. (Zeises, 2009, p. 84)

Avoiding the topic altogether denotes a bigger problem than even representing it in a negative light.

How Do Men Masturbate with That Thing?

As a young girl of seven or eight, Stevi Jackson pondered on the issue of male masturbation bearing in mind the anatomical difference between boys and girls. "I also reflected about the possibility of male masturbation. I masturbated at the time and assumed that other people must do so too. I concluded, however, that it must be an entirely female activity — boys would find it difficult because their 'thing' would get in the way" (Jackson, 1982, p. 74). Unfortunately, we do not hear similar stories, from the female point of view, very often. Living in a patriarchal society, the male perspective is imposed on us and we are made to crawl on the margins and compare ourselves to the male rather than setting ourselves as the standard. Masturbation is considered to be a male activity.

The reason behind considering masturbation mainly a male activity is taken for granted even though it does not make a lot of sense. The "logic" behind this notion is presented in a famous episode of the American series *Seinfeld* entitled "The Contest". The controversial episode which aired on 18 November 1992 elicited a great deal of analysis in the fields of sexuality, gender studies, and freedom of speech. At the beginning of the episode, George reveals to his three friends, a woman and two men, that his mother "caught" him when he dropped by her house and lingered for some time. To his friends' question: "doing what?" he simply replies "You know. I was alone" (Cherones, 1992). The M word is never mentioned at all in the episode, yet the four friends do not seem to find any difficulty in communicating about this issue. George's predicament, which led the

awestricken mother to go to the hospital, prompted the four friends to hold a contest. The winner would be the one who remained without any auto-erotic activity for the longest time. When Elaine, the only female, wishes to participate in the contest, her three male friends express their objections. While each of the three men agrees to pay \$100, Elaine is asked to pay \$150 after a bit of haggling, because as Jerry explains "It's easier for a woman not to do it than a man... We have to do it. It's part of our lifestyle. It's like, uh.. shaving" (Cherones, 1992). When George's mother asks him why he masturbates, he replies: "because it's there" (Cherones, 1992). Ludicrous as it may seem, this is mainly the reason why masturbation is considered a male activity; they have a protruding sexual organ. The concept that people become aware of their erogenous zones due to arousal, and not simply because they are "there," does not seem to be very popular.

Hence, women are encouraged to masturbate by women's magazines and romantic comedy films. This is particularly evident in *Cosmopolitan*, for instance (Moore, 2014). Although female masturbation is far from being a recurring topic in films, there are examples which bear mentioning. In *The Ugly Truth* (2009), the heroine Abby is advised by Mike, who also gives advice on love and relationships, to masturbate. When she replies by saying she thinks it's "Impersonal," he rhetorically asks her: "Abby, what could be more personal than you flicking your bean?" (Luketic, 2009). In *Pleasantville* (1998), twins David and Jennifer find themselves in the black-and-white world of a sitcom from the fifties. Jennifer teaches her mother about sex, but when faced with the dilemma of having a father who is not particularly

interested in any of that, she tells her mother: "Well, Mom ... there's ways to enjoy yourself without Dad." In the next scene, as the father goes to bed, the mother starts enjoying the pleasures of masturbation while taking a bath. Suddenly, the black-and-white scene comes to colour. She is fascinated by all the colourful objects in the bathroom, and as she reaches orgasm, the Elm tree outside the house bursts into flames and the bright orange colour lights up the night (Ross, 1998).

Solitary? Think Again

One of the major "vices" of masturbation in our age is introversion. The concept of indulging in a practice that excludes society seems to pose a threat to other humans. An introvert is sometimes presented as a dangerous individual; a freak of nature who is guilty until proven innocent. Several books have been published for the sole purpose of defending those who shy away from society. An example of these is the best-seller *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* by Susan Cain. The concept that a person who stays alone might be scheming and conspiring against the safety of society is far from unusual. This is despite the fact that psychopaths, for instance, are frequently portrayed as very popular individuals who steal the light once they walk into a room. An example of an introvert who actually conforms to the image which the society draws of introverts is India from the 2013 film *Stoker*. The film begins with the funeral of India's father who was killed mysteriously on her eighteenth birthday. At the funeral, an uncle appears on the scene after been estranged for a long time. India and her mother never even knew he existed. The young girl is

presented as someone who likes to be on her own climbing trees and playing barefoot in the garden around her father's estate. The girl's relationship with boys is disturbed to say the least. Threatened by her silence and peculiarity, they tease her repeatedly making sexual innuendos. Even the only one of them who appeared to treat her as a human being at first, attempted to rape her when they were alone. However, her equally peculiar uncle was there to save her. He tied the boy to let India hit him at first and then he suffocated him to death with the help of his niece. This was the first murder she witnessed. She not only helped with the murder but with the burial of the corpse afterwards. As soon as she returned back home she undressed and went into the shower to wash the mud off her. There she masturbated as she cleaned her body, cried and recreated the murder in her head. Indeed the murder itself was her fantasy and her orgasm coincided with her image of the last moment of the boy's execution in which his neck broke due to the uncle's strangling him with a belt. Even though India is presented as someone who doesn't like to be touched even by her own mother, she found her release in touching herself while she imagined her first crime. For India, violent traits, exactly like many other tendencies can be hereditary, and she inherited hers from the uncle she only met after she became 18 years old. When her father was alive, he channelled her violence into teaching her how to hunt animals, but the arrival of her murderous uncle awakened in her the desire for homicide. Like Hamlet, India was faced with the dilemma of an uncle who killed her beloved father and started approaching her mother sexually. Like Amleth, the historical figure on which the character of Hamlet was based, India is violent and she revels in murder. The masturbation scene simply

adds to the gruesomeness of the film. The young girl does not masturbate in order to enjoy herself but to relieve her tension after the crime and the attempted rape by the boy she trusted. India's case is an example of an introvert masturbator who has serious issues which make her among other things shun the advances of the other sex and the tender touch of her own mother; she resorts to masturbation only to relieve herself after a difficult and yet partly enjoyable experience.

Considering that the masturbation scene in *Stoker* fits within the overall plot, I believe that it is befitting and hence will not be slated by me. However, it raises the question of fantasy and whether masturbation should be blamed for people's wild fantasies. Conversely, this concept is counterbalanced by how the "benefits" of orgasm started being transferred to masturbation automatically in the twentieth century. It is true that the chances of reaching an orgasm through masturbation are higher particularly for females, yet in many cases sexual relationships do lead to orgasm. In the same light, fantasy is by no means restricted to masturbation, so why should the practice be blamed for fantasies that may exist with or without a partner?

