The Abject-Other in the Abolitionist Feminist Discourse on Prostitution

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The consciousness of privilege came to me shamefully late. And where the blame for that late arrival bears first and above all on me, it does not bear on me alone. One of the things that consciousness brought me was the understanding of the crushing weight of structure over individuals. With it, the certainty of the obligations that, as a direct consequence, rest with the state and its institutions, as well as with every single one of us as part of a society that can no longer remain passive and silent in the face of obvious and abhorrent injustice. This work is my scream of indignation as a woman, as a feminist, and as a legal scholar at the situation of absolute lack of rights of those most marginalized and stigmatized among us.

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ABSTRACT

This work analyses the abolitionist feminist discourse on prostitution as elaborated by second-wave feminists in the last decades of the twentieth century. Its aim is to deconstruct such a discourse, to locate the point at which its system of values is transgressed and its coherence collapses. While abolitionist feminism embodies a claim to be in strict opposition to the patriarchal discourse on prostitution, this work attempts to demonstrate that is not the case by uncovering the points at which both discourses overlap. Patriarchal notions of female sexuality which culminate in the essentialization of the "good woman" image of femininity ultimately lead to the positioning and representation of the (consenting) prostitute as abject-Other in abolitionist feminism. As Other to the norm in both its descriptive and normative senses, the (consenting) prostitute is endowed with the meaning of *abject* thus being *abjected* from an *Us* that does not include her.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo analiza el discurso feminista abolicionista sobre la prostitución tal como fue elaborado por las feministas de la segunda ola en las últimas décadas del siglo XX. Su objetivo es deconstruir este discurso, ubicar el punto en el que su sistema de valores se transgrede y su coherencia colapsa. Si bien el feminismo abolicionista encarna una reivindicación de estar en estricta oposición al discurso patriarcal sobre la prostitución, este trabajo intenta demostrar que no es así, revelando los puntos en los que ambos discursos se superponen. Nociones patriarcales de la sexualidad femenina que culminan en la esencialización de la imagen de la "buena mujer" terminan conduciendo al posicionamiento y representación de la prostituta (que consiente) como Otra-abyecta en el feminismo abolicionista. Como Otra a la norma, tanto en su sentido descriptivo como normativo, a la prostituta (que consiente) le es atribuido el significado de *abyecta* y, por lo tanto, es excluida – *abyectada* – de un *Nosotras* que no la incluye.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Relevance

Vanesa Campos was born in Peru. She was murdered in Paris during the night of 16 to 17 August 2018 when resisting a robbery by a group of men. Vanesa was a prostitute whose presence at the dangerous place where she found her death was directly motivated by a law that is alleged to protect women from violence. That law, adopted in France in 2016, represents the country's adoption of what is known as the "Nordic Model", a legal approach to prostitution which prohibits the purchase of sex, criminalizing not the prostitute but her client. Its claimed purpose is the abolition of prostitution: targeting the demand, so the logic goes, annihilates the market, and, with it, the human rights violations suffered by women engaged in prostitution. Its results, however, are quite a different story. Not only has the Nordic Model had very little impact on demand and supply in the countries where it was adopted,[1] as it has been responsible for the severe worsening of the prostitutes' rights situation. One of the reasons is the need for concealment the criminalization of clients has sparked. One which leaves prostitutes exposed to a much greater risk of violence and economic exploitation. And the one which has led Vanesa Campos into the dangerous place where she was when she was murdered. In the words of Thierry Schaffauser, sex worker and spokesperson for French sex workers' union STRASS, "she had to work in a part of the forest that has no light and is very remote […,] a place where nobody would go before the law, because it's known to be dangerous."[2] Now, despite the devastating consequences of the Nordic Model on prostitutes, who, of course, are overwhelmingly *women*, this legal approach is not the result of national government's disregard for feminist revindications. In fact, quite the opposite is true. The Nordic Model is the policy defended and fought for by a particular

[1] In relation to Sweden see SCOULAR, Jane, "What's Law Got to Do with It: How and Why Law Matters in the Regulation of Sex Work", p. 20.

[2] BACHLAKOVA, Polina, "Long read: How the Nordic model in France changed everything for sex workers". Available at https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/long-read-how-nordic-model-france-changed-everything-sex-workers/.

strand of feminism that has become dominant on the matter in the last decades. This is what is generally referred to as *abolitionist feminism*.

Vanesa Campo's case is no exception. It is no exception in terms of the general situation of violation of prostitutes' most basic rights, it is no exception in what concerns the direct relation between that situation and the regulation of prostitution, and it is also no exception with respect to the direct link between that regulation and abolitionist feminism.

Summarizing a review of the policies on prostitution in twenty-one European countries, Hendrik Wagenaar affirms that "in terms of effectiveness and human rights, the regulation of prostitution is to a greater or lesser extent a failure in almost European countries."[3] Different types of laws impede prostitutes from renting a house, opening a bank account, entering a mortgage or business loan, having custody of their children, supporting or helping to support a partner or a parent, enjoying adequate work conditions, exercising the right to unionize, working collectively, not being taxed far above the average, appealing to unjust tax claims, having health and unemployment insurance, accessing the justice system, having the innumerous crimes to which they are victims punished, migrating and generally exercising the right to free movement as other people.[4]

Wagenaar and Sieetske Altink explain this general situation of regulative failure as follows: rather than evidence and facts, regulation of prostitution is mostly determined by ideology.[5]

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[3] WAGENAAR, Hendrik, "Introduction: Prostitution Policy in Europe – An Overview", p. 2.

[4] PHETERSON, Gail, *The Prostitution Prism*, pp. 41-3; WAGENAAR, Hendrik, AMESBERGER, Helga, and ALTINK, Sietske, *Designing Prostitution Policy: Intention and Reality in Regulating the Sex Trade*, p. 31; OLIVEIRA, Alexandra, LEMOS, LEMOS, Ana, MOTA, Mafalda, PINTO, Rita, MACHADO, Pedro, PINTO, Marta. *Less Equal Than Others: The Laws Affecting Sex Work, and Advocacy in the European Union*, pp. 11-7; See also JAHNSEN Synnøve Økland, and WAGENAAR, Hendrik (eds.), *Assessing Prostitution Policies in Europe*; ICRSE (International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe), *Exploitation: Unfair Labour Arrangements and Precarious Working Conditions in the Sex Industry*; ICRSE (International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe), *Undeserving Victims? A Community Report on Migrant Sex Worker Victims of Crime in Europe*.

[5] WAGENAAR, Hendrik, and ALTINK, Sietske, "Prostitution as Moral Politics or Why It is Exceedingly Difficult to Design and Sustain Effective Prostitution Policy", pp. 283-4. The dominance of ideology over evidence and facts is one of the key findings of Alexandra Oliveira and her colleagues´ "Comparative and critical analysis of different laws on prostitution in the European Union": "Sex work, and the people involved in it, has been repeatedly subject to debate, often fierce and usually dominated by moral, ideological, or philosophical premises instead of being based on knowledge, whether scientific, technical, or other. […] This means that policies are often made in the name of moral and ideological stances, with little concern about their impact on the health, safety and living conditions of sex workers." (OLIVEIRA, Alexandra, et al., *Less Equal*

This means that instead of the outcome of the policy, the actors pushing for a specific regulation are mostly interested in sending a message, in propagating a view on prostitution as part of, as a "vehicle for a larger moral cause."[6] Such view, in addition, is deeply entrenched in the actors proposing it, who are emotionally committed to it and who, as a result, remain both resistant to facts and deaf to dialogue: "the angry reiteration of original positions, the unwillingness to listen to the opponent's point of view, the demonization of those who think differently."[7] As we shall see in more detail in a moment, this has particularly been the case of abolitionist feminism's defenders.

I define abolitionist feminism as a view that conceives prostitution *per se* as a form of violence against women rooted in gender relations of power. Such perspective excludes the possibility of women's real consent to prostitution, as well as the broader idea of freedom in

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Than Others: The Laws Affecting Sex Work, and Advocacy in the European Union, p. 1.) Janie A. Chuang concurs. She speaks of how in prostitution and human trafficking policymaking in the United States and the United Nations "ideology comes to substitute for evidence, with moral certainty precluding critical assessment." (CHUANG, Janie A., "Rescuing Trafficking from Ideological Capture: Prostitution Reform and Anti-Trafficking Law and Policy", p. 1721). Jo Doezema has equally noted the workings of ideology in the negotiations of the United Nations Optional Protocol to Suppress, Prevent, and Punish Trafficking in Persons that supplements the 2000 United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol): "At the negotiations, the subject of trafficking could not have been discussed in a more superficially rational, more dry, less apparently mythical way. The use of competing ideologies by feminist lobbies is an example of this, but so are the interactions between state delegations and between state delegations and lobbyists." (DOEZEMA, Jo, *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters: The Construction of Trafficking*, pp. 114-5.)

[6] WAGENAAR, Hendrik, and ALTINK, Sietske, "Prostitution as Moral Politics or Why It is Exceedingly Difficult to Design and Sustain Effective Prostitution Policy", p. 283. Ronald Weitzer makes a similar point. In his view, there has been a moral crusade against prostitution, and he speaks of how, in it, participants "see their mission as a righteous enterprise whose goals are both symbolic (attempting to redraw or bolster normative boundaries and moral standards) and instrumental (providing relief to victims, punishing evildoers)." (WEITZER, Ronald, "The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade", p. 448.)

[7] WAGENAAR, Hendrik, and ALTINK, Sietske, "Prostitution as Moral Politics or Why It is Exceedingly Difficult to Design and Sustain Effective Prostitution Policy", p. 284. Melissa Ditmore describes "the rancor that existed between feminist factions addressing trafficking in persons" at the negotiations of the Palermo Protocol. As she says, "[h]owever, malice between feminists on the issue of prostitution is neither new or unique, and can take extraordinary forms." (DITMORE, Melissa, "Trafficking in Lives: How Ideology Shapes Policy", p. 111.) In the context of the Palermo Protocol negotiations, Doezema has also noted the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women's (an abolitionist organization) "aggressive campaign" against Clinton Administration, which it accused of "supporting 'legalized prostitution' at the UN." (DOEZEMA, Jo, *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters: The Construction of Trafficking*, p. 129.) The reason was that Administration's "push for a broadening of the trafficking definition to include other exploitative ends, such as labour, servitude and organ trafficking." (WYLIE, Gillian, "Neo-abolitionism and Transnational Advocacy Networks: Globalising an Idea", p. 18.)

it. It therefore understands the abolition of prostitution as a necessary requirement for women's equality and freedom. While I have found a general conflation between abolitionist feminism and neo-abolitionism, I believe it is important to distinguish them. Neo-abolitionism[8] is defined in relation to public policy: it is a public policy approach to prostitution. Eilís Ward and Gillian Wylie have described it as follows:

> a new version of an established approach to prostitution, abolitionism, that seeks to shut down the spaces and places wherein commercial sex is transacted. This works by criminalising activities attendant to sex work such as pimping, profiteering, living off the earnings of prostitution, organising and so on. We can think about this as a regime that attempts to squeeze 'supply' by criminalising its technologies, human or otherwise, but on paper at least, does not punish the seller.[9]

Criminalization, thus, is neo-abolitionism's cornerstone. As Wagenaar, Helga Amesberger, and Sietske Altink sum it up, neo-abolitionism is the "current dominant movement to eradicate or suppress prostitution in society by applying criminal law to clients and third parties."[10] Elizabeth Bernstein speaks of a "commitment to carceral paradigms of social, and in particular, gender justice".[11] In her view, what characterizes neo-abolitionism[12] is precisely the reliance on "criminal justice interventions rather than a redistributive welfare state".[13]

Abolitionist feminism, instead, is not necessarily and logically attached to a particular public policy approach to prostitution even though it has concretely and historically been so. Abolitionist feminism is a view, a cluster of ideas, a discourse, which has been used to justify

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[8] The term "neo-abolitionism" in the context of prostitution is generally adopted to distinguish the contemporary abolitionist movement from the abolitionist campaigns of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United Kingdom and the United States. Although the purpose of both movements is/was the abolition of prostitution, they defend/ed and fight/fought for different types of public policies.

[9] WARD, Eilís, and WYLIE, Gillian, "Introduction", p. 2.

[10] WAGENAAR, Hendrik, AMESBERGER, Helga, and ALTINK, Sietske, *Designing Prostitution Policy: Intention and Reality in Regulating the Sex Trade*, p. 26.

[11] BERNSTEIN, Elizabeth, "Militarized Humanitarianism Meets Carceral Feminism: The Politics of Sex, Rights, and Freedom in Contemporary Antitrafficking Campaigns", p. 47.

[12] Bernstein uses the term "New Abolitionism" instead of "Neo-abolitionism".

[13] BERNSTEIN, Elizabeth, "The Sexual Politics of 'New-Abolitionism'", p. 137. The same point is made by Eilís Ward and Gillian Wylie: "neo-abolitionism […] delinks prostitution from social policy frameworks such as harm reduction and anti-poverty measures and focuses instead on criminal justice and law enforcement responses." (WARD, Eilís, and WYLIE, Gillian, "Introduction", p. 2.)

and defend the implementation of neo-abolitionism, but which can be maintained without the endorsement of neo-abolitionism. And precisely the same can be said of neo-abolitionism, which can, of course, and indeed has been defended and implemented based on views other than abolitionist feminism.

My point, however, is not (exclusively) one of conceptual accuracy. Distinguishing between abolitionist feminism and neo-abolitionism allows for a clearer perception of the different actors, views, and interests involved in neo-abolitionism. And this is a fundamental point as those different actors, views, and interests most often remain completely invisible to public eye, masked under the cloak of women's rights and protection invoked by public institutions upon the adoption of criminalizing regulation that harms prostitutes and violates their most basic rights.

This is a crucial issue. Abolitionist feminism is the discourse generally invoked to justify, legitimize, and call for neo-abolitionism. And if, as so many have observed, neo-abolitionism has become dominant,[14] abolitionist feminism's own dominance has a lot to do with that. Among the European countries that have adopted the neo-abolitionist approach to

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[14] CHUANG, Janie A., "Rescuing Trafficking from Ideological Capture: Prostitution Reform and Anti-Trafficking Law and Policy", p. 1658; WAGENAAR, Hendrik, AMESBERGER, Helga, and ALTINK, Sietske, *Designing Prostitution Policy: Intention and Reality in Regulating the Sex Trade*, p. 26; WARD, Eilís, and WYLIE, Gillian, "Introduction", p. 1. Not only have most countries adopted some form of third-party criminalization (even the ones which have chosen to regulate prostitution instead of criminalizing it), as this dominance is generally recognized in the literature. In addition, it should be noted that that the Nordic Model is the policy approached recommended by the European Parliament (2014 European Parliament Resolution on Sexual Exploitation and Prostitution and its Impact on Gender Equality).

prostitution policy,[15] abolitionist feminism has a strong presence in most of them.[16] That is particularly the case of the countries that have implemented the Nordic Model.[17] As Katrien Symons and Kristien Gillis say, then, the way prostitution is framed is essential, as it has "far-reaching real-world consequences. It affects how people who work in prostitution are treated by society on a daily basis, but also the conditions in which they work and the extent to which they […] become stigmatized and criminalized."[18]

2. Object of Analysis and Preliminary Research Question

Hoping to have been able to demonstrate abolitionist feminism's relevance in what concerns present day regulation of prostitution and, consequently, its contribution to prostitutes' precarious human rights situation, I would now like to establish such discourse as this work's object of analysis.

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[15] According to Oliveira and her colleagues, out of "the 27 countries within the EU, […]18 criminalize third parties and/or clients, but not sex workers (Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and Slovenia) […], six […] have regulated sex work (Austria, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, and The Netherlands)" and three (Croatia, Lithuania, and Romania) punish sex workers and their clients "both criminally and administratively". (OLIVEIRA, Alexandra, et al., *Less Equal Than Others: The Laws Affecting Sex Work, and Advocacy in the European Union*, p. 5.) Oliveira and her colleagues adopt a classification of policy regimes on prostitution that divides them into (1) regimes that regulate and (2) regimes that criminalize prostitution, further subdividing the latter into (2.1) regimes that criminalize and impose other forms of legal sanctioning *to sex workers* and (2.2) regimes that criminalize and impose other forms of legal sanctioning *on third parties and/or clients* but not sex workers. (OLIVEIRA, Alexandra, et al., *Less Equal Than Others: The Laws Affecting Sex Work, and Advocacy in the European Union*, p. 4.) It is important to note, however, that there are several types of classifications of policy regimes on prostitution. As Wagenaar tells us, "[t]here is considerable debate about the type and proper nomenclature of the different regimes. […] They do not necessarily coincide with national borders, they are insufficiently consistent as more than one regime can be discerned in the same country or even in one policy program or legal approach, and they ignore the complex and multi-level character of prostitution policy". (WAGENAAR, Hendrik, "Introduction: Prostitution Policy in Europe – An Overview", p. 3.)

[16] BJØNNES, Jeanett, and SPANGER, Marlene, "Denmark", pp. 157-8; SOLANO, Mariola Bernal, DANET, Alina, and CERDÁ, Joan Carles March, "Spain", p. 292; OLIVEIRA, Alexandra, "Portugal", p. 308.

[17] ÖSTERGREN, Petra, "Sweden", pp. 173-4; DARLEY, Mathilde, DAVID, Marion, GUIENNE, Véronique, MAINSANT, Gwénaëlle, and MATHIEU Lilian, "France", pp. 95, 98-9; RYAN, Paul, and WARD, Eilís, "Ireland", pp. 51-3; JAHNSEN, Synnøve, and SKILBREI, May-Len, "Norway", pp. 191-3; VUOLAJÄRVI, Niina, VIUHKO, Niinna, KANTOLA, Johanna, and MARTTILA, Anne-Maria, "Finland", pp. 204-5; ŠORI, Iztok, and PAJNIK, Mojca, "Slovenia", pp. 233-4. Finland and Slovenia have adopted the partial criminalization of clients, where the purchase of sexual services from a victim of trafficking is punishable. (VUOLAJÄRVI, Niina et al., "Finland", p. 200; ŠORI, Iztok, and PAJNIK, Mojca, "Slovenia", p. 230.)

[18] SYMONS, Katrien, and GILLIS, Kristien, "Talking about Prostitution and the Representation of a (Problematic) Group: Identifying frames in Flemish News Coverage on Prostitution", p. 121.

What particularly puzzles me about abolitionist feminism is how, a discourse continuously translated into policies that make prostitutes much more vulnerable to harm, is so convincing as a discourse of *protection* of women.[19] In fact, abolitionist feminism seems extremely adaptable. It flourishes in the most diverse settings, adapting to very distinct contexts and actors. It seems to mingle equally well with both systemic notions of power and injustice and neo-liberal ideas, conservative and liberal views, and even misogynistic and feminist ideas of sex and women. Proof of this is abolitionist feminists' alliance with conservative and religious organizations. Whereas in the United States, these feminists have formed alliances with neoconservatives and evangelical Christians,[20] in Europe, both conservative religious organizations and the populist right have become abolitionist feminists' strange bedfellows.[21] Everywhere consensus seems to have been achieved, with both right and left of both neoliberal and welfare states agreeing on prostitution being a form of violence against women who are claimed to be forced into it.[22]

So here is my preliminary question: why is abolitionist feminism so convincing despite its contradictory effects? Why does it travel so well across such disparate political platforms and

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[19] Lilian Mathieu has made a very similar point when discussing prostitution policy in France. She notes how the "coercive policies towards prostitutes" introduced in 2003 "have not been perceived as being in contrast to the compassionate approach", which "is supposed to predominate in the way the French state deals with prostitutes" following its framing of prostitution as a human dignity issue in the 1960s. The reason is the fact that those policies are in fact perceived as guaranteeing the protection of human dignity. (MATHIEU, Lilian, "An Ambiguous Compassion: Policing and Debating Prostitution in Contemporary France", p. 203.)

[20] BERMAN, Jacqueline, "The Left, the Right, and the Prostitute: The Making of U.S. Antitrafficking in Persons Policy"; BERNSTEIN, Elizabeth, "The Sexual Politics of 'New-Abolitionism'"; JACKSON, Crystal A., REED, Jennifer J., and BRENTS, Barbara G., "Strange Confluences: Radical Feminism and Evangelical Christianity as Drivers of US Neo-abolitionism"; WEITZER, Ronald, "The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade", p. 449; CHUANG, Janie A., "Rescuing Trafficking from Ideological Capture: Prostitution Reform and Anti-Trafficking Law and Policy", p. 1658.

[21] WAGENAAR, Hendrik, AMESBERGER, Helga, and ALTINK, Sietske, *Designing Prostitution Policy: Intention and Reality in Regulating the Sex Trade*, p. 70.

[22] SVANSTRÖM, Yvonne, "From Contested to Consensus: Swedish Politics on Prostitution and Trafficking", p. 34; MATHIEU, Lilian, "An Ambiguous Compassion: Policing and Debating Prostitution in Contemporary France", p. 205 ; Wagenaar, Amesberger, and Altink have also reported abolitionist feminism's dominance in countries such as the Netherlands and Austria that generally adopt regulationist rather than neo-abolitionist regulations: "[h]owever, similar to the Netherlands, this discourse of labour rights and decriminalisation of the sex trade has increasingly lost out against the abolitionist discourse of trafficking. […] Politicians of all parties (except for the Greens and the LIF102), the media and various civil society stakeholders exerted considerable political pressure in favour of accepting the abolitionist trafficking agenda. (WAGENAAR, Hendrik, AMESBERGER, Helga, and ALTINK, Sietske, *Designing Prostitution Policy: Intention and Reality in Regulating the Sex Trade*, p. 175.)

beyond geographical and cultural borders? This is this work's starting point. It is this inquiry that will frame the shape of the investigation I will here undertake.

3. Reasons for Abolitionism Feminism Prominence

There are several reasons for abolitionist feminism current position of prominence. Not all are related to the discourse itself. Some are of a political, material, and very concrete nature and others are of what I would call a rhetorical character. Before going into what I believe there is in the abolitionist feminist discourse that makes it so persuasive, I would like to address the second and third type of reasons for its prominence. As I see it, doing so might not only contribute to demystify the taken-for-granted status it currently holds in many feminist circles, as it might be helpful in directing us to the discursive reasons that have allowed or at least made it very easy for the political, material and very concrete factors I will analyze in the coming lines.

3.1. Political and Rhetorical Reasons

The first, is the alliances with powerful actors such as the conservative and religious groups already mentioned. As abolitionist feminist Laura Lederer has admitted, they "would not be getting attention internationally" were it not for the alliance with "faith-based groups".[23] Attention, however, is far from being the only way in which those alliances benefited abolitionist feminists. Most importantly, they allowed them access to state institutions. And this brings us to a second political and material factor which played a fundamental role in the achievement of abolitionist feminism' current hegemonic position. I am referring to institutionalization, or, to put it differently, the alliance with and endorsement by state actors

[23] LEDERER, Laura, as cited in BELZ, Mindy, "No Sale". Available at https://wng.org/articles/no-sale-1620655434.

and institutions willing to promote abolitionist feminism and allocate resources to that end.[24] The best examples are the United States and Sweden.

As several authors have observed, a fundamental episode in the history of abolitionist feminism's ascendency was the incorporation of abolitionist feminists into the Bush Administration (2001-2008), which was made possible precisely because of the alliances with religious and conservative groups that dominated that administration.[25] Abolitionist feminism became the official view on prostitution, which, among others, had important financial consequences: on one side, the allocation of a bulk of funds to prominent abolitionist feminist organizations in the United States and their allies around the world,[26] and, on the other, the exclusion from funding of programs that promoted, supported, or advocated the legalization of prostitution as well as of organizations that did not explicitly oppose prostitution.[27] The funding that abolitionist groups have been awarded has been used in the organization of conferences throughout the world, which were restricted to people

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[24] Ronald Weitzer defines institutionalization as "ranging from consultation with activists, inclusion of leaders in the policy process, material support for crusade organizations, official endorsement of crusade ideology, resource mobilization, and the creation of legislation and new agencies to address the problem." He documents "[t]he institutionalization of "the anti-prostitution crusade" by showing the "*consultation and inclusion* of activists in policy making, official *recognition and endorsement* of crusade ideology, officials' independent *articulation* of this ideology, and *programmatic and legal changes* in accordance with this ideology." (WEITZER, Ronald, "The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade", p. 458.)

[25] JACKSON, Crystal A., REED, Jennifer J., and BRENTS, Barbara G., "Strange Confluences: Radical Feminism and Evangelical Christianity as Drivers of US Neo-Abolitionism", p. 74; WEITZER, Ronald, "The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade", pp. 449, 461; CHUANG, Janie A., "Rescuing Trafficking from Ideological Capture: Prostitution Reform and Anti-Trafficking Law and Policy", p. 1680.

[26] WEITZER, Ronald, "The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade", p. 460; CHUANG, Janie A., "Rescuing Trafficking from Ideological Capture: Prostitution Reform and Anti-Trafficking Law and Policy", p. 1715; SODERLUND, Gretchen, "Running from the Rescuers: New U.S. Crusades Against Sex Trafficking and the Rhetoric of Abolition", p. 68; JACKSON, Crystal A., REED, Jennifer J., and BRENTS, Barbara G., "Strange Confluences: Radical Feminism and Evangelical Christianity as Drivers of US Neo-Abolitionism", p. 75.

[27] WEITZER, Ronald, "The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade", p. 460; CHUANG, Janie A., "Rescuing Trafficking from Ideological Capture: Prostitution Reform and Anti-Trafficking Law and Policy", pp. 1683-4; SODERLUND, Gretchen, "Running from the Rescuers: New U.S. Crusades Against Sex Trafficking and the Rhetoric of Abolition", p. 80; JACKSON, Crystal A., REED, Jennifer J., and BRENTS, Barbara G., "Strange Confluences: Radical Feminism and Evangelical Christianity as Drivers of US Neo-Abolitionism", p. 75.

sharing the abolitionist view,[28] in research that has become widely influential despite its questioned quality,[29] and in lobbying of international agencies to pass legislation incorporating abolitionist feminist views.

Moreover, as Janie Chuang put it, "the United States has proclaimed itself global sheriff" on matters of prostitution, drawing many countries "to develop domestic laws and policies" consistent with its own abolitionist view.[30] Gretchen Soderlund further explains it as follows:

> The United States is also using its status as a superpower and major donor nation to force other countries to allow its citizens to raid brothels and send prostitutes into rehabilitation programs as well as to create domestic legislation that further criminalizes sex trafficking (and by extension other forms of prostitution).[31]

International lobby is a third factor with a fundamental role in abolitionist feminism's spreading. Gillian Wylie has described the role of abolitionist feminists as "transnational moral entrepreneurs", that is, as actors working "actively at the international level to frame concepts, lobby policy makers and socialize them with new ideas, ultimately aiming to get international bodies and their constituent states to adopt new normative frameworks."[32] Wylie highlights the crucial impact abolitionist feminists' activism had on the approval of two most important international instruments: the 2000 United Nations Protocol to Prevent,

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[28] WEITZER, Ronald, "The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade", p. 460.

[29] WEITZER, Ronald, "The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade", p. 460. Crystal A. Jackson and her colleagues talk of the impact on research grants for scholarships. As they explain "[r]esearch funding on human trafficking from the US Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), and National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has been disproportionately awarded to neo-abolitionist and anti-prostitution groups." (JACKSON, Crystal A., REED, Jennifer J., and BRENTS, Barbara G., "Strange Confluences: Radical Feminism and Evangelical Christianity as Drivers of US Neo-abolitionism", p. 75.) And they also refer to the "poor data sources, unverifiable global generalisations as well as muddy definitions of trafficking". In fact, "In 2006, the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) distanced itself from its own widely cited 2003 and 2004 international estimates and TIP reports citing weak methods, data gaps and discrepancies and concluding that country-level data are generally not reliable or comparable." (JACKSON, Crystal A., REED, Jennifer J., and BRENTS, Barbara G., "Strange Confluences: Radical Feminism and Evangelical Christianity as Drivers of US Neo-abolitionism", p. 76).

[30] CHUANG, Janie A., "The United States as Global Sheriff: Using Unilateral Sanctions to Combat Human Trafficking", p. 439.

[31] SODERLUND, Gretchen, "Running from the Rescuers: New U.S. Crusades Against Sex Trafficking and the Rhetoric of Abolition", p. 76.

[32] WYLIE, Gillian, "Neo-abolitionism and Transnational Advocacy Networks: Globalising an Idea", p. 12.

Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, which supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol) and the 2014 European Parliament Resolution on Sexual Exploitation and Prostitution and its Impact on Gender Equality. While the first includes in the definition of "trafficking in persons" the movement of persons for the purpose of "exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation", thus allowing an interpretation of trafficking as including voluntary prostitution,[33] the second defines prostitution as a form of slavery and violence against women, incompatible with human rights and dignity, and recommends the adoption of the Nordic Model to European Union countries.

The success of abolitionist feminism's international lobby is directly connected with its institutionalization, as both American and Swedish administrations have been their crucial allies in this enterprise.[34] In fact, the similarity of patterns in Sweden and the United States is worth of note: as in the U.S., also in Sweden the alliances with religious groups were of great importance in the process leading to the adoption of the Nordic Model, which was defended, justified, and legitimized by means of an abolitionist feminist view on prostitution,[35] and, later intentionally exported onto the European level by Sweden as a way "of symbolically promote Swedish liberal gender equality norms rather than as a radical questioning and overturning of patriarchal sexual standards."[36]

A last note on the importance of the success of the international lobbying and the incorporation of an abolitionist feminism view in international instruments: its impact on the national level. As Soderlund puts it, "current policy implementation on the national level is often deeply informed by and becomes the object of transnational debates and global activism".[37]

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[33] CHUANG, Janie A., "Rescuing Trafficking from Ideological Capture: Prostitution Reform and Anti-Trafficking Law and Policy", p. 1676.
[34] WYLIE, Gillian, "Neo-abolitionism and Transnational Advocacy Networks: Globalising an Idea", p. 12.
[35] SVANSTRÖM, Yvonne, "From Contested to Consensus: Swedish Politics on Prostitution and Trafficking", p. 34.
[36] *Idem*, p. 42.
[37] SODERLUND, Gretchen, "Running from the Rescuers: New U.S. Crusades Against Sex Trafficking and the Rhetoric of Abolition", p. 67.

In addition to what I referred to as factors of a political, material, and concrete nature, there are also factors of a more rhetorical character which explain the abolitionist feminism's path towards hegemony. Inflated numbers of victims which exacerbate the magnitude of the problem;[38] the use of shocking cases which are presented as typical and prevalent and which both arise indignation and appeal to emotions of compassion, horror and disgust;[39] the employment of redbaiting tactics by which opponents are "labeled as 'pro-prostitution'"[40] or accused of "being paid by pimps or in the service of the 'prostitution mafia' or the 'prostitution lobby'";[41] and finally, the conflation of prostitution with practices that are widely condemned such as exploitation, violence, rape, and slavery.[42]

In strict relation to the latter, there is a factor, generally claimed to have been a game-changer for abolitionist feminism: the framing of prostitution as trafficking in women. Crystal A. Jackson, Jennifer J. Reed, and Barbara G. Brents explain how such framing came about:

> In 1988, Women Against Pornography (WAP), one of the key anti-prostitution radical feminist organisations in the 1970s sex wars, made a strategic change of direction. Laura Lederer, one of the founders of WAP and of Take Back the Night, helped fund and organise a 1988 conference that defined trafficking as 'globalised prostitution' and urged feminists to shift the fight from their focus on domestic censorship of pornography to international sex trafficking. They could shift the attack away from the sex lives of Western feminists to humanitarian concerns over third world women. […] Lederer joined with WAP leaders, Janice Raymond and Doris Leidholdt, and in 1988 created the Coalition against Trafficking in Women (CATW) and WAP eventually

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[38] WEITZER, Ronald, "The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade", pp. 462-3; WAGENAAR, Hendrik, AMESBERGER, Helga, and ALTINK, Sietske, *Designing Prostitution Policy: Intention and Reality in Regulating the Sex Trade*, p. 42.

[39] WEITZER, Ronald, "The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade", p. 463; WAGENAAR, Hendrik, AMESBERGER, Helga, and ALTINK, Sietske, *Designing Prostitution Policy: Intention and Reality in Regulating the Sex Trade*, p. 40.

[40] CHUANG, Janie A., "Rescuing Trafficking from Ideological Capture: Prostitution Reform and Anti-Trafficking Law and Policy", p. 1673.

[41] WAGENAAR, Hendrik, AMESBERGER, Helga, and ALTINK, Sietske, *Designing Prostitution Policy: Intention and Reality in Regulating the Sex Trade*, p. 42.

[42] OLIVEIRA, Alexandra, et al., *Less Equal Than Others: The Laws Affecting Sex Work, and Advocacy in the European Union*, p. 20.

> faded as an organisation. […] Other organisations emerged in the early 1990s to fight sex trafficking and prostitution using this frame. Many of these organisations, including Equality Now, shared members on their boards of directors.[43]

The success of this strategy was such that nowadays trafficking and prostitution can be said to have become completely intermeshed discursively, politically, and legally. Erin O'Brien, Sharon Hayes, and Belinda Carpenter describe the relations established between prostitution and trafficking as follows:

> […] in order to prevent trafficking prostitution must be abolished. They position the harm of sex trafficking as a direct consequence of legalised, decriminalized or tolerated prostitution and typically characterise the relationship between prostitution and sex trafficking as one of cause and effect, arguing that legalised prostitution creates the conditions for sex trafficking to flourish. As Janice Raymond, leading abolitionist activist and founder of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), has declared, 'when prostitution is accepted by society, sex trafficking and sex tourism inevitably follow'.[44]

There is another important type of relationship being made between trafficking and prostitution: if there is no possibility of consent to prostitution and thus all prostitution is a form of slavery, then all migration for the purpose of commercial sex is trafficking. It is due to such reasoning and through of a chain of equivalences that trafficking is so often referred to "modern day slavery". This conflation between trafficking and prostitution has been fought for by the abolitionist feminist block in the negotiations of the Palermo Protocol,[45] and, as already said, its final text allows for such an interpretation. The Protocol, furthermore, with its criminal approach to trafficking and its "emphasis on prosecution of both traffickers and (migrant) victims instead of human rights and service provision"[46] has had a deleterious

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[43] JACKSON, Crystal A., REED, Jennifer J., and BRENTS, Barbara G., "Strange Confluences: Radical Feminism and Evangelical Christianity as Drivers of US Neo-abolitionism", p. 70.

[44] O'BRIEN, Erin, HAYES, Sharon, and CARPENTER, Belinda, *The Politics of Sex Trafficking: A Moral Geography*, p. 1.

[45] DITMORE, Melissa, "Trafficking in Lives: How Ideology Shapes Policy", p. 115.

[46] WAGENAAR, Hendrik, AMESBERGER, Helga, and ALTINK, Sietske, *Designing Prostitution Policy: Intention and Reality in Regulating the Sex Trade*, pp. 9-10.

effect on national policy on prostitution, legitimizing repressive measures which further undermine the rights of women engaged in prostitution. As Chuang observes, "anti-trafficking law and policy became the vehicle by which these [abolitionist] activists continue to battle for influence over prostitution policy worldwide."[47]

If, however, as many have noted, it became virtually impossible to discuss prostitution without trafficking being raised as a linked issue,[48] it is necessary to emphasize that the success of the trafficking frame to prostitution is intimately connected with other types of factors. In addition to the political and rhetorical factors already discussed in relation to prostitution, a most decisive issue in the triumph of the trafficking frame is the rising worry over illegal migration.

This, in fact, seems to be a crucial reason behind the approval of anti-trafficking laws that privilege criminalization over victims' protection measures at both national and international level. Jo Doezema relates how this became very clear at the negotiations of the Palermo Protocol, where, for instance, "[a] conversation with a delegate from a European country provide[d] a good example of how the fear of illegal migration and the reluctance to promote strong rights protections were linked."[49] The result of the linkage between the approval of anti-trafficking laws and the underlying worries with migration could not be otherwise: on one side, national anti-trafficking measures are used to discriminate against migrants and to force them to leave the country, on the other, the alleged purpose of stopping trafficking is used as a justification for repressive immigration measures. "[L]imiting the number of visas issued to women from 'origin' countries, increased policing borders, and high penalties for illegal migrants and those who facilitate their entry or stay" are just some examples.[50]

Lastly, the 9/11 attack. As Doezema puts it, "[t[he abolitionist feminist campaign against trafficking was given a boost by the 'war on terror'."[51] To use Soderlund's words, the anti-

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[47] CHUANG, Janie A., "Rescuing Trafficking from Ideological Capture: Prostitution Reform and Anti-Trafficking Law and Policy", p. 1664.
[48] O'BRIEN, Erin, HAYES, Sharon, and CARPENTER, Belinda, *The Politics of Sex Trafficking: A Moral Geography*, pp. 8-9.
[49] DOEZEMA, Jo, *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters: The Construction of Trafficking*, p. 123.
[50] *Idem,* p. 122.
[51] *Idem*, p. 130.

trafficking campaign "– with its emphasis on the unsanctioned movement of people – […] mesh[ed very well] with pervasive fears of terrorism".[52] As a result, not only have anti-trafficking laws become an essential element of the war on terror, as the link to terrorism has served to portray trafficking as even more serious and terrifying, thus creating a sense of urgency for action. Consequently, state intervention appeared "as necessary and right", and the "curtailment of civil liberties in the name of protection" emerged as justified and legitimized to public eye.[53] This, of course, not to mention, how, in the opposite direction, "the femininized war against trafficking function[ed] to give a human face to the war against terrorism while bolstering Bush's popularity".[54]

As we can see, then, abolitionist feminism's prominence is related to multiple factors that have nothing to do with how right or truthful such vision of prostitution is. In fact, the hegemony it has achieved in terms of public policy might, instead, be attributed to its connection with laws that serve a wide variety of interests – interests that have nothing to do with women's freedom and equality.

3.2. Discursive Reasons

Yet, while, as I hope I was able to show, political and rhetorical issues were absolutely crucial in abolitionist feminism's path towards prominence, there is, I believe, something else that explains its power of persuasion. Something which, in my view, has to do with the discourse itself. My suggestion is that there are two factors, apparently contradictory, that account for abolitionist feminist discourse's general persuasiveness. The first is the fact that it is a *feminist* discourse; the second, its close connection with conservative and patriarchal notions of sexuality and women.

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[52] SODERLUND, Gretchen, "Running from the Rescuers: New U.S. Crusades Against Sex Trafficking and the Rhetoric of Abolition", p. 75.
[53] DOEZEMA, Jo, *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters: The Construction of Trafficking*, p. 131.
[54] SODERLUND, Gretchen, "Running from the Rescuers: New U.S. Crusades Against Sex Trafficking and the Rhetoric of Abolition", p. 68.

Let me start with the former. As a discourse of protection of (women's) rights, abolitionist feminism legitimizes the involvement of the state, as a discourse of sexual violence, it legitimizes the criminalization approach, and as a discourse of danger towards all women, it legitimizes state intervention through criminalization despite its harming effects on a "small" group of women. This, thus, is the first reason why, in my understanding, being a feminist discourse makes abolitionist feminism persuasive – or maybe just simply useful: it confers legitimacy to policies that would otherwise appear as simply harmful to individual rights and so unjustified. And since it legitimizes them, abolitionist feminism comes to be widely diffused by those interested in those policies.

The second reason why I believe that being a feminist discourse contributes to abolitionist feminism's preponderance is related with the growing awareness of sexual violence against women. Since the 1970s, second wave and, more specifically, radical feminists have been very successful in unveiling the sexual violence pervading women's lives. From the consciousness raising groups of the 1970s to the legal fights over sexual harassment and rape still active today, together with an enormous bulk of literature on the topic, these feminists were able to bring sexual violence against women to the forefront of public discussion, effectively framing it as an issue of power relations between men and women. In fact, as Alice M. Miller says, sexual violence has been very effective in providing "a means to make the gender-specific content of this violence visible".[55] Awareness of the interrelations between sexuality and gender asymmetry which translate into women's objectification and sexual subordination set the perfect stage for the understanding of prostitution as a continuation or even, as so often claimed, the best expression of that scenario. As I see it, then, the abolitionist feminist discourse with its framing of prostitution as a form of violence against women strongly resonates with the awareness and focus on violence against women.

A third reason why I believe that being a feminist discourse makes abolitionist feminism persuasive is related with the polarization of the debate on prostitution both in specialized literature, politics, and what I would call, for lack of better expression, common sense. The treatment and approach to prostitution is generally one of these two: either the starting point

[55] MILLER, Alice M., "Sexuality, Violence against Women, and Human Rights: Women Make Demands and Ladies Get Protection", p. 18.

is the acknowledgement of gender as a fundamental issue in prostitution, with the following step being the defense of the abolition of prostitution, or the fundamental matter is rather seen as being prostitutes' rights, with gender completely disappearing from discussion. As I see it, this leads to what in my view is a deeply entrenched (and incorrect) idea that being a feminist is to side with that first position, the only (wrongly) perceived as addressing and confronting the gender issue.

Let me now address the second discursive factor I suggest it explains abolitionist feminism's power of persuasion and, in particular, its adaptability to very different actors and contexts: its connection with conservative and patriarchal notions of sexuality and gender.

Abolitionist feminism's "underlying commitment to 'traditional' ideals of gender and sexuality"[56] has been widely noted. Assumptions of attributes attached to stereotypical representations of men and women, which are reenacted in universalist and essentialist constructions of men women[57] have been claimed to permeate the idea of commercial sex as inherently damaging.[58] Such idea is argued by Erin O'Brien and her colleagues to derive from "hetero-normative ways of thinking about masculinity, femininity and sex, and the moral harms associated with sex outside of the traditional boundaries of love, marriage and commitment".[59] Laura Agustí speaks of "a presumption as to what sex is supposed to be: the expression of love for a particular partner."[60] That, of course, is a gendered idea as the connection between sex, love, and commitment has historically been associated with women. Men, on the contrary, have been benefited by a patriarchal double standard, which attributes

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[56] BERNSTEIN, Elizabeth, "Militarized Humanitarianism Meets Carceral Feminism: The Politics of Sex, Rights, and Freedom in Contemporary Antitrafficking Campaigns", p. 47.
[57] BERMAN, Jacqueline, "The Left, the Right, and the Prostitute: The Making of U.S. Antitrafficking in Persons Policy", pp. 272, 287.
[58] O'BRIEN, Erin, HAYES, Sharon, and CARPENTER, Belinda, *The Politics of Sex Trafficking: A Moral Geography*, p. 28.
[59] *Idem*, p. 3.
[60] AGUSTÍN, Laura María, *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry*, p. 58.

them a "transitory, non-monogamous and indifferent" sexuality,[61] not attached therefore to the private sphere as in the case of women.[62]

In addition, dichotomous ideas "of activity and passivity, seducer and seduced, experience and innocence"[63] are argued to pervade abolitionist feminism's claim concerning the impossibility of women's consent to prostitution. Indeed, the representation of women engaged in prostitution as "innocent victims" has been amply noted, particularly in the context of discourses and stories of "trafficking in women". Doezema argues that "policies to eradicate 'trafficking' continue to be based on the notion of the 'innocent,' unwilling victim".[64] As she further elaborates, images of young, pure, virginal, and child-like women are mobilized into wider narratives of coercion, in which, as Jacqueline Berman puts it, "innocent girls are tricked, kidnapped, beaten, and forced into a life of sexual slavery."[65] From them, the old idea of female fragility emerges, reenacting notions of women's need for protection and saving along with images of feminine dependency and lack of agency.[66]

This depiction of the woman engaged in prostitution as an innocent victim with "a blameless sexual past, [… and who, thus,] could not have 'chosen' to be a prostitute",[67] institutes a radical division between good, coerced women and guilty whores, which is particularly visible in the context of the laws on trafficking in women. As Doezema puts it,

> A "guilty" prostitute is not considered a possible "victim of trafficking" […]. Thus, women who knowingly migrate to work in the sex industry and who may encounter exploitation and abuse, are not considered to have a legitimate claim to the same sorts of human rights protections demanded for "trafficking victims". This is a reflection of

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[61] O'BRIEN, Erin, HAYES, Sharon, and CARPENTER, Belinda, *The Politics of Sex Trafficking: A Moral Geography*, p. 13.
[62] *Ibidem*.
[63] *Idem*, pp. 2-3.
[64] DOEZEMA, Jo, "Loose Women or Lost Women? The Re-emergence of the Myth of White Slavery in Contemporary Discourses of Trafficking in Women", p. 24.
[65] BERMAN, Jacqueline, "The Left, the Right, and the Prostitute: The Making of U.S. Antitrafficking in Persons Policy", p. 288.
[66] DOEZEMA, Jo, "Loose Women or Lost Women? The Re-emergence of the Myth of White Slavery in Contemporary Discourses of Trafficking in Women", pp. 23, 47.
[67] *Idem*, p. 36.

> the earlier regulationist reasoning: “innocent girls” need protecting, “bad women” who chose prostitution deserve all they get.[68]

As a result, rather than contributing to a change in the pervasive stigma suffered by women who sell sex, the idea of the innocent, coerced victim both preserves and bolsters it. In her classical treatment of the “stigma whore”, Gail Pheterson notes how such stigma works precisely by dividing women into good and bad, innocent and corrupted, honorable and dishonorable,[69] and then ascribe the prostitute “a fixed identity”:[70] rather than something a woman *does*, prostitution is understood as something she *is*. This, of course, is completely intertwined with normative and patriarchal ideas about gender and sexuality, which although particularly and “explicitly target[ing] prostitute women, implicitly control […] *all* women.”[71]

Penelope Saunders argues that those ideas are “the ideological element that connects conservative and abolitionist feminist agendas.”[72] Saunders certainly has a point, as the alliance between abolitionist feminists and conservative actors is far from new or exclusive to the modern anti-trafficking movement. In fact, this coalition can be traced back to the nineteenth century Britain and United States, when first wave abolitionist feminists joined hands with “social purity” reformers interested in cleaning society from vice,[73] continued all the way through the “white slavery movement” that culminated in the approval of the 1949 United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others,[74] and was revived once again in the fight over the

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[68] *Idem*, p. 37.
[69] PHETERSON, Gail, *The Prostitution Prism*, p. 11.
[70] *Idem*, p. 10.
[71] *Idem*, p. 12.
[72] SAUNDERS, Penelope, “Traffic Violations: Determining the Meaning of Violence in Sexual Trafficking Versus Sex Work”, p. 355.
[73] DOEZEMA, Jo, “Loose Women or Lost Women? The Re-emergence of the Myth of White Slavery in Contemporary Discourses of Trafficking in Women”, p. 27. See also WALKOWITZ, Judith R., “The Politics of Prostitution”; and WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, Chapters 5 and 6.
[74] DOEZEMA, Jo, *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters: The Construction of Trafficking*, pp. 17-18, 60; WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, p. 96. On the White Slavery Movement see DOEZEMA, Jo, “Loose Women or Lost Women? The Re-emergence of the Myth of White Slavery in Contemporary Discourses of Trafficking in Women”; DOEZEMA, Jo, *Sex*

approval of antipornography laws in the 1980s in the United States.[75] Such enduring alliance makes one indeed wonder if there is not something other than a commitment to "carceral politics"[76] that unites such disparate groups, something more deeply engrained such as the view on sexuality and gender.

Yet, understanding why those visions would be persuasive even to a feminist public requires an appreciation of how the human brain works, of how we get to be convinced of something. In the next section I will engage with this matter, bringing in what I believe to be some important on it.

3.3. Persuasion

David Kahneman won a Nobel prize for showing that our brain has both a reflexive and unconscious and a reflective and conscious system, which he calls System 1 and System 2, and that most of our judgements and decisions are taken using the first system. This is how he characterizes both systems:

> The operations of the system 1 are typically fast, automatic, effortless, associative, implicit (not available to introspection) and often emotionally charged; they are also governed by habit and are therefore difficult to control or modify. The operations of system 2 are slower, serial, effortful, more likely to be consciously monitored and deliberately controlled; they are also relatively flexible and potentially rule governed.[77]

When we think of how we reason, judge, and take decisions, we imagine it in terms of System 2: "the conscious, reasoning self that has beliefs, makes choices, and decides what to think

Slaves and Discourse Masters: The Construction of Trafficking, Chapters 2 and 3; and WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, Chapter 3.

[75] WEITZER, Ronald, "The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade", p. 53.

[76] The term has been coined by Elizabeth Bernstein to refer to abolitionist feminists and religious actors' "shared commitment to neoliberal (i.e., market-based and punitive as opposed to redistributive) solutions to contemporary social problems". (BERNSTEIN, Elizabeth, "Militarized Humanitarianism Meets Carceral Feminism: The Politics of Sex, Rights, and Freedom in Contemporary Antitrafficking Campaigns", p. 47.)

[77] KAHNEMAN, Daniel, "A Perspective on Judgement and Choice: Mapping Bounded Rationality", p. 698.

about and what to do."[78] This, however, could not be further from the truth. And the reason is that the main sources of the explicit beliefs and deliberate choices of System 2 are the impressions and feelings originating in System 1.[79] Here is how it works:

> System 1 continuously generates suggestions for system 2: impressions, intuitions, intentions, and feelings. If endorsed by system 2, impressions and intuitions turn into beliefs, and impulses turn into voluntary actions. When all goes smoothly, which is most of the time, system 2 adopts the suggestions of system 1 with little or no modification. You generally believe your impressions and act on your desires […].[80]

To this it must be added another important characteristic of System 1: it operates through biases. In what concerns persuasion, an extremely relevant bias is what Kahneman calls the *illusion of validity*. It refers to the overconfidence we have in our beliefs, judgements, and predictions. And it is an overconfidence because it remains even in the absence of evidence and in the presence of quantitative and qualitative evidence to the contrary.[81] A second relevant cognitive error is the *confirmation bias*, which concerns the tendency to seek, interpret, and remember information that is compatible with the beliefs one currently holds, giving far less consideration to possible alternatives.[82] Finally, the *illusion of truth*, which is related with familiarity: if something seems familiar, we assume it is probably true. Familiarity, then, is often confused with truth. That is why an important instrument to make people believe something is frequent repetition. And it is not even necessary that the entire statements of a fact or idea is repeated: "[t]he familiarity of one phrase in the statement suffice[s] to make the whole statement feel familiar, and therefore true."[83]

What this means is basically that we are much more easily convinced by widely shared ideas, ideas that are firmly rooted in our culture, and ideas we are already convinced of are difficult to be contradicted. They have a special hold on us, which make it very hard for conflicting ideas to be persuasive.

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[78] KAHNEMAN, Daniel, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, p. 21.
[79] *Ibidem*.
[80] *Idem*, p. 24.
[81] *Idem*, pp. 209-11.
[82] *Idem*, p. 81.
[83] *Idem*, p. 62.

Let me now apply all this to abolitionist feminism and the suggestion that its persuasiveness can be accounted, to an important extent, by its uphold of traditional and patriarchal notions of gender and sexuality.

Several authors have noted important transformations in the meaning contemporary societies attach to sexuality. Manuel Castells, for instance, has "spoken of the new economy's 'normalization' of sex; Steven Seidman has described the emergence of 'unbound eros,' Anthony Giddens has evoked 'plastic sexuality,' and Zygmunt Baumanhas referred to a 'postmodern erotic revolution'".[84] Drawing on all of them, Elizabeth Bernstein has suggested that

> the traditional 'procreative' and the modern 'companionate' models of sexuality are increasingly being supplemented by what sociologist Edward Laumann and his colleagues have referred to as a "recreational" sexual ethic. Instead of being premised on marital or even durable relationships, the recreational sexual ethic derives its primary meaning from the depth of physical sensation and from emotionally bounded erotic exchange.[85]

Yet, as O'Brien and her colleagues remarked, [i]n spite of increased tolerance and acceptance in recent years of a recreational sexual ethic that allows for sex outside marriage", this tolerance remains largely […seen as] 'premarital' [and conditional to] potential for future compliance with" companionate sexuality.[86] As they observe, recreational sex is, in today's (western) societies, a kind of "practice for traditional heterosexuality, providing a sandpit for exploring what it means to engage in sexual and love relationships, hopefully leading towards a future of marriage and family."[87]

This means that despite the emergence of a recreational type of sexuality, the companionate model is still very much prevalent, with love, intimacy, and enduring monogamic relationships largely shaping contemporary views on sex. So, here is my point in relation to

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[84] BERNSTEIN, Elizabeth, *Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity, and the Commerce of Sex*, p. 6.
[85] *Ibidem*.
[86] O'BRIEN, Erin, HAYES, Sharon, and CARPENTER, Belinda, *The Politics of Sex Trafficking: A Moral Geography*, p. 12.
[87] *Ibidem*.

abolitionist feminism: its persuasiveness is largely owed to its coherence with notions which are still very much predominant in our societies.

Now, the companionate model is not *in itself* patriarchal. As it is not, *by itself*, either good or bad, despite, of course, having both advantages and disadvantages. It becomes so when, as I believe is still the case, it is applied and understood differently in relation to men and women, to the disadvantage of the latter. And in fact, it is particularly in relation to women that sex is still generally thought of as being attached to feelings, intimacy, and enduring monogamic relationships. As if female sexuality was naturally and necessarily attached to all that, without possibility of desire, pleasure, and fulfillment for women outside that model. In addition, it is women, much more than men, who are subject to negative consequences in case of inconformity with that model. Men are not generally perceived as negatively as women when exercising their sexuality according to the recreational model. In fact, in relation to men this is commonly seen as natural, and that is why they, contrary to women, are not faced with the stigma, prejudice, and everything else that comes with it. Where I am trying to get, then, is that the companionate model is both descriptively and normatively imposed upon women, and that is what is patriarchal about it.

In addition to its gendered or femininized character, the companionate model is often attended by stereotypical notions of femininity and masculinity. Notions which are derogative of women, and which are also still pretty common in our societies. Once again, Kahneman has an explanation for this. It has to do with the associative characteristic of System 1. It is through association that we perceive and remember information. Ideas are not, then, perceived or recalled individually. Every idea is linked not to one, but many others. They are nodes in a vast network.[88] Information is costly to store and retrieve. "The more orderly, less random, patterned, and narrativized a series of words or symbols, the easier it is to store that series in one's mind or" retrieve it.[89] "By finding the pattern, the logic of the series, you no longer need to memorize it all. You just store the pattern [… and] a pattern is obviously more compact than raw information."[90] Association, however, is not only key to

[88] KAHNEMAN, Daniel, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, p. 52.
[89] TALEB, Nassim Nicholas, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*, p. 68.
[90] *Idem*, p. 69.

how we store information. As already said, it is also intrinsically linked with how we retrieve it. Ideas are also activated in an associative manner: when an idea is evoked it triggers many other ideas, and the essential feature of this associative activation is coherence.[91]

This way of storing and retrieving information has important consequences for both how meaning is constituted and how persuasion comes about. Processes which the notions of *discourse* and *interdiscursivity* attempt to address and capture. As we shall see, these are crucial notions in this work. First, because I define abolitionist feminism, this work's object of analysis, as a *discourse*. And second, because what I am suggesting is that abolitionist feminism's power of persuasion, its adaptability to different contexts and actors, can, to an important measure, be accounted by the continuities it establishes with a discourse – the patriarchal discourse on prostitution – which it supposedly opposes. In this sense, *interdiscursivity*, the relation between different discourses, is a key concept in this work, one that will dictate my approach to abolitionist feminism.

4. Discourse

Having established both my research question and my suspicion for why abolitionist feminism is so convincing, it is now time for definitions. Following Ian Parker, I define discourse as a *coherent system of meanings about a specific subject*.[92] Starting from the idea that alternative versions of events are possible, I understand discourse as a representation, a view, a way of looking at reality. In Vivien Burr's words, a discourse "refers to a particular picture that is painted of an event, person or class of persons, a particular way of representing it in a certain light".[93]

Understanding discourse in this way is to *distinguish it from texts*. Once again, I follow Parker in defining texts as "delimited tissues of meaning reproduced in *any* form that can be given an interpretative gloss."[94] On this view, "[s]peech, writing, non-verbal behaviour, Braille,

[91] KAHNEMAN, Daniel, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, p. 51.
[92] PARKER, Ian, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, p. 10.
[93] BURR, Vivien, *Social Constructionism*, p. 75.
[94] PARKER, Ian, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, p. 6.

Morse code, semaphore, runes, advertisements, fashion systems, stained glass, architecture, tarot cards and bus tickets are all forms of text."[95] "[A]nything that can be 'read' for meaning"[96] is a text. Texts, thus, are that in which discourses are both expressed and realized.

Discourses construct the subject matter of which they speak. Michel Foucault has famously defined discourses as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak".[97] Jacques Derrida has elaborated on this idea by saying that "objects and events come into existence for us *as meaningful entities* through their representation in discourse."[98] And Stuart Hall has made the point that discourse "governs the way that a topic can be meaningful talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others."[99] The three are ultimately referring to the notion of discourse as a grid of intelligibility: "[d]iscourses both facilitate and limit, enable and constrain what can be said (by whom, where, when)",[100] thought, and "experienced at any particular socio-historical moment."[101]

This, of course, is rooted in the idea "that the categories with which we as human beings apprehend the world do not necessarily refer to real divisions.[102] As such, rather than natural or intrinsic to things, meaning or, to put it differently, "the ways in which we commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts we use, are *historically and culturally specific*."[103] As Burr puts it,

> [t]his means that all ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative. Not only are they specific to particular cultures and periods of history, they are products of that culture and history, dependent upon the particular social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time. The particular forms of knowledge that abound in any culture are therefore artefacts of it, and we should not assume that

[95] *Idem*, p. 7.
[96] BURR, Vivien, *Social Constructionism*, p. 78.
[97] FOUCAULT, Michel, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 54.
[98] My emphasis. DERRIDA, Jacques, *On Grammatology,* p. 158.
[99] HALL, Stuart, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge and Discourse", p. 72.
[100] PARKER, Ian, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, p. xiii.
[101] MACLEOD, Catriona, "Deconstructive Discourse Analysis: Extending the Methodological Conversation", p. 18.
[102] BURR, Vivien, *Social Constructionism*, p. 3.
[103] *Idem*, p. 4.

> *our* ways of understanding are necessarily any better, in terms of being any nearer the truth, than other ways.[104]

The idea of truth takes us to the one of *power*. Discourse is closely bound up with power. All discourses entail a claim to truth. Yet, not all of them are equally seen as true in a particular time and place. Some are generally perceived as more truthful than others. In fact, some are given such credence in a society that they become perceived as common sense, and the view that they purport comes to be seen not as one among many other possible views, but rather as natural, self-evident, and beyond dispute.[105] Those discourses are generally referred to as hegemonic, dominant, or prevailing discourses. So, this is the first way in which discourse and power are connected: some discourses are more powerful than others in the sense that they hold different truth status in a particular time and place.

Now, each discourse is attached to particular social practices, to a form of acting rather than another. Discourses imply both normative ideas about how people should behave and particular material, social and institutional arrangements. Vivien Burr gives a good example:

> […] prevailing discourses of the family involve representations and talk which construct parents as ideally loving and protective towards their children and responsible for their welfare. These representations go hand-in-hand with practices such as taking care of their daily needs for food, clothing and shelter and accompanying them on their journeys to school. These discourses are also tied to particular patterns of material circumstances and arrangements, for example houses built to accommodate four or more people, 'family size' packs of food, laws holding parents responsible for their children's well-being and school attendance, and the provision of family welfare benefits.[106]

This is the second way in which discourse and power are associated: discourse brings about power relations. Finally, the reason why some discourses and not others are accepted and

[104] *Ibidem*.
[105] SCOTT, Joan W., "Deconstructing Equality-versus-Difference: Or, the Uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism", pp. 35-6.
[106] BURR, Vivien, *Social Constructionism*, p. 191.

function as true is the “systems of power which produce and sustain” them.[107] For instance, it can be said that the prominence of racist discourses is directly linked with a system of economic and social inequality that allows their proliferation. Discourses, hence, both originate in and reproduce power relations.[108] They bear the marks of the existing social structures and relationships and simultaneously help to constitute them and maintain them.

Another fundamental characteristic of discourses is that they involve *emotions*. I follow Sarah Ahmed in claiming that not only do emotions involve appraisals, judgements, and, as Jean-Paul Sartre put it, a “specific manner of apprehending the world”,[109] as specific manners of apprehending the world – discourses in the terminology I am here adopting – are inextricably linked with emotions, as well as bodily sensations.[110] As worldviews, discourses are a whole constituted of ideas, emotions, and bodily sensations that are in constant interaction with each other. On this view, thus, emotions play an important role in the process of meaning-making. And so, if discourses construct the subject matter of which they speak, such construction cannot be separated from the emotions such subject arises when read according to its representation in a certain discourse. Emotions which, as Ahmed puts it, both confirm and make that discourse circulate.[111]

This view about the relationship between discourses and emotions relies on a number of assumptions I would like to make sure are clear. The first concerns the rejection of dichotomous theories that conceive emotions either as primarily connected with sensation or instead as tied exclusively to cognition. As Ahmed, I too see emotions as involving “sensations or bodily feeling as well as forms of cognition.”[112] The second assumption is emotions’ social character. As opposed to the view that emotions are expressions of interior and subjective states, I side with those who conceive them as social and cultural practices.[113] What I mean by it is that emotions both shape and are shaped by discourses and are further a

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[107] FOUCAULT, Michel, “Truth and Power”, p. 133.
[108] PARKER, Ian, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, p. 18.
[109] SARTRE, Jean-Paul, *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*, p. 9, as cited in AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 5.
[110] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 6.
[111] *Idem*, p. 8.
[112] *Idem*, p. 5.
[113] *Idem*, 9.

fundamental element of a discourse's persuasiveness. From this follows the third assumption I would like to address: emotions' connection with power. Emotions are irremediably connected with how power works both socially and in every single one of us. How we become invested in social norms,[114] how we "align ourselves with some others and against other others",[115] how we treat and are treated: none of this can be accounted for without proper consideration of the workings of emotions. To use Clare Hemmings' words, emotions are a "central mechanism of social reproduction in the most glaring ways."[116]

Having started the present definition of discourse with the idea of coherence, I would now like to finish by coming back to it. Julian Henriques and his colleagues say that "[t]he systematic character of a discourse includes its systematic articulation with other discourses."[117] This is a crucial point, which relies upon the idea that *every discourse relates to other discourses*.

As Parker notes, "[d]iscourses [always] embed, entail and presuppose other discourses".[118] This is related with the historicity of discourse. Discourses do not arise in a discursive vacuum. There are always alternative ways of understanding the same object or event. Additionally, the specific understanding of a subject matter always draws on discourses about other related matters. As Mikhail Bahktin claimed, then, "[e]ach utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies on the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account."[119] Kristeva followed by saying that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another."[120] And Foucault drew on it to affirm that "there can be no statement that in one way or another does not

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[114] *Idem*, p. 205.
[115] *Idem*, p. 28.
[116] HEMMINGS, Clare, "Invoking Affect: Cultural Theory and the Ontological Turn", p. 551.
[117] HENRIQUES, Julian, HOLLWAY, Wendy, URWIN, Cathy, VENN, Couze, and WALKERDINE, Valerie, *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity,* pp. 105-6, as cited in PARKER, Ian, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, p. 13.
[118] PARKER, Ian, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, p. 13.
[119] BAKHTIN, Mikhail, "The Problem of Speech Genres", p. 91.
[120] KRISTEVA, Julia, "Word, Dialogue and Novel", p. 37.

reactualize others."[121] As already said, I will refer to the connection between discourses as *interdiscursivity*.

Now, relations between discourses can be of different types. Foucault, for instance, speaks of relations of analogy, opposition, complementarity, and also of relations of multiple delimitation.[122] And the type of relation of a discourse to another is an important element of its overall coherence. This is a crucial point in my analysis of abolitionist feminism. As previously elaborated on, my suspicion is that abolitionist feminism stands in relation to the patriarchal discourse on prostitution not in a relation of opposition but rather in a relation of continuity on important matters. If proven to be right, this would constitute an important blow to abolitionist feminism's coherence. And that is precisely my intention in this work. One that, as we will see in the next section, dictates the methodology adopted.

5. Methodology

The methodology this work will undertake is what I, following Catriona Macleod, call *deconstructive discourse analysis*.[123] And what I mean by *deconstruction* here is the offensive against the system of coherence of a discourse.

The term "deconstruction" was first introduced by Jacques Derrida. It is important to say that he never meant it as a methodology. Instead, he defined it, as a way of reading, as a particular type of look at a text.[124] I will apply this type of look to discourse: the abolitionist feminist discourse.

According to Derrida's theory of meaning, each word, each idea is related to its opposite in what he calls a relation of *différance*. This is a word invented by Derrida based on the junction of two different ones: to differ and to defer. And such junction is quite telling, as *différance* refers to the relation of difference and mutual dependence between concepts. It "simultaneously indicates that (1) the terms of an opposition are differentiated from each

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[121] FOUCAULT, Michel, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 111.
[122] *Idem*, p. 67.
[123] MACLEOD, Catriona, "Deconstructive Discourse Analysis: Extending the Methodological Conversation", p. 17.
[124] NORRIS, Christopher, *Derrida*, p. 18.

other (which is what determines it); (2) each term in the opposition defers the other (in the sense of making the other term wait for the first term), and (3) each term in the opposition defers *to* the other (in the sense of being fundamentally dependent upon the other)."[125] From the idea of *différance* derives the one of *trace*. If the relation between the terms of an opposition is one of difference and mutual dependency, each concept bears the trace of the other. Trace, then, refers to

> the effect of the opposite concept, which is no longer present but has left its mark on the concept we are now considering. The trace is what makes deconstruction possible; by identifying the traces of the concepts in each other, we identify their mutual dependence.[126]

I will apply the notions of *différance* and trace to discourse. In establishing this bridge, the idea of interdiscursivity is of essence. As previously detailed, every discourse refers to other discourses. Discourses are always interconnected, and in being so, they shape and are shaped by one another. I will use for discourse the grafting model Derrida used as a metaphor for thinking about the logic of intertextuality, the relation between texts.[127] Grafting is a technique of horticulture through which vascular tissues of different plants are joined together. My point is that, as plants, also discourses are inserted into others by means of a scission. They are "the product of various sorts of combinations and insertions".[128] As also mentioned before, the relations between discourses can be of different types: opposition, continuity, supplementarily, etc. And the type of relation a discourse established with another is a crucial element of its overall coherence.

Let us now apply all this to the abolitionist feminist discourse. Abolitionist feminism embodies a claim to be in strict opposition to the patriarchal discourse on prostitution, and such claim lies at the heart of its system of coherence. My purpose in this work is to demonstrate that is not the case. To substantiate my claim, I will look beyond abolitionist feminism's surface in search of the points at which both discourses overlap. So, here is this

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[125] BALKIN, Jack, M., "Deconstructive Practice and Legal Theory", p. 752.
[126] *Ibidem*.
[127] CULLER, Jonathan, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*, p. 134.
[128] *Idem*, p. 135.

work's aim: to identify the overlapping points between abolitionist feminism and the patriarchal discourse on prostitution. Doing so, will undermine abolitionist feminism's coherence, thus, *deconstructing* it. To use Gayatri Spivak's words in the *Translator's Preface* to Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, this work's purpose is to locate in abolitionist feminism "the moment […] that seems to transgress its own system of values [… and] which cannot be dismissed simply as a contradiction [...] a moment that genuinely threatens to collapse that system."[129]

Such deconstructive project will be undertaken by following the subsequent methodological steps: 1) identifying the discursive opposition, 2) contrasting the opposing discourses, setting them against each other by mapping the opposing picture of the world each presents,[130] and, finally, 3) identifying the points where both discourses overlap.[131] Such methodological steps dictate the structure of this work, which is divided into three Parts. The first methodological step is currently being dealt with: the opposition I identify is between the patriarchal and the abolitionist feminist discourses on prostitution. The second step will be the aim of Parts One and Two of this work. Part One will describe the abolitionist feminist discourse and Part Two will lay out the patriarchal discourse on prostitution. Finally, Part Three will deal with the third step by elaborating on both discourses' overlapping points. It will do this by "exploring the connotations, allusions and implications"[132] abolitionist feminism evokes. What I propose here is to go beyond the superficial and expressive meaning of abolitionist feminism into its deeper layers and hidden meanings.[133]

It is in this way that that I expect, as Catriona Mcleod put it, to turn "oppositions into supplements, highlighting the absent, undermining the stability of the [discourse] and allowing for alternative readings."[134] My ultimate goal is to show how abolitionist feminism, an allegedly emancipatory discourse, "connects with [an]other discourse[…] that sanction[s]

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[129] SPIVAK, Gayatri Chakravorty, "Translator's Preface", pp. xlix, Ixxv.

[130] I am here fusing the seventh and nineth methodological steps suggested by Ian Parker. (PARKER, Ian, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, pp. 12, 14.)

[131] This third methodological step corresponds to Ian Parker´s tenth. (PARKER, Ian, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, p. 14.)

[132] PARKER, Ian, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, p. 7.

[133] *Idem*, p. 15.

[134] MACLEOD, Catriona, "Deconstructive Discourse Analysis: Extending the Methodological Conversation", p. 22.

oppression",[135] making it a case of what Parker says about discourses in general: "discourses that challenge power are often tangled with oppressive discourses".[136]

There is also a second sense in which deconstruction resonates with the methodology adopted in this work. Starting from the idea of social construction of that which we, as Foucault put it, "tend to feel is without history",[137] deconstruction has been employed as a method to reveal the historicity of naturalized concepts – concepts which "we often treat as unproblematic and so use unthinkingly".[138] That is what some have called *deconstructionism*,[139] probably to distinguish it from deconstruction in the *Derridean* sense. The focus here is on the cultural and historical specificity of the discourse analyzed.[140]

This is related with the idea that social construction operates by means of *concealment*. When elaborating on the performativity of discourse, Judith Butler speaks of how the power of discourse to bring things into being relies on "a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, [...which] conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition."[141] The dissimulation of certain concepts as norms and conventions works to naturalize them. In addition, reiteration is itself concealed or, as she also puts it, "its historicity remains dissimulated."[142] In the same vein, Sara Ahmed, when developing her theory of how emotions come to "stick" to bodies, being experienced as if caused by them, talks of concealment: objects only seem to be in a certain way, having a certain value, and so causing in others certain emotions due to the erasure of the historicity of the discourses that allow them to be read in that way.[143] Since emotions and the idea that they are elicited by the objects themselves are what, in Ahmed's view, confirm and make those discourses circulate, concealment lies at the heart of the whole process of social construction of an object in a certain way.

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[135] PARKER, Ian, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, p. 20.
[136] *Idem*, p. 18.
[137] FOUCAULT, Michel, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", p. 139.
[138] BECKMANN, Andrea, *The Social Construction of Sexuality and Perversion: Deconstructing Sadomasochism*, p. 11.
[139] BURR, Vivien, *Social Constructionism*, p. 20.
[140] *Idem*, p. 21.
[141] BUTLER, Judith, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, p. 12.
[142] *Idem*, p. 12.
[143] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, p. 11.

As such, unveiling the historical character of a discourse allows for the denaturalization of its representation of the object, thus opening the door for its *deconstruction*. The present work applies deconstruction also in this sense. The aim here is, to use Joan Scott´s formulation, the "scrutiny of […the] explanatory categories […] taken for granted" [144] in abolitionist feminism, in order to expose the historical and cultural roots of some of its fundamental notions. This is what will take me from the last decades of the twentieth century, when the contemporary version of abolitionist feminism was initially theorized, to the Middle Ages, first, and then the nineteenth century, where I will be examining the Christian doctrine and the sexological medical discourse, in search of ideas about prostitution, femaleness, and sexuality. As we shall see, completely intermeshed with them are particular emotions, which play a crucial role in the construction of a specific representation of the prostitute whose traces can be found in abolitionist feminism. As Ahmed says,

> it is through attending to the multiplicity of the pasts that are never simply behind us, through the traces they leave in the encounters we have in the present, that we can open up the promise of the 'not yet'.[145]

6. Hypothesis

When looking for the continuities between abolitionist feminism and the patriarchal discourse on prostitution, I found more than common notions of gender and sexuality. Directly emerging from them, I was faced with the representation and positioning of the prostitute as abject-Other. That is the precise point where I suggest both discourses overlap.

As Stuart Hall accurately observes, "[r]epresentation is a complex business and, especially when dealing with 'difference', it engages feelings, attitudes and emotions and it mobilizes fears and anxieties in the viewer, at deeper levels than we can explain in a simple, common-

[144] SCOTT, Joan W., "The Evidence of Experience", p. 780.
[145] AHMED, Sara, "This Other and Other Others", p. 559.

sense way."[146] That is precisely what, in my view, the notion of abject-Other accurately captures.