One interesting event which attempts to make the masturbatory act more socially acceptable is the US-based event called Masturbate-a-thon. This event involves raising money for charity and competitions for men and women. The longest masturbation time, number of orgasms, and ejaculation distance and target are measured and compared. Additionally, the whole month of May is chosen to be the International Masturbation Month. One might ask here "what are people meant to do over the 11 months from June

through April?" (Brooks, 2014). Another question is: wouldn't masturbating just because it is NMD defy the purpose of popularising masturbation as an activity you can have whenever you decide and not whenever your partner is ready or whenever the national day is? This same point applies to Masturbate-a-thon with the added huge doubt as to whether this event is more about exhibitionism than it is about solitary sex.

This solitariness of the masturbatory act could be one of the main reasons why it had been condemned in the first place. Jeffrey Weeks argues that doctors and moralists warned against masturbation because it marked the birth of modernity. "Masturbation is the sexuality of the modern self. It is protean, unbounded, limited only by imagination. It is the sexuality of secrecy, of privacy, of excess. It is self-governed, autonomous, autarchic. It is the sexuality of fantasy. It is a denial of, or at least outside, the social" (Weeks, 2011, p. 114). He further paints an image of the present "where sex with the self has found its role: not as the gateway to vice, but as the royal (super) highway to private pleasures and infinite fantasy" (Weeks, 2011, p. 115). I share Weeks's view of an autoerotic act which was feared because of its solitary and personal characteristics, but his view of today's liberalism about masturbation falls in the realm of wishful thinking. Even his description of masturbation as a limitless and progressive act appears to be a celebration of the act which is not necessarily shared by everyone today. Yes, masturbation is no longer the "Heinous Sin" (Anon., 1725) described in the eighteenth century, yet it is far from "royal."

Tap the Gap with an App

"Loving your body, in every way, is not a sin. No more shame, no more secrets. This little vulva is on a mission: to free the world from a silly social stigma" (Gong, 2013). Luckily, this is not the motto of a new sexual revolution; it is the promise given by a female masturbation app created by Tina Gong called Happy Playtime.⁶⁶ Before examining the app in question, let us familiarise ourselves with the technology involved. "A mobile app is a piece of software specifically designed to run on a mobile device, such as a smartphone or tablet" (Salz and Moranz, 2013, p. 14). Some of these apps are already installed on mobile devices and designed to serve a specific purpose, while others are chosen and installed by the phone or tablet user. Many apps are moderately priced or even free but others involve in-app purchases, which might be costly in the long run. An avid user might install a large number of sophisticated applications ranging from video editors to 3D games. However, even the most minimalist users can find apps which suit their tastes. Indeed, despite being an exaggeration, the widespread claim that "there is an app for everything you can possibly imagine" (Audain, 2014) gives one an idea of the large number and variety of apps at present. Checking an app store, like Google Play, a mobile user is overwhelmed with a huge number of apps ranging from useful or educational to fun to utterly

⁶⁶ It should be noted here that although this app has a dedicated website where it can be played, it cannot be installed from iTunes due to its content. The programmer's appeal to Apple was rejected, and their reply was included on her website: "We found that your app contains content that many audiences would find objectionable, which is not in compliance with the App Store Review Guidelines." They further explain the reason behind their rejection of the app by criticising the "erotic and mature themes that are not appropriate for the App Store" (Gong, 2014).

useless. Popular types of mobile applications include: educational, cooking, game, news, productivity, fitness and social networking apps.

The Happy Playtime app is presented by its programmer as an educational app which teaches by playing a game. "HPT is game that allows users to learn through action," Tina Gong explains, "so it is not meant to follow the same standard procedures of learning as typical educational apps do. We're trying to use the medium of touch in a more innovative way, and giving hands on guidance and practice for users. We intersperse game portions with standard sexual-education material" (Gong, 2014). The app involves a simple game which allows one to stimulate the "happy" pink vulva, which to me looks like a Matryoshka doll, in a circular motion until orgasm is reached several times in 60 seconds. There are three power-ups which become unlocked gradually: porn, lubricant and vibrator. Along the line, four lessons about female genitalia are unlocked as well to be read by the masturbator (or the player). Several online magazines and newspapers discussed the app as it raised several issues regarding female sexuality. "Well Said" (Travers, 2013), commented the *Cosmopolitan* columnist on the programmer's words "Being comfortable with your own sexual pleasure is a prerequisite to both being able to healthily accept pleasure from others, and pleasing others" (Gong, 2013). Apparently even in 2013, the programmer felt the need to dissociate herself from the grave sin of appreciating masturbation as pleasurable activity in its own right; it is just the first step in a better sex life. In the *Cut*, Ann Friedman wondered if we consider masturbation "still taboo enough that women need a new app to encourage

them not to be grossed out by their own genitalia" (Friedman, 2013). A writer commented: "What if masturbation wasn't a shameful reminder of our primate progenitors, but rather a jauntily animated app with a pink, vagina-shaped mascot that said things like, 'Oh my, I'm getting all hot and bothered' when a user executes the proper finger-blasting technique?" (Barry, 2013). It is vulva-shaped actually, and some writers view the mascot as an infant which somewhat complicates the problem. In *The Guardian*, even the colour scheme of the app which "features more pink than a Paris Hilton perfume launch" (Buchanan, 2013) is criticised.

My problem with this app does not stem from the concept of infantilisation of women, the pink colour, or even the ludicrousness of such a game. The need for such an app is what I want to discuss here. In my study of women's current problems with masturbation, this app constitutes the most recent piece of the puzzle. The existence of such an app tells us that a woman who spends hours playing Candy Crush⁶⁷ might need an incentive to have fun with her own body. The reader who is confused as to why we are still encouraged to masturbate even after discovering that it is not the sin and disease it used to be has only to read my previous chapters. The immense confusion surrounding the issue is the culprit here. The road from "abnormal" to "normal" was so long and bumpy that at times we feel that we are marching on the spot. "I hope that the 50 Shades effect, and apps such as Happy Playtime, will help future generations of teenage girls to learn that their bodies are meant for their own pleasure, not other people's gratification

⁶⁷ "The core market of Candy Crush players is overwhelmingly women in their mid-30s" (Shute, 2013) hence my choice of it as an example.

– and that they have the right to masturbate without shame" (Buchanan, 2013). While I understand where *The Guardian* columnist is coming from, I doubt that the "benefits" of a badly-written "erotic" trilogy⁶⁸ or a cute app can eradicate the outcome of decades upon decades of confusion and ignorance. After all, our long and difficult journey with masturbation so far shows that ignorance can be "as potent and multiple a thing as knowledge" (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 4 as cited in Halberstam, 2011, p. 12).

Conclusion

"Masturbation: the primary sexual activity of mankind. In the nineteenth century, it was a disease; in the twentieth, it's a cure"(Szasz, 1973, p. 12). A thorough, and yes even pedantic, reading of this quote sums up some of the most important problems we have with masturbation. To begin with, while acknowledging the importance of masturbation, it is equally important to refrain from defining it as "primary" for fear we end up relapsing to a time when the practice was alluded to as "juvenile." Another detail which despite seeming minor for some does constitute a major topic in our study, is adding womankind to "mankind" because even though masturbation is considered mainly a male activity, women masturbate too. Most importantly, having read chapters one through six of my thesis, a reader would easily detect that the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century is oversimplified in the quote. The change did not take place overnight at the turn of the twentieth century. Indeed, masturbation continued to be considered a disease well into

⁶⁸ Having read all 1700 pages of *Fifty Shades Trilogy* by E L James, I take responsibility for the not-so-favourable way I present the three books, for I find them neither erotic nor enjoyable from a literary point of view. Many other readers share my opinion the columnist Jen Doll is one of them (Doll, 2012).

the twentieth century and not only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The change was gradual and very far from linear. Nevertheless, the transformation from a disease into a cure did happen. The problem with it, however, is that it was not a happy ending for the problems we had with masturbation.

Conclusion

It is understandable for the researchers who choose to focus on the campaign against masturbation to view what followed it as a great improvement. It is indeed, but this is not the whole story. As I have argued in this thesis, the way female masturbation is presented in the works of key twentieth century sexologists and sex researchers is problematic and confusing. Furthermore, due to the authoritative voice of such researchers, their attitudes could have influenced our less than favourable attitude towards masturbation today.

In chapter one, I have presented an analysis of some of the key texts which marked the beginning of the campaign against masturbation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The first one of these works is *Onania* by John Marten. This pamphlet grew in size with each new edition due to the alleged correspondence from tormented readers. It presented masturbation as both a sin and a disease. My main focus has been the derogatory way in which Marten refers to female masturbators. In his examples, Marten refers to the "filthiness" and "lasciviousness" of women, thereby revealing his prejudice against them. An alleged letter from a female reader reveals that Marten agrees with clitoridectomy as a possible treatment for an enlarged clitoris. The appearance of *Onania* might have been the main reason behind the publication of *Onanism* by Tissot. This book is written by a famous physician, but it is, as I have demonstrated, far from scientific, as we would understand the term today. For Tissot, masturbation causes women to be

unattractive to the opposite sex and presumably unmarriageable. In order to depict how female sexuality was viewed in the eighteenth century, I discuss *Nymphomania* by Bienville. The author here discusses how marriage and pregnancy cures alleged hypersexuality and eliminates the need for masturbation. While men are advised to have sex with prostitutes rather than masturbate, marriage seems to be women's only choice. This condemnation of masturbation turned into sadism in the nineteenth century. Physicians began to torture female masturbators by cauterisation of the genitals and even clitoridectomy. A prominent example of this sadistic treatment is the case study of two little girls by Zambaco. This physician who used to be revered in his time, resorted to torturing two girls aged six and ten both psychologically and physically. Blinded by his disapproval of masturbation, the physician chose to ignore the real cause of disease and treat an imaginary one. Zambaco, however, was simply following the surgical procedures recommended in his time for "curing" masturbation. Having presented such dismal view of masturbation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, I do acknowledge that the practice was condemned in males as well as females, and that it might not have been as condemned in the countryside and in poor families. What I demonstrate in this chapter is that when it came to female masturbation, science during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries simply followed in the footsteps of quackery and bequeathed us many erroneous concepts which lingered with us for decades.

The second chapter was dedicated mainly to the works of the sexologist Havelock Ellis, who despite being critical of earlier authors for creating a long tradition of wretchedness and shame, did not acquit masturbation of all the charges it dragged along with it. Unlike John Marten who recoiled from studying female masturbation at length because he viewed that as leading to filthiness and depravity, Ellis devoted a vast section of his study to it. Indeed, he even narrates examples of the different methods by which women masturbate. However, the difference between Ellis's work and that of the previously mentioned physicians and charlatans is not as huge as it may seem at first. Instead of outright condemnation of Ellis's work, I chose to examine his ideas within the context of a society that did not give much thought to female sexuality. As such, I argue, Ellis was an innovator and a man of his age at the same time. In Ellis's work, masturbation was transformed from an absolute evil to a necessary evil. This view is considered old-fashioned or possibly archaic, yet I do believe that the works of one of the leading figures in the field of sexology constitute an important step that should be acknowledged if not appreciated. As far as female sexuality as a whole is concerned, I have tried to place Ellis somewhere between the woe of dismissing condemners and the bliss of adulating believers.

Even though Ellis was one of those who introduced Freud to the English-speaking world (Grosskurth, 1980, p. 388) and was mostly supportive of the latter's work, Freud's fame greatly surpassed that of Ellis. Indeed, many sex researchers choose to ignore Ellis completely, or simply

rely on second-hand knowledge of his work, but the same cannot be said of Freud. The father of psychoanalysis is almost always present in studies on sexuality, and mine is no exception. Despite my appreciation for Freud's unparalleled contribution to the field of sexuality, in chapter three, I am mostly critical of his work because his theories on female sexuality in general and female masturbation in particular left a lot to be desired. Like Ellis, Freud believed that excessive masturbation is harmful and he further elaborated on one of its alleged symptoms; that is neurasthenia. He at least achieved what Ellis failed to do by explaining what neurasthenia actually entails, but he also presented certain theories regarding female sexuality and masturbation which remained unchallenged for years causing women to be estranged from their own bodies. Freud admitted that despite his long research on women for thirty years he failed to find out what women really wanted (Jones, 1958: 468). This is notably evident in his theories of how he thought women should feel and behave. Indeed, the importance of Freud's work in the field of female sexuality lies in the discourse it incited rather than the assumptions it expounded.

Because Freud's ideas had a major impact on the field of sex research, it took more than one voice to try to rectify the damage. One of those who took on the herculean task was Alfred Kinsey to whom I dedicate my fourth chapter. Unlike Freud, whose theories can be short on evidence, Kinsey chose the scientific approach. He presented numbers, tables, charts as well as case studies. He interviewed participants and even watched them have sex while he took notes. The issue with Kinsey's Reports is that even

though he presented important findings with regard to female sexuality and masturbation, these were overshadowed by his then-considered shockingly high percentages of homosexuality and adultery. With Kinsey, we still have a problem with the way female sexuality is perceived. His methodology, which is based on hard facts and statistics, is questioned with regard to its inadequacy and inability to draw the whole picture. However, it is safe to say that Kinsey and his fellow researchers' work mark a transition from lamenting the tribulations of masturbation to praising its benefits. My argument is that this transition creates a new problem instead of solving the old one.