I was driven to this hypothesis by several initial impressions I would like to make explicit in order to clarify my position, the place where I am coming from in approaching abolitionist feminism the way I do in this work and proposing this hypothesis. I use *impression* here in the sense that Sara Ahmed does: as a blend of perception, cognition, emotion, and bodily sensation which affects us and moves us by leaving its mark and trace upon us. As that, thus, which has impressed me, impressed upon me, and left me with an impression.[147] The reason why I was moved by the topic and the reason that made me move in relation to it the way I did rather than other.

The very first is the silencing of the prostitute in abolitionist feminism. While this formulation has been widely directed against abolitionist feminism, I believe it is important to understand it carefully and properly. It is not that abolitionist feminists have completely dispensed with prostitutes' voices. In fact, as referred to above, the use of stories about the horrific events of violence and harm told in the first person by women who have previously been engaged in prostitution – survivors in abolitionist feminist terminology – is a technique extensively employed by abolitionist feminists to both confirm the idea of prostitution as sexual slavery, rape, and violence against women and to draw public attention to the issue. As such, the idea of silencing refers, instead, to the speaking subject of abolitionist feminism. A subject who is not women engaged in prostitution but rather women engaged in theoretically conceptualizing women's oppression and respective forms of emancipation, most commonly in the context of academic institutions, and politically committed to institutionalize their account of prostitution by means of criminalizing laws.

Yet, the idea of a speaking subject that does not include women engaged in prostitution is not only about the concrete women who conceptualized the abolitionist feminist view of prostitution. It is also about the fact that this is a view directly contested by many women currently engaged in prostitution and by the sex workers' movement more generally. It is

[146] HALL, Stuart, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'", p. 226.
[147] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 6.

about, then, "the author den[ying] the subject the opportunity for self-representation",[148] the erasure of the prostitute and her direct experience from a discourse about prostitution and prostitutes. As Joanna Liddle and Shirin Rai argue, this is what ultimately allows for the "reductive unitary image [of prostitution] created by the author"[149] and the specific construction of the prostitute that emerges out of abolitionist feminism.

Particularly impressive to me – impressive in the three senses mentioned above – is the abolitionist feminist argument I understand as "we know better than you about your own situation" or just simply "you do not know what you are talking about". While this idea does generally leave me with a "sensation" that "something is [very] wrong",[150] to use Ahmed`s formulation, such sensation acquired a particular "intensity" for me in this case. First, for being applied to women, whose views have traditionally been dismissed as naïve and as lacking in depth understanding of reality, and second, for coming from feminists. After all, feminism, and particularly second-wave feminism in the context of which contemporary abolitionist feminism was initially formulated, has heavily relied on women's accounts of their own experience to build the knowledge about our oppression and envision strategies for our emancipation. And so, it just felt completely contradictory.

A second fundamental impression which has moved me into the hypothesis I am here setting forth is related to the notion of opposition between feminism and prostitutes' rights. While it is generally true that prostitution policy, even when defended and adopted with the aim of protecting prostitutes' rights rather than abolishing prostitution, tends instead to be used against prostitutes,[151] abolitionist feminism's relation with the violation of prostitutes' rights does not seem to be one of unintended effects. First, because, despite the serious harming effects on prostitutes – which have been widely documented –, abolitionist feminists continue to defend neo-abolitionist policies,[152] and second, due to the straightforward opposition to prostitutes' fight for rights. Such opposition has become particularly clear to me after an

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[148] LIDDLE, Joanna, and RAI, Shirin, "Feminism, Imperialism, and Orientalism: The Challenge of the 'Indian Woman'", p. 512.
[149] *Ibidem*.
[150] AHMED, Sara, *Living a Feminist Life*, p. 22.
[151] DOEZEMA, Jo, *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters: The Construction of Trafficking*, p. 23
[152] *Ibidem*.

episode I followed closely in Spain in 2018. It concerns the creation of a prostitutes' trade union (Organización de Trabajadoras Sexuales – OTRAS).

After the initial authorization of the trade union's constitution by the Spanish Ministry of Work, Migrations and Social Security, a first instance court decision has made it null in the course of a law action initiated by two feminist organizations which opposed the trade union's creation. The court's decision was generally celebrated as a victory by abolitionist feminists. Particularly striking to me was the declaration of the Minister of Labor, Magdalena Valeria, after finding out about the resolution which initially approved the constitution of the trade union: "Me han colado un gol por la escuadra." The best translation I can think of is "I have been scored a goal from the corner." "The dissatisfaction I felt when I found out", the Minister continued, "was one of the biggest in all my professional and political life and I have been here for quite a while."[153] The reason given for such outrage is this: "I am part of a *feminist* government".[154]

This idea of opposition between feminism and the rights of prostitutes – who abolitionist feminists rightly observe to be predominantly women –,[155] this logic of enmity and opponency come up as totally contradictory to me. It also puzzles me to see that the same feminists who defend the abolition of prostitution based on the idea that prostitution is a form of exploitation go through great efforts to impede the creation of a union which is the general accepted means to reduce exploitation. As it equally amazes me that organizations working against violence against women would propose a law action directed at stopping the creation

[153] VALERIO, Magdalena, "La ministra de Trabajo, desolada, se la han 'colado' con el sindicato de prostitutas". Available at https://www.elplural.com/politica/sindicato-prostitutas-ministra-trabajo-desolada_202223102.
"el disgusto que me pillé ayer cuando me enteré es uno de los más gordos que me he pillado a lo largo de mi vida profesional y política y llevo ya un cierto rodaje". (VALERIO, Magdalena, "La ministra de Trabajo, desolada, se la han 'colado' con el sindicato de prostitutas". Available at https://www.elplural.com/politica/sindicato-prostitutas-ministra-trabajo-desolada_202223102.)
[154] My emphasis. VALERIO, Magdalena, "La ministra de Trabajo, desolada, se la han "colado" con el sindicato de prostitutas". Available at https://www.elplural.com/politica/sindicato-prostitutas-ministra-trabajo-desolada_202223102.
[155] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 563.

of a trade union but remain passive in the face of the judicial system's resistance to address the physical and sexual violence suffered by prostitutes every single day.[156]

To this it must be added the "viscerality" with which discussions and encounters with abolitionist feminists are so frequently marked by. My impression, in fact, is that there is something visceral about abolitionist feminism itself. And this has been a third fundamental element in directing me towards the notion of abject-Other. When considered together with the indifference about the effects of this discourse on the lives of women engaged in prostitution as well as with the passivity in relation to particular aspects of the overall injustices these women are faced with on a daily basis, that "viscerality" seems to unveil a very particular "economy of touch".[157] As Ahmed points out, "we are touched differently by different others".[158] As we are also touched differently by different aspects of others, I would add. And the way we are touched, by whom and what, the direction at which being touched (or not) moves us (or not) are both cause and effect of the attachments we hold to others.[159] It both speaks of existing boundaries between us and them and plays a crucial role in their construction.

As I hope I will be able to demonstrate in the development of this work, the notion of abject-Other makes these three aspects of abolitionist feminism intelligible. It organizes into a coherent whole what I initially sensed as contradictory.[160] It shows how a discourse claimed to be premised upon the idea of commonality and sisterhood between women engaged and women not engaged in prostitution, is in fact rooted in a division, a boundary, a wall between *us* – feminists, emancipated, and enlightened women – and *they* – consenting prostitutes, a threat to the movement and a source of defilement. As I see it, thus, the idea of abject-Other explains the particular "economy of touch" at work in abolitionist feminism – one which

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[156] On the violence suffered by people engaged in prostitution and the legal system's resistance to address it see ICRSE (International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe), *Undeserving Victims? A Community Report on Migrant Sex Worker Victims of Crime in Europe*.
[157] AHMED, Sara, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, p. 49.
[158] AHMED, Sara, *The Politics of Emotion*, p. 216.
[159] AHMED, Sara, *The Politics of Emotion*, p. 11.
[160] I use "sensed" to refer to "sensation", which I, following Sara Ahmed, understand as an unorganized and unintentional response to something. As that which leaves us "with an impression that is not clear or distinct." A kind of "sense of injustice" that arises "strong curiosity, interest, or excitement." As Ahmed puts it, "[y]ou might not have used that word for it; you might not have the words for it; you might not be able to put your finger on it [… but t]hings [just] don't seem right." (AHMED, Sara, *Living a Feminist Live*, p. 22).

blends visceral action with freezing indifference –, accounts for the idea of opposition between feminism and prostitutes' rights, and, finally, discloses the meaning of the silencing of the prostitute in a discourse which excludes her from the position of speaking subject.

In offering this hypothesis, I am drawing on the literature that has pointed out the traditional and patriarchal notions of sexuality and gender embedded in abolitionist feminism. As hopefully I will succeed in showing, those notions are the starting point, the premise upon which the notion of abject-Other is rooted. As I see it, however, such literature, deeply engaged as it is with the analysis and effects of neo-abolitionism, which it frequently conflates with abolitionist feminism, is faulty of a superficial engagement with the latter.

As we have seen before, the group pushing for neo-abolitionism includes different types of actors, among which are conservative and religious ones, who indeed share and are driven by traditional and patriarchal notions of gender and sexuality. Sometimes these notions are spoken of expressly, in others, though, they are concealed by means of a language that echoes abolitionist feminism.[161] In my vision, this situation, together with the alliances established between these actors and abolitionist feminists, has rushed some authors into concluding the embrace of the same notions by abolitionist feminism. Yet, sharing and working together towards the same objective – the abolition of prostitution by means of criminalizing laws – ,[162] regrettable as such objective and strategy might be, does not necessarily entail that abolitionist feminism shares the same visions on gender and sexuality. As many of the authors that defend the abolition of prostitution have successfully demonstrated, sexuality is not immune to power as it is not, then, immune to the unequal gender relations of our societies. Quite the opposite, in fact. And so, a defense for state intervention in sexual matters cannot be dismissed from the outset as an outmoded attitude towards sexuality. In fact, I would like to register how uncomfortable I am as a woman and a feminist with some descriptions of abolitionist feminism I came across in this literature, as they seem infused with an intent to ridicule and completely dismiss notions of violence, harm, and patriarchy

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[161] WEITZER, Ronald, "The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade", p. 451.

[162] According to Elizabeth Bernstein, it is this objective rather than the same views on sexuality and gender that both groups have in common. (BERNSTEIN, Elizabeth, "Militarized Humanitarianism Meets Carceral Feminism: The Politics of Sex, Rights, and Freedom in Contemporary Antitrafficking Campaigns", p. 47.)

in relation to sexuality. As I hope I was able to make it totally clear, that is in no way my assumption.

It is for all these reasons that I believe a serious and deep engagement with abolitionist feminism is required. And the same can be said of patriarchal notions of gender and sexuality. This work is committed to this task, which it will face in its Part One and Two, respectively. As we shall see, this is an ineludible first step in the substantiation of the hypothesis of the prostitute's representation and positioning as abject-Other in abolitionist feminism. A notion which this work will specifically address in Part Three. As Molly Smith and Mac Juno observed, "[p]rostitution is heavy with meaning and brings up deeply felt emotions."[163] It is that meaning and those emotions that, in my view, the notion of abject-Other accurately captures.

7. Delimitation of the Object

Discussion of prostitution and specifically abolitionist feminism very frequently generates an expectation of an address of certain closely related topics. That is generally the case of the feminist sex wars of the 1980s, pornography, and trafficking in human beings. While some believe any analysis of abolitionist feminism requires an engagement with those topics, I disagree. And while I have touched upon them in order to contextualize abolitionist feminism's position of preponderance, I will not further pursue their analysis nor their connections with abolitionist feminism. There are, I believe, good reasons for this decision.

Let me start with the latter subject. Though it is true that in practice, in terms of public policy, and in what concerns prostitutes' rights violations, trafficking is completely intertwined with prostitution, I do not think discursively that is the case. Arguments that have been used to link prostitution and trafficking are distinct and, in my view, of a different nature from those made against prostitution. So for instance, the idea that legalized prostitution increases trafficking, the claim that an incredible high percentage of women selling sex have been trafficked and thus forced by coercive means to engage in prostitution, as well as the

[163] SMITH, Molly, and MAC, Juno, *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Worker's Rights*, p. 2.

conflation of trafficking and prostitution, and finally the reduction of trafficking to commercial sex with the consequent erasure of other activities for which people – both men and women – are also trafficked: these are all specific issues that apply only to trafficking and are very different in character from the abolitionist feminist arguments generally concerned with women's sexual oppression. As a result, one can challenge those former arguments without that challenge having any bearing on the validity of arguments against prostitution. The opposite is also true, as, for example, to conclude that prostitution is not a form of female oppression in no way equates to a defense of trafficking where trafficking indeed refers to coercion and not simply migration with the purpose of exercising prostitution. In fact, I am convinced that discussing abolitionist feminism separately from trafficking is potentially beneficial for the trafficking discussion precisely because it addresses the issues that are generally used to conflate trafficking and migration without having them mixed with other kinds of arguments that, when discussed together, contribute to a different appraisal of those specific ones.

In what concerns pornography, the decision not to approach is based on the view that despite the many discursive continuities with abolitionist feminism, with most of the same arguments being used both in relation to prostitution and pornography, there is an issue of freedom of expression and wider accessibility in pornography that does not apply to prostitution. In addition, pornography is ruled in most countries by a very different public policy, which does not leave the people involved in it as unprotected as people engaged in prostitution. There is also a matter of stigma, as women engaged in pornography do not seem to face the same intense prejudices and stereotypes as women society generally refers to as prostitutes. In fact, women engaged in pornography do not generally seem to be perceived exactly as prostitutes. And this is a fundamental issue, as this work's focus is the prostitute's representation and the cultural meaning she is endowed with in different discourses.

Finally, the feminist sex wars. While having largely emerged out of feminist debates on pornography and commercial sex, the sex wars must also be put into the context of the sexual revolution and the movement uncovering and fighting against sexual violence against women. As I see it, such wider context provides the means to understand the broad scope of the sex wars, which were not just about pornography, commercial sex, or specific sexual

practices such as sadomasochism, even though these were focal topics around which the wars unfolded. The sex wars were about sexuality in general and its relation to women's freedom and equality, with the discussions on specific issues and the arguments made in relation to them being inseparably connected with how sexuality in general was represented by the two opposing camps, and also with those specific issues being transformed into examples of what was defended more generally in relation to the sexuality of *all* women. And precisely here is the problem.

Molly Smith and Juno Mac have pointed out the metaphorical use of the prostitute by feminism.[164] And they have traced the metaphorical use of the prostitute to both sides of the sex wars. As they explain,

> Rather than focusing on the 'work' of sex work, both pro-sex feminists and anti-prostitution feminists concerned themselves with *sex as symbol*. Both groups questioned what the existence of the sex industry implied for their own positions as women; both groups prioritised those questions over what material improvements could be made in the lives of the sex workers in their communities. Stuck in the domain of sex and whether it is 'good' or 'bad' for women (and adamant that it could only be one or the other) it was all too easy for feminists to think of The Prostitute only in terms of what she represented to them. They claimed ownership of sex worker experiences in order to make sense of their own.[165]

As I read them, what Smith and Mac are saying is that what both camps in the sex wars were interested in was not prostitution itself much less prostitutes, but rather the meaning prostitution carried to other women and how it affected these other women's interests. As they note, the "interest in the metaphorical uses of *prostitute* was not accompanied by much practical support for sex workers".[166] And if for anti-prostitution feminists, the prostitute was a mere synonym for every woman's situation of sexual domination, it is not less true that

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[164] *Ibidem*.
[165] *Idem*, p. 11.
[166] *Idem*, p. 2.

"many sex radicals advanced their arguments from a non-sex worker perspective. Defending porn often meant defending watching it, rather than performing in it."[167]

While my starting point in approaching prostitution is its gendered character, I do not believe that approaching prostitution from its gendered character necessarily entails an analysis focused on what prostitution says of sexuality and femininity in general. First, because that would mean to assume a single and uniform female experience, which I in no way do. And second, because that would miss the fundamental point that the prostitute is socially perceived as a different type of woman from those not engaged in prostitution, and precisely in this differentiation lies the reason of the prostitute's discrimination and marginalization. In fact, such historical and deeply rooted cultural differentiation is one of this work's the main points. Discussing prostitution and the tools that lead women engaged in prostitution to be excluded from the rights other people are generally conceded is, in my view, feminist enough. In fact, as I see it, this is the only truly feminist approach, if we, as Bell Hooks, assume that feminism's unnegotiable "aim is not to benefit solely any specific group of women" but to "transform in a meaningful way all our lives."[168]

Because my focus is prostitution and not female sexual oppression and freedom in general, I have decided not to discuss or engage with the feminist sex wars. And while I will be touching upon some of the arguments formulated by one camp in those debates, I will only do so because they are equally used against prostitution and are thus a fundamental part of the abolitionist feminist discourse. In addition, as my purpose in analyzing abolitionist feminism is not to discuss its truthfulness or logic but rather to unveil how it functions to exclude prostitutes and restrict their rights on the policy level, I do not consider it to be necessary to engage with the counterarguments elaborated within the opposing camp in the sex wars.

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[167] *Idem*, p. 10.
[168] HOOKS, Bell, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, p. 28.

8. Terminology

A last word on terminology. I will refer to the prostitute as "she" and to the client as "he". This terminology choice is a reflex of the assumption I have just referred to concerning the gendered character of prostitution. To use the words of those working in the industry, what I mean by it is that "the majority of those who sell sex are women, and the majority of those who pay for sex are men."[169] And, in my view, this is neither an accident nor an expression of natural male and female sexuality, but rather an effect of the unequal relations between those socially perceived as men and women. Such conviction, however, in no way denies the fact that people of all genders sell sex: cisgender and transgender men and women, non-binary people, as well as those with non-western genders. Yet, as Smith and Mac point out, gender does shape the experience of people selling sex.[170] This work examines the relation between the cultural understanding of femininity and the consequences for those who, by selling sex, deviate from it. As such, its focus is *women who sell sex* and the terminology adopted reflects its object of analysis.

I will also refer to the person who sells sex as "prostitute". While this term is now generally associated with an abolitionist position, my choice to use "prostitute" instead of "sex worker" is *not* synonym with a position that argues against the recognition of labor rights to people selling sex. As I believe it is quite clear by now, I am a strong supporter of such recognition and this work is conceived precisely as a strategy of resistance against a discourse which, in my understanding, is currently the main discursive obstacle to the recognition of those and other rights to people, particularly women, engaged in prostitution. Consequently, my decision to use the term "prostitute" is motivated by other reasons.

The first is of a very practical nature: this work analyzes discourses that use such terminology. And so, it would be very difficult and probably also quite confusing to constantly switch from one terminology to the other as I move from describing and explaining the ideas that constitute those discourses to my own views about those ideas. The second is related to a perception of diversity in the terminology adopted by people selling

[169] SMITH, Molly, and MAC, Juno, *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Worker's Rights*, p. 4.
[170] *Ibidem*.

sex to designate themselves and their organizations. Where it is true that many people working with commercial sex prefer the term "sex worker", which was proposed in 1970 by an American activist "in order to minimize the stigma associated with the word 'prostitution' and to emphasize labor issues to the detriment of moral assumptions",[171] such preference and use seem nowadays far from consensual. In Latin America, for instance, people engaged in commercial sex are increasingly using the most negatively charged word in Spanish and Portuguese languages – "puta" – to refer to themselves and their organizations. The reason seems to be the belief in the transformative power of language and the consequent engagement in a struggle over the meaning of the word. A belief and a struggle which I share, and which constitute the third reason for my decision to use the term "prostitute" instead of "sex worker".

As Paul Beatriz Preciado says, "behind every word there is a history, just as behind every history there is a struggle to fix or change the meaning of words."[172] Meaning is mutable and that is why language is a privileged locus for political action and resistance.[173] Through it, some ideas become possible and others get to be contested. And that is why a word such as "prostitute", so negatively charged that is most often used as an offense, can be transformed into "a program of social criticism and cultural intervention."[174] In deciding to use the word "prostitute" in this work I intend to take part in the political struggle over its meaning, as I too am firmly committed to the belief in the transformative power of language.

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[171] OLIVEIRA, Alexandra, et al., *Less Equal Than Others: The Laws Affecting Sex Work, and Advocacy in the European Union*, p. 3. Oliveira and her colleagues are referring to Carol Leigh who claims to have coined the term. (LEIGH Carol, "Inventing Sex Work", p. 230.)
[172] My translation. PRECIADO, Paul Beatriz, "Historia de una Palabra: Queer", p. 14.
[173] My translation. *Idem*, p. 16.
[174] My translation. *Ibidem*.

PART 1. THE ABOLITIONIST FEMINIST DISCOURSE

> Discourse that possesses an author's name is not to be immediately consumed and forgotten; neither is it accorded the momentary attention given to ordinary, fleeting words. […] a private letter may have a signatory, but it does have an author; a contract can have an underwriter, but not an author; and, similarly, an anonymous poster attached to a wall may have a writer, but he cannot be an author. In this sense, the function of an author is to characterize the existence, circulation and operation of certain discourses within a society.[175]

1. Opening Remarks

Discourse belongs to no one. Discourses are, as Ian Parker put it, transindividual: they go "beyond individual intentions".[176] Yet, the attempt to grasp them necessarily entails an examination of the texts where discourses are both expressed and constructed. And texts have authors. Authors whose names "group together a number of texts and thus differentiate them from others."[177] As Michel Foucault noted, "the fact that a number of texts were attached to a single name implies that relationships of homogeneity, filiation, reciprocal explanation, authentification, or of common utilization were established among them."[178] Consequently, the name of an author "points to the existence of certain groups of discourse and refers to the status of this discourse within a society and culture."[179] That is why when analyzing a

[175] FOUCAULT, Michel, "What is an Author?", pp. 123-124.
[176] PARKER, Ian, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, p. 7.
[177] FOUCAULT, Michel, "What is an Author?", p. 123.
[178] *Ibidem*.
[179] *Ibidem*.

discourse, the choice of the authors whose texts one will be focusing on are of absolute essence.

The aim of the first Part of this work is to describe abolitionist feminism. I will do that mainly through the texts of seven prominent scholars: Kathleen Barry, Andrea Dworkin, Sheila Jeffreys, Catherine Mackinnon, Kate Millett, Carole Pateman, and Margaret Radin. There was not one, but several criteria leading me to the choice of these authors.

The first is related with the importance of the arguments elaborated by these authors in the overall discussion on prostitution till this day. While most of these authors' texts are now several decades old, their content continues to shape current debate. In fact, abolitionist feminist arguments against prostitution today pretty much reproduce the elaboration of prostitution by some of the authors included in this group.

A second criteria is the individual relevance of these authors, either theoretically or politically, and in some cases both. Kathleen Barry is a great example of the latter. Not only has she written one of the most important works on prostitution to the date – *Female Sexual Slavery* – as she was one of the founders of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), a Non-Governmental Organization with consultive status at the United Nations, which has played a fundamental role in shaping anti-trafficking and anti-sex legislation all over the world. Catherine Mackinnon and Andrea Dworkin are another crucial case, as they have been central in second wave feminism's theorization of sexuality and its connections with power relations, and they are equally credited with elaborating the Swedish law that criminalizes the clients of prostitution, thus providing a starting point for what has since then become known as the Nordic Model.

Finally, my choice was also motivated by the will to diversity in thematic focus. While all authors have, of course, extensively elaborated on prostitution, different authors have focused on different aspects of it. Margaret Radin is the best example of an author I brought in due to this criteria. Except for her, all other authors arrive to prostitution by means of their extensive theorization of sexuality and gender relations. Radin, however, has followed a different path. Her elaboration of prostitution emerges from her broader interest in the market and commodification. More specifically, she is concerned with the increasing

commodification of different aspects of the self. An angle to prostitution equally developed by Carole Pateman in the context of her work on consent as a means of (gender) domination. As the problem of prostitution is the problem of sex in the market, the specific focus on the market seemed to me one that could not be left out.

Organizing into a coherent whole the ideas and arguments of seven authors was not an easy task. The different thematic focus adds to the distinct disciplinary backgrounds and the disparate theoretical assumptions of the authors in making it a particularly challenging project. As such, it is important to say that neither the seven authors I have mentioned nor others I occasionally also allude to direct at prostitution or even agree on all arguments I will be referring to. Still, despite the obvious difficulties, I believe the result is a comprehensive overview of the type of charges generally made against prostitution: different arguments and different variations of the same arguments are joined together in this attempt to describe and explain with sufficient depth and fairness the substantiation of the abolitionist feminist position. In this regard, it should also be noted that such position does not equate a defense of neo-abolitionist policies by all the authors whose work I will be engaging with. In fact, some have been quite straightforward in distancing themselves from those policies and even arguing against them[180]. This makes it particularly clear that abolitionist feminism and neo-abolitionist are not necessarily attached to each other, even though the association between both in practice, in politics, and in law is generally made. A perfect example of how "[t]he authority of the text is [always] provisional",[181] as "[t]he text belongs to language, not to the sovereign and generating author."[182]

Let me now lead you through the structure of this Part One. It mirrors what I believe to be the three main types of abolitionist feminist arguments. Section One addresses the special value sexuality is argued to have for human beings, Section Two focuses on the idea of

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[180] This is particularly the case of Margaret Radin, who defends that the ideal of a society in which sexuality is not commercialized should not be abandoned but needs, however, to be pursued "in ways that are not harmful under nonideal circumstances" such as our own. She justifies her position with the idea that "[t]here is always a gap between the ideals we can formulate and the progress we can realize." And so, "if we are too utopian about our ideals given our circumstances, we may also make no progress." (RADIN, Margaret Jane, *Contested Commodities*, pp. 134, 123, 124.)

[181] SPIVAK, Gayatri Chakravorty, "Translator's Preface", p. xviii.

[182] *Idem*, p. lxxiv.

women's objectification and subordination, and, finally, Section Three is devoted to the claim of lack of consent and freedom more generally in prostitution. Sections Two and Three are further subdivided. The former examines two different types of claims regarding objectification: (2.1) that prostitution is itself a form of objectification of women who sell sex, and (2.2.) that prostitution is a cause and a consequence of women's general objectification and subordination. And the latter is divided into three subsections. The first (3.1) analyses the external conditions to prostitution claimed to make the choice to sell sex a forced one, the second (3.2) explores prostitution's internal conditions argued by abolitionist feminists to keep women from leaving it, and the third (3.3) addresses the idea of the irrelevance of consent in prostitution's lack of freedom. The idea here is that independently of consent, prostitution is a form of abuse and surrender of one's self-government.

A note on terminology. Motivated by the intent to reproduce the abolitionist feminist discourse in the most accurate manner possible, I will adopt here the terminology generally employed by abolitionist feminists to refer to prostitute and client, namely "prostituted woman" and "John".

As a final introductory remark, I would like to emphasize that the analysis that follows is only a first step in the broader examination of abolitionist feminism this work will undertake. While my aim here is to describe abolitionist feminism as explicitly elaborated by the authors selected, I will come back to it in Part Three, where I will be engaging with its implicit layers of meanings[183] and "exploring the connotations, allusions and implications"[184] evoked by the texts now examined.

2. The Special Meaning of Sexuality

One of the main charges directed by abolitionist feminists against prostitution is that sex has a special value for human beings and that value distinguishes prostitution from other uses of

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[183] I follow Ian Parker in the idea that discourses and the texts where they are expressed and constructed have "different layers of meaning" and that in discourse analysis one should attend both to a discourse's explicit and implicit meanings. (PARKER, Ian, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, p. 15.)

[184] *Idem*, p. 7.

the body to make money. On this view, there is something specific about sex, something that makes it different from other activities that occur in the market: it is not just *another* use of the body in commerce.[185]

This idea takes on different forms: sometimes is defended as a descriptive and contingent claim, others as an essentialist and normative one. And whether it is expressly stated or not, the assertion that sex has a distinct and critical statute for individuals is a constant within abolitionist feminism. In fact, most of the arguments would not stand without it. Even if argumentative paths might then follow very different directions.

Scott Anderson and Margaret Radin provide us with rather good examples of the different forms that the abolitionist feminist argument concerning the special value in sex can take. While such value is merely descriptive and contingent for the former, the latter takes an essentialist and normative stance on the topic. In Anderson's words:

> Both in history and in the present, a person's sexuality almost always figures prominently as an aspect of his or her self-conception, status in society, and economic and social prospects. Being thought beautiful or ugly, being experienced or inexperienced, being raped or impregnated, being sexually apathetic or adventurous – all of these factors can have significant impacts on how one's life goes, how one is treated by others, and how one thinks of oneself.[186]
>
> In making my case, I have avoided trying to justify the special status that sex has for us, which is, I believe, contingent on many other facts about our form of social life. […] the meaning and significance of sex are subject to change. Were sex to acquire a very different status for us, the problems associated with prostitution could well dissipate.[187]

In contrast, Radin speaks of non-commodified sex as an ideal of sexuality "integral to personhood",[188] with personhood being put into question when "attributes that are (or were)

[185] ANDERSON, Scott, "Prostitution and Sexual Autonomy: Making Sense of the Prohibition of Prostitution", p. 762.
[186] *Idem*, pp. 774-5.
[187] *Idem*, p. 775.
[188] RADIN, Margaret Jane, *Contested Commodities*, p. 135

intrinsically part of the person come to be detached and thought of as objects of exchange".[189] In her view, "we accept an inferior conception of personhood […] if we suppose people may freely choose to commodify themselves".[190] For Radin, sexuality is an attribute of personhood and prostitution "the pricing of what we thought to be priceless."[191]

> I believe that a *better view of personhood* should understand many kinds of particulars - one's politics, work, religion, family, love, *sexuality*, friendships, altruism, experiences, wisdom, moral commitments, character, and personal attributes - as *integral to the self.* To understand any of these as monetizable or completely detachable from the person - to think, for example, that the value of one person's moral commitments is commensurable or fungible with those of another, or that the "same" person remains when her moral commitments are subtracted - is to do violence to our deepest understanding of what it is to be human.[192]

The idea of an "integral connection between sexuality and the sense of self'[193] is equally present in Carole Pateman's work. As Radin, Pateman also attributes that connection an essentialist and normative character. However, the reasoning behind the use of what are apparently the same ideas and concepts is quite distinct in both those authors.

The first difference is this: while Radin is *defending* a morally superior conception of human being that she sees as being present in our society's discourse, Pateman is *criticizing* a conception of the individual epitomized by social contract theory which. In her view, transforms domination into freedom in society's eyes. These are Radin's exact words on the matter:

> I have used the term "personal property" to refer to categories of property that we understand to be *bound up with the self in a way that we understand as morally justifiable*. I have used the term "fungible property" to refer to categories of property that we do not understand to be justifiably bound up with the self, but rather

[189] *Idem*, p. 156.
[190] *Idem*, p. 94.
[191] *Idem*, p. 160
[192] *Idem*, p. 56.
[193] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 207.

> understand to be separate from the self in the sense that they are not implicated in self-constitution. […] *These categories of understanding are not transcendent but rather relate to cultural commitments*.[194]

As for Pateman, she is not (directly) upholding a commitment to a morally superior conception of human being, but rather condemning and denouncing a specific notion of subjecthood that permeates modern societies and changes our perception of certain practices, among which is prostitution.

The conception which Pateman opposes is the one that equates the human subject with the possessive individual: the individual that "owns his body and his capacities as pieces of property as he owns material property."[195] According to Pateman, the problem with such conception is that "[i]f the individual owns his capacities, he stands in the same external relation to this intimate property as to any other"[196] and that is why the "individual's property can be [thought to be] contracted out without any injury to, detriment to, or diminishment of the individual self which owns the property.[197]

As Radin, Pateman refers to the idea of personal property. She calls it "property in the person".[198] But while Radin uses it to identify a type of personal characteristics that are, in her view, undetachable from a better notion of human being, Pateman refers to property in the person as an idea that legitimizes the detachment, alienation, and commodification of individual's most personal characteristics. In sum, to oppose the idea of separability, Radin uses the concept Pateman charges with legitimizing it. This is the second difference between Radin's and Pateman's use of what is only apparently the same argument.

The third has to do with this: why are certain characteristics – and, in particular, sexuality – inseparable from the self? And why should they be thought of as inseparable? Radin's answers for both questions conflate; Pateman's do not, at least not in a direct way.

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[194] My emphasis. RADIN, Margaret Jane, *Contested Commodities*, p. 58.
[195] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 55.
[196] *Idem*, p. 56.
[197] *Idem*, p. 72.
[198] On the reasons why Pateman prefers the term "propriety in the person" over the expression "self-ownership" see PATEMAN, Carole, "Self-Ownership and Property in the Person: Democratization and a Tale of Two Concepts".

Since Radin grounds the inseparability of certain characteristics from the self on a superior moral conception of personhood, the reason why those characteristics are inseparable from the human subject is the same as the reason they should be seen or thought of as inseparable: it violates society's conception of the self, one that is morally superior.

> To treat deep parts of our identity as alienable commodities is to do violence to the conception of the self that we actually have and to the texture of the world of human practice and interaction revealed through this conception.[199]

Pateman follows a very different path. To the question "why are certain characteristics inseparable from the human beings?" she simply replies, "because it is physically impossible".[200] Separability is a fiction. Sex and sexuality are constitutive of the body and "the body is, in turn, inseparably connected to the sense of self." [201]

There are, of course, many other commodified practices that also involve the direct use of the body. However, "the services of the prostitute are related in a more intimate manner to her body than those of other professionals"[202] and "[s]exuality and the body are further, internally connected to conceptions of femininity and masculinity, and these are constitutive of our individuality, our sense of self-identity."[203] "In prostitution," she argues, "because of the relation between the commodity being marked and the body, it is the body that is up for sale."[204]

The last remark gives us some hint into Pateman's answer to the second question: why should certain characteristics not be seen as separable from the human subject? The problem seems to be commodification, the availability in the market.

But that takes us to a third question: what is the problem with the market, what is wrong with commodification? The answer is subordination. Subordination through alienation. And

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199 NUSSBAUM, Martha, "Human Functioning and Social Justice", p. 231, as cited in RADIN, Margaret Jane, *Contested Commodities*, p. 75.
200 PATEMAN, Carole, "Self-Ownership and Property in the Person: Democratization and a Tale of Two Concepts", p. 27.
201 PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 562.
202 *Ibidem*.
203 *Ibidem*.
204 *Ibidem*.

alienation of what? Rights, self-government, autonomy. Here is how Pateman leads us to that conclusion:

> […] contracts involving this category – the political fiction – of property in the person create relationships (such as that between worker and employer, or wife and husband, for example). The significant aspect of contracts that constitute such relationships is not an exchange, but the alienation of a particular piece of property in the person; namely, the right of self-government.[205]

> […] "labor power" and "services" are abstractions. When workers sell labor power, or professionals sell services to clients (…), neither the labor power nor services can in reality be separated from the person offering them for sale. Unless the 'owners' of these abstractions agree to, or are compelled to, used them in certain ways, which means that the 'owners' act in a specified manner, there is nothing to be sold. The employer appears to buy labor power; what he actually obtains is the right to command over workers, the right to put their capacities, their bodies, to use as he determines.[206]

> […] the consequence of contracting out part of property in the person is that a diminution of autonomy or self-government occurs. I called this curtailment of freedom *civil subordination* […].[207]

Radin arrives to the same conclusion – subordination – through a different reasoning. For her, there is something wrong with commodification itself. She first distinguishes between literal commodification and commodification in rhetoric. Both are loosely interdependent:

> Unless the market conceptual scheme (market rhetoric) were prevalent in the world, literal market exchanges could not have the meaning they do. And unless literal market exchanges were prevalent in world, we would not be able to operate inside the conceptual scheme the way we do.[208]

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[205] PATEMAN, Carole, "Self-Ownership and Property in the Person: Democratization and a Tale of Two Concepts", p. 27.
[206] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 562.
[207] PATEMAN, Carole, "Self-Ownership and Property in the Person: Democratization and a Tale of Two Concepts", p. 33.
[208] RADIN, Margaret Jane, *Contested Commodities*, p. 118.

Market rhetoric is characterized by four conceptual indicia: objectification, fungibility, commensurability, and money equivalence. Let us see the meaning Radin attributes to each:

> Objectification relates to ontological commitment. By objectification, I mean ascription of status as a thing in the Kantian sense of something that is manipulable at the will of persons. Fungibility relates to exchange. By fungibility, I mean at least that the things are fully interchangeable with no effect on value to the holder. Fungibility may also mean that the things can be equated with a sum of money. If fungibility has this meaning, it collapses into commensurability. Commensurability relates to the nature of value. By commensurability, I mean that values of things can be arrayed as a function of one continuous variable, or can be linearly ranked. By money equivalence, I mean that the continuous variable in terms of which things can be ranked is dollar value.[209]

These indicia of commodification in rhetoric are understood to be "at least roughly cumulative".[210] If there is money equivalence, the other three will also be present. Commensurability implies fungibility and objectification but not necessarily money equivalence and the same can be said in relation to fungibility which implies objectification but not necessarily commensurability and money equivalence. And all that means that it is possible to have objectification without having the other three indicia.[211]

The relevance of this is that, in Radin's view, commodification entails at the very minimum objectification. And when what is commodified are the attributes of personhood, a form of reductionism comes about, eroding the concept of personhood, as objectivation is an ontological statement and the pricing of what is otherwise considered to be priceless has a downgrading meaning.[212]

> Market discourse exists within a market culture. The cultural meaning (of course) is what renders worrisome the pricing of what we thought to be priceless. That cultural meaning has to do with our categories of severable, fungible "objects" as opposed to

[209] *Ibidem*.
[210] *Ibidem*.
[211] *Idem*, pp. 118-9.
[212] *Idem*, p. 120.

> the realm of autonomous, self-governing "persons." Commodification of (attributes of) personhood implies objectification.[213]

Objectification, however, is not only a harm in itself for it is generally connected to subordination: "objectification may be one of the indicia of wrongful subordination, or of an important form of wrongful subordination."[214] In fact, Radin seems to defend an intrinsic connection between objectification and subordination when she says that both notions can be characterized as a "form of improper treatment of persons that fails to recognize the other as bearing the same human status as oneself"[215] and as a "form of using others as means to one's own ends".[216] In a nutshell, then, when thinking about what is wrong with commodification, Radin says both objectification and subordination.

> So, at least in our culture, wrongful subordination may be linked, through objectification, with commodification. This hypothesis is bolstered by the fact that in our culture slavery was – and symbolically remains – both the core instance of wrongful subordination and the core instance of commodification of persons.[217]

But that is not only it. Radin also refers to maldistribution in connection to commodification. In fact, this is a point of high concern within abolitionist feminism. To talk about maldistribution is to talk about "vulnerable" or "powerless" people; it is to talk about inequality and, thus, injustice. There is, however, a specific sense of unequal distribution at stake when talking about it in connection with the harms of commodification. The point here is not the unequal conditions of wealth leading poor people to engage in prostitution, and which might classify their choice as not free. Nor is the point the extremely low payment often leading prostitution to be characterized as exploitation and from which one could conclude that no one would freely choose it. Radin's point is instead the further injustice that engaging in commodified sex constitutes *if* prostitution is seen to be itself an unequally

[213] *Idem*, p. 160.
[214] *Idem*, p. 157.
[215] *Ibidem*.
[216] *Ibidem*.
[217] *Ibidem*.

distributed form of violation of rights and dignity. The idea is, of course, connected both with objectification and subordination:

> In the framework of a liberal worldview, it is possible to think about wrongful subordination as a form of maldistribution. When a group of persons is wrongfully subordinated it lacks social recognition of the rights and other indicia of respect otherwise conceived of as universally applicable to persons. In a liberal worldview those rights and other indicia of respect are attributed to, allocated to, or distributed to all persons. Wrongful subordination can be thought of as a form of maldistribution because a just society *would* distribute to those in the subordinated position, as to all, equal opportunity and the bases of self-respect that would prevent their subordination. [218]

Commodification is, then, a means through which the harms of subordination and objectification come about and is, thus, a device of maldistribution of rights. But there is more to it. It is not only about the result, but also about the cause; it is not only about the fact that some people are denied their rights, but about who those people are. And those people are not just *any* people: it is not equally likely that a white middle-class man and a racialized poor woman come to be engaged in prostitution. There is nothing random about it. Commodification is a means through which privileged people can further objectify and subordinate people who are already in a vulnerable position. And if maldistribution of wealth is the most immediate cause for subordination through commodification, it is certainly not the only one. In our society poverty comes with a history of racial and sexual subordination.

> Commodification comes together with lingering institutional racism and sexism and with maldistribution of wealth. […] At the same time, the market culture also tends toward irregularities of "private" power, with the resulting subordination on the basis of wealth. And the "private" culture of lingering racism and patriarchy results in a state of affairs in which women and people of color are on the whole poorer than white men,

[218] *Idem*, p. 158.

> hence more susceptible to subordination because of maldistribution of wealth as well as on the basis of race or sex.[219]

The conclusion is this: prostitution is a “mark of entrenched injustice”, a type of desperate exchange based on poverty, sexism, and racism:

> […] in prostitution, men of relative privilege and power exploit the poverty, powerlessness, and history of sexual abuse that characterize the lives of many women. […] Since no rational person would willingly be consumed as a sexual object, prostitution is necessarily a form of exploitation: its existence depends on the role social inequality plays in ensuring that the socially more powerful have access to sexual objects of their choice.[220]

As a summary, it is possible to say that the argument that sex has a special value for human beings which differentiates it from other commercial uses of the body has two parts: first, a claim about sexuality; second, a claim about commodification. In what concerns sexuality, it is argued that it has a special and important value both to individuals and society. That value is further claimed to be superior to the value other things have. Such superior value is what justifies the posture that while there is no problem – or at least it is not equally serious – for those other things to be commodified, commercial sex is downgrading to the human subject considered both individually and in society. Yet, this last part of the argument implies a second claim, one that is not about sexuality but about commodification: the problem is with selling sex and not with sex that does not imply money as a compensation. So, the problem must be with commercialization. What is wrong with it? Objectification, subordination, and maldistribution. Commodification of important characteristics of subjecthood – and specifically of sexuality – is caused by and brings about social injustice in those forms.

But why? Why is prostitution *per se* objectifying, subordinating, and a form of maldistribution? In what way does it wound the subject-like-value that all human beings should be accorded? And why is all that specifically relevant in relation to women? In what way is prostitution related to more general forms of female objectification, subordination,

[219] *Idem*, pp. 158-9.
[220] ANDERSON, Scott, “Prostitution and Sexual Autonomy: Making Sense of the Prohibition of Prostitution”, p. 754.

and maldistribution? These are the questions that will guide our inquiry into the abolitionist feminist discourse in the next section.

3. Sexual Objectification and Female Subordination

The idea of objectification can be traced back to the Kantian divide of the world into subjects and objects. Human beings are subjects, and subjects are autonomous, self-governing, and moral agents. Objects are the subjects' opposites: not self-governing, not autonomous, not moral agents. Subjects are agentic entities; objects are manipulable and exchangeable.[221] "Persons possess objects that they may control or manipulate to achieve their ends as persons, the objects having no ends in themselves".[222] An object, thus, is the opposite of a human being. That is the basis of the meaning of objectification as the failure to respect the human subject: objectification is the negation of the human subject; the improper treatment of persons as means and not ends in themselves.[223]

When used in this sense, the idea of objectification seems to function as a denunciation of the *loss or reduction of autonomy* that inheres certain types of relationships. Those are the relationships in which one part has the power to dictate how the other must act, the other giving up any power to decide her own course of action. And those are also relationships in which the objective of the association is not the interests and needs of both parties but only the interests and needs of the one that has the power to decide. They are, therefore, relationships in which one manipulates and the other is manipulated as a means to that one's ends.

This, however, is not the only sense in which the idea of objectification is used within the abolitionist feminist discourse. When we say someone is objectified, there are a few different things we can mean and different wrongs we might be referring to. In a second sense, objectification refers to *a reduction of the objectified person to a specific aspect of her being*, thus erasing all the other features of her personality. When endowed with this meaning, the

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[221] RADIN, Margaret Jane, *Contested Commodities*, p. 155.
[222] *Idem*, p. 156.
[223] *Ibidem*.

accusation of objectification might amount to two different wrongs. The first is the *denial of the person's other characteristics and capacities*, which often translates into discrimination based on stereotyping; the second corresponds to a *denial of the value of someone's individuality*. The reason is that, in this sense, objectification is synonymous with the obliteration of the complex and multiple character of a person's very self, which translates into a negation of what makes her unique, into a denial of her individuality. When a person is reduced to a single aspect of her being, all the other aspects are depleted of relevance and, thus, any person who is equally reduced to the same aspect is seen as being able to perform the same function. There is not a specific need for a particular individual to perform it, and so individuals become interchangeable, fungible.

Very closely connected with this second sense of objectification, it is possible to identify a third one. Here, objectification comes to signify *depersonalization* and the wrong it refers to is that of *separateness between individuals*. A relationship based on a single aspect of an individual's self is a relationship devoid of closeness, the opposite of a deep and truthful sharing of selves in all their aspects, which implies feelings, emotions, and empathy. That not only falls short of the type of interaction a human being is worthy of as it is reductive of the human being as a species and as a society. In sum, depersonalization and separateness – and thus objectification – stand in direct opposition to human flourishing.

All these three meanings of objectification imply, of course, a reductionism in the value of the human being as human being. Objectification has to do with the attribution of an object's property to a subject. But that is not a mere assignation with no relevance other than conceptual distinction. The subject and the object do not have the same value. There is a hierarchy and in that hierarchy the subject occupies the superior position, the inferior one being left to the object. Hence, objectifying in this sense represents a type of ontological downgrading, it is a statement about the inferior value of an individual: a reductionism in terms of an individual's human worth.

Yet, although entailed, not always is this ontological reductionism the specific point aimed at by abolitionist feminist arguments concerning objectification. When it is, a fourth sense of objectification is at stake. Here objectification is most used as a synonym of *dehumanization*

and the wrong it refers to is *physical and psychological ill-treatment*, a kind of treatment that provokes pain and suffering. An object is a thing not a person, and a thing is that which does not have what is specific to a human being: reason and emotions or feelings. A thing does not suffer or if it does, its suffering does not matter, it is not deemed morally wrong. A thing, hence, is something (/someone) whose ill-treatment is authorized, legitimized. This is what abolitionist feminists aim at pointing their finger at when using objectification in this sense against prostitution.

There is also a second version of the ontological reductionism always implied and sometimes directly targeted with the use of the idea of objectification by abolitionist feminist arguments. At stake in this case is a *comparative downgrading* of the objectified person: comparative in relation to those who objectify her. This sense of objectification is very closely related with the first one mentioned: the use of a person as a means to someone else's ends. The comparative ontological reductionism – in a word, the inferiority – of the person used as a means in relation to the one who uses her seems a necessary logical implication. However, this sense of objectification appears sometimes as a tool to target a more specific and somehow different wrong, namely inequality, and inequality not in the general sense of human value but *inequality in the enjoyment of rights and respect*. When used with this fifth meaning, objectification is, of course, even more intimately connected with subordination and maldistribution.

Finally, objectification might simply refer to commodification. Implied in this sixth sense of objectification is an assumption that money, by itself, brings about human degradation, and it is to such wrong and harm that the charge of objectification, when used in this sense, aims at tackling.

Within the abolitionist feminist discourse, it is possible to identify all these different senses of objectification, as it is possible to identify the use of this idea as a form of exposure of very different wrongs. And wrongs located at different levels, for prostitution is claimed to be (1) a form of objectification *in itself*, (2) a *consequence*, and also 3) a *cause of* women's sexual objectification subordination.

Let us begin with the first charge: prostitution is *in itself* a form of objectification. What do abolitionist feminists mean when they say commodified sex is *objectifying*?

3.1. Prostitution as a Form of Objectification in Itself

The substantiation of this claim offered by Kathleen Barry is this: the separation of the sexual experience from the total person is a form of objectification,[224] and that separation is precisely what characterizes prostitution. Barry, thus, refers to objectification in the sense of *depersonalization*. Non-objectifying sex involves "the whole psychic, social, and spiritual being"[225] and is connected "with warmth, affection, love, [and] caring."[226] It is a type of sex that involves closeness as opposed to a depersonalized sexual experience. And closeness in two different senses. First, in the sense of intimacy or privacy: since, in her view, sexuality is "something that stems from the very depths of the being and in a sense define[s] a very important part of the person"[227], it is something that

> [...] can only be shared with those few people in which one trusts and who one wants to get to know us on that level. It is a privileged sharing, an intimate exchange of deeper parts of ourselves than we show to the rest of the world, distant friends or acquaintances.[228]

Sexual intimacy is not automatic as depersonalized sex often is, as sex, Barry argues, is "not something to be given lightly but something that has to be earned by each from each other. We do not automatically grant trust or respect; they are earned".[229] Second, closeness in the sense of *true sharing*, a type of sharing that

[224] BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 266.
[225] *Idem*, p. 267.
[226] *Ibidem*.
[227] *Ibidem*.
[228] *Ibidem*.
[229] *Ibidem*.

> […] involves, in the deepest sense, experiencing the pleasure of physical and sexual closeness with another while being able to put oneself in the place of the other, taking on the meaning of the experience of the other, creating not a private but shared joy.[230]

Margaret Radin has a very similar position to Barry on this last point. For her, commodified sex maintains and reinforces separateness between individuals, whereas noncommodified sex diminishes it. The reason is that, as I have already mentioned, In Radin's understanding, the latter is "conceived as a union because it is ideally a sharing of selves"[231] and that kind of "interpersonal sharing […] is part of our ideal of human flourishing."[232] Subscribing to Martha Nussbaum theory of human nature, Radin sees the sense of affiliation and concern with other human beings as a characteristic that marks us as human beings and the possibility of "being able to live for and with others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of familial and social interaction"[233] as a necessary circumstance to be able to live a good life.[234] As Barry, also Radin denounces the separateness inherent in prostitution, which, thus, stands in direct opposition to human flourishing. That is why for her, the ideal of sexual interaction is nonmonetized sharing and the "good" commodified sexuality ought not to exist: "sexual activity should be market-inalienable."[235]

Radin, however, does not use the idea of objectification to *mean* depersonalization and separateness as Barry does. Instead, she connects it with fungibility, which, as we have also seen, implies but does not strictly equate objectification.[236] Her reasoning goes along these lines: money equivalence implies fungibility and to "conceive of something personal as fungible also assumes that persons cannot freely give of themselves to others."[237] To conceive of something personal as something which when interchanged has absolutely no

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[230] *Ibidem*.
[231] RADIN, Margaret Jane, *Contested Commodities*, p. 94.
[232] *Idem*, p. 134.
[233] NUSSBAUM, Martha, "Human Functioning and Social Justice", p. 222, as cited in RADIN, Margaret Jane, *Contested Commodities*, p. 68.
[234] RADIN, Margaret Jane, *Contested Commodities*, p. 67.
[235] *Idem*, p. 132.
[236] *Idem*, pp. 118-9. As noted before, in Radin's view, the indicia of commodification in rhetoric are "roughly cumulative", money equivalence necessarily implying commensurability, fungibility and objectification.
[237] *Idem*, p. 93.

effect on the holder is to conceive that something and its sharing as not having a particular significance to that person.[238] And that is why such sharing is not endowed with the meaning of "give of oneself to other". It is for that reason that, in Radin's view,

> [c]ommodification stresses separateness both between ourselves and our things and between ourselves and other people. To postulate personal interrelationship and bonding requires us to postulate people who can yield personal things to other people and not have them instantly become fungible.[239]

But not only. A sale is the opposite of a gift, and a gift is an expression "of the interrelationships between the self and the others. A gift takes place within a personal relationship with the recipient, or else it creates one."[240] Therefore,

> […] gifts diminish separateness. This is why (to take an obvious example) people say that sex bought and paid for is not the "same" thing as sex freely shared. Commodified sex leaves the parties as separate individuals and perhaps reinforces their separateness […].[241]

It is worth to highlight that Radin is not here referring to fungibility of people but to fungibility of personal characteristics. She is not, hence, making a point about the negation of a human being's individuality – as in the second sense of objectification – but is instead substantiating the claim that commodified sex entails separateness and opposes human flourishing. But she is not doing it when she treats specifically this last question. She does it elsewhere and, hence, shares the idea that prostitution entails fungibility of women and the denial of their integrity and uniqueness. These are her words on the matter:

> If the social regime permits buying and selling of sexual and reproductive activities, thereby treating them as fungible market commodities given the current understandings

[238] Radin's commitment to incommensurability is central to her critique of universal commodification. In her view, commensurability "cannot capture – and may debase – the way humans value things important to human personhood." (*Idem*, p. 9) Incommensurability means both "that there is no "stuff" that we can substitute equivalent amounts of when we try to sum values" (*Idem*, p. 10) and 2) "that there is no scale along which all values can be arrayed in order so that for any value or package of values we can say definitively that it has more or less value than some other." (*Idem*, p. 11.)

[239] *Idem*, pp. 93-4.

[240] *Idem*, p. 93.

[241] *Idem*, p. 94.

> of monetary exchange, there is a threat to the personhood of women, who are the "owners" of these "commodities." The threat to personhood from commodification arises because essential attributes are treated as severable fungible objects, and such treatment denies the integrity and uniqueness of the self. (…) commodification now tends toward fungibility of women […].[242]

It is interesting to note that despite sharing the opinion that prostitution is both a form of negation of individuality leading to fungibility of people and a form of depersonalization leading to separateness between individuals, Radin does not use objectification as a synonym of those wrongs.[243] Rather, both these wrongs and objectification have the same cause: fungibility. So, for this author fungibility implies objectification: "things that are interchangeable are conceived of as manipulable objects and not as subjects or agents."[244] That is why

> […] conceiving of persons or of essential attributes of personhood as fungible commodities tends to make us think of ourselves and others as means, not ends. Conceiving of the person as a commodity is harmful, in other words, because it undermines the conception of personhood involving the Kantian agent as end-in-itself: the Kantian person cannot be conceived of as a fungible exchangeable object.[245]

In this it is possible to conclude that Radin uses objectification in the first sense to refer to the loss of autonomy prostitution brings about:

> Market discourse exists within a market culture. The cultural meaning (of course) is what renders worrisome the pricing of what we thought to be priceless. That cultural meaning has to do with our categories of severable, fungible "objects" *as opposed to*

[242] *Idem*, p. 127.
[243] In general terms, this seems to the be the most precise reconstruction of Radin's position on the matter. However, in a particular occasion, the author's language seems to lead her in a different direction and objectification seems to be used as a synonym of fungibility: "[t]reating something as interchangeable with others of its kind is not the only way to treat it as an object." (*Idem*, p. 119.)
[244] *Ibidem*.
[245] *Idem*, p. 84.

> *the realm of autonomous, self-governing "persons."* Commodification of (attributes of) personhood implies objectification.[246]

But that is not all. According to Radin, commodification (of sexuality) implies objectification also in a different sense: commodification entails money equivalence and

> money equivalence seems to imply objectification, because something whose value is perspicuously described as precisely equivalent to a sum of money has no more honorific ontological status than the sum of money itself.[247]

Objectification is here used in the sense of ontological reductionism. Yet, Radin's point when talking of objectification as ontological reductionism is not dehumanization or unhuman treatment. She is instead referring to a kind of *comparative* ontological reductionism: objectification "is a form of improper treatment of persons that fails to recognize de other as bearing of the same human status as oneself".[248] Her point is here *inequality*. Inequality in what? Sexual satisfaction. In Martha Nussbaum's theory of human nature to which Radin subscribes, the second level list that refers to the necessary circumstances to live a good human life includes opportunities for sexual satisfaction.[249] Human flourishing entails sexual satisfaction because one of the characteristics that define our humanness is the capacity to experience sexual desire.[250] That is why, in Radin's view, ideal sexual interaction is not only nonmonetized sharing, it is also *equal sharing*,[251] and "the ideal of equal [sexual] sharing is part of a conception of human personhood to which we remain deeply committed"[252].

Satisfying one's own needs and desires through objects is part of the definition of a subject; being a means to satisfying another's needs and desires is what an object is all about. Consequently, for Radin, the link between objectification and commodification is this: "[a]s means, objects may be bought and sold in markets, to achieve satisfaction of persons' needs and desires. Objects, but not persons, may be commodified."[253] But objectification is for her

[246] My emphasis. *Idem*, pp. 160-1.
[247] *Idem*, p. 119.
[248] *Idem*, p. 157.
[249] *Idem*, p. 67.
[250] *Idem*, pp. 20-1.
[251] *Idem*, p. 132.
[252] *Idem*, p. 134.
[253] *Idem*, p. 156.

also a synonym of a lesser personhood. And lesser personhood licenses not only the treatment of the objectified person as means and not ends but also the refusal to recognize the "rights and other indicia of respect otherwise conceived of as universally applicable to persons."[254] For this author, then, the problem with objectification or, to put it differently, the wrong Radin's use of the idea of objectification is aimed at targeting is also inequality: inequality in rights and respect and, in what concerns prostitution, inequality in the right to sexual satisfaction. As already mentioned, in her view, such inequality is a form of *maldistribution*. And a form of maldistribution because in a just society "those rights and indicia of respect are attributed to, allocated to, or distributed to all persons."[255]

Inequality also comes out in Carole Pateman's abolitionist arguments in a very similar way. According to this author, what makes prostitution morally inacceptable is the lack of *mutual* physical attraction and the fact that is not a form of *reciprocal* expression of desire:[256] "[t]here is no desire or satisfaction on the part of the prostitute."[257] Pateman, however, does not use the idea of objectification to refer to it. As seen before, her focus is *subordination*. Yet, with the idea of subordination she refers to the same wrongs Radin does when speaking of objectification: lack of sexual liberty and equality as a result of – and resulting in – a comparative ontological reductionism. In fact, for Radin, these wrongs are precisely what is common to objectification and subordination,[258] and that is why, in her view, objectification might exist without the other three other indicia of rhetorical commodification. When that is the case, objectification equates wrongful subordination.

> Finally, it seems possible to have objectification without fungibility, commensurability, or money equivalence. Treating something as interchangeable with others of its kind is not the only way to treat it as an object. Por example, improper subordination of persons could be a form of objectification without the other indicia of commodification.[259]

[254] *Idem*, p. 157.
[255] *Idem*, p. 158.
[256] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 563.
[257] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 198.
[258] RADIN, Margaret Jane, *Contested Commodities*, pp. 156-7.
[259] *Idem*, p. 119.

The idea of subordination is equally present in Catharine Mackinnon's abolitionist arguments. For her what is bought and sold in prostitution is not only sex but power:[260] the "you do what I say" sex,[261] the sex in which one serves and the other is served.[262] Serving or being used sexually is what prostitution is all about for this author, and being defined in terms of usability for someone else's sexual pleasure is precisely what she means by "sex object".[263] As a result, subordination and objectification appear as necessarily connected in Mackinnon's stance on prostitution. The wrongs referred to with those concepts are, first, the lack of freedom and equality: prostitution is denounced as the ultimate denial of sexual freedom,[264] as an issue of enforced inequality.[265]

In the same vein as Pateman, Mackinnon distinguishes and opposes prostitution to sex, since the latter – the "real thing" as she calls it – is "one of those things money cannot buy".[266] The reason is this: "sex is supposed to be chosen and wanted". "When you are having sex with someone you want to be having sex with", when you have choice over the men you are having sex with and over the sex you are having, when, hence, sex is *mutual*, "what you get out of sex is that you are doing it": sex "is its own reward", you do not need to be paid for it.[267] When you are being paid for it, you are not having sex for sex but for a non-sexual reason. And in Mackinnon's view that is evidence that paid sex is sex not chosen and not wanted.[268] Prostitution, therefore, is the opposite of what real sex is: mutual – equal in desire and pleasure – and free in the choice of the partner and practices.

The latter is an essential matter in Mackinnon's position on prostitution. In fact, the practices performed in prostitution and the lack of limits in those practices lead her to use objectification in a sense beyond the ones that function as a denunciation of the prostitute's

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[260] Kate Millett shares this idea: "[…] the buyer, the john, is not buying sexuality, but power, power over another human being, the dizzy ambition of being lord of another's will for a stated period of time – the euphoric ability to direct and command […]." (MILLETT, Kate, *The Prostitution Papers: A Candid Dialogue*, p. 56.)
[261] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 294.
[262] *Idem*, p. 291.
[263] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Francis Biddle's Sister: Pornography Civil Rights and Speech", p. 173.
[264] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 271.
[265] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Prostitution and Civil Rights", p. 30.
[266] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p 281.
[267] *Ibidem*.
[268] In the same vein, Sheila Jeffreys calls the sex in prostitution "unwanted sexual intercourse". (JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, pp. 260-1.)

lack of freedom and equality. Objectification is used by the author as a synonym of dehumanization and the wrong it targets is the degrading physical and psychological treatment this author claims prostitutes are always – or at least most often – victims of. That no social institution exceeds prostitution in physical violence[269] or that prostitutes are "subject to more violence than any other group of women in the world"[270] are only some of Mackinnon's many claims on the matter. But it is not only an issue of physical violence, it is an issue of denial of rights in general[271] and hence of denial of humanity:

> Women in prostitution are denied every imaginable civil right in every imaginable and unimaginable way, such that it makes sense to understand prostitution as consisting in the denial of women's humanity, no matter how humanity is defined.[272]

And that kind of treatment – an unhuman, cruel, and degrading treatment – is not only something that happens, or even that happens quite frequently. In Mackinnon's view, the possibility of a treatment that crosses the limits of humanity is prostitution's very reason: "it is the opportunity to do this that is exchanged when women are bought and sold for sex."[273]

Mackinnon, thus, seems to share Andrea Dworkin's idea that "prostitution is intrinsically abusive."[274] Dworkin, however, locates such intrinsic abuse at a very basic level: she speaks

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[269] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Prostitution and Civil Rights", p. 25.
[270] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p 285.
[271] Mackinnon refers specifically to the following rights: right not to be tortured, right to personal security, liberty and privacy, freedom from arbitrary arrest, property ownership, freedom of speech, right to be recognized as a person before the law, right to life, and right to formal and substantial equality. (MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Prostitution and Civil Rights", pp. 14-6.)
[272] *Idem*, p. 13.
[273] *Ibidem*, p. 13. Pateman makes the point in a different way. For her, one of the differences between prostitution and the work contract is that, in the latter, "[t]he employer is primarily interested in the commodities produced by the worker, that is to say, in profits", whereas in prostitution "[t]he employer has an interest in workers as selves in that, without them, he ceases to be a master and loses the enjoyment of command over subordinates." (PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 203.) "Masters […] contract for the use of human embodied selves. Precisely because subordinates are embodied selves they can perform the required labour, be subject to discipline, give the recognition and offer the faithful service that makes a man a master." (*Idem*, p. 206.)
[274] DWORKIN, Andrea, "Prostitution and Male Supremacy", pp. 2-3. Mackinnon opposes the idea that "[n]othing is fundamentally problematic about prostitution itself" and that "its harms [are] negligible or occasional", consequently defending prostitution's "intrinsic harm". (MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 297.)

of "prostitution per se".[275] For her, then, prostitution "without more violence, without extra violence, without a woman being hit, without a woman being pushed. Prostitution in and of itself is an abuse of a woman's body."[276]

> Prostitution is not an idea. It is the mouth, the vagina, the rectum, penetrated usually by a penis, sometimes hands, sometimes objects, by one man and then another and then another and then another and then another. That's what it is.[277]

That, by itself, is dehumanizing, since, in her opinion,

> It is impossible to use a human body in the way women's bodies are used in prostitution and to have a whole human being at the end of it, or in the middle of it, or close to the beginning of it. It's impossible. And no woman gets whole again later, after. […] nobody gets whole, because too much is taken away when the invasion is inside you, when the brutality is inside your skin.[278]

But that is not only it. The view that prostitution is intrinsically abusive and dehumanizing also lies in a definition of prostitution that puts objectification and subordination at its core: "[p]rostitution: what is it? It is the use of a woman's body for sex by a man, he pays money, he does what he wants."[279] Dworkin, however, sees the objectification within prostitution as a particular kind of objectification, since, in her view, the prostitute is not treated like any other object. Some objects one might actually take pretty good care of. Prostituted women instead "are treated as a particular kind of object, which is to say, a target", and a target is not an object you take good care of. A target is something "you go after."[280] The reason, for Dworkin, is the fact that the prostitute experiences a specific kind of inferiority. She is perceived and treated as dirty, as contagious, as deserving punishment and this not because

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[275] Sheila Jeffreys and Evelina Giobbe also share the idea that prostitution constitutes sexual violence in and of itself. See JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, pp. 259-63; GIOBBE, Evelina, "Prostitution: Buying the Right to Rape", pp. 143-9.
[276] DWORKIN, Andrea, "Prostitution and Male Supremacy", pp. 2-3.
[277] *Idem*, p. 2.
[278] *Idem*, p. 3.
[279] *Idem*, p. 2.
[280] *Idem*, p. 8.

of what she *does*, but because of what she *is*: "vaginal slime".[281] She is at "a social bottom beneath which there is no bottom."[282]

Dworkin sees the use of women in prostitution by men as an expression of "a pure hatred" and contempt for the female body.[283] That contempt is expressed in the reduction of the prostitute's whole human life "to a few sexual orifices", to which men can do whatever they want.[284] The prostitute "has no name. She is a mouth, a vagina, and an anus […]." She has a purely sexual function. So, no one needs *her* in particular, it can be any other. She is completely expendable.[285] The prostitute is, in fact, "the ultimate anonymous women": men "do not have to deal with her, […] don't have to remember who she is," she is not anyone specific to them.[286] "When she dies, who misses her? Who mourns her? She's missing, does anybody go look for her? I mean, who is she? She is no one. Not metaphorically no one. Literally, no one."[287] Being considered as less than nothing, as completely worthless is the prostitute's everyday experience.[288] That is how Dworkin explains the aggression involved in prostitution and the "specific kind of dehumanization experienced by women who are prostituted."[289]

The use of the idea of objectification in Dworkin is quite manifold. The use of a person as a means to another's ends, the reduction of a human being to a single aspect with the consequent denial of her individuality, fungibility, depersonalization and separateness, inferiority, and dehumanization: all these meanings are at work in Dworkin's use of the concept. However, the link between dehumanization, depersonalization, and reduction of the objectified person to a single aspect is, in my view, critical. The wrong particularly aimed at appears to be the cruel, humiliating, and undignified treatment prostitutes are claimed to always be subject to. But what that treatment consists of or, to put it differently, what makes

[281] *Idem*, pp. 5-6.
[282] *Idem*, p. 10.
[283] *Idem*, p. 6.
[284] *Ibidem*.
[285] *Idem*, p. 7.
[286] *Idem*, p. 6.
[287] *Idem*, p. 7.
[288] *Ibidem*.
[289] *Idem*, p. 8.

that treatment cruel, humiliating, and undignified remains unclear: the number of partners, the type of practices, the lack of sovereignty over one's own body and even mere commercialization – the sheer fact of receiving money for sex – are all specifically referred to by the author.

Sheila Jeffreys establishes a similar link between objectification, dehumanization, and violence. The common thread for her, though, seems to be depersonalization. Using John Stoltenberg's definition of sexual objectification, Jeffreys refers to the distance the person who objectifies interposes between himself and the person being sexually objectified. It is a distance that makes the objectified person "seem absent, not really 'there' as an equal real self," a *gulf* in fact, a "gulf between someone who experiences himself as real and someone whom he experiences as not real."[290] For Jeffreys, hence, sexual objectification "occurs in a continuum of dehumanization", whose far end is violence.[291] Prostitution is for Jeffreys "the purest form of objectification":

> [a]n unknown body which is paid for is likely to offer more effective gratification in this regard than a woman who is known and may intrude demands and make comments which might remind her user that she is a real person.[292]

The reference to *demands* takes us back to the idea of (lack of) liberty and sexual satisfaction. But the lack of liberty or choice in what concerns sexual practices leading to sexual satisfaction is far from being Jeffreys' main point when arguing against prostitution.

It is not, of course, that the absence of sexual pleasure in prostitution is unimportant for this author's stance on it. Quite the opposite: Jeffreys strongly opposes the allegation – posed by what she calls the "pro-prostitution movement" – that prostitutes enjoy sex, and that prostitution can, therefore, be a form of sexual liberation. In her view, the sex in prostitution is one of *serving the sexual desires* of one part and that could never be enjoyable or constitute sexual freedom to the other.[293] This is definitely one of Jeffreys' objections to prostitution. But the lack of sexual pleasure and liberty in determining the practices leading to it is not,

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[290] STOLTENBERG, John, *Refusing to be a Man*, p. 54, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 219.
[291] STOLTENBERG, John, *Refusing to be a Man*, p. 59, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 219.
[292] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 219.
[293] *Idem*, pp. 219-20.

however, Jeffreys' main concern when it comes to prostitution in particular and sexuality in general – a type of sex contrary to *the sexuality of equality and respect* is. And that type of sex is not exclusive to prostitution. So, even when chosen for pleasure and not for money, certain sexual practices – such as sadomasochism –[294] are not acceptable in this author's view: inequality of power trumps choice and desire when it comes to sex. The reason is this: desire does not necessarily lead to liberty and equality. Quite the opposite, in fact. Desire is determined by relations of power. In patriarchal societies hierarchy, subordination, and objectification can and in fact are eroticized.[295] That is why not everything that one wants and choses in sex – not all desired and satisfying sex – can be seen as liberating: in our society inequality is sexy.[296]

This is the reason for Jeffreys' focus on abusive sex rather than lack of mutual desire and pleasure or even non-consented sex. In her view, "consent is not a very effective way to distinguish between abusive and non-abusive sex",[297] because it makes harm invisible. People tend to "collapse the experience of harm into the act of consent."[298] For Jeffreys, prostitution is "sexual abuse because prostitutes are subjected to any number of sexual acts that in any other context, acted against any other woman, would be labelled assaultive or, at the very least, unwanted and coerced."[299] Following Kathleen Barry, Jeffreys claims that the sex that men buy in prostitution is the "same sex they take in rape – sex that is disembodied, enacted on the bodies of women who, for the men, do not exist as human beings, and the men

[294] Sheila Jeffreys has been a strong opposer of the acceptability of sadomasochism. See JEFFREYS, Sheila, "Consent and the Politics of Sexuality", p. 173, and JEFFREYS, Sheila, *Anticlimax: A Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution*. According to Jeffreys, "sadomasochism is based upon the inversion of values as in 'only when bound am I really free' and 'slavery is freedom'. Now the practice of that very bondage and slavery is being interpreted as freedom itself and female power." (JEFFREYS, Sheila, *Anticlimax: A Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution*, p. 5.) "A further possibility is that, once sex and degradation have been efficiently learned as one package, ritualised or actual degradation will be necessary in the future to elicit sexual response. Here lies the basis for sadomasochism." (*Idem*, p. 173.)

[295] MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, pp. 127, 137; JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 207; JEFFREYS, Sheila, *Anticlimax: A Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution*, pp. 4-5.

[296] MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 168.

[297] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 135.

[298] BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality,* p. 89, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, 136.

[299] GIOBBE, Evelina, "Prostitution: Buying the Right to Rape", p. 159, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 260.

are always in control."[300] The exchange of money does not transform the abusive nature of the acts, it merely redefines as prostitution what otherwise would be considered criminal.[301] And so, she concludes that "prostitution is the commerce of sexual abuse and inequality."[302]

The relation between money and objectification is due of note. Jeffreys talks of money as having the power to make the harms of prostitution invisible, objectification being one of those harms. But not always the wrong in commodification is so clearly stated as in this author. Very much the opposite: often, within the abolitionist feminist discourse, objectification is simply assumed to be a necessary result of commodification. In fact, "commodity" and "thing" are frequently used as interchangeable terms. The following step relies in the opposition between an object and a human being. The result is the direct equivalence between commodification and dehumanization. Andrea Dworkin's use of objectification is a good example of this: "[o]bjectification occurs when a human being […] is made less than human, turned into *a thing or commodity*."[303] It is as if money by itself had a downgrading effect on the person receiving it. Dworkin puts it this way:

> It is always extraordinary, when looking at this money exchange, to understand that in most people's minds the money is worth more than the woman is. The ten dollars, the thirty dollars, the fifty dollars, is worth much more than her whole life. The money is real, more real than she is. With the money he can buy a human life and erase its importance from every aspect of civil and social consciousness and conscience and society, from the protections of law, from any right of citizenship, from any concept of human dignity and human sovereignty. For fifty fucking dollars any man can do that.[304]

Kate Millett seems to use objectification precisely in this manner as she describes prostitutes as those who "offer themselves for sale as objects" and the act of those who buy as one "of buying person as objects".[305] For her, prostitution is itself a declaration of value, a reification

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[300] BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality*, p. 36, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 260.
[301] GIOBBE, Evelina, "Prostitution: Buying the Right to Rape", p. 146, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 260.
[302] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 260.
[303] My emphasis. DWORKIN, Andrea, "Against the Male Flood: Censorship, Pornography, and Equality', pp. 30.
[304] My emphasis. DWORKIN, Andrea, "Prostitution and Male Supremacy", p. 4.
[305] MILLETT, Kate, *The Prostitution Papers: A Candid Dialogue*, p. 50.

for "it's not sex the prostitute is really made to sell: it is degradation".[306] The claimed ontological reductionism and degrading treatment resulting from the prostitute's objectification comes out particularly clear as Millett describes the following scene she witnessed between a prostitute and a men who had refused her:

> She is stung hurt out of the somnolence of her mindless and comforting dance of sale, and yells back 'sonofabitch', 'motherfucker'. But her clichés have no striking power, and he continues to taunt her*, ridiculing the object for sale, cheapening it, defiling it, declaring it altogether valueless.* All she has. Her outrage and frustration, the *overpowering indignity*.[307]

Millett's use of objectification concludes an analysis of the handling of this notion by seven of the most important authors within abolitionist feminism. Such analysis was animated by some important questions we were left with at the end of the previous section: why is prostitution *per se* objectifying, subordinating, and a form of maldistribution? In what way does it wound the subject-like-value that all human beings should be accorded to? What do abolitionist feminists mean when they say prostitution is *in itself* a form of objectification?

After a dive into the main arguments of the referred authors on the matter, the answers found are quite manifold. Objectification is used with different meanings and with the aim of exposing different wrongs in prostitution. And where those wrongs are not referred to through the idea of "objectification", they are nonetheless identified as a reason in favor of abolishing prostitution.

I was able to identify six different senses with which objectification is used within the abolitionist feminist discourse. Someone's use as a means to another's ends is the first one. When used in this sense, objectification is generally aimed at exposing the lack of sexual autonomy prostitutes are faced with. Except for Carole Pateman, all the authors analyzed use objectification in this sense; Pateman also refers to it but calls it subordination instead. The second meaning of objectification identified is that of the reduction of a person to a single characteristic. The wrong aimed at here seems to be the negation of someone's individuality,

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[306] *Idem*, p. 56.
[307] My emphasis. *Idem*, p. 61.

with fungibility as a consequence. Andrea Dworkin is particularly strong on this point; Margaret Radin too, even if, as opposed to Dworkin, she does not use objectification as a synonym of this wrong. The third meaning of objectification equates depersonalization and is meant at exposing the wrong constituted by separateness between people, or, to put it differently, the lack of feelings and empathy in a sexual relation or between sexual partners. Kathleen Barry, Andrea Dworkin, and Sheila Jeffreys are the most prominent on attributing objectification this meaning; Radin, once again, refers to it and makes a strong issue out of it without naming it objectification. We are now left with objectification used in the sense of dehumanization to denounce violence by Catharine Mackinnon, Dworkin, Jeffreys and Barry. And, finally, with objectification as a synonym of inferiority and as a tool to expose inequality in rights and respect. Radin, Mackinnon, and Jeffreys are the expositors of this last meaning of objectification with Pateman making it an essential point on her arguments against prostitution but abstaining from calling it objectification.

One last note on the uses of objectification by abolitionist feminists. The five senses just mentioned can be understood as answers to the question "what is the wrong with objectification?": "why is objectification morally inacceptable?" There is, however, a sixth sense in which objectification is used by abolitionists which does not answer that question. I am here referring to the occasions in which objectification is simply used as a direct or necessary result of a commercial transaction involving sex without any substantiation of that claim. Dworkin and Millet are rather good examples of that use of objectification.

Some of the wrongs denounced and referred to by the term objectification are the same some abolitionist feminists allude to through the term *subordination*. That is the case for the first and fifth sense of objectification which aim to expose the harms of lack of autonomy and inequality in rights and respect. Of all the authors analyzed, Carole Pateman provides the best example of the use of subordination to refer to those harms. For her, what characterizes the relationship created by the contract of prostitution is not the exchange but the alienation of the right to self-government.[308] In fact, according to her, the enjoyment of command over a subordinate is what prostitution is all about: the real interest of the one's who contracts the

[308] PATEMAN, Carole, "Self-Ownership and Property in the Person: Democratization and a Tale of Two Concepts", p. 27.

services of a prostitute is to be a master and to be acknowledged as such.[309] But subordination could not be established in a situation of equality of interests and ends. And so Pateman claims that prostitution is the use of a person's body to *another's satisfaction*. There is no desire or satisfaction on the part of the prostitute. Prostitution is the unilateral use of someone's body in exchange for money, there is no mutual sexual attraction nor mutual physical satisfaction.[310]

Prostitution, however, is not only claimed to be a form of objectification, subordination, and maldistribution of rights. Prostitution is also claimed to be *caused by* and *cause to* those forms of social injustice. Abolitionist feminists, therefore, argue that prostitution has a direct relation with more general forms of female objectification, subordination, and maldistribution, and that, as a result, abolishing prostitution is specifically relevant to women. Why? How? In what way? Here are the questions that will direct the next section.

3.2. Prostitution as a Result and Cause of Women's Objectification

The assertion that sexuality is "integrally connected to conceptions of femininity and masculinity, and all these are constitutive of our individuality, our sense of self-identity"[311] is advanced by Pateman when arguing the special value sex has for human beings and defending the abolition of prostitution. A full grasp of this claim, however, is only made possible upon elucidation of a crucial notion for feminism, that of gender. In what follows, I will attempt to reconstruct this concept as elaborated by abolitionist feminists.

3.2.1. Gender and Sexuality

The *concept of gender* and its importance to feminism could, in a first moment, be summarized in this manner: the differences between men and women are not biological but rather socially constructed, and can, therefore, be modified. This idea, in turn, cannot be

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[309] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 203.
[310] *Idem*, p. 198.
[311] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 564.

properly understood without appreciating a fundamental distinction: that between sex and gender.

Sex refers to the anatomy and physiology of an individual's reproductive system and secondary sex characteristics; gender, on the other hand, refers to someone's behavior, feelings, thoughts, fantasies, and interests – it refers, thus, to someone's personality. It can be said that when one speaks of sex is speaking of male and female individuals, whereas gender denotes, instead, a sense of masculinity and femininity. These are not only different things as they are not necessarily connected.[312] Sex is biologically and prenatally determined; gender is not. Gender is instead "determined by postnatal forces, regardless of the anatomy and physiology of the external genitalia."[313] Gender, in fact, is so independent from sex, that it may even be contrary to physiology as proven by intersexed people who are assigned at birth a gender erroneously. And so, although the external genitalia may contribute to the sense of femininity and masculinity, it does not necessarily so. In sum, gender is postnatal and learned, it is socially constructed, culturally rather than biologically determined.[314]

To say that gender is socially constructed is to say that the sense of masculinity and femininity is determined by social relations. Men and women have different and specific roles in society, roles that are opposite and complementary. Women take care of children, men work to provide their sustenance; women are responsible for the house, men for work and the state; women have care related jobs, men have physical and decision-making type of jobs. Gender, hence, is a relational and extrinsic property of individuals determined by one's part in a system of social relations, which includes, among other things, the other gender and thus each gender's relationships to one another.[315]

Determined and determining such roles and relations are the notions of what a (normal) woman and a (normal) man is, of how, thus, each man and woman should be like. These ideas, therefore, work as norms, as gender norms. Let us pause here for a minute to make the notion of *gender norms* clearer. It can be said that "gender norms are clusters of

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[312] MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 29.
[313] STOLLER, Robert J., Sex *and Gender*, p. 48, as cited in MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 30.
[314] MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 30.
[315] HASLANGER, Sally, "On being Objective and Being Objectified", p. 212.

characteristics and abilities that function as a standard by which individuals are judged to be ‘good’ instances of their gender; they are the ‘virtues’ appropriate to the gender.”[316] Consequently, gender norms are norms that “capture how one should behave and what attributes are suitable if one is to excel in the socially sanctioned gender roles.”[317]

Let us now go back to the issue of *how* gender is socially constructed and in what sense is such construction related to gender norms: to say that gender is socially constructed is to say that our behavior is determined by norms of femininity and masculinity. It is through the interiorization of such norms that gender socialization operates. In it, mechanisms of punishment and reward play a significant role: those who resist or fail to comply are punished by being considered lesser man/woman, whereas those who comply are rewarded by being elevated to models of masculinity/femininity.[318]

Now, if gender refers to human being’s behavior, thoughts, fantasies, and interests, then an important part of it is *sexuality*. And this means that, on this view, sexuality is not natural either but also socially constructed. This idea seems to be in general far more difficult to accept: sexual desire, excitement, and pleasure as well as sexual acts are strongly believed to be the product of natural instincts or biological reflexes and drives. Yet, that sexual desire, pleasure, and practices are not based on biology but learnt is exactly what feminist theory of sexuality[319] has been claiming since at least the early seventies. Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics*, a classic on the topic, is a great example:

> […] the enormous area of our lives, both in early “socialization” and in adult experience, labeled “sexual behavior,” is almost entirely the product of learning. So much is this the case that even the act of coitus itself is the product of a long series of learned responses-responses to the patterns and attitudes, even as to the object of sexual choice, which are set up for us by our social environment.[320]

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[316] *Idem*, p. 213.
[317] *Idem*, p. 214.
[318] MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 110.
[319] Feminists are not, of course, the only ones claiming that sexuality is socially learnt. Social constructionism – as opposed to essentialism – has been defended by social theorists such as symbolic interactionist and post-structuralists or post-modernists. (JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 197.)
[320] MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 32.

As a form of behavior, sexuality is thus claimed to be constructed by gender roles and norms of masculinity and femininity. And so, feminists say that, although distinct because not naturally determined by sex, gender and sexuality stand in an intimate connection with each other: part of what is to be a man or a woman is to feel and act sexually in a certain way, a way that is different for men and for women. The heterosexual norm in our societies is sufficient prove of just that. But what exactly that relation is can be highly disputed among feminists. Carole Pateman and Catharine Mackinnon illustrate such debate quite well: while the former seems to claim that sexuality is a result of gender,[321] the latter inverts the relation by saying that sexuality is the force behind it[322]. And there are still others, such as Sheila Jeffreys, that attribute sexuality and gender a mutually reinforcing relation.[323] Where all these authors coincide, though, is on sexuality's importance to masculinity and femininity: as opposed to other feminists, both these and other abolitionists share the idea that sexuality – and not reproduction or labor – is gender's cornerstone.[324] And so what abolitionist feminists[325] claim is not only that to be a man or a woman is to feel and act sexually in a certain way, but that to feel and act sexually in a way that is coherent with the notions of womanhood and manhood is the most important part of those notions.

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[321] "Womanhood, too, is confirmed in sexual activity". (PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 61.) Kathleen Barry seems to share this position when she says that "sex is "a political product of gender hierarchy". (BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality*, p. 24.)

[322] "[…] it is sexuality that determines gender, not the other way around." (MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 111); "The molding, direction, and expression of sexuality organises society into two sexes: women and men. This division underlies the totality of social relations. Sexuality is the social process through which social relations of gender are created, organised, expressed, and directed, creating the social beings we know as women and men, as their relations create society." (*Idem*, p. 3); "To explain gender inequality in terms of "sexual politics" is to advance […] a political theory of the sexual that defines gender […]." (*Idem*, p. 131.)

[323] "This makes sexuality fundamentally constructive of sexual politics, as it is fundamentally constructed by sexual politics." (JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 206.)

[324] PATEMAN, Carole, "Sex and Power", p. 401.

[325] Perhaps it would be more accurate to say here "radical feminists" instead of "abolitionist feminists", as the authors who bring the idea of the fundamental importance of sexuality to the definition of what is a woman and a man identify themselves as radical feminists. However, because what is being analyzed is the abolitionist feminist argument that incorporates that same idea and not all authors that identify themselves as radical feminists are abolitionists – the pro-sex movement within radical feminism being the best example –, I have preferred to refer to abolitionist feminism. On the radical feminist movement's divisions and their respective positions on sexuality see WILLIS, Ellen, "Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism" and WILLIS, Ellen, "Lust Horizons: Is the Women's Movement Pro-Sex?".

Hopefully, the connection between gender and sexuality is now clearer. But to understand that gender and sexuality are not biologically determined, and that sexuality is part of gender because it is a form of behavior that both determines and is determined by it still does not allow us to understand why the integral connection between sexuality and the notions of femininity and masculinity is an argument in favor of the abolition of prostitution. To do so implies an examination of the content of gender and sexuality in our societies, societies claimed by feminists to be patriarchal societies.

A definition of patriarchy is in order. The simplest is this: patriarchies are societies in which men dominate women, where women are subordinated to men. Following Weber, Kate Millett, in her first notes toward a theory of patriarchy, describes the relationship between men and women precisely as one of dominance and subordinance.[326] Dominance, she says, is the possibility of imposing one's will and interests upon the behavior of others, and can emerge in the most diverse forms and be kept through the use of the most diverse means.[327] Despite its contradictions and exceptions – which is typical of any institution –, patriarchy's pervasiveness is undeniable. As Millett puts it,

> patriarchy as an institution is a social constant so deeply entrenched as to run through all other political, social, or economic forms, whether of caste or class, feudality or bureaucracy, just as it pervades all major religions, it also exhibits great variety in history and locale.[328]

Men dominate politics, the economy and all the major social institutions: from the family[329] to religion[330] and the state. Knowledge, technology and culture, in fact civilization itself can – and in deed is and has been – thought to be man's manufacture.[331] It is all men's domain and whatever men do, how they do it, what they think it should be done becomes the *norm*

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[326] MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, pp. 24-5.
[327] MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 25.
[328] MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 25.
[329] On the importance of family to patriarchy see MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, pp. 33-6; BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. xii; DWORKIN, Andrea, *Woman Hating*, p. 104; JEFFREYS, Sheila, *Anticlimax: A Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution*, p. 172; MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 42; PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, pp. 116-53.
[330] On the role of religion and myth in patriarchy see MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, pp. 51-4.
[331] MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 25.

for every human being: male is the subject and referent to which female is the "other".[332] So, apart from – and as a result of – power, wealth and all sorts of privileges, men hold in patriarchal societies a superior status in relation to women.

All this is achieved and maintained through multiple means. Violence and dependence are some of them, consent is other. Women's consent to – and voluntary cooperation with – patriarchy results from the interiorization of patriarchal values.[333] Among them are the ideas of femininity and masculinity, of what was previously referred to as gender norms. As said before, such norms act a normative standard taught, learned, and deeply interiorized. This can be explained through the idea of gender norms' prescriptive force: "not only do [those norms] serve as the basis for judgments about how people ought to be (act, and so on), but also we decide how to act, what to strive for, what to resist, in light of such norms."[334] Through that avenue, patriarchal values become something not (only) imposed or coerced, but something desired, "freely" complied with.[335]

Needless to say, that the content of the norms of femininity serves men's rather than women's best interests. So here is how femininity looks like: docile, delicate, passive, virtuous, emotional, beautiful, sexy. Sexy but not aggressive. That is men's domain: aggressivity, proactivity, force, intelligence, efficacy.[336] These characteristics, which Millett calls temperament, are aligned to correspond inversely: femininity is constructed as the opposite of masculinity and vice-versa.[337] That is what the idea of gender as relational and complementary is about. Those temperamental traits come with a role, which, in turn, assigns specific activities and functions within social institutions to each gender: "domestic service and attendance upon infants to the female, the rest of human achievement, interest, and ambition to the male."[338]

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[332] *Idem*, p. 46.
[333] *Idem*, p. 26.
[334] HASLANGER, Sally, "On being Objective and Being Objectified", pp. 214-15.
[335] As mentioned above, this prescriptive forced is backed by social sanctions: "if you don't aspire to the norm or if you don't manage to conform, you can expect censure, sometimes mild, sometimes severe." (*Idem*, p. 215.)
[336] MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 26.
[337] *Idem*, p. 32.
[338] *Idem*, p. 26.

So basically, to women is assigned the private sphere, to men the public arena. But that does not mean that women "rule" in the private sphere: also here, men's needs and desires, men's opinions and decisions determine women's limits and possibilities. In fact, according to Pateman, the private realm is the primal space where women become servants and men their masters.[339] The reason is this: the private sphere is constructed as opposite to the public domain, a kind of state of nature within civil society.[340] And so, while the public arena is a space of liberty and equality between the individuals allowed to access it – men –,[341] the private sphere is a space of natural subjection – of women.[342] Here, the state has traditionally been absent, the rule being left to nature. Nature, in turn, is thought to have made men superior and that is why the "natural" superiority of men's capacities is seen as justifying women's subordination in the private domain.[343] It is not surprising then that until the nineteenth century women had no legal existence independently of their husbands. As Pateman says, "a wife, like a slave, was civilly dead."[344]

One could think of very few things other than sexuality considered as "private". If privacy is the primal sphere in which men and women constitute themselves as master and servant, sexuality could not remain indifferent to such relationship. Quite the opposite: sexuality is one of the realms in which men's dominance over women is most present. In concrete, "men's ability to deny women sexuality or to force it upon them" is one of the shapes male power assumes in patriarchal societies.[345] Pateman talks of the "law of the male sex-right" to

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[339] Pateman substantiates this claim in her readings of the seventeenth century social contract theorists.
[340] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 10.
[341] "The contract theorists held that individuals, i.e., men, are born free and equal to each other and thus no natural relations of subordination and superiority can exist." (*Idem*, p. 82.)
[342] *Idem*, p. 11.
[343] *Idem*, pp. 94, 110, 172. Pateman is here referring to Immanuel Kant's justification of the husband's power over his wife: "the natural superiority of the faculties of the Husband compared with the Wife […]". (KANT, Immanuel, Philosophy of Law, pp. 111-12, as cited in PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 172.) Samuel von Pufendorf refers "to the 'superiority' of the male sex" and John Locke says "that a wife's subjection has a 'foundation in nature'". (PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 94.)
[344] *Idem*, p. 119.
[345] GOUGH, Kathleen, "The Origin of the Family", pp. 69-70, as cited in RICH, Adrienne, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", p. 638. Rich elaborates on the categories that Gough lists as characteristics of male power in archaic and contemporary societies. In what concerns the denial of sexuality to women, Rich says that such denial can be seen in the practices of "clitoridectomy and infibulation; chastity belts; punishment, including death, for female adultery; punishment, including death, for lesbian sexuality; psychoanalytic denial of the clitoris; strictures against masturbation; denial of maternal and postmenopausal

refer to the idea that men behave as if they have the right to sexually access women's bodies,[346] and, according to her, the exercise of such right is part of what, "in modern patriarchal terms, it means to be [masculine and] feminine."[347] And so, if "[t]he provision of 'domestic service' is part of the patriarchal meaning of femininity, of what it is to be a woman",[348] the same can be said about sex. That is how women come to be identified "first as sexual beings who are responsible for the sexual services of men"[349] and how sexual objectification comes to add subordination as *women's condition*.[350]

The idea of male sex-right can be better understood in connection with the notion of women's *chattel status*. Andrea Dworkin explains it as follows:

> Through most of patriarchal history, which is estimated variously to have lasted (thus far) five thousand to twelve thousand years, women have been chattel property. Chattel property, in the main, is movable property—cattle, wives, concubines, offspring, slaves, beasts of burden, domesticated animals. Chattel property is reckoned as part of a man's estate. It is wealth and accumulations of it both are wealth and demonstrate wealth. Chattel property for the most part is animate and sensate, but it is perceived

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sensuality; unnecessary hysterectomy; pseudolesbian images in media and literature; closing of archives and destruction of documents relating to lesbian existence". (RICH, Adrienne, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", p. 638.) As for the imposition of male sexuality upon women, Rich claims that it is done "by means of rape (including marital rape) and wife beating; father-daughter, brother-sister incest; the socialization of women to feel that male sexual "drive" amounts to a right; idealization of heterosexual romance in art, literature, media, advertising, etc.; child marriage; arranged marriage; prostitution; the harem; psychoanalytic doctrines of frigidity and vaginal orgasm; pornographic depictions of women responding pleasurably to sexual violence and humiliation (a subliminal message being that sadistic heterosexuality is more "normal" than sensuality between women)". (*Idem*, pp. 638-39.)

[346] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 2. A small genealogy of the idea of "law of the male sex-right" might be of relevance here. Pateman follows Adrienne Rich who first used the expression "law of the male sex-right" in "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence". The latter, in turn, follows Kathleen Gough, in her "The Origins of the Family", in what concerns the idea that men power expresses itself in the imposition of sexuality upon women, and Kathleen Barry, who uses the idea of "right to sexual access" (BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 252) and explains it as follows: "[f]rom cultural myths boys readily learn, first, at this drive is one that must be fulfilled because it cannot be contained and, second, that they have the implicit right to take girls and women as objects to fulfill that drive." (*Idem*, p. 257.)

[347] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 100.

[348] *Idem*, p. 126.

[349] BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 121.

[350] Objectification is here used in the second sense, i.e., as reduction of a human being to a specific aspect of her being, with the consequent erasure all the other features of her personality.

> and valued as commodity. To be chattel, even when human, is to be valued and used as property, as thing.[351]

Examples of women's chattel status can be found both in law and practice. Till the nineteenth century, women were not allowed to own property, which meant that they were not considered persons but property, and until the late twentieth century, married women could not engage in some economic transactions without the consent or participation of their husbands. With regard to sex and reproduction, women's chattel status has always been particularly present. Dworkin states as example the obligation of a married woman to engage in coitus with her husband. Writing at the beginning of the 1980s, the author is referring to marital rape and to the fact that it was not punishable at that time due to the legal definition of rape which did not comprise marriage. As a result, marriage implicitly included the legal right to coital access. The denial of the exercise of that right has always been punished in practice with battery, death and, of course, rape. Dworkin reminds us that

> [w]hen women were clearly and unambiguously sexual chattel, the wife could be 'chastised' by her husband at will – whipped, flogged, caned, hit, tied up, locked up – to punish her for her for real or imagined bad behavior or to improve her character. The bad behavior, then as now, was often an attempt to refuse the husband sexual access.[352]

Today, the astonishing numbers of rape cases and battered women confirm that the chattel status and the male right to sexual access are as much alive as they have always been.

The status of women as sexual property, as sexual objects is, thus, central in fixing male sexual control of women.[353] It is also absolutely essential to the very definition of what a woman is: "cunt, formed by men, used by men, her sexual organs constituting her whole being and her whole value."[354] The conclusion is this: sexual objectification is a defining element of womanhood since women have in a masculinist society a fundamental sex-object role.[355] To be a woman is to identify oneself as a being that which exists for male sexual

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[351] DWORKIN, Andrea, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, pp. 101-2.
[352] *Idem*, p. 102.
[353] *Idem*, p. 103.
[354] *Idem*, p. 110.
[355] BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 11.

use.[356] That is why, as Mackinnon puts it, "[a]ll women live in sexual objectification the way fish live in water."[357] The feminine gender is defined in terms of sexual objectification. It is in this sense that Dworkin says that a

> [w]oman is not born. She is made. In the making her humanity is destroyed. She becomes symbol of this, symbol of that […] but she never becomes herself […]. No act of hers can overturn the way in which she is consistently perceived: as some sort of thing. No sense of her own purpose can supersede, finally, the male's sense of her purpose: […] She is the thing she is supposed to be: the thing that makes him erect.[358]

Women's sexual objectification, however, does not impact only the definition of what a woman is; it also defines what (normal) sex is, how sex should be like, and so how it is in fact. In this sense, sexual objectification is the cement that connects gender and sexuality across patriarchal cultures, the common thread between them. As such, sexual objectification is the ground upon which abolitionist feminists[359] build their critique of our paradigm of sexuality. It is a threefold critique, which I now move to analyze in some detail.

The first part of such critique focuses on the idea of male sexuality. With it, these feminists are referring to the fact that what we see as sex, as what sex *is*, as "just sex", what we believe to be sex from a neutral perspective is in fact sex from a very specific point of view: the male point of view. The sexual practices considered "normal" sexual acts, and thus more often

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[356] MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 110.
[357] *Idem*, p. 149. Mackinnon substantiates this claim by saying that each element of the female gender stereotype is in fact sexual. "Vulnerability means the appearance/reality of easy sexual access; passivity means receptivity and disabled resistance, enforced by trained physical weakness; softness means pregnability by something hard. Incompetence seeks help as vulnerability seeks shelter, inviting the embrace that becomes the invasion, trading exclusive access for protection […] from that same access. Domesticity nurtures the consequent progeny, proof of potency, and ideally waits at home dressed in Saran Wrap. Woman's infantilization evokes pedophilia; fixation on dismembered body parts (the breast man, the leg man) evokes fetishism; idolization of vapidity, necrophilia. Narcissism ensures that woman identifies with the image of herself man holds up: 'Hold still, we are going to do your portrait, so that you can begin looking like it right away.' Masochism means that pleasure in violation becomes her sensuality. Lesbians can so violate the sexuality implicit in female gender stereotypes as not to be considered women at all, or lesbian existence must be suppressed to reaffirm the stereotypes." (*Idem*, p. 110.)
[358] DWORKIN, Andrea, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, p. 128.
[359] Once again, accuracy requires me to make clear that it was radical feminists and not just abolitionist feminists who directed at sexuality the critique I am here referring to. However, since such critique is used by abolitionist feminists as a foundation of one of the most important arguments in favor of the abolition of prostitution – the one I am now examining –, I believe this nomenclature is more adequate to the context.

performed, are the ones that sexually satisfy and arouse men. Penetration is probably the best example. Mackinnon puts it as follows: sexuality still centers on penetration and male ejaculation, the reproductive act. But if reproduction had anything to do with what sex is for, sex would not, of course, happen as often as it does. Still, as she notes, "'we had sex three times' typically means the man entered the woman three times and orgasmed three times."[360] And this despite the fact that vaginal orgasms are, for quite a while now, proven to be much less frequent than orgasms resulting from clitoral stimulation.[361] It is in this sense that Jeffreys says that what constitutes sex in our societies is men's use of "another human being as an object on whom and in whom he can act out his urges in a way that makes her 'desires' and pleasure, even her personhood, irrelevant."[362] Pateman summarizes all this by saying that "[i]n modern patriarchy, masculinity provides the paradigm for sexuality; and masculinity means sexual mastery. The 'individual' is a man who makes use of a woman's body (sexual property); the converse is much harder to imagine."[363] From this it follows the claim that we live under a paradigm of male sexuality, which, in turn, means female objectification.

Female objectification is the second part of the critique abolitionist feminists direct at the current model of sexuality. In this context, the focus is what female objectification entails in terms of specific practices. We already know that, according to abolitionist feminists, those practices are whatever men desire and take pleasure on. Precisely from this derives women's sexual objectification. Yet, the relation between both those elements is not unidirectional. It is not just that male sexuality leads to female objectification, but also that what constitutes male sexuality – the specific practices men desire and take pleasure on – is also determined by female objectification.

Now, objectification, let us be reminded, is claimed to occur within a continuum in which violence is the extreme pole.[364] Does this mean that violent practices are inherent to sex under the male model of sexuality? For these feminists that is exactly it. And that is precisely what

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[360] MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 133.
[361] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 237. Jeffreys bases this statement in the 1977 Hite Report. On the same point about the greater frequency of the clitoral orgasm see MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 117.
[362] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 214.
[363] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 185.
[364] STOLTENBERG, John, *Refusing to be a Man*, p. 59, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 219. MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 145.

one of their major criticisms: "[m]ale sexuality is apparently activated by violence against women and expresses itself in violence against women to a significant extent."[365] Such claim was not difficult to substantiate. Multiple psychological studies and an extensive literature on the matter establish a strong connection between violence and sexual arousal.[366] And also pornography provides testimony to the first part of the argument: based on what it portrays, what sexually arouses men is "women bound, women battered, women tortured, women humiliated, women degraded and defiled, women killed."[367] As to the second part, numbers do the job: in the beginning of the 1980s, "[u]sing FBI statistics, feminists calculate[d] that in the United States one woman [was] raped every three minutes, one wife battered every eighteen seconds."[368] In fact, "only 7.8 percent of women in the United States is not sexually assaulted or harassed in their lifetimes".[369]

The conclusion should not be misunderstood: the claim is not that violence is a response to the desired object when desire's expression is frustrated, but that violence is the very dynamic of desire; and it is not just that violence is sexualized, it is rather that violence, under patriarchy, becomes *what sex is*. Hostility and contempt are the emotions of this sexuality's excitement.[370] In particular, "it is hostility – the desire, overt or hidden, to harm another person – that generates and enhances sexual excitement."[371]

But the abolitionist feminist criticism of sexuality does not end here. To say that we live under a paradigm of male sexuality is not only to say that sex is what *men* sexually desire and take pleasure on or even that violence is inherent to sex because sexual practices determine and are determined by women's sexual objectification. In fact, such criticism is not only about sexual practices – about their content – but also about the meaning of those practices. And meaning is of a fundamental importance in sexuality, since it is meaning that can make some practices sexually attractive, desirable, and satisfying, and not others. It is

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[365] MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 145.
[366] *Idem*, p. 144.
[367] *Idem*, p. 138.
[368] DWORKIN, Andrea, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, p. 103.
[369] MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 127.
[370] *Idem*, p. 136.
[371] STOLLER, Robert, *Sexual Excitement: Dynamics of Erotic Life*, p. 6, as cited in MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 136.

meaning that shapes desire and pleasure. So here is the third part of the critique abolitionist feminists make to our paradigm of sexuality: what is eroticized under patriarchy is hierarchy; domination in the case of men, subordination in the case of women.[372] It is the meaning of a practice as domination for men and as subordination for women that makes such practice sexually attractive for both men and women.

Understanding how that comes to be the case require us to first understand desire itself as a social construct. Sexuality is not a separate and immune sphere to preexisting social relations. On the opposite: it is a pervasive dimension of social life, one that permeates everything and in which social divisions – and hence social roles – play themselves out. The sexual is, then, "continuous with something other than sex itself": it is continuous with politics, with power.[373] From this it follows that sexuality coincides with gender, that their content is identical.[374] In Mackinnon's words,

> many distinctive features of women's status as second class – the restriction and constraint and contortion, the servility and the display, the self-mutilation and requisite presentation of self as a beautiful thing, the enforced passivity, the humiliation – are made into the content of sex for women.[375]

The fundamental point is this: sex is about power. As it is gender. It is power – male power – that shapes both sexuality and gender. Power is, thus, the force that determines both sexuality and gender's crucial content: men's domination and women's subordination. It is precisely that content that becomes sexualized under the current model of sexuality. It is domination and subordination that arouse men and women respectively and, therefore, lead to specific sexual practices and forms of sexuality which objectify women and are simultaneously determined by such objectification. And so, that desire is an artefact of power and that, consequently, what is sexually arousing is power for men and lack of it for women is precisely what the third part of the abolitionist feminist criticism of sexuality consists of.

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[372] MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 130.
[373] *Ibidem*.
[374] *Idem*, p. 143.
[375] *Idem*, p. 130.

But there is still a missing element in all this. One that is pervasive to all three parts of the critique just examined. Men's desires and pleasure, sexual practices and its meanings cannot fully account for a paradigm of male sexuality and female objectification. There is a further element to it: the fact that whatever men desire and sexually satisfy them – even if that is violence against women and power in relation to them – comes to be perceived by all – women included – as simply what sex is; as if it was neutral rather than masculine, "just sex" rather than sex from the male point of view.

To understand how the interests of male sexuality construct what sexually as such means, the idea of *epistemological objectivity* must be added to the equation. According to Mackinnon, there is an intrinsic relation "between objectification, the hierarchy between self as being and other as thing, and objectivity, the hierarchy between the knowing subject and the known object."[376] In our societies, the position of epistemic subject has historically belonged to men. It is men who have always been seen as capable of objectivity by their own nature. Women, on the contrary, have been excluded from objectivity because stigmatized as ruled by subjective passions and therefore relegated to subjective inwardness.[377] Now, objectivity – with its requirements of distance and aperspectivity – is a myth, but it is a myth with crucial implications,[378] for it serves to hide the specific subjectivity behind objectivity, the male subjectivity. That is how the male point of view about the world becomes, in the eyes of all, what the world really *is*.

Epistemological objectivity is the last element of the criticism abolitionist feminists direct at our current paradigm of sexuality. This is the element that stiches together the three parts of a critique that ultimately charges our model of sexuality with male sexuality and female objectification. Now, this is not a minor criticism. Quite the opposite, since sexuality is taken by abolitionist feminists to be gender's central element. Not reproduction, not division of labor, nor even unequal wealth distribution. According to them, the core of femininity is sexuality. And not any type of sexuality but *sexual objectification*, the only possible female sexuality in patriarchal societies. And so, that women *are* – are made to be – sexual objects

[376] *Idem*, p. xi.
[377] *Idem*, p. 121.
[378] *Idem*, p. 99.

is these authors' main critique of gender and sexuality. It is also the firm basis upon which rest two of abolitionist feminism's main arguments against prostitution: that prostitution is an expression of women's general condition – as sexual objects – and that prostitution is a cause, a tool in the social construction of women as such. Sexual objectification as the fundamental condition of women is, therefore, the connection between the feminist theory of gender and sexuality analyzed in this section and the abolitionist arguments against prostitution which motivated it.

3.2.2. Prostitution as Caused by Women's Sexual Objectification

Let us begin with the first charge: prostitution is an expression of women's sexual objectification and so it only exists because of it.

Such argument departs from undeniable empirical data: the absolute majority of people in prostitution are women and the absolute majority of clients are men.[379] The next step could not, of course, be other than the understanding of the reasons behind such fact. A step that assumes that the numbers are not random, a product of pure chance. And since a biological explanation is discarded due to the very definition of gender as socially constructed, prostitution cannot but be the result of structural elements.

Prostitution is often attributed to factors such as class and race. And, in fact, poverty is, for several different reasons, particularly female. But men are poor too and, as women, are also members of racial and socially disadvantaged groups. "Yet men are not selling sex in anything like the numbers women are. So: why are the prostituted so often women? The answer […] is sex inequality",[380] and sex inequality in a very specific sense, for the problem with prostitution, according to the argument under analysis, is not that prostitution is contingently gendered, that is female – even if in fact is. What is argued is not that prostitution is a problem of unequal distribution of benefits and burdens.[381] Rather, prostitution is a

[379] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 563.
[380] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 291.
[381] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 561. In fact, some feminists "deny that women's acting sexually just like men is a worthy goal or that women's purchasing sexual services

problem of unequal sexual relations, a problem, located at the very core of femininity and masculinity's content. That is why it is not "a merely contingent fact that most prostitutes are women and customers men."[382] This is a result of "the structure of sexual relations between women and men."[383] A structure in which men are the subject and women the object whose function is to fulfill men's sexual desires. And a structure in which to be the subject in sex is the very meaning of masculinity, the same way that to be a sexual object is femininity's content.

It is in this sense that abolitionist feminists argue that "[t]he demand by men for prostitutes in patriarchal capitalist society is bound up with a historically and culturally distinctive form of masculine [and feminine] individuality."[384] Sexual selves of men and women are not interchangeable. Each correspond to different roles: one – the male one – that dominates, and other – the female one – that is subordinated. And it is domination and, consequently, the affirmation of (that specific form of) masculinity that men look for and achieve in prostitution.

On this view, then, it is the social structure of sexual relations that explains (1) the demand for prostitution, (2) why is men who demand it, and (3) what exactly is demanded: not sex on equal terms, not a "reciprocal expression of desire" but a "unilateral subjection to sexual acts with the consolation of payment".[385] In sum, what is wrong with prostitution is the fact that it "is grounded in the [gender] inequality of domination and subjection",[386] in the sexual objectification of women. Prostitution, in fact, is claimed to be "the fullest patriarchal

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is a potential benefit." (OVERALL, Christine, "What's Wrong with Prostitution? Evaluating Sex Work", p. 721.)

[382] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 563. The point that "prostitution is overwhelmingly done to women by men" is also made by Mackinnon (MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Prostitution and Civil Rights", p. 29.) See also, OVERALL, Christine, "What's Wrong with Prostitution? Evaluating Sex Work", p. 717.

[383] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 564. The claim that there is a structural element behind prostitution, which is the cause of its existence is also made by Christine Overall in her "What's Wrong with Prostitution? Evaluating Sex Work", p. 716.

[384] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 564.

[385] *Idem*, p. 563. Mackinnon makes the same point about male demand being the reason of prostitution's existence in her "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 281.

[386] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", pp. 561-2. The same argument is made by OVERALL, Christine, "What's Wrong with Prostitution? Evaluating Sex Work" p. 719.

reduction of women to sexed body".[387] And so, it is inherently gendered:[388] "women are prostituted as women."[389]

3.2.3. Prostitution as a Cause of Women's Objectification and Subordination

Let us now move on to the second argument: prostitution is a cause, a tool in the social construction of women as sexual objects.

Abolitionist feminists take different routes to reach this conclusion. One is what I would call *confirmation*. Confirmation of the (sexual) master status of masculinity. Here the idea seems to be that prostitution leads to the social construction of women as sexual objects by providing a locus where both masculinity as domination and femininity as subordination are confirmed and, thus, interiorized. Pateman gives us a good example of this type of substantiation of the argument under analysis:

> Not all husbands exercise to the full their socially and legally recognized right – which is the right of a master. There is, however, another institution which enables all men to affirm themselves as masters. To be able to purchase a body in the market presupposes the existence of masters. Prostitution is the public recognition of men as sexual masters; it puts submission on sale as a commodity in the market.[390]

Another is *normalization*. And normalization in a more direct sense, as all paths toward this argument seem to somehow imply it. The claim here seems to be that the very existence of

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[387] BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality,* p. 22.

[388] OVERALL, Christine, "What's Wrong with Prostitution? Evaluating Sex Work", p. 721; "What other job is so deeply gendered that one's breasts, vagina and rectum constitute the working equipment?" (LEIDHOLDT, Dorchen, "Prostitution: A Violation of Women's Human Rights", pp. 138-9, as cited in MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Prostitution and Civil Rights", p. 29.

[389] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Prostitution and Civil Rights", p. 29.

[390] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 564. Kate Millett seems to take the same road as she argues that prostitution is a declaration of the prostitute's value right in the open and since prostitution is "the very core of the female's social condition" (MILLETT, Kate, *The Prostitution Papers: A Candid Dialogue*, p. 55), it's also a declaration of women's value, of women reification. The reason for this is that, in her view "[i]t is not sex the prostitute is really made to sell: it is degradation. And the buyer, the john, is not buying sexuality, but power, power over another human being, the dizzy ambition of being lord of another's will for a stated period of time - the euphoric ability to direct and command an activity presumably least subject to coercion and unquestionably most subject to shame and taboo." (*Idem*, p. 56.)

prostitution, as well as its pervasiveness, normalizes the status of women as sexual objects, hence contributing to the interiorization of such status by society as a whole. So, for example, Barry says that sexual exploitation – of which prostitution is an instance – is the foundation of the social normalization of women's oppression.[391] In her view, normalization transforms the specific type of sex performed in prostitution into what sex in general is. In this sense, the problem is not (only) the sexuality of prostitution, but the prostitution of sexuality the former leads to.

A third avenue could be referred to as *schooling*. Here the argument that prostitution leads to the social making of women as sexual objects is based on the idea that prostitution (un)teaches people what sex is. It indoctrinates both men and women in male sexuality and female sexual objectification. In this process, pornography is inextricably linked to prostitution. "Pornography is an arm of prostitution."[392] The links established between them are twofold. On one side, pornography is said to be a form of prostitution[393] – recorded and visual prostitution –, on the other, pornography is claimed to portray the type of sex women experience in prostitution.[394] Particularly, the worst kind. According to Dworkin, etymology shows us just that: "[t]he word pornography, derived from the ancient Greek *pornē* and *graphos*, means 'writing about whores.' *Pornē* means 'whore,' specifically and exclusively the lowest class of whore, which in ancient Greece was the brothel slut available to all male citizens."[395] In Dworkin's view,

> [c]ontemporary pornography strictly and literally conforms to the word's root meaning: the graphic depiction of vile whores, or, in our language, sluts, cows (as in: sexual cattle, sexual chattel), cunts. The word has not changed its meaning and the genre is not misnamed.[396]

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[391] BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality,* pp. I, 26.
[392] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Prostitution and Civil Rights", p. 30.
[393] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Pornography as Trafficking", p. 999.
[394] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Prostitution and Civil Rights", p. 30. Jeffreys makes the same point: "[p]ornography and prostitution are indivisible too, because pornography is the representation of prostitution. Pornography records the commercial sexual use of women." (JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, pp. 231-2.)
[395] DWORKIN, Andrea, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, p. 199.
[396] *Idem*, p. 200.

The result is the encouragement of more and more passive acquiescence to the prostitution type of sexuality that pornography depicts, which, in turn, makes "the already credulous consumer more credulous. He comes to the pornography a believer; he goes away from it a missionary."[397] It is in this way that "pornography connects sexuality with gender in social reality".[398] Through the depiction of the sexuality of prostitution as just sex, pornography sexualizes inequality, makes women sexual objects.[399]

> Pornography is a means through which sexuality is socially constructed, a site of construction, a domain of exercise. It constructs women as things for sexual use and constructs its consumers to desperately want women to· desperately want possession and cruelty and dehumanization. Inequality itself, subjection itself, hierarchy itself, objectification itself, with self-determination ecstatically relinquished, is the apparent content of women's sexual desire and desirability.[400]

Finally, the last course I was able to identify is premised in the idea of *obstacle*. The allegation here is that prostitution is an impediment to the transformation of sex into a type of sexuality respectful of women as human beings and, hence, of their subordinate status. And if it is a barrier to change, it is also an instrument in the social manufacture of women as sexual objects. Jeffreys puts it as follows:

> The "sex" of prostitution, it seems, can provide a reservoir of access to sexist behaviour towards women as this becomes less acceptable in the workplace, in the home and in marriages. For women as a class, the ability to transform sexual practice, to achieve respect from men as equal human beings and thus break out of their subordinate status,

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[397] *Idem*, p. 202.

[398] MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 142. Part of this process of schooling is, of course, the normalization of the type of sex portrayed in pornography. (*Idem*, p. 205; MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Not a Moral Issue", p. 156). Normalization, however, seems here to be relegated to a second level factor in the wider process of schooling.

[399] MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 143. Other than Mackinnon and Dworkin, several abolitionist feminists seem to espouse this route of the argument according to which prostitution is an important element in the social construction of women as sexual objects through pornography. Barry is a rather good example: "while pornographic media are the means of sexually saturating society, while rape is paradigmatic of sexual exploitation, prostitution, with or without a woman's consent, is the institutional, economic, and sexual model for women's oppression." (BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality,* p. 24)

[400] MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 139.

> is undermined by the ability of men to escape from the responsibility of acknowledging women's equality. Men's use of women in prostitution stands directly in the way of women's efforts to improve their status. As the sex industry expands in its forms, in its worldwide organisation and in its acceptability, its effectiveness in preventing such an improvement is likely to intensify considerably.[401]

It is through all these four routes, then, that abolitionist feminists substantiate the argument that prostitution leads to female sexual objectification. The idea is that, whether though confirmation, normalization, schooling, or as an obstacle to change, prostitution becomes "the model for women's condition".[402] Under this perspective, prostitution is an institution that confirms, normalizes and teaches the whole society that women are sexual objects, impeding the transformation of their sexuality and status. It is, therefore, an institution through which the male point of view about sexuality becomes the universal and neutral point of view, thus constructing the reality of femininity – of female gender – as sexual objectification.

> The prostitute symbolizes the value of women in society. She is paradigmatic of women's social, sexual, and economic subordination in that her status is the basic unit by which all women's value is measured and to which all women can be reduced.[403]

3.2.4. Concluding Remarks

Hopefully, Pateman's argument with which this whole section began is now completely clear: sexuality – and so also prostitution – is "integrally connected to conceptions of femininity and masculinity".[404] Conceptions whose content corresponds to domination and

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[401] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 240.
[402] GIOBBE, Evelina, "Confronting the Liberal Lies About Prostitution", p. 7. Barry concurs: "prostitution, with or without a woman's consent, is the institutional, economic, and sexual model for women's oppression." (BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality,* p. 24.)
[403] GIOBBE, Evelina, "Confronting the Liberal Lies About Prostitution", p. 7, as cited in MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Prostitution and Civil Rights", p. 29.
[404] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 564.

subjection, to the sexual objectification of women, and which are both expressed and actualized by prostitution.

When asking "what's wrong with prostitution" from an abolitionist feminist point of view, we were confronted with the harms of commodification as an answer. Those harms are claimed to be objectification, subordination, and maldistribution of rights. More specifically, prostitution is said to be in itself a form of those types of social injustice. But not only. Prostitution is also claimed to be caused and bring about those social harms. The previous section was devoted to the examination of the first claim. The current section was aimed at analyzing the second claim and its specific relation to women's condition in our society, since prostitution is argued to be intrinsically related with female objectification, subordination, and maldistribution: a relation that consists of being both caused by and cause of those forms of female injustice.

The scrutiny of such allegation required us to dig into the theory of gender and sexuality espoused by abolitionist feminists, whose main points are these: (1) gender and sexuality are socially constructed, (2) sexuality is gender's cornerstone, and (3) both gender and sexuality's content correspond to the domination of men and subordination of women. In what concerns sexuality, such subordination translates into female objectification. And it is in the idea of women's sexual objectification – with all its consequences – that the abolitionist feminist critique to our current model of sexuality relies on.

Now, that prostitution is in itself a form of objectification is a crucial premise of the argument that this institution is also a result and a cause of our society's type of sexuality. The point is exactly that prostitution is the model of patriarchal societies' sexuality. That there is a continuum between both, that both prostitution and our current paradigm of sexuality have at the core the same problem and the same fundamental feature: women's sexual objectification. Since sexuality is taken to express and construct gender, sexual objectification and thus prostitution are claimed to be femininity's essential meaning. That is what is wrong with prostitution to abolitionist feminists.

This takes us to a last crucial question: can an object be free? Can the decision to become an object be an expression of liberty? Is consent an adequate concept to interpret the choices

determined by the lack of alternatives? Or is that notion just a way to mask and legitimize what is in fact complete servitude?

4. Consent and Freedom

Prostitution is the ultimate denial of freedom: it is a form of rape, a form of sexual slavery. This could be said to be the general abolitionist feminist argument concerning prostitution and freedom. Its substantiation, of course, revolves around consent. Yet several and different claims about consent can and indeed are made to support that general allegation about the lack of freedom in prostitution.

In my view, two lines of reasoning can generally be identified. The first focus on the necessary requirements for a truly free consent; the second on the relation between consent and freedom. The former denies the presence of those requirements in prostitution; the latter denies the very relevance of consent in establishing prostitution as free. In sum, one refutes free consent; the other dismisses it.

But this is not the only possible way to understand the types of abolitionist feminist arguments concerning freedom in prostitution. A second, very close one, regards conditions. And conditions in a double sense: external and internal to prostitution. External in the sense of conditions that are extrinsic to prostitution and lead women to engage in it or keep them from leaving; internal in the sense of conditions *of* prostitution, i.e., conditions under which prostitution operates and which are said to be "truly disastrous".[405]

While in the first case the idea is that such (external) conditions force women into prostitution; in the second, the claim is that those (internal) conditions are so bad that no one could freely and consciously consent to it. That, however, is not the only connection established between internal conditions to prostitution and consent. Such connection is, in fact, of two kinds. The first, just mentioned, seems to be, once more, linked to the idea of free consent. The claim here is that, if the internal conditions of prostitution are intrinsically bad, the only thing that could lead someone to take the decision to engage in it is the external

[405] ANDERSON, Scott, "Prostitution and Sexual Autonomy: Making Sense of the Prohibition of Prostitution", p. 358.

conditions, which coerce consent. It is, therefore, a connection that departs from internal conditions but also requires the external ones as a necessary part of the argument. The second, instead, relies exclusively on internal conditions and instead of evoking the lack of freedom that leads women to engage in prostitution, focus on the lack of freedom within prostitution both for prostitutes as individuals and as women, i.e., as members of a collective entity. The point, then, is not to invalidate consent, but to dismiss it as a paradigm of freedom. Consent, thus, is here deemed irrelevant.

Hopefully, these attempts at classification is a start toward clarification of the arguments that emerge from abolitionist feminism concerning consent in prostitution. Let us now take a closer look into specific arguments. I will start with arguments of the first type: arguments that deny the presence of the essential requirements for a free consent, arguments that focus on the conditions leading to the decision to engage in prostitution. And I will begin by looking at what those (external) conditions are claimed to be and what they mean in terms of consent.

4.1. Consent and External Conditions

First, *poverty*: the most common reason why people engage in prostitution is claimed to be poverty.[406] Poverty, in this context, means essentially two things: need and lack of options. Need for what? Most frequently, when speaking of poverty as the main cause of entrance in prostitution, abolitionist feminists are referring to a level of poverty in which survival is at stake.[407] So, need here would be the need for the essential means for survival. The only kind of need whose object cannot be said to be a mere desire, the only whose content cannot be seen, under any perspective, as only relatively or subjectively important. As such, it is not a need whose fulfillment is optional. And so, it is a need capable of transforming what would otherwise be a free choice into a coerced decision:[408] one cannot but say yes to whatever allows us to survive.

[406] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 276.
[407] *Idem*, p. 281.
[408] *Ibidem*.

That transformative power, however, does not result exclusively from the type of need. The conversion of consent into coercion demands a second element: that the person does not have access to other means capable of fulfilling the referred need, the lack of options, therefore. Poverty is not only a matter of wealth but also a question of restriction of possibilities, of limitation of access to more and better sources of income. This, in turn, relates to lack of access to education and to the consequent lack of job skills.[409]

Such limitation is, of course, connected to membership in social disadvantaged groups.[410] Poverty is not something individual, but rather a matter of class. And, additionally, it goes hand in hand with racism, colonialism, and sexism, which make poverty racialized, geographically situated, and also undoubtedly gendered.[411] That is why it is not equally likely that a white, European men and a racialized woman from the Global South come to be engaged in prostitution.[412]

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[409] "They entered prostitution before any other possible method of earning money was open to them. Their social background was often the bottom end of the working class." (JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 153); BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 89. Barry denies that poverty is the direct cause of prostitution. Her point is combating the myth that "only lower-class or poor women and girls turn to prostitution", since, in her view, "most pimps recruit girls who are runaways, many of whom are from middle-class homes." She also opposes the idea that "only ethnic minority women are trapped in prostitution", for, according to her, "many white women and girls are visible hooking on the streets" and "pimps recruit women based on customer demand and easy availability", and that, for her, seems to mean white girls and women. (*Idem*, p. 10.) However, when explaining what she calls the recruitment tactic consisting of love and befriending – one of the few that does not directly imply poverty – she says: "[t]he young girl or woman he sets as a target is likely to be naive, lonely, and bitter at the family she has just run away from or the marriage she has just left. She is also likely to be broke and without job skills. Suddenly a man appears who is friendly, who offers to buy her a meal and, later, a place to spend the night. [...] buy her new clothes and have her hair done". (*Idem*, p. 89.)

[410] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 277.

[411] That poverty is gendered and that poverty is one of the factors that lead women to engage in prostitution is argued by Jeffreys, who provides the following statistics on the matter: "[w]omen's economic status in the United States, for instance, suggests that the 'choice' of prostitution is not often made from amongst many viable alternatives. Women are two thirds of all economically poor adults, according to the US Bureau of Census; full-time female workers earn 60 per cent of the male wage, and the average female college graduate earns less than a man with a mere high-school diploma." (JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 154.) In addition to the inequality in payment and access to jobs, Jeffreys also highlights that women's poverty – and thus their entrance into prostitution – is also related in an important way with the fact that women are children's primary caretakers: "[o]lder women, she explains, entered prostitution as a way to resist poverty for themselves and their children." (*Idem*, p. 155.)

[412] Not all abolitionist feminists seem to share this claim. Barry, for instance, with her strong belief that the oppressive sexual relations all women are subject to are the cause of prostitution, hurries to highlight that the belief that prostitution affects mainly poor and racialized women is a false one. (BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 10.)

Additionally, the limitation of options as a condition of entrance into prostitution is deepened by factors that further restrict people's possibilities of income: (1) homelessness – commonly resulting from physical and sexual abuse –,[413] (2) drug addiction – both previous and posterior to prostitution and which leaves only crime as an alternative for survival –,[414] and (3) the very engagement in prostitution, which makes it much more difficult to find a different job.[415]

Now, none of this is a choice. No one chooses to be born poor or a member of socially vulnerable groups – groups that have very limited possibilities of fulfilling basic and non-optional needs. It is that lack of alternatives, whether determined by a structural condition or a more individual one, that leads people to engage in prostitution. That is why abolitionist feminists argue that prostitution is not a choice but the "product of lack of choice, the resort of those with the fewest choices, or none at all when all else fails."[416] The conclusion is this: in prostitution "[t]he sex is coerced by the need to survive."[417] Rather than guaranteeing consent, money coerces the sex in prostitution, which, hence, makes it "a practice of serial rape".[418]

Second, *sexual abuse*. According to abolitionist feminists, sexual abuse in childhood is a major precondition to entrance in prostitution.[419] The substantiation of such claim begins

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[413] DWORKIN, Andrea, "Prostitution and Male Supremacy", p. 4; BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality,* p. 40.

[414] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, pp. 154, 273; BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality,* p. 43. As far as I could observe, the reference to drugs and drug addiction within the abolitionist feminist discourse is not used as an autonomous argument to say that the consent in the decision to engage in prostitution is vitiated. Instead, it seems to be used in connection with the argument about poverty and lack of choices: what is claimed is that drugs put people in a situation in which their only alternative for survival is prostitution or crime.

[415] Mackinnon, for instance, talks of how much more difficult it becomes to leave prostitution when a woman is arrested for it and, as a result, gets a criminal record. (MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 283.) Jeffreys, on the other hand, refers to the fear of "exposure of their prostitution experience, which generally predate[s] any other paid work, and this often [leads] to their leaving jobs." (JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 154.)

[416] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 274.

[417] *Idem*, p. 281.

[418] *Idem*, p. 274.

[419] *Idem*, p. 279. BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 178: "[…] the physical and sexual abuse of children which are preconditions to forced prostitution (...)"; BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality,* p. 40: "This younger generation of women and girls in prostitution [...] are the teenage girls and young women who have experienced prior sexual abuse, poverty, and homelessness".

with numbers. Some advance numbers around 90%, saying that is the percentage of prostituted women that were sexually abused in childhood, 93% of which having been abused by a family member.[420] The following step is the outline of a psychological explanation. Some argue that prior sexual abuse, particularly when sustained over time, predisposes women to other forms of sexual exploitation – and thus prostitution –, because it makes them vulnerable, unable to fight back.[421] Others propose a different but related link between child sexual abuse and prostitution: sexual abuse "tells you what you are for." [422] The child develops "an identity out of an environment which defines her as a whore and a slave".[423] That self-image becomes "a stable part of a child's personality structure and persists into adult life."[424] The result is that the victim of sexual abuse comes to think that being a whore is her nature, that she "was born for it", and that is what eventually leads her to prostitution.[425] Finally, a third explanation: child sexual abuse is where the girl is trained to be a prostitute. She learns "not to have any real boundaries to her own body; to know that she's valued only

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[420] GIOBBE, Evelina, "Confronting the Liberal Lies About Prostitution", p. 73, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 256; Kathleen Barry advances different but equally overwhelming statistics: "Prior to entering prostitution, 80 percent had been victims of physical or sexual abuse (37 percent incest/sexual abuse in the home, 33 percent physical abuse, and 60 percent rape)." (BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 119.) More recently, the *European Parliament Resolution of 26 February 2014 on Sexual Exploitation and Prostitution and its Impact on Gender Equality* affirms that "80-95% of prostituted persons have suffered some form of violence before entering prostitution (rape, incest, paedophilia), that 62% of them report having been raped and that 68% suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder". (Number 14.) The source of these data is eminent abolitionist feminist Melissa Farley's study, according to which "[f]ifty-seven percent [of the prostitutes she interviewed] reported that they had been sexually assaulted as children and 49% reported that they had been physically assaulted as children." (FARLEY, Melissa, "Prostitution, Violence, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder", p. 37.)

[421] BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality,* p. 23.

[422] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 280.

[423] HERMAN, Judith Lewis, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, p. 100, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 257.

[424] HERMAN, Judith Lewis, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, p. 51, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 257.

[425] RUSSELL, Diana, "The Making of a Whore", p. 87, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 258; Very similar versions of this argument can be found in Barry. The author, who also refers to the self-image that originates in sexual abuse, puts forward a different but very close explanation between such self-image and prostitution by saying the victim comes to believe she *deserves* such a treatment: "If the people she is closest to deny her affection and instead shower her with abuse, then she will eventually begin to think of herself as somehow *deserves* that kind of treatment." In addition, this author also says that the victim comes to believe that she is "worth nothing more than the treatment she has received." (BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 119.)

for sex;" and she learns about men being abusers.[426] What is at stake here seems to be a specific perception about sexuality that allows and encourages women to enter prostitution.[427]

If that is the case, sexual abuse[428] is one of the conditions leading to prostitution, a condition that leaves no room for the idea of freedom in the decision to engage in prostitution because it acts on the very perception of the victim about herself and the world, impeding her to perceive other alternatives as real possibilities or leading her to a material situation – such as homelessness[429] and drug addiction – where indeed other alternatives are not real possibilities. In sum, trauma resulting from sexual abuse makes prostitution appear as the obvious – maybe the only – choice. In such scenario, it is hard to see prostituted women "as having a really free choice."[430]

Third, *emotional and psychological dependency*: women are said to enter and stay in prostitution because of emotional and psychological dependency. Such dependency may be the outcome of a childhood of sexual, physical, and psychological abuse, but may also result from specific tactics employed by procurers, such as "befriending or love" and "seasoning".

Let us look into the first one. It is usually applied to naive, needy, and lonely girls and women, who are bitter at the family they just run away from or the marriage they have just left. And they are also likely to be broke and without job skills.[431] Being a strategy designed "to fit the vulnerabilities of the potential victim",[432] "befriending or love" consists in offering her what she is lacking: money to basic things – a meal, a place to spend the night, provide for

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[426] DWORKIN, Andrea, "Prostitution and Male Supremacy", p. 4.
[427] "For one who comes from a background of physical and sexual abuse, or even just verbal or psychological abuse from those who are the most significant in her life, anonymous and violent sex is possible." (BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 119.)
[428] Barry extents the relation between abuse and prostitution beyond sexual abuse to include also physical and psychological abuse. (*Ibidem*.)
[429] Dworkin is one of the authors that highlights the connection between sexual abuse, homelessness and prostitution: "In our society, for instance, in the population of women who are prostituted now, we have women who are poor, who have come from poor families; they are also victims of child sexual abuse, especially incest; and they have become homeless." (DWORKIN, Andrea, "Prostitution and Male Supremacy", p. 4.)
[430] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 153.
[431] BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 89.
[432] *Idem*, p. 87.

her children –[433] and luxury items – new clothes, having their hair done, cars, travels –,[434] protection,[435] compliments – which they hear for the first time in ages –,[436] attention and affection.[437] Once the relationship with the procurer has been established and she is in love, he uses the tactic "if you love me, you'll do anything for me" to ask her to engage in prostitution (and give him a share of the money, of course). She accepts to prove him her feelings and because of the fear of losing him.[438] What follows is psychological destruction and character breakdown by "making her believe that she is truly a slut and that only he out of the goodness of his heart will have anything to do with such a despicable creature."[439]

"Seasoning" complements the "befriending or love" strategy in this last step but is also employed, in different forms, in all procuring tactics. It consists in separating the victim from her previous life and is meant to reduce her ego, distort her perceptions, and break her will. Isolation from family, friends, and other sources of affection and reasoning makes the woman emotionally and psychologically dependent.[440] In addition, her identity is changed: she is given a new name and documents in order to separate her from her past and make her focus completely in the life she now has with this man. It is a kind of brainwashing process that consists in giving her a new social and moral environment, and which takes away every set of values and morality she previously had, thus ensuring obedience to the pimp.[441] All this makes seasoning a very efficient strategy in making women enter prostitution. But not only. Together with physical violence, it is a most effective means to force them to remain in it.[442]

Whether the result of an abusive childhood or the product of specific techniques aimed at leading women into prostitution, the agonizing loneliness and need for affection alter the woman's perception by making prostitution seem "little to ask of her in exchange for the

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[433] *Idem*, p. 89.
[434] *Idem*, p. 90.
[435] *Ibidem*.
[436] *Idem*, p. 87.
[437] *Idem*, p. 91.
[438] *Ibidem*.
[439] *Ibidem*.
[440] *Idem*, pp. 92-3.
[441] *Idem*, pp. 94-5.
[442] *Idem*, p. 93.

attention she receives."[443] In fact, "she becomes willing to take almost anything to get it."[444] "This does not mean she likes it, needs it, or wants it".[445] It means that the decision to engage in prostitution is a consequence of a situation in which the woman has both her emotions and her perceptions altered. She is not herself. Under that emotional and psychological state, she feels she has no other choice and that is how her will comes to be broken. The conclusion could not be otherwise: her decision to engage in prostitution is not the result of a real or free choice. It is just the opposite to that.

All these three conditions of entrance into (and maintenance in) prostitution – poverty, sexual abuse, and emotional and psychological dependency – are presented as opposed to the requirements of free consent. They are, therefore, argued to be determinant of a coerced consent. Two main ideas are used to substantiate the claim that, given the presence of one or more of these three conditions, the decision to engage in prostitution is coerced: one is that of vulnerability, the other is that of preclusion of alternatives. Poverty, race, gender, sexual trauma, and psychological and emotional abuse are all argued to be conditions of vulnerability that make the consent in prostitution to be coerced rather than free.[446]

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[443] *Idem*, p. 120.
[444] *Ibidem*.
[445] *Ibidem*.
[446] Mackinnon is one of the authors who uses the idea of vulnerability to defend that the consent in prostitution is coerced. She mostly uses legal sources to support this argument. Specifically, she refers to (1) the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime; to (2) the South African Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Bill; and to (3) ECOSOC, CHR, *Integration of the Human Rights of Women and a Gender Perspective, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Aspects of the Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*. Whereas the first establishes the abuse of a position of vulnerability to achieve the consent of a person to prostitution as an element of the definition of trafficking in persons, the second instrument establishes socio-economic circumstances as a cause of vulnerability. (MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 299). In turn, the third instrument defends that a notion of vulnerability – a vulnerability which the author finds to be overwhelmingly present in prostitution – should "include power disparities based on gender, race, ethnicity and poverty." (MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 300.) Finally, in what concerns sexual abuse as a condition of vulnerability through the idea of sexual trauma, the author gives preference to psychological bibliographic sources (*Idem*, p. 298). The idea of vulnerability as a cause of coerced consent is articulated in connection with jurisprudence concerning the Thirteen Amendment to the United States Constitution, which establishes the right to be free from slavery and involuntary servitude. In it, it is established that "[t]he vulnerabilities of the victims are still relevant to determining whether physical or legal coercion or threats compel the service, rendering it 'slave like.'" (MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Prostitution and Civil Rights", p. 22.)

There is, of course, a gap between the idea of vulnerability and coercion that needs to be filled: why does vulnerability makes consent coerced rather than free? First, because vulnerability is about a condition in which basic needs are at stake. From survival to essential emotional and psychological needs, the condition of vulnerability consists in not having the fulfilment of these needs assured. But that is not only it. Those needs we all – vulnerable people or not – have. The point, thus, is not the existence of those needs but the difficulty to have them fulfilled. The problem, then, is the lack of possibilities of fulfilment of those needs. As a result, the gap between vulnerability and coercion seems to be filled within the abolitionist feminist discourse with the idea of lack of alternatives. The conditions of vulnerability make consent coerced because they lead the "person to believe that he or she has no reasonable alternative but to submit to exploitation".[447] Often that belief corresponds to reality and sometimes it is mostly a perception that it is not necessarily true. Either way, it is that perception, whether real or not, that leads people to engage in prostitution.

That is why abolitionist feminists say that people enter prostitution "through choices precluded, options restricted, possibilities denied."[448] People would not be in prostitution if they were able to leave. And that is why instead of a voluntary situation, people enter into through a free choice, prostitution is argued to always be coerced. As such, it is a form of servitude,[449] a case of sexual slavery. This argument seems to rest on the idea that "[u]nless refusal of consent or withdrawal of consent are real possibilities, we can no longer speak of 'consent in any genuine sense.'"[450] Mackinnon is one of the authors who substantiates the argument that prostitution is a form of slavery in this manner. According to her, the overwhelming majority of prostitutes want to leave prostitution but cannot.[451] And so, "[i]f they are there because they cannot leave, they are sexual slaves."[452]

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[447] Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Bill, 2010, as cited in MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 299.
[448] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 274.
[449] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Prostitution and Civil Rights", p. 26.
[450] PATEMAN, Carole, "Women and Consent", p. 150. Pateman is not here referring specifically to prostitution. In fact, in what concerns prostitution and freedom, Pateman focus not on consent but rather on the relation of subordination that emerges from consent.
[451] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Prostitution and Civil Rights", p. 14.
[452] *Ibidem*.

Yet, the idea that prostitution is a form of sexual slavery is also made possible through a different – even if very similar – reasoning. Here the idea of lack of alternatives is once again central:

> *Female sexual slavery is present in ALL situations where women or girls cannot change the immediate conditions of their existence; where regardless of how they got into those conditions they cannot get out; and where they are subject to sexual violence and exploitation.* [453]

However, in this second argumentative path, the lack of alternatives is not the only element that leads prostitution to be classified as a form of slavery. The second and most essential element of that definition is *exploitation*. And exploitation has to do *not* with the conditions of entrance into prostitution, the conditions under which consent is given and which are external to prostitution, but with conditions under which prostitution operates, i.e., conditions which are, in a sense, internal to it and which harm prostitutes on multiple levels. We are now entering what can be considered a different field. A field constituted by abolitionist feminist arguments that instead of denying the presence of the necessary requirements of a free consent, focus on the irrelevance of consent in establishing a given relationship as free. To fully appreciate them, we will have once more to dive into the harmful internal conditions which abolitionist feminists refer to in order to argue that prostitution is a form of exploitation.

4.2. Consent and Internal Conditions

The first one is most definitely *physical violence*: "[t]he vast majority of prostituted people report being physically assaulted in prostitution".[454] In fact, prostituted women "are subject

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[453] BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 40.
[454] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 282.

to more violence than any other group of women in the world."[455] They are physically assaulted by clients, pimps, and cops,[456] in both outdoor and indoor prostitution.[457]

> No social institution exceeds it in physical violence. It is common for prostitutes to be deprived of food and sleep and money, beaten, tortured, raped, and threatened with their lives, both as acts for which the pimp is paid by other men and to keep the women in line.[458]

The violence in prostitution is cause to a major debate, whose object is whether violence is or not inherent to prostitution. Opposing the idea that the violence in prostitution is the result of stigma and discrimination as well as the product of its illegal status, abolitionist feminists argue that the conditions in prostitution cannot be improved.[459] The violence suffered by prostitutes is the result of that which constitutes the essence of prostitution: sexual objectification. As mentioned before, these feminists defend that objectification occurs in a continuum of dehumanization whose far end is violence.[460] On this view, then, violence is a necessary consequence of sexual objectification. And, according to abolitionist feminists, is also prostitution's very reason: "[w]omen are prostituted precisely in order to be degraded and subjected to cruel and brutal treatment without human limits; it is the opportunity to do this that is exchanged when women are bought and sold for sex."[461] That is why, to abolitionist feminism, violence is not merely contingent but integral to prostitution, which, thus, cannot be reformed to exclude it.

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[455] *Idem*, p. 285.
[456] *Idem*, p. 282; PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 197.
[457] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 284.
[458] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Prostitution and Civil Rights", p. 25. According to Jeffreys, "[m]uch research over the past twenty years has found that prostituted women suffer high rates of rape and battery from johns, and battery from pimps and partners. They are all too frequently murdered as a result of their work, or of being seen as prostitutes." (JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 254.)
[459] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, pp. 223-4.
[460] STOLTENBERG, John, *Refusing to be a Man*, p. 59, as cited JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 219. Mackinnon makes the same point: "[…] violence is seen as occupying the most fully achieved end of a dehumanization continuum on which objectification occupies the least express end […]." (MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 45.)
[461] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Prostitution and Civil Rights", p. 13.

The second internal condition abolitionist feminists refer to is *psychological, emotional, and sexual harm*. Under this heading multiple claims are made.

One of them is the *deep emotional pain* that results from prostitution. So deep that it is said to resemble grieving.[462] The cause is the prostitute's perception of assault on her body, mind, and dignity as a human being.[463] Such perception is argued to be a direct consequence of the experience of the sex in prostitution as something awful and disgusting.[464] With it, feelings of humiliation, degradation, defilement, and dirtiness.[465] Worthlessness, valuableness, and blame also make their way through. The result is *trauma*. So, in addition to be a harm in itself, the deep emotional pain experienced in prostitution causes another, distinct but intimately connected injury.

The *traumatic effects* of being treated as nonpersons[466] are so serious that abolitionist feminists argue that "the prostituted women's measured level of post-traumatic stress ("PTSD") is equivalent to that of combat veterans or victims of torture or raped women."[467] One of them is the difficulty in carrying life outside prostitution. Simple things such as taking exams, standing up, speaking at meetings, or even just sitting close to people become a problem.[468] Sometimes the cause is the "scarlet letter syndrome", which is the belief that people "can 'tell' that they have been prostitutes by merely looking at them."[469] In other cases, those difficulties are related with the feeling of dirtiness, which translates into a fear of physical dirtiness, with prostituted women reporting being afraid of stinking or having body fluids appearing in public.[470] But the traumatic effects go much further than that. Failure

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[462] GIOBBE, Evelina, "Prostitution: Buying the Right to Rape", p. 155, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 268.
[463] GIOBBE, Evelina, "Prostitution: Buying the Right to Rape", p. 156, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 268.
[464] HOIGARD, Cecilie, and FINSTAD, Liv, *Backstreets: Prostitution, Money and* Love, p. 109, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 270.
[465] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 268.
[466] *Ibidem*.
[467] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 286. See also JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 269.
[468] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 270.
[469] GIOBBE, Evelina, "Prostitution: Buying the Right to Rape", p. 156, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 268.
[470] HOIGARD, Cecilie, and FINSTAD, Liv, *Backstreets: Prostitution, Money and* Love, p. 113, as cited in Jeffreys, JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, pp. 270-1.

in establishing emotional relationships, destruction of sexual life, drugs[471] and, in the most extreme cases, suicide[472] are all recurrently observed among prostituted women.

In what concerns the difficulty in establishing emotional relationships, a few explanations are advanced: disdain and hatred towards men,[473] becoming hard and cold for being treated as if they were only the genitals men use,[474] and, finally, difficulties in – destruction, in fact, of – their sex life. Such difficulties, in turn, are said to be the consequence of the inability of most prostitutes to separate their public and private selves.[475] The result is the loss of the capacity to feel anything sexually, including orgasm.[476] This happens because in prostitution women learn to despise their bodies and their sexuality: "We are in our bodies – all the time.

[471] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 287; BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality,* p. 41; JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 272; MILLETT, Kate, *The Prostitution Papers: A Candid Dialogue*, p. 36. All four authors argue that the frequent use of drugs by prostitutes is a consequence of their emotional and psychological incapacity to deal with the abuse suffered in prostitution: the need to "cut off" from what is happening. Drugs are, hence, referred to by abolitionist feminists both as a prove of such abuse and as a specific harm resulting from prostitution. Mackinnon, furthermore, mentions the fact that even though earlier studies suggested some women were addicts prior to entering prostitution – thus concluding that drugs made them vulnerable to entry into prostitution –, more recent and larger studies find that there are much more women who start using it as a result of their engagement in prostitution. (MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 287). In addition to the mentioned need to cut off, other explanation advanced is that drugs are used by pimps to keep women in prostitution. (*Idem*, p. 287; BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 93.) In this case, thus, the addiction to drugs could be used to say that women are forcibly kept in prostitution since drugs are used as a technique of compliance. However, as far as I could observe, this is not used within the abolitionist feminist discourse as an autonomous argument to say that the consent in the decision to engage in prostitution is vitiated. At most, it is used in connection with the argument about poverty and lack of choices: what is claimed is that drugs put people in a situation in which their only alternative for survival is prostitution or drugs. (BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality*, p. 43; JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, pp. 154, 273.)

[472] "Giobbe […] reports that figures from public hospitals show that 15 per cent of all suicide victims are prostitutes and one survey of call girls revealed that 75 per cent had attempted suicide." (JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 280.)