Feminists, such as Emily Mudd, had a bone to pick with some of Kinsey and his fellow male researchers' work with regard to the representation of female sexuality. Thus, it was the work of Masters and Johnson, and not that of Kinsey, that alerted feminists to the possibility of breaking free from the shackles of Freud's idea of femininity, female sexuality and masturbation. An indication of this ray of hope for women is Masters' acknowledgment of his need for a female assistant in order to more fully understand female sexuality. However, my argument in chapter five of the thesis is that Johnson's contribution to the study was mostly overshadowed by Masters' dominant authoritative voice. The sheer existence of a female sex researcher is certainly an improvement in a field of study which is almost exclusively dominated by men, but Johnson's impact leaves a lot to be desired. Furthermore, I do question the degree to which Masters and Johnson presented a revolutionary view of female sexuality, and whether it was conducive to a conclusion like Koedt's "Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm"

(Koedt, 1973), or whether some feminists chose to draw their own conclusions from an otherwise heterosexist and traditional study. I am critical of their representation of masturbation as a cure for sexual dysfunction.

Again, Shere Hite reiterated what Masters and Johnson found and she further popularised the idea of a female sexuality that can survive and thrive without the male. However, as I have discussed in the sixth chapter, Hite's importance lies in her identity as a feminist. Although she might view her own research as scientific, Hite deviated from accepted scientific procedures of interviewing, taking notes and careful observation. Instead, she chose the path of anonymous questionnaires. The advantages and possible disadvantages of such an approach are discussed in my chapter on Hite. Through allowing women to describe their own feelings and desires anonymously, Hite gave them a platform from which they could express ideas in their own voices. In their discussion of masturbation and guilt, for instance, the participants in Hite's *Report* expressed their feelings on how the existing literature affected their masturbatory habit. However, this does not mean that the dominant authoritative voice which read, assessed, selected, omitted and categorised was absent or even democratic. Thus, I argue, despite the benefits in Hite's studies of listening to women's voices, it is important to question whether these voices are guided in a certain predetermined route.

In the seventh chapter, I discussed the present attitude towards female masturbation through the lens of popular culture. I began with an analysis of Betty Dodson's project of encouraging masturbation. I examined

her influential book *Sex for One*, her website, and important interviews with her. My argument was that even though she presents progressive ideas, her overenthusiasm is sometimes unsubstantiated. The authors of young adult fiction do not seem to share Dodson's interest in the topic. Few novels discuss female masturbation, and even when they do, they mostly adopt a didactic tone which tries to justify the practice and reassure the young masturbators. Adolescent girls are continuously assured that masturbation is normal and they should not worry. I chose to discuss *Anatomy of a Boyfriend* as an example of positive presentation of female masturbation in young adult fiction, because the novel presents an image of masturbation which neither shames nor empowers, but simply leads to orgasm easily. Female masturbators are accused of being introverts. Yet, women's magazines continue to encourage women to masturbate and there is even an app dedicated to the cause. This paradox leads us to believe that masturbation is still suspect in some way.

I have argued in this thesis that many of the problems attributed to female masturbation today have been caused by the ideas put forward by twentieth century sexologists and sex researchers. It is true that the campaign against the practice which started in the eighteenth century caused many problems, but it is erroneous to assume that the publication of Havelock Ellis's *Studies* led to a less-damaging attitude to masturbation: he simply argued that the symptoms are psychological rather than physical. Freud's disapproval of female masturbation and clitoral orgasm added to the confusion. The considerably improved assessments presented by Kinsey,

Masters and Johnson, and Hite were considerably deficient because they continued to regard masturbation as inferior to penetrative sex.

This study has presented a detailed analysis of the works of key figures in the field of sex research in the twentieth century to show the flaws in their arguments regarding masturbation and female sexuality in general. My argument is that the campaign against autoerotism in the twentieth century is certainly dwindled, but it is far from over. The importance of this work lies mainly in its value as a gender study which sheds light on the double standards in a predominantly androcentric field of study.

My thesis is an attempt at examining female autoerotism from a different angle; one which reveals that an excessive zealousness towards a practice can be as indicative of an inherent problem as can condemnation. Enthusiastic attempts to promote masturbation often suggest a need to justify it, indicating that it is far from being taken for granted. Gender studies would benefit from devoting more research to the representation of female autoerotism particularly in popular culture in order to analyse and evaluate the assumptions underlying it.

Bibliography

- Abramson, Paul R., and Pinkerton, Steven D. (2002). *With Pleasure: Thoughts on the Nature of Human Sexuality*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Allen, Peter Lewis. (2000). *The Wages of Sin : Sex and Disease, Past and Present*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Anon. (1718). *Onania; or, the Heinous Sin of Self-pollution, and All Its Frightful Consequences, in Both Sexes, Considered, with Spiritual and Physical Advice to Those Who Have Already Injur'd Themselves by This Abominable Practice. To Which Is Subjoin'd, a Letter from a Lady to the Author, (Very Curious) Concerning the Use and Abuse of the Marriage-bed, with the Author's Answer* (4th Ed.). London: N. Crouch.
- _____. (1725). *Onania: or, the Heinous Sin of Self-pollution, and All Its Frightful Consequences, in Both Sexes, Consider'd. With Spiritual and Physical Advice to Those, Who Have Already Injur'd Themselves by This Abominable Practice. To Which Is Added, Seasonable Admonition to the Youth of the Nation, (of Both Sexes) and Those Whose Tuition They Are under, Whether Parents, Guardians, Master, or Mistresses* (10th ed.). London: T. Crouch.
- _____. (2010). *The Arabian Nights Complete and Unabridged* (Richard F. Burton, Trans.). Luton: Halcyon Press Ltd.
- Appignanesi, Lisa , and Forrester, John. (1992). *Freud's Women*. London: Virago.
- Audain, Jon. (2014). *The Ultimate Guide to Using ICT Across the Curriculum (For Primary Teachers): Web, Widgets, Whiteboards and Beyond!* New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Barry, Doug. (2013). Finally, a Masturbating App Will Lift the Veil on Lady-Boners. Retrieved 20 October, 2014, from <http://jezebel.com/finally-a-masturbating-app-will-lift-the-veil-on-lady-513666120>