[473] GIOBBE, Evelina, "Prostitution: Buying the Right to Rape", p. 155, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 268.

[474] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 270.

[475] HOIGARD, Cecilie, and FINSTAD, Liv, *Backstreets: Prostitution, Money and* Love, p. 107, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 270. The argument about inability of separating both spheres coexists with the argument about the need of the use of distancing strategies to survive prostitution and its harms. (PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 207.)

[476] HOIGARD, Cecilie, and FINSTAD, Liv, *Backstreets: Prostitution, Money and* Love, p. 112, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 270.

We are our bodies. When a woman prostitutes herself, her relationship to her body changes".[477]

Such explanation of the emotional, psychological, and sexual harms deriving from prostitution is directly connected with – a connection that consists in being a proof of – the third of the internal conditions that lead abolitionist feminists to classify prostitution as exploitation. I am referring to what some have referred to as *paid violence*.[478] Such nomenclature is aimed at distinguishing this kind of violence from the one previously mentioned as physical violence – battery, torture, rape, starvation, murder – and which is named, within this distinction, *unpaid* violence, since it refers to violence for which prostitutes are not paid: it is "violence which is related to their work in prostitution, but not the violence which constitutes their work."[479]

The idea of *paid violence*, instead, refers to the very activity which prostitution consists of: having sex for money. So, here violence refers to "prostitution per se, without more violence, without extra violence, without a woman being hit, without a woman being pushed." [480] Now, why is commercial sex argued to be a form of violence?

One answer is this: "prostitution is intrinsically abusive. […] Prostitution in and of itself is an abuse of a woman's body."[481] For what else is prostitution but "the mouth, the vagina, the rectum, penetrated usually by a penis, sometimes hands, sometimes objects, by one man and then another and then another and then another and then another[?] That's what it is."[482] That, however, is an incomplete answer to which then the following is added:

> In prostitution, no woman stays whole. It is impossible to use a human body in the way women's bodies are used in prostitution and to have a *whole human being* at the end of

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[477] HOIGARD, Cecilie, and FINSTAD, Liv, *Backstreets: Prostitution, Money and* Love, p. 108, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 271.
[478] The expression was coined by Jeffreys (JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 254.)
[479] *Ibidem*.
[480] DWORKIN, Andrea, "Prostitution and Male Supremacy", p. 3.
[481] *Idem*, pp. 2-3.
[482] *Idem*, p. 3.

> it, or in the middle of it, or close to the beginning of it. It's impossible. And no woman gets whole again later, after.[483]

This brings us back to the relation between sexuality and the self. It also brings us back to the discussion about what is sold in prostitution: if mere sexual services or the body and so the very self. The position adopted by abolitionist feminists is already known: sexuality is related with the body in a way that other activities are not, and that makes it integrally connected with the sense of self.[484] And if that is the case, then prostitution consists in putting a price on what is absolutely priceless.[485] Within the abolitionist feminist discourse, the idea of unfairness of exchange, which the general use of the term exploitation comprises, is definitely anchored on that special value, to which unpaid physical violence and emotional, psychological, and sexual harm is added.[486] Proof of just that is the argument that sexual exploitation is not particular to prostitutes but rather a condition common to all women as women:

> I have approached this struggle by understanding prostitute women not as a group set apart, which is a misogynist construction, but as women whose experience of sexual exploitation is consonant with that of all women's experience of sexual exploitation.[487]

Thus, in general terms, exploitation is used within the abolitionist discourse not to refer to the value received in exchange for a given activity or service, as in other contexts, but to the activity itself and the conditions abolitionist feminists defend to be inseparable from it. It is not that the extremely low values received by prostitutes goes somehow unnoticed. Quite the opposite. Kathleen Barry, for instance, starts her classic work on prostitution, *Female Sexual Slavery*, taking about the 30 francs (approximately $6,00) prostitutes receive per client in the *maisons d'abattage* in Paris.[488] Mackinnon also refers to the fact that it is usual that prostitutes get further into poverty and debt.[489] And exploitation in connection to pimps is

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[483] *Ibidem*.
[484] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 562.
[485] RADIN, Margaret Jane, *Contested Commodities*, p. 160.
[486] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 8.
[487] BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality*, p. 9. The reason Barry presents for that commonality is the fact that sexual exploitation is the very condition of women's oppression. (*Idem*, p. 8.)
[488] *Idem*, pp. 3-4.
[489] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 277.

certainly one of the strongest arguments made against prostitution. However, even in this last case, more than a matter of payment itself, i.e., how much money prostitutes (do not) make, what is really at stake is not money itself but the commercialization of something that, for being invaluable, should never be for sale. When it is, it cannot but be a form of exploitation: sexual exploitation. It is mostly in this sense that exploitation is used within the abolitionist feminist discourse.[490]

Such use of the term plays a fundamental role in what concerns consent: if the conditions of prostitution are intrinsically those of exploitation, then no one could ever freely choose it. Why do so many people choose it then? The abolitionist feminists answer is the lack of alternatives. This means that the internal conditions are a necessary addition to the lack of alternatives associated with a position of vulnerability in concluding the absence of real consent in the decision to engage in prostitution and, consequently, in the condition of servitude prostitutes are claimed to be in:

> Since no rational person would willingly be consumed as a sexual object, prostitution is necessarily a form of exploitation: its existence depends on the role social inequality plays in ensuring that the socially more powerful have access to sexual objects of their choice.[491]

This, however, does not exhaust all forms of argumentation concerning the claim that prostitution constitutes sexual slavery. A third argumentative path draws on a strong distinction between the conditions under which someone enters a contract and the nature of the relationship that emerges from that contract. Here, it is irrelevant if consent was free or coerced. The point is rather the content of such choice. This means that even in situations in which the external conditions that coerce consent are absent, prostitution is deemed contrary

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[490] Barry presents us with the most explicit use of exploitation in this sense: "Various theories of labor and analysis of labor markets treat capitalist labor as the exploitation of surplus value, revealing inequalities and dual labor markets. […] The question of whether paid sexual exchange is exploited [exploited in the previous sense] as labor does not fully address the question of whether certain experiences and actions should be conditions of labor at all." (BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality*, pp. 66.) "Is emotional labor exploited because it is unremunerated, or is it exploited because emotional and sexual life have been reduced to mere servicing, to labor that sustains power relations?". The exploitation in prostitution is not, thus, a matter of a fair wage with full benefits of social services but one of reduction of the human experience of sex to labor. (*Idem*, p. 67.)

[491] ANDERSON, Scott, "Prostitution and Sexual Autonomy: Making Sense of the Prohibition of Prostitution", p. 365.

to freedom in reason of its very essence, of that in which it consists of. The matter is not anymore whether prostitution was freely entered, but rather that the relationship created by consent is not one of freedom for the prostitute. And consent is considered irrelevant because it does not alter the nature of the relationship that emerges from it. In fact, consent is precisely what makes the lack of freedom in prostitution invisible.

4.3. The (Ir)Relevance of Consent

One version of this argument is provided by Pateman. Instead of exploitation, her focus is on subordination. She explains why:

> A great deal of attention has been paid to the conditions under which contracts are entered into and to the question of exploitation once a contract has been made.[492] [… Critics of contract doctrine], whether socialists concerned with the employment contract, or feminists concerned with the marriage contract or prostitution contract, have [… pointed out] the often grossly unequal position of the relevant parties and […] the economic and other constraints facing workers, wives and women in general. [...] Criticism has also been directed at exploitation, both in the technical Marxist sense of the extraction of surplus value and in the more popular sense that workers are not paid a fair wage for their labour and endure harsh working conditions, or that wives are not paid at all for their labour in the home, or that prostitutes are reviled and subject to physical violence. [...] However, exploitation is possible precisely because […] contracts about property in the person place right of command in the hands of one party to the contract.[493]

In sum, exploitation is made possible because of subordination. More specifically, exploitation is made possible because the exploited is constituted as subordinate through contract, i.e., through consent. Now, this does not mean that subordination is a consequence of any kind of contract. The problem, hence, is not contract or consent by itself, but rather a

[492] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 7.
[493] *Idem*, pp. 7-8.

particular *object* of contracts and consent. Subordination results from contracts about *property in the person*.

Property in the person refers to categories of property that are intrinsically connected with the "owner", the individual, the very self. Examples of what property in the person refers to include "an individual's powers, capacities, abilities, skills, and talents" and even one's body parts.[494] That to which it refers to is, thus, inseparable from the individual. The concept of property, however, hides that inseparability, and it does so by marketing what is being alienated through the contract as "labor power" or "services". But labor power and services are abstractions. In reality, they refer to the fact that the part that provides the labor power or services acts in a specified way, a way determined by the part who buys them. Therefore, what is in fact being alienated by one part and acquired by the other is the *right to command* over oneself/other, the right to put one's own/other's capacities, one's own/other's body to use as one/other determines.[495] That is why Pateman says that "property in the person" is a fiction.[496] A political fiction that masks as *exchange* the significant aspect of the relationship created by contracts involving such category: "the alienation of a particular piece of property in the person; namely, the right to self-government."[497] The result is the reduction of autonomy or self-government – the curtailment of freedom – to which Pateman calls subordination.[498]

Now, the voluntary entry into contracts involving property in the person does not change the relationship of subordination constituted by such contract.[499] It does hide it, though. How? Once again, the concept of property in the person is of essence. Its *classic locus* was provided by John Locke, who stated "every Man has a property in his own Person. This no Body has

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[494] PATEMAN, Carole, "Self-Ownership and Property in the Person: Democratization and a Tale of Two Concepts", pp. 26-27.
[495] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 562.
[496] PATEMAN, Carole, "Self-Ownership and Property in the Person: Democratization and a Tale of Two Concepts", p. 26.
[497] *Idem*, p. 27.
[498] *Idem*, p. 33. "Civil subordination depends upon the capacity of human beings to act *as if* they could contract out labour power or services rather than, as they must, contract out themselves and their labour to be used by another." (PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 232.)
[499] PATEMAN, Carole, and MILLS, Charles, *Contract & Domination*, p. 2.

any Right to but Himself."[500] Property in the person or, to put in a most common terminology, "self-ownership" has, since then, become a way of speaking about autonomy. More specifically, it has become synonymous with freedom from interference and control over one's actions and capacities, which, in turn, translates into the right to make choices about one's own life.[501] The right to choose – consent therefore – has then become the paradigm of freedom, as if it exhausted it. As if freedom was all about choosing and nothing about what is chosen. As if consent to slavery was freedom and not slavery.

The notion of property in the person and the notion of freedom which the former gives rise to are both grounded on the idea of a disembodied and rational self, whose autonomy consists precisely on her self-critical capacity to assess her present wants and lives".[502] "In short, [under this view,] freedom is the unconstrained capacity of an owner (rational entity), externally related to property in its person (body), to judge how to contract out that property."[503] Pateman opposes both such notions, standing firmly with the idea of an embodied self and of freedom as necessarily linked with the body. In her view, "[t]here is an integral relationship between the body and the self. The body and the self are not identical, but selves are inseparable from bodies."[504] This means that individuals do not stand in an external relation to their bodies. And that is why freedom cannot be all about choice and, more specifically, cannot be about the choice to contract out – render command of – one's bodily parts. Freedom is not a property of a disembodied and rational self as subordination is not exercised over purely rational entities. "Precisely because subordinates are embodied selves they can perform the required labour [and] be subject to discipline".[505]

It is, therefore, the conception of an embodied self that leads Pateman to deny that freedom can be retained when the use of the body, or part of the body, is contracted out. In sum, this author opposes a notion of freedom that reduces it to the choice of contracting out one's body, for that is precisely what makes subordination – the right to command over another's body

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[500] PATEMAN, Carole, "Self-Ownership and Property in the Person: Democratization and a Tale of Two Concepts", p. 24.
[501] *Ibidem*.
[502] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, pp. 204-5.
[503] *Idem*, p. 205
[504] *Idem*, p. 206.
[505] *Ibidem*.

and capacities – both possible and invisible. This is her main point on prostitution. Let us now see how her argument unfolds in this regard.

Unveiling the subordination in prostitution requires looking beyond the idea of property in the person and the fictions that idea enables. To do that one needs first to understand what is really sold in prostitution: not sexual services – which is a fiction – but the prostitute's body and so her very self. The substantiation of this claim lies in the fact that the prostitute does not stand in an external relation to her body. The prostitute's "services" cannot be provided unless she is present. And that is because property in the person, unlike material property, cannot be separated from its owner.[506]

But it is not only that the body is what is really exchanged in prostitution. The body and more specifically the intrinsic interest in the body of the prostitute is what distinguishes the prostitution contract from other employment contracts. In the latter, the employer is primarily interested in the commodities produced by the worker, that is to say, in profits. Proof of just that is the fact that the employer can and often does replace the worker with machines. In contrast, in prostitution, the body of the woman is the very object of the contract.[507] Hence, there is not merely an instrumental relationship between the body and prostitution, but rather a fundamental one.

If the body is what is exchanged in prostitution, what is acquired by the man who enters that contract is the right of command over the prostitute's body. The object of such contract is, thus, the unilateral sexual use of a woman's body for the man's satisfaction. There is no desire or satisfaction on her part, and there is no freedom either. The freedom over her body and sexuality is precisely what is exchanged for money in prostitution.[508]

Now, "[t]o have bodies for sale in the market, as bodies, looks very [much] like slavery."[509] If the body is an inseparable part of the self, selling one's body is to sell one's very self. Not having freedom over one's body is not to have freedom over oneself and that, again, is slavery

[506] *Idem*, p. 203.
[507] *Ibidem*.
[508] *Idem*, p. 198.
[509] *Idem*, pp. 203-4.

and not freedom. This is how Pateman substantiates the claim that prostitution is a form of sexual slavery.

This, of course, could be said about all employment contracts. And Pateman in fact does say so. She calls all such contracts “civil slave contracts”. The “free worker” who is constituted through contract and free consent to it is supposed to be the opposite of a slave. The distinction between the slave and the free worker, however, rests on a fiction: one according to which the free worker does not sell herself as a commodity or a piece of property; she sells his labor power instead. As if labor power was something external to herself. As if the “individual” stood “to his property, to his body and capacities, in exactly the same external relation in which, as a property owner, [s]he stands to […her] material property.” [510] As if, finally, she could contract out the pieces of property from which she is constituted without detriment to her self.[511]

But if all free workers are in fact slaves, why is prostitution singled out? What is different about the slavery arising from the prostitution contract? Why should prostitution and not all wage contracts be abolished? The answer, once again, is sex.[512] More specifically, the integral connection between sex and the self: “sex and sexuality are constitutive of the body in a way” that other “services” are not.[513] “Sexuality and the body are, further, integrally connected to conceptions of femininity and masculinity, and all these are constitutive of our individuality, our sense of self-identity.”[514] “Masculinity and femininity are sexual identities”,[515] for, as previously elaborated on, sexuality is deemed to be gender’s cornerstone and sexual subordination femininity’s most central meaning. Therefore, even though the “self is not completely subsumed in its sexuality, [...] identity is inseparable from the sexual construction of the self.”[516] As a result,

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[510] *Idem*, p. 149.
[511] *Ibidem*.
[512] The same answer is given by Barry. When comparing prostitution to other female marketed jobs, the author says that “[t]he difference from prostitution is that these services do not invoke sex.” (BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality,* p. 66). For her, then, the problem is sex, sex as the object of a contract.
[513] PATEMAN, Carole, “Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson”, p. 562.
[514] *Ibidem*.
[515] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 207.
[516] *Ibidem*.

> [i]n modern patriarchy, [the] sale of women's bodies in the capitalist market involves sale of a self in a different manner, and in a more profound sense, than sale of the body of a male baseball player or sale of command over the use of the labour (body) of a wage slave.[517]

This is one of the three types of arguments I was able to identify within the abolitionist feminist discourse concerning the claim that prostitution is a form of slavery. Talking about slavery is, of course, a way of talking about freedom. More precisely, it is a way of talking about freedom's requirements. What does it need to be there for something be deemed free? Consent was the first answer given by abolitionist feminists. And the conclusion of its absence the basis for two of the argumentative paths towards the substantiation of the assertion that prostitution is a form of sexual slavery. The first focuses on the (external) conditions that lead people to engage in prostitution; the second relies both on internal and external conditions. Both conclude coercion through lack of alternatives: the decision to engage in prostitution results from the absence of other options, which makes consent unreal, unfree. But the absence of consent is not the only way of grounding prostitution as a form of slavery. And so, a third avenue concentrating exclusively on the internal conditions came about. Here, sexual slavery is concluded not because consent is absent but because it is irrelevant, being, in addition, a mechanism which makes slavery both possible and invisible.

As I see it, all these arguments about prostitution being a form of slavery refer to the lack of freedom of the prostitute as an *individual*. But the discussion about prostitution and freedom within abolitionist feminism is not limited to such individual perspective. An important line of arguments refers, instead, to the lack of freedom of the prostitute as a *woman*, and so, as a member of a collective body. Also here, consent and its relation to freedom assumes a central role, the main claim being once again the irrelevance of consent in determining prostitution in particular and women in general as (un)free. This claim, even if apparently very similar to the one made through the previous argument about subordination, is, however, distinct from it in what concerns the very concept of freedom and its referent.

[517] *Ibidem*.

Let us begin by illuminating the context in which the second line of arguments just mentioned arouse: a quite intensive dispute between abolitionist feminists and the sex workers' movement. Such arguments, in fact, seem to have been a reaction to the sex workers' claim that, as opposed to what abolitionist feminists defend, prostitution is a "choice", a real and free choice. A choice which the sex worker's movement further defended to be inseparably connected to sexual freedom:

> Uncomfortable as it may be for some feminists, though, it is implicit in the demand that women have control over their own bodies that they also have the right to sell their own sexual services, if they wish to.[518]

The abolitionist feminist answer goes along these lines: consent is a problematic concept when applied to prostitution and sexuality. Consent, in fact, is a problematic concept when talking of freedom and oppression and, particularly, when talking of *women*'s freedom and oppression. For consent, let us be reminded, is one of the mechanisms through which oppression comes about. And consent to sex, to male sexuality, is of absolute essence in this regard.

According to abolitionist feminists, then, when inquiring about freedom and sex, one should not ask about choice or consent but about *harm*.

The first reason is that choice and harm are not incompatible. Quite the opposite: consent to harm is a fact of oppression.[519] Freedom, then, should not be understood consent to harm, but instead as freedom from harm. Harm or, to put it differently, *exploitation*, rather than choice and consent, are, therefore, defended as the right indicators of freedom.

> […] "consent" is not the indicator of freedom, nor is absence of consent the primary indicator of exploitation. […] Consent to oppression or an apparent "will" to be objectified is a condition of oppression. It is never a state of freedom. Sexual exploitation is oppression, and that means that it will be accepted and even promoted within the oppressed class. That is what oppression is! This is how every form of

[518] ROBERTS, Nickie, *Whores in History: Prostitution in Western Society*, p. 355.
[519] BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality,* p. 65.

> oppression is sustained. Violating consent may be an aspect of exploitation, but it's not its defining feature. Therefore, freedom cannot be confined within a unidimensional concept of consent; it must expand to the full human condition – the female condition.[520]

Yet the problem with consent is not only that people tend to completely subsume freedom into it. One, for instance, can think of consent to slavery as an act of freedom and still see the harm in slavery. This, however, is not what generally happens with consent and sexuality. So, the second problem with consent is the fact that it renders harm invisible because people – and specifically sex workers when they say that prostitution is a choice – tend to "collapse the experience of harm into the act of consent."[521] As if the only harm in prostitution – and sexuality in general – was the lack of consent and not at all the type of sex that often comes after and because of consent.

This is the reason why abolitionist feminists argue that tracking the harm in sexuality and prostitution require us to ditch the consented/coerced dichotomy and focus, instead, on *abuse*. That is what, according to them, prostitution is: abuse. Such abuse is what the very designation of prostitution renders invisible, since the naming is what differentiates the sex in prostitution from sex which is immediately seen as abusive: prostitution is "abuse because prostitutes are subjected to any number of sexual acts that in any other context, acted against any other woman, would be labelled assaultive or, at the very least, unwanted and coerced".[522] The abuse and violence in prostitution is the same as in battery, sexual harassment, and rape. When a prostituted woman is used in sadomasochistic sex that is *battery*; when prostitutes are used in sex that is undesired, unsatisfying, or disrespectful of them as equal human beings that is *rape*;[523] and when "a John compels a woman to submit

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[520] *Idem*, p. 89.

[521] BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality,* p. 66, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 136. Mackinnon, in turn, puts this claim as follows: "The appearance of choice or consent, with their attribution to inherent nature, is crucial in concealing the reality of force." (MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 141.)

[522] GIOBBE, Evelina, "Prostitution: Buying the Right to Rape", p. 159, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 260.

[523] Barry's version of the claim about the equivalence between prostitution and rape is as follows: "prostitution is sex bought on men's terms. Rape is sex taken on men's terms. The sex men buy in prostitution is the same sex that they take in rape-sex that is disembodied, enacted on the bodies of women who, for the men, do not

to his sexual demands as a condition of 'employment'"[524] that is *sexual harassment*. All of that, when done to other women, are crimes; when done to women in prostitution is just prostitution. As if "the exchange of money [transformed] the violence of the acts involved into something else". But the truth is that the "fact that a John gives money to a woman [...] for submitting to these acts does not alter the fact that he is committing [...], rape, and battery [and sexual harassment]; it merely redefines these crimes as prostitution."[525] Sexual abuse, exploitation, and slavery are a common condition to all women, and it is that commonality that is denied when the abuse in prostitution is rendered invisible by the idea of free choice.[526]

Recognition of the abuse in prostitution makes evident another problem with consent: the displacement of responsibility, the victim blaming. Victim-blaming is a technique generally used to obscure male culpability for the abuse of women. Through it, male violence is attributed to the personality and behavior of the victim. Victim-blaming has been dominant in rape and battery. In the first case, "[w]omen are blamed for wearing the wrong clothing, being in the wrong place at the wrong time, leading men on, accepting a lift, being prostitutes";[527] in the second, victim blaming has taken both "the form of asking what personality characteristics cause a woman to get battered" and of asking why women stay.[528] When it comes to prostitution, it is the idea of choice and consent that does the trick: "[t]he language of choice puts the responsibility for prostitution upon women. Men's abuse of women in prostitution is explained in terms of the actions of the women they abuse i.e., a woman's choice to be there."[529] On this view, to focus on women's choice in entering prostitution is an updated version of victim-blaming. Proof of just that is the fact that in the literature that concentrates on showing why women "choose" prostitution, the role of men,

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exist as human beings. Men decide whether it is sex they pay for, or sex they take by force or with consent. (BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality*, p. 37.) Precisely these words ate quoted by Jeffreys in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 260.

[524] GIOBBE, Evelina, "Prostitution: Buying the Right to Rape", p. 146, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 260.

[525] *Ibidem*.

[526] "Radical feminist theorists have indeed started from the understanding that all women are linked in a common oppression and that what happens to any woman affects and should be of concern to all". (JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 149.)

[527] *Idem*, p. 139.

[528] *Ibidem*.

[529] *Ibidem*.

of clients, is entirely obscured. Here, prostitution appears as an answer to women's need for money, which, then, continues to exist because women continue to "choose" it. [530]

It is in that way that choice becomes an instrument to make the harm itself disappear. It is, however, a specific way of doing it. It does not exactly deny the harm itself but rather transforms the relation between harm and the person who suffered it: through choice the person to whom a harm has been done is transformed into its causal agent. And if that person was the cause, she cannot be the victim. After all, "it was her own responsibility". So, the result is this: the perpetrator is exempted from responsibility and the victim is denied her victimization. As if a harm had never been done to her. The recognition of the harm done to prostitutes is abolitionist feminists' professed aim. That, of course, implies the recognition of the prostitute as a victim: a victim of sexual slavery and exploitation.

This, however, led to a particularly intense debate with the sex workers, who understood the attribution of victimhood as a denial of their agency. They accused abolitionist feminists of representing them as passive, helpless, and degraded victims, uncapable of taking action in their own interest and, thus, inherently uncapable of real consent.[531] In opposition, they defend their agency in prostitution and even their empowerment through it.[532]

The reply from the abolitionist feminists follows the same argumentative path mentioned before: on one side, real consent is denied; on the other, consent is deemed irrelevant. Both strategies make use of the idea of *false consciousness*. The former, on an individual level; the second on a collective one.

Let us look into the first use of this term. Here the idea of false consciousness is used in the sense of *neutralizing technique*: a rationalization created by people belonging to socially despised and marginalized groups as an alternative to painful self-contempt, and which allows them to survive their marginal condition.[533] The idea of choice is claimed to be such neutralizing technique to prostitutes:

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[530] *Idem*, p. 142.
[531] ALEXANDER, Priscilla, "Feminism, Sex Workers, and Human Rights", p. 83.
[532] SCAMBLER, Graham, and SCAMBLER, Annette, *Rethinking Prostitution: Purchasing Sex in the 1990s*, p. 188, as cited by JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 145.
[533] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, pp. 137-8.

> Women who are compromised, cajoled, pressured, tricked, blackmailed, or outright forced into sex […] often respond to the unspeakable humiliation […] by claiming that sexuality as their own. Faced with no alternative, the strategy to acquire self-respect and pride is: I chose it.[534]

> When prostituted women themselves use the language of "choice", they can be seen to be engaging in what deviancy sociologists call "neutralising techniques". Sociologists use this term to describe the way in which socially despised and marginalised groups create rationalisations which enable them to survive their marginal condition. Such techniques may be employed because the only alternative available may be the painful one of self-contempt. The idea that prostitution is freely chosen is such a technique.[535]

But disbelieving women is extremely problematic for feminism since "much of feminist theory and practice has been based upon the idea that women should be believed."[536] "Feminist ideas on methodology, ways of establishing the truth of women's experience, tend to rely on what women recount".[537] Abolitionist feminists defend themselves by saying that to rely on women's accounts of their experience does not mean to accept totally conflicting accounts as equally accurate.[538] And accounts about choice and prostitution is such case of completely conflicting views, because if there are women who say they chose it, there are also women who say they did not and that they felt coerced and enslaved while doing it.

The first step out of this dilemma concerning the conflicting accounts of prostitution and choice is to understand who and why might be wrong, i.e., who and why might have a false consciousness about their own situation in prostitution. In understanding this, the idea of knowledge as a social construct is of essence: "conceptual frameworks are shaped and limited

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[534] MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, pp. 149-50. Mackinnon is here specifically referring to pornography and not prostitution. However, since, as seen before, in this author's view pornography and prostitution are very strongly connected, I believe the quoted allegation is for Mackinnon equally applicable to prostitution. This seems to be Jeffreys' view, as she quotes this passage to make the point about false consciousness in relation to some prostitutes' claim that they chose prostitution. (JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 128.)
[535] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, pp. 137-8.
[536] *Idem*, p. 156.
[537] *Ibidem*.
[538] *Ibidem*.

by their social origins."[539] Put in different way, class position affects consciousness. But this does not only mean that each class has a different view of reality. It also means that the ruling-class as ruling-class has the power to influence the view of the oppressed: "in any historical period, the prevailing world view will reflect the interests and values of the dominant class."[540] As a result, "[s]ometimes the ruling ideology succeeds in duping [oppressed groups] into partial denial of their pain or into accepting it temporarily".[541]

Now, when it comes to prostitution, the ruling-class is men. And the men who use prostituted women are unlikely to recognize that they are being abusive. Not only their class position might prevent them to perceive the suffering of the oppressed, as they might believe that prostitution "is freely chosen, deserved or inevitable. They experience the current organization of society as basically satisfactory and so they accept the interpretation of reality that justifies that system of organization".[542]

Some of the prostituted women's interpretations of their experience have been shaped by social relations and by both a culture of male sexuality and an understanding of prostitution that benefits the ruling class. That is why a "feminist standpoint is not just any account by women, but one created out of political struggle."[543] In this sense,

> when feminists are confronted with differing accounts of the truth of prostitution, we should not simply retire from the field but exercise a critical political intelligence. We need to measure what we are being told against what we already know about sexuality and sexual violence from our extensive feminist knowledge and our own experience.[544]

The idea of "political struggle" or "critical political intelligence" takes us beyond an individual and subjective sense of false consciousness. What is at stake here is not anymore whether the individual choice to engage in prostitution is real or a mere product of a

[539] JAGGAR, Alison M., *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, p. 369, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 156.
[540] *Ibidem*.
[541] JAGGAR, Alison M., *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, p. 370, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 157.
[542] *Ibidem*.
[543] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 158.
[544] *Ibidem*.

neutralizing technique – i.e., consent –, but the consciousness about what is (sexual) freedom and oppression for women as a collective entity. What is at stake, then, is *class consciousness*, and with it a notion of freedom whose referent is not the individual prostitute but the prostitute as a woman or just simply women in general.

In my understanding, it is with this concept of collective freedom in mind that abolitionist feminists, within the debate about victimhood and agency in prostitution, say that

> [i]t is deeply problematic to identify as agency the situations in which women opt into oppressive institutions which originate precisely in the subordination of women. Radical feminists […] have seen women's agency as most clearly expressed in their "resistance to those oppressive institutions, not in women's assimilation to them".[545]

The justification of the idea of *freedom as resistance* is that it is precisely oppressive institutions such as prostitution that construct, burden, frame, impair, constrain, limit, coerce and shape women's choices. This does *not* mean that women's choices are *determined* or that women are passive or helpless victims of patriarchy.[546] It does *not* mean an inert passivity.[547] Testimony to that is feminism itself and its fight for and accomplishments in terms of women's liberation.[548] But it *does* mean, though, that women are victims: victims of harms that we often embrace just because most commonly there are no other real options. The lack of alternatives, is thus, a harm in itself to which women in general and prostituted women in particular are victims of.

Resistance to the institutions that lead to such lack of alternatives – and consequently to acceptance of harm, abuse, and exploitation – is, therefore, the type of freedom defended by abolitionist feminists. One that is not confined to the concept of consent and that focus, instead, on the general conditions of oppression under which consent to harm is given. And

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[545] RAYMOND, Janice G., "Sexual and Reproductive Liberalism", p. 109, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 144.
[546] RAYMOND, Janice G., "Sexual and Reproductive Liberalism", p. 103, as cited in BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality,* p. 81.
[547] The claim that being a victim does not mean to be passive is made by BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, pp 48-9; BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality,* p. 81; JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 151; and MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 138.
[548] RAYMOND, Janice G., "Sexual and Reproductive Liberalism", p. 103, as cited in BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality*, p. 81.

also, one that is not limited to the personal feelings, preferences, and will of specific individuals, but focus instead on women's common good or collective well-being. It is the lack of consciousness of women as a class, the false consciousness about what leads to and constitutes our freedom and oppression as *women* that, according to abolitionist feminists, makes some prostituted women affirm that prostitution is a free choice and even a form of sexual emancipation.

As opposed, the idea of freedom as resistance, resistance to institutions that oppress *all* women, is based precisely on that political and collective consciousness. That is why it is defended as the concept of freedom against which any claim to women's freedom or lack of thereof must be valued. From here the conclusion is quite simple: prostitution is the ultimate denial of women's (sexual) freedom. And so, freedom as resistance is the concept upon which abolitionist feminists ground their last argument concerning this very claim.

5. Closing Remarks

The value of sexuality, the objectification and subordination of prostitutes and women more broadly, and, finally, consent and freedom are the three main types of arguments explicitly articulated by the abolitionist feminist authors selected. The aim of Part One of this work has been to examine those explicit arguments, in an attempt to lay down a comprehensive overview of abolitionist feminism.

Having mapped out the picture of prostitution presented by abolitionist feminism, my next step will be to describe the patriarchal discourse on prostitution. The overall objective is to contrast both discourses, setting them against each other as the allegedly opposing discourses they are. Such objective corresponds to the second stage of the methodology adopted in this work, which I have referred to as deconstructive discourse analysis.

The analysis of the patriarchal discourse, however, serves yet another function. It will allow me to go beyond the explicit layers of meaning of abolitionist feminism into its deeper and more implicit ones. For here, when "exploring the connotations, allusions and

implications"[549] of abolitionist feminism, what one is faced with is many of the notions of the patriarchal discourse on prostitution, which could not be adequately identified as such without a previous engagement with and a proper understanding of the patriarchal discourse.

[549] PARKER, Ian, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, p. 7.

PART 2. THE GOOD AND THE BAD WOMAN IN THE PATRIARCHAL DISCOURSE ON PROSTITUTION

> At any rate, the relationship between the reinscribed text and the so-called original text is not that of patency and latency, but rather the relationship between two palimpsests. The "original" text itself is that palimpsest on so-called "pre"-texts that the critic might or might not be able to disclose and any original inscription would still only be a trace: "Reading then resembles those X-ray pictures which discover, under the epidermis of the last painting, another hidden picture […].[550]

1. Opening Remarks

The notion of interdiscursivity is central to this work. The idea that every discourse is connected with other discourses in a "ceaseless play of citation and allusion"[551] is at the root of the hypothesis I have put forward: that abolitionist feminism's dominance results, in great measure, from its coherence with patriarchal discourses on prostitution and on women more generally. Additionally, interdiscursivity is also at the core of the methodology I have adopted. As said before, deconstruction's last step consists in the identification of the points where the discourses initially identified and contrasted overlap. This is the aim of this work as I move forward: to identify the overlapping points between abolitionist feminism and the patriarchal discourse on prostitution.

But more specificity is required, for I am interested in one particular point: the representation of the prostitute. To be more accurate, I am interested in the representation of the prostitute

[550] SPIVAK, Gayatri Chakravorty, "Translator's Preface", pp. lxxv-lxxvi.
[551] NORRIS, Christopher, *Derrida*, p. 64.

as woman. By this I mean that what I am looking for is the representation of women in both discourses – how they both depict, claim, and assume women to be like – and the place of the prostitute in that representation. Is the prostitute an exception to that representation or is it instead its most paradigmatic personification? My suspicion is that both discourses share the same representation of women and the same positioning of the prostitute in the spectrum of womanhood.

Part Two of this work is the first step towards the substantiation of this suspicion. As such, it is aimed at a history of the representation of womanhood within patriarchal discourses. Such a representation includes the prostitute, of course, but it also goes much beyond her. What exceeds her, however, cannot be dispensed as irrelevant to the understanding of the figure of the prostitute. It is, in fact, a fundamental part of its proper comprehension.

By setting myself to engage in a history of representation I am already taking a specific position within the field of the history of prostitution. Timothy Gilfoyle points out that "[s]ince the 1980s, historians have addressed prostitution according to two broad paradigms." One "examines the social structure and organization of commercial sex" or, to put it differently, its material conditions; the other, instead, focus on "the symbolic and discursive meanings of prostitution […] their [prostitutes´] symbolic representation."[552] My approach is definitely the latter. As a result, I will not address prostitution's material conditions, nor will I attempt to account for the material conditions leading to the representation of women and prostitutes in specific historical moments. For one, my aim here is descriptive rather than explanatory. But more important to my current point is that the reason for that choice of approach is not, in any way, a view that disregards or underestimates the interconnections between material and discursive conditions. My choice is rather motivated by my object of analysis – which is discourse –, by my point – the overlapping representation of women in abolitionist feminism and the patriarchal discourse on prostitution –, and, of course, by the limitation of space in a work that is not exclusively aimed at the historical investigation of such a representation.

[552] GILFOYLE, Timothy, "Prostitutes in History, From Parables of Pornography to Metaphors of Modernity", p. 119.

That limitation, however, cannot be a reason to not acknowledge and dig into the fundamental connections of the history of the representation of the prostitute with other domains. To do so would be to tell only a partial story, one that would miss key issues in that history. I have already said, or at least tried to, that the history of the discourses on prostitution is inseparable from the one of the discourses on women more generally. The representation of women is an integral part of the representation of the prostitute. And so, both histories cannot but be told together. But not only. At the crossroad of both those representations lies sexuality. Consequently, a history of those representations necessarily requires an engagement with the history of sexuality.

Speaking of history in what concerns sexuality, however, is never as straightforward as it might by now seem for many of us. Sexuality is one of those categories that still today appears for most as something completely natural: something of the order of biological fact, grounded in the functioning of the body, and the expression of an innate sexual instinct or drive. It is generally attributed to Michel Foucault the idea that sexuality is, instead, socially constructed. In his view,

> [s]exuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct: not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power.[553]

As David Halperin puts it,

> "[s]exuality" in this sense is not a purely descriptive term, a neutral representation of some objective state of affairs or a simple recognition of some familiar facts about us; rather, it is a distinctive way of constructing, organizing, and interpreting those "facts," and it performs quite a lot of conceptual work.[554]

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[553] FOUCAULT, Michel, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, pp. 105-6.
[554] HALPERIN, David M., "Is There a History of Sexuality?", p. 259.

Under this light, it can be said that sexuality is permeated by discourse, being this a means by which it is constructed. Now, discourses and the meanings of sexuality are hardly immutable. They are in a continual process of change, as are the "forms, content, and context of sexuality". As Robert Padgug says, they "always differ. There is no abstract and universal category of 'the erotic' or 'the sexual' applicable without change to all societies."[555] As such, rather than fix and immutable, sexuality is, as described by Carol Vance, "fluid and changeable, the product of human action and history".[556] This takes us back to the idea of a history of sexuality. If sexuality is not a static and permanent reality, it can be, as it has been quite intensively since Foucault, an object of historical analysis.

Let us now go back to the relationship between sexuality and the representation of women. Thomas Laqueur summarized it perfectly: "almost everything one wants to say about sex – however sex is understood – already has in it a claim about gender."[557] Carol Vance elaborates on the idea by saying that "sexuality and gender are separate but overlapping domains".[558] Not only "the configurations of the sexual system bear on the experience of being female", but also "the definitions of gender resonate with and are reflected in sexuality".[559] An important example of this is what has been termed heteronormativity:[560] the general belief that heterosexuality is the normal form of sexuality. Such belief is rooted in a dichotomous understanding of gender (a person is either a man or a woman) from which sexual orientation towards the opposite gender is inferred.

It is important to highlight, however, that the overlapping between sexuality and gender does not mean that sexuality is "a residual category, a subcategory of gender; nor [that …] theories of gender [are] fully adequate to account for sexuality."[561] The assumption that sexuality is

[555] PADGUG, Robert A., "Sexual Matters: On Conceptualizing Sexuality in History", p. 11.
[556] VANCE, Carole S., "Social Construction Theory: Problems in the History of Sexuality", p. 160.
[557] LAQUEUR, Thomas, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, p. 111.
[558] VANCE, Carole S., "Pleasure and Danger: Toward a Politics of Sexuality", p. 9.
[559] *Ibidem*.
[560] It was Michael Warner who coined the term in 1991 in his "Introduction: Fear of a Queer Planet". Yet, the roots of the concept lie in Gayle Rubin's notion of "sex/gender system" and in Adrienne Rich´s "compulsory heterosexuality".
[561] VANCE, Carole S., "Pleasure and Danger: Toward a Politics of Sexuality", pp. 9-10

an exclusive function of the relations between women and men has in fact been challenged, most significantly by Gayle Rubin.[562] She substantiates her claim as follows:

> For instance, lesbian feminist ideology has mostly analyzed the oppression of lesbians in terms of the oppression of women. However, lesbians are also oppressed as queers and perverts, by the operation of sexual, not gender, stratification. Although it pains many lesbians to think about it, the fact is that lesbians have shared many of the sociological features and suffered from many of the same social penalties as have gay men, sadomasochists, transvestites, and prostitutes.[563]

While I concur with the idea that sexuality is not reducible to gender, I am much more careful in withdrawing gender from any analysis of sexual oppression. The example provided by Rubin is an excellent one to my point. Contrary to her, in my view, there is no doubt that a great part of the oppression suffered by the categories of people she refers to is definitely related with gender. Homosexual men and women are not only depicted as sexual deviants; they are also seen as *gender* deviants: they are commonly portrayed as femininized men and masculinized women. The same could not be truer of transvestites. And gender is also, as we shall see, an essential issue in what concerns sadomasochism: masochist men and sadist women are equally understood in terms of gender inversion. Sadomasochism is then far from being gender neutral. Finally, the prostitute. One of the main points of this work in general and Part Two more specifically is to show that, to a great measure, the oppression female prostitutes are victims of is, without any doubt, related to their nonconformity with a *female* norm of sexuality, which in turn is related to women´s social role.

Sexuality is in no way gender neutral, particularly for those outside the heterosexual norm, which – and this is a fundamental point I hope becomes clear by the end of Part Two – is not restricted to a sexual orientation towards the opposite sex, but it also incorporates standards concerning sexual practices and ways of behavior more generally. The problem with a gender-neutral view of sexuality has been widely noted and criticized in Foucault's history of sexuality. And, as Lynn Hunt has accurately noted, what lies behind that apparent

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[562] RUBIN, Gayle, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality", p. 307.
[563] *Idem*, p. 308.

neutrality is in fact a male individual.[564] That is so not only in what Foucault is concerned but generally, since subjectivity – and so, too, sexuality as one of its essential elements – has always been throughout history, as it still is in our present, inescapably gendered.

So here is my point: the subject of sexuality is undeniably gendered, the same way gender is unquestionably sexual. As such, not only an analysis of sexuality cannot exempt itself from an account of the positional specificities of each subject, as the analysis of the subject woman cannot refuse a dive into the specifics of female sexuality. Most obviously, the latter is particularly so when what is at stake is the history of representation of the prostitute and its positioning in the spectrum of womanhood.

Hoping to have made clear the general lines of the project that I am undertaking here, as well as the theoretical assumptions that underly it, I will now proceed by clarifying the way in which I will attempt to accomplish it. Part Two is divided into two. The first will dig into religious sources; the second into scientific ones. More specifically, I will search for the representation of the prostitute and women more generally in the Christian doctrine of the Middle Ages and in nineteenth century sexology. There are, I believe, good reasons for this choice.

Rosemary Ruether has pointed out "the role of religion, specifically the Judeo-Christian tradition, in shaping the traditional cultural images" of women. As she argues, "religion has been not only a contributing factor, it is undoubtedly the single most important shaper and enforcer of the image and role of women in culture and society."[565] In addition, "[d]espite the assumption of most people that religion and sex do not mix any more than religion and politics, religion traditionally has been both highly political in its reality and highly sexual in its imagery."[566]

James Brundage goes further on this claim concerning religion and sexuality and speaks of the influence that the Christian sexual doctrine of the Middle Ages has had in the West, one that remains firmly embedded in western sexual ethos. According to him, "Christian ideas

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564 HUNT, Lynn, "Foucault´s Subject in the History of Sexuality", pp. 78-9.
565 RUETHER, Rosemary Radford, "Preface", p. 9.
566 *Idem*, p. 10.

about sex so permeate Western mentality that we generally accept them without examining them or identifying them as particularly Christian."[567] Despite such impact, however, "[h]istorians of sex have tended to ignore the theological origins of sexual attitudes, in favour of the supposed influence of secular and scientific currents of thought."[568]

My intention is to depart from this pathway. I side with Feramerz Dabhoiwala when he claims that Christian moral principles underpin conventional social thought and so that sexual attitudes – and discourses, I must add – cannot be understood without reference to religion.[569] If we now add to this the intertwining of discourses on sexuality with the ones on women and prostitution, the impact of (Christian) religion on the representation of womanhood cannot but be equally recognized. These are the reasons for the choice of the Christian doctrine of the Middle Ages as a source of discursive analysis in the first section of Part Two.

The second section changes its focus from religion to science. More precisely, I will focus on sexology, which arose in the last decades of the nineteenth century. By sexology I understand the scientific study of human sexuality, which, as Peter Cryle and Elizabeth Stephens tells us, "was produced in the context of a diverse range of fields, most of which were broadly medical in approach".[570] Among them, psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and even criminal anthropology played an essential role. The reasons for the choice of sexology as a discursive object of analysis are manifold and interrelated.

The first concerns the status of truth acquired by science from modernity onwards. It is generally recognized that, by the eighteenth century, science began to overthrow religion, acquiring a privileged authority in western societies. That, no doubt, has everything to do with sexuality. As Peter Cryle and Lisa Downing say, eighteenth century enlightenment is generally regarded "as having brought to an end the dominance of religious thought in Western Europe."[571] To the extent that was so in general, it definitely was so also in what sexuality is concerned.

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[567] BRUNDAGE, James A., *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, p. 8.
[568] DABHOIWALA, Faramerz, "Lust and Liberty", p. 94.
[569] *Idem*, p. 95.
[570] CRYLE, Peter, and STEPHENS, Elizabeth, *Normality: A Critical Genealogy*, p 263.
[571] CRYLE, Peter, and DOWNING, Lisa, "Introduction: The Natural and the Normal in the History of Sexuality", pp. 191-2.

This, however, needs to be properly understood, for, as Cryle and Downing, I too maintain the hypothesis that elements of theological thinking persist in the nineteenth century scientific discourse on sexuality.[572] Foucault, for instance, tells us how, in the nineteenth century, the old religious categories of sin, excess, and transgression were transposed into pathological categories and object to detailed nosology.[573] And Frank Mort has shown how the political "interleaving of medicine and religion"[574] at that historical moment was absolutely fundamental in the constitution of the new domain of sexuality.[575] What happened, then, was, a couching of the old theological categories about sex in scientific terms.

However, it can by no means be denied the importance sexology, precisely because of its scientific vests, has had in the history of sexuality. It marked a fundamental shift and, in an important sense, even the very invention of sexuality.[576] As Jeffreys Week puts it, "[s]exology was simultaneously constituting and exploring a new continent of knowledge, assigning thereby a new significance to the 'sexual'."[577]

Completely related with this is the second reason for my choice of sexology as an object of discursive analysis. As Harry Oosterhuis says, "the modern notion of sexuality, as we experience and understand it today, took shape in the last two decades of the nineteenth century" in the works of the first sexologists.[578] But not only. Of great importance to this work is the fact that much of the ideas enmeshed in the sexological theorizations of this time

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[572] *Idem*, p. 191.
[573] FOUCAULT, Michel, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, p. 67.
[574] MORT, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830*, p. 25.
[575] *Idem*, especially pp. 11-33. More specifically, Mort is referring to the practical alliances between scientists and clerics that "were forged through the various pressure groups campaigning for public health in the 1840s" (*Idem*, p. 26), but he places such alliance within a wider movement of expansion of medico-moral politics (*Idem*, p. 20), in which the cleric had a fundamental role, and which can be traced back to the system of social hygienics of mid eighteenth century (*Idem*, p. 18).
[576] Foucault speaks of "sexuality" as a result of sexology, an ordered system of knowledge which sets itself to reveal the truth about sex and, because sex was put at the core of subjectivity as a "cause of any and everything" in one's existence, ultimately about the very self. (FOUCAULT, Michel, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, pp. 65-70.) Supporting this thesis, it is worth of note the fact that the term sexuality as we now understand it made its first appearance at the end of the nineteenth century, in the case of English language, in 1789. (MOTTIER, Véronique, *Sexuality: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 31.)
[577] WEEKS, Jeffrey, *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800*, p. 184.
[578] OOSTERHUIS, Harry, "Sexual Modernity in the Works of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll", p. 133. More precisely, Oosterhuis makes this claim in relation to the works of psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902) and neurologist Albert Moll (1862-1939).

are, in my view, either directly opposed or rather taken up by abolitionist feminists, sometimes implicitly, others quite explicitly. As such, a deeper understanding of such ideas is of essence for the general purposes of this work.

Finally, as with religion, sexology is an essential source of ideas about gender, and so, of images of women. As we shall see, completely intertwined with this type of theorization of sexuality are notions of femininity and masculinity and stereotypes about men and women. These, in a great measure, both determined and were determined by that theorization, and can clearly be unveiled in any detailed analysis of the sexological writings. For this reason, the meaning and the image of the prostitute acquired in this period, as well as the place it held within the spectrum of womanhood, can only be properly understood when read against the background provided by the sexological theorization.

Hoping to have made clear the reasons for my choice of both Christian religion and sexology as an object of discursive analysis in the coming lines, it is now time to finally get into it.

2. Religion

2.1. Prostitution as a Lesser Evil

> Suppress prostitution and capricious lust will overthrow society.[579]

We owe to Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.C), one of the Fathers of the Christian Church, the formulation of the "lesser evil" discourse on prostitution. In *De ordine*, he writes: "[i[f you remove harlots from society, you will disrupt everything because of lust."[580] According to Augustine, the vanishment of prostitution would cause men to turn their lustful attention to respectable matrons and other virtuous women. It was not that prostitution was

[579] SAINT AUGUSTINE, as cited in ROBERTS, Nickie, *Whores in History: Prostitution in Western Society*, p. 61.
[580] "Aufer meretrices de rebus humanis, turbaveris omnia libidinibus: constitue matronarum loco, labe ac dedecore dehonestaveris." (AUGUSTINE, *De ordine*, 2.4.12 in PL 32:1000, as cited in BRUNDAGE, James A., *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, p. 106.)

not seen as an evil. It most certainly was. But, as James Brundage tells us, it was one believed to be necessary for the preservation of the social structure and the orderly conduct of civil life.[581]

This was the Christian rationale for the policy of practical toleration toward prostitution, which became institutionalized ten centuries later in the Council of Trent (1545-1563). As Isabel Ramos explains, it was by then that matrimony was finally regulated and, indirectly, so was prostitution. All clandestine matrimonies were forbidden, as well as every other form of extra matrimonial relations. The only sins of lust that were tolerated by Canon Law were prostitution and sex between single people, and that was so, first, because both were occasional types of relations,[582] and, second, due to their social purpose. Both were thought as a lesser evil through which other worse excesses of the flesh could be corrected.[583] In what concerns prostitution, the theory of the lesser evil was summarized by the expression "*In publicé prostituta cessat crimen adulterii*".[584] But it was not only about adultery. Sodomy, rape, and incest were also thought to be prevented and contained by allowing prostitution. And there was also its utility in initiating young men's sexual life as well as in allowing spouseless men to control their sexual impulses.[585]

Now, this is the first part of the lesser evil discourse on prostitution. The second has to do with the evil of prostitution being blamed on the prostitute, despite what is expressly recognized as men's incontrollable sexual impulse. Understanding the second part of this discourse requires us to realize that the history of the discourses on prostitution is one of correlation. It is not possible to understand a discourse on prostitution without understanding, first, the one on women in general, and second, the one on sexuality. These latter are an integral part of former one.

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581 BRUNDAGE, James A., *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, p. 106.

582 Maintaining a stable sexual relation outside marriage for at least a year was considered a very serious sin, punished by the Church with excommunication. (RAMOS VÁSQUEZ, Isabel, "La Represión de la Prostitución en la Castilla del Siglo XVII", p. 267.)

583 *Ibidem*.

584 MATHEU Y SANZ, *Tractatus de re criminali sibe controversiarum, Lugduni*, 1702, Controversia LIX, n. 33, as cited in RAMOS VÁSQUEZ, Isabel, "La Represión de la Prostitución en la Castilla del Siglo XVII", p. 268.

585 RAMOS VÁSQUEZ, Isabel, "La Represión de la Prostitución en la Castilla del Siglo XVII", p. 268.

2.2. Sexuality

Let us reverse that order and start with *sexuality*. As I see it, a great deal of the story that follows starts with the adoption by Saint Augustine of the platonic philosophy. As Isabel Ramos details, for Plato, the human being was constituted by a radical dualism between soul and body: the soul is perfect and eternal; the body imperfect and ephemeral. Whereas the first belongs to the world of essences or ideas, the second is part of the physical or natural world. The body is the soul's prison, and so, man needs to free the soul from the body by controlling his instincts and passions. That is what purification or catharsis is all about: the separation of man from the mundane world and his preparation for the perfect world of the ideas.[586]

As Rosemary Ruether notes, such philosophy was translated into Christian anthropology and redemption, with the latter being defined "as the rejection of the body and flight of the soul from material, sensual nature."[587] The dual nature of man and the anti-corporeal or spiritual nature of redemption determines an absolute prescription of repressiveness toward sensual libido of any kind, which, includes all pleasurable experiences of the body.[588] Yet, as Brundage observes, sexual desire "was the most foul and unclean of human wickednesses. […]. Other bodily desires and pleasures […] did not overwhelm reason and disarm the will". Sex, however, did.[589] And that is why, in Augustine's view, it was "the most pervasive manifestation of man's disobedience to God's designs."[590] For this reason, sex was both irrational and sinful.[591] And it was, furthermore, an ever-present danger to morality. For even if some sexual urges could sometimes be mastered – the wish to have sex and the conscious desire for pleasure, for instance, required consent of the will before becoming sinful –, sexual impulse itself sprang from the depths of the human psyche and its appearance could not be anticipated.[592] Finally, the idea of sex as shameful due to the pollution that accompanied it.

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[586] *Idem*, pp. 264-5.
[587] RUETHER, Rosemary Radford, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church", p. 153.
[588] *Idem*, p. 167.
[589] BRUNDAGE, James A., *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, p. 80.
[590] "In quibus [cupiditatibus malis] libido prae caeteris est, cui nisi resistatur, horrenda immunda committit." (AUGUSTINE, *Contra Julianum*, 4.5.35, in PL 44:756, as cited in BRUNDAGE, James A., *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, p. 80.)
[591] BRUNDAGE, James A., *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, p. 80.
[592] *Idem*, p. 81.

This idea led Augustine and other Fathers to defend that "sex left a stain of moral contamination that must be removed before entering holy places or participating in sacred rites."[593] According to this logic, sex was impure and defiling, and hence a source of shame.[594]

That was the characterization of sex provided by Saint Augustine. This does not mean, of course, that the other Fathers were silent on the matter. Quite the opposite. But Augustine was, in Brundage's words, "[t]he most important patristic authority on sexual matters, the one whose views have most fundamentally influenced subsequent ideas about sexuality in the West."[595] Now, Augustine's ideas on sexuality were not gender neutral. Far from it. And that is once again – at least theoretically – related to the adoption of the platonic soul-body dualism.

2.3. Women

So, let us now focus on the Christian discourse on *women*. Man is mind, woman is body. In a nutshell, that is basically it. The patristic and Augustine's view on woman is based entirely on the assimilation of maleness into mind/soul/spirituality and femininity into body/corporeality. As such, for Augustine, only man, not woman, is the image of God.[596] This idea is based on a specific interpretation of the story of Creation. What the Bible says is this: "God created man in His own image; in the image of God he created him; *male and female He created them*."[597] What Augustine interpreted, instead, was, as Ruether says, that

> *man*, as the image of God, was summed up in Adam, the unitary ancestor of humanity. But Adam is compound, containing male spirit and female corporeality. When Eve is taken from Adam´s side, she symbolizes this corporeal side of man, taken from him in order to be his helpmeet. But she is a helpmeet solely for the task of creation, for which

[593] *Ibidem*.
[594] *Idem*, p. 5.
[595] *Idem*, p. 80.
[596] According to Ruether, "Augustine justifies this view by fusing the Genesis text with I Corithians 11:3-12." (RUETHER, Rosemary Radford, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church", p. 156.)
[597] My emphasis. Genesis 1:27, as cited in RUETHER, Rosemary Radford, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church", p. 153.

> she is indispensable. For any spiritual task another male would be more suitable than a female as a helpmeet.[598]

From such interpretation emerges the equation of women with an *inferior nature*.[599] But not only. Women are said to have an inferior nature because they are body, and the body is the source of *sin*. So here is the second story, which, together with its interpretation – which, it is important to note once again, is far from the literal sayings of the Bible –[600] is absolutely decisive in how women have been defined by Christian Church: the story of the Fall. As William Phipps explains, in it

> the primeval pair engage in conversation with one another and with others. […] The serpent initiates the conversation by subtly suggesting that the divine command was a total fruit prohibition. Eve responds by relating […] that the prohibition was limited to one tree. The serpent then persuades Eve that divine wisdom rather than human death will result from eating the forbidden fruit. Regarding the off-limits tree, it is stated: "She took of its fruit and ate; and she gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate." The jointly disobedient couple then have a misplaced shame over their appearance. Both attempt to transfer responsibility to others. Consequences of the misuse of freedom ensue. Yahweh gives Adam a life sentence at hard labor on marginal farmland, and Eve is given pain in childbirth and domination by her husband. After being evicted from Eden, they raise a family.[601]

That is the story the Bible depicts: both Adam and Eve are present, they both hear what the serpent says, and even though Eve is the first to eat the apple, Adam does it too, fully aware he is disobeying God. However, the interpretations and translations of the story of the Fall by the Fathers change it in two fundamental ways. For a start, Adam disappears from the scene of the encounter with the serpent. And this, one way or the other, results in the blaming

[598] My emphasis. RUETHER, Rosemary Radford, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church", p. 156.
[599] *Ibidem*.
[600] William E. Phipps notes that "[d]ue to translation and conceptual difficulties, few readers understand that there is no gender differentiation for much of the [Garden of Eden] story." (PHIPPS, William E., "Eve and Pandora Contrasted", p. 35.)
[601] *Ibidem*.

of Eve – and her corporeal nature – for the original sin and the expel of humankind from paradise.[602] The second change has to do with the forbidden fruit's sexual connotation. As Phipps notes, Adam and Eve cling together in the nude prior to the serpent episode, and so the shame they feel after eating the apple "is from the loss of self-respect after stealing what did belong to them, not for any lustful embrace."[603] The attribution of a sexual symbolism to the forbidden fruit alters, in a fundamental way, Eve's portrayal: from the spokesperson of the couple, who, during her talk with the serpent, presents theological arguments, she is transformed into wanton, tempting and tempted sexuality.[604]

So here we have it: from these interpretations of the story of Creation and the story of the Fall follows the equation of women with sin and with an inferior nature. Both relate with the assimilation of corporality into femininity and, more specifically, with the identification of the body – and thus women – with sexuality, temptation, and danger.

This image of women led to the affirmation of a duty of abasement of women's visual image so they did not appear as women before the eyes of the males. As Ruether observes,

> [i]t is from this obsession with blotting out the female bodily image that we find that peculiar involvement in the Fathers with questions of female dress, adornment and physical appearance. The woman must be stripped of all adornment. She must wear unshapely dress and a veil that conceals her face and limbs. Finally, she must virtually destroy her physical appearance so that she becomes unsightly.[605]

But the idea of danger associated with the representation of women as sexual body went much further, determining Augustine's view on how men should act in sex for procreation – the only reason for women's existence. As Ruether tells us, right sex should be depersonalized, unfeeling, and totally instrumental. Men should relate to women exclusively

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[602] For Augustine, for instance, "the Fall could only occur, not when the body tempts, but when the male ruling principle agrees to 'go along.' This, however, does not imply a milder view of sin, only a more contemptuous view of Eve's capacity to cause the Fall 'by herself.' In other Fathers, such as Tertullian, Eve is made to sound as though she bore the primary responsibility. Tertullian demands an abasement of woman and the covering of her shameful female nature as the consequence of continuing imaging of this guilty nature of Eve." (RUETHER, Rosemary Radford, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church", p. 157.)

[603] PHIPPS, William E., "Eve and Pandora Contrasted", p. 36.

[604] *Ibidem*.

[605] RUETHER, Rosemary Radford, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church", p. 161.

as bodies to be used in procreation, with the same rationality and dispassion with which a farmer plants his seed in a field. To the contrary, sinful carnality comes in, the man loses control of his body, which obeys a will of its own in the presence of the female body, the sole purpose of which is sensual pleasure. In this case, women are once again depicted in a totally depersonalized way: they are, thus, either an instrument for procreation or an instrument for sinful sexual pleasure.[606]

In this sense, the male-female dualism, into which the soul-body dualism was assimilated, is translated into a subject-object relationship between men and women. Ruether explains that women are not considered by the Fathers a "thou", a person to be related to with equality or mutuality.[607] After all, women are body, sexuality, and danger, not soul, spirit, or purity. All the lower traits of mind and body were attributed to women and these were characterized as feminine: "the 'natural' inferiorities of bodily weakness and pettiness, maliciousness and sensuality of mind were perceived as feminine, whereas all the virtues associated with salvation – chastity, patience, wisdom, temperance, fortitude, and justice – were thought as masculine.[608] As a result, women were not seen as "self-sufficient, whole person[s] with equal honor, as the image of God in [their] own right, but rather, ethically, as dangerous to the male."[609] The consequence is fatal: the justification and prescription of women's subordination to men. As Augustine put it, "flesh must be subject to spirit in the right ordering of nature."[610]

As Ruether says, the subjugation of woman to man is defended by Augustine as natural law and, in his view, leads to a feminine duty of her body to her husband. No woman has the right to dispose of her body without male permission, by which he means that no woman can exact a vow of continence from her husband. In reality, for Augustine, no woman has the right to dispose of her person, her conduct of life, and her property autonomously.[611] Such autonomy

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[606] *Idem*, p. 162.
[607] *Idem*, p. 163.
[608] *Idem*, p. 159.
[609] *Idem*, pp. 156-7.
[610] AUGUSTINE, *De Contin*, I.23, as cited in RUETHER, Rosemary Radford, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church", p. 157.
[611] RUETHER, Rosemary Radford, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church", pp. 159-60.

is, according to him, "incompatible with the nature of a woman, who does not have her own 'head' but belongs to her husband, who is her 'head'."[612] The reason is this: because defined as body, only when taken together with the male – her head – can a woman achieve the status of image of God.[613]

For other Fathers, women's subjection is not connected to their inferior nature – not directly, at least –, but rather to the idea of woman as sin. On this view, Eve's blame for the Fall is of essence. For John Chrysostom, for instance, "[w]hat happened to the first woman occasioned the subjection of the whole sex",[614] and what happened to that first woman, Eve, was that she was "'an ensnarer' who triggered the fall of all humanity."[615] Now, the idea of Eve as ensnarer and temptress does not stop there. As Jean Higgins has shown, parallels between Eve and the serpent[616] equate her with the very evil and the devil himself or at least with the devil's and not Adam's helpmeet. In this sense, Tertullian:

> You are the Devil´s gateway. You are the unsealer of that forbidden tree. You are the first deserter of the divine Law. You are she who persuaded him whom the Devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God´s image man. On account of your desert, that is death, even the Son of God had to die.[617]

It is no wonder then that probably the best summary of such theology on Eve as evil temptress can be found on the fifteenth century witch-hunters' manual *Malleus Maleficarum*: "In the Old Testament, the Scriptures have much that is evil to say about women, and this because of the first temptress, Eve, and her imitators."[618] The authors then continue by associating

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612 *Idem*, p. 160.
613 *Idem*, p. 156.
614 CHRYSOSTOM, John, *Sermons on Timothy*, p. 9, as cited in PHIPPS, William E., "Eve and Pandora Contrasted", p. 43.
615 CHRYSOSTOM, John, *Sermons on First Corinthians*, pp. 26, 3, as cited in PHIPPS, William E., "Eve and Pandora Contrasted", p. 43.
616 HIGGINS, Jean M., "The Myth of Eve: The Temptress", p. 639.
617 TERTULLIAN, *The Cultu Fem.,* 1,1, as cited in RUETHER, Rosemary Radford, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church", p. 157.
618 KRAMER, Heinrich, and SPRENGER, James, *Malleus Maleficarum*, p. 1486, as cited in HIGGINS, Jean M., "The Myth of Eve: The Temptress", p. 641.

woman's attractive appearance to the pollution and danger that comes from her: "[a] woman is beautiful to look upon, contaminating to the touch, and deadly to keep."[619]

The danger coming from women could assume many forms. As Silvia Federici observes, on one side, witches were accused of making men impotent, on the other, through their sexuality, witches were said to enslave men and chain them to their will, which they were claimed to do by generating an excessive erotic passion in men.[620] And so, according to the *Malleus Maleficarum*,

> [t]here are […] seven methods by which [witches] infect […] the venereal act and the conception of the womb: First, by inclining the minds of men to inordinate passion; Second, by obstructing their generative force; Third, by removing the member accommodated to that act; Fourth, by changing men into beasts by their magic art; Fifth, by destroying the generative force in women; Sixth, by procuring abortion; Seventh, by offering children to the devil […].[621]

It is not surprising, then, that charges of sexual perversion, contraceptive practices, abortion, and infanticide featured prominently in the witch trials of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe.[622] After all, as Federici says, the witch "was also the loose promiscuous woman – the prostitute or adulteress, and generally, the woman who exercised her sexuality outside the bonds of marriage and procreation. Thus, in the witchcraft trials, 'ill repute' was evidence of guilt."[623]

From here, the significant connection between the witch and the prostitute which Federici has noted. "A prostitute when young, a witch when old": that is how the saying went. Both used sex to deceive and corrupt men.[624] "And both *sold themselves* in order to obtain money

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[619] KRAMER, Heinrich, and SPRENGER, James, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, pp. 43-47, as cited in PHIPPS, William E., "Eve and Pandora Contrasted", p. 44.
[620] KORS, Alan C., and PETERS, Edward, *Witchcraft in Europe 110-1700: A Documentary History*, pp. 130-2, as cited in FEDERICI, Silvia, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation*, p. 190.
[621] KORS, Alan C., and PETERS, Edward, *Witchcraft in Europe 110-1700: A Documentary History*, p. 47, as cited in FEDERICI, Silvia, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation*, pp. 190-1.
[622] FEDERICI, Silvia, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation*, p. 180.
[623] *Idem*, p. 184.
[624] STEIFELMEIER, Dora, "Sacro e Profano: Note Sulla Prostituzione Nella Germania Medievale", p. 48ff, as cited in FEDERICI, Silvia, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation*, p. 197.

and an illicit power".[625] Both were the daughters and heirs of Eve: sexual, dangerous, and insubordinate. After all, as Federici puts it, the witch (and so also the prostitute) was also "the rebel woman who talked back, argued, swore, and did not cry under torture."[626] The one who did not submit to men's control, who did not let them be their "head".

Eve, the witch, and the prostitute: they are all part of the same image, the same representation of woman, the same idea concerning the female nature sponsored by the Church Fathers: the whore, the strumpet, the "bad girl". As Ruether argues,

> [a]s whore, woman is wholly the image of that "revolting carnality" that entices the rational mind down from its heavenly scat to "wallow" in the flesh. Here woman is depicted as the painted strumpet, strutting forth with all her natural and artificial allures, the very incarnation of that "fleshy" principle in revolt against its "head" which subverts all right ordering between mind and sense.[627]

The prostitute is the paradigmatic figure, the supreme incarnation of this female image. It is important to understand the specific meaning the Fathers and particularly Saint Jerome attributed prostitution. As Brundage notes, for them,

> the essence of prostitution lay in promiscuity, rather than in the mercenary nature of the transaction between the harlot and her client. Thus, a woman who took many lovers was a prostitute, whether she took money for her favors or not. Financial gain was a secondary consideration.[628]

But the image of the strumpet does not stand alone. It bears the trace of its opposite on which it is intrinsically dependent: the virgin. In Ruether's words, "[h]ere alone woman rises to spirituality, personhood and equality with the male, but only at the expense of crushing out of her being all vestiges of her bodily and her female 'nature'."[629] Such duality is at the root of the Fathers' ambiguous position towards women, for, as Ruether claims, side by side with

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[625] FEDERICI, Silvia, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation*, p. 197.
[626] *Idem*, p. 184.
[627] RUETHER, Rosemary Radford, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church", pp. 163-4.
[628] BRUNDAGE, James A., *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, p. 248.
[629] RUETHER, Rosemary Radford, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church", p. 164.

their hatred of women as strumpets, it stood the patristic high praise of women in their role as virgins.[630]

2.4. The Virgin

Once again, the view on women, and particularly, on the virgin as a type or image of women is directly connected with the view on sex. If sexuality is seen and defended as intrinsically evil, then continence is the only path towards salvation or at least "the shortest route to heaven".[631]

The defense of virginity had as champion Jerome. As Ruether tells us, if a mother decided to dedicate her daughter to virginity, Jerome had an entire course of education to recommend, one that completely isolated her from everything that could awaken her corporeality and her sexuality and damage her purity:

> The child must be kept secluded and never allowed to stir from her mother's side, so that all independence becomes foreign to her mind. She must not go to the baths with eunuch servants (as was customary), because these men, although they have lost the power for the act, still retain lewd desire. Nor should she be allowed to bathe with married women, for the pregnant bodies are utterly disgusting and will arouse in the girl thoughts about the potential of her own body injurious to her vocation. After she grows older she should shun the company of married women altogether and should forswear all bathing, for she should blush for shame at the very idea of seeing her own unclothed body. She should be trained in vigils and fasts, and by "cold chastity" put out the flames of lust. Any food or drink that will arouse the natural bodily heats should be avoided. Squalid dress and neglect of hygiene will spoil her natural good looks and keep her from becoming an object of desire. For Jerome, a "clean body signifies a dirty mind". The girl should not busy herself with secular learning or cultivated ways, but should cling only to the scriptures and make writings of the Church Fathers her only literature. Banqueting, the bustle of the streets, the sight of fashionable dressed women

[630] *Idem*, p. 151.
[631] *Idem*, p. 169.

> or curled and perfumed fops, the social rounds of high Roman society – all this is anathema. Finally, [… only far from] the myriad temptations of the great city [… could] she be trained in the "angelic life", which, "while in the body lives as though it were without flesh" in a suitable environment.[632]

That is how a virgin was not only to be raised, but to live her entire life. That is what a virgin, the female ideal, was like. When that was the case, the woman was seen as rising to a "masculinity" that conquered the volatile mind and the weak flesh intrinsic to women. If angelic life required of man to rise above his body, it required of women to rise above her own nature, getting rid of all that belongs to her femaleness.[633]

When that was the case, when a woman rose above their bodiliness, and thus her very femaleness, she was, according to the Church Fathers, "bound for heaven, and her male ascetic devotees would stop at nothing short of this prize for her."[634] Yet, as Ruether observes, this came at a high price: the despise of all real physical women and the turning back on any affective or sexual expression with the "dangerous daughters of Eve".[635] Such dichotomy is clearly expressed in the exhortation to both despise and love women: despise them in her bodily functions and depraved psychic characteristics and love them as a "redeemable souls". In Augustine's words:

> A good Christian is found in one and the same woman to love the creature of God whom he desires to be transformed and renewed, but to hate in her the corruptible and mortal conjugal connection, sexual intercourse and all that pertains to her as a wife.[636]

2.5. The Wife/Mother

The wife is an interesting matter. In patristic theology, although the figure of the wife was, of course, present, it was assimilated into the one of the strumpet, the sexualized woman,

[632] *Idem*, p. 170.
[633] *Idem*, p. 176.
[634] *Idem*, p. 179.
[635] *Ibidem*.
[636] AUGUSTINE, De *Sermone Dom. in Monte*, p 41, as cited in RUETHER, Rosemary Radford, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church", p. 161.

and, thus, opposed to the virgin. As Ruether explains, as wives, women were also essentially body, even if a totally submissive body, obedient to their "head".[637]

This, of course, is related to the view of the Fathers on both marriage and procreation. Their ideas on sexuality were so negative that even when practiced for the end of procreation within marriage, sex was still considered as something inherently sinful, polluting, and debasing. In this sense, marriage was seen as inferior to virginity and if it was not deemed completely corrupting, it was only because of its instrumentality to procreation. Procreation, however, merely made the sex act forgiven and not redeemed.[638] For even when intended to be totally dispassionate and instrumental, it still inevitably produces "filthy carnal pleasure".[639] This results in the corruption of its fruit as well, and so, on this view, the child "is born 'tainted' by original sin."[640] That is why without spiritual rebirth, children are not children of God and are condemned to damnation.[641] In fact, both Augustine and Jerome agree "that the Old Testament blessing on fecundity [… had by then] been rescinded by God."[642]

> [N]ow that Christ has been born from Israel and has brought about the reborn life of Resurrection, the need for physical progeny is fast coming to an end. The pagans, indeed, create sufficient offspring to provide the raw material for spiritual rebirth, and so it would be well for Christians to abjure the first entirely, in order to concentrate all their attention on the second, which is the proper task.[643]

This, in turn, is reflected in the view of motherhood, which for the Fathers was far from holy. As Ruether tells us, not only did they feel and express disgust at childbearing,[644] childbirth, and breastfeeding, as they were indifferent and even recommended women to abandon their children to commit to monastic life.[645] In fact, the excessive passion and attachment of mothers to their children was one of the reasons the Fathers saw motherhood as incompatible

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[637] RUETHER, Rosemary Radford, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church", p. 164.
[638] *Ibidem*.
[639] *Idem*, p. 165.
[640] *Idem*, p. 166.
[641] *Idem*, p. 168.
[642] *Ibidem*.
[643] *Idem*, p. 169.
[644] *Idem*, p. 170.
[645] The praise for the abandonment of children to seek the higher life of chastity is particularly present in Jerome and his letters to Paula. (*Idem*, p. 176.)

with salvation, which, according to them, required the renunciation of all types of passions.[646] That is why throughout all the Middle Ages it is the nun and not the mother who was perceived as the embodiment of the virgin, spiritual woman.

This view of marriage and motherhood and, hence, of the wife and mother would only slightly change over the following centuries. In fact, it was not until the beginning of the Modern age that a radical rupture in this perspective took place. Several factors have contributed to it. I will focus on three.[647]

2.5.1. De-sexualization of Marriage

First, what I would refer to as the *desexualization of marriage* achieved through extensive and meticulous regulation of sexuality by the Church. In this sense, the first thing to note is the possibility and even the recommendation of marriage without sex. According to Brundage, Gregory the Great,[648] for instance, thought that since sexual intercourse could lead to other serious kinds of sexual misconduct, the best thing was for couples not to consummate their marriages at all.[649] Otherwise, the Church recommendation was for couples to reduce to a minimum the sexual element in their marriage.[650] As a result, by the sixth century, sexual abstinence was not only exhorted, but said to be what distinguished married sex from fornication.[651] As Brundage explains, sex was allowed only for reproduction and at

[646] This is especially patent in the Greek Fathers such as Gregory of Nyssa. As opposed to Jerome, Gregory of Nyssa's view on marriage and virginity stresses more the transience of the goods of marriage than the defiling character of sex. For him, the problem with marriage is not so much the defiling character of sexuality but the mutability of all worldly loves. The love for a husband or a child is a passing good. "Those who fix their affections on these finite relationships are doomed to tragedy and loss. Better, then, not to place one´s heart on passing goods but to look to heavenly things that do not pass away." For Nyssa, virginity is more a metaphor of an inner attitude of detachment and spiritual lifting of the mind, than a sexual issue, for he can imagine the married woman a "virgin life" without denying her marital duties. (*Idem*, pp. 176-7.)
[647] I am here speaking of discursive factors. There were, of course, many and fundamental material conditions that led to a change in ideas on these issues. However, as my object here is discourse, I will keep to the first type of factors.
[648] Pope Gregory I (Latin: Gregorius I; c. 540 – 12 March 604), commonly known as Saint Gregory the Great, was the bishop of Rome from 3 September 590 to his death.
[649] BRUNDAGE, James A., *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, p. 138.
[650] *Idem*, p. 140.
[651] *Idem*, p. 155.

prescribed times and places.[652] In this sense, the Penitentials[653] specified when married people were expected to refrain from sexual relations according to two kinds of criteria: the wife's physiological cycle (menstrual period, pregnancy, childbirth, and lactation) and the Church's liturgical calendar (Sundays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and sometimes Saturdays). And there were also other mixed abstinence periods defined by other criteria.[654] In addition to abstinence, the Penitentials imposed other limitations on sexual intercourse: relations were allowed only at night, had to be undertaken partially clothed, and could not take place from the rear.[655] There was a general restriction on marital sexual relations in nonstandard positions or employing unorthodox techniques[656] that was present from the Penitentials in the seventh and eighth centuries to the canonists in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, and even to Tridentine Catholicism, in the sixteenth century.[657] Everything apart from the "missionary position" was considered unnatural and "whorish". The expression is Gratian's and was inspired by Jerome. According to the latter, "this sort of thing […] was bad enough when practiced by a harlot, [but] was even more damnable in the sacred precincts of the marriage bed."[658]

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[652] *Idem*, p. 139.
[653] "Penitentials, a new genre of Christian moral literature, grew increasingly influential in shaping Catholic sexual doctrine between the end of the sixth century and the beginning of the eleventh century. The handbooks of penance written in this period provided guidance for confessors in dealing with sinners who wished to be reconciled with God and to make their peace with the Church. The advice offered by the penitential authors was grounded on their practical experience as confessors, as well as on their reading in spiritual and doctrinal literature. The penitentials, accordingly, focused primarily on pastoral concerns, on the means by which those who had offended God and the Christian community might make reparation for their sinful thoughts, words, and deeds. Sexual offenses constituted the largest single category of behavior that the penitentials treated." (*Idem*, pp. 152-3.)
[654] *Idem*, p. 155.
[655] *Idem*, p. 161.
[656] The reason might have been the suspicion that such positions and techniques made procreation more difficult or either that they involved a pursuit of more intense sexual pleasure. (*Idem*, pp. 158-60.) While some have suggested that "that the ban on intercourse in anything but the so-called missionary position sprang from a belief that this position was the most favorable one for conception", Brundage asserts instead that "the context of the prohibition in the penitentials suggests that the authors linked nonstandard coital positions, particularly the rear-penetration position, with bestiality rather than with contraception or abortion. (*Idem*, 163.)
[657] "The legislation of the Council of Trent gave no explicit attention to problems of marital sexuality, but those who interpreted Trent's marriage law" did. Among them, Spanish Jesuit Tomás Sánchez (1550-1610) analyzed in detail the problem of coital positions used by married couples. According to him, the missionary position was the natural one, and all deviations from it were, thus, unnatural and, hence, sinful. (*Idem*, pp. 565-6.)
[658] IVO, *Decretum*, 9.110, as cited in BRUNDAGE, James A., "Let Me Count the Ways: Canonists and Theologians Contemplate Coital Positions", p. 84.

As Bernard Murstein tells us, the path towards the configuration of marriage as asexual or antisexual is well illustrated in the Middle Ages' heated debate on the validity of marriage. Both sides of such debate are well represented by two twelfth century systematists, Gratian and Lombard, who became influential leaders of Christian thought. Gratian concluded in his *Decretum* that while consent initiated marriage, it was the sexual relations between the spouses that ratified it, and that meant that whereas under certain circumstances consent could be dissolved, once the sexual act had occurred, the marriage was indissoluble. As opposed, Peter Lombard in his *The Sentences* defended consent as sacramental in nature and intercourse as merely a promise to wed, which, thus, could be withdrawn unless it had occurred after consent. It was this second view that prevailed, as Pope Alexander III decided that once consent was given, marriage was valid even if the woman later married another man in a Church ceremony and had sexual relations with him. As a result, the idea of mystical bond in carnal relations, whereby man and wife became one was displaced and the Church had now a definition of marriage that put it on the asexual leaning of the hierarchy.[659]

Even the late association between marriage and love did not displace the anti/asexual meaning that marriage came to acquire. In fact, just the opposite was true: it desexualized the idea of love. This, of course, has a long history to which different factors have contributed, but the Christian influence can hardly go unnoticed. It was Thomas de Aquinas who mingled love and marriage together. He was definitely not the first within Christianity, but he was no doubt the most successful. The love he referred to, however, was far from being a sexual one. As Collen McCluskey notes, he spoke, instead, of friendship between husband and wife, which he saw as a second purpose of marriage, the first being the survival of the species, i.e., procreation.[660] Under this light, Aquinas warned couples not to place too great an emphasis on the pleasures of the marriage bed, to which he added that a man who had intercourse with his wife solely for enjoyment was treating her as if she were a whore.[661]

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[659] MURSTEIN, Bernard I., *Love, Sex, and Marriage Through the Ages*, pp. 109-10.
[660] MCCLUSKEY, Collen, "An Unequal Relationship between Equals: Thomas Aquinas on Marriage", p. 10.
[661] BRUNDAGE, James A., *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, p. 448.

2.5.2. The Cult of Mary

The second factor leading to the displacement of the wife/mother from the prurient to the purity side of the dualism of female images within the Christian tradition is the change in the perception of Mary.

From a distant Queen of the Heavens in the Early Middle Ages to a close, protector, and patient mother to all children and helpmate to religious men in the eleventh and twelfth centuries: that is the course the perception of Mary has followed. And that exact same path can be seen in the understanding of the conception of motherhood: from the distinction between spiritual and physical motherhood and the praise of the first in the Early and High Middle Ages[662] to a new esteem and respect towards physical motherhood in the Late Middle Ages. In sum, from an incompatibility between holiness and motherhood to a congruity and even an understanding of the latter precisely in terms of holiness.

The story of such pathway takes us back to the ascetic ethos of the Fathers. It was generally believed that monasticism offered the "best" life for a Christian. Monasticism was thought to be within the grasp of a celibate monk or nun but out of the reach of people distracted from devotion to God by the things of this world. Those things included families. Saint Jerome, for instance, believed that too much affection for one's children weakened one's love for God. As Clarissa Atkinson explains,

> [i]n its everyday physical and social meanings, parenthood was excluded from the monastic world. Candidates for the religious life were expected to eschew it if possible or, if they were already parents, to find a new focus for their interests, energies, resources, and affections.[663]

Physical motherhood was, thus, incompatible with religious life, devotion to God, and holiness. As a result, physical maternity was devalued, and spiritual maternity took its place.[664] In Atkinson's words, "'[r]eal' or significant motherhood was conceived as a

[662] ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 64.
[663] *Idem*, p. 66
[664] *Idem*, p. 67.

spiritual rather than a biological relationship",[665] and it was related with the teaching of the sacred sciences, with spiritual direction – salvation in a spiritual sense –, and with virginity.[666] The nun was, thus, the paradigmatic figure of spiritual motherhood: "the virgin mother of many virgins vowed to God".[667] It was she that most closely emulated the true – spiritual – motherhood represented by the Virgin Mary.[668]

The relevance of Mary's motherhood in Christianity needs to be properly understood. It is of an utmost importance to the idea of Christ's humanity and, thus, to that of incarnation and redemption: the reality of the birth – and death – of Christ depends on it.[669] At this time, however, Mary's motherhood was carefully distinguished from the motherhood of other women. As Atkinson puts it, "[e]ven though it was precisely her *physical* motherhood that accomplished the Incarnation, still – and increasingly – the differences, not the similarities, between the birth of Christ and all other births were elaborated and celebrated."[670]

The most important difference was Mary's virginity: God "took our body, and not simply that, but from a pure and unspotted virgin ignorant of a man, a body pure and truly unalloyed by intercourse with men."[671] For that reason, "Mary gave birth without the pain, immodesty, and disarray of ordinary female experience."[672] Let us be reminded that the pains of childbirth were said to be a punishment to all women for Eve's original sin. And it was Mary's virginity that allowed for the holiness of her child and, hence, hers.[673]

Yet, as Atkinson argues, the differentiation between the perception of Mary and physical motherhood did not rely exclusively on virginity. It was equally based on a distance from the sense of intimacy and familiarity typical to the motherhood of "this world". The Early Middle Ages witnessed a theology and spirituality according to which the Father and the Son were

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[665] *Idem*, p. 94

[666] *Ibidem*.

[667] BEDE, *History* 4.19, pp. 239, as cited in ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 95.

[668] ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 95.

[669] *Idem*, p. 108.

[670] *Idem*, p. 111.

[671] ATHANASIUS, "On the Incarnation of the Word" 1.18, p. 153, as cited in in ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 111.

[672] ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 112.

[673] *Idem*, p. 110.

closely identified, and "Christ was preeminently king and judge, distant from this world and its people." Mary's perception reflected such vision of her son: she was portrayed as Queen of Heaven. As such, her lap offered "not maternal comfort and intimacy but a throne for the God-child." And so, by the year one thousand, her majesty was stressed at the expense of intimacy and familiarity.[674]

Such perception, however, would change over the following centuries. "Mary gradually took the place of old, familiar, and beloved local saints and acquired some of their characteristics – intimacy, immediacy, and parental concern for the affairs of her children."[675] Atkinson shows that by the eleventh century, monks

> paid attention to their own feelings and to the imagined feelings of Christ and Mary and the saints, dwelling less on the majesty of the distant lord Christ than on the sufferings of the man Jesus and his family and friends. Inevitably, there was a corresponding shift in the perception and praise of Mary.[676]

She started to be perceived not only as a Mother of Christ, but as a Mother to all humans, to whom she was a source of hope for redemption and protection.[677] The multitude of tales about Mary's miracles is proof of this different view of Mary, which became prevalent by the late eleventh century, when those stopped to be just popular stories and started to be told by clerics.[678] Such stories, together with theological writings, visionary literature, and medieval paintings portrayed Mary's mediating role: "interceding for sinners, she uses her maternal influence to plead for mercy from Christ the Judge, or God the Father, who is the central figure."[679] Mary became a symbol of maternal solicitude, love, tenderness, care, and patience, as well as of suffering and self-sacrifice, as the image of the Pietà as one of the most prevalent in Christian imagery can witness.

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[674] *Idem*, p. 115.
[675] *Idem*, p. 118.
[676] *Idem*, p. 118.
[677] *Ibidem*.
[678] *Idem*, p. 132.
[679] *Idem*, p. 134.

As Atkinson claims, such a change in the perception of Mary approximated motherhood and, hence, the "mother" to goodness and was, therefore, an important step in mother's opposition to Eve. For Guerric of Igny (1070/80-1157 a.c.), a Cistercian abbot who wrote a series of sermons about maternity and who perceived women in terms of extreme good and evil, Eve could not be considered a mother, since mothers were defined as good.[680] Eve, therefore, was

> not so much a mother as a stepmother since she handed on to her children an inheritance of certain death […] She is indeed called the mother of all the living, but she turned out to be more precisely the murderer of the living […] since the only fruit of her child-bearing was death.[681]

The new perception of Mary had its stronger effect in the late Middle Ages, when "Christian teachers, artists, and religious leaders expressed a new appreciation of marriage, family, and motherhood".[682] Reflecting such view of Mary (and Christ), "[m]aternity was understood to include intense suffering" but also intense love, and, as a result, "[b]elievers were encouraged to discover and exploit tender family affections" as a way, a means to love God.[683]

In what concerns the identification between motherhood and love, the fourteenth century illustrated Franciscan manuscript *Meditations on the Life of Christ* is a good example of the new Christian view on maternity and its connection with the perception of Mary. In it, Mary's love for Jesus is depicted as "intensely physical in expression and passionate in feeling".[684]

> But when she cries, do you think the mother will not cry? She too wept, and as she wept the Child in her lap placed His tiny hand on His mother's mouth and face as though to comfort her by His gestures, that she should not cry, because He loved her tenderly […] the mother wiped His eyes and hers, laid her cheek on His, nursed Him, and comforted Him in every way she could.[685]

[680] *Idem*, p. 122.
[681] IGNY, Guerric of, *Liturgical Sermons*, 2:168, as cited in ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 123.
[682] ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 144.
[683] *Idem*, p. 145.
[684] *Idem*, p. 155.
[685] "Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century", p. 44, as cited in ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 155.

As Atkinson notes, however, "[t]he fourteenth century mystical theologian Julian of Norwich went further, identifying mother love with the source of all love – that is, with the loving Christ."[686] Motherhood's symbology as love went so far as Christ himself being perceived as a mother: "all the fair work and all the sweet kindly offices of beloved motherhood belong to the second person."[687]

Yet, the identification of Mary with passionate feeling was not limited to love. Her perception as suffering mother led to the "[r]ecognition and acknowledgement of the necessity and holiness of suffering, believed to be intrinsic to all motherhood, [and] contributed a sacred dimension to physical motherhood."[688]

Now, despite the importance of the cult of Mary in the change of perception of motherhood, its influence in the transition of "the mother/wife" into the prurient side of the Mary-Eve dualism was not limited to motherhood. As Atkinson explains, the cult of Mary was equally connected to the image of the wife, as Mary became a model of behavior all wives should emulate.

First, because of the conflation – already seen in the Fathers – of Mary's role as mother and consort. Mary was not only the mother of Christ but also His bride: the bride of Christ and mother to all Christians.[689]

Second, because of Mary's opposition to Eve in terms of obedience and humility. "Paul had identified Christ as the second Adam; for theologians after him, Mary was the second Eve, whose obedience reversed the damage done by the disobedience of the first. By implication, just as Eve was Adam's partner in the Fall, Mary was Christ's partner in redemption."[690] As Atkinson observes, the quiet voice and demure behavior was of essence in the construction of Mary since the Fathers,[691] but it was in the Late Middle Ages that it acquired a new vigor. The new cult and image of Saint Joseph in the fifteenth century is a great expression of just

[686] ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 161.
[687] NORWICH, Julian of, *Revelation 14*, pp. 591, 593, as cited in in ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 162.
[688] ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 164
[689] *Idem*, p. 110.
[690] *Idem*, p. 109.
[691] *Idem*, p. 111.

that. From an aged widower and a feeble man, too simple and patient to reproach Mary for her pregnancy before knowing the truth about it, Joseph came to be depicted by Late Middle Ages as Mary and Jesus' lord to whom they both obeyed.[692]

Finally, the Late Medieval emphasis on the humanity of Mary (and Jesus) fostered a new cult for the Holy Family. In it, Mary's role was not only that of "the humble young woman nursing her baby or the tortured old woman at the Cross",[693] but also that of a modest and obedient wife in a family which had Joseph at its head. As Atkinson concludes, together with "Joseph's vigorous paternity", "vested with dignity and authority", Mary's role as obedient wife "symbolized and legitimated the new family of modern Europe".[694]

2.5.3. Humanism and Protestantism

Despite the impact of the cult of Mary in the Middle Ages, the changes in the perception of motherhood and family would only consolidate in the Modern Era. Here we find the third factor conductive to the transition of "the mother/wife" into the prurient side of the Mary-Eve dualism: *the humanist and protestant views on motherhood and family*. It was only by then and under such influence that, as Atkinson puts it, "[t]he relationship of virtue and holiness to domesticity was turned around".[695]

In that sense, it is indicative that Erasmus of Rotterdam "loved to make fun of lazy, vicious monks and nuns", "warned of the physical and moral dangers of religious life", "praised the excellence of marriage", and "urged young people, especially young women, to marry and attend to husbands, households, and children.[696] Such inversion in the relationship between virtue, holiness, and domesticity was, thus, intimately connected with the humanist preference for worldly activity over monastic renunciation.[697] But not only. The humanist attention to civic virtue was equally important, since humanists considered the family

[692] *Idem*, p. 159.
[693] *Idem*, p. 162.
[694] *Idem*, p. 160.
[695] *Idem*, p. 195.
[696] *Idem*, p. 201.
[697] *Ibidem*.

fundamental for good order and the socialization of the young.[698] From here, their obsession with education and the role of the mother in it, to which the belief "that the health and strength of the body determine that of the mind and spirit"[699] was also vital. It made it crucial that "the youthful body receive proper care from the minute it's born."[700] That was the mother's function.

Building on the teaching of the humanists, the first generation of Protestants reformers had a consuming interest in matters of marriage and family. Erasmus and Martin Luther agreed on the goodness of marriage, the importance of careful child raising, and the role of women in it.[701] Atkinson tells us that, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Luther defined female nature and calling in terms of the woman's role as wife and mother: she was "created to be a companionable helpmeet to the man in everything, particularly to bear children".[702] The education of children was the most sacred task for married people: they "can do no better work and do nothing more valuable either for God, for Christendom, for all the world, for themselves, and for their children than to bring up their children well [… that is] their shortest road to Heaven."[703] As motherhood was inconceivable outside marriage, "mother" and "wife" became interchangeable. In marriage, Luther said,

> the rule remains with the husband, and the wife is compelled to obey him by God's command. He rules the home and the state, wages wars, defends his possessions, tills the soil, builds plants, etc. The woman, on the other hand, is like a nail driven into the wall. She sits at home.[704]

As Atkinson explains, motherhood in the context of marriage was for Luther and Protestantism in general women's true nature, the sole purpose of their existence. Procreation

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[698] *Idem*, p. 200.
[699] *Idem*, p. 203.
[700] ERASMUS, Desiderius, *The Colloquies of Erasmus*, p. 278, as cited in ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 202-3.
[701] ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 204.
[702] LUTHER, Martin, "A Sermon on the Estate of Marriage", p. 8, as cited in ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 205.
[703] *Ibidem*.
[704] LUTHER, Martin, *Genesis 1-5*, p. 202, as cited in ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 208.

and the sustaining of the life of the newborn depended exclusively on women. Luther shared with the humanists the value attributed to the mother's milk: "when the fetus has been brought into the world by birth, no new nourishment appears, but a new way and method: from the two breasts, as from a fountain, there flows milk by which the baby is nourished."[705] According to him "the entire female body was created for the purpose of nurturing children", whereas men were clumsy "at the simplest tasks around the baby!"[706] Women, then, were designed for motherhood and in motherhood and marriage lied both their duty and their purpose: "[a] woman does not have complete mastery over herself. God so created her body that she should be with a man and bear and raise children."[707]

Both Luther and John Calvin recognized and praised "the heroism required of childbearing women and displayed a sympathetic recognition of the physical and emotional consequences of motherhood."[708] Together with the importance of raising virtuous children, such recognition fostered the identification between motherhood and holiness. As Atkinson puts it, women expressed

> their spirituality at home through care for the family. In Protestant Europe, motherhood became a sign, even a precondition, of a woman's moral and physical health. Obedience replaced virginity and poverty as the essential female virtue and road to holiness; a good woman obeyed God and her husband – whose wills, increasingly, were identified – and raised virtuous children.[709]

Humanism and Protestantism would have a strong impact in the inversion of the relationship between virtue/holiness and domesticity within the Roman Catholic Church in modernity. "Catholics never ceased to insist vigorously upon the value of consecrated virginity and clerical celibacy, but simultaneously, the Church developed an increasing dependence upon

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705 LUTHER, Martin, *Genesis 1-5*, p. 202, as cited in ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, pp. 208-9.
706 LUTHER, Martin, *Genesis 1-5*, p. 202, as cited in ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 209.
707 LUTHER, Martin, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, p. 271, as cited in ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 213.
708 ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 216.
709 *Idem*, pp. 213-4.

the conjugal family, supported by a specifically Catholic ideology of marriage and domesticity."[710]

An increasing Catholic appreciation of marriage could be seen from the Middle Ages. The definition of marriage as one of the seven sacraments both reflected it and was cause to it.[711] Such appreciation, however, reached a whole different level in Modernity, when it was said to be "the nursery of Christianity, which fills the earth with faithful people to complete in heaven the number of the elect."[712]

Such a view of marriage was fundamental in changing what was expected of the virtuous women. In what concerns married women, the obedience to husbands and the care for children became an instance of religious devotion. As the influential preacher and confessor Francis de Sales wrote in 1609, "devotion should be practiced in different ways by the gentleman, the artisan, the servant, the prince, the widow, the young girl, and the wife".[713] That being so, both obedience to husbands and care for children should be put before religious obligations in the strict sense. De Sales "consistently urged wealthy, well-born women to avoid giving offense to husbands, parents, or other family members by spending too much time in church or neglecting their households",[714] and he also advised pregnant women to look after themselves carefully:

> do not be in the least anxious about keeping yourself to any sort of spiritual exercise, except in a most gentle way. If you are tired of kneeling, sit down, if you have not sufficient concentration to pray for half an hour, then make it a quarter of an hour or even half of that.[715]

By this time, Roman Catholics were far from exhorting married woman and mothers to abandon their husbands and children to devote to religious life, as they were from seeing the mother's love for their children as an obstacle to sanctity and salvation. In fact, by then, quite

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[710] *Idem*, p. 222.
[711] *Idem*, p. 152.
[712] *Idem*, p. 224.
[713] *Idem*, pp. 222-3.
[714] *Idem*, pp. 223-4.
[715] De SALES, *letter 827*, 6:214, as cited in ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 225.

the opposite was true. As Atkinson says, "[b]y early modern times, the 'natural passions' of motherhood were not only acceptable but essential and admirable in a pious Roman Catholic woman."[716] A "powerful commitment to children [was] expected of Christian mothers in the seventeenth century. According to contemporary notions, their children were entitled to a passionate, single-minded maternal devotion, a devotion incompatible with traditional sacrifice of 'carnal' affections by holy men and women."[717]

2.6. Closing Remarks on Religion

Catholic discourses on women and sexuality created a dualistic image of woman: in them, the good and asexual woman – Mary – coexists with the evil and sexual woman – Eve. The relation between sexuality and morality is of essence here and still worthy of an extra note.

As Brundage tells us, no other religion put morality at the center of morality or identified sex as something intrinsically evil as Christianity did.[718] The "tendency to identify morals primarily, even exclusively, with sexual behavior" is a Christian one.[719] As it is the idea of sex as "a source of moral defilement, spiritual pollution, and ritual impurity".[720] Christendom has "associated sensuality with sin, guilt, and fear of damnation",[721] and this was a fundamental factor in the representation of women, who were themselves identified with sexuality and with all that Christianity associated with it. Yet, as Brundage claims, the pervasive disdain for sex in Christianity had another side: along with it coexisted a veneration – even if not always the practice – of the ideal of chastity.[722] This again reverberated in the representation of women, who were not uniquely depicted as harlots and profane but also as virgins and holy.

The representation of the prostitute within Christianity needs to be contextualized in this dualistic depiction of women, as the prostitute was placed in its "bad", sexual side. The

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[716] ATKINSON, Clarissa W., *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 229.
[717] *Idem*, pp. 228-9.
[718] BRUNDAGE, James A., *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, p. 9.
[719] *Idem*, p. 8.
[720] *Idem*, p. 6.
[721] *Idem*, p. 8.
[722] *Idem*, p. 6.

prostitute, I claim, is the most paradigmatic expression of the evil sexual Eve. And her meaning can only be fully apprehended when she is placed in opposition to the good and asexual Mary.

The previous section outlined the movement of the wife/mother from the prurient to the purity side of the dualism of female images within the Christian tradition. From harlot in the patristic era to pure and holy at the dawn of modernity. As a result, her representation replaced the nun as the paradigmatic embodiment of the good woman and occupied her place in the opposition to the prostitute, the epitome of the bad woman. Precisely in this lies the relevance of the representation of the wife/mother. The notion of trace proposed by Jacques Derrida is of essence here. It refers to the idea that each word, each notion – and, we can now add, each representation – can only be understood in relation to its opposite. And this is so because the meaning of each side in an opposition is determined by the other. As a result, each bears the trace of the other, which means that to fully understand the meaning of one it is necessary to properly appreciate the significance of the other. From this the conclusion regarding the opposition between the good and the bad images of women and, more specifically, between the wife/mother and the prostitute: the meaning of the latter cannot be fully grasped without a proper understanding of the former.

In the present section on religion, I have begun to unveil the interrelated meanings of the prostitute and its opposite, the wife/mother. Christianity definitely set the stage for the way both those figures would be represented in western imaginary till present today. But Christianity was not, of course, their only shaping influence. In the next Section, I will change my focus from religion to science, or, more specifically to the science of sex. We will also fast forward in time and will land in the nineteenth century. As we shall see, in that time and "discursive place", we will find another fundamental contribution to the present-day representation of the good and bad woman, the wife and the prostitute.

3. Science

3.1. The New Standard of Femininity

Silvia Federici claims that out of the witch-hunt "a new model of femininity emerged: the ideal woman and wife – passive, obedient, thrifty, of few words, always busy at work, and chaste". According to Federici, this change happened

> at the end of the 17th century, after women had been subjected to more than two centuries to state terrorism. [...] while at the time of the witch-hunt women had been portrayed as savage beings, mentally weal, insatiably lusty, rebellious, insubordinate, incapable of self-control, by the 18th century the canon had been reversed. Women were now depicted as passive, sexual beings, more obedient, more moral than men, capable of exerting a positive moral influence on them.[723]

Federici talks of two images of women, one being replaced by the other at the end the seventeenth century. Yet, the overview of the Christian discourse on women leads me to dispute this idea. Both those images were already present many centuries before. And, as I hope to show in the lines to come, they would both remain in the centuries that followed. What probably did change around the historical moment pointed at by Federici was which of the two images of woman was represented as women's true nature – from that point onwards the good woman – and which was depicted as an exception, a deviation, a corrupt state – the bad woman –. In fact, the very idea of deviation, of an *abnormal* – and thus of a *normal* – state is an important change that firms its roots around the same historical period.

3.2. The Normal/Abnormal

Before going into why the emergence of the normal and abnormal "marked an important discursive and conceptual turn",[724] such historical insertion of the origins of those ideas

[723] FEDERICI, Silvia, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation*, p. 103.
[724] CRYLE, Peter, and DOWNING, Lisa, "Introduction: The Natural and the Normal in the History of Sexuality", p. 191.

requires further explanation, since scholars overwhelmingly locate their appearance much later, in the nineteenth century.[725]

Such an explanation is in fact quite simple. As with any other idea, the one of normal did not just appeared suddenly and without precedent. Its foundations lie in other notions that served as its historical antecedents.[726]

3.2.1. Antecedents

Diving into the conceptual landscape of the eighteenth century, Caroline Warman finds

> that polarities such as virtue and vice, beauty and ugliness, harmony and dissonance, order and disorder, rule and chaos, all feed into the eventual emergence of the polarity normal/abnormal, and moreover that the negative versions are often exemplified by reference to sexual behavior.[727]

In addition, by looking at Denis Diderot's writings, Warman identifies an exploration of "what can be said to constitute or define an object, a concept, a human, a species, *et cetera* and what, conversely, detracts from its defined identity to the extent that it can no longer be seen as representative of its category", observing that Diderot "looks at concepts that we would now recognize as normal and abnormal even though those terms did not exist at the time".[728]

Another most important precursor of the idea of the normal is the notion of natural. As Peter Cryle and Lisa Downing tell us, "the binary opposition of the natural and the unnatural, grounded historically in theology, bears a genealogical relation to the binary opposition of

[725] *Ibidem*. Even though it might appear to contemporary minds a timeless idea, "the concept of the normal as we know it today dates from no earlier than the mid-twentieth century." According to Peter Cryle and Elizabeth Stephens "[f]or most of the nineteenth century, the word 'normal' was used exclusively in scientific contexts. […] the term was first used in its modern sense in France in comparative anatomy, around 1820." (CRYLE, Peter, and STEPHENS, Elizabeth, *Normality: A Critical Genealogy*, p. 3.)
[726] CRYLE, Peter, and DOWNING, Lisa, "Introduction: The Natural and the Normal in the History of Sexuality", p. 191.
[727] WARMAN, Caroline, "From Pre-normal to Abnormal: The Emergence of a Concept in Late Eighteenth-century France", p. 201.
[728] Ibidem.

the normal and the abnormal, grounded historically in the nineteenth century mathematical and scientific discourse."[729] Lorraine Daston and Michael Stolleis explain that there was an "efflorescence of [the idea of] natural law in both European jurisprudence and natural philosophy from circa de mid-sixteenth through the mid-eighteenth centuries",[730] and that, even though the term has ancient antecedents in both fields, it was not until the seventeenth century that "it suddenly thrust itself onto centre stage in both realms."[731] To this it must added the mutability in meaning of terms such as *ius naturale*, *lex naturalis*, and *lex naturae* over the centuries, with significant shifts not only in the words themselves and the contexts in which they were applied, but also in their lexical fields.[732] In this sense, in the early modern period, there were patterns of terms used in association with those that were nowhere to be found previously.[733]

They include notions such as determinism, certainty – in both epistemological and ontological sense –, and the blurring of the distinctions "between the natural and the moral, the descriptive and the prescriptive, the providential and the determined".[734] But not only. Notions such as order, hierarchy, cause (of both human conduct and physical effects, and so both in the moral and the natural orders), universalism, foundationalism, truth, regularity, and predictability,[735] were equally included in a conceptual cluster that delimitated the "shared, if often implicit framework for natural laws in early modern European natural philosophy, jurisprudence, moral philosophy, political theory, and theology." [736]

In the field of sexuality, the natural was always a constant presence. As Andreas De Bloch and Pieter Adriaens point out, Christian theology distinguished between "sexual vices in line with nature, such as adultery, rape, and incest, [and] the unnatural vices, such as masturbation, sodomy, and bestiality, [which] were worst sins because they could not result

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[729] CRYLE, Peter, and DOWNING, Lisa, "Introduction: The Natural and the Normal in the History of Sexuality", p. 191.
[730] DASTON, Lorraine, and STOLLEIS, Michael, "Nature, Law and Natural Law in Early Modern Europe", p. 1.
[731] *Idem*, p. 2.
[732] *Idem*, p. 3.
[733] *Idem*, p. 4.
[734] *Ibidem*.
[735] *Idem*, pp. 4-12.
[736] *Idem*, p. 4.

in conception."[737] The criterion of this distinction was reproduction: sexual intercourse that could not result in conception was deemed unnatural.[738] Such criterion of naturalness was in turn inherited by nineteenth century elaborations of normal/healthy and abnormal/pathological sexuality.[739]

3.2.2. Definition

The examination of the antecedents of the idea of the normal already anticipated its meaning. I will start with the continuity between fact and value. The normal refers both to what is and to what ought to be. It has both a descriptive and a normative meaning.

Let us begin with the latter. The normal is what one should be. And the reason is that the normal has the norm built into it. Everyone should be like it and in fact everyone one is. Everyone wants to be normal. As such, the normal carries around the mark of conformity. As Ian Hacking said, the normal is probably the major ideological tool of the last two centuries.[740]

In what concerns the descriptive meaning of the notion of the normal, it is necessary to go beyond the surface. The normal does not refer to any fact. It seems to refer, instead, to what is both natural and universal. As Waltraud Ernst observes, the natural is not merely an antecedent but is also built into the meaning of the normal.[741] The normal, Hacking writes, seems to be a different (modern) way to refer to human nature.[742] It is this sense that the normal is said to evoke determinism, for in what concerns the "events to be described, it became a soothsayer, a teller of the future, of progress and ends."[743]

This takes us to several ideas. First, being a way to refer to human nature, the normal has we know it today – with the meaning it acquired somewhere around the twentieth century –

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[737] BLOCK, Andreas De, and ADRIAENS, Pieter R., "Pathologizing Sexual Deviance: A History", p. 278.
[738] OOSTERHUIS, Harry, *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity*, p. 21.
[739] BLOCK, Andreas De, and ADRIAENS, Pieter R., "Pathologizing Sexual Deviance: A History", p. 278.
[740] HACKING, Ian, *The Taming of Chance*, p. 169.
[741] ERNST, Waltraud, "The Normal and the Abnormal: Reflections on Norms and Normativity", p. 4.
[742] HACKING, Ian, *The Taming of Chance*, pp. 161-2.
[743] *Idem*, p. 161.

carries the stamp of medicalization. It is in part a medical concept that refers to the healthy state in human beings. It arose in physiology around 1820 as the opposite of the pathological, this latter being defined as a deviation from the norm – an incorporation of the mathematical concept of the normal, whose effect in notions of health had the influence of Greek ideas.[744] Now, with medicalization came its "scientification", which, in turn, accounts for the apparently objective character of the idea of the normal, again, a major ideological tool for building a bridge between the descriptive and normative meaning within the normal.[745]

The second idea that the descriptive meaning of the normal leads us to is the one of types of people. The nineteenth century saw for the first time the rise of normal and abnormal types of people. And that was because the normal bears with it the stamp of identification and exclusion, the idea that normal and abnormal people are different kinds, distinct species, with unalike natures. As Michel Foucault tells us, the idea of instinct was of essence here.[746]

But not only. The nineteenth century saw the rise of the importance of sexuality.[747] That was in fact a novelty brought up by modernity, probably put forward by demographic, economic, and social factors that made reproduction absolutely essential.[748] As a result, the nineteenth century was witness to a renewed focus, a new anxiety with sexuality.[749] As Foucault says, sex came to be seen around the second half of the nineteenth century as telling an inner and ultimate truth about the self, about one's true nature.[750]

And so, soon after the rise of the normal, the nineteenth century saw the rise of the sexual abnormal, for sexuality came to be understood as the root of all abnormalities.[751] The rise of sexology was absolutely essential here, for it was the taxonomies of sexual abnormalities – perversions – elaborated within this new discipline of the "man" that came to individualize and spread throughout all society what seemed as an infinitive number of sexual monsters,

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[744] *Idem*, pp. 163-4.
[745] *Idem*, p. 160.
[746] FOUCAULT, Michel, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*, p. 132.
[747] WEEKS, Jeffrey, "The Body and Sexuality", p. 221.
[748] See generally FEDERICI, Silvia, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation*.
[749] WEEKS, Jeffrey, *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800*, pp. 48, 51, 62; WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, p. 6.
[750] FOUCAULT, Michel, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, p. 69.
[751] FOUCAULT, Michel, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*, p. 168.

the abnormals.[752] And I speak of abnormals and abnormality, because the normal remained in the nineteenth century a mere implicit referent of the abnormal, this latter, rather than that former, object of detailed theorization.[753]

Now, all this was cause to an important transformation in the history of sexuality: the rise of the notion of sexual identity. There is, in the nineteenth century, a change in the understanding of sex from acts to identities. Foucault explains such a shift in a much-quoted passage of his *History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*:

> As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away. It was consubstantial with him, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature. We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized – Westphal's famous article of 1870 on "contrary sexual sensations" can stand as its date of birth – less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself. Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.[754]

As David Halperin further explains, what Foucault is saying is that

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[752] FOUCAULT, Michel, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, pp. 23-4, 43-4, 64, 67; FOUCAULT, Michel, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*, pp. 310-3.

[753] CRYLE, Peter, and DOWNING, Lisa, "Feminine Sexual Pathologies", p. 2; CRYLE, Peter, and STEPHENS, Elizabeth, *Normality: A Critical Genealogy*, pp. 36, 181-2.

[754] FOUCAULT, Michel, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, p. 43.

> before the nineteenth century categories or classifications typically employed by European cultures to articulate sexual difference did not distinguish among different kinds of sexual actors but only among different kinds of sexual acts. In the premodern and early modern periods, […] sexual behavior did not represent a sign or marker of a person's sexual identity; it did not indicate or express some more generalized or holistic feature of the person, such as that person's subjectivity, disposition, or character.[755]

The idea of sexual identity was constructed by means of the idea of sexual instinct. And sexology had a fundamental role in the construction of both as well as in the attribution of a rising importance to sexuality. As Jeffrey Weeks notes,

> [i]n his famous study *Psychopathía Sexualís* (first translated into English in 1892), Richard von Krafft-Ebing, the pioneering sexologist of the late nineteenth century, described sex as a 'natural instinct' which 'with all conquering force and might demands fulfilment' […] Few people Krafft-Eving wrote, 'are conscious of the deep influence exerted by sexual life upon the sentiment, thought and action of man in his social relations to others. […] We now take for granted, in part because of the sexologists, that sexuality is indeed at the centre of our existence. The following quotation from the English sexologist, Havelock Ellis, who was very influential in the first third of this [the twentieth] century, illustrates the ways in which sexuality has been seen as offering a special insight into the nature of the self: 'Sex penetrates the whole person; a man's sexual constitution is a part of his general constitution. There is considerable truth in the dictum: 'a man is what sex is'.[756]

The idea of the sexual instinct was elaborated in conjunction with the one of perversion. And here, once again, the work of Krafft-Ebing is absolutely essential, particularly his distinction between perversions and perversities. As Block and Adriaens explain, in Krafft-Ebings's view,

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[755] HALPERIN, David M., "Forgetting Foucault: Acts, Identities, and the History of Sexuality", p. 96. It should be noted that Halperin is here speaking of the general interpretation of Foucault's claim rather than his own, and that he goes on in this article to revise it, even if not reverse it.

[756] WEEKS, Jeffrey, "The Body and Sexuality", pp. 221-2.

> [s]ince perversions are functional diseases, their causes should not be looked for in the brain or in the genitals, and they cannot be diagnosed on the basis of behaviors alone. Rather, they should be looked for in the person as a whole […]. It is only the involvement of the personality as a whole that turns a perversity into a proper perversion […].[757]

But that was not the only contribution that Kraft-Ebbing's notion of perversion made to the idea of sexual identity. Its understanding as the derivation of sexual pleasure from imagination and fantasy was equally important, since this meant that people could be perverts independently of the realization of their fantasies in concrete behaviors.[758]

Finally, a third connection between perversion and instinct is the former's location within Kraft-Ebbing's taxonomy of disturbances of the sexual instinct. Following Moreau de Tours, Kraft-Ebbing distinguished: 1) "anesthesia", the lessening of the sexual appetite, 2) ''hyperesthesia'', its abnormal increase, 3) ''paradoxia'', its manifestation outside the biologically normal period, and, finally, 4) ''paraesthesia'', which referred to the expression of the sexual instinct in manners that did not correspond with the purpose of nature: propagation. It was this latter category – the unnatural expressions of sexual desire led by an inappropriate or unsuitable-for-procreation-desire – that Kraft-Ebbing called perversions.[759]

As we can see, reproduction is the criterion of normal sexual instinct at the core of the notion of perversion as elaborated by this author.[760] And it is such criterion that accounts for two of the four fundamental forms of perversions enumerated by Krafft-Ebbing: fetichism and homosexuality. Reproduction, however, is far from being the whole story. Additionally, there is in this and other author's theorization of the idea of perversion a radical differentiation between male and female sexuality, and, thus, a deep differentiation in terms of gender.

This can be seen, first of all, in the notion of homosexuality as understood by Krafft-Ebbing, which referred not only to same-sex relations but also to "various physical and psychological fusions of masculinity and femininity that in the twentieth century would gradually be

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[757] BLOCK, Andreas De, and ADRIAENS, Pieter R., "Pathologizing Sexual Deviance: A History", p. 281.
[758] *Ibidem*.
[759] *Ibidem*.
[760] OOSTERHUIS, Harry, "Sexual Modernity in the Works of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll", p. 144.

differentiated into homosexuality, bisexuality, androgeny, transvestism and transsexuality."[761] Such elaboration of the notion of homosexuality seems to draw on Karl Heinquech Ulrichs, who, in 1864, "wrote that 'urnings' (i.e., men who were sexually attracted to men) were actually born with a woman's spirit, whereas 'urnindes' (i.e., women who were sexually attracted to women) had a male spirit trapped in a female body".[762]

Such idea, however, was not limited to homosexuality. As Block and Adriaens noted, very similar ideas circulated in relation to female sadism and male masochism.[763] And this was so because there was a sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit assumption that female masochism and male sadism were part of women and men's natural sexuality. As Alison Moore says, whereas sadism in men and masochism in women were conceptualized as excess, sadism in women and masochism in men was conceived as inversion.[764] Harry Oosterhuis explains Kraft-Ebbing's view of these two perversions,

> sadism and masochism were inherent in normal male and female sexuality, the former being of an active and aggressive nature, the latter passive and submissive. They were the most extreme forms of sexual hyperesthesia: sadism, at bottom, was a quantitative extension of the normal sexual psychology of males, while masochism was an exaggeration of the female sexual nature. It followed that sadism was essentially a male disorder and masochism a female one. However, most of his cases were of male masochists, and therefore he assumed that masochism in males was related to inversion.[765]

Peter Cryle and Lisa Downing provide us with an excellent summary in of the connection between the theorization of sexual perversions and the deepening of gender differentiation:

> discourses at the end of the nineteenth century frequently constructed sexual deviation in terms of normative ideas of gender, so that pathologies of both genders were often

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[761] *Ibidem*.
[762] BLOCK, Andreas De, and ADRIAENS, Pieter R., "Pathologizing Sexual Deviance: A History", p. 279.
[763] *Ibidem*.
[764] MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", p. 140.
[765] OOSTERHUIS, Harry, *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity*, p. 64.

seen as a sign of misplaced traits attributed to the other gender, resulting in "feminized" men and "masculinized women.[766]

But this was not a single-directional relationship, since it was not only that the theorization of sexual perversion reflected gender stereotypes, but also that such theorization was fundamental in constructing those stereotypes.

This makes such theorization a fundamental tool in the unveiling of the gender representations at the time sexology was starting to develop: the second half of the nineteenth century. In this sense, the analysis of the sexological elaboration of perversions is quite illuminating of not only the abnormal male and female sexualities but also of what was considered normal men and women. The reason is that definitions of normal sexuality and, thus, of normal men and women were, as Cryle and Downing say, "strikingly absent" in the sexological writings of the nineteenth century, working rather as an implicit and undefined referent in the theorization of perversions.[767]

3.3. Female Perversions

The analysis of perversions requires an important contextualization concerning female desire. The new late eighteenth century model of incommensurable and horizontally opposed male and female bodies brought with it a fundamental change in the representation of female sexuality and desire, which, as Thomas Laqueur tells us, reflected cultural images of women[768] and deepened the differentiation between them and men. In the previous one-sex model, female sexual pleasure was both recognized and attributed an important role. This was due to two main ideas: the projection of male sexual experience onto women, on the one side, and the connection between female orgasm and impregnation, on the other. If impregnation was not possible without male orgasm, the same was thought of in relation to women, since the female body was perceived as an inferior instance of the male physique.[769]

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[766] CRYLE, Peter, and DOWNING, Lisa, "Feminine Sexual Pathologies", p. 2.
[767] *Ibidem*.
[768] LAQUEUR, Thomas, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, pp. 149-50.
[769] *Idem*, pp. 182-3.

The new two-sex model, however, with its idea of radical difference between male and female body, broke the connection between female pleasure and reproduction, thus allowing "the biological possibility of a passionless female".[770] As a result, "female orgasm vanishes from medical discourse in the first decades of the nineteenth century."[771]

Kraft-Ebbing put it clearly: "If [a woman] is normally developed mentally, and well bred, her sexual desire is small. It is certain that the man that avoids women and the woman that seeks men are abnormal."[772] As Peter Cryle and Elizabeth Stephen explain, such normal sexuality was, in Krafft-Ebing's view, the effect of biological imperatives.[773]

The theorization of sexual perversions further deepened this notion of normal female asexuality. As we have seen before, the normal was often an implicit referent of the nineteenth century sexual abnormal rather than an object of direct and elaborated theorization itself. For this reason, I will continue the inquiry of the medical notion of the normal (lack of) female desire by means of the examination of the theorization of sexual perversions.

3.3.1. Nymphomania

Nymphomania was a very ambiguous concept. Its basic idea was, of course, excessive female sexual desire – in men such condition was called satyriasis. But what exactly did that mean for nineteenth century sexologists and doctors was very uncertain, since it could mean just anything: adultery, being divorced, feeling more passionate than the husband, flirting, actively, trying to attract men by wearing perfume, adorning oneself, talking marriage, desire for gynecological examinations, incessant and uncontrolled masturbation, introducing pins and other foreign objects into the urethra, vagina, or uterus, orgasm at the mere sight of a man, lewd and lascivious tearing of clothes, public display of genitals – they all were diagnosed as nymphomania.[774] But not only. Carole Groneman tells us that

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[770] *Idem*, p. 161.
[771] EK, Imelda Helena, *Erotic Insanity: Sex and Psychiatry at Vadstena Aslum, Sweden 1849-1878*, p. 87.
[772] KRAFFT-EBING, Richard von, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, p. 13, as cited in CRYLE, Peter, and STEPHENS, Elizabeth, *Normality: A Critical Genealogy*, p. 269.
[773] *Ibidem*.
[774] GRONEMAN, Carol, "Nymphomania: The Historical Construction of Female Sexuality", pp. 340-1.

> [n]ymphomania was also diagnosed by Krafft-Ebing in the case of a mother's incestuous desire for her son, while Chicago neurologist James G. Kiernan diagnosed nymphomania in cases of three schoolgirls who masturbated together and two women who lived together as "man and wife". Cases were reported of puerperal nymphomania (relating to or occurring during childbirth), malarial nymphomania, mild or true nymphomania, homosexual nymphomania, platonic nymphomania, and nymphomania brought on by pulmonary consumption and by opium. One doctor claimed that women with blond hair between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five were the most likely candidates, while others saw it as a disease of widows, virgins, or pubescent adolescents.[775]

We can conclude then, as Ann Goldberg does, that "nymphomania was one of those vague, all-encompassing, but all the more ubiquitous, terms for female sexual deviancy".[776] Basically, in the late nineteenth century, every deviation from the norm of female modesty could be diagnosed as nymphomania.[777] This is the reason why nymphomania is such a privileged site for the unveiling of the idea of normal woman that lay behind it as a standard based on which nymphomania was diagnosed. Whatever is classified as nymphomania is pathological, abnormal for women; whatever its opposite is synonym with health and female (sexual) normality.

Let us start there. Looking at the variety of behaviors diagnosed as nymphomania, it can easily be concluded that normal female sexuality was equivalent to intersubjective, heterosexual, reproductive, exclusive/monogamous, and marital sexuality. It was also equivalent with passivity, and passivity in at least two senses: in the sense of feeling less desire than men, and, probably in strict connection with that idea, in the sense of not acting out on sexual desire, not taking initiative of attracting men, either with direct or indirect – marriage – sexual purposes.

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[775] *Idem*, p. 340.

[776] GOLDBERG, Ann, *Sex, Religion, and the Making of Modern Madness: The Eberbach Asylum and German Society, 1815-1849*, p. 85.

[777] GRONEMAN, Carol, "Nymphomania: The Historical Construction of Female Sexuality", p. 341.

This idea of female sexual passivity becomes even more evident if we compare nymphomania to satyriasis, its male form. In this sense, probably the most telling feature is that satyriasis was never diagnosed for cases of flirting, lascivious glances, wearing perfume or other behaviors that in women were diagnosed as (mild) nymphomania.[778] Behaviors that in women were seen as excessive and pathological, in men were perceived as normal. Krafft-Ebing put this clearly when he said that "predominating sexual desire in woman arouses a suspicion of its pathological significance"[779] – in woman, not man. Most likely because of this idea, satyriasis was thought to occur much less frequently than nymphomania. In addition, the degree of pathologization was also very different: whereas the majority of nymphomaniacs were perceived as severely diseased, the majority of cases of satyriasis were thought of as only very mild.[780] This was reflected in the consequences predicted for each of the diseases, which were much worst for nymphomania. As Groneman tells us, "the outcome for nymphomaniacs was prostitution or the insane asylum, while satyriasists might go through life without getting into trouble if they learned to control themselves".[781] Finally, great differences existed in the treatment prescribed. In the case of women, removal of ovaries and excision of the clitoris and/or the labia were very common treatments, in men, castration was only used as a treatment in very few examples.[782]

Yet, as Goldberg says, "nymphomania was only partly about sexuality".[783] As it was passivity. They both were also about gender and about women's social role. Women, the theorization of nymphomania implicitly claimed, are not only passive in terms of sexuality. Women are also passive in terms of temperament and that is what justifies their role in society. The ones that are not, are diseased, abnormal. Both – normality and abnormality – are said to be owed to women's bodily constitution.

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[778] *Idem*, p. 352.
[779] KRAFFT-EBING, Richard von, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, p. 87, as cited in GRONEMAN, Carol, "Nymphomania: The Historical Construction of Female Sexuality", p. 352.
[780] GRONEMAN, Carol, "Nymphomania: The Historical Construction of Female Sexuality", p. 352.
[781] *Ibidem*.
[782] *Idem*, pp. 349, 352.
[783] GOLDBERG, Ann, *Sex, religion, and the Making of Modern Madness: The Eberbach Asylum and German Society, 1815-1849*, p. 90.

It is in this sense that Goldberg argues that nymphomania's counterpart was not satyriasis but masturbatory insanity, for "both these 'illnesses' participated in the formulation of polarized gender norms". As such, they "can only be properly understood in relationship to each other, as two gendered sides of sexual pathology."[784] According to Goldberg, what made masturbatory insanity a male disorder was not the assumption of a greater incidence in males, but "the set of symptoms attributed to masturbation and seen only on men]…]: enfeeblement, weakness, listlessness, passivity, idiocy."[785] Male masturbators were thought to lose not only sexual desire, but also strength and will, and even their "intellectual light" was said to become extinguished. In cases of male masturbatory insanity, the active drive for a sexual or other object was replaced with a passive enjoyment of the good life. They suffered of indolence, laziness, and mental distraction.[786] As such, "they worked uncommonly slow and without attention, and seemed to be incapable of the necessary reflection for employment." [787]

If these symptoms were perceived as pathological in men, in women, pathology – nymphomania – was found in their exact opposites. As such, to the excess in sexual desire, other excesses were associated in cases of nymphomania: surfeit in emotions, in behavior, and even in physical strength.[788] Nymphomaniacs were often described in terms of imagery of fire and wildness:[789]"intractably wild, no straitjacket holds her back."[790] Open expression of raw and unrepressed emotion were often part of doctors' description of nymphomaniacs: "[i]n conversation she lapses into convulsive laughter or breaks out into the most frightful swearing."[791] And references to tearing of clothes, screaming, hitting, and ratting were also quite common. [792]

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[784] *Idem*, p. 86.
[785] *Idem*, pp. 88-9.
[786] *Idem*, p. 92.
[787] *Ibidem*.
[788] *Idem*, p. 89.
[789] *Ibidem*.
[790] No. 536, medical log, 11 September, 1841, as cited in GOLDBERG, Ann, *Sex, Religion, and the Making of Modern Madness: The Eberbach Asylum and German Society, 1815-1849*, p. 90.
[791] No. 830, August, 1846, as cited in GOLDBERG, Ann, *Sex, Religion, and the Making of Modern Madness: The Eberbach Asylum and German Society, 1815-1849*, p. 90.
[792] GOLDBERG, Ann, *Sex, Religion, and the Making of Modern Madness: The Eberbach Asylum and German Society, 1815-1849*, p. 90.

In addition, as Goldberg notes, there seemed to be "always something public about nymphomania: it occurred in relation to others (doctors, attendants, officials, community) and was defined in terms of 'the scandal' posed by the loss of 'shame.'" [793] Apart from the physiological and mental explanations of the symptoms, doctors constantly put those symptoms as violations of social morality and transgressions of public sexual propriety. Also in this, it is possible to see how nymphomania and masturbatory insanity were thought of in oppositional terms. As opposed to the public character of (female) nymphomania, the problem with (male) masturbatory insanity seemed to be its privacy, for it was perceived as leading men to "turning in on oneself and [to cause] a withdrawal from society and family.[794]

The active and public character of nymphomania and the passive and private nature of masturbatory insanity were fundamental instruments in the construction of the male and female roles as polarized: "women were expected to lead domestic lives as wives and mothers in the 'private' sphere, while men claimed a monopoly over the 'public' world of work, politics, and learning."[795] Everything that was public was constructed as pathological in the case of women, the same way as whatever was private was seen as a disease in men.

The means through which medicine, in the nineteenth century, achieved such a naturalization of normative gender roles was, as said before, the differentiation of male and female bodies, in a way that passivity in woman and activity in men were seen as the result of their physical constitution. As we shall see, such constructions pervaded the specific conceptualizations of male and female sexual perversions. And that was definitely the case for nymphomania.[796]

For a start, women were said to have weak nerves and in them the reproductive organs were thought to dominate over their bodies and minds.[797] This explained women's vulnerability to sexual illnesses and, in particular, it explained nymphomania, since the connection between the reproductive system and the brain through the nervous system was an essential part of the explanation of the disease, in addition to the idea, which dominated from the second half

[793] *Idem*, p. 91.
[794] *Ibidem*.
[795] *Idem*, p. 95.
[796] *Ibidem*.
[797] *Idem*, p. 96.

of the nineteenth century, that the precise seat of nymphomania was the genitals.[798] This is also how the literature of the time explained the greater frequency of nymphomania when compared to its male counterpart, satyriasis. As Goldberg observes,

> Bienville claimed that the female "genitals […] are much more easily and sooner aroused and ignited than in men" because "the nerve fibers in women are much more fragile […] and taut." Thus, "they must be more intensely aroused or more sensitive, from which it is easy to conclude that the sensations and demands of lust [are] likewise much stronger [in women when they have been improperly aroused].[799]

But the explanation of the difference in occurrence between nymphomania and satyriasis does not end here. Psychological differences resulting from the physiological account of women as weak-nerved and at the mercy of their reproductive system also played a fundamental role. From the idea of women being dominated by their reproductive system, the step into the one that a woman's intended purpose was to become a mother and a wife was a short one. And from that idea of women's intended purpose to the one that true self-sacrificing love was deeply rooted in female personality was an even shorter one. The result in terms of the differences between nymphomania and satyriasis was this: "[w]hile 'excessive sex drive in men occurs much more frequently,' it was less likely to lead to mental disturbance: the more purely physical nature of the male sex drive allowed men sexual satisfaction without love and attachment."[800]

Nymphomania, however, does not tell only a story about women and emotions. It also tells one about their (ir)rationality. Or, perhaps more accurately, nymphomania tells the story about the link between women's lack of emotional control and their irrationality. As Goldberg tells us, this disease seemed to revolve around the themes of energy and control:

> the intensity and degree of sexual desire, the relationship between mind and body in the control of desire, and the (re)establishment of the proper balance between reason

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[798] GRONEMAN, Carol, "Nymphomania: The Historical Construction of Female Sexuality", p. 348.

[799] BIENVILLE, M.D.T. de, *Nymphomanie*, pp. 38–40, as cited in GOLDBERG, Ann, *Sex, Religion, and the Making of Modern Madness: The Eberbach Asylum and German Society, 1815-1849*, p. 96.

[800] JESSEN, Peter Willers, "Nymphomanie", pp, 393–4, as cited in GOLDBERG, Ann, *Sex, Religion, and the Making of Modern Madness: The Eberbach Asylum and German Society, 1815-1849*, p. 96.

> and the sex drive. Nymphomania and masturbatory insanity, each in their own way, were illnesses (or symptoms) of sexual energy levels gone awry, as well as of the loss of control of the mind over the body.[801]

Indeed, at least since M.D.T. de Bienville's influential treatise on nymphomania (1771), this disease was conceived as evolving through stages of intensifying sexual excitement and correspondent weakening of rational control over the animal instincts.[802] In this sense, it is interesting to note, on the one hand, nymphomania's association with hysteria and erotomania,[803] and, on the other, that, for instance, in Phillippe Pinel's work, nymphomania was subsumed under the general category of "*névroses de la generation*".[804] Here, once again, the idea of women's more sensible nerves can be seen to be deeply rooted in the conception of nymphomania. And the same can be said of women's irrationality.

Groneman enlightens us into this latter matter. According to her, nymphomania's genealogy is very much intricated with the one of love insanity. She points out how, for instance, French physician Jacques Ferrand included "both [diseases] under the rubric of lovesickness, claiming that they differed only in degree", and how the debate concerning the nature of both continued well into the nineteenth century. She then moves on by quoting Ferrand on the reason why, in his view, lovesickness was more likely to affect women: "because they were less rational, more 'maniacal,' and more libidinous in their love." [805] According to her, "[b]elief in female irrationality continued to inform the medical discussions of nymphomania into the nineteenth century".[806]

We might now be able to see more clearly how "[m]edical representations of the (gendered) body played an important role in the justification of separate spheres [for men and

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801 GOLDBERG, Ann, *Sex, Religion, and the Making of Modern Madness: The Eberbach Asylum and German Society, 1815-1849*, p. 86.
802 *Idem*, p. 87.
803 GRONEMAN, Carol, "Nymphomania: The Historical Construction of Female Sexuality", p. 340; GOLDBERG, Ann, *Sex, Religion, and the Making of Modern Madness: The Eberbach Asylum and German Society, 1815-1849*, pp. 86-7.
804 GOLDBERG, Ann, *Sex, Religion, and the Making of Modern Madness: The Eberbach Asylum and German Society, 1815-1849*, p. 87. Phillippe Pinel (1745-1826) was a French physician known as the founder of scientific psychiatry.
805 GRONEMAN, Carol, "Nymphomania: The Historical Construction of Female Sexuality", p. 344.
806 *Idem*, p. 345.

women]."[807] Women's physiology was the linking element in a conceptual thread that associated women with passivity, weakness, emotionality, nurturing, and lack of rationality, and these, in turn, with women's suitability for the domestic role as wives and mothers within the private sphere. As opposed, activity, aggressivity, strength, and rationality were attributed to men, who, as a result, were thought of as the natural actors of the public sphere of work, politics, and knowledge.[808] As Goldberg puts it, "women and men had fundamentally different physiologies and […] female's physiology prescribed her confinement to the private sphere".[809]

Putting on the gender lens in the analysis of nymphomania allows us to understand that what was pathologized by means of this perversion was precisely those traits in women that were being excluded from the norms of femininity of the time.[810] That is why the nymphomaniac was often imagined and represented as metamorphosing into men: images of nymphomaniacs' clitoris enlarged to the size of a penis are proof precisely of their masculinization in the medical imaginary.[811] But the gender lens also allows us to see who was the woman that stood across the nymphomaniac, as the norm in relation to which this latter was a deviation: the modest, chaste, and passive mother and wife of the bourgeoise ideology. In her, female desire was imagined as "passive and latent, connected to true love, marriage and motherhood".[812] In this context, it is quite telling that, as Goldberg says,

> [s]exual arousal in women was set against the duties of wife and mother. It led women to focus on their own needs and desires, and therefore destroyed the ideal of self-sacrifice enshrined in the bourgeois concepts of "modesty" and female "honor." Of a "proud" and "sensual" middle-class nymphomaniac, for example, the medical log noted: "Is reckless. Decorates her cap with flowers, seeks to please and does not demonstrate the least attachment to her children." On the other hand, the asylum

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[807] GOLDBERG, Ann, *Sex, Religion, and the Making of Modern Madness: The Eberbach Asylum and German Society, 1815-1849*, p. 95.
[808] *Ibidem*.
[809] *Idem*, p. 96.
[810] *Ibidem*.
[811] *Idem*, p. 97.
[812] GRONEMAN, Carol, "Nymphomania: The Historical Construction of Female Sexuality", p. 355.

described a recovering nymphomaniac as "a *good woman* who is deeply interested in her household affairs."[813]

3.3.2. Sadism and Masochism

Nymphomania proved to be an excellent tool to uncover the ideas that circulated during the nineteenth century concerning not only sexuality but also gender in a wider sense. As such, its analysis was quite enlightening with respect to the notions of the normal and abnormal woman in what concerns not only sexuality, but also, more generally, norms of femininity. I now move forward with the intent of deepening the examination of those very norms by means of an inquiry into sadism and masochism.

As Ivan Crozier observes, "sadism and masochism were first isolated as sexological issues" in 1890, in the fifth edition of Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*.[814] Sadism was therein defined as "the impulse to cruel and violent treatment of the opposite sex, and the coloring of the idea of such acts with lustful feeling."[815] Berlin psychiatrist Albert Moll added to this physical definition of sadism, the idea of humiliation, when he defined it as the sexual impulse with "the tendency to strike, ill-use, and humiliate the beloved person."[816] As opposed to sadism, masochism was, from its very first elaboration in the work of Krafft-Ebing, defined by reference to the idea of humiliation:

> a peculiar perversion of the physical *vita sexualis* in which the individual affected, in sexual feeling and thought, is controlled by the idea of being completely and unconditionally subject to the will of a person of the opposite sex, of being treated by this person as by a master, humiliated and abused. This idea is colored by sexual

[813] My emphasis. GOLDBERG, Ann, *Sex, Religion, and the Making of Modern Madness: The Eberbach Asylum and German Society, 1815-1849*, p. 97.
[814] CROZIER, Ivan, "Philosophy in the English Boudoir: Havelock Ellis, Love and Pain, and Sexological Discourses on Algophilia", p. 277.
[815] KRAFFT-EBING, Richard von, *Psychopathis Sexualis*, p. 80, as cited in CROZIER, Ivan, "Philosophy in the English Boudoir: Havelock Ellis, Love and Pain, and Sexological Discourses on Algophilia", p. 277.
[816] MOLL, Albert, *Die konträre Sexualenipfindung*, as cited in in CROZIER, Ivan, "Philosophy in the English Boudoir: Havelock Ellis, Love and Pain, and Sexological Discourses on Algophilia", p. 277.

feeling; the masochist lives in fancies in which he creates situations of this kind, and he often attempts to realize them.[817]

In 1892, Dimitri Dimitry Stefanowsky, the assistant imperial prosecutor in Jaroslaw, Russia, further elaborated on the conceptualization of sadism and masochism. It did so by, first, claiming that sadism "consists in the complete abdication of the will of one person to the profit of another with an erotic end",[818] and, second, by defending a strict connection between sadism and masochism: "[p]assivism[, as he called masochism,] and sadism touch. The first delights in receiving, the second in inflicting pain".[819] The connection between both was not only physical. It could also be "moral", as he named it. With the idea of moral connection, Stefanowsky referred concretely to humiliation and abasement.[820]

Before putting to rest strictly definitional issues, there are important points I would like to pick up. The first is the fact that sadism and masochism are not defined only by reference to physical pain, but also in relation to domination and subordination. And the second concerns the connection between domination and sexual agency or will, as well as the corresponding link between the lack thereof and subordination.

Leaving that aside for the moment, the starting point of the analysis that follows must, once again, be the gendered character of sadism and masochism. It would be nice to be able to simply say that sadism was perceived as a disease in women while masochism was thought of as a pathology in men, were things not a bit more complicated than that. It is true indeed that sadism in women and masochism in men were conceived as perversions in that initial sense the word had within the taxonomy of sexual abnormalities proposed by Krafft-Ebbing: a kind of gender inversion. Yet, unlike nymphomania, which was a specifically and

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[817] KRAFFT-EBING, Richard von, *Psychopathis Sexualis*, p. 115, as cited in CROZIER, Ivan, Philosophy in the English Boudoir: Havelock Ellis, Love and Pain, and Sexological Discourses on Algophilia, p. 279.

[818] STEFANOWSKY, Dimitry, "Passivism – A Variety of Sexual Perversion", pp. 650-7, as cited in CROZIER, Ivan, "Philosophy in the English Boudoir: Havelock Ellis, Love and Pain, and Sexological Discourses on Algophilia", p. 279.

[819] STEFANOWSKY, Dimitry, "Passivism – A Variety of Sexual Perversion", p. 652, as cited in CROZIER, Ivan, "Philosophy in the English Boudoir: Havelock Ellis, Love and Pain, and Sexological Discourses on Algophilia", p. 279.

[820] STEFANOWSKY, Dimitry, "Passivism – A Variety of Sexual Perversion", p. 653, as cited in CROZIER, Ivan, "Philosophy in the English Boudoir: Havelock Ellis, Love and Pain, and Sexological Discourses on Algophilia", p. 279.

exclusively female disease, and satyriasis, which was a specifically and exclusively male pathology, both sadism and masochism could be found either in men or in women. As such, male sadism and female masochism were also perceived as sexual pathologies. What makes sadism and masochism gendered, then, is not its exclusive attribution to men or women, but rather the different conceptualization sadism and masochism had depending on the gender of the person affected by these pathologies. As Alison Moore explains, if female sadism and male masochism were conceptualized as a form of gender inversion, male sadism and female masochism were instead thought of as excesses of men and women's natural sexuality.[821]

This, of course, is quite telling of what normal meant for those responsible for such a conceptualization. Krafft-Ebing, who coined the terms sadism and masochism, put it clearly: "[i]n woman voluntary subjection to the opposite sex is a physiological phenomenon. […] Ideas of subjection in woman form, so to speak, the harmonics which determine the tone quality of feminine feeling."[822] Émile Laurent, a French psychiatrist and criminologist who wrote extensively on perversion, also joined the general chorus in claiming that for women

> submission to the opposite sex is a physiological phenomenon. […] It is amorous sensuality to obey, to feel that one is possessed. This need can to a certain extent be considered normal in women. But if it is exaggerated, then we enter into the realm of masochistic perversion.[823]

For men, instead, normal sexuality was equated with both domination and violence. This is why for Laurent sadism "in reality is simply a pathological accentuation of virility."[824] He further elaborates this idea as follows:

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[821] MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", pp. 138-9.
[822] KRAFFT-EBING, Richard von, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, p. 130, as cited in in MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", p. 146.
[823] LAURENT, Émile, *Sadisme et Masochisme*, p. 226, as cited in MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", p. 147.
[824] LAURENT, Émile, *Sadisme et Masochisme*, p. 54, as cited in MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", p. 148.

> Among animals the sexual act happens most often only after a struggle. Love is conquest. It was such too for savage Man in the prehistoric age. The conquest of the spouse was but a rape, and the obscure origins of sadism are there.[825]

It is interesting to note how masochism in women and sadism in men were explained through metaphors of the past. As Moore says, "they tended to be imagined as a return of the barbaric evolutionary past", as opposed to masochism in men and sadism in women, which, instead, were seen as a result of the "sickly decline [of] the decadent present."[826] Krafft-Ebing describes the reasons of such decadent present: "[l]arge cities are hotbeds in which neuroses and low morality are bred, as is evident in the history of Babylon, Nineveh, Rome, and the mysteries of modern metropolitan life."[827] In his understanding, that was the reason of the alarming numbers of male masochists: "the episodes of moral decay always coincide with the progression of effeminacy, lewdness and luxuriance of the nations."[828]

Krafft-Ebing's view on the pervasiveness of male masochism reflects general fin-de-siècle anxieties about masculinity, which have been widely reported. As opposed, concerns with sadistic women were much less frequent. As Moore argues, such difference in the perception of the occurrence of male masochism and female sadism reveals "prevailing assumptions about women's weaker sexual drive".[829] But that is not only it. Sadism and masochism have yet a lot to tell us about what was considered sexually normal and abnormal in women.

In this sense, it is important to note that sadism and masochism were not only about sexual domination and submission, as they were not merely about pain and pleasure. They also concerned the pathologization of deviations from normative sexual practices.

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[825] LAURENT, Émile, *Sadisme et Masochisme*, p. 6, as cited in MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", p. 149.

[826] MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", p. 140.

[827] KRAFFT-EBING, Richard von, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, p. 4, as cited in MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", p. 142.

[828] KRAFFT-EBING, Richard von, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, pp. 3-4, as cited in MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", pp. 142-3.

[829] MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", p. 139.

Let us connect this idea with male masochism. As Moore tells us, several scholars have shown that "the male masochist at the fin de siècle was imagined as perverting normative masculinity by abdicating his penetrative agency and relocating his pleasure in bodily zones other than the penis, which was considered the only legitimate organ of male pleasure."[830] As she notes,

> Krafft-Ebing saw the mislocation of pleasure as one of the primary symptoms of male masochism. He claimed that "in man, the only 'hyperaesthetic' zone is the penis and perhaps the skin of the external genitals," while only "under pathological conditions" might the anus or other areas be considered zones of concentrated sexual stimulus.[831]

In this regard it seems quite telling that the masochistic pleasure more widely discussed was flagellation and that in it the primary erotic zone is often the buttocks, which is generally associated with humiliation, shame, and femininity.[832]

There is, hence, a connection between male masochism and the transgression of normative coital sexual relations. It is no accident then that Krafft-Ebing conceived the male masochist and (the corresponding) female sadist as forgoing normative coitus in favor of other sexual practices, where the same was not thought in relation to male sadism – the perverse exaggeration of the male natural desire –, not always at least.[833] There was good reason for this. Dominance in normal male sadism was in part identified with the act of penetration itself and with male ejaculation. As a result, also subjection in normal female masochism was identified with coitus and vaginal orgasm. German sexologist Wilhelm Sketel[834] put it as

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[830] *Idem*, p. 138.
[831] KRAFFT-EBING, Richard von, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, p. 25, as cited in MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", p. 145
[832] MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", pp. 138-9.
[833] KRAFFT-EBING, Richard von, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, p. 57, as cited in MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", p. 148.
[834] According to Peter Cryle and Alison Moore, "Stekel was a medical practitioner in Vienna, a pupil and disciple of Freud who had established a psychoanalytic practice in 1908, before being expelled from the Vienna school in 1912. His work still constitutes the most substantial single piece of psychoanalytical writing on frigidity." The work Cryle and Moore are referring to is Wilhelm Stekel´s 1920 *Die Geschlechtskälte der Frau: Eine Psychopathologie des weiblichen Liebeslebens* (*Frigidity in Woman: A Psychopathology of Women's Love Life*). (CRYLE, Peter, and MOORE, Alison, *Frigidity: An Intellectual History*, p. 216.)

follows: "[w]oman derives her highest orgasm from the 'will to self-subjection'".[835] As Moore explains, according to him,

> [t]o fall in love or to accept pleasure was to lose control and thus submit. A woman who did not experience simultaneous orgasm at the moment of her partner's ejaculation was resisting his natural masculine will to dominate and refusing her own natural feminine instinct to receive pleasure on his terms.[836]

The elaboration of the pathological female masochism seems to result from the application of a kind of reverse logic to the understanding of the *normal* female masochism. In Sketel's view, *pathological* female masochism was the product of a "will to unpleasure". As such, "while the natural woman masochistically gave herself over to the pleasures offered to her through heterosexual coitus, the masochistically perverse woman rejected this pleasure to punish herself, since only through suffering could she experience sexual delight." [837] So here we have it: while normal female masochism submits to men by means of coital sexual relations, the pathological kind rejects it.