- BBC Factfile: Masturbation.). Retrieved 01 December, 2012, from http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/advice/factfile_az/masturbation
- Beadnell, C. March. (1905). Circumcision And Clitoridectomy As Practised By The Natives Of British East Africa. *The British Medical Journal*, 1(2313), 964-965.
- Ben-Itzhak, Rachel (2008). *Keats, Modesty and Masturbation*. (PhD Dissertation), University of Liverpool
- Bennett, Paula. (1993). Critical Clitoridectomy: Female Sexual Imagery and Feminist Psychoanalytic Theory. *Signs*, 18(2), 235-259.
- Bennett, Paula, and Rosario, Vernon A. (1995). *Solitary Pleasures: The Historical, Literary, and Artistic Discourses of Autoeroticism*. New York: Routledge.
- Bienville, M.D.T.d. (1775). *Nymphomania*. London: J. Bew.
- Bland, Lucy. (1995). *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality 1885-1914*. London: Penguin.
- Blume, Judy. (2003). *Deenie*. New York: Delacorte.
- _____. (2014). *Then Again, Maybe I Won't*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Bogaert, Anthony F. (2012). *Understanding Asexuality*. Plymouth: Rowman & Littelfield Publishers, Inc.
- Bonomi, Carlo. (1997). Freud and the Discovery of Infantile Sexuality: A Reassessment. In Todd Dufresne (Ed.), *Freud Under Analysis: History, Theory, Practice*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- Brome, Vincent. (1979). *Havelock Ellis, Philosopher of Sex: a Biography*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Brooks, Rob. (2014). Worse Than Sex? 'M' Is for May and Masturbation Month. Retrieved 10 November, 2014, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rob-brooks/worse-than-sex-m-is-for-may-and-masturbation-month_b_5246164.html

- Buchanan, Daisy. (2013). Female Masturbation: Yes, Yes, Yes, There's an App for That. Retrieved 20 October, 2014, from <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jun/21/female-masturbation-happy-playtime-app>
- Buhle, Marie Jo. (1998). *Feminism and its Discontents : A Century of Struggle with Psychoanalysis*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- C.K., Louis (2006). *One Night Stand: HBO Special*. New York: HBO Studios.
- Cabot, Meg. (2006). *Ready or Not: An All-American Girl Novel*. London: Macmillan Children's Books.
- Cain, Susan. (2012). *Quiet : the Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*. London: Viking.
- Campbell, Beatrix. (1980). A Feminist Sexual Politics: Now You See It, Now You Don't'. *Feminist Review*(5), 1-18.
- Carpenter, Edward. (1918). *My Days and Dreams* (3rd ed.). London: Allen & Unwin.
- Castleman, Michael. (2002). Too sexy for her rocker. Retrieved 10 October, 2014, from <http://www.salon.com/2002/03/27/dodson/>
- Cherones, Tom (Writer). (1992). The Contest, *Seinfeld*. USA: Sony Pictures Television.
- Collis, John Stewart. (1959). *An Artist of Life: A Study of the Life and Work of Havelock Ellis*. London Cassell & Company LTD.
- Conaway, Tim. (1977, April). The Hite Report Exposed. *Hustler*, 71-75.
- Cornog, Martha. (2003). *The Big Book of Masturbation: From Angst to Zeal*. San Francisco, Calif.: Down There Press.
- Crews, Frederick Campbell. (1998a). Overview. In Frederick Campbell Crews (Ed.), *Unauthorized Freud: Doubters Confront a Legend*. New York: Penguin.

_____. (1998b). Unconscious Deepes and Empirical Shallows. *Philosophy and Literature*, 22(2), 271-285.

Defoe, Daniel. (2007). *Moll Flanders*. New York: Pearson Education.

DeLeon, David (ed.). (1994). *Leaders from the 1960s: A Biographical Sourcebook of American Activism*. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Dickens, Charles. (1868). *A Tale of Two Cities*. London: Chapman & Hall.

Dodson, Betty. (1979). Masturbation as Meditation. In Manfred F. DeMartino (Ed.), *Human Autoerotic Practices*. New York: Human Sciences Press.

_____. (1996). *Sex for One : the Joy of Selfloving*. New York: Crown Trade Paperbacks.

_____. (2007). Confessions of a Career Masturbator. Retrieved 10 August, 2014, from <http://www.dodsonandross.com/sexfeature/confessions-career-masturbator>

_____. (2009a). Beyond Serial Monogamy. Retrieved 10 October, 2014, from <http://dodsonandross.com/sexfeature/beyond-serial-monogamy>

_____. (2009b). Writing About Sex Doesn't Make You a Whore. Retrieved 10 October 2014, from <http://dodsonandross.com/blogs/betty-dodson/2009/11/writing-about-sex-doesnt-make-you-whore>

_____. (2011). I'm Thrilled to Be Joining the Ranks of Accomplished Academics. Retrieved 20 October, 2014, from <http://www.dodsonandross.com/blogs/betty-dodson/2011/10/im-thrilled-be-joining-ranks-accomplished-academics>

Doll, Jen. (2012). The Alleged Sexiness of '50 Shades of Grey'. Retrieved 10 November, 2014, from www.thewire.com/entertainment/2012/05/alleged-sexiness-50-shades-grey/52667/#disqus_thread

Draznin, Yaffa Claire (ed.). (1992). *My Other Self: the Letters of Olive Schreiner and Havelock Ellis*. New York: Peter Lang.

Driel, Mels van. (2012). *With the Hand : a History of Masturbation* (Paul Vincent, Trans.). London: Reaktion.

Dundes, Alan. (2003). *Parsing Through Customs: Essays by a Freudian Folklorist*. London: University of Wisconsin Press.

Ellis, Havelock. (1890). *The New Spirit*. London: George Bell and Sons.

_____. (1918a). *Studies in the Psychology of Sex Volume I* (3rd ed.). Philadelphia: F.A. Davis.

_____. (1918b). *Studies in the Psychology of Sex Volume II* (3rd ed.). Philadelphia: F. A. Davis.

_____. (1918c). *Studies in the Psychology of Sex Volume III* (3rd ed.). Philadelphia: F. A. Davis.

_____. (1918d). *Studies in the Psychology of Sex Volume VI* (3rd ed.). Philadelphia: F. A. Davis.

_____. (1919). *The Philosophy of Conflict, and Other Essays in War-Time*. London: Houghton Mifflin company.

_____. (1922). *Little Essays of Love and Virtue*. London: George H. Doran.

_____. (1928). *Studies in the Psychology of Sex Volume VII*. Philadelphia: F. A. Davis.

_____. (1930). *Man and Woman: A Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characters* (6th ed.). London: A. & C. Black LTD.

_____. (1934). *My Confessional: Questions of Our Day*. London: John Lane The Bodley Head LTD.

_____. (1940). *My Life*. London: William Heinemann LTD.

Felski, Rita. (1998). Introduction. In Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (Eds.), *Sexology in Culture : Labelling Bodies and Desires* (pp. 1-8). Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Foerstel, Herbert N. (2002). *Banned in the U.S.A.: A Reference Guide to Book Censorship in Schools and Public Libraries*. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Freud, Sigmund. (1910). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XI*. London: The Hogarth Press.