It cannot go unnoticed how such elaboration differs from the one applied to the corresponding male pathology of excess: male sadism. Whereas in men the pathology of excess simply exacerbated what was already seen as normal male sexuality – coitus –, in women it reversed it, for instead of accepting it to an excessive point, women rejected what for them was supposed to mean subjection: penetration by men. That is why instead of being seen as a kind of nymphomania, female masochism was much more associated with frigidity. In fact, in Stekel's view, both were forms of female resistance to men's domination.[838]

But, in speaking of frigidity and its association with female masochism, I am already fast-forwarding way into the twentieth century, for it was then, with Sigmund Freud and the emerging psychoanalysis at the beginning of the century, and later, with his followers in the mid-wars period, that female masochism and frigidity would respectively become objects of

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[835] STEKEL, Wilhelm, *Frigidity in Woman in Relation to Her Love Life*, p. 249, as cited in MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", p. 153.
[836] MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", p. 153.
[837] *Idem*, pp.153-4.
[838] *Idem*, p. 153.

detailed theorization. For now, it will suffice to conclude this section with an attempt to summarize the norms of femininity that can be extracted from the present analysis of sadism and masochism.

In my view, sadism and masochism add a great deal to the notion of female sexual passivity previously discussed in relation to nymphomania. If this latter perversion disclosed a sense of lesser female sexual desire when compared to men – one which is reaffirmed by articulations of sadism and masochism –, as well as a norm of inactivity in terms of acting out on sexual desire or taking initiative in relation to it, sadism and masochism extend the notion of female passivity to matters of sexual practices.

Here, the idea of subordination is of absolute essence. Its meaning is multifold. It refers, first, to coitus, since penetration is itself conceived as a form of male domination and female subordination, or to put it as it was often metaphorically spoken of, a form of male conquest of the female "dark continent". Second, it described a lack of sexual agency or, more precisely, the female submission to the male's sexual will. Third, it was equally vested with a meaning of humiliation, and, finally, it signaled subjection to physical pain.

So here we have it. Whereas the examination of nymphomania allowed us to conclude a norm of sexual femininity equivalent to intersubjective, heterosexual, reproductive, exclusive/monogamous, and marital sexuality, the analysis of the theorization of sadism and masochism allows us now to precise that norm in terms of coital intercourse and submission to the male's will, even when that meant violence and humiliation. All women who behaved accordingly were considered normal and healthy; all the others were, instead, represented as pathologically abnormal.

3.3.3. Frigidity

As I have anticipated, the history of frigidity is closely intertwined with the one of sadism and masochism. This can perhaps be summarized through the idea of frigidity as resistance to (normal) male domination, an idea that became stronger within and through psychoanalytic theory. The history of this female sexual disease is also completely interwoven with the one

of marriage, reproduction, and motherhood, as it can be seen in any analysis of both cannon law and psychoanalysis.

So, since psychoanalysis is such an important chapter in both these interlinked histories, I shall begin the examination of frigidity with it. There is also another important reason for this choice: psychoanalysis' fundamental role in the shift from a physiological approach to sexuality to a psychological one.[839] As such it cannot be left out in any attempt at reconstructing the history of the representation of normal and abnormal sexuality and femininity.

Put in extremely simple terms, it can be said that Sigmund Freud envisioned a theory of psychosexual development throughout a series of five stages, each having as a source of pleasure different erotic areas: the oral, anal, phallic, latent, and genital stages. To this it must be added that each stage is marked by a conflict, whose complete resolution is necessary as a path towards healthy personality. When a conflict is not resolved at the corresponding stage, people become fixated in that stage, leading to personality disorders in adulthood.[840]

The most relevant stage to our inquiry into female sexuality in psychoanalytic theory is the third: the phallic phase. And that is so because this is the stage in which children first discover the differences between males and females and which has an important role in the formation of sexual identity. In the phallic stage, the primary source of pleasure is for boys the penis and for girls the clitoris, and the conflict that occurs in this stage is the Oedipus complex. The latter refers, on one side, to the child's desire for his or her opposite-sex parent, and, on the other, to the jealousy and anger he or she feels toward the same-sex parent. The idea is that whereas boys compete with their fathers for the possession of their mothers, girls compete with their mothers for their father's affection. It is the Oedipus complex that leads

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[839] Despite psychoanalysis' most important role in this shift, it is important to note that its beginning is associated with Kraft-Ebing's work. As Harry Oosterhuis explains, in his work "references to physical abnormalities were of secondary importance: psychological characteristics were in fact considered decisive in diagnosing perversion. Perversions were functional disorders of the instinct, and they expressed themselves in large measure as psychological phenomena." (OOSTERHUIS, Harry, *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity*, pp. 59-60.)

[840] See generally MITCHELL, Juliet, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis*.

to the boy's identification with the father, and thus manhood, and the girl's identification with the mother, and hence womanhood.

In what concerns girls, the idea of penis-envy is of essence, for this is what explains the transition from the girl's initial attachment to the mother to the competition with her for the father's attention and affection. The idea is that in girls, the development of the Oedipal complex begins when the girl realizes her lack of a penis, which she perceives as a castration. The reason why the penis-envy is important in breaking the girl's previous attachment to the mother is that it leads to resentment towards the mother – for failing to provide her with a penis – and also to the mother's depreciation – for not having a penis.

But not only. It is the penis envy that leads the girl to desire the father. As Juliet Mitchell explains, the girl wants "his phallus, and then by the all-important analogy, his baby, then the man again to give her this baby."[841] For this reason, she needs to abandon the pleasures of her clitoris and embrace "her passive sexual impulses – that is the passive aims of her sexual drive."[842] She thus accepts her castration not only by acknowledging the lack of the phallus but also by abandoning the clitoris – according to Freud, a kind of phallic organ –[843] as a source of sexual satisfaction.

That is how the penis-envy is repressed and transformed.[844] And that is how the girl, previously just a little boy, takes the first step into womanhood. This, of course, is when the paths of psychosexual development lead to normality. But they not always do. If, instead of accepting her castration, "the girl merely hopes that later she will have a penis, or that her clitoris will grow", she develops what has become known as masculinity complex.[845]

It is at the crossroads of such theorization that frigidity must be understood, since frigidity came to equate clitoral orgasm and be understood as a form of masculinity complex. As Moore tells us, through the notion of frigidity, "[i]nterwar discourses pathologized clitoral

[841] MITCHELL, Juliet, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis*, p. 97
[842] *Idem*, pp. 96-7.
[843] Freud argued "in the 1905 *Three Essays in the Theory of Sexuality* that the clitoris was a kind of phallic organ, making boys and girls analogous up until puberty, at which time the locus of female sexuality shifted." (MOORE, Alison, "Relocating Marie Bonaparte's Clitoris", p. 153.)
[844] MITCHELL, Juliet, Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis, p. 96.
[845] *Idem*, p. 98.

pleasure as a failure of feminine normativity, as a masculine stain on the inherently receptive desire of women for penetration.” [846] Such pathologization is grounded in the idea that clitoral pleasure represents the primitive stage of libidinous development for women, and that, as psychoanalytic theorist Marie Bonaparte claimed, the exclusion of the phallus “is what must happen normally in the little girl if she is to adapt later to her erotic role as a woman.”[847]

As we can see, then, frigidity, in its psychoanalytic elaboration, was not defined in relation to libido or desire, but, instead, in relation to pleasure.[848] In fact, even though the word frigidity has its roots in the ancient idea of women’s cold nature, in the twentieth century it came to incorporate quite the opposite notion according to which sexual anesthesia among women was rather unusual.[849] Such development can be traced back to late nineteenth century ideas concerning men’s responsibility in the sexual awakening of their wives.

In fact, this is a decisive idea at the heart of the notion of frigidity. Not only should (frigid) women be awaken from their asexual state through the sexual agency of men,[850] as they could become frigid either because men were too aggressive with their wives on their first night or, on the contrary, because they were not aggressive and assertive enough.[851] This, of course, already reveals – or rather reasserts – the old assumption about female sexual passivity and male sexual agency: “[t]he role of the wife is completely passive and straightforward; the active role of the husband is very difficult.”[852] And it also reasserts visions about male natural aggressiveness and sadism and women’s delicate and masochist nature. But my point now is related with the significance frigidity was vested with in relation to men: their lack of virility. Taking this into account might help us to disclose the reason why frigidity came to acquire such an importance at times of masculinity crisis, such as the end of the nineteenth century

[846] MOORE, Alison, “Pathologizing Female Sexual Frigidity in Fin-de-siècle France, or How Absence Was Made into a Thing”, p. 193.
[847] BONAPARTE, Marie, *A la Mémoire des Disparus 1: Derrière les Vitres Closes*, p. 20, as cited in MOORE, Alison, “Relocating Marie Bonaparte’s Clitoris”, p. 153.
[848] CRYLE, Peter, and MOORE, Alison, *Frigidity: An Intellectual History*, p. 117; MOORE, Alison, “Relocating Marie Bonaparte’s Clitoris”, p. 150.
[849] CRYLE, Peter, and MOORE, Alison, *Frigidity: An Intellectual History*, pp. 117-8.
[850] *Idem*, p. 122.
[851] CRYLE, Peter, “‘A Terrible Ordeal from Every Point of View’: (Not) Managing Female Sexuality on the Wedding Night”, pp. 47-8, 54-5.
[852] RHAZIS, *L’initiation Amoureuse, ou L’art de se Faire Aimer et de Plaire*, p. 32, as cited in CRYLE, Peter, “‘A Terrible Ordeal from Every Point of View’: (Not) Managing Female Sexuality on the Wedding Night”, p. 46.

and the interwar and the middle twentieth century.[853] Either way, such articulation has at its core the idea that women could and should feel pleasure and that is where I want to go back to.

So, let us now put both these ideas together: women can feel pleasure and such pleasure is related to men. The result is a norm of female pleasure that identifies it with vaginal rather than clitoral orgasm, as the latter was perceived as a kind of masculine organ. That is what can be seen in the most eminent definition of frigidity proposed by freudian psychoanalytical theoreticians Eduard Hitschmann and Edmund Bergler in 1936:

> Under frigidity we understand the incapacity of woman to have a vaginal orgasm. It is no matter whether the woman is aroused during coitus or remains cold, whether the excitement is weak or strong, whether it breaks off at the beginning or the end, slowly or suddenly, whether it is dissipated in preliminary acts, or has been lacking from the beginning. The sole criterion of frigidity is the absence of the vaginal orgasm.[854]

Yet, masculinity or phallicism frigidity did not refer exclusively to clitoral orgasm. It also meant resistance to men's domination and rejection of the role attributed to women. In fact, when Marie Bonaparte described herself as phallic, she was not referring to sexuality but rather to her dominant personality, intelligence, and independence.[855] And frigidity came to assimilate precisely all those meanings. The work of Wilhelm Stekel is particularly relevant in what concerns the theorization of such connotations of frigidity. Moore tells us how

> Stekel's massive two volume on frigidity constructed it clearly as a form of gender warfare. The opening chapter to the second volume is entitled 'The Struggle of the Sexes' ('Der Kampf der Geschlechter'). Analysing female frigidity as repressed sexuality, Stekel added that repression was not so much an inability as an unwillingness to see the truth. Frigidity was only ever caused by one of four possible factors, he claimed. These were homosexuality, prudishness, hatred of the father; or

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[853] MOORE, Alison, "Relocating Marie Bonaparte's Clitoris", p. 161.
[854] HITSCHMANN, Edward, and BERGLER, Edmund, *Frigidity in Women: Its Characteristics and Treatment*, p. 27, as cited in MOORE, Burness E., "Frigidity: A Review of Psychoanalytic Literature", p. 324.
[855] MOORE, Alison, "Relocating Marie Bonaparte's Clitoris", p. 158.

> fixation with the mother; all of which added up to some form of active resistance to heterosexual normalcy. [856]

There was, hence, an element of voluntariness in Sketel's view on frigidity. Such idea was picked up by others and it was eventually Dr. Eynon who laid down its medical version. According to him, in what concerns women's sexual insensitivity, "one might be inclined, and not without reason, to wonder if in some women this unusual, lamentable condition is not to be attributed to the sullen refusal of love, rather than any actual mutism of their flesh."[857]

This idea that frigidity was owed to women's ill will was substantiated in different ways: sometimes it was said to be caused by a woman's resentment towards a man for a specific reason, others it was simply attributed to an "unconscious hatred of the man, whom she cannot forgive for the very fact of being a man".[858] And even more generally frigidity was often claimed to be caused by hysteria – the classic female madness. Vienna-trained psychiatrist Edmund Bergler, for instance, "believed that women who routinely respond to men with feelings of aversion and disgust are hysterical, and 'hysterical women are without exception frigid'."[859] Either way, frigidity was generally seen as a weapon used by women against men. And it was through this idea that frigidity was connected with sadism.

In very general lines, the basic idea was that frigidity was a form of emasculating husbands and lovers by reducing the importance of the penis. That is what German psychoanalyst Karl Abraham claimed in a paper he published in 1920 on the female castration complex. As Louise Kaplan explains, according to Abraham, frigidity was the result of penis envy, which led women to have sadistic impulses toward men.[860] In his view, the frigid woman

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[856] *Ibidem*.

[857] EYNON, Dr., *Manuel de Ll'amour Conjugal*, p. 132, as cited in CRYLE, Peter, and MOORE, Alison, *Frigidity: An Intellectual History*, p. 124.

[858] BERGLER, Edmund, "The Problem of Frigidity", p 382, as cited in MARGOLIN, Leslie, "Sexual Frigidity: The Social Construction of Masculine Privilege and Feminine", pp. 3-4.

[859] HITSCHMANN, Edward, and BERGLER, Edmund, *Frigidity in women: Its characteristics and treatment*, pp. 23, 48, as cited in MARGOLIN, Leslie, "Sexual Frigidity: The Social Construction of Masculine Privilege and Feminine", p. 4.

[860] KAPLAN, Louise J., *Female Perversions: The Temptations of Emma Bovary*, p. 174.

> is not overtly phobic about intercourse or marriage and, with her suggestively lowered gaze, she seems to promise every variety of sexual delight. To be sure, at the moment just before his penetration or perhaps a few minutes later, at the moment of his climax, she disappoints the man: "I did not get what was promised to me. Now I will not give you what I promised." According to Abraham, frigidity is an ingenious strategy for diminishing the worthiness and significance of the penis.[861]

Still in relation to sadism and, more specifically, in relation to a certain notion of evil it entailed, it is possible to note yet another meaning the conceptualization of frigidity came to encompass: a sense of deceit and untrustworthiness. Bergler, for instance, referred to it when he talked of the endless series of manipulations and lies through which frigid women put their husbands in a position of "absolute stupid naïvete".[862] As examples he talked of how women lied about being treated for frigidity, how they pretended to be satisfied even after completely unsatisfactory intercourse,[863] and how they tended to make their husbands believe to be responsible for their condition.[864]

In its turn, this latter idea that women unfairly blamed men for their frigidity leads us to a different but related point. It was not only by somehow intentionally refusing the delights of vaginal orgasm that women put in practice their sadistic impulses in relation to men. A different kind of non-submissive attitude towards men also came to be embraced by frigidity. I am referring to a sense of cold treatment and a complaining attitude about men's behavior. Leslie Margolin provides us with a very representative example of this: a dialogue between Bergler and the husband of one of his frigid patients, who seemed to blame her condition on the husband's complete lack of tenderness.

> Bergler asked, "What about your alleged lack of tenderness?" "I hate the word," he answered bitterly. "I get it as a reproach, served for breakfast and dinner – it's my good luck that I don't take lunch at home. My wife's first word after awakening, her last one

[861] *Idem*, p. 176.
[862] BERGLER, Edmund, "The Problem of Frigidity", p. 388, as cited in MARGOLIN, Leslie, "Sexual Frigidity: The Social Construction of Masculine Privilege and Feminine", p. 6.
[863] MARGOLIN, Leslie, "Sexual Frigidity: The Social Construction of Masculine Privilege and Feminine", p. 6.
[864] *Ibidem*.

> before going to bed, has something to do with that damned tenderness. It drives me crazy." "Do you consider yourself a tender person?" "I don't know any more what the word means? My wife uses it as a whip."[865]

Frigidity, then, has come to refer to the bitter always-nagging woman and to her ice-cold temperament. This, of course, was constructed as opposed to the normal non-frigid woman, who was always tender, never angry, and completely altruistic. Gynecologist Hamilton illustrates this view very clearly. As he puts it as late as 1961, the normal non-frigid woman

> is always ready to make love when her husband is ready (barring sickness, or certain times in pregnancy). Her deep altruism makes her extremely sensitive to his moods, and she will not find it in herself to treat him as if he were a robot, become angry or feel rejected if, when the button is pushed, he does not respond. She will die a thousand deaths rather than make him feel sexually inadequate […].[866]

Bergler concurred and extended this view of female complete selflessness beyond sexuality. For him, a normal woman "listens, consoles, and helps her husband in anyway she can." She is patient, tender, understanding and forgiving.[867] And she "seeks agreement, unity, and her husband's happiness and peace of mind above all things."[868] Marie Robinson adds children to what she calls the essential female altruism, which, according to her,

> blossoms in her joy in giving the very best of herself to her husband and to her children. She never resents this need in herself to give; she never interprets its manifestations as a burden to her, an imposition on her. It pervades her nature as the color green pervades the countryside in the spring, and she is proud of it and delights in it.[869]

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[865] *Ibidem*.

[866] HAMILTON, E. G., "Frigidity in the Female", p. 1041, as cited in MARGOLIN, Leslie, "Sexual Frigidity: The Social Construction of Masculine Privilege and Feminine", p. 8.

[867] BERGLER, Edmund, *Divorce Won`t Help*, p. 217, as cited in MARGOLIN, Leslie, "Sexual Frigidity: The Social Construction of Masculine Privilege and Feminine", p. 10.

[868] BERGLER, Edmund, "The Problem of Frigidity", p. 382, as cited in MARGOLIN, Leslie, "Sexual Frigidity: The Social Construction of Masculine Privilege and Feminine", p. 10.

[869] ROBINSON, Marie N., *The Power of Sexual Surrender*, p. 32, as cited in MARGOLIN, Leslie, "Sexual Frigidity: The Social Construction of Masculine Privilege and Feminine", p. 10.

In opposition, the frigid woman is conceived as "full of anger and hatred for her husband".[870] She is "easily angered, aggressive and jealous",[871] and "expresses her frustration in the form of nagging, irritability, temper tantrums, weeping spells, etc.".[872] She has always "one complaint or other to lodge against her husband, humiliating him in company".[873] That is how sexologists constructed the image of the frigid woman until way after the mid twentieth century: as the opposite to the normal completely altruistic and submissive normal woman.

This, however, is not the whole story. For it was not only that frigid women resisted, in one way or the other, men and their domination. It was also that by doing so they were perceived as stepping away from femininity and into masculinity. Drawing on Stekel's ideas, Docteur Robert Teusch, in 1934, framed frigidity as one of the categories of feminism aberration. In fact, in his views, the shadow of masculinity hanging over frigidity comes across very clearly:

> Dressed in solid masculine fabrics, or else on the contrary, sporting soft girlish blouses […] barely capable of true love, but thirsty for a lewdness that refuses to acknowledge itself [… it] tenses their personality, tortures them, then makes them choke with disappointment, often out of rage and bitterness.[874]

It might come as no surprise, then, the strong imaginary link forged between frigidity and lesbianism.[875] As I have mentioned before, homosexuality had both a sexual and a gendered meaning, so that same-sex desire was also perceived as gender inversion. As Chiara Becalossi explains, "homosexual men were considered effeminate, and homosexual women were virile."[876] Precisely the same thing happened with frigidity. Frigid women were perceived as

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[870] BERGLER, Edmund, "The Problem of Frigidity", p. 385, as cited in MARGOLIN, Leslie, "Sexual Frigidity: The Social Construction of Masculine Privilege and Feminine", p. 10.
[871] BERGLER, Edmund, "The Problem of Frigidity", p. 382, as cited in MARGOLIN, Leslie, "Sexual Frigidity: The Social Construction of Masculine Privilege and Feminine", p. 10.
[872] CAPRIO, F. S., *The Sexual Adequate Female*, p. 14, as cited in MARGOLIN, Leslie, "Sexual Frigidity: The Social Construction of Masculine Privilege and Feminine", p. 10.
[873] HITSCHMANN, Edward, and BERGLER, Edmund, *Frigidity in women: Its characteristics and treatment*, p. 5, as cited in MARGOLIN, Leslie, "Sexual Frigidity: The Social Construction of Masculine Privilege and Feminine", p. 10.
[874] TEUTSCH, Robert, *Le Féminisme*, pp. 167-8, as cited in MOORE, Alison, "Relocating Marie Bonaparte's Clitoris", p. 159.
[875] MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", p. 152.
[876] BECALOSSI, Chiara, "The Origin of Italian Sexological Studies: Female Sexual Inversion, ca. 1870-1900", p. 104.

masculine, and that gender dysfunction was often read through fashion signifiers of masculinity.[877] What is very interesting – and indeed very revealing – in the Teusch's passage quoted above is the reference to both masculine and female fashion signifiers. But what might at first sight appear as contradictory can readily be made quite coherent if the idea of sexuality as masculine is brought back into the picture. As we have seen in the examination of nymphomania, excessive female sexual desire was essentially a comparative notion in relation to men and bore the mark of masculinity, since normal womanhood was equated with lesser sexual desire. And that is precisely what it can be observed in frigidity, as frigidity rather than standing for the absence of sexual desire, came to imply an excess of it, and thus to be often aligned with nymphomania rather than placed in direct opposition to it.

Such alignment is made most obvious in the classification of different degrees of frigidity proposed by Hitchmann and Bergler. According to them, frigidity varied along a scale in which the highest grade was "total frigidity with vaginal anesthesia" and the lowest "frigidity of the nymphomaniac type", the latter referring to the case in which a woman feels strong excitement but no vaginal orgasm.[878] But that was not only it, for nymphomania was also perceived as both cause and effect of frigidity. Helena Ek, for instance, tells us of

> Dr. Eduard Winkler, whose *Amor and Hymen, or, The Secrets of Love and Marriage Revealed* went through nineteen Swedish editions following its publication in 1846, warned that for women, abstinence could be more harmful than indulgence, causing inflammation of the reproductive parts resulting in nymphomania, insanity, and occasionally, death.[879]

And Moore explains how already in the nineteenth century "[d]escriptions of the perils of female sexuality often intermeshed frigidity with nymphomania. Frigidity could be caused by nymphomania – an overexcited woman would experience vaginal clamping due to excess

[877] MOORE, Alison, "Relocating Marie Bonaparte's Clitoris", p. 159.
[878] HITSCHMANN, Edward, and BERGLER, Edmund, *Frigidity in women: Its characteristics and treatment*, pp. 20-1, as cited in MARGOLIN, Leslie, "Sexual Frigidity: The Social Construction of Masculine Privilege and Feminine", p. 7.
[879] EK, Imelda Helena, *Erotic Insanity: Sex and Psychiatry at Vadstena Aslum, Sweden 1849-1878*, p. 65.

muscular tension, making heterosexual coitus impossible."[880] And frigidity was also attributed to masturbation and seen as a result of other perverse pleasures, such as lesbianism. That is how perverse pleasure came to be "at once the cause, the sign, and the result of frigidity."[881]

The main point of encounter between frigidity and nymphomania, however, seems to be the clitoris, which – as a "site of a curious contradiction in which perversion and lack were made to meet" – fused the frigid woman and the nymphomaniac into one and the same.[882] And that was also what connected both of them to the lesbian and even to the career woman, who refused to procreate, loved sex for its own sake, dressed in a boyish fashion, smoked cigarettes, and wear short hair.[883] They were all represented as agentially libidinous phallic women who did not conform with the roles attributed to women not only in a sexual but also in a more general sense, and were, for that reason, perceived as rejecting femininity and embracing masculinity.[884] As such, they should all be understood in the context of the rising anxieties concerning gender differentiation and women's refusal of the confining domesticity in the bourgeois family that had been assigned to them.[885]

This is yet another essential point regarding frigidity. As it can be seen in Teusch's description, frigid women were perceived as incapable of true love, which was equated with motherhood and marriage. This can be traced back to Krafft-Ebing, for whom sexual anesthesia was connected with a lack of altruistic feelings. As Oosterhuis explains, "[i]n Krafft-Ebing's perspective there was a strong link between sexuality and sociability."[886] This idea of selfishness, however, came to coexist with the idea of excess of sexual feeling rather than anesthesia. For frigid women, in the twentieth century, came to be depicted in psychoanalytic theory as selfish sexual women who resisted their role as selfless mothers and

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[880] MOORE, Alison, "Pathologizing Female Sexual Frigidity in Fin-de-siècle France, or How Absence Was Made into a Thing", pp. 193-4.
[881] *Idem*, p. 188.
[882] *Ibidem*.
[883] MOORE, Alison, "Relocating Marie Bonaparte's Clitoris", p. 160.
[884] *Ibidem*.
[885] KAPLAN, Louise J., *Female Perversions: The Temptations of Emma Bovary*, p. 167.
[886] OOSTERHUIS, Harry, "Sexual Modernity in the Works of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll", p. 142.

submissive wives. The result was the frequent reduction of normal female desire to a desexualized – or maybe sexually passive – "longing for motherhood and happy families."[887]

In this respect, it is worthy of note the role psychoanalysis has had in the construction of the opposition between female sexuality and motherhood, or, to put it differently, in the propagation of the idea that good mothers are generally asexual. After all, that idea was already in circulation much before psychoanalytic theory vested it in a "scientific" robe.[888] Either way, as Susan Weisskopf says, psychoanalytic theorists such as Helene Deutsch and Theresa Benedek had a fundamental role in the elaboration of ideas that equate motherhood with women's maturity, which in turn is contrasted with erotic sexuality.[889] Deutsch, for instance, claims that there is a split between sexuality and motherliness,[890] and Benedek "suggests that the mature woman's ego identity is more invested in her aspiration to bear and raise children than in orgasm."[891] But that was not just it. Psychoanalytic theory's contribution to the elaboration of the idea of the mother's complete selflessness cannot go unnoticed. In this light, Deutsch´s work assumes a particular relevance in virtue of her claim that motherhood is the inevitable outcome of the passivity, masochism, and narcissism that comprise the feminine core, since it is precisely those characteristics that lead to good mothering.[892]

But, coming back to frigidity, it cannot be stressed enough the fundamental relationship of its history with marriage. As Peter Cryle tells us, frigidity only became a problem when marriage, at the turn of the twentieth century, started to be thought of "not as an alliance of families or even as the proper means of procreation but as an occasion for sexual intimacy."[893] That is not to say that the eroticization of marriage only came about at the end

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[887] MOORE, Alison, "Pathologizing Female Sexual Frigidity in Fin-de-siècle France, or How Absence Was Made into a Thing", p. 189.

[888] Rachel Mesch, for instance, traces this idea throughout eminent literary works of the second half of the nineteenth century. (MESCH, Rachel, "Housewife or Harlot? Sex and the Married Woman in Nineteenth-Century France", pp. 75-6.)

[889] WEISSKOPF, Susan, "Maternal Sexuality and Asexual Motherhood", pp. 769-70.

[890] *Idem*, p. 770.

[891] *Ibidem*.

[892] *Idem*, p. 769.

[893] CRYLE, Peter, "A terrible Ordeal from Every Point of View": (Not) Managing Female Sexuality on the Wedding Night, p. 45.

of the nineteenth century. It had, after all, "been the subject of a famous text written over two centuries earlier". But it was at the turn of the twentieth century, that "[s]exual relations within marriage took on a new importance."[894] That led to what Moore calls a new medical imperative of female pleasure.[895] Yet, it was not a concern with women that motivated such imperative and the consequent formulation of frigidity, but rather the sexual satisfaction of husbands and the preoccupation with harmonious marriage.[896] After all, the absence of female pleasure was seen as conducive to adultery.[897] The result was that the new norm of sex within marriage and female pleasure coexisted with older and quite different views.[898] That is probably what explains the constituent ambiguity in the notion of frigidity: at its heart lies both an idea of women as naturally sexless and as only pathologically so.[899] And that is also what accounts for its use as a "catch-all term for any failure of appropriate desire": [900] marital and vaginal.

3.4. The Normal Woman

Even though perversions refer to sexuality, they elaborate on the notion of abnormal woman in a much wider sense. Intermeshed in its theorization are a multiplicity of ideas that concern gender more generally. This is why I believe the analysis of the elaboration of sexual perversions is a great source of ideas about the normal and the abnormal woman in general. As I hope it became clear, the theorization of abnormality always implies an articulation, whether implicitly or explicitly, of that which is considered normal. As such, the inquiry into the sexological elaboration of perversions provided important material for my attempt to

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[894] *Ibidem*.
[895] MOORE, Alison, "Relocating Marie Bonaparte's Clitoris", p. 150.
[896] CRYLE, Peter, and MOORE, Alison, *Frigidity: An Intellectual History*, pp. 209-10.
[897] MESCH, Rachel, "Housewife or Harlot? Sex and the Married Woman in Nineteenth-Century France", p. 69; CRYLE, Peter, "'A Terrible Ordeal from Every Point of View': (Not) Managing Female Sexuality on the Wedding Night", pp. 57, 63.
[898] CRYLE, Peter, "'A Terrible Ordeal from Every Point of View': (Not) Managing Female Sexuality on the Wedding Night", p. 45.
[899] CRYLE, Peter, and MOORE, Alison, *Frigidity: An Intellectual History*, p. 244.
[900] *Idem*, p. 197.

reconstruct the binarism good/bad woman, which, in the age of (sex) science, came to be read through the medical lenses of the normal and the abnormal.

Let us start with the normal woman. I finished the previous section on frigidity speaking of the changes that came to reunite marriage and sexuality in the nineteenth century. I would now like to resume that topic for its fundamental significance to our theme. In reality, I would like to pick up from where I left off in the section on religion: the opposing side the wife/mother came to occupy in the good/bad woman binarism. She had, at the dawn of modernity, replaced the nun as the primary incarnation of the stereotype of the good woman. And, as it is possible to observe from the inquiry into perversions, she was now, at the end of the nineteenth century and way into the twentieth, the referent of normality behind the theorization of female abnormality.

In terms of sexuality, that meant a restriction to a norm of intersubjective, heterosexual, reproductive, marital, monogamous, penetrative, passive, and submissive sexual relations. In terms of personality traits, an equation with emotionalism, sensibility, tenderness, selflessness, submissiveness, and passivity as opposed to male rationalism, competitiveness, individualism, aggressiveness, and agency. And in terms of roles, one which was confined to the private and domestic sphere as mothers and wives.

All three domains are completely intertwined, with the characteristics attributed to normal womanhood in one spilling over into the others. The idea of passionless as elaborated by Nancy Cott provides an excellent starting point in the disentanglement of the connections between all three spheres. And that is so because passionless refers both to a lack of sexual aggressiveness and to a superior moral nature attributed to women,[901] which, in turn, justified and legitimized their restriction to the private sphere.

This, of course, is quite unsurprising when one thinks of how Christianity managed to put sexuality at the heart of morality and how its impact can be observed even in present day. Once this is recalled, then, it might not be so puzzling the fact that, by the eighteenth century, "female chastity [was] the archetype for human morality."[902] The basic idea behind it was

[901] COTT, Nancy F., "Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850", p. 220
[902] *Idem*, p. 223.

that women lacked sexual aggressiveness, that their sexual appetites contributed very little to their motivations, and so they were more moral and generally more virtuous than men.[903] Very simply, the idea was that because women were less carnal, they were also more spiritual. That, in turn, is completely related to women's restriction to the household, for that was the place where the tenderness, understanding and selflessness, which were said to characterize their virtue, were to be properly exercised, specifically in the context of their roles as mothers and wives. For this reason, I will follow by analyzing the two major ideas that connect women to those roles: motherhood and romantic love. My aim is to show the interplay between the three spheres I have identified above.

3.4.1. Motherhood

Ruth Bloch tells us about the rise of the ideal of the moral mother at the end of the eighteenth century and first decades of the nineteenth. As she explains, "motherhood had not always been a dominant feminine ideal."[904] In fact, up until the late eighteenth century, there was a devaluation of motherhood in favor of fatherhood, and "the standard against which they were measured was essentially the same."[905] In addition, not only was parenthood not regarded as a predominantly female responsibility, as motherhood was not the primary occupation of women.[906] At the end of the century, however, a change in perception occurred. From then onward, motherhood would be attributed a unique value,[907] and the construction of motherhood as we now understand it would come about.

Its origin can be located in the deepening of the labor division between men and women, which, on one side, took men out of the house and deprived them of the necessary proximity to take part in childrearing as they had done till then, and, on the other, confined women to the household and transferred to them many responsibilities that had earlier been assigned to

[903] *Idem*, p. 220.
[904] BLOCK, Ruth H., "American Feminine Ideals in Transition: The Rise of the Moral Mother, 1785-1815", p. 100.
[905] *Idem*, p. 107.
[906] *Idem*, p. 108.
[907] *Idem*, p. 109

fathers or parents jointly.[908] As a result, "[n]ot only did mothers rear children more by themselves, but simultaneously – and for similar reasons – women became more exclusively preoccupied with their maternal roles."[909] As Bloch explains, that substantive redefinition of the maternal role led to a higher evaluation of motherhood,[910] and, by extension, of women's characteristics deemed important to childrearing. One of them was tenderness, perceived as "the very quality most essential to the cultivation of morality in children."[911] As Bloch puts it,

> [w]omen often came to be depicted not only as virtuous in themselves, but as more virtuous than men, indeed, as the main "conservators of morals" in society by means of their beneficial influence on both men and children. Even New England clergymen regarded "the superior sensibility of females," their "better qualities" of tenderness, compassion, patience, and fortitude as inclining them more naturally toward Christianity than men. […] No longer grounds for disparagement, the supposedly natural susceptibility of women to "the heart" now became viewed as the foundation of their superior virtue. In accord with this newly elevated characterization of female emotions, maternal fondness and tenderness toward children – behavior that had often provoked criticism from Puritan writers – now received highly sentimental acclaim.[912]

That certainly led to what Anthony Giddens refers to as the idealization of the mother, a most important strand of the modern construction of motherhood.[913] But that was not only it. For it was not only that women came to be seen as particularly suitable for motherhood in virtue of their now idealized characteristics, but also that motherhood came to be thought of as women's destiny, as somehow inscribed within their very essence. And that was so not merely in virtue of their physiology, which allowed them to bear and nurse babies, but also due to their mental qualities: piety, courage, and benevolence.[914]

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[908] *Idem*, p. 113.
[909] *Idem*, p. 114.
[910] *Idem*, p. 113.
[911] *Idem*, p. 116.
[912] *Ibidem*.
[913] GIDDENS, Anthony, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, p. 42.
[914] BLOCK, Ruth H., "American Feminine Ideals in Transition: The Rise of the Moral Mother, 1785-1815", p. 116.

My point, thus, is this: the confinement of women to the private sphere, specifically in what regards their role as mothers, eventually led to their depiction and valuation as emotional, tender, and altruistic beings, capable of unique affective bonding. That on the one hand. On the other, precisely because those characteristics came to be seen as natural in women, women's confinement to the role of mothers became justified and legitimized.

All this, in turn, is intimately connected with sexuality. And it is so in several senses. First, because women were seen as morally better, and thus, as instinctively maternal, precisely because they were depicted as asexual, or at least, as less sexual than men: spiritual rather than carnal. Second, because of the idea, which comes out very clearly in sexological writings, that women's normal instincts are directed from sexuality into motherhood, as if both could not coexist simultaneously. And finally, because maternal love is not only represented as, of course, void of sexuality, but also because it is characterized in opposition to it. We have seen in our inquiry into perversions how women's sexuality was contrasted with their motherly feelings and with the characteristics required of motherhood, with special emphasis on altruism. On that view, the type of love that involves sexuality is perceived as opposed to the one that does not, for its focus on oneself rather than the other and, in close relation to it, for its lack of tenderness. In this regard, it cannot go unnoticed the influence of the Christian image of the self-sacrificial mother most clearly embodied by Mary. Exactly as her and in strict opposition to Eve, mothers, at the end of the eighteenth century, came to be represented as pure and virtuous due precisely to their asexuality and supreme selflessness.

3.4.2. Romantic love

It is not only in maternal love, however, that the opposition between sexuality and goodness, can be seen. Romantic love is also a prime example. This, however, needs to be properly and carefully understood, as the idea of love was also responsible for a better view of sexuality

and, consequently, at least to some extent, for the renewed preoccupation with sex within marriage in the nineteenth century,[915] to which reference was made in the last section.

Harry Oosterhuis tells us of the connection between sexuality and love theorized by Krafft-Ebing and the German neurologist Albert Moll, both of whom Oosterhuis attributes "the modern notion of sexuality, as we experience and understand it today".[916] The overall idea was that sexuality implied not only physical individualistic satisfaction, but also interpersonal bonding. Elaborating on Krafft-Ebing's idea that sexuality had not only an individual but also a social significance, Moll divided

> the *libido sexualis* into two major components and more or less independent instincts: the individualistic and predominantly physical 'detumescence-impulse' (Detumescenztrieb), and the psychological and social 'contrectation-impulse' (Contrectationstrieb). The first referred to the sexual act and was aimed at discharge and mere physical satisfaction; the second to attraction to another individual: the impulse to think about a real or imagined partner, as well as to touch, feel, fondle or kiss him or her.[917]

In the writings of these sexologists, thus, sexuality became romanticized. But not only. Love also became sexualized, since, for them, "love, as a social bond, was inherently sexual".[918] This latter notion, however, must be placed within the context of the rise of the idea of romantic love in the eighteenth century.

As opposed to courtly love – claimed by many as its origin –, romantic love did indeed encompass sexuality, but sexuality was far from being its most relevant element. As Irving Singer explains, romantic love inherited from Plato and the Neoplatonists the idea of "purity in love that transcended ordinary sexual experience".[919] The essential notion at its core is not sexuality but the one of oneness with another person, a kind of "metaphysical craving for

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[915] As Mike Featherstone says, "[t]he growing democratization of love in the 18th century also saw love as increasingly linked to sexuality and both becoming central to marriage." (FEATHERSTONE, Mike, "Love and Eroticism: An Introduction", p. 6.)
[916] OOSTERHUIS, Harry, "Sexual Modernity in the Works of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll", p. 133.
[917] *Idem*, p. 142.
[918] *Ibidem*.
[919] SINGER, Irving, *The Nature of Love, Volume 2: Courtly and Romantic*, p. 285.

unity". It is a unity between men and women, which is felt necessary for one's completeness.[920] One that restores that which is assumed to be a fundamental lack in the individual, who through it is made whole.

Such completeness, of course, does not refer to flesh but soul: romantic love is but a meeting of souls, a type of psychic communication.[921] This can even be seen in what is often referred to as the instantaneous attraction element in romantic love. For even though romantic love is depicted as involving love at first sight, such immediate attraction does not refer to a sexual type of compulsion but rather to the qualities of character of the beloved one, qualities that make of him/her the special one. As Anthony Giddens puts it, "[t]he first glance is a communicative gesture, an intuitive grasp of the qualities of the other."[922] There is here both a sense of transparence and intimacy. It is in this light that Eva Illouz says that

> [l]ove was central to Victorian's sense of self because through it they learned to know not only their partners but themselves. Love was a template for the authentic, albeit restrained, expression of their inner self, but it was also a means to attain spiritual perfection.[923]

It is no wonder, then, that it is due to this "associative quality" – which distinguishes it from other bodily appetites such as hunger – that (romantic) love is said to have the "capacity to raise the body to the level of mind instead of allowing the mind to 'sink' in the body"[924] In this lies the sense of transcendence romantic love is endowed with. To sum up the relation between sexuality and romantic love, it can be said, as Giddens did, that "[i]n romantic love attachments, the element of sublime love tends to predominate over that of sexual ardour."[925]

Now, it is precisely in that associative quality, that sense of unity, that lies the connection between love and goodness, an element whose significance Singer lays down as follows:

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[920] *Idem*, pp. 288, 289.
[921] GIDDENS, Anthony, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, p. 45.
[922] *Idem*, p. 40.
[923] ILLOUZ, Eva, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, p. 29.
[924] SINGER, Irving, *The Nature of Love, Volume 2: Courtly and Romantic*, p. 289.
[925] GIDDENS, Anthony, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, p. 40.

> […] its sanctitiy and godliness as that which unifies, purifies, and redeems human nature, using frail mortals as intermediaries within its cosmic journey, became the fundamental principle in the concept of romantic love. For medieval Christianity, God is love; for the Romantic ideology, love is God.[926]

Illouz brings this insight into the nineteenth century. According to her, "[v[ictorians virtually worshipped heterosexual love, making it a deity to which they willingly devoted their existence",[927] but even today we can speak of the supreme value our society attributes to romantic love. After all, as then, we now too tend to equate it with happiness.[928] It is in this light that Illouz speaks of romantic love as a new religion in times of secularization. But there is something more to it. If love "bears deep affinities with the experience of the sacred",[929] it is largely in virtue of its unifying, redemptive, and purifying power.

There is, thus, a sense of divinity deriving from the unity with another person. But that is not the only connection between love and goodness or morality. Such connection also rests in the conceptualization of love "as something that transforms primordial selfishness into unselfish oneness with other persons."[930] In this, it is possible to see at work the idea that links sexuality with selfishness, for it is the associative element in romantic love rather than the sexual one that is conceived as pure unselfishness. In romantic love, then, sexuality is envisioned as a mere first degree in a ladder in which only the last degree is divine union,[931] only this latter and not the former being conceived in terms of complete altruism. We might now, then, come to understand the common elaboration of female sexual perversion in terms of selfishness.

There is yet another central element in the connection between romantic love and goodness: its opposition to rationality and, more specifically, to utilitarian considerations. As Illouz says, romantic love is irrational rather than rational, organic rather than utilitarian, gratuitous

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[926] SINGER, Irving, *The Nature of Love, Volume 2: Courtly and Romantic*, pp. 293-4.
[927] ILLOUZ, Eva, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, p. 28.
[928] *Ibidem*.
[929] *Idem*, p. 8.
[930] SINGER, Irving, *The Nature of Love, Volume 2: Courtly and Romantic*, p. 296.
[931] *Idem*, p. 288.

rather than profit oriented. [932] That is why it "seems to evade the conventional categories within which capitalism has been conceived",[933] standing, "above the realm of commodity exchange".[934] And that is why it is also private rather than public. It belongs to the sacred and pure space of the house and family rather than the corrupt one of the market.

The private character of romantic love leads us to an essential topic: marriage. The idea of romantic love is indeed completely intertwined with marriage. In a nutshell, it can be said that marriage is the proper province of romantic love. As Singer notes, in the conceptualization of romantic love there is an idea of desire finding "love within and by means of marriage." In fact, "[r]omantic idealization of love between the sexes is frequently directed towards the attainment of a permanent and stable union."[935] Behind it lies the idea of *non-interchangeability*: the beloved person is unique and irreplaceable.[936] It is based on the sense that "true love, once found, is for ever",[937] which, in turn, is undeniably connected with the notion of union of souls.

This takes us back to sexuality, since marriage – as a permanent and stable union – is added up precisely as a form of purification of sexuality. It is in this sense that Singer explains that romantic love inherits "Protestant attempts to dignify marriage as heterosexual friendship […] and even Rationalist ideas about the friendliness of marriage as opposed to the evils of passion."[938] As Giddens puts it, then, romantic "[l]ove breaks with sexuality while embracing it",[939] and that is the notion of love (and sex) marriage comes to be associated with in the nineteenth century.

There is only one final, but definitely not lesser, feature of romantic love that should be added for its relevance to the present analysis: its gendered character. Indeed, romantic love was far from being gender neutral. As Giddens says, "[r]omantic love was essentially femininised

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[932] ILLOUZ, Eva, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, p. 2.
[933] *Ibidem*.
[934] *Idem*, p. 3.
[935] SINGER, Irving, *The Nature of Love, Volume 2: Courtly and Romantic*, p. 299.
[936] ILLOUZ, Eva, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, p. 3.
[937] GIDDENS, Anthony, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, p. 46.
[938] SINGER, Irving, *The Nature of Love, Volume 2: Courtly and Romantic*, p. 301.
[939] GIDDENS, Anthony, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, p. 40.

love."[940] It was women who were thought to be naturally oriented towards romantic love. Men, on the contrary, were the province of what Giddens calls passionate love, one in which the sexual element predominates,[941] or were instead quite simply seen as oriented towards sex rather than love. This comes across quite clearly in the theorization of sexual perversions.

If we add marriage to the femininization of romantic love, we are immediately led to what has been termed the double standard. Keith Thomas defined it as the idea that "unchastity, in the sense of sexual relations before or outside marriage, is for a man, if an offense, none the less a mild and pardonable one, but for woman a matter of the utmost gravity."[942] The idea behind it is simply that women, as opposed to men, are naturally driven to love – which implied marriage and motherhood –, not sex, and thus their engagement in non-marital sexual relations was abnormal in both its descriptive and normative senses.

The double standard has been incorporated into Freud's theorization of the Madonna-whore complex, which sought to explain it and, as many claim, perhaps even justify it. Such complex refers to the common inability of civilized men to fuse love and sexual desire into a single woman and the resulting tendency of seeking sexual satisfaction in women other than their wives, for whom they only feel tenderness, affection, and esteem. Of those men Freud says, "where they love they do not desire and where they desire they cannot love."[943] Such dissociation between sexual attraction and love, however, is not so commonly found in women, for with them "the directly sexual elements of love are more frequently aroused together with the elements of tenderness and esteem, than is the case with men."[944] When it is, it takes the form of frigidity – of sexual abnormality, therefore.[945] But not only. As we can now conclude from our analysis of sexual perversions, also nymphomania and sadism in women were seen as opposed to love.

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[940] *Idem*, p. 43.
[941] *Idem*, p. 37.
[942] THOMAS, Keith, "The Double Standard", p. 195.
[943] FREUD, Sigmund, "On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love", p. 183, as cited in THOMAS, Keith, "The Double Standard", p. 207.
[944] FLÜGEL, J.C., *The Psycho-Analytic Study of the Family*, p. 112, as cited in THOMAS, Keith, "The Double Standard", p. 207.
[945] THOMAS, Keith, "The Double Standard", p. 207.

Behind the theorization of the Madonna-whore complex, we can, thus, find a fundamental split between normal and abnormal women, which is one between loving and sexual women and also one between the private and the public sphere. After all, it is marriage that draws the line between female normality and abnormality, and this can specially be seen in the idea that women who were not sexually pleasured by their husbands were said to be destined to adultery and even prostitution.[946]

Put in this context, the anxieties arising, in the second half of the nineteenth century, out of the new medical insistence upon female sexual pleasure within conjugal relations are quite telling. As Rachel Mesch says, such insistence led to the persistent question of whether men should treat their wives as mistresses.[947] And that only bear testimony to the still prevalent split between the pure, good, motherly, and passive wife, on one side, and the lustful, evil, selfish, and aggressive mistress, on the other.[948] A split which was merely "a variation of the age-old Madonna-whore complex, perfectly vocalized in Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's infamous 1846 analysis of women's roles: "[h]ousewife or harlot, I see no middle ground."[949]

The feminine character of love, however, did not just imply criteria of quantitative and qualitative sexuality. In fact, it did not concern only sexuality. It also referred to a specific kind of behavior of women towards men. It implied a prescription on women to serve, to understand and never, ever, disturb or upset them.

> There is no such thing as true love without reward; for even if one is denied what we call "love returned," there are all the other beautiful rewards that come with loving: the *nobler views and higher ideals that love gives one,* the *joy of serving,* the wider sympathy and better understanding, the richer and more complete living.[950]

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[946] MESCH, Rachel, "Housewife or Harlot? Sex and the Married Woman in Nineteenth-Century France", pp. 57, 63.
[947] *Idem*, p. 70.
[948] *Idem*, p. 71.
[949] PROUDHON, Pierre-Joseph, *Système des Contradictions Économiques, ou Philosophie de la Misère*, 8 vols., 2:197, as cited in MESCH, Rachel, "Housewife or Harlot? Sex and the Married Woman in Nineteenth-Century France", p. 71.
[950] MCCALL, A. B., "The Tower Room: A Girl's Ideal of Love", p. 4, as cited in ILLOUZ, Eva, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, p. 29.

Serving and understanding assumed different but interrelated forms. As Barbara Welter shows, in the nineteenth century, women, should, for a start, be their husbands' comforters, caregivers, and cheers.[951] As such, a woman would be her husband's best friend, his nurse when needed, and she should also sustain his "genius and aid him in his arduous career."[952] But not only. She should avoid a controversial spirit,[953] never give her opinion until he asked for it,[954] and always reverence his wishes even when she did not his opinions.[955] She should also be completely forgiving: "[t]o bear the evils and sorrows which may be appointed us, with a patient mind, should be the continual effort of our sex."[956] And she should do that in the most calm, quiet and gentle manner: "if he is abusive, never retort."[957] She should "suffer and […] be silent under suffering".[958]

All that was love. Love and gratitude: "[l]ove, in the heart of a woman should partake largely of the nature of gratitude. She should love, because she is already loved by one deserving her regard."[959] And there was, indeed, on that view, great things women should be grateful for. After all, they were said to be weak,[960] doubtful, timid, and dependent: perpetual children, in sum.[961] And so, if they were "conscious of their inferiority, they should then be nothing but grateful for the support men provided them with."[962] A support that came in the form of

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[951] WELTER, Barbara, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860", p. 163.
[952] **"**The Sculptor's Assistant: Ann Flaxman", in *Women of Worth: A Book for Girls*, p. 263, as cited in WELTER, Barbara, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860", p. 160.
[953] NEWCOMB, Harvey, *Young Lady's Guide to the Harmonious Development of Christian Character*, p. 10, as cited in WELTER, Barbara, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860", p. 161.
[954] *Ibidem*.
[955] PACKARD, Clarissa, *Recollections of a Housekeeper*, p. 122, as cited in WELTER, Barbara, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860", p. 160.
[956] SIGOURNEY, *Letters to Mothers*, p. 199, as cited in WELTER, Barbara, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860", p. 161.
[957] *The Lady's Token: or Gift of Friendship*, p. 119, as cited in WELTER, Barbara, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860", p. 161.
[958] "Woman" in *Godey's Lady's Book, II,* p. 110, as cited in WELTER, Barbara, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860", p. 162.
[959] FARRAR, Eliza, *The Young Lady's Friend*, p. 313, as cited in WELTER, Barbara, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860", p. 160.
[960] BURNAP. George, *Sphere and Duties of Woman*, p. 47, as cited in WELTER, Barbara, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860", p. 159.
[961] BURNAP. George, *Sphere and Duties of Woman*, p. 47, as cited in in WELTER, Barbara, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860", p. 160.
[962] SANDFORD, *Woman, in Her Social and Domestic Character*, p. 15, as cited in WELTER, Barbara, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860", p. 159.

“wisdom, constancy, firmness, perseverance”, and protection, and which a woman should repay “by the surrender of the full treasure of her affections.”[963] After all, she “has a head almost too small for intellect but just big enough for love.”[964]

A love that, hence, meant patience, mercy, and gentleness, and that was, once more, placed in opposition to the harlot: “[t]he ‘sterile embraces’ of a harlot cannot compete with those of a beloved housewife.”[965] Wives provided men with both a refuge and a sanctuary in the familial house, something a harlot could never do. In fact, they were often depicted as saving their husbands from those abnormal women. Testimony to that is the common plot in so many novels of the time. As Eric Trudgill tells us, they showed “a remarkably similar pattern: the hero becomes entangled with a frivolous and often dangerous young woman, but he escapes from folly at last after much suffering to form a union with a mature and motherly angel.”[966]

The reference to evilness illuminates an important feature in the good girl/bad girl dichotomy. It was not only a criterion of sexuality that established a division between them. It was also one of morality – one which put the good, normal girl on the side of goodness, and placed the bad, abnormal girl on the realm of evilness. The former was a potential victim of the dangers of the world outside the sanctuary of the house due to her fragility and delicacy; the latter, instead, was one of its sources. One an angel, the other a devil. As such, the first should be kept in and the other out of the house. After all, “feminine delicacy regularly meant an insulation from all sullying contact with the sins and cruelties of the world”.[967] And there was still a third division between them: whereas the good girl was depicted as closer to emotion and distant from the intellect, the bad girl was represented as deprived of amorous love, but as endowed with a certain measure of intellect.

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[963] WELTER, Barbara, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860”, p. 159.
[964] MEIGS, Charles, *Lecture on Some of the Distinctive Characteristics of the Female, delivered before the class of the Jefferson Medical College, Jan. 1847*, p. 17, as cited in WELTER, Barbara, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860”, p. 160.
[965] MESCH, Rachel, “Housewife or Harlot? Sex and the Married Woman in Nineteenth-Century France”, p. 78.
[966] TRUDGILL, Eric, *Madonnas and Magdalens: The Origins and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes*, p. 82
[967] *Idem*, pp. 65-6.

3.5. The Prostitute as Abnormal Woman

The prostitute is the abnormal woman. Eve, the seductress, the ultimate embodiment of the bad woman stereotype, which, in the nineteenth century, acquired taints of pathologic abnormality. The work of sexologists was of essence in this framing of the prostitute. In it, she is portrayed simultaneously as nymphomaniac, sadist, and frigid:

> By taking the active, dominating role and appearing to care about sex as much as or even more than a man, the prostitute, who typically is frigid despite her outward appearance of active sexual interest, is making conscious what is unconscious in her proper, middle-class sisters – the wish to be *more* than a man and more sexually potent than any man.[968]

As Sander Gilman puts it, then, "[t]he prostitute is the essential sexualized female in the perception of the nineteenth century. She is perceived as the embodiment of sexuality and of all that is associated with sexuality".[969] In this light, not only was she said to be a sexual pervert, as "interpretations of prostitutes' sexuality opened new ways of thinking about supposedly deviant female sexuality". [970] Heather Lee Miller explains why:

> Although Parent-Duchâtelet, Acton, and Sanger recognized the fact that poverty played an important role in a woman's decision to sell her body, evidence suggested that at least some women had more sinister and selfish reasons as well. Acton wrote that "natural desire[,] natural sinfulness[,] the preferment of indolent ease to labour[,] vicious inclinations strengthened and ingrained by earlier neglect or evil training, bad associates, and an indecent mode of life" caused prostitution, in addition to seduction, evil training, and poverty. This concentration on the natural presence of female desire, sin, indolence, and moral weakness, and Acton's subsequent discussions on the "unnaturalness" of certain kinds of sexual behavior, foreshadowed arguments

[968] KAPLAN, Louise J., *Female Perversions: The Temptations of Emma Bovary*, p. 180. Kaplan is here referring specifically to the work of Karl Abraham, who in 1920, wrote a paper on the female castration complex, which he named "Manifestations of the Female Castration Complex".
[969] GILMAN, Sander L., "The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality", p. 95.
[970] MILLER, Heather Lee, "Sexologists Examine Lesbians and Prostitutes in the United States, 1840-1940", p. 72. Miller is specifically referring to Action and Singer.

> predominant later in the century about "natural" versus "normal" sexual instinct and behavior. […] The character traits Acton and his contemporaries found in prostitutes contradicted nineteenth-century, white, middle-class ideals of feminine passionlessness, piety, and selflessness, rendering these women decidedly unfeminine.[971]

Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste Parent-Duchâtelet in 1836,[972] William Acton in 1848,[973] and William Sanger in 1857[974] published the first studies on prostitution in major urban areas: Paris, London, and New York. The three were works of a quantitative nature, describing the numbers and the lives of prostitutes, as well as the reasons why they entered prostitution. In the following decades, sexology would draw on notions used by these studies and medicalize them. That was the time scientific inquiries into the nature of perversions proliferated and prostitution came to be seen as a kind of innate sickness.[975]

So, it was not only a matter of excess of female desire. Sexological discourse represented the prostitute as bearing all the other marks of the sexual abnormal. She was a category, a type of person, an identity. As such, her sexuality spilled over into other traits of her character. And she carried with her the stamp of gender inversion, which at once masculinized her and opposed her to the proper womanhood of the wife/mother.

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[971] *Ibidem.*

[972] *La Prostitution dans la Ville de Paris*. This work was translated into English in 1945 under the name *Prostitution in Paris Considered Morally, Politically, and Medically: Prepared for Philanthropists and Legislators from Statistical Documents*. It "became the canonical text of the study of prostitution in the nineteenth-century Europe. Parent's methodological analysis of the bodies and lifestyles of prostitutes set the pattern for subsequent studies. […] His work had a critical impact on the discussion of prostitution and disease in Britain." (SPONGBERG, Mary, Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-century Medical Discourse, p. 37.)

[973] *A Complete Practical Treatise on Venereal Diseases and Their Immediate and Remote Consequences Including Observations on Certain Affections of The Uterus*, *Attended with Discharges*. Acton also published another two studies on prostitution. One in 1857 (*Prostitution*) and another in 1870 (*Prostitution Considered in its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects in London and Other Large Cities and Garrison Towns: With Proposals for the Control and Prevention of Its Attendant Evils*). Action's work was heavily influenced by Parent-Duchâtelet's. In fact, as Mary Spongberg points out, many of Acton´s key descriptions came directly from Parent-Duchâtelet's work. In addition, it is important to note that "his sources were various and his reliance on scientific method minimal." (*Idem*, p. 46.) For this reason. his work has, in fact, been described as part of more of a "literary genre" than a piece of scientific or sociological observation. (WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, p. 46.)

[974] SANGER, William, *The History of Prostitution: Its Extent, Causes and Effects Throughout the World*.

[975] MILLER, Heather Lee, "Sexologists Examine Lesbians and Prostitutes in the United States, 1840-1940", p. 70.

3.5.1. The Physical Abnormal

Let us start with identity. The prostitute's specific nature and difference in relation to the normal woman was constantly looked for in physical characteristics. As Miller explains, this was the result of the use of biological theories of evolution by sexologists after the mid-1860s.[976] Also in this Parent-Duchâtelet preceded them and presented "his readers with a statistical profile of the physical types of the prostitutes, the nature of their voices, the color of their hair and eyes, [and] their physical anomalies".[977] In Russia, Pauline Tarnowsky carried a detailed study on the physiognomy of the prostitute. As Gilman notes,

> Her categories remain those of Parent-Duchatelet. She describes the excessive weight of prostitutes and their hair and eye color, provides measurements of skull size and a catalogue of their family background (as with Parent-Duchatelet, most are the children of alcoholics), and discusses their fecundity (extremely low), as well as the signs of their degeneration. These signs are facial abnormalities: asymmetry of the face, misshapen noses, overdevelopment of the parietal region of the skull, and the so called "Darwin's ear." […] All of these signs point to the "primitive" nature of the prostitute's physiognomy; stigmata such as Darwin's ear (the simplification of the convolutions of the ear shell and the absence of a lobe) are a sign of atavism.[978]

In *La Donna Delinquente*, Cesare Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero repeat word per word the paper in which Tarnowsky documented her study on the appearance of the prostitute and further refer to prostitutes' steatopygia and "apron". But Lombroso is merely articulating views that were already in circulation at the time. In 1870, for instance, Adrien Charpy concluded from his study on the external form of the genitalia of eight hundred prostitutes examined at Lyons their elongation of the labia majora.[979]

It cannot go unnoticed the parallel such physical trait established between the prostitute and the Hottentot.[980] As Gilman explains, "[e]ighteenth-century travelers to southern Africa, such

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[976] *Idem*, p. 74.
[977] GILMAN, Sander L., "The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality", p. 95.
[978] *Idem*, p. 96.
[979] *Idem*, p. 99.
[980] Hottentot is a term widely used by Europeans to refer to the non-Bantu indigenous population of South Africa.

as Frangois Levaillant and John Barrow, had described the so-called 'Hottenttot apron,' a hypertrophy of the labia and nymphae".[981] Such physical characteristic would become a sign of the voluptuousness and lascivity, thought to be typical of the lowest human species. When Charpy talks of the elongation of the labia majora in prostitutes, he explicitly compares it with the apron of the "disgusting" Hottentots.[982] This indicates how the late-nineteenth century merged both figures, attributing them a primitive stage in the scale of evolution, one marked by a lack of control in the form of unbridled sexuality.[983] Guglielmo Ferrero, Lombroso's co-author, made the connection between prostitution and primitiveness very clear when he described prostitution as the rule in primitive societies and said that neither adultery nor virginity had any meaning in such societies. [984]

This is yet another indication of the nineteenth century representation of the prostitute as a sexual abnormal, since, as we might recall, the theorization of sexual abnormality, specifically in Krafft-Ebing, implied a notion of historical teleology, according to which abnormalities of excess were a manifestation of an animalistic and barbarous past, and, hence, a sign of retrograde degeneration.[985] That, as we can now see, was definitely the case in what concerns visions of the prostitute.

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[981] *Idem*, p. 86.
[982] *Idem*, p. 99.
[983] *Idem*, p. 100.
[984] *Ibidem*. This seems to confirm the ideological parallels and interactions between 'sex' and 'race' in the nineteenth century, or as Arthur Brittan and Mary Maynard have put it, the belonging of racism and sexism to the same discursive universe. (STOTT, Rebecca, The Fabrication of Late Victorian Femme Fatale, p. 36.) As Rebecca Stott observes, this is related with the "growth of biological determinist in the sciences in the nineteenth century", since "concepts of sex and race in effect were created by the same anthropological sciences in late nineteenth century." (STOTT, Rebecca, *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale: The Kiss of Death*, p. 36.) As Joanna De Groot says, "[w]hereas the theories and practices related to 'class' distinctions and relationships were founded on the new 'sciences' of political economy and social investigation, theories and practices related to 'race' and 'sex' drew on biological, anthropological, and medical scholarship, often grounding themselves in part on observable and 'inescapable' physical aspects of difference." (DE GROOT, Joanna, "'Sex' and 'Race': The Construction of Language and Image in the Nineteenth Century", pp, 92-3.) The entanglement of the discourses on sex and race in the nineteenth century can be seen, for instance, in the fact that "[i]mperialists speak of penetrating the Dark Continent, Jung celebrates Freud's 'passions for knowledge which was to lay open a dark continent to his gaze'; criminologists studying the prostitute look for negroid or 'atavistic' features; the Oriental man is feminised." (STOTT, Rebecca, *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale: The Kiss of Death*, p. 36)
[985] MOORE, Alison, M., *Sexual Myths of Modernity: Sadism, Masochism, and Historical Teleology*, p. 24.

But there is much more in the analysis of the physical characteristics of the prostitute made by sexologists. Such analysis, for instance, was not immune to the idea of masculinity associated with female perversion. Tarnowsky´s study is quite exemplary of that as she finds that when prostitutes age, their

> strong jaws and cheek bones, and their masculine aspect […] hidden by adipose tissue, emerge, salient angles stand out, and the face grows virile, uglier than a man's; wrinkles deepen into the likeness of scars, and the countenance, once attractive, exhibits the full degenerate type which early grace had concealed.[986]

The masculinity that emerges from the attribution of these physical characteristics to the prostitute is, in a sense, quite contradictory in relation to the previous point made concerning the prostitute's primitiveness. Again, what is at stake is the teleological assumptions that permeated the sexological writings. Kraft-Ebbing had linked sexuality to historical teleology by means of his division of sexual pathologies into abnormalities of excess and abnormalities of inversion. Whereas abnormalities of excess were, as already mentioned, connected with a barbarous past, abnormalities of (gender) inversion were, instead, a sign of civilized degeneracy and decadence arising from the stresses of modern life.[987] In this sense, the masculinity that emerged from the physical characteristics attributed to the prostitute is contradictory in relation to her depiction as primitive. Such contradiction, however, quickly dissipates if one takes into account the divergent teleological assumptions taken up by different theories. Krafft-Ebing and Lombroso are a very good example, for whereas the former assumes a primitive state in which men and women are opposites in what concerns sexuality – men are active and sadist and women masochists and passive –, the latter presupposes, instead, a primitive state in which men and women are quite similar in sexual terms. For Lombroso, then, differentiation between male and female sexuality comes with evolution, with sexual passivity in women being its natural outcome and not an initial

[986] TARNOWSKY, Pauline, "Fisiomie di Prostitute Russe", pp. 141-2, as cited in GILMAN, Sander L., "The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality", p. 97.
[987] MOORE, Alison, "Rethinking Gendered Perversion and Degeneration in Visions of Sadism and Masochism, 1886-1939", p. 143.

primitive state.[988] That is why, for him, the prostitute comes to be both abnormally masculine and primitive, which under Krafft-Ebing teleological assumptions would be a contradiction.

Such abnormality of the prostitute, which emerges in the analysis of her physical characteristics, further relied on her opposition to the normal woman. Christian Strohmberg, who, as Sander Gilman tells us, was the most vociferous German supporter of Lombroso, states clearly the view upon which the search for the specific physical characteristics of prostitutes was based: "[the prostitute] fills her ranks from the degenerate females, who are clearly differentiated from the normal woman."[989]

3.5.2. The Psychological Abnormal

Under such a view, "the prostitute's future is predetermined […] from the moment of conception."[990] And this both physically and psychologically, for the idea of the specific and abnormal nature of the prostitute did not translate only into physical traits, but also into intellectual and psychological qualities.[991] All of these were, of course, connected, with one type of characteristics functioning as signs of the others.

A good example of such a connection between different types of characteristics concerns the intellectual traits of the prostitute, which, I might add, presented quite an interesting dilemma. As we have seen, women were generally thought to be less intelligent than men, and the nineteenth century craniology provided the means to scientifically prove it: women had smaller cranium sizes.[992] Yet, as Miller observed, many sexologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also believed that hypersexuality was a trait linked to brain size. American surgeon and criminal anthropologist G. Frank Lydston, for instance, claimed that it was the "larger brain size [that] caused men's increased sex drive when compared to women." That led to the claim that "born prostitutes" were women with large cerebellar

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[988] GIBSON, Mary, "Labelling Women Deviant: Heterosexual Women, Prostitutes and Lesbians in Early Criminological Discourse", p. 91.

[989] STROHMBERG, Christian, *Die Prostitution … Eine socialmedicinische Studie*, p. 65, as cited in GILMAN, Sander L., "Male Stereotypes of Female Sexuality in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna", p. 56.

[990] GILMAN, Sander L., "Male Stereotypes of Female Sexuality in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna", p. 56.

[991] MILLER, Heather Lee, "Sexologists Examine Lesbians and Prostitutes in the United States, 1840-1940", p. 74.

[992] *Idem*, p. 76; STOTT, Rebecca, *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale: The Kiss of Death*, p. 24.

development, which, in turn, implied that they had more intellectual capacities than normal women and the same as men.[993]

That, in turn, connected the prostitute with the criminal, since this latter was, as Lisa Downing points out, stereotyped as male.[994] But the connection between these two figures went further, laying both in psychological and moral characteristics. It was in Lombroso's theory of the inborn criminal that the connection between physical, intellectual, psychological, and moral characteristics of the prostitute was made most obviously. As we have seen, in his view, the prostitute was both the ultimate female abnormal and criminal. As Downing explains, according to Lombroso, the inborn female criminal was endowed with masculine traits, being more like a man than a normal woman.[995] He then goes on by distinguishing men's and women's crimes. Whereas crimes committed by men were generally more physically violent and passionate, female crimes were more calculating and reasoned. They were, in fact, terribly premeditated.[996] Lombroso related this with women's innate deceptiveness and ease in lying, but the true is that it committed him to an idea of female genius, even if in the sense of genius for perversity, and thus with one of female intelligence. As he expressly admitted:

> Criminal women exhibit many levels of intelligence. Some are extremely intelligent, while others are ordinary in this respect. As a rule, however, their minds are alert; this is evidently why; relative to men, they commit few impulsive crimes. To kill in a bestial rage requires no more than the mind of a Hottentot; but to plot out a poisoning requires ability and sharpness.[997]

But the characteristics that allowed for those female type of crimes were not only of an intellectual nature. They also spoke of women's evilness: criminal women, Lombroso

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[993] MILLER, Heather Lee, "Sexologists Examine Lesbians and Prostitutes in the United States, 1840-1940", p. 76.
[994] DOWNING, Lisa, "Murder in the Feminine: Marie Lafarge and the Sexualization of the Nineteenth-Century Criminal Woman", p. 123.
[995] *Idem*, p. 135.
[996] *Idem*, p. 136.
[997] LOMBROSO, Cesare, and FERRERO, Guglielmo, *Criminal Woman, The Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, p. 189, as cited in DOWNING, Lisa, "Murder in the Feminine: Marie Lafarge and the Sexualization of the Nineteenth-Century Criminal Woman", p. 137.

argued, "were more terrible and monstruous that their male counterparts."[998] They were cruel, vindicative, and jealous.[999]

Here sexuality worked as a sign: criminal women were always sexually deviant.[1000] This is why prostitution was, according to Lombroso, "the most typical form of female crime".[1001] Putting together his claims concerning the primitiveness of abnormal and criminal women, Lombroso said that the "[p]rimitive woman was rarely a murderer, but she was always a prostitute."[1002] In comparing prostitutes to male criminals, he completed the characterization of the prostitute:

> the psychological and anatomical similarity of the male criminal and the born prostitute could not be more complete […] Male criminals and prostitutes exhibit the same lack of moral sense, hardness of heart, youthful appetite for evil and indifference to public opinion which lead the former to become a convict and the latter a fallen woman.[1003]

Such psychological and moral characteristics of the prostitute were, as already mentioned, supported by a plethora of physical anomalies: "smaller skulls and brains, larger and heavier jaws, receding foreheads, jutting brows, asymmetrical faces, prehensile feet, higher rates of obesity, denser pubic hair and larger (that is, masculine) vocal chords."[1004] As Mary Gibson says, "these physical anomalies were outward manifestations of an underlying condition of psychological abnormality, that of moral insanity."[1005] Such condition was characterized by the inability of distinguishing right from wrong despite of the maintenance of the ability to act rationally and even with intelligence. More specifically, James Cowles Prichard, the Bristol doctor who first introduced the concept in 1833, defined it as a "morbid perversion

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[998] GIBSON, Mary, "Labelling Women Deviant: Heterosexual Women, Prostitutes and Lesbians in Early Criminological Discourse", p. 89.
[999] *Idem*, p. 90.
[1000] *Ibidem*.
[1001] *Idem*, p. 93.
[1002] LOMBROSO, Cesare, and FERRERO, Guglielmo, *La Donna Delinquente La Prostituta e la Donna Normale*, p. 538, as cited in GIBSON, Mary, "Labelling Women Deviant: Heterosexual Women, Prostitutes and Lesbians in Early Criminological Discourse", p. 93.
[1003] LOMBROSO, Cesare, and FERRERO, Guglielmo, *La Donna Delinquente La Prostituta e la Donna Normale*, p. 571, as cited in in GIBSON, Mary, "Labelling Women Deviant: Heterosexual Women, Prostitutes and Lesbians in Early Criminological Discourse", p. 94.
[1004] GIBSON, Mary, "Labelling Women Deviant: Heterosexual Women, Prostitutes and Lesbians in Early Criminological Discourse", p. 94.
[1005] *Ibidem*.

of the natural feelings, affections, inclinations, temper, habits, moral dispositions, and natural impulses, without any remarkable disorder or defect of the intellect or knowing and reasoning faculties, and particularly without any insane illusion or hallucination."[1006] This was, in Lombroso's view, a defining characteristic of born prostitutes.[1007]

To prove his theory on the prostitute's moral insanity, Lombroso pointed out a set of behavioral patterns. The first was the lack of maternal feelings. He concluded such a feature from the low percentage of prostitutes with children, and even though he admitted that prostitution might discourage women from bearing children, he still claimed that only moral perversion could prevent a woman from pursuing the female natural purpose of motherhood.[1008]

It is important to note in this remark concerning motherhood the shadow of primitiveness hoovering once again over the characterization of the prostitute. After all, in Lombroso's view, evolution in women led them to channel all their energy, including sexual, into motherhood.[1009] Also relevant here is the opposition, already noted in relation to the sexological elaborations of female perversions, between motherhood and sexuality. Such opposition, in fact, reflects the same contradictions found in those elaborations. For instance, Lombroso simultaneously hold that prostitutes were sexually unconstrained and active and that there was among them a prevalence of frigidity.[1010] As Chiara Beccalossi observes, just as with many other logical problems in Lombroso's work, this contradiction was never addressed by him. But what is relevant to my point here is that such contradiction seems to be rooted in the same cause it was in sexological writings: both perversions were seen as opposed to motherhood, one because of the excess of sexuality and the other for encompassing a meaning of coldness of character which was deemed incompatible with

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[1006] PRICHARD, James Cowles, *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind*, p. 6, as cited in AUGSTEIN, Hannah Franziska, "J C Prichard's Concept of Moral Insanity – A Medical Theory of the Corruption of Human Nature", p. 312.
[1007] GIBSON, Mary, "Labelling Women Deviant: Heterosexual Women, Prostitutes and Lesbians in Early Criminological Discourse", p. 94.
[1008] *Idem*, p. 95.
[1009] *Idem*, p. 92.
[1010] LOMBROSO, Cesare, *L'uomo Delinquent in rapporto all'antropologia, Diurisprudenza ed alle Discipline Carcerarie. Delinquente Nato e Pazzo Morale*, p. 177, as cited in BECALOSSI, Chiara, *Female Sexual Inversion: Same-Sex Desires in Italian and British Sexology, c. 1870-1920*, p. 138.

motherhood. This idea seems to be supported by a number of sensitivity tests conducted by Lombroso, from which he concluded that prostitutes had a duller sensitivity than any other group of women.[1011] The sensitivity tests were of a physical nature: they tested touch, taste, smell, and even sensitivity in the clitoris. But, as Gibson explains, the theory behind it was that levels of physical sensitivity were directly connected with emotional, moral, and intellectual sensitivity.[1012] And that first type of sensitivity was precisely Lombroso's point when he referred to the lack of maternal feelings in prostitutes as a sign of moral insanity.

The second characteristic pointing to moral insanity in prostitutes was the extreme variation in intelligence, "ranging from those who were half idiots of halfwits to those who border brilliance".[1013] But, as Gibson says, according to Lombroso, "[e]ven the clever ones displayed an intelligence that was 'narrow and riddled with gaps'."[1014] Either way, their intelligence was invariantly connected with their evilness, for it was used to hide their depravity. A depravity manifest in their lack of modesty, greediness, laziness, vanity, gluttony, and love for alcohol.[1015] The attribution of such characteristics to prostitutes, however, was far from restricted to Lombroso. Alain Corbin, for instance, tells us how Parent-Duchâtelet saw the prostitute as rejecting work in favor of pleasure and how, according to him, that was expressed in her laziness and love for idleness.[1016] In addition to the exaggerated fondness for alcohol and excessive eating, Parent-Duchâtelet talks of the incessant chattering and frequent bursts of anger as other forms excess assumes in prostitutes. And he also referred to their lack of notion of saving money,[1017] their indulgence in useless expenditures, and their easily acquired passion for gambling.[1018] Either way, it was Lombroso

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[1011] BECALOSSI, Chiara, *Female Sexual Inversion: Same-Sex Desires in Italian and British Sexology, c. 1870-1920*, p. 138.
[1012] GIBSON, Mary, "On the Insensitivity of Women: Science and the Woman Question in Liberal Italy, 1890-1910", p. 11.
[1013] LOMBROSO, Cesare, and FERRERO, Guglielmo, *La Donna Delinquente La Prostituta e la Donna Normale*, p. 544, as cited in GIBSON, Mary, "Labelling Women Deviant: Heterosexual Women, Prostitutes and Lesbians in Early Criminological Discourse", p. 95.
[1014] LOMBROSO, Cesare, and FERRERO, Guglielmo, *La Donna Delinquente La Prostituta e la Donna Normale*, p. 546, as cited in GIBSON, Mary, "Labelling Women Deviant: Heterosexual Women, Prostitutes and Lesbians in Early Criminological Discourse", p. 95.
[1015] GIBSON, Mary, "Labelling Women Deviant: Heterosexual Women, Prostitutes and Lesbians in Early Criminological Discourse", p. 95.
[1016] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 7.
[1017] *Ibidem*.
[1018] *Ibidem*.

who took further this attribution of immorality or depravity to prostitutes by claiming their delight in subjecting their customers to theft and blackmail.[1019] The connection between all these characteristics attributed to the prostitute and moral insanity was laid down by Prichard himself when he placed "the propensity to make extravagant purchases", "garrulity", and "a state of excitement" among the salient features of moral insanity.[1020]

Although the positivist school of criminology led by Lombroso minimized the social and environmental influences on human behavior,[1021] not all views of the prostitute did so, not at least in the same measure.

William Acton, for instance, added to the natural desire and sinfulness of prostitutes, early neglect, evil training, bad associations, and an indecent mode of life as causes of prostitution.[1022] By doing so, he connected prostitution with lower-class females in a way that goes beyond poverty. As Gilman says, "[w]hile Acton sees the economic pattern of the nineteenth-century society as a catalyst in the creation of prostitution, he also sees the potential for prostitution as inherent in the lower-class female."[1023]

Acton was following Parent-Duchâtelet's steps on this, for, as Corbin tells us, Parent-Duchâtelet believed that "[a] girl sinks into 'public prostitution' only after a period of 'debauchery' following a disorderly life.'"[1024] It was the propensity toward libertinage and

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[1019] GIBSON, Mary, "Labelling Women Deviant: Heterosexual Women, Prostitutes and Lesbians in Early Criminological Discourse", p. 95.

[1020] PRICHARD, James Cowles, *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind*, p. 6, as cited in AUGSTEIN, Hannah Franziska, "J C Prichard's Concept of Moral Insanity – A Medical Theory of the Corruption of Human Nature", p. 312.

[1021] GIBSON, Mary, "On the Insensitivity of Women: Science and the Woman Question in Liberal Italy, 1890-1910", p. 13.

[1022] ACTON, William, Prostitution, Considered in Its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects, pp. 165-6, as cited in GILMAN, Sander L., "Male Stereotypes of Female Sexuality in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna", p. 44.

[1023] GILMAN, Sander L., "Male Stereotypes of Female Sexuality in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna", p. 44.

[1024] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 6.

laziness that led women into prostitution. Such propensity, in turn, was, in his view, a matter of family origin: "an ignoble origin",[1025] to witness "disorder in the home",[1026] led to vice.[1027]

Friedrich Hiigel follows the same formula. His 1865 public health study reflects the Viennese view of the causes of prostitution. Among them, it is worthy of note the "bad education of girls in general, but especially those from the lowest classes."[1028] As Gilman says, Hiigel believed that girls were "exposed to the 'immoral speech and acts' of their parents and of the ubiquitous boarders, whose presence in most lower-class homes was an economic necessity."[1029] In addition, in those homes, Hiigel claimed, the parents' seduction of children was also common: "[f]athers and daughters living together in concubinage; —fathers living off the ill-gotten gains of the daughters". Finally, the lower-class girl was also said to be physically weaker and more given to "coquetry, love of pleasure, dislike of work, desire for luxury and ostentation, love of ornament, alcoholism, avarice, immorality, etc." In a sense, then, it was "the poverty of the home that made the luxurious life of the prostitute attractive."[1030]

Lombroso concurs with this view, for, according to him, rather than lust it was greediness and indolence that led women to prostitution: what they want is "financial gain without the fatigue of honest work."[1031] But, as shown before, sexuality was far from being out of the picture in the association between the lower class and prostitution. The conditions in which the lower class lived were seen as a causal factor in its sexual debauchery. As Frank Mort

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[1025] PARENT-DUCHÂTELET, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste, *De la prostitution dans la Ville de Paris Considérée sous le Rapport de Phygiene Publique, de la Morale et de l'Administration, Vol. I*, p. 95, as cited in CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 6.
[1026] PARENT-DUCHÂTELET, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste, *De la prostitution dans la Ville de Paris Considérée sous le Rapport de Phygiene Publique, de la Morale et de l'Administration, Vol. I*, p. 94, as cited in CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 6.
[1027] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 6.
[1028] HIIGEL, Friedrich, *Zur Geschichte, Statistik und Regelung der Prostitution. Social-medicinische Studien in ihrer praktischen Behandlung und Anwendung auf Wien und andere Grosstadte*, pp. 205-217, as cited in GILMAN, Sander L., "Male Stereotypes of Female Sexuality in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna", p. 43.
[1029] *Ibidem*.
[1030] GILMAN, Sander L., "Male Stereotypes of Female Sexuality in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna", p. 43.
[1031] GIBSON, Mary, "Labelling Women Deviant: Heterosexual Women, Prostitutes and Lesbians in Early Criminological Discourse", p. 94.

points out, "[t[here were constant references to the effects of overcrowding and bad housing on sexual behavior throughout the official investigations":[1032]

> How they lay down to rest, how they sleep, how they can preserve common decency, how unutterable horrors are avoided, is beyond all conception […] It shocks every feeling of propriety to think that […] civilized beings should be herding together without a decent separation of age or sex.[1033]

The associations between these conditions, sexual impropriety, and prostitution were, of course, quite common:

> In Hull […] I found in one room a prostitute, with whom I remonstrated on the course of her life […] she stated that she had lodged with a married sister, and slept in the same bed with her and her husband; that hence improper intercourse took place, and from that she became more and more depraved.[1034]

The attribution of all these psychological characteristics to the prostitute – whether thought of as part of an inborn condition or class/environmental one – can be condensed under a general rubric of immorality. As Mort explains, in the nineteenth century, immorality had a multiplicity of meanings, ranging from the lack of individual self-reliance to criminality and sexual impropriety.[1035]

3.5.3. The Diseased Abnormal

We have seen before how sexual abnormality was, in the age of sex science, couched in terms of pathology. We will now see how the sign of disease was one most fundamentally engraved in the representation of the prostitute. She was, in fact, essentially represented as "a distinctly

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[1032] MORT, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830*, p. 30.
[1033] GILLY, Canon of Durham, *Report into the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population,* p. 124, as cited in MORT, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 183*, p. 30.
[1034] WOOD, Ridall, *Report into the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population*, p. 125, as cited in MORT, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830*, p. 31.
[1035] MORT, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830*, p. 28.

pathological female type".[1036] As such, in the nineteenth century, she was basically a synonym for syphilis.

Syphilis appeared in Europe at the end of the fifteenth century.[1037] As Gilman has shown, from the very beginning syphilis was associated "with sexual excess and deviance."[1038] Until the eighteenth century, the image of the syphilitic was mainly masculine. It was not that women did not suffer from syphilis, of course, but that this disease was thought of as, first, affecting more men than women, and, second, that a distinction was "always drawn between the active and exemplary suffering of the male and the passive suffering of the female."[1039] It was not until the Enlightenment that the image of syphilitic shifted from male to female and that women started to be seen not as victims but as sources of the disease.[1040] The new female representation of syphilis would, then, connect and carry on with the old image of the woman as both seductive and physically corrupt.[1041] As such, "[b]y the eighteenth century, the corrupt female is associated with the signs of a specific disease, syphilis", and, most specifically, with the syphilitic prostitute.[1042] Such image, in turn, would permeate the "medical literature in the early nineteenth century". [1043] By that time, Gilman concludes, "vice" had become "disease", and "seduction" had transformed into "infection".[1044]

This, however, needs to be properly understood. For it was not that notions of vice or sin had, by then, been completely disconnected from the one of disease. Quite the contrary, in fact. Mort tells us of the "medico-moral concepts of health and disease"[1045] arising in the eighteenth century from the system of hygienics, which was directed at the improvement of

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[1036] *Idem*, p. 62.
[1037] There is some discussion on this. As David Newman observes, there is doubt on this matter due to the fact that "[u]p to the middle of the nineteenth century the three venereal affections – syphilis, soft chancre, and gonorrhea – were not clearly differentiated". (NEWMAN, David, "The History and Prevention of Venereal Disease", p. 88). It follows, thus, that syphilis might have been present in Europe throughout the Middle Ages. Either way, "it was not until the close of the fifteenth century that public attention was called to syphilis. In 1495 a terrible and widespread European epidemic prevailed. Neglected in its early stages, favoured by social disorder and European wars, it spread with great rapidity over a wide area." (*Idem*, p. 90.)
[1038] GILMAN, Sander L., "AIDS and Syphilis: The Iconography of Disease", p. 92.
[1039] *Idem*, p. 93.
[1040] *Idem*, p. 95.
[1041] *Ibidem*.
[1042] *Idem*, p. 96.
[1043] *Ibidem*.
[1044] *Idem*, p. 98.
[1045] MORT, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830*, p. 15.

specific institutional populations[1046] and applied in the first half of the nineteenth century at general population in the outbreak of cholera. Debauchery was immediately seen as a cause of the disease and education in a regime of morality was defended as an essential part of the solution.[1047] As Mort explains, "many early nineteenth-century intellectuals combined theoretical research with a commitment […] to evangelical religion".[1048] Physical degeneracy was seen as intrinsically connected with mental and moral deterioration and they were all framed in relation to questions of Christian morality.[1049]

Such framing can be seen, first, in terms of causation, since cholera was said by many doctors to be a providential intervention, a punishment for the transgression of God's law through immoral acts.[1050] But not only. Religion was also seen as part of the solution. James Phillips Kay, a senior physician from Manchester who had an important role in the coordination of the plans for state intervention,[1051] provides a great example of such connection. As he put it: "the purely physical condition of the people seemed to me to be incapable of permanent improvement without an increase of their intelligence and virtue […] through the influence of education and religion."[1052]

There was, thus, an interleaving of medicine and religion, which operated by means of a "fundamentally deistic conception of early nineteenth-century science".[1053] And it was such

[1046] *Idem*, p. 18. Mort refers specifically to prisoners, workhouse inmates and hospital patients. As he further explains, as early as the 1750s, doctors started to "draw attention to medical and sanitary hygiene as a means of reducing the rising prison mortality rates." In the 1770s and 1780s, a crisis of criminality and punishment led to an implementation of a "new penal regime that was simultaneously medical, hygienic and moral." (*Ibidem*.)

[1047] *Idem*, p. 13.

[1048] *Idem*, p. 15.

[1049] *Idem*, p. 16.

[1050] *Idem*, p. 24.

[1051] Kay was, for instance, the author of one of the three reports published in conjunction with the report produced in the context of the inquiry into the relationship between urban conditions and disease, launched by the Poor Law Commissioners in 1838. As Mary Spongberg explains, "[t]his was the first time doctors were employed formally by the government to gather factual information." That report inaugurated the preventive and environmental medicine, which represented "the rejection of 'curing' as the primary and paradigmatic medical task in favour prevention […] and was based on the conviction that many diseases had external, that is removable and controllable, causes." (SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", pp. 35-6.)

[1052] BLOOMFIELD, Barry, *The Autobiography of Sir James Kay- Shuttleworth,* p. 12, as cited in MORT, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830*, p. 17.

[1053] MORT, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830*, p. 25.

conception and such interleaving that were at the heart of the social reform movement – one that joined the state and the medical establishment – that emerged from the cholera outbreak. Sexuality stood at its very core. As Mort says, "given the constant interplay of moral and material factors within early social reform, sexual debauchery was understood both as a product of material squalor and a causal factor in the decline of the urban environment."[1054] It is not surprising, then, that prostitution would become one of the keystones of the social hygiene movement, with the prostitute personifying the "great social evil" of the time. She was at once synonym of physical, moral, and social disease. And here we come back to syphilis.

As Mary Spongberg puts it, the sexualized female body became, in the nineteenth-century medical discourse, the source of syphilis.[1055] And to the prostitute, as "the most visible emblem of illicit sexuality[, …] was attached the idea that venereal disease was qualitatively connected with immorality."[1056]

Several theories paved the way into this connection. For a start it is important to note that doctors could not find a specific cause for syphilis. It was said to be caused by an infection but what caused the infection was unknown. This, however, did not keep doctors from attributing it to promiscuous intercourse.[1057] In Britain, F.C. Skey is a great example. Skey published in 1840 *A Practical Treatise on the Venereal Disease* and was a very well positioned surgeon who chaired the 1867 Select Committee to Inquire into the Pathology and Treatment of the Venereal Disease. According to him, "the virus of syphilis did not necessarily develop as a contagious reaction passed on from an infected person."[1058] It was a type of allergic reaction to 'impure intercourse'.[1059]

To this it must be added the connection between venereal disease and women. Such connection was not new to the nineteenth century. In the Middle Ages, intercourse with a

[1054] *Idem*, p. 30.
[1055] SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 54.
[1056] *Idem*, p. 28.
[1057] *Idem*, p. 36.
[1058] *Idem*, p. 41.
[1059] *Idem*, p. 42.

woman during menstruation was often believed to be the cause of leprosy.[1060] Both leprosy and syphilis were also said to be related with certain humoral disorders in women. It was believed that women could transmit these diseases while remaining immune to them.[1061] Gonorrhea was the best example of this idea in the nineteenth century. It was the French venereologist Philippe Ricord who successfully proved that gonorrhea and syphilis were different diseases. Although from his work resulted much elucidation, he was unable to recognize the specific nature of gonorrhea, arguing that it resulted from a variety of irritants. Gonorrhea pus was, according to him, the chief irritant, but other secretions, such as menstrual, lochial, and puerperal could also cause it.[1062] With this idea, Ricord connected the disease to women, suggesting that they could cause men spontaneously to contract it, while remaining greatly unaffected by it.[1063] F.C. Skey suggested the same in relation to syphilis. According to him, venereal disease in general, and so also syphilis, could develop in men "without the presence of the disease in the female of any kind."[1064] Following Ricord, Skey suggested that also syphilis developed as a result of a variety of stimuli, among which were the female inflammatory secretions.[1065]

From the coupling of syphilis with immoral sexuality, on one side, and with women, on the other, we arrive at what was represented as an intrinsic link with prostitution. Acton, for instance, argued that women were only infectious while they were practicing prostitution, despite this being contrary to all contemporary knowledge about the infectiousness of syphilis and even to evidence he himself provided.[1066] Holmes Coote, an army surgeon and author of the work *A Report on Some of the More Important Points Connected with the Treatment of Syphilis* published in 1857, followed the same line of argument and substantiated it with the prostitutes' mode of life. According to him, syphilis was

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[1060] *Idem*, p. 20.
[1061] SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 20.
[1062] *Idem*, p. 39.
[1063] *Idem*, p. 40; WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, pp. 53-4.
[1064] SKEY, F. C., *A Practical Treatise on the Venereal Disease*, p. 9, as cited in SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 42.
[1065] SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 43.
[1066] *Idem*, p. 50.

"engendered by the mode of life to which prostitutes are exposed".[1067] He further illustrates this point by likening the prostitute´s body to a swamp from which poisonous miasma flowed:

> If [...] it can be shown that the poison acquires a positive virulence through the habits of excess in promiscuous intercourse by the woman, I see no difficulty in imagining that this is the source whence the poison may have originated in the beginning: that nature has established laws, the transgression of which is followed by vitiation of the natural secretions, poison capable of acting upon the human frame, in the same way as the decomposition of vegetable matter will produce the miasmata, the breathing of which will produce marsh fever.[1068]

As Spongberg explains, "[m]iasma was putrid matter believed to be given off by marshes, drains, sewers and cemeteries."[1069] On one side, the idea that miasma was responsible for many contagious diseases was very popular in the nineteenth century; on the other, the definition of the prostitute's body in terms of drains and sewers was quite an old one. Corbin correctly traces it back to the Church Fathers. As he explains, the idea is that the "prostitute enables the social body to excrete the excess of seminal fluid that causes her stench and rots her." As a result, she is assimilated to both the emunctories – which discharge humors, secretions, and excretions – and to drains or sewers.[1070] From this, the step into the attribution of syphilis to prostitutes was a very small one. In fact, under this light, we might now understand a claim such as Coote's: all the bodily discharges of the prostitute were poisonous. In his view, the more depraved the prostitute was, the more poisonous was the disease she inflicted."[1071]

[1067] COOTE, Holmes, *A Report upon some of the more important points connected with the Treatment of Syphilis*, p. 6, as cited in SPONGBERG, Mary, "Feminizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 53.
[1068] COOTE, Holmes, *A Report upon some of the more important points connected with the Treatment of Syphilis*, p. 7, as cited in SPONGBERG, Mary, "Feminizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 53.
[1069] SPONGBERG, Mary, "Feminizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 54.
[1070] CORBIN, Alain, "Commercial Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France: A System of Images and Regulations", p. 211.
[1071] SPONGBERG, Mary, "Feminizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 54.

But that was far from it. According to Corbin, the theory of congenital syphilis – that children may be born with syphilis if the mother has an infectious case during pregnancy –, which appeared around 1860, would charge the figure of the prostitute with new anxieties.[1072] Adding to it, the belief in hereditary syphilis was of essence. As Jill Harsin explains,

> Although physicians throughout the nineteenth century recognized the existence of congenital syphilis, they believed in the predominance of the nonexistent "hereditary" transmission, or of syphilis inherited from either or both parents, supposedly transmitted to the child at the very moment of conception.[1073]

But hereditary syphilis was not restricted to parents. Like other inherited conditions, it was thought to might skip generations and be inherited from ascendents other than the parents.[1074] What was at stake with congenital and hereditary syphilis was the genetic patrimony of the dominant classes. The syphilitic prostitute was seen as being able to put in motion a process of degeneration which threatened to annihilate the bourgeoise.[1075] All this was also, of course, a matter of race and degeneration.

Alfred Fournier, a former apprentice of Philippe Ricord, has clearly stated the relationship between syphilis and degeneracy:

> It emerges from recent research that syphilis can because of its hereditary consequences, debase and corrupt the species by producing inferior, decadent, dystrophic and deficient beings. Yes, deficient [...] or they can be mentally deficient, being, according to the degree of their intellectual debasement, retarded, simple-minded, unbalanced, insane, imbecilic or idiotic.[1076]

[1072] CORBIN, Alain, "Commercial Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France: A System of Images and Regulations", p. 212.
[1073] HARSIN, Jill, "Syphilis, Wives, and Physicians: Medical Ethics and the Family in Late Nineteenth-Century France", p. 78.
[1074] *Idem*, p. 80.
[1075] CORBIN, Alain, "Commercial Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France: A System of Images and Regulations", p. 212.
[1076] FOURNIER, Alfred, 1904, as cited in SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 160.

In a time where the belief in the decline of the British race determined the tone of the day, degeneration became a fundamental issue. This, of course, had a major impact on the representation of the prostitute in the last decades of the nineteenth century: now she did not just spread infection, she also bred degeneracy.[1077]

The prostitute was, thus, the ultimate embodiment of sexual danger. But this was not only because of degeneracy. For prostitutes were seen not only as physically responsible for the spread of disease, but also as morally so. They were a source of contagion also in the moral sense. The body at stake in this latter case is no longer the individual's physical one but rather the social. James Miller, professor of surgery at the University of Edinburgh, expressed this idea most clearly when he called prostitution "a festering sore" on "the body politic".[1078] The *Medical Times and Gazette* referred to it as 'social malady' and 'poisonous tree',[1079] and W.R. Greg, an important British journalist and social critic, described it as "the hideous gangrene of English Society."[1080]

There were multiple ways in which the prostitute infected society. For a start, prostitutes were "a constant temptation to middle class sons."[1081] A young man, "cannot pass along the street in the evening without meeting with, and being accosted by, women of the town at every step."[1082] "His path is beset on the right hand and on the left, so that he is at every step exposed to temptation from boyhood to mature age, his life is one continued struggle against it."[1083]

[1077] SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 174.

[1078] MILLER, James, *Prostitution Considered in Relation to Its Causes and Cure*, p. 5, as cited in SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 45.

[1079] "Prostitution", in *Medical Times and Gazette*, p. 90, as cited in SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", pp. 45-6.

[1080] GREG, W.R., "Prostitution", p. 475, as cited in SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 45.

[1081] WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, p. 34.

[1082] BEVAN, William, *Prostitution in the Borough of Liverpool*, p. 5, as cited in WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, p. 34.

[1083] TAIT, William, *Magdalenism: An Enquiry into the Extent, Causes and Consequences of Prostitution in Edinburgh*, p. 176, as cited in WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, p. 34.

Then, they were a public spectacle of vice. Many were the complaints about "the physical and visual aggressiveness of the 'painted creatures' with their 'gaudy dress,' aggressive gaze, and provoking deportment."[1084] From the "elegantly attired streetwalkers who perambulated around the fashionable districts, to the impoverished women […] committing 'acts of indecency' in the ill-lit back alleys and courts of the city's slums", [1085] prostitutes were a public symbol of female vice. In what concerns the "healthy neighborhoods", "prostitution constituted a distressing street disorder that threatened to infect" them.[1086] In them, prostitutes "elbow[ed …] wives and daughters in the parks and promenades and *rendez-vous* of fashion."[1087]

But the public character of prostitutes was not the only source of the social pollution that emanated from them. In a sense, more problematic was their secrecy. One of the greatest sources of danger was the clandestine prostitutes' work as servants in respectable middle-class homes, which they infiltrated and contaminated with immorality.[1088] It was precisely this that worried Parent-Duchâtelet. As Corbin tells us, what haunted him was not public prostitution but rather the temporary character of the prostitute's "career": they "come back into Society […] they surround us […] they gain access to our homes."[1089]

So, the prostitute was a source of contagion both in a physical and moral sense, a danger to both individuals and society. That, of course, needed to be explained. And this is where congenital and hereditary syphilis comes in again, this time substantiating the idea of the prostitute as a type of person with specific and abnormal characteristics. At the end of the nineteenth century, the prostitute came to be represented not only as source of degeneration but also as a degenerate herself and so innately diseased and different from other women.[1090]

[1084] WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, p. 23.
[1085] *Idem*, p. 21.
[1086] WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, p. 41.
[1087] ACTON, William, *Prostitution*, p. 24, as cited in WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, p. 13.
[1088] WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, p. 34.
[1089] PARENT-DUCHÂTELET, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste, *De la Prostitution Dans la Ville De Paris Considérée sous le Rapport de Phygiene Publique, de la Morale et de l'Administration*, *Vol. I*, p. 14, as cited in CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 4.
[1090] SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 166.

We have seen before how the prostitute was attributed specific physical and psychological traits. And we have seen how that was part of a vision according to which she was a different type of person and an abnormal woman. We are now coming to understand the scientific theories that lied behind those views. Among them the relationship between syphilis and general paralysis of the insane was of essence.

As Elaine Showalter explains, general paralysis of the insane (GPI) was recognized as a disease in the 1820s, but only in the 1890s its connection with syphilis was established. GPI was in fact the terminal form of syphilis.[1091] "In the popular mind, the most salient symptom of general paralysis was 'the failure or perversion of moral sense.'"[1092] At this point we need to go back to the idea of moral insanity: the "morbid perversion of natural feelings, affections, inclinations, temper, habits, moral dispositions, and natural impulses, without any remarkable disorder or defect of the intellect, or knowing and reasoning faculties."[1093] As we might recall, Lombroso connected moral insanity and prostitution by saying that was a defining characteristic of born prostitutes.[1094] The relationship between syphilis and GPI was the perfect foundation for such a theory. It scientifically substantiated the inborn predisposition to immorality and prostitution.

Through syphilis, then, the prostitute became marked with the idea of hereditary defect, which affected both her constitution and her moral sense.[1095] This was the final step in the process of pathologization of the prostitute that occurred throughout the nineteenth century. The infectious model of disease that had dominated the representation of the prostitute earlier in the century was replaced with the idea of hereditary defect. The result was that the prostitute's difference from other women was no longer based on moral judgement or on the presence of disease but intrinsically connected with her very nature as a deformity.[1096] From

[1091] SHOWALTER, Elaine, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*, pp. 110-1.
[1092] *Idem*, p. 111.
[1093] PRICHARD, James Cowles, *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind*, p. 6, as cited in AUGSTEIN, Hannah Franziska, "J C Prichard's Concept of Moral Insanity – A Medical Theory of the Corruption of Human Nature", p. 312.
[1094] GIBSON, Mary, "Labelling Women Deviant: Heterosexual Women, Prostitutes and Lesbians in Early Criminological Discourse", p. 94.
[1095] SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 169.
[1096] *Ibidem*.

then onwards it would be "impossible to consider that a prostitute was in any way a 'normal' woman. Instead, she was viewed as a carrier of disease who bore all the signs of a mental, moral and physical degenerate."[1097]

3.5.4. The Opposition to the Wife/Mother

So, we finally get to the last characteristic of the abnormal, the one which is also my main point: its opposition to the normal, respectable wife and mother. Such opposition can be seen in multiple ways. Disease is a good starting point, for whereas the prostitute was seen as diseased and as a source of contagion both physically and socially, the respectable woman was perceived in terms of health in both domains. That, of course, was related to the very association of sexuality with disease in the nineteenth century. As Mort explains, at that moment, sexual immorality was defined through imagery and significations of disease, dirt, pollution, and corruption. And it was also defined in terms of political and cultural threat.[1098] This was because sexual morality and social health were strongly associated, particularly in England, due to its specific circumstances. One side of this association had, as already mentioned, to do with syphilis and degeneracy. The other was of a less physical nature. Lynda Nead tells us how the English equated sexual morality with social stability. For them, the French revolution stood as a paradigm:

> The moral depravity of the French aristocracy was identified as the primary cause of the 1789 Revolution and the subsequent disturbances of 1830 and 1848. To English analysts writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, it was the sexual and moral order of the middle-class family home which had immunized England against similar revolutions.[1099]

It is no wonder then that the pure, respectable, and asexual women were assigned a fundamental role in the maintenance of morality and thus of a healthy society. Edward Tilt,

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[1097] *Idem*, p. 181.
[1098] MORT, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830*, p. 31.
[1099] NEAD, Lynda, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*, pp. 92-3.

an important English physician who wrote a number of books on women's health and gynecology in the 1850s, expressed such relationship as follows:

> […] the great means of improving the human race must be sought in the improvement of the health of woman, for she is the matrix in which the human statue is cast. Improve her health of body, of mind, and of heart, and the human race would advance to perfection; deteriorate her, on the contrary, and in the same ratio does it degenerate […] In civilized nations matrons give the tone to society; for the rules of morality are placed under their safeguard. They can try delinquents at their own tribunal, expel the condemned from their circle, and thus maintain the virtue and the country of which it is the foundation; or they can, as in France in the eighteenth century, laugh down morality, throw incense to those who are most deserving of infamy, and, by the total subversion of all public virtue, lead to sixty years of revolution.[1100]

Secondly, the opposition between the prostitute and the wife/mother can also be seen in the fact that where the latter was perceived as the paradigm of femininity, the prostitute was represented as masculine, as less than a woman. William Acton expressed this idea quite clearly when to the question "What is the prostitute?" he replied "[s]he is a woman with half the woman gone, and that half containing all that elevates her nature, leaving her a mere instrument of impurity".[1101] There is a reason for such depiction. As Mort says, "Acton's work is usually represented as the high point of mid-Victorian distinctions between the asexual bourgeois lady and the sexually depraved working-class prostitute."[1102] Acton contrasted the basic instincts of motherhood, marriage, and domesticity in the normal woman to the unnatural sexual desire of the prostitute, the nymphomaniac, and the courtesan.[1103] And

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[1100] TILT, Edward, *Elements of Health*, pp. 13, 261, as cited in NEAD, Lynda, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*, p. 92.
[1101] ACTON, William, *Prostitution Considered in Its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects in London and Other Large Cities and Garrison Towns; with Proposals for the Mitigation and Prevention of Its Attendant Evils*, p. 166, as cited in NEAD, Lynda, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*, p. 101.
[1102] MORT, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830*, p. 61.
[1103] ACTON, William, *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs in Childhood, Youth, Adult Age and Advanced Life Considered in Their Physiological, Social and Moral Relations*, p. 183, as cited in MORT, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830*, p. 61.

he also added love or the lack thereof to the equation, defining the prostitute as the "woman who gives for money that which she ought to give only for love".[1104]

Thirdly, the wife/mother was the angel of the house, the prostitute was the devil of the streets. Whereas the former's proper sphere was the private domain, the sanctity of the house, the prostitute was the very definition of the public woman. And she was public in multiple senses: she did not keep to the house, she did not belong to a single man, and she mixed sex with money, thus sullying what was supposed to be a spiritual and private act.[1105]

The opposition between the normal and the abnormal woman – the respectable mother/wife and the prostitute – was at the core of the regulationist legal regime on prostitution that popped up around Europe in the nineteenth century.

For a start, such regime was premised in the idea of necessary evil. Parent-Duchâtelet, the most prestigious theoretician and apostle of the regulationist regime in France, where it first arose, put it as follows: "[p]rostitutes are as inevitable, where men live together in large concentrations, as drains and refuse dumps",[1106] "they contribute to the maintenance of social order and harmony",[1107] because without them "the man who has desires will pervert your daughters and servant girls […] he will sow discord in the home."[1108] The prostitute, thus, is necessary in order to protect the respectable woman – and her domain, the house – from men's lust.

But not only. The idea of a regime that circumscribed prostitutes to a part of the city and withdrew them from public visibility also had the protection of respectable women in mind.

[1104] ACTON, William, *Prostitution Considered in Its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects in London and Other Large Cities and Garrison Towns: with Proposals for the Mitigation and Prevention of Its Attendant Evils*, p. 166, as cited in NEAD, Lynda, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*, p. 101.
[1105] WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, p. 33.
[1106] PARENT-DUCHÂTELET, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste, *De la Prostitution Dans la Ville De Paris Considérée sous le Rapport de Phygiene Publique, de la Morale et de l'Administration*, *Vol. I*, p. 513, as cited in CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 4.
[1107] PARENT-DUCHÂTELET, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste, *De la Prostitution Dans la Ville De Paris Considérée sous le Rapport de Phygiene Publique, de la Morale et de l'Administration*, *Vol. I*, p. 512, as cited in CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 4.
[1108] PARENT-DUCHÂTELET, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste, *De la Prostitution Dans la Ville De Paris Considérée sous le Rapport de Phygiene Publique, de la Morale et de l'Administration*, *Vol. I*, p. 41, as cited in CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 4.

Arguments in its support referred to the importance of "protecting young girls' innocence and feminine modesty from the spectacle of the vice".[1109] This determined the design of the system. As Corbin says, in France, "the axis of the system was the *maison de tolérance* […] allowed to operate only in certain districts, […] making it possible to conceal the building itself from the sight of the female public".[1110] The removal from public and female eye, further determined the very structure of the house of prostitution: "[t]he house was to be enclosed; entry could be gained only through a dual-door system; the windows were to be of frosted glass and barred."[1111] And prostitutes themselves were as much as possible excluded from the public sphere: "[t]he girls would be allowed out only on rare occasions, and medic check-ups would take place in the house." [1112]

The opposition between the prostitute and the wife can also be seen in a facet of the regulationist regime which concerns the registration and physical examination of prostitutes. Here we come back to venereal disease and to syphilis in specific. As Jill Harsin explains in relation to France, the increasing concern with syphilis, with its condemnation of families to sickly, tainted progeny, led, in this period of *réglementation*, to the reaffirmation and extension of the registration and regular examination of prostitutes as a means of controlling the disease. The result was "the subjection of thousands of prostitutes to harsh and frequently arbitrary regulation, often with the justification that such cruel treatment of 'unworthy' women would save respectable wives from diseases that their husbands would otherwise have brought home to them."[1113] But it was not just that. The same opposition can be seen in how syphilis was dealt with by doctors in a very different manner depending on whether the woman affected was a prostitute or a wife. Harsin explains how the registration and treatment of prostitutes with syphilis constituted a breach in the confidentiality by doctors, which apart from being a long-standing medical custom and part of the Hippocratic Oath, was reinforced in France by Article 348 of the Penal Code. Whereas the confidentiality of the disease in

[1109] CORBIN, Alain, "Commercial Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France: A System of Images and Regulations", p. 209.
[1110] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 10.
[1111] *Ibidem*.
[1112] *Ibidem*.
[1113] HARSIN, Jill, "Syphilis, Wives, and Physicians: Medical Ethics and the Family in Late Nineteenth-Century France", p. 72.

cases where the victim was a wife was kept at all costs – including from herself –, the police system of registration and examination, abolished confidentiality for prostitutes.[1114]

Finally, the idea of rehabilitation. In Britain, for instance, the regulationist regime, of which Acton was a major supporter, involved the reform of prostitutes in lock hospitals, in which they "were subjected to a programme of physical and moral disciplining," informed by the "belief that 'fallen women' needed to relearn their femininity through moralizing domestic labour."[1115] The reform of prostitutes, therefore, consisted in teaching them values and skills that were proper to the respectable woman. As such, reform was about transforming them into respectable wives and mothers, in perfect angels of the house.

It is in the opposition between the wife and the prostitute, the good and the bad woman, I suggest, that the reason for the nineteenth century harsh reaction against prostitutes is to be found. Eric Trugdill tells us of the "active hatred and revulsion" the prostitute inspired, of how "she was treated as some kind of moral monster", and how she was the "victim of brutal ostracism and persecution". After all, as he observes,

> harshly punitive treatment of the prostitute was vital to the sanctity of the home. If the home was to be the place of peace and the found of civic virtues, it was essential both to banish fallen women from society lest they contaminate by example and temptation, and to make them bear the stigma of public obloquy.[1116]

All of that was ultimately related with sexuality: with the era's fear of sex and specifically female sex. As Bulwer Lytton put it in 1833, "[o]ur extreme regard for the chaste induces a contemptuous apathy to the unchaste."[1117] And, as Trudgill concludes, that was the reflex of the cult of female purity.[1118]

> For men anxious to worship women as angels, conscious of the importance of woman's role as wife and mother, conscious of her natural proclivity to virtue, by constitution,

[1114] *Idem*, pp. 80-1.
[1115] MORT, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830*, p. 63.
[1116] TRUDGILL, Eric, *Madonnas and Magdalens: The Origins and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes*, p. 104.
[1117] LYTTON, Bulwer, *England and the* English, p. 370, as cited in TRUDGILL, Eric, *Madonnas and Magdalens: The Origins and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes*, p. 105.
[1118] TRUDGILL, Eric, *Madonnas and Magdalens: The Origins and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes*, p. 105.

> education and social situation, feminine impurity was an immeasurably greater crime than masculine delinquency […] Their revulsion at fallen women was in proportion to their adoration of female purity.[1119]

3.6. Closing Remarks on Science

Linda Mahood argues that “prostitution, like other forms of sexual behavior, acquired a new meaning in the nineteenth century.”[1120] Such meaning can be related with Foucault’s insight concerning the role sex acquired at that age as “the explanation for everything”.[1121] Sex became the major principle of intelligibility of our subjectivity, our deepest truth. At the same time, sexuality was medicalized: it was analyzed and constructed through the categories of health and pathology.[1122] The result was the categorization of individuals by the science of sex: perverts became a type of person, or as Foucault says, “a personage […] with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology […] a single nature […] a species.”[1123] That was precisely the meaning the prostitute acquired at that moment: the pervert, the deviant, the abnormal.

As such, she was defined and understood in terms of difference in relation to the norm of femininity: “if the feminine ideal stood for normal, acceptable sexuality, then the prostitute represented deviant, dangerous and illicit sex.”[1124] More specifically, I suggest, if the ideal woman stood for intersubjective, heterosexual, reproductive, passive, penetrative, exclusive/monogamous, and marital sexuality, then the prostitute represented all sexuality that differed from such a standard. And if, as we have seen, sexuality is always intertwined with ideas of gender in a wider sense, then the prostitute also represented all that opposed domesticity, love, tenderness, selflessness, and morality, all which was seen as natural, normal, and proper to womanhood.

[1119] *Ibidem*.
[1120] MAHOOD, Linda, *The Magdalenes: Prostitution in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 6.
[1121] FOUCAULT, Michel, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, p. 78
[1122] *Idem*, p. 44
[1123] *Idem*, p. 43
[1124] NEAD, Lynda, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*, p. 95.

It is in this light that Mahood claims that the prostitute is a historical construction: "it works to define and categorize a particular group of women in terms of sex".[1125] What I would add is that it also works to define that group in terms of gender, for the prostitute came to be constructed as the female abnormal in terms that were wider than sex. In fact, the prostitute works to define gender and womanhood more generally, since the discourses that surrounded her became a crucial site for the construction and circulation of ideas about femininity.[1126]

The connection between sexuality and gender has been theorized by Judith Butler through the notion of heterosexual matrix. She defines it as the hegemonic discursive/epistemic model that assumes the natural coherence between sex, gender, and desire.[1127] Under this view, part of what is to be a man and a woman is to sexually desire the opposite sex/gender. "The internal coherence or unity of either gender, man or woman, thereby requires both a stable and oppositional heterosexuality."[1128] If that is so, then, "one is a woman, according to this framework, to the extent that one functions as one within the dominant heterosexual frame".[1129]

The examination of the history of the representation of womanhood that now reaches its conclusion both attests and disproves Butler's claim. It attests it in what concerns the connection between sexuality and gender and, of course, in that heterosexual desire and practice is intrinsically bound up with what it means to be a woman. It disproves it in that it shows that the connection between sexuality and gender cannot be reduced to heterosexual orientation toward the opposite sex/gender. What the history of the representation of womanhood shows is that the heterosexualization of desire needs to be understood beyond sexual orientation to incorporate the asymmetrical and oppositional characterization of male and female desire in what respects intensity, context, and practices. It also needs to be extended from sexuality strictly speaking into other domains. What I mean here is that the characterization of male and female desire is completely intertwined with male and female

[1125] *Idem*, p. 94.
[1126] *Idem*, p. 103.
[1127] BUTLER, Judith, *Gender Trouble*, p. 208.
[1128] *Idem*, pp. 29-30.
[1129] *Idem*, p. xi.

roles and the personality traits perceived as natural and normal in men and women, and so it cannot be properly understood unless in strict connection with those.

As I see it, it is in this wider sense that Butler's claim concerning the relation between what it means to be a woman and "the institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality"[1130] becomes particularly illuminating. Such broader sense not only affords a much better understanding of the content of the heterosexual norm, as it also allows a much more accurate and inclusive perception of the ones perceived as sexual deviant and abnormal type of persons. The prostitute is an excellent evidence of this. Under a more restrictive understanding of the notion of heterosexual matrix, the meaning the prostitute was endowed with in the nineteenth century patriarchal discourse as abnormal woman would remain completely invisible.

[1130] *Idem*, p. 31.

PART 3. THE ABJECT-OTHER

> Modernity through a process of othering has produced "the prostitute" as the other of the other: the other within the categorical other, "woman."[1131]

> […] the wretched population, exploited for production and cut off from life by a prohibition on contact is represented from the outside with disgust as the dregs of the people, populace and *gutter*. […] The word miserable […] has now become a synonym for abject: it has stopped hypocritically soliciting pity for cynically demanding aversion. This last word expresses an anger shattered by disgust and reduced to mute horror […]. It thus appears situated at the confluence of the multiple contradictory impulses required by the aimless existence of human refuse.[1132]

1. Opening Remarks

Let me remind you of the overall project of this work: to identify the common ideas, the overlapping points between abolitionist feminism and the patriarchal discourse on prostitution. More specifically, my focus is the representation of the prostitute. And what I am looking for is how both discourses position the prostitute in the spectrum of womanhood.

As I have previously elaborated on, in executing this project, I have adopted deconstruction as a methodology. More accurately, what I am undertaking is a deconstructive discourse analysis. Its first step consists in identifying the discursive hierarchical opposition, and it is

[1131] BELL, Shannon, *Reading, Writing, and Rewriting the Prostitute* Body, p. 2.
[1132] BATAILLE, Georges, "Abjection and Miserable Forms", pp. 9-10.

followed by a second stage in which the discourses under analysis are described and contrasted by a mapping of the opposing picture of the same object that each presents. Whereas the introduction dealt with the first step, Parts One and Two were aimed at the second. Part One described abolitionist feminism and Part Two laid out the patriarchal discourse on prostitution. It is now time for the third step of the methodology adopted: to identify the points where both discourses overlap. This is the aim of Part Three that now begins.

I will draw extensively on the Part Two. In fact, in what concerns the patriarchal discourse on prostitution, Part Three can be seen as a continuation of that previous one. And this is because, having ended with the idea of the prostitute as abnormal woman, Part Two finished a step too short of an important conclusion about the representation of the prostitute in patriarchal discourse, which will now take the center stage. I am referring to the meaning of the prostitute as abject-Other. A meaning which, as I hope I will be able to show, is equally present in abolitionist feminism. It is, therefore, around the idea of the prostitute as abject-Other that both discourses meet and overlap: that is what is common to both.

Part Three will attempt to prove this claim in three sections. The first is of a conceptual nature and is aimed at offering a definition of the notion of abject-Other. I start with an immersion into the idea of otherness and proceed by focusing on abjection. Despite being but one of the several characteristics of otherness, abjection will occupy me for most of that first section due, first, to its conceptual complexity, and second, to its centrality in the representation of the prostitute both in patriarchal discourse and abolitionist feminism. The second section will take us back to the nineteenth century where, following the conclusion about the prostitute's otherness in patriarchal discourse, I will look for the traces of her representation and exclusion as abject. Finally, the third section of this Part is devoted to the abolitionist feminist discourse. Here I will revisit the arguments described in Part One with the intent of uncovering the standard of sexuality in which I defend they are rooted. My claim is that abolitionist feminists uphold and further essentialize the "good woman" sexuality, thereby placing the "bad" consenting prostitute – the woman who claims to freely choose to engage in prostitution – in the abnormal and unintelligible side of the spectrum of womanhood: the side and place of the (female) Other. Having established the consenting prostitute's

otherness, I then finish with abjection, identifying its manifestations in abolitionist feminism's assumptions, arguments, selectivity, language, and, finally, in the indifference towards the consequences brought on prostitutes by the policies defended and fought for by abolitionists.

2. The Abject-Other

2.1. Otherness

The idea of "the Other" has been developed in different areas. For a start, that of language and meaning. Here the starting point is the idea of oppositions. Ferdinand Saussure has put it as follows: "[e]ach term present in the grammatical fact […] consists of the interplay of a number of oppositions within the system. When isolated, neither *Nacht* nor *Nächte* is anything: thus everything is opposition."[1133] Vivien Burr further explains it by saying that

> [a]ny category or concept can only ultimately be described by referring to yet other categories or concepts from which is different. […] The meaning of a sign resides not intrinsically in that sign itself, but in its relationships to other signs.[1134]

This means that our understanding of an object – which might, of course, be a concept with no physical reality – is dependent upon its difference in relation to what is not that object and, in what concerns binary oppositions, in relation to its oppositional object. To use some of the most obvious examples, it can be said that we cannot understand the idea of beauty without the one of ugliness, as we cannot understand the one of light without the one of darkness, or the one of fullness without that of emptiness.

So, meaning is *relational and differential*: it is established through difference in relation to something else. But that is not only it. Not at least in what concerns binary oppositions. A most important element in the relation between the two poles in a dichotomous opposition is

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[1133] SAUSSURE, Ferdinand de, *Course in General Linguistics*, p. 122.
[1134] BURR, Vivien, *Social Constructionism*, p. 60.

the fact that they are *mutually constitutive*. If the meaning of one is established through difference in relation to the other, they are mutually dependent. As already mentioned previously, it is to this characteristic that Jacques Derrida is referring to when he speaks of *différance*.[1135] And from *différance* follows the idea of *trace*, as the effect, the mark left in one concept by its opposite.[1136]

But there is yet a further and fundamental characteristic of the relation between the two poles of a dichotomous opposition: its *hierarchy*. Such relation in not neutral. The poles have different values, one being perceived as superior and the other as inferior (axiologically, logically, etc.).[1137] This leads us to the idea of *norm*: the upper side of the dichotomy embodies a norm, which becomes, at the same time, naturalized. In this regard, the opposition normal/abnormal could not be more telling, for the upper side in such dichotomy is precisely and most obviously the norm in both prescriptive and descriptive senses. It is important to note, however, that this is not the case merely for this specific dichotomy. Now, if the upper pole of the dichotomy corresponds to a norm, the lower pole is the space of that which does not conform with it: it is the space of the *Other*. As such, that lower pole – the Other – is defined in purely negative terms: it is that which is *not* what it *should be*, that which is *not* what *normally and naturally is*. It is defined, therefore, in terms of difference. A difference which is axiologically, logically, and ethically inferior.

These ideas have been applied to the relations of power between social groups, which has been a privileged loci for the elaboration and application of the notion of otherness. Here the basic idea is that some groups become marked as the Other, and my aim as I move forward is to give an account of what that entails.

Applying to social groups what has already been said about the Other as the opposite to the norm in a dichotomy, Zygmund Bauman provides us with a good starting point:

> In dichotomies crucial for the practice and the vision of social order the differentiating power hides as a rule behind one of the members of the opposition. The second member

[1135] BALKIN, Jack M., "Deconstructive Practice and Legal Theory", p. 752.
[1136] *Ibidem*.
[1137] SPIVAK, Gayatri Chakravorty, "Translator's Preface", pp. LXXVI-LXXVII.

> is but *the other* of the first, the opposite (degraded, suppressed, exiled) side of the first and its creation. Thus abnormality is the other of the norm, deviation the other of law-abiding, illness the other of health, barbarity the other of civilization, animal the other of the human, woman the other of man, stranger the other of the native, enemy the other of friend, 'them' the other of 'us', insanity the other of reason, foreigner the other of the state subject, lay public the other of the expert. Both sides depend on each other, but the dependence is not symmetrical. The second side depends on the first for its contrived and enforced isolation. The first depends on the second for its self-assertion.[1138]

So, a social group marked as the Other is defined in terms of difference in relation to those groups taken as norm or, more precisely, in relation to those groups' characteristics.[1139] I have already talked about the hierarchy between the two poles in a dichotomy and how the Other is assigned the inferior position. Such hierarchy is absolutely essential in terms of social groups for it is, in great measure, what relegates the groups marked as Other to a lower social status. But in what concerns groups, an important feature of that inferior position still unspoken of here is the attribution of characteristics that are themselves the inferior pole in important cultural dichotomies: mind/body, rationality/emotion, health/disease, culture/nature, civilized/savage, human/animal. As such, an important characteristic of the Other is her definition in terms of body, irrationality, emotionality, disease, nature, savagery, and animality.[1140]

This, however, is only the workings of the prescriptive side of the norm. The descriptive side is equally important in the meaning attached to the Other and the effects on those marked as such. When a group of people is culturally taken as the norm in its descriptive sense, those people are depicted as the natural and universal standard of humanity. This has different consequences in what concerns the meaning of otherness.

[1138] BAUMAN, Zygmunt, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p. 14.
[1139] YOUNG, Iris Marion, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, p. 169.
[1140] *Idem*, pp. 128-9.

For a start, the Other is defined in terms of lack: she is that in which what is natural to human beings is missing.[1141] And here we come back to the negative characteristics attributed to the Other, who is, therefore, represented as lacking rationality, body and emotional control, civilization, and even humanity.

Then, being defined as the Other to the norm in its descriptive sense also means to be represented as an exception, as that which when taken into consideration makes for a lack of neutrality. Iris Marion Young speaks of the ability of the groups taken as norm to assert their "perspective and experience as universal and neutral",[1142] but I would argue that there is something more to it. It is not only an epistemological matter; it is also an ontological one. It is those groups themselves – their characteristics, what is seen as their essence – that is asserted as universal and neutral.

This, of course, is not to deny the epistemological issue or its essential role in the establishment of this sort of "ontological universality". Behind the fact that the "ontology" of those groups is seen as universal there is, no doubt, a fundamental epistemological issue.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has coined the term "epistemic violence" to refer to the silencing of groups marked as the Other.[1143] Foucault, whom Spivak draws on, provides two important insights in this regard. The first concerns the exclusions produced by discourse in regarding subjects. As he explains, "not anyone has the right to speak of anything whatever." If a discourse is to be taken as true, only some have "the privileged or exclusive right of the speaking subject".[1144] The second, instead, refers to the relations of power which permeate discourse. Within a given society, not all discourses have the same value, are ranked equally, or have the same power over people. Some are subjugated – "disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" –,[1145] and others are accepted as true. Those which are accepted and function as true are so due to "systems of power which produce

[1141] *Idem*, p. 59.
[1142] *Idem*, p. 60.
[1143] SPIVAK, Gayatri Chakravorty, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", pp. 280-1.
[1144] FOUCAULT, Michel, "The Order of Discourse", p. 52.
[1145] FOUCAULT, Michel, "Two Lectures: Lecture One, 7 January 1976", p. 82.

and sustain" them and have "effects of power which induce and which extend" them.[1146] One of those power effects of discourses taken as true – hegemonic discourses – is precisely the silencing of powerless groups.

Edward Said provides us with a most paradigmatic example of this when speaking about *Orientalism* – a European discourse, a system of knowledge about the Orient, which produced it "politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period."[1147] He speaks of "Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian courtesan[, which] produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman." As he explains,

> she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. *He* spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him […] to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was "typically Oriental."[1148]

Said is here tackling several fundamental issues at once. Issues that are most intimately related. First, the connection between relations of power – or, more accurately in this regard, relations of domination –[1149] and hegemonic discourses. Second, the silencing of powerless groups in their own representation within those discourses. And finally – and this is where I wanted to get to – the connection between the speaking subject and the discourse's content or, more specifically, the representation of the silenced group within that discourse. This is the epistemological issue at stake in the representation of the Other as an exception to a universal human being: the representation of some groups as universal and others as exception is the direct result of the othered groups' silencing within hegemonic discourses.

[1146] FOUCAULT, Michel, "Truth and Power", p. 133.
[1147] SAID, Edward W., *Orientalism*, p. 3.
[1148] *Idem*, p. 6.
[1149] I am here following Michel Foucault in his distinction between relations of power and relations of domination. While he defines power as "a mode of action upon the actions of others", a form of "government of men by other men" (FOUCAULT, Michel, "The Subject and Power", p. 790), he characterizes domination as "a general structure of power whose ramifications and consequences can sometimes be found descending to the most recalcitrant fibers of society", a "situation more or less taken for granted and consolidated" (*Idem*, p. 795). On this view, then, "power is not to be taken to be a phenomenon of one individual's consolidated and homogeneous domination over others, or that of one group or class over others." (FOUCAULT, Michel, "Two Lectures: Lecture Two, 14 January 1976", p. 98.)

Were they not silenced, both the specific content of their representation and the place they occupy in relation to the norm would certainly be otherwise.

I have so far been talking of the meaning attached to the Other in virtue of the prescriptive and descriptive sides of the norm. There is, however, a fundamental issue that I would not be able to ascribe to either side separately, as it seems to me a feature which is completely intertwined with both. I am referring to the idea of abjection. In what follows I will elaborate on it.

2.2. Abjection

The exact meaning of the word might be a good starting point in the understanding of this notion. As Rina Ayra explains, the term "abject" has two different but related meanings. On one side, it refers to an operation – in fact, the word "'[a]bjection' comes from the Latin *abicere*, which means 'to throw away' or 'to cast off, away, or out'." On the other, abjection refers to a condition – degrading, wretched, low. It is thus both a verb – *to abject* – and an adjective – *to be abject*.[1150] And the two meanings are closely related: one *abjects* – repulses, repels – that which *is* abject – repulsive, revolting.

It is not possible to talk of abjection without mentioning Julia Kristeva. It was her who most notoriously developed the notion of abjection in the context of her psychoanalytic theory of identity formation.[1151] And even though I am here interested in the social aspect of abjection – abjection as a social process and as a condition of othered social groups –,[1152] Kristeva's theory cannot be overlooked given the important insights it provides.[1153]

The first concerns the very idea of constitutive Other. Identity, according to Kristeva, is formed by means of expulsion, ejection, repulsion, – abjection in the sense of operation – of

[1150] ARYA, Rina, *Abjection and Representation: An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature*, p. 3.
[1151] KRISTEVA, Julia, *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*.
[1152] Imogen Tyler speaks of the "conceptual paradigm of *social abjection*" and even though my conceptual framework does not coincide with his, I too see myself as working in that conceptual paradigm. (TYLER, Imogen, *Revolting Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain*, p. 3.)
[1153] In what follows, I have no intention of reconstructing Kristeva's theory in all its elements and complexity. My aim is simply to bring in aspects of that theory that I consider relevant to the notion of Other(ing).

that which is not-me.[1154] It is, therefore and first of all, a matter of differentiation in relation to the Other,[1155] who, in this sense, is constitutive of the self. It is a matter of establishment of a border between the I and the not-I. But there is more to it, for abjection is not at stake only in an initial moment of identity formation. It is present later in life every time a not-me comes too close to the border that defines the limits of the I. As Imogen Tyler says, "abjection is not a stage 'passed through' but a perpetual process that plays a central role within the project of subjectivity."[1156] So here we have it: the first insight provided by Kristeva's theory is abjection's connection with identity, with the definition of an I by means of the expulsion of a not-I. This applies to individuals, identities (stereotypes about people), and groups.

The second insight has to do with abjection's emotional elements.[1157] Elements which, as we shall see, connect the two senses of abjection. The most discussed is no doubt disgust. And there are good reasons for it, since not only is disgust a very important part of abjection as disgust's phenomenology shares several characteristics with the phenomenology of abjection, namely its elicitors and what I will refer to as functions.[1158] It is for this reason that I will start my analysis of abjection through the lenses of disgust.

2.2.1. Disgust

Disgust is an integral element of abjection, which includes a sense of aversion experienced by those confronted with an abject not-me. It is a sense that refers both to an unease, a displeasure at the presence and closeness of the abject, and to the rejecting, the moving away

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[1154] An important precision must be made. Kristeva locates abjection before the mirror stage, which following Jacques Lacan, Kristeva understands as formative of the I. Abjection is a previous stage, a necessary but not a sufficient means in that process of identity formation. (ARYA, Rina, "Abjection Interrogated: Uncovering the Relation Between Abjection and Disgust", pp. 49-50; ARYA, Rina, "The Many Faces of Abjection: A Review of Recent Literature", p. 406).

[1155] The Other, in terms of identity formation, does not have to be a person. In speaking of abjection in terms of identity formation, Kristeva actually refers to the mother's milk, whose expulsion becomes an initial phase of the differentiation of the baby in relation to the mother, whom for her is until that point part of herself. (KRISTEVA, Julia, *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, pp. 12-3)

[1156] TYLER, Imogen, "Against Abjection", p. 80.

[1157] As said before, I following Sara Ahmed in understanding emotions as involving both sensation of bodily feelings – of which emotions are interpretations – and forms of cognition. (AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 5.)

[1158] ARYA, Rina, "Abjection Interrogated: Uncovering the Relation Between Abjection and Disgust", p. 55.

from it. Such sensation monopolizes our senses and is expressed through bodily reactions. Recoil – the moving away from the source of disgust – is one of them. What Paul Rozin and his colleagues call the "disgust face" is another.[1159] It is characterized by the lowering of the jaw, the wrinkling of the nose, and the rising of the upper lip. And it is often accompanied by nausea.[1160]

But disgust is not only about gut feelings or bodily reactions. As neither is abjection. Sara Ahmed speaks of how disgust is mediated by ideas.[1161] And the same could not be truer of abjection.

Mary Douglas' anthropological study on dirt – which Kristeva draws on – is most illuminating in this regard. Douglas examined the concept of dirt/pollution in different cultural systems and practices and got to several important conclusions. The first concerns the cultural relativity of what is considered dirty. As she explains, "while our revulsion to what we regard as unclean may be universal, the objects of abomination vary".[1162] Nothing is inherently dirty or, to put it as Douglas does, "[t]here is no such thing as absolute dirt; it exists in the eye of the beholder."[1163]

In understanding this, Douglas' second conclusion is of essence: "dirt is essentially disorder."[1164] This might, at first sight, be difficult to concede. So, the best way forward might be to think of those things we are most convinced of being dirty and disgusting in themselves. Feces, urine, and mucus are probably some of them. "However, in their respective places in

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[1159] ROZIN, Paul, HAIDT, Jonathan, and MCCAULEY, Clark R., "Disgust", p. 759.
[1160] ARYA, Rina, "Abjection Interrogated: Uncovering the Relation Between Abjection and Disgust", pp. 55-6. Paul Rozin and April E. Fallon speak of four features of disgust: "a characteristic facial expression […], an appropriate action (distancing of the self from an offensive object), a distinctive physiological manifestation (nausea), and a characteristic feeling state (revulsion)." (ROZIN, Paul, and FALLON, April E., "A Perspective on Disgust", p. 23.)
[1161] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 83.
[1162] ARYA, Rina, *Abjection and Representation: An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature*, p. 45.
[1163] DOUGLAS, Mary, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, p. 2.
[1164] *Ibidem*.

the body – in the bowel, bladder, and in nasal passages they would not be thought of as being dirty."[1165] Douglas provides other examples:

> Shoes are not dirty in themselves, but it is dirty to place them on the dining-table; food is not dirty in itself, but it is dirty to leave cooking utensils in the bedroom, or food bespattered on clothing; similarly, bathroom equipment in the drawing room; clothing lying on chairs; out-door things in-doors; upstairs things downstairs; under-clothing appearing where over-clothing should be, and so on.[1166]

In this sense, then, in cleaning we are actually "positively re-ordering our environment, making it conform to an idea."[1167] We are attempting "to relate form to function".[1168] This takes us to the core issue at stake: the relation between dirt and systems of classification. "Where there is dirt there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter".[1169] We consider dirty that which does not fit a system of classification. And that is why dirt is relative: it depends on the system of classification in use, on the categories established in and by it.

This leads Douglas to yet another conclusion concerning ideas of dirt: its relationship with the notions of ambiguity and anomaly. [1170] Something ambiguous – which has more than one meaning or has an indeterminate form – or anomalous – an exception to a category – is that which does not fit into a particular system of classification, that which does not conform with the categories produced by such a system. That is why ambiguous and anomalous things are generally considered dirty. Douglas exemplifies the association of the idea of dirt with ambiguity and anomaly by means of her analysis of the classification of food that underpins dietary Jewish laws present in the book of Leviticus. What she finds is that the distinction between animals that are acceptable for consummation and those which are not lies in the

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[1165] ARYA, Rina, *Abjection and Representation: An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature*, p. 46.
[1166] DOUGLAS, Mary, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, p. 37.
[1167] *Idem*, p. 2.
[1168] *Ibidem*.
[1169] *Idem*, p. 36.
[1170] *Idem*, p. 5.

idea of dirt and this, in turn, is related to a system of classification of animals.[1171] As she puts it, then, "[t]he underlying principle of cleanness in animals is that they shall conform fully to their class."[1172]

Let us now take a small step back and be reminded of why we entered the discussion on dirt: I was talking of how both disgust and abjection do not involve only body sensations and reactions but are mediated by ideas. More specifically, those ideas are what make something "to be" abject, what makes something to cause or, to put differently, to be a source of abjection and disgust in the sense of body sensations and reactions. We then found our first answer: systems of classification. In this sense, both (1) disorder or, as Douglas also puts it, "matter out of place"[1173] and (2) ambiguity and anomaly in relation to the categories in a given system of classification are elicitors of disgust and abjection. And, in fact, the features of ambiguity and anomaly apply neatly to the abject, which, as Arya explains, "is often between two states and/or boundaries and cannot be neatly classified".[1174] Kristeva refers to it as the "in-between, the ambiguous, the composite."[1175]

We are now ready to advance to a second cause of disgust and abjection: *the body, animality, and sexuality*. These, of course, are three different elicitors of disgust and abjection. Yet, there are, I believe, good reasons to place them together under the same heading. As we shall see in a moment, the close relationship between them is one, whereas another is my overall purpose in analyzing abjection (and disgust): its connection with the marking of some social groups as Other.

[1171] More specifically, Douglas finds a three-fold classification related with the division of the world in earth, waters, and firmament. "In the firmament two-legged fowls fly with wings. In the water scaly fish swim with fins. On the earth four-legged animals hop, jump or walk." (*Idem*, p. 56.) Any type of animal whose locomotion is different from this scheme is considered unclean: four-footed creatures which fly; creatures which have two legs and two hands and go on all fours like a quadruped; creatures endowed with hands instead of front feet, and which perversely use their hands for walking; and, finally, animals which creep, crawl, or swarm. (*Idem*, pp. 56-7)

[1172] *Idem*, p. 56.

[1173] *Idem*, p. 36.

[1174] ARYA, Rina, *Abjection and Representation: An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature*, p. 46.

[1175] KRISTEVA, Julia, *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 4.

The connection between disgust and animality has been widely noted. On one side, an overwhelming quantity of objects that provoke disgust are of animal origine. As Rozin and Fallon say, [a]lmost all objects that qualify as disgusting […] are animals or parts of animals, animal body products, or objects that have had contact with any of the above or that resemble them."[1176] On the other, we tend be disgusted by things that remind us of our animal origins. Good examples are body waste products, such as feces, urine, and mucus. Jonathan Haidt and his collaborators have elaborated on this idea by suggesting that what is at stake in disgust is a more elementary and fundamental psychic need to avoid reminders of our animal condition.[1177]

With this latter link between disgust and animality we also found the connection between disgust and the body: our body is the strongest reminder of our animal condition. And the same relation with such condition – and thus with the body – is also what links disgust and sexuality. When questioning people about things that disgust them, Haidt and his colleagues found "frequent references to sexual matters, such as incest, homosexuality, bestiality, or almost any other deviation from the cultural ideal of 'normal' heterosexuality."[1178]

Sexuality leads us to a third elicitor of disgust: *morality*. It has already been mentioned how Christianity has given sexuality a central place in morality. And I believe it is safe to say that the connection between both is still very much in place in contemporary societies of this religious tradition. Sexuality, however, is not the only moral elicitor of disgust. Haidt, Clark McCauley, and Rozin have come to this conclusion after years of research on disgust. And so, while they initially dismissed "social-moral violations" as an independent cause of disgust,[1179] they later came to include them as one of the three types of disgust elicitors in

[1176] ROZIN, Paul, and FALLON, April E., "A Perspective on Disgust", p. 27.
[1177] HAIDT, Jonathan, MCCAULEY, Clark, and ROZIN, Paul, "Individual Differences in Sensitivity to Disgust: A Scale Sampling Seven Domains of Disgust Elicitors", p. 712; HAIDT, Jonathan, ROZIN, Paul, MCCAULEY, Clark, and IMADA, Sumio, "Body, Psyche, and Culture: The Relationship between Disgust and Morality", p. 112.
[1178] *Ibidem*.
[1179] HAIDT, Jonathan, MCCAULEY, Clark, and ROZIN, Paul, "Individual Differences in Sensitivity to Disgust: A Scale Sampling Seven Domains of Disgust Elicitors", p. 703.

their classificatory system, for having concluded that such violations include items other than sexuality.[1180]

Indeed, as William Miller has noted, it is extremely difficult, "in normal conversation, to give voice to moral judgments without having recourse to the idiom of disgust or reference to the concept of the disgusting."[1181] Yet, as he also concluded, disgust is not merely a language, a mode of expression, or a metaphorical device – even if, at times, it certainly works as such.[1182] As Aurel Kolnai has put it, disgust is an "an important part of our ethical sensibility."[1183] And, as Mary Douglas claimed, pollution ideas are an expression of the moral code of a society, encapsulating moral values and social rules.[1184]

Yet, as Douglas also notes,[1185] not all forms of moral offense trigger disgust. It seems to me that the ones that do are those which also relate to one of the causes of disgust mentioned before. Sexuality is probably the best example: it is connected both with the body and animality. But there are other cases. Kristeva, for instance, talks of "[t]he traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a savior. […] premeditated crime, cunning murder, hypocritical revenge".[1186] This is the type of acts that belong to "[t]he in-between, the ambiguous, the composite."[1187] In the same vein, Miller talks of hypocrisy and betrayal. And he has a quite telling image to describe our feelings in relation to acts classified as such. According to him, they "disgust because we understand them to mimic the forms of the loathsome in the material world. They slither, insinuate, and exude slime and grease."[1188] They thus transverse categories, mix them.

The relation between disgust and morality, however, goes beyond the objects that elicit disgust. It goes into the *functions* of disgust. In this sense, it is not only that certain moral

[1180] HAIDT, Jonathan, ROZIN, Paul, MCCAULEY, Clark, and IMADA, Sumio, "Body, Psyche, and Culture: The Relationship between Disgust and Morality", p. 703.
[1181] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 180.
[1182] *Idem*, p. 183.
[1183] SMITH, Barry and KORSMEYER, Carolyn, "Visceral Values: Aurel Kolnai on Disgust", p. 22.
[1184] DOUGLAS, Mary, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, p. 3.
[1185] *Idem*, p. 130.
[1186] KRISTEVA, Julia, *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 9.
[1187] *Ibidem*.
[1188] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 186.

violations trigger disgust; it is also that disgust has, as Miller calls it, a "*moralizing capacity*": "[w]e perceive what disgusts and tend to imbue it with defective moral status for that reason alone."[1189] Sara Ahmed notes how we then proceed by assuming that moral status – that "badness" as she refers to it – as inherent to the object we find disgusting.[1190] This is related to an important function of disgust: its *performativity*. As Ahmed, drawing on Judith Butler, explains, "performativity relates to the way in which a signifier, rather than simply naming something that already exists, works to generate that which it apparently names."[1191]

This moves us from the realm of objects of disgust as things or acts to the one of people. The double directionality of disgust – and thus abjection – is of an utmost importance in what concerns the othering of social groups. As Miller argues, disgust is an emotion of status demarcation: it assigns to a lower status those against whom it is directed, and, as a result, plays an important role on *social hierarchization*. [1192] It "rank[s] us and order[s] us in hierarchies".[1193] And here, once again, the double directionality of disgust applies, for the low is also what disgusts in the "first" place.[1194] Douglas talks about how ideas of dirt are both instrumental and expressive.[1195] Not only are they an important tool in social hierarchization, as they also already mirror "designs of hierarchy or symmetry which apply in the larger social system"[1196] Here, once more, the performativity of disgust is crucial. And again, Ahmed explains it most clearly:

> On the one hand, the performative is futural; it generates effects in the constitution or materialisation of that which is 'not yet'. On the other hand, performativity depends upon the sedimentation of the past; it reiterates what has already been said, and its power and authority depend upon how it recalls that which has already been brought into existence. This model of performativity relates to my argument about the

[1189] *Idem*, p. 180.
[1190] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 82.
[1191] *Idem*, p. 92.
[1192] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 205
[1193] *Idem*, p. 202.
[1194] *Idem*, p. 237.
[1195] DOUGLAS, Mary, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, p. 3.
[1196] *Idem*, p. 4.

> temporality of disgust: it both 'lags behind' the object from which it recoils, and generates the object in the very event of recoiling.[1197]

Moralization, hierarchization, and performativity, however, are not the only functions of disgust. Another, and a quite important one in what concerns the notion of the Other, is the *association of the disgusting object with danger*. This association is twofold. On the one hand, it is because the object is dangerous to a particular system, because it does not fit its categories and hence it threatens it that it becomes disgusting. This is the insight Douglas has brought us with her reflection on ideas about dirt. According to her, "our pollution behavior is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications."[1198] Kristeva has brought this idea to the notion of the abject: "We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it – on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger".[1199] As Elizabeth Gross further explains, the abject is that which is always there, hovering "at the border of the subject's identity, threatening apparent unities and stabilities with disruption and possible dissolution."[1200] Danger is, thus, intrinsic to abjection's very definition.

On the other hand, othered groups – the ones against whom disgust is directed and who disgust both recognizes and assigns to the lower ranks of social hierarchy – come to be associated with danger. Douglas tells us of how one of the techniques a culture has for dealing with ambiguous or anomalous objects is to label them as dangerous.[1201] In what concerns othered social groups, such a labelling might take on different concrete forms. Yet the attribution of negative characteristics is definitely a first necessary step: "The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly; look, a nigger, it's cold, the nigger is shivering, the nigger is shivering because he is cold […]"[1202] The second is, as Ahmed notes, the constitution of the Other as a threat to life, which might also take on

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[1197] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, pp. 92-3.
[1198] DOUGLAS, Mary, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, p. 37.
[1199] KRISTEVA, Julia, *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 9.
[1200] GROSS, Elizabeth, "The Body of Signification", p. 87.
[1201] DOUGLAS, Mary, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, p. 40.
[1202] FANON, Franz, *Black Skin White Masks*, p. 86.

different forms: a threat to me, to “us”, “to what is”, “live as we know it”, or even “life itself”.[1203]

The strongest link between the above forms of assigning danger to the abject-Other is *animality*. As Deborah Lupton points out, “[p]ortraying certain social groups as more animal than others has served to represented them as the dangerous Other because of their supposed lack of humanity.”[1204] Zygmund Bauman has identified this mechanism at work in the representation of Jews by Nazis:

> Defining the Other as vermin harnesses the deeply entrenched fears, revulsion and disgust in the service of extermination. But also, and more seminally, it places the Other at an enormous mental distance at which moral rights are no longer visible. Having been stripped of humanity and redefined as vermin, the Other is no more an object of moral evaluation.[1205]

But that is only a first stage or a more general and diffuse one in a process that often takes on more concrete shapes. Criminality is one of them. The “myth of black criminality”, as Paul Gilroy calls it, is an excellent example. Its long history attests to the special ideological importance of images of crime. As Gilroy says, “images of particular crimes and criminal classes have frequently borne symbolic meanings and even signified powerful threats to the social order.”[1206]

Another means by which disgust and danger come to be associated is *disease*. As Douglas points out, since the nineteenth century, with the discovery of the bacterial transmission of disease, our ideas of dirt became dominated by our knowledge of pathogenic organisms.[1207] As a result, nowadays it is very difficult to think about dirt or that which disgusts us without rationalizing it in terms of our fear of disease and contamination.[1208] David Sibley has

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[1203] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 64.
[1204] LUPTON, Deborah, *Risk*, p. 175.
[1205] BAUMAN, Zygmunt, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, p. 48.
[1206] GILROY, Paul, “The Myth of Black Criminality”, p. 47.
[1207] DOUGLAS, Mary, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, p. 36.
[1208] ARYA, Rina, *Abjection and Representation: An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature*, p. 46.

provided several examples of the association between othered groups and disease. As he explains, disease "is a mark of imperfection and carries the threat of contagion."[1209]

So strong is the idea of threat and contagion embedded in the meaning of disease that it has often been used metaphorically to describe – or, more accurately, constitute – the Other. When that is the case, disease is often used in reference to the social body. Another manner of associating certain groups with disease is to talk of them in terms of particular animals – those also associated with dirt, illness, and contamination. Rats, pigs, and cockroaches are probably the best examples. As Sibley points out, these animals "are associated with residues – food waste, human waste" and with sewers,[1210] the proper place of such residues. In fact, the association of "dirty Others" with sewers has been a constant feature in their social representation. Sibley offers the example of the portrayal of Jews as rats in "racist propaganda such as anti-Semitic films produced by Nazis",[1211] and Peter Stallybrass and Allon White observe the same in relation to the representation of the Irish minority in nineteenth century England. As they say,

> Once the metaphoric relations were established, they could be reversed. If the Irish were like animals, animals were like the Irish. One of the sewer workers […] described the sewers (which Irish labourers had helped to build) as full of rats 'fighting and squeaking … like a parcel (!) of drunken Irishmen'.[1212]

The possibility of reversal is witness to the symbolic chain linking animality, the body (its lower parts and residues), disease, and dirt, and to how such web of meanings is condensed into specific objects – subjects, Others – which trigger disgust and abjection.