_____. (1953a). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume IV*. London: The Hogarth Press.

_____. (1953b). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume VII*. London: The Hogarth Press.

_____. (1955a). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume II*. London: The Hogarth Press.

_____. (1955b). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XVII*. London: The Hogarth Press.

_____. (1958). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XII (1911-1913)*. London: The Hogarth Press.

_____. (1961a). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XIX (1923-1925)*. London: The Hogarth Press.

_____. (1961b). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XXI (1927-1931)*. London: The Hogarth Press.

_____. (1962). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume III*. London: The Hogarth Press.

_____. (1966). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume I (1886-1899)*. London: The Hogarth Press.

_____. (1970). *Letters of Sigmund Freud 1973-1939*. London: The Hogarth Press.

_____. (1995). *The Freud Reader* (Peter Gay Ed.). London: Vintage.

Freud, Sigmund, and Jones, Ernest. (1995). *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones 1908-1939*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap P. of Harvard U.P.

Friedman, Ann. (2013). For Women, Is Masturbation the Last Sex Taboo? Retrieved 20 October, 2014, from <http://nymag.com/thecut/2013/06/women-is-masturbation-the-last-sex-taboo.html>

Gagnon, John H. (2004). *An Interpretation of Desire: Essays in the Study of Sexuality*. Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press.

Galdston, Iago. (1954). Kinsey, Sexological Unitarian: So Noble an Effort Corrupted. In Donald Porter Geddes (Ed.), *An Analysis of the Kinsey Reports on Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male and Female*
London: Frederick Muller Ltd.

Gathorne-Hardy, Jonathan (1998). *Kinsey: A Biography*. London: Random House.

Gay, Peter. (1988). *Freud: A Life for Our Time*. London: Dent.

Gelfand, Toby, and Kerr, John. (1992). *Freud and the History of Psychoanalysis*. Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.

Gerhard, Jane (2000) ", vol. 26, no. 2, Summer, pp. 449-476. (2000). Revisiting "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm": The Female Orgasm in American Sexual Thought and Second Wave Feminism. *Feminist Studies*, 26(2), 449-476.

Ginsburg, Sol W. (1954) ', in Geddens, D.P. (ed.) , London: . (1954). A Source of Error: Atomism of Behavior. In Donald Porter Geddes (Ed.), *An Analysis of the Kinsey Reports on Sexual Behavior in the Human Male and Female*. London: Frederick Muller Ltd.

Ginzberg, Eli. (1954). The Effect of the Future on the Present: Sex and the Female Character. In Donald Porter Geddes (Ed.), *An Analysis of the Kinsey Reports on Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male and Female*. London: Frederick Muller Ltd.

- Gong, Tina. (2013). Meet Happy. Retrieved 20 October, 2014, from <http://happyplaytime.com/about/>
- _____. (2014). Appeal Rejected: It's Final, Hpt Is Not Coming to iTunes. Retrieved 15 November, 2014, from <http://happyplaytime.com/appeal-rejected-final-hpt-coming-itunes/>
- Greg, Tuck. (2005). *Masturbation, Sexual Logic and Capitalism: The Autoerotic in Contemporary American Cinema and Beyond*. (PhD Dissertation), Brunel University.
- Grosskurth, Phyllis. (1980). *Havelock Ellis: A Biography*. London: Allen Lane.
- Halberstam, Judith. (2011). *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham [NC]: Duke University Press.
- Heath, Stephen. (1982). *The Sexual Fix*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Henderson, J. Maureen. (2009). Taking Matters Into Your Own Hands: An Interview With Dr. Betty Dodson. Retrieved 10 October, 2014, from <http://generationmeh.com/2009/09/23/betty-dodson/>
- Hermes, Joke. (2005). *Re-reading Popular Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hine, Thomas. (2000). *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Hirschmüller, Albrecht. (2007). Freud and Minna Bernays. *American Imago*, 64(1), 125-129.
- Hite, Shere. (1976). *The Hite Report on Female Sexuality*. London: Pandora Press.
- _____. (2000). *The Hite Report on Shere Hite: Voice of a Daughter in Exile*. London: Arcadia.
- Irvine, Janice M. (2004). *Talk about Sex: The Battles Over Sex Education in the United States*. London: University of California Press.

_____. (2005). *Disorders of Desire: Sexuality and Gender in Modern American Sexology*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Jackson, Margaret (1994). *The Real Facts of Life*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Jackson, Stevi. (1982). *Childhood and sexuality*. Oxford: Blackwell.

_____. (1993). Introduction. In Stevi Jackson, Karen Atkinson, Deirde Beddoe, *et al.* (Eds.), *Women's Studies: Essential Readings* (pp. 225-227). New York: New York University Press.

_____. (1996). *Christine Delphy*. London: Sage.

_____. (1999). *Heterosexuality in Question*. London: Sage.

Jackson, Stevi, and Scott, Sue. (1996). Sexual Skirmishes and Feminist Factions: Twenty-Five Years of Debate on Women and Sexuality. In Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (Eds.), *Feminism and Sexuality*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

_____. (2015). A Personal History of Researching Childhood and Sexuality: Continuities and Discontinuities. In Emma Renold, Danielle Egan and Stevi Jackson (Eds.), *Children, Sexuality and Sexualisation of Culture*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jalland, Pat, and Hooper, John (eds). (1986). *Women from Birth to Death: The Female life Cycle in Britain 1830-1914*. Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press Limited.

James, E. L. (2012). *Fifty Shades Trilogy Bundle: Fifty Shades of Grey; Fifty Shades Darker; Fifty Shades Freed*. New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

Jeffreys, Sheila. (1985). *The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality 1880-1930*. London: Pandora Press.

_____. (1990). *Anticlimax: A Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution*. London: The Women's Press.

- Jimenez, Jill Berk, and Banham, Joanna. (2001). *Dictionary of Artists' Models*. London: Fitzroy Dearborn.
- Jones, Darryl. (2004). *Jane Austen*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jones, Ernest. (1953). *Sigmund Freud Life and Work Volume One: The Young Freud 1856-1900*. London: The Hogarth Press.
- _____. (1957). *Sigmund Freud Life and Work Volume Three: The Last Phase 1919-1939*. London: The Hogarth Press.
- _____. (1958). *Sigmund Freud Life and Work Volume Two: Years of Maturity 1901-1919*. London: The Hogarth Press.
- _____. (1961). *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*. London: Basic Books.
- Jones, Ernest (ed.). (1922). *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis III 1922 Part 1*. Vienna: The International Psycho-analytical Press.
- Jones, James H. (1997). *Alfred C. Kinsey: A Public/ Private Life*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Kaslik, Ibi. (2004). *Skinny*. New York: Walker & Company.
- Katchadourian, Herant A. , and Lunde, Donald T. (1980). *Fundamentals of Human Sexuality* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.
- Katz, Esther (ed.). (2003). *The Selected Papers of Margaret Sanger, Volume 1: The Woman Rebel, 1900-1928*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- Kent, Susan Kingsley. (1987). *Sex and Suffrage in Britain 1860-1914*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kerber, K. L. (2005). *Sexual Tendencies*. New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House.
- Kimball, Roger. (1998). *Tenured Radicals : How Politics Has Corrupted Our Higher Education*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee.

Kinsey, Alfred C., Pomeroy, Wardell B., and Martin, Clyde E. (1948). *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders.

Kinsey, Alfred C., Pomeroy, Wardell B., Martin, Clyde E. , and Gebhard, Paul H. (1953). *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders.

Koedt, Anne. (1973). The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm. In Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine and Anita Rapone (Eds.), *Radical Feminism*. New York: Quadrangle Books.

Krafft-Ebing, Richard von. (1893). *Psychopathia Sexualis* (7th ed.). Philadelphia: F. A. Davis.

Laqueur, Thomas Walter. (1990). *Making sex : body and gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

_____. (2003). *Solitary Sex : a Cultural History of Masturbation*. New York: Zone Books.

Lever, Janet. (1988, February). A Sociologist Looks at Women and Love. *Playboy*, 42-43.

Looby, Christopher (1995). The Roots of the Orchis, the Iuli of Chestnuts: The Odor of Male Solitude *Solitary Pleasures* (pp. 163-187). New York: Routledge.

LoPiccolo, Joseph , and Lobitz, W. Chales (1972). The Role of Masturbation in the Treatment of Orgasmic Dysfunction. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 2(2), 163-171.

Lothane, Zvi. (2007). The Sigmund Freud/Minna Bernays Romance: Fact or Fiction? *American Imago*, 64(1), 129-133.

Ludwig, Elisa, and Abrams, Dennis. (2013). *Judy Blume (Who Wrote That?)*. New York: Infobase Learning.

Luketic, Robert (Writer). (2009). *The Ugly Truth*. United States: Columbia Pictures.

- Lynn, David J. (1997). Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis of Albert Hirst. *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 71(1), 69-93.
- MacDonald, Robert H. (1967). The Frightful Consequences of Onanism: Notes on the History of a Delusion. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 28(3), 423-431.
- Macmillan, Malcolm. (1991). *Freud Evaluated: The Complete Arc*. New York: North Holland.
- Maier, Thomas. (2009). *Masters of Sex: The Life and Times of William Masters and Virginia Johnson, the Couple Who Taught America How to Love* (Updated paperback. ed.). New York: Basic Books.
- Mason, Diane Elizabeth. (2003). *The Secret Vice: Masturbation in Victorian Fiction and Medical Culture*. (PhD Dissertation), Bath Spa University
- _____. (2008). *The Secret Vice: Masturbation in Victorian Fiction and Medical Culture*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Masson, Jeffrey Moussaieff. (1998). *The Assault on Truth : Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory*. New York: Pocket Books.
- Masson, Jeffrey Moussaieff (ed.). (1985). *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap P. of Harvard U.P.
- Masters, William H. , and Johnson, Virginia E. . (1970). *Human Sexual Inadequacy*. London: Churchill.
- Masters, William H. , Johnson, Virginia E., and Kolodny, Robert C. (1994). *Heterosexuality*. New York: Thorsons.
- Masters, William H., and Johnson, Virginia E. (1979). *Homosexuality in Perspective*. Boston: Little Brown.
- Masters, William H., Johnson, Virginia E. , and Kolodny, Robert C. (ed.). (1980a). *Ethical Issues in Sex Therapy and Research*. New York: Little Brown.

- Masters, William H., Johnson, Virginia E., and Kolodny, Robert C. (1982a). *Human Sexuality*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- _____. (1982b). *Sex and Humen Loving*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- _____. (1988). *Crisis : Heterosexual Behavior in the Age of AIDS* (1st ed. ed.). New York: Grove Press.
- Masters, William H., Johnson, Virginia E., and Levin, Robert J. (1980b). *The Pleasure Bond*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Mirk, Sarah. (2014). *Sex from Scratch: Making Your Own Relationship Rules*: Microcosm Publishing.
- Money, John. (1986). *Venuses Penuses : Sexology, Sexosophy, and Exigency Theory*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.
- Moore, Lane. (2014). 12 Things No One Tells You About Masturbation. Retrieved 20 October, 2014, from <http://www.cosmopolitan.com/sex-love/advice/a31449/things-no-one-tells-you-about-masturbation/>
- Morrow, Ross (2008). *Sex Research and Sex Therapy*. New York: Routledge.
- Mudd, Emily. (1954). Let's Talk about Sex: Implications for Marriage and Sexual Adjustment. In Donald Porter Geddes (Ed.), *An Analysis of the Kinsey Reports on Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male and Female*. London: Frederick Muller Ltd.
- Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds. (2005). *Alice on Her Way*. New York: Simon Pulse.
- _____. (2012). *Dangerously Alice*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Neu, Jerome (ed.). (1991). *The Cambridge Companion to Freud*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- NHS. (2011). Vaginal discharge Retrieved 15 December, 2014, from <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaginal-discharge/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

- Nottingham, Chris. (1999). *The Pursuit of Serenity: Havelock Ellis and the New Politics*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Obstetrical Society of London. (1867). *Lancet*, 429-441.
- Ogden, Gina. (2008). *The Return of Desire*. Boston: Trumpeter.
- Patton, Michael S. (1986). Twentieth-Century Attitudes Toward Masturbation. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 25(4), 291-302.
- Philo-castitatis. (1723). *Onania Examined, and Detected: or, the Ignorance, Error, Impertinence. Of a Book Call'd Onanià, Discovered, and Exposed*. London: Joseph Marshall, and J. Roberts.
- Pierce, R. V. (1883). *The People's Commonsense Medical Adviser*. Buffalo, N.: World's Dispensary Priming-Office and Bindery.
- Plante, Rebecca F. (2014). *Sexualities in Context: A Social Perspective*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Pomeroy, Wardell Baxter. (1971). *Girls and Sex*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Pomeroy, Wardell Baxter, and Kinsey, Alfred C. (1972). *Dr. Kinsey and the Institute for Sex Research*. London: Nelson.
- Rahbani, Ziad (1983). *Failure 'Shee Fashel'*. Beirut: Sawt Beirut.
- Rawson, Hugh. (1995). *Rawson's Dictionary of Euphemisms and Other Doubletalk*. Chicago: Multimedia Product Development.
- Reisman, Judith A. , and Eichel, Edward W. (1990). *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud*. Colombia: Lochinvar Inc.
- Reumann, Miriam G. (2005). *American Sexual Character: Sex, Gender, and National Identity in the Kinsey Reports*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Richardson, Samuel. (1980). *Pamela* (Peter Sabor Ed.). New York: Penguin Books Limited.

- Roberts, Laura. (2009). V for Vixen. Retrieved 10 October, 2014, from <http://hour.ca/2009/09/24/v-for-vixen-12/>
- Robinson, Beatrice E. , Bockting, Walter O., and Harrell, Teresa. (2002). Masturbation and Sexual Health: An Exploratory Study of Low Income African American Women. In Walter O. Bockting and Eli Coleman (Eds.), *Masturbation As a Means of Achieving Sexual Health* (pp. 85-102). New York: Haworth.
- Robinson, Paul. (1976). *The Modernization of Sex*. London: Paul Elek Ltd.
- Robinson, William J. (ed.). (1919). *Sexual Truths Versus Sexual Lies, Misconceptions, and Exaggerations*. New York: The Critic & Guide Co.
- Rohndda, Viscountess. (1933). *This was My World*. London: Macmillan & Co.
- Roith, Estelle. (1987). *The Riddle of Freud : Jewish Influences on his Theory of Female Sexuality*. London: New library of psychoanalysis.
- Ross, Gary (Writer). (1998). Pleasantville. USA: New Line Cinema.
- Rothos, Math. (1727). *A Whip for the Quack: Or, Some Remarks on M---N's Supplement to His Onania. With a Full Answer and Confutation of His Boasted-Of, and Long-Promised Curious Piece from Sckmeider, and of All Their Arguments for the Seeds [Sic] Return into the Blood After Its Secretion*. London: Joseph Marshall.
- Rowbotham, Sheila, and Weeks, Jeffrey. (1977). *Socialism and the New Life: The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis*. London: Pluto Press.
- Rutter, Virginia, and Schwartz, Pepper. (2012). *The Gender of Sexuality: Exploring Sexual Possibilities*. Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Salz, Peggy Anne, and Moranz, Jennifer. (2013). *The Everything Guide to Mobile Apps: A Practical Guide to Affordable Mobile App Development for Your Business*. Avon, MA.: Adams Media.

Sanger, Margaret (2004). *Margaret Sanger, an Autobiography*. New York: Kessinger Publishing Company.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. (1990). *Epistemology of the Closet*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

_____. (1991). Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl. *Critical Inquiry*, 17(4), 818-837.

Segal, Lynne. (1994). *Straight Sex: Rethinking the Politics of Pleasure*. Los Angeles, California: University of California Press.

Shute, Joe. (2013). Why 66 million of us are sweet on computer game Candy Crush. Retrieved 10 November, 2014, from www.telegraph.co.uk/games/10054231/Why-66-million-of-us-are-sweet-on-computer-game-Candy-Crush.html

Siegel, Lee. (2013). Queer Theory, Literature, and the Sexualization of Everything. In Daphne Patai and Wilfrido Howard Corral (Eds.), *Theory's Empire: An Anthology of Dissent* (pp. 424-440). New York: Columbia University Press.

Silverman, Sarah, and Will.i.am. (2013). Perfect Night. from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2KYHLLIRYk>

Snadowsky, Daria (2008). *Anatomy of a Boyfriend*. New York: Ember.

Spitz, Rene A. (1952). Authority and Masturbation: Some Remarks on a Bibliographical Investigation. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 21, 490-527.

Stanley, Liz. (1995). *Sex Surveyed 1949-1994 From Mass Observation's 'Little Kinsey' to the National Survey and the Hite Reports*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Stannard, David E. . (1998). Culture Vulture. In Frederick Campbell Crews (Ed.), *Unauthorized Freud: Doubters Confront a Legend*. New York: Penguin.

- Stein, Katy. (2012). "My Slippery Place": Female Masturbation in Young Adult Literature. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 37(4), 415-428.
- Stekel, Wilhelm. (1951). *Auto-Erotism: A Psychiatric Study of Masturbation and Neurosis*. London: Peter Nevill Limited.
- Stengers, Jean , and Neck, Anne Van. (2001). *Masturbation: The History of a Great Terror*. New York: Palgrave.
- Stopes, Marie. (1919). *Married Love* (6th ed.). London: A. C. Fifield.
- Storey, John. (2014). *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* (6th edition ed.). New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Sulloway, Frank J. (1992). *Freud, Biologist of the Mind : Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Szasz, Thomas. (1973). *The Second Sin*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- Telford, Cee. (2004). *Judy Blume*. Westport: Rosen Central.
- Tiefer, Leonore. (1995). *Sex Is Not a Natural Act and Other Essays*. San Francisco: Westview Press.
- Tissot, S.A.D. (1781). *Onanism: or, a Treatise upon the Disorders Produced by Masturbation* (3rd ed.). London: D. Bell, R. Gray, and W. Thompson at Bath.
- Tracy, Kathleen. (2008). *Judy Blume: A Biography*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- Travers, Penny. (2013). Happy Playtime App: A Guide to Masturbating Properly. Retrieved 20 October, 2014, from <http://www.cosmopolitan.co.uk/love-sex/sex/tips/a20588/happy-playtime-app-a-guide-to-masturbating/>
- Trites, Roberta Seelinger. (2000). *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

- Turner, Graeme. (2003). *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Waters, Chris. (2006). Sexology. In Harry Cocks and Matt Houlbrook (Eds.), *Palgrave Advances in the Modern History of Sexuality* (pp. 41-63). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Webster, Paula. (1992). The Forbidden: Eroticism and Taboo. In Carole S. Vance (Ed.), *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* (New ed. ed.). London: Pandora Press.
- Webster, Richard. (2005). *Why Freud Was Wrong: Sin, Science and Psychoanalysis*. Oxford: Orwell Press.
- Weeks, Jeffrey. (2011). *The Languages of Sexuality*. New York: Routledge.
- Whiting, Pat. (1972). Female Sexuality: Its Political Implications. In Michelene Wandor (Ed.), *The Body Politic: Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain, 1969-1972* (pp. 189-213). London: Stage 1.
- Wilcocks, Robert. (1994). *Maelzel's Chess Player: Sigmund Freud and the Rhetoric of Deceit*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth. (1988). *Anna Freud: A Biography*. New York: Summit Books.
- Zambaco, Démétrius Alexandre. (1986). Masturbation and Psychological Problems in Two Little Girls. In Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Ed.), *A Dark Science : Women, Sexuality, and Psychiatry in the Nineteenth Century* (1st ed. ed., pp. 61-89). New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Zeises, Lara M. (2009). The M Word *Everything I Needed to Know About Being a Girl I Learned from Judy Blume* (pp. 78-85). New York: Gallery Books.