But the metaphoric use of disease is hardly exclusive.[1213] Disease has been used in a much more literal way within the othering process. On one side, certain groups are attributed the origin of certain diseases in virtue of their condition as Others and, of course, due to the

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[1209] SIBLEY, David, *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West*, p. 24.
[1210] *Idem*, p. 28.
[1211] *Ibidem*.
[1212] WRIGHT, Lawrence, *Decent and Clean*, p. 155, as cited in STALLYBRASS, Peter, and WHITE, Allon, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, p. 133.
[1213] It was Susan Sontag who first and most famously used the idea of metaphor in relation to disease in her *Illness as Metaphor*.

characteristics attributed to them as a result and cause of that condition.[1214] On the other, disease brings with it a stigma that attaches to the groups associated with it.[1215] The idea of filth, contamination, and danger, as well as the corresponding emotions of fear and disgust are a crucial part of it.

Several authors have noted how "western culture uses disease to define social boundaries."[1216] Sander Gilman tells us how gout, for instance, was seen, in the eighteenth century, as an illness of the overprivileged and how, tuberculosis, instead, was associated with the lower classes, despite "the evident fact that all people seemed to be equally susceptible to tuberculosis." Another social connection made with tuberculosis was the Jews. As Gilman explains, in the nineteenth century, Jews were thought to be immune to this disease because of their "constant exposure to the disease during '2000 years in the ghetto'" and were, as a result, seen as its natural carriers.[1217] Another kind of connection between disease and social groups is of geographical character. Cholera and AIDS are rather good examples in this regard. "Cholera was seen as an 'Asian' disease penetrating Europe and the USA. […] whatever the real point of origin, its association with 'Asia' (or 'India') meant that it came from a more primitive part of the world and attacked 'civilization'."[1218] In what concerns AIDS, it was, in its beginning, seen as a black African or Haitian disease in the United States,[1219] whereas in France and other European countries was, instead, perceived as an American disease.[1220]

But AIDS is a particularly charged disease, with connections with multiple Others. In it, assumptions concerning geography, race, gender, and, above all, sexuality come together, constituting it as a particularly stigmatized disease.[1221] This has to do, of course, with the fact

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[1214] It is in this sense that Gilman talks of the social construction of disease according to "specific ideological needs and structured along the categories of representation accepted within that ideology." (GILMAN, Sander L., *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS*, p. 2.)
[1215] LUPTON, Deborah, *Medicine as Culture: Illness, Disease and the Body in Western Societies*, p. 7.
[1216] *Idem*, p. 21. See also BRANDT, Allan M., "AIDS and Metaphor: Toward the Social Meaning of Epidemic Disease".
[1217] GILMAN, Sander L., "Disease and Stigma", p. SIV15.
[1218] *Ibidem*.
[1219] SIBLEY, David, *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West*, p. 25; GILMAN, Sander L., Disease and Representation, p. 263.
[1220] GILMAN, Sander L., *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS*, p. 263.
[1221] *Idem*, pp. 263-6.

that it is a sexually transmitted disease, which, as Gilman claims, also makes it a "morally repugnant disease"[1222] due to the association of this type of diseases with sexual deviance.[1223] This, in turn, renders AIDS and sexual transmitted diseases more generally a privileged locus of disgust and abjection. So much is this so that it has been suggested that "AIDS represents the historical enactment of abjection in the late twentieth century."[1224] This is not surprising. Anomaly/ambiguity, animality/body/sexuality, and morality: all the boxes are filled in. As a result, the workings – I have been calling it *functions* – of disgust and abjection are all too visible in relation to those diagnosed with AIDS. So far, I have mentioned four of those functions: moralization, hierarchization, performativity, and association with danger. It is now time to make important additions to this list and AIDS can be of great help in this regard.

Let us start with *blame*. Allan Brandt talks of the victim-blaming that occurs with AIDS patients.[1225] More specifically, he talks of the "process of dividing victims into blameless and blameful", [1226] into innocent and guilty,[1227] and which he observes not only in AIDS but also in syphilis.[1228] Blame, of course, is connected with morality: we are to blame when we did something we should not have done, when thus we have violated a moral norm. In what concerns AIDS, what "guilty patients" are blamed for is having violated a norm of sexual conduct: the heterosexual norm, with all it implies. And such blame is expressed through the idea – often implicit but all too obvious – that the disease and the suffering it carries is a (well deserved) punishment for that violation.[1229] Gilman has noted that same idea of punishment for sexual transgression in the iconography of both syphilis and AIDS.[1230] Blame in this context, however, goes beyond the individual sphere: "guilty" AIDS patients are not only

[1222] *Idem*, p. 258.
[1223] The strength of that association is such that a diagnosis of AIDS in the 1980s immediately brought with it the suspicious of homosexuality, even though sexual orientation was in no way related with other categories of people also labeled as being at risk for AIDS, such as hemophiliacs, heroin addicts, and Haitians. (*Idem*, p. 247.)
[1224] ZIVI, Karen, "Constituting the 'Clean and Proper' Body: Convergences between Abjection and AIDS", p. 36.
[1225] BRANDT, Allan M., "AIDS and Metaphor: Toward the Social Meaning of Epidemic Disease", p. 429.
[1226] *Ibidem*.
[1227] *Idem*, p. 422.
[1228] *Idem*, pp. 429-30.
[1229] BRANDT, Allan M., *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in The United States Since 1880*, p. 5.
[1230] GILMAN, Sander L., *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS*, pp. 248-62.

blamed for becoming diseased themselves; they are blamed in a wider sense for the spread of the disease.

Both types of blame, of course, are already related to the representation of the blamable groups: a representation that already depicts them as "dirty" or, as Judith Butler puts it, as "bearers of death".[1231] The cause of such representation, in turn, is related to the group's very identity. The fear of such identity or, more specifically, the fear of the particular motif around which such identity is organized gets completely mixed with the fears of the disease itself. That is what Brandt has pointed out in relation to AIDS and homosexuality:

> Underlying the fears of transmission were deeper concerns about homosexuality. Just as "innocent syphilis" in the first decades of the twentieth century was thought to bring the "respectable middle-class" in contact with a deviant, ethnic, working-class "sexual underworld," now AIDS threatened the heterosexual culture with homosexual contamination. In this context, homosexuality – not a virus – causes AIDS. Therefore homosexuality itself is feared as if it were a communicable, lethal disease.[1232]

In this sense, then, what blame is directed at is not (only) the spread of the disease itself but the identity which is associated with the disease. William Miller stitches all this together in what he calls the "economy of disgust": one which is both emotional and moral, or more accurately, normative. According to him, disgust asks

> the offender [of the norm] for too much, often for entire transformations of character, and even for physical transformations such as skin color, gender, body type, age, and state of health, things for which […] we cannot justifiably be blamed since they are not meaningfully matters of choice. […]; it cares about what you are as well as what you do; it cares about what you don't do and what you can't do.[1233]

What lies behind this kind of "wholesome blame" is, of course, the moral norms "the offender" violates with her very existence. Ahmed flawlessly captures this idea when she

[1231] BUTLER, Judith, "Sexual Inversions", p. 346.
[1232] BRANDT, Allan M., "AIDS and Metaphor: Toward the Social Meaning of Epidemic Disease", p. 429.
[1233] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 198.

says that "[t]hese various others come to embody the failure of the norm to take form".[1234] Miller complements this picture with two important insights concerning norms and disgust. The first concerns the distinction between accepting norms and "being in their grip", the difference consisting in the sentiments which a violation of the norm triggers: whereas the breach of a norm we accept causes guilt, the infringement of a norm we are in the grip of elicits disgust instead.[1235] The second insight follows from this one: disgust is an expression of our belief in the norm. As Miller says,

> [e]ven if we are only using the diction of disgust as a fashion of talking, that is, independent of the feeling, we are still stating most emphatically the belief that the norms being referenced by our expression of disgust should be the sort that hold us in their grip.[1236]

But it is somehow even more than that: disgust "carries with it the notion of its own indisputability". It "expects concurrence", it "argues for […] the sheer obviousness of the claim."[1237] When we express disgust we speak a language, a sentiment, which we expect our audience to concur: we expect it to be quite indisputable.[1238]

This leads us to two other functions of disgust: *the reenactment of social norms* on one side, and the *creation of community* on the other. They are, quite clearly, intertwined. Regarding the latter, Miller talks of the "powerful communalizing capacities" of disgust. As he puts it, disgust "is especially useful and necessary as a builder of moral and social community."[1239] It brings people together around the same indisputable norms. In doing so, however, it creates a distance from the ones that do not conform with it. And so, "[i]t performs this function obviously by helping define and locate the boundary separating our group from their group, purity from pollution, the violable from the inviolable."[1240]

[1234] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 78.
[1235] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 201.
[1236] *Idem*, p. 194.
[1237] *Ibidem*.
[1238] *Ibidem*.
[1239] *Idem*, pp. 194-5.
[1240] *Ibidem*.

In such separation, the *incompatibility of disgust with empathy* is of essence. Miller talks of it in terms of pity. "To be pitiable", he says, "is a sign that one has escaped the realm of the disgusting".[1241] Disgust "works to prevent concern, care, pity, and love."[1242] It is an "impenetrable barrier".[1243] Judith Butler's notion of "bodies that do *not* matter" seems right on target here. Disgust's (and abjection's) incompatibility with empathy creates a realm of bodies that fail "to qualify as fully human", that do *not* "count as 'life,' [as] lives worth protecting, lives worth saving, lives worth grieving".[1244]

In fact, the notion of bodies that do not matter seems to bring together the three functions of disgust and abjection last mentioned: the reenactment of norms, the constitution of a community, and the deactivation of empathy. As I see it, then, the social constitution of "bodies that do not matter" is the result of the joint workings of those functions. Butler provides an excellent elaboration of the articulation of those functions. Her starting point is the heterosexual norm. There are people who incorporate and embody that norm and there are people who do not. The ones that do not are, as a result, repudiated, relegated to the realm of the abject. That is a "founding repudiation", one that constitutes the inside, and which, in turn, makes those abject beings a "constitutive outside".[1245] Now, the norm, in addition, functions as an epistemological frame, which allows to qualify the lives of those who conform – but not of those who do not – as lives (that matter). As such, the norm delimits the sphere of apprehension and appearance of "the lives of others as lost or injured".[1246] And so, only the life and injury of those who conform appear and are apprehended as lost or injured. Only those are, as Butler puts it, grievable. It is in this sense that, as she claims, grievability becomes "a presupposition of the life that matters."[1247] The final step in this reasoning is a return to norms, for in failing to embody them and, consequently, in failing to qualify as fully human, those abject beings fortify the very regulatory norms that produce them.[1248]

[1241] *Idem*, p. 244.
[1242] *Idem*, p. 251.
[1243] *Idem*, p. 242.
[1244] BUTLER, Judith, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, p. 16.
[1245] *Idem*, p. 3.
[1246] BUTLER, Judith, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*, p. 1.
[1247] *Idem*, p. 14.
[1248] BUTLER, Judith, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, p. 16.

2.2.2. Abjection, Disgust, and Hate

Let us now come back to disgust and abjection. I have so far been speaking of both interchangeably. There is, I believe, good reasons for that. The main one, I would claim, is the fact that the conceptual grid that mediates the emotion of disgust is the same that applies to abjection. As a result, the objects and functions of disgust can equality be said to be abjection's. Yet, disgust and abjection do not completely coincide. Not at least in what concerns my main object of analysis here, the one that led me to the analysis of abjection: the Other. And, as I see it, the reflection on empathy in the context of disgust makes the inexistence of a complete overlap between disgust and abjection very clear.

Iris Marion Young speaks of the systematic violence suffered by othered groups. As she says, members of those "groups live with the knowledge that they must fear random, unprovoked attacks on their persons or property, which have no motive but to damage, humiliate, or destroy the person."[1249] Lack of empathy does not explain this. It explains our indifference to it, our inability to be sufficiently disturbed by it, and also our lack of grief for the injuries and the lives lost. But it does not explain violence itself. It is not lack of empathy that motivates the violence suffered by those othered – even if it certainly is a necessary first step. And the same can be said of disgust.

Our reaction to a disgusting object is one of recoil and distancing, not one of destruction. It is, as Aurel Kolnai, argues, a passive one, "a sort of 'flight' […] from the object´s […] perceptual neighborhood and from possible contact, and most of all [from] a possible intimate contact and union with it."[1250] Violence is a completely opposite kind of reaction to this. As Kolnai goes on by saying, "the person seized with disgust does not […] in any direct and emphatic sense seek to destroy (diminish, weaken, humiliate, reduce, etc.) the object of his aversion."[1251] The one who does is that taken by rage and hate instead. As Kolnai once again explains:

[1249] YOUNG, Iris Marion, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, p. 61.
[1250] KOLNAI, Aurel, "The Standard Modes of Aversion: Fear, Disgust and Hatred", p. 100.
[1251] *Ibidem*.

> Prototypically, the 'movement' proper to hatred is directed to the destruction of its object; or at least to an impact on the object stopping short of destruction but aligned with it and consonant to its spirit or symbolic of destruction in one essential respect (humiliation, insult, expulsion, etc.).[1252]

Siding with Kolnai on this particular point, I depart from William Miller's analysis of disgust on the social sphere. According to the latter, "[d]isgust can lead to disproportionate responses; it often seeks removal, even eradication of the disgusting source of threat."[1253] As a result, it is incompatible with "a policy of live and let live".[1254] As said before, this is not coherent with disgust, but Miller definitely seems to be on to something here, as what he is referring to no doubt corresponds to the day-to-day experience of social Others.

Zygmund Bauman talks of two major forms by which societies deal with Others (strangers in his terminology): assimilation and exclusion. Borrowing Levi-Strauss' concepts, he names them *anthropophagic* and *anthropoemic*, respectively. The first consists in making the different similar by "smothering [… the] cultural or linguistic distinctions, forbidding all traditions and loyalties except those meant to feed the conformity of the new and all embracing order, promoting and enforcing one and only one measure of conformity."[1255] It is, therefore, a kind of *devouring*, and in this it is rather different from the second form, which, as the word suggests,[1256] consists of a kind of *vomiting* instead. Vomiting, of course, immediately takes us to disgust. Bauman includes in this second "strategy", as he calls it, what in my view are three quite different forms of management of others: 1) expulsion "beyond the frontiers of the managed and manageable territory"; 2) confinement "within the visible walls of the ghettos or behind the invisible", and 3) physical destruction.[1257]

Miller seems to me as doing the same as Bauman when applying disgust to the social sphere: an overinclusion not supported by the metaphor of vomiting. Vomiting, as disgust, is about expelling and distancing, not destruction, which instead implies a movement towards the

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[1252] *Idem*, p. 104.
[1253] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 251.
[1254] *Ibidem*.
[1255] BAUMAN, Zygmunt, "Making and Unmaking of Strangers", p. 2.
[1256] "[…] from the Greek *emein*, to vomit". (LEVI-STRAUSS, Claude, *Tristes Tropiques*, p. 386).
[1257] BAUMAN, Zygmunt, "Making and Unmaking of Strangers", p. 2.

object. We do not want to destroy the disgusting object; we want to get as far as possible from it. It is hate that "wants *to get its hands on* the other; it wants to touch even when it wants to destroy".[1258]

This is what makes me think of abjection as a much better suited notion to the social sphere and the process of othering than disgust. Disgust is an emotion, abjection is not. Abjection is a condition, on one side, and an activity, a process, on the other. Abjection involves disgust no doubt: the abject-Other elicits disgust. I am not disputing this. In fact, Miller points out what it seems to me a brilliant example of disgust in this sense. It concerns smell. As he notes, "Christians, whites, the upper classes, and men have all complained through the centuries, often obsessively, about the smells of Jews, nonwhites, workers, and women."[1259] And this is not only an accusation of the higher classes towards the lower ones. "The low come to believe it of themselves or, if they cannot quite smell it, they suspect others can."[1260] Disgust, however, is not the only emotion the abject-Other prompts. The bridge between abjection as a condition and abjection as a process is also built by emotions other than disgust.

As hinted above, hate is one of them, and quite an important one. I have already mentioned a fundamental difference between disgust and hate: whereas disgust is passive and distance demanding, hate is active and oriented at destruction. This leads to different but complementing consequences in what concerns the experience of abject-Others: while disgust leads to lack of empathy, hate leads to violence – even if lack of empathy seems to play an important and necessary role in any violent encounter.

There are, however, important features shared by hate disgust. Features that, I believe, justify the inclusion of these emotions in the notion of abjection.

Sara Ahmed notes how the rhetoric of hate is often one involving the *idea of threat*. The hated Other is discursively constructed as a threat, a source of danger. As she puts it, "[s]uch narratives work by generating a subject that is endangered by imagined others whose proximity threatens not only to take something away from the subject (jobs, security, wealth),

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[1258] BORCH-JACOBSEN, Mikkel, *The Emotional Tie: Psychoanalysis, Mimesis, and Affect*, p. 10, as cited in AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 51.
[1259] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 245.
[1260] *Idem*, p. 246.

but to take the place of the subject."[1261] In this sense, hate becomes a defense, and a reversal takes place: the one who hates takes the position of victim and the one who is hated is positioned as aggressor.[1262] To sum it up, then, the idea of the Other as a threat is the first common feature between hate and disgust.

The second feature common to both disgust and hate concerns *community constitution*. This time Ahmed takes us through another kind of reversal she observes operating in hate. The one who does and says hateful things claims that what motivates her is not hate but love: love for someone/something that is threatened by the Other.[1263] Ahmed illustrates this reversal with a quote from the Aryan Nation's Website:

> The depths of Love are rooted and very deep in a real White Nationalist's soul and spirit, no form of 'hate' could even begin to compare. At least not a hate motivated by ungrounded reasoning. It is not hate that makes the average White man look upon a mixed racial couple with a scowl on his face and loathing in his hear [sic]. It is not hate that makes the White housewife throw down the daily newspaper in repulsion and anger after reading of yet another child-molester or rapist sentenced by corrupt courts to a couple short years in prison or on parole. It is not hate that makes the White workingman curse about the latest boatload of aliens dumped on our shores to be given job preference over the White citizens who built this land. It is not hate that brings rage into the heart of a White Christian farmer when he reads of billions loaned or given away as 'aid' to foreigners when he can't get the smallest break from an unmerciful government to save his failing farm. No, it is not hate. It is Love.[1264]

What follows is that it is love that explains the "shared 'communal' visceral response of hate": "*[b]ecause we love, we hate, and this is what brings us together*."[1265] As Ahmed then concludes, "[h]ate is involved in the very negotiation of boundaries between selves and others, and between communities, where 'others' are brought into the sphere of my or our

[1261] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 43.
[1262] *Ibidem*.
[1263] *Idem*, pp. 42-3.
[1264] The Aryan Nations' Website, as cited in AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 42.
[1265] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 43.

existence as a threat." This is not to say that hate is integral to any demarcation between the us and the not-us. Yet some demarcations do indeed come into existence through hate.[1266]

There is a third commonality between hate and disgust that seems quite relevant in what concerns abjection. I am referring to *hierarchy* in both its moral and social sense. As disgust in general, hate also implies dislike, and, as moral disgust in specific, it also implies condemnation and moral reprobation.[1267] Both emotions, therefore, involve what Kolnai calls a "qualitative depreciation"[1268]: the one who feels disgust and hate considers herself morally superior and the one who she hates and is disgusted at as morally inferior.

In what concerns disgust, Miller has noted how the low do not seem to elicit disgust when they respect social hierarchy, even if at close distance. He gives the example of the black woman who nurses the white child and cooks the food for the white family. In this role, one of most intimate contact, she does not seem to "smell".[1269] And this despite disgust being a spatial emotion,[1270] arising with proximity and dispelling with distance. As I interpret Miller, he concludes that what is stake here is space in a social sense: in spite of the physical proximity, in her role as a servant, the black woman is keeping her distance in social terms. She is in her proper place in what concerns social hierarchy, which then is not threatened in any way.

This idea, I suggest, can also be applied to hate. My reasoning draws on three different insights provided by Ahmed, Miller, and Kolnai. Ahmed tells us of the relation of hate with group membership. According to her,

> [h]ate may respond to the particular, but it tends to so by aligning the particular with the general; 'I hate you because you are this or that', where the 'this' or 'that' evokes a group that the individual comes to *stand for* or *stand in for*.[1271]

[1266] *Idem*, p. 51.
[1267] KOLNAI, Aurel, "The Standard Modes of Aversion: Fear, Disgust and Hatred", pp. 104, 105.
[1268] *Idem*, p. 105.
[1269] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 248.
[1270] KOLNAI, Aurel, "The Standard Modes of Aversion: Fear, Disgust and Hatred", p. 100.
[1271] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 49.

Kolnai, on his side, refers to a sense of inconformity present in hate. As he sees it, hate "impinges not only on the object as such but on its existential status in the world and thereby on the world itself". The hater, he says "is a claimant […] for participation in the shaping of the universe."[1272] And, finally, Miller discusses the relation of hate and disgust with (in)equality. In his view, disgust "creates and is witness to a claim of moral (and social) inequality, while hatred tends to embody the resentment of an unwelcome admission of equality."[1273] My suggestion slightly reworks Miller's: it is not that hate admits an unwelcome equality, but that hate is a reaction against the other's claim (whether real or imagined) to her equality or of my inequality. Under this view, then, hate concerns group membership and social hierarchy, arising out of one's inconformity with a certain state of affairs or with an intent to change it.

A final coincidence between disgust and hate: they both *relate to fear*. The connection of both with fear lies in the idea of threat, already discussed in relation to each. Fear is always related to some sort of threat. As Kolnai says, one fears that which one believes threatens our survival, integrity, body, safety, welfare, possessions, status, or any other of one's vital interest.[1274] The idea of "belief" is of essence: what we fear and believe it threatens us needs not constitute a real threat.[1275] In fact, in what concerns social relations and crime in particular, Jason Ditton and Stephen Farrall tell us that "those least in danger are the most afraid".[1276] And so, as Ahmed concludes, "fear is not simply a consequence of the 'objectivity' of threats and dangers."[1277]

Yet, if this is a characteristic of fear applicable in any situation, the combination of fear with other emotions renders it distinctive features. A most relevant one concerns the object. If "fear as such is not intrinsically interested in its object[, … in its],nature, its value or disvalue, [nor in] its features and qualities", but "only in the threat it embodies", that is not the case

[1272] KOLNAI, Aurel, "The Standard Modes of Aversion: Fear, Disgust and Hatred", p. 107.
[1273] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 35.
[1274] KOLNAI, Aurel, "The Standard Modes of Aversion: Fear, Disgust and Hatred", p. 97
[1275] *Idem*, p. 98.
[1276] DITTON, Jason, and FARRAL, Stephen, *The Fear of Crime*, p. xvi, as cited in AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 68.
[1277] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 68.

when fear is associated with disgust and hate.[1278] When experienced together with these emotions, fear relates to the "object for its own sake".[1279] Another distinctive feature of fear when experienced in connection with disgust and hate concerns its subjection to rational control. Kolnai argues that fear "is highly susceptible of being unfastened from its object by convincing argument and cognitive discovery", whereas that is definitely not the case of fear experience in the context of disgust and hate.[1280]

The kind of fear present in abjection is thus a specific one: not fear by itself, but the type of fear that is intermeshed with disgust and hate. There is, however, another emotion that, even though has been described as a mixture of fear and disgust, is an autonomous emotion, distinct from the two that compose it, and which plays an important role in abjection. I am talking about horror.

2.2.3. Horror

Miller has characterized horror as a "fear-imbued disgust". "[U]nlike fear, which presents a viable strategy (run!), horror denies flight has an option." And horror is also unlike disgust, which has distancing and evasiveness as strategies. In fact, what characterizes horror is precisely the fact that it denies "all strategy, all option."[1281] There is also another important characteristic to it: its intensity. As Miller puts it, "[d]isgust admits of ranges of intensity from relatively mild to major." Horror, however, "makes no sense except as an intense experience. Mild horror is no longer horror."[1282]

In what regards that which elicits horror, Adriana Cavarero speaks of the human condition and, more specifically, "the ontological dignity of the human figure".[1283] To illustrate her view, she contrasts horror with terror. While terror is caused by a threat to life or even a threat of violent death,[1284] what is at stake in horror is not life but the human symbolic unit. Death,

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1278 KOLNAI, Aurel, "The Standard Modes of Aversion: Fear, Disgust and Hatred", p. 98.
1279 *Idem*, p. 100.
1280 *Idem*, p. 99.
1281 MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 26.
1282 *Idem*, p. 27.
1283 My translation. CAVARERO, Adriana, *Horrorismo: Nombrando la Violencia Contemporánea*, p. 25.
1284 *Idem*, p. 20.

she says, does not offend human dignity. "[N]ot at least, while the dead body keeps its symbolic unit, that human appearance".[1285] As she sees it, then, horror

> has to do with the instinctive repulsion for a violence, which, not satisfied in killing, as that would be far from enough, aims at destroying the unity of the body and entrails in its constitutive vulnerability. What is at stake is not the end of a human life, but the end of the human condition itself as incarnated in the singularity of vulnerable bodies.[1286]

Noël Carroll has developed what he calls a "cognitive/evaluative theory" of horror at the center of which he places the figure of the monster. According to him, emotions are characterized by "some physical abnormal state of felt agitation[, which is] caused by the subject's cognitive construal and evaluation of his/her situation."[1287] In the case of horror, what causes it is the belief and evaluation of that which elicits horror as "physically (and perhaps morally and socially) threatening [and] impure".[1288] The monster, then, is that which one believes to be dangerous and impure.

Hopefully, this seems all too familiar to us by now. And, in fact, Carroll draws on Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger* to elaborate on the figure of the monster as a "violation of standing cultural categories".[1289] More precisely, monsters are, in Carroll´s view, violations of the "culture's conceptual scheme of nature."[1290] It is no wonder then that these "un-natural creatures" have "fantastic biologies", which are often the result of a *fusion*: a "compounding of ordinarily disjoint or conflicting categories in an integral, spatio-temporally unified individual."[1291] When this is the case, the monster is "a composite figure, conflating distinct types of beings."[1292] But the monster's biology can also embody a *fission*. When that is so, two contradictory categories occupy the same body in different times or in different spaces.[1293]

[1285] My translation. *Idem*, p. 24.
[1286] My translation. *Idem*, p. 25.
[1287] CARROLL, Noël, *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, p. 27.
[1288] *Ibidem*.
[1289] *Idem*, p. 200.
[1290] *Idem*, p. 34.
[1291] *Idem*, p. 44.
[1292] *Idem*, p. 45.
[1293] *Idem*, pp. 45-6.

Monsters' violation of categories, however, is not restricted to biology. As Carroll says, "the salient opposition of different elements at the categorical level of biology might be thought of as prefiguring a series of further thematic oppositions."[1294] As such, monsters come to embody deep-seated cultural oppositions: "sensual versus staid, nondirective activity versus contentious, female versus male"[1295] are some of them.

Speaking from within history and cultural studies, Jeffrey Cohen follows up on this idea with two important insights. The first concerns the relation of monsters with the culture in which they arise. The monster, he says, is an embodiment of an intricate matrix of cultural and social relations.[1296] As such, it "signifies other than itself".[1297] The second, instead, regards difference: "the monster is difference made flesh". [1298] As he explains,

> In its function as dialectical Other or third-term supplement, the monster is an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond – of all those loci that are rhetorically placed as distant and distinct but originate Within. Any kind of alterity can be inscribed across (constructed through) the monstrous body, but for the most part monstrous difference tends to be cultural, political, racial, economic, sexual.[1299]

The monster is then the Other and, as such, it is that which is and must be abjected: "[t]he monster is the abjected fragment that enables the formation of all kinds of identities – personal, national, cultural, economic, sexual, psychological, universal, particular".[1300]

In fact, the monster is a perfect example of the last of abjection's characteristics I would like to put forward: its ambiguity. The monster, as an abject-Other, is not only cause to horror, disgust, and hate. It is also an undeniable source of curiosity, interest, and fascination. It both repulses and attracts.

[1294] *Idem*, p. 48.
[1295] *Ibidem*.
[1296] COHEN, Jeffrey Jerome, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", p. 5.
[1297] *Idem*, p. 4.
[1298] *Idem*, p. 7.
[1299] *Ibidem*.
[1300] *Idem*, p. 19.

2.2.4. Attraction

There are different explanations for the attraction which the monster, the abject-Other, elicits. Carroll and Cohen provide what seems to me two very interesting ones.

Carroll relates it with the epistemological and cognitive challenge monsters pose. Being a violation of a culture's conceptual scheme of nature, monsters are "impossible beings",[1301] and as impossible beings – beings "outside the bounds of knowledge" –[1302], they are "natural subjects for curiosity".[1303] As Carroll puts it, "[t]hey arise interest and attention by being putatively inexplicable or highly unusual vis-à-vis our standing cultural categories, thereby instilling a desire to learn and to know about them."[1304] Such learning, in turn, generates gratification and pleasure.[1305]

Cohen goes further. In his view, the monster "is continually linked to forbidden practices",[1306] evoking "potent escapist fantasies"[1307]. As Cohen further explains, "the linking of monstrosity with the forbidden makes the monster all the more appealing as temporary egress from constrain."[1308] Through his body, "fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion are allowed safe expression in a clearly delimited and permanently liminal space."[1309] According to Cohen, then, monsters perform the function of "secondary bodies through which the possibilities of other genders, other sexual practices, and other social customs can be explored."[1310] And that is why they attract, fascinate, and elicit desire.

Sander Gilman provides us with a good – and very sad – example of this kind of attraction and fascination that the abject-Other produces. It regards the exhibition of black people in zoological gardens, parks, and parties in nineteenth century Europe, to which fascinated

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[1301] CARROLL, Noël, *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, p. 182.
[1302] *Idem*, p. 183-4.
[1303] *Idem*, p. 182.
[1304] *Ibidem*.
[1305] *Idem*, p. 181.
[1306] COHEN, Jeffrey Jerome, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", p. 16.
[1307] *Idem*, p. 17.
[1308] *Ibidem*.
[1309] *Ibidem*.
[1310] *Idem*, p 18.

crowds assisted to.[1311] Marylin Scott described a "long carriage procession of seventy African men, women and children, almost the entire population of an Ashanti village," in 1896, all the way through the city of Vienna till its Zoo, which hundreds of curious spectators watched in astonishment.[1312] Another well-known case is Sara Baartman's. She was a twenty-five Hottentot woman exhibited in Europe to show her "protruding buttocks".[1313] After her death, she was dissected and "her brain, skeleton and sexual organs remained on display in a Paris museum until 1974."[1314]

2.2.5. Closing Remarks on Abjection

Abjection is a very dense notion and, in a very significant sense, a circular one as well. This is why a brief summary and systematization of the concept might be useful at this concluding point of its examination.

Abjection is both a condition and a process. As a condition, it refers to the quality of wretchedness and lowness, degradation, and repulsiveness with which the Other is perceived as being endowed with. As a process, it concerns the casting off, the repelling, the expulsion of those in the condition of abject-Other. Abjection is thus completely intertwined with the notion of the Other. In both its senses, abjection is an ineludible presence in the lives of those socially othered. It is unsurprising then the connection between abjection and the formation of identity: the casting off of a non-I is the first step in the process of constitution of the I.

What unites abjection as a condition of othered groups and abjection as a process are the emotions that lead us from one to the other in a continuous and bidirectional movement. I have mentioned disgust, hate, (non-immediate/non-isolated) fear, horror, and attraction. Abjection has been claimed to be "the newest mutation in the theory of disgust."[1315] I disagree. Even though abjection shares many of disgust's characteristics, abjection is much

[1311] GILMAN, Sander L., "Black Sexuality and Modern Consciousness", pp. 111-2; GILMAN, Sander L., "The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality", p. 89.
[1312] SCOTT, Marilyn, "A Zoo Story: Peter Altenber's *Ashantee* (1987)", p. 48.
[1313] GILMAN, Sander L., "The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality", p. 86.
[1314] PARKINSON, Justin, "The Significance of Sarah Baartman".
[1315] MENNINGHAUS, Winfried, *Disgust: Theory and History of a Strong Sensation*, p. 365.

wider than disgust. Not only is abjection not an emotion, as it incorporates emotions other than disgust. Emotions that lead to consequences not explained by disgust, but which are a crucial part of the process of abjection of social others. Disgust alone does not accurately describe or explain the lives of those marked as Others.

Emotions, however, are far from being the only bridge between abjection as a condition and abjection as a process. In fact, completely intermeshed with the emotions that are part of the "economy of abjection" are the ideas that mediate them. Those are ideas that keep showing up in every emotion analyzed. Ambiguity and anomaly in relation to a system of classification, the body/animality/sexuality, and morality: these are the ideas that resurface over and over again in any closer look at disgust, hate, horror, and attraction. This is what elicits, what causes, what lies behind all those emotions.

Yet, speaking of abjection as being caused might give us a very incorrect picture of abjection as a passive or inert reality, which is caused but, in any way, contributes to the constitution of that which causes it. As we have seen, that could not be further from the truth. Abjection does an incredible amount of work, and, in very significant senses, produces that which simultaneously causes it. I have referred to the work performed by abjection as functions and mentioned specifically performativity, moralization, hierarchization, association with danger, blame, reenactment of norms, community creation, deactivation of empathy (grievability), and violence.

Understanding all this implies, of course, going back to the notion of the Other and to its place in the inferior pole of a dichotomy. It also implies to consider the existence of a norm to which the Other does not comply. As I see it, this is in fact the starting point of any analysis of the abject-Other. When that is taken into account, we might then understand that the very condition as abject is dependent on the attribution of characteristics that are themselves the lower pole in deeply rooted cultural dichotomies. This is the work of the norm in both its descriptive and prescriptive senses. And such attribution – such representation – is both cause and consequence of abjection.

Finally, abjection in the sense of process. I have briefly mentioned two ways societies deal with the abject-Other: assimilation and exclusion. This in turn completely mirrors the process

of identity creation – whether individual or social – as envisioned by Julia Kristeva, in which that which does not become part of the I is expelled, cast-off in a gut felt reaction.

Following the characteristics just summarized, I would like to propose a definition of abjection as an *affective economy*.[1316] With it I refer to a system that involves both ideas and emotions whose circular interaction and mutual implication have both discursive and material effects. In fact, abjection can be seen as establishing or constituting a bridge between what is often conceptualized as two completely distinct realms: discourse and material reality. Within what has been described as the "affective turn" in social sciences, affect has been defined by reference to a "capacity to affect and to be affected".[1317] It is this idea I am trying to capture with the expression "affective economy", one that invokes action, change, and movement: affect is not static or passive; it does things – even if those things are sometimes to immobilize others. Affect, furthermore, refers to embodied knowledge,[1318] an idea that stitches cognition to emotions and bodily sensations, thus rejecting body-mind dualisms: affect "refer[s] equally to the body and mind; […] involve[s] both reason and the passions."[1319] Finally, affect also refers to those "visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing",[1320] and this is precisely what I believe abjection is all about.[1321]

[1316] I am here borrowing Sara Ahmed's expression. (AHMED, Sara, "Affective Economies"). However, I do not follow the definition of "affective economies" the author offers: a system of circulation of emotions "between signifiers in relationships of difference and displacement." (*Idem*, p. 119). Although I agree with what Ahmed describes, I see it as one among other effects of an affective economy.
[1317] SEIGWORTH, Gregory J., and GREGG, Melissa, "An Inventory of Shimmers", p. 2.
[1318] *Idem*, p. 3.
[1319] HARDT, Michael, "Foreword: What Affects Are Good For", p. ix.
[1320] SEIGWORTH, Gregory J., and GREGG, Melissa, "An Inventory of Shimmers", p. 1.
[1321] Affect is often defined as something other and beyond emotion. I depart from this understanding, which not only distinguishes between affect and emotions, but which also frequently leads the ones embracing it away from a theoretical engagement with emotions. (AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 206.) I agree with Sara Ahmed when she claims that the characteristics of affect I mentioned above can equally be said of emotions, as she in fact did. (*Idem*, p. 208.) As a result, I use affect and emotion indistinctively.

3. The Prostitute as Abject-Other in the Nineteenth Century Patriarchal Discourse

The immersion into the history of the representation of women in both religious and scientific discourse in the Part Two has revealed not a unitary but a binary and dichotomous portrayal of femaleness: women have been depicted throughout western history as both good and bad, sexual and asexual, evil and virtuous. As we saw, in such dichotomous representation of women, the prostitute has always been the epitome of the bad, sexual, and evil woman. And as such she stood in direct opposition to the (representation of the) good wife and mother. Now, as we know, oppositions are not neutral but rather hierarchically organized. And, in this one, it is the wife/mother who, from modernity onwards, occupied its superior pole: the side of the norm in both its descriptive and normative senses. This means that the prostitute does not merely occupy one of the poles in the dichotomous representation of women; she is allocated to the inferior one: the place of the Other. Lynda Nead captures this idea most clearly when she writes that the prostitute was an "accommodating category", which referred to "any woman who deviated from the feminine ideal".[1322] As she further explains, "[t]he feminine ideal was the central term, the cultural norm, against which all other forms of female sexuality were defined as unnatural and deviant."[1323]

In this sense, the history of the representation of the prostitute is the history of her otherness. And it is that history I want to continue to grasp as I now move to uncover the traces of the prostitute's representation and exclusion as abject. As an essential element of otherness, abjection lies at the heart of the representation of the prostitute in patriarchal discourse. That is what I hope to be able to show in the coming lines.

3.1. Ambiguity and the Heterosexual Norm

My starting point is the heterosexual norm and the system of classification of people such norm institutes: men and women. My claim is that the prostitute confuses, disturbs, and violates both that norm and that system of classification, and that is precisely what connects

[1322] NEAD, Lynda, "The Magdalen in Modern Times: The Mythology of the Fallen Woman in Pre-Raphaelite Painting", p. 30.
[1323] *Idem*, p. 27.

her with abjection. "[W[hatever disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous": that is what, according to Kristeva, *causes* abjection.[1324] I will slightly reformulate (precise) this claim according to the framework I developed in the previous section to say instead that is what *is* (perceived as) abject and what is *abjected*.

My claim, of course, depends on a particular understanding of the heterosexual norm. One which, for a start, completely intermeshes sexuality and gender. On this view, not only is sexuality a fundamental factor in what it means to be a men and a woman, as to be a man or a woman is a crucial element in the characterization of sexuality. This is all too closely related to a second particularity of the understanding of the heterosexual norm I adopt, which is one that extends it beyond its most common understanding as different-sex sexual orientation in, at least, two senses. First, it is not restricted to sexual orientation, but also includes the characterization of sexual desire in what concerns intensity, context, and practices. And second, it is one in which the difference between men's and women's sexuality goes beyond the sex/gender of their objects of desire. It is not only, then, that men and women are sexually oriented towards different objects (women and men), but that their sexual desire is perceived as being quite different in what concerns intensity, context, and practices. This is an important point of contention in relation to other notions of heterosexuality. The one offered by Jonathan Katz in his celebrated work *The Invention of Heterosexuality* is a good example.

Katz has defined heterosexuality with reference to a "different-sex pleasure ethic" [1325] and opposed it to what, in his view, was a radical distinct sexual morality which associated sexuality with love and marriage. As he sees it, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, out of the work of the first sexologists and specifically Kraft-Ebing, "a new pleasure norm began to grow."[1326] Pleasure is thus at the center of Katz's notion of heterosexuality. This is why he says that

> each sex starts off from a different place in relation to the new and developing heterosexual norm. Because of their supposed greater eroticism, men are considered

[1324] KRISTEVA, Julia, *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 4.
[1325] KATZ, Jonathan Ned, *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, p. 19.
[1326] *Idem*, p. 21.

> closer to heterosexuality. When women moved toward erotic parity with men in the twentieth century, they became more heterosexual […].[1327]

Putting pleasure at the center of heterosexuality leads Katz to distinguish it from the "antisexual Victorian" regime, which he historically locates in early nineteenth century.[1328] At its center lied not pleasure as in heterosexuality, but the association of sex with true love and matrimony.[1329]

In neither sexual regime does Katz make any distinction between men and women: heterosexuality meant pleasure for both sexes precisely as Victorian sexual regime meant the association of sex with love for both men and women. In his understanding, then, in the Victorian era "[t]rue men, thought to live closer to carnality, and in less control of it, ideally aspired to the same rational regulation of concupiscence as did respectable true women." True love, he says, was as much linked to the ideal of true men as it was to the ideal of true woman.[1330] Katz seems to deem irrelevant the fact that, in the two different historical moments he locates those sexual regimes, men and women are characterized very differently in what sexual desire is concerned – which he actually recognizes and specifically refers to –,[1331] and that men and women faced very different legal and social consequences when they diverged from the norms of sexual propriety and looked for pleasure alone irrespective of love and matrimony.

I completely disagree from Katz. What the history of the representation of womanhood reveals is that at the heart of heterosexuality lies an abyssal difference between the representations of men and women. Such difference, far from restricted to the object of desire, concerns the characterization of male and female desire. Pleasure independent of love, matrimony, and reproduction has never been gender neutral, but specifically male. For women what was left was a sexuality completely bound with those and other attachments, such as the house and their role as wives and mothers and even their inferior hierarchical

[1327] *Idem*, p. 32.
[1328] *Idem*, p. 40.
[1329] *Idem*, p. 42.
[1330] *Idem*, p. 44.
[1331] *Idem*, p. 32.

position in relation to men. As we have seen in Part Two, when, at the end of the nineteenth century, female sexual pleasure even begun to be considered at all, it was always in reference to what it meant for and said of men. This is also what the analysis of sexual perversions as elaborated by late nineteenth century and early twentieth century sexology has irrefutably shown. The deviance from the standard of sexuality which connected it with love and matrimony was perceived as a sign of illness, a deviance from a healthy normal state, in women and women alone. Never in men. This is why, rather than distinguishing between heterosexuality and the Victorian sexual regime, I merge them together, assigning the connection between sex, love, and stable relationships to women and pleasure independently of all such things to men.

Having made clear what I mean by heterosexual norm, let me now come back to abjection and its association with the prostitute. The perception of the prostitute's ambiguity in respect to gender was made very clear in the physical and psychological traits that the nineteenth century "science" attributed her. The representation that emerged from such attribution was one which at once opposed the prostitute to what was considered natural and normal in women and approximated her of what was considered typically masculine.

From the large and strong jaws and salient cheek bones detected by Pauline Tarnowsky's study,[1332] to the denser public hair and the masculine vocal chords claimed by Cesare Lombroso,[1333] and even the larger brain size surgeon G. Frank Lydston argued to have irrefutable evidences of, the body of the prostitute as read by scientists was a living testimony of her masculinity. But not only. Psychological characteristics such as the exaggerated fondness for alcohol, the excessive eating, the incessant chattering, the passion for gambling, the love for idleness expressed in the favor of pleasure in detriment of work, and the frequent bursts of anger Parent-Duchâtelet has detected,[1334] all was evidence of the prostitute's

[1332] GILMAN, Sander L., "The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality", p. 97.
[1333] GIBSON, Mary, "Labelling Women Deviant: Heterosexual Women, Prostitutes and Lesbians in Early Criminological Discourse", p. 94.
[1334] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 7.

masculinity. Yet, nothing spoke of her gender inversion as much as the lack of maternal feelings and instincts, which Lombroso and common sense so often addressed.[1335]

All this, of course, had one single source: sexuality. And I speak of source in the sense of these scientists starting point, of what prompted in them the search and founding of all these physical and psychological masculine traits. A female sexuality that was public and detached from love and marriage could not but instigate suspicions of illness and sexual abnormality. It is unsurprising, then, that prostitutes were diagnosed as nymphomaniacs, frigids, and sadists. Nymphomania, as we know, referred to an excess of sexual desire, which, of course, was excessive in women, not men. In what concerns frigidity, it is important to remember that this perversion was conceptualized not as lack of sexual desire and pleasure but as pleasure that was not appropriately feminine: it was associated with clitoral orgasm and clitoris was seen as a masculine organ. And, finally, sadism, which in women was conceived as a sign of gender inversion.

My point thus is this: the inconformity with the norm of female sexuality led to the perception of the prostitute as masculine and, hence, as gender ambiguous. Such ambiguity is evidence of the intrinsic connection between sexuality and gender, and it also demonstrates the need to understand such connection in terms wider than sexual orientation. But where I want to get to now is the fact that ambiguity connects the prostitute with abjection, which is the condition of those things and people who do not fit the categories instituted by a system of classification. A system such as that which categorizes human beings as either men or women and endows them with different and specific types of sexuality. Under that system, the prostitute is the "in-between", that which "does not respect borders, positions, rules", and so, that which "disturbs identity, system, order." [1336]

[1335] GIBSON, Mary, "Labelling Women Deviant: Heterosexual Women, Prostitutes and Lesbians in Early Criminological Discourse", p. 95.

[1336] KRISTEVA, Julia, *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 4.

3.2. Animality, Body, Sexuality: The Prostitute as Grotesque Body

Ambiguity, however, is not the only connection of the prostitute with abjection. As we have seen, a second source of abjection is the triad animality/body/sexuality. Even though these are three different elicitors of abjection, I have put them together in virtue of their close relationship and because they are often found together in the representation of those socially marked as Others. The representation of the prostitution is no exception. In it, this triad appears, first of all, in the form of the prostitute's characterization as primitive, degenerate, uncivilized, as that was just another way of talking of what Parent-Duchâtelet called the "animal life" prostitutes led.[1337]

Sexuality is, once again, the starting point, as voluptuousness, lascivity, and unbridled sexuality was, for nineteenth century science, "animal like"[1338] and typical of the lower human species, and so a sign of a primitive stage in the scale of evolution.[1339] Yet, the characterization of the prostitute as primitive appeared in different forms. For a start, in the very idea of primitive society. Guglielmo Ferrero described it as a society where prostitution was the rule and where virginity and adultery had no meaning.[1340] Then, in the attribution of physical traits to the prostitute. The steatopygia and the "hottentot apron" are probably the best examples. But the "Darwin's ear", the asymmetry of the face, and the misshaped nose were also seen as important signs of the prostitute's atavism.[1341]

Physical traits, however, were only a sign of an underlying condition, which could also be seen in attributes of a more psychological nature. Of special importance in this regard is the idea of the lack of maternal feelings in prostitutes. According to Lombroso, for instance, evolution led women to direct their sexual energy into motherhood,[1342] and so the lack of maternal feelings so often asserted in relation to prostitutes was but another evidence of their

[1337] PARENT-DUCHÂTELET, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste, *On Prostitution in the City of Paris*, p. 38, as cited in GILMAN, Sander L., "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature", p. 223.
[1338] GILMAN, Sander L., "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature", p. 223.
[1339] GILMAN, Sander L., "The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality", p. 100.
[1340] *Ibidem*.
[1341] *Idem*, p. 96.
[1342] GIBSON, Mary, "Labelling Women Deviant: Heterosexual Women, Prostitutes and Lesbians in Early Criminological Discourse", p. 92.

primitiveness. The same observation can be made of the lasting stereotype of prostitutes as infantile. Alain Corbin tells us that it was Henri-François-Alphonse Esquiros "who elaborated this theme at greatest length."[1343] Such elaboration makes explicit the connection between prostitutes' "childhood state" and their primitiveness by means of the idea of "childhood of human race". According to him, prostitutes are "a class of women who perpetuate among us the childhood of human race … who have remained … in the primitive state of nondevelopment".[1344]

At the root of the stereotype of immaturity and its connection with primitiveness was the prostitute's opposition to the values of the time: as a child she had not yet been able to assimilate the values of civilization.[1345] Proper sexuality was, of course, at the top of the values unassimilated by prostitutes, but other matters were equality pointed out by those "scientifically" analyzing the prostitute. Parent-Duchâtelet, for instance, has highlighted the bursts of anger, the rejection of work in favor of pleasure, the laziness, the lack of cleanliness, and the exaggerated fondness for eating and drinking.[1346] Those were no random or neutral traits: they bore the specific meaning of primitiveness, being equally found in the "description" of Black Africans, in relation to whom they were used as evidence of their innate inferiority and as justification of the slave trade.[1347]

> Their penchant for pleasure makes them fairly unfit for hard labor, since they are generally lazy, cowardly, and very fond of gluttony. The least esteemed of all the nègres are the Bambaras; their uncleanliness, as well as the large scars that they give themselves across their cheeks from the nose to the ears, make them hideous. They are lazy, drunken, gluttonous, and apt to steal.[1348]

[1343] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, pp. 373-4.
[1344] ESQUIROS, Henri-François-Alphonse, *Les Vierges Falles,* p. 69, as cited in CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 374.
[1345] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 7.
[1346] *Ibidem*.
[1347] STRINGS, Sabrina, *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia*, pp. 79-80.
[1348] LE ROMAIN, Jean-Baptiste-Pierre, "Negroes" (1765), in *Encyclopaedia of Diderot and d'Alembert: Collaborative Translation Project*, as cited in STRINGS, Sabrina, *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia*, p. 81.

> They have no knowledge of God…. They are very greedie eaters, and no lesse drinkers, and very lecherous, and thievish, and much addicted to uncleanenesse: one man hath as many wives as hee is able to keepe and maintaine.[1349]

It comes as no surprise, hence, that fatness, one of the most repeated stereotypes concerning the prostitute´s appearance,[1350] was a most claimed characteristic of Black Africans.[1351] In fact, this is a stereotype particularly charged with meaning. It was simultaneously connected with primitiveness, immorality, irrationality, disease, and deformity.[1352] The central connector was gluttony, which, opposing the moral value of self-restraint and self-regulation that came to dominate the nineteenth century Europe, was seen as an evil and condemned as pathological excess.[1353] Gluttony, as a pleasure of the flesh, was also strongly associated with the body, which, from modernity onwards, came to acquire a particularly negative value.

Norbert Elias has talked of a transformation in social behavior, which occurred in Europe around Renaissance, and which concerned above all "outward bodily propriety".[1354] New manners concerning the behavior at table, natural functions, and the expression of emotions, which arose around that time as way of distinguishing the higher classes from the lowest, had, by the nineteenth century, become a standard of civilization.[1355] Sabrina Strings has shown that the long eighteenth century (ca. 1680–1815) added to the norms of appropriate and civilized behavior restrain in eating and drinking. As she explains, "as eating and drinking less became evidence of refinement [and civilization], so too did the thinner figures such behavior produced."[1356]

Out of the transformation in social behavior which Elias has referred to as "the civilizing process", a new notion of the body emerged.[1357] That had to do with the "privatization" of

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[1349] PURCHAS, Samuel, *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrimes*, as cited in STRINGS, Sabrina, *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia*, p. 82.
[1350] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 9
[1351] STRINGS, Sabrina, *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia*, p. 77.
[1352] *Idem*, p. 109.
[1353] BELL, Kirsten, MCNAUGHTON, Darlene, and SALMON, Amy, "Introduction", p. 4.
[1354] ELIAS, Norbert, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, p. 48.
[1355] *Idem*, pp. 80-1.
[1356] STRINGS, Sabrina, *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia*, p. 100.
[1357] This is Norbert Elias's thesis. There were, of course, other important factors referred to by other authors to explain the emergence of this new conception of the body. Factors which, in an important sense, are of a more

the body, which that process led to. From then onwards, the body and its functions were excluded from the public sphere and forced into privacy and secrecy.[1358] An accomplishment of such magnitude was not, of course, the exclusive product of external social proscriptions. It involved a fundamental change in mental and emotional structure.[1359] As Elias observes, from that point on, the exposure of the body and the performance of natural bodily functions were met with a "different standard of repugnance":[1360] whereas in Middle Ages, shame and disgust over the body were pretty much nonexistent, from Renaissance onwards shame and mainly disgust occupied in relation to it an absolutely central place.[1361] Implicit in such a new economy of shame and disgust was a conception of the body which Silvia Federici describes as depersonalized,[1362] lower, degraded,[1363] and as a source of all evils.[1364] In a word, grotesque. A conception which dictated the "closing-off" of the body: the body should now be contained, controlled, and restrained in its impulses and emotions.[1365]

Let us now come back to the prostitute. The closed conception of the body sheds new light into the representation of the prostitute. For instance, the outbursts of anger, which Parent-Duchâtelet claimed to be common in prostitutes can now be understood as part of a wider idea of the prostitute as excessively emotional. An idea which connected those outbursts to the prostitute's alleged ease in being carried away by various enthusiasms and also her supposed sudden shifts of mood.[1366] And an idea that can now be revealed as being endowed with a particular significance. In a time when all public emotional display was greeted with acute repugnance and disgust,[1367] such idea relegated the prostitute to the sphere of the body:

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material kind. Silvia Federici, for instance, speaks about capitalism and its need of transforming the body into a work-machine. See FEDERICI, Silvia, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation*, especially chapter 3, "The Great Caliban".

[1358] ELIAS, Norbert, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, p. 121.

[1359] *Idem*, p. 49.

[1360] *Idem*, p. 51.

[1361] Elias' account of this process has been challenged on many levels. See MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 151.

[1362] As Federici explains, this is a conception of body "which only in principle can be conceived as the site of the soul, but actually is treated as a separate reality". (FEDERICI, Silvia, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation*, p. 139.)

[1363] *Ibidem*.

[1364] *Idem*, p. 137.

[1365] *Idem*, p. 153.

[1366] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 7.

[1367] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 177.

the savage, repugnant, and grotesque body.[1368] Precisely the same reasoning can be applied to the stereotype about the plumpness of figure of the prostitute. It evoked a whole array of meanings ranging from savagery to immorality, sexuality, intellectual derangement, ugliness, and disease, which ultimately were all united in their connection to the open, grotesque body. Such connection comes out particularly clear in the nineteenth century popular idea that fatness in women was a kind of deformity – deformity being an essential element of the grotesque.

> All defects are in the nature of ugliness, but certain ones are more degrading than others; and of these obesity, which is a deformity, is signally ignoble.[1369]

Mikhail Bakhtin has spoken at length about the idea of *grotesque*. The context in which he did so was, of course, very different from mine here. Yet, his immersion into that idea has rendered insights my present purposes cannot dispense with. Bakhtin's point was to contest the predominant interpretation of the imagery present in the literary work of François Rabelais, which was one conditioned by a nineteenth century ideological perspective and its very different conception of the body.[1370] In doing so, however, he addressed what was it that from that perspective came out as grotesque and repulsive[1371] and that is precisely what I am interested in.

The first thing Bakhtin notes is what he calls the material bodily principle. The subject, he explains, is turned into flesh,[1372] appearing in a fashion that a nineteenth century bourgeois point of view deems degrading and debasing: "lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract".[1373] This is owed to a premodern conception that mingles the body with the social and the cosmic in an indissoluble whole, and which makes it unnecessary for the body to be presented "in in a private, egotistic form, severed from other spheres of life",[1374] as our own

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[1368] "[…] less labile in their moods, less prone to great swings in emotional display, more moderate, restrained, and 'civilized.'" (*Idem*, p. 171.)

[1369] FLETCHER, Ella Adelia, *The Woman Beautiful: A Practical Treatise on the Development and Preservation of Woman's Health and Beauty, and the Principles of Taste in Dress*, as cited in MATTHEWS, Mimi, "Victorian Fat Shaming: Harsh Words on Weight From the 19th Century".

[1370] BAKHTIN, Mikhail, *Rebelais and His World*, p. 18.

[1371] *Idem*, p. 3.

[1372] *Idem*, p. 20.

[1373] *Idem*, p. 19.

[1374] *Ibidem*.

sensibility would have it. The result is the prevalence, among the Middle Age images present in Rebelais' work, of references to "[e]ating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation",[1375] which by modern standards are grotesque and cause to repugnance. [1376] As Bakhtin observes,

> [i]n the modern image of the individual body, sexual life, eating, drinking, and defecation have radically changed their meaning: they have been transferred to the private and psychological level where their connotation becomes narrow and specific, torn away from the direct relation to the life of society and to the cosmic whole.[1377]

The modern image of the individual body which Bakhtin is referring to is also a finished, completed one,[1378] alien to metamorphosis and ambivalence.[1379] That is why images of disintegration and dismembering are met by us with such horror. They are grotesque and repugnant to us, as are images of sick, swallow,[1380] and fat bodies,[1381] as well as "[v]arious deformities such as protruding bellies, enormous noses, or humps",[1382] which seem to alter the human natural form. And precisely the same can be said of "bodies that are merged with each other or with objects"[1383] or even with animals or animal traits. [1384] Yet, these were very popular themes in Rabelais' time, when an open, cosmic, and universal conception of the body prevailed.

Let us once again come back to the prostitute. Our brief digression into the notion of the grotesque body was aimed at disclosing the meaning the representation of the prostitute was endowed with in the nineteenth century: that of grotesque body. And the traits attributed to her by both science and common sense were simultaneously cause and consequence of that underlying meaning. Fatness and its perception as a deformity was completely intertwined

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[1375] *Idem*, p. 317.
[1376] *Ibidem*.
[1377] *Idem*, p. 321.
[1378] *Idem*, p. 25.
[1379] *Idem*, p. 24.
[1380] *Idem*, p. 323.
[1381] *Idem*, p. 222.
[1382] *Idem*, p. 91.
[1383] *Idem*, p. 323.
[1384] *Idem*, p. 316.

with the idea of the grotesque body and so was the stereotype of the fat prostitute. Yet, this was far from being the only trait attribution that immersed the image of the prostitute in that significance.

Specific physical traits such as the asymmetry of the face and the misshapen nose,[1385] the strong jaws and cheek bones together with salient angles described as emerging and standing out, [1386] and, of course, the elongation of the labia majora and nymphae,[1387] did not express and construct an understanding of the prostitute merely as masculine and primitive. It also constituted her as grotesque body.

Adding to the catalog of characteristics that conveyed the meaning of the prostitute as grotesque body was the idea of her diseased sexual organs. The belief that the prostitute's genitalia became more and more diseased as she aged was a deeply rooted one.[1388] And the same was thought of the prostitute's overall state of health. This was undoubtedly connected with the "then-dominant idea that sexual excess diminishes life expectancy."[1389] So strong were these beliefs that Parent-Duchâtelet, with his rigorous methods of observation, felt obliged to addressed them even if just to contradict them: "[d]espite so much excess and so many causes of diseases, their health is more resistant than that of most women who have children and do housework."[1390] This, of course, "with the exception of the syphilitic diseases",[1391] which was not just any exception but a crucial one. After all, syphilis was a most straightforward avenue for the association between the prostitute and the grotesque body. As Deborah Lupton tells us, descriptions of syphilis "represented the ill body as a monstruous sight, an 'exteriorized horror' of rotting flesh, in which the presence of disease

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[1385] GILMAN, Sander L., "The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality", p. 96.
[1386] *Idem*, p. 97.
[1387] *Idem*, p. 99.
[1388] GILMAN, Sander L., "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature", p. 226; CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 8.
[1389] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 8.
[1390] PARENT-DUCHÂTELET, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste, *De la prostitution dans la Ville de Paris Considérée sous le Rapport de Phygiene Publique, de la Morale et de l'Administration*, *Vol. I*, p. 279, as cited in CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 9.
[1391] PARENT-DUCHÂTELET, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste, *De la prostitution dans la Ville de Paris, Vol. I*, pp. 279-80, as cited in BERNHEIMER, Charles, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 25.

was immediately visible to onlookers and sufferers themselves."[1392] Evidence of this was Parent-Duchâtelet's claim that "[n]othing is more frequent in prostitutes than common abscesses in the thickness of the labia majora",[1393] "which commence with a little pus and tumefy at each menstrual period".[1394]

Pus and syphilis lie at the crossroads of the representation of the prostitute as grotesque body in two different senses: a literal one, in which the prostitute is attributed psychological and particularly physical traits seen as such, and what can be said to be a more metaphorical sense. Let me explain. We have seen in Part Two that syphilis has, in the nineteenth century, been explained in terms of miasma theory.[1395] And, as Mary Spongberg put it, "[m]iasma was putrid matter believed to be given off by marshes, drains, sewers and cemeteries."[1396] So, if, on the one hand, syphilis connected the prostitute to the grotesque body by means of disease and its visible signs, on the other, it metaphorically associated her with what Bakhtin calls the body lower stratum.[1397]

The association between the prostitute and sewers is an old one. It can already be found in the Fathers of the Christian Church. Yet, in the nineteenth century, it acquired a particular and revigorated strength. Parent-Duchâtelet put it in the clearest way: "[p]rostitutes are as inevitable, where men live together in large concentrations, as drains and refuse dumps".[1398] As Alain Corbin tells us, the idea was that "[t]he prostitute enables the social body to excrete the excess of seminal fluid", thus allowing for its survival.[1399] Such was the ubiquity of this

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[1392] LUPTON, Deborah, *Medicine as Culture: Illness, Disease and the Body in Western Societies*, p. 75.
[1393] PARENT-DUCHÂTELET, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste, *On Prostitution in the City of Paris*, p. 50, as cited in GILMAN, Sander L., "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature", p. 223.
[1394] PARENT-DUCHÂTELET, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste, *On Prostitution in the City of Paris*, p. 49, as cited in GILMAN, Sander L., "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature", p. 223.
[1395] SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 53.
[1396] *Idem*, p. 54.
[1397] "[…] the genital organs, the belly, and buttocks [… ,which] relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth." (BAKHTIN, Mikhail, *Rebelais and His World*, p. 21.)
[1398] PARENT-DUCHÂTELET, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste, *De la prostitution dans la Ville de Paris Considérée sous le Rapport de Phygiene Publique, de la Morale et de l'Administration, Vol. I*, p. 513, as cited in CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 4.
[1399] CORBIN, Alain, "Commercial Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France: A System of Images and Regulations", p. 211.

idea that it had a direct influence in the structuring of the policy toward prostitution. The notions of tolerance, circumscription, surveillance, and enforced concealment, which were at the very root of the regulationist system, were completely intertwined with the image of the prostitute as sewer and emunctory. As Corbin says, "[l]ike everything that relates to bodily needs and everything dirty but necessary for the social body's survival, prostitution must be tolerated,"[1400] but it also needs to be enclosed, contained, and closely supervised, so as to prevent any spillover,[1401] and, finally, hidden from the eyes of the public for being too intolerable to the senses of civilized society.[1402] It is most noteworthy that Parent-Duchâtelet, "the most prestigious theoretician " and "apostle" of the regulationist system,[1403] was also "the man of the Paris drains and refuse dumps".[1404] As Charles Bernheimer observes, not only was he a an "esteemed member of the government's Public Health Council"[1405] working on issues such as excrements, waste and corpses, as his investigations on "sewers, cadavers and the like" were conducted in simultaneous with his work on prostitution.[1406] As such, the comparisons he established were far from a random coincidence:

> Prostitutes are as inevitable in an agglomeration of men as sewers cesspits, and garbage dumps; civil authority should conduct itself in the same manner in regard to the one as to the other: its duty is to survey them, to attenuate by every possible means the detriments inherent to them, and for that purpose to hide them, to relegate them to the most obscure corners, in a word to render their presence as inconspicuous as possible.[1407]

Another "grotesque" association that syphilis boosted was that between the prostitute and corpses. Corbin tells us of the long-standing idea that people with syphilis "have rotten

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[1400] *Idem*, p. 213.

[1401] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 9.

[1402] CORBIN, Alain, "Commercial Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France: A System of Images and Regulations", p. 215.

[1403] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 3

[1404] *Idem*, p. 4.

[1405] BERNHEIMER, Charles, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 9.

[1406] *Idem*, p. 15.

[1407] PARENT-DUCHÂTELET, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste, *De la prostitution dans la Ville de Paris, Vol. II*, pp. 513-4, as cited in BERNHEIMER, Charles, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 16.

blood."[1408] And he also tells us that "[i]n nineteenth-century hygienists' discourse, the association between the prostitute and cadaverous flesh becomes a leitmotiv."[1409] The connection with sewers was an important link in the metaphorical chain that led to yet this further association: the excess of seminal fluid that the prostitute enables the social body to excrete rots her and makes her stench.[1410] As a "kind of sewer, a place of biological decomposition,"[1411] the prostitute becomes herself rotten flesh. Another important link in the association of the prostitute with cadavers was the idea that she smells. This was, once again, an old age belief. In fact, some defend that connection is engraved in the very etymology of word *putain*, that is claimed to derive from the Latin word *putida*, which means both stinking and infected.[1412] But more important seems to have been the eighteenth century medical theory that "sperm confers an odor of flesh on females".[1413] On this view, the odor supposedly emitted by the prostitute was the result of excessive sexual relations and an evidence that the *putain*, the symbol of moral rot, was also "literally the putrid woman".[1414] Such meaning comes out very clearly in the French naming of working-class houses of prostitution as "slaughter houses" (*maisons d'abattage*)[1415] and is also very much present in the similarities of the regulations that applied to prostitution and dead flesh.[1416] Concealment is a good example. "Like corpses, carrion, and excrement, prostitution [had] to remain hidden as much as possible."[1417] Thus Parent-Duchâtelet's recommendation that, as cadavers, prostitutes be transported in covered wagons in their way "from police headquarters to prison or hospital".[1418]

[1408] CORBIN, Alain, "Commercial Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France: A System of Images and Regulations", p. 211.
[1409] *Ibidem*.
[1410] *Ibidem*.
[1411] BERNHEIMER, Charles, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 15.
[1412] CORBIN, Alain, "Commercial Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France: A System of Images and Regulations", p. 210.
[1413] *Ibidem*.
[1414] *Ibidem*.
[1415] *Idem*, p. 212
[1416] *Idem*, p. 211.
[1417] *Idem*, p. 215.
[1418] BERNHEIMER, Charles, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France*, pp. 13-4

Noël Carroll, in the context of his philosophy of horror, has talked about what he refers to as horrific metonymy. As he explains it, "[o]ften the horror of horrific creatures is not something that can be perceived by the naked eye or that comes through a description of the look of the monster." Instead, "the horrific being is surrounded by objects that we antecedently take to be objects of disgust and/or phobia." [1419] As he further observes,

> Horrific metonymy is a means of emphasizing the impure and disgusting nature of the creature – from the outside, so to speak – by associating said being with objects and entities that are already reviled: body parts, vermin, skeletons, and all manner of filth.[1420]

Carroll is, of course, speaking of art-horror, the art genre designed to cause the emotion of horror.[1421] And so, when he speaks of horrific metonymy, he is referring to associations that are often very literal, such as associations with other characters or events witnessed by the horrific being.[1422] Yet, this is not necessarily so. Horror can also be elicited by metaphorically speaking of the object in terms of horrific and disgusting things. This is where I think the idea of horrific metonymy can be of great interest in regard to the representation of the prostitute. Speaking of the prostitute in terms of sewers and rotting flesh seems to be an excellent case of horrific metonymy in this second, metaphorical sense. The effect is the displacement of the emotions of disgust and horror into the prostitute. An effect which is all too visible in the similarity of policies applied to prostitution, sewers, and cadavers.

Yet, horror and disgust in relation to the prostitute, are far from being elicited exclusively by metaphorical thinking in terms of sewers and cadavers. Smell is a most crucial elicitor of disgust. It is not a coincidence that, as William Miller has observed, othered groups have, throughout history, been persistently accused of smelling.[1423] As it is not a coincidence that, as Corbin tells us, the idea that the body of the prostitute smells is such an old and firmly

[1419] CARROLL, Noël, *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, p. 51
[1420] *Idem*, p. 52.
[1421] *Idem*, p. 8.
[1422] *Idem*, pp. 51-2.
[1423] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 245.

rooted one.[1424] Smell, of course, is but another expression of the grotesque body. A body of which, as we have seen, the prostitute was, in the nineteenth century, a perfect incarnation.

Peter Stallybrass and Allon White tell us of the complex cultural process whereby categories of high and low in what concerns social order, human body, psychic forms, and geographical space are constructed in an interrelated and dependent manner.[1425] As they put it, "[d]ivisions and discriminations in one domain are continually structured, legitimated and dissolved by reference to the vertical symbolic hierarchy which operates in the other three domains."[1426] Among other things, this means that people at the lower pole of social hierarchy are thought of and socially represented in terms of what is considered lowest in the body, in the psychic, and in geography. In this sense, then, as Stallybrass and Allon observe, "body-images 'speak' social relations and values", and they do it "with particular force."[1427] Images of grotesque bodies are both revealing and constitutive of the meaning of some people as low Others, since low Others "are constructed by the dominant culture [precisely] in terms of the grotesque body."[1428] The analysis of the representation of the prostitute in the nineteenth century completely confirms this thesis. In fact, I would argue, the depiction of the prostitute is a most paradigmatic example of the cultural process Stallybrass and Allon refer to. Having tracked "the 'grotesque body' and the 'low-Other' through different symbolic domains of bourgeois society since the Renaissance", Stallybrass and Allon, claim that the grotesque body is "a sort of intensifier in the making of identity."[1429] This could not be truer in the case of the prostitute. Her widely shared depiction as grotesque body is an essential piece of her construction as low, degraded, and wretched. In a word, as abject-Other.

This is completely related with disgust. After all, the grotesque body is precisely the disgusting and horrific body which arose out of the "civilizing process" as proposed by Norbert Elias. And the role of the grotesque body in constituting the prostitute's identity is nothing other than disgust's functions of performativity, hierarchization and moralization at

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[1424] CORBIN, Alain, "Commercial Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France: A System of Images and Regulations", p. 210.
[1425] STALLYBRASS, Peter, and WHITE, Allon, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, p. 2.
[1426] *Idem*, p. 3.
[1427] *Idem*, p. 10.
[1428] *Idem*, pp. 22-3.
[1429] *Idem*, p. 25.

work. For, let us be reminded, disgust simultaneously constitutes the disgusting thing as such and reiterates as such the disgusting thing that was already there: "it both 'lags behind' the object from which recoils, and generates the object in the very event of recoiling."[1430] It "rank us and order us in hierarchies"[1431] that were already there, as the low is also what disgusts in the first place.[1432] And, finally, it moralizes that which disgusts: "[w]e perceive what disgusts and tend to imbue it with defective moral status for that reason alone",[1433] at the same time that what disgusts us is that which violates the morals norms that have us in their "grip", as Miller put it. [1434] In sum, disgust, as Douglas observes in relation to dirt, is both instrumental and expressive. [1435]

And how could it be any different? The prostitute, as "the wagenafemale in the perception of the nineteenth century",[1436] could not but be described in terms of the grotesque and disgusting body. For sex was one of those things that the "civilizing process" locked in very carefully in the depths of our privacy,[1437] and the prostitute brought it back out in the open to the public sphere. She was, in addition, a "she", which is an essential matter, since the "civilizing process" was far from being gender neutral. It was women that, as essentially spiritual beings to nineteenth century eyes, were placed further from the body or at least from the lower bodily stratum, and that is why, in them, any reminder of the corporeal element could not but be perceived as uncivilized and cause extreme repugnance. So here we have it: the last element of what I called the triad animality/body/sexuality. Sexuality was what united both the prostitute's depiction as savage and her representation as grotesque body, and so what ultimately relegated her to the condition of low, wretched, and repulsive. Sexuality was thus at the root of her constitution as abject-Other.

[1430] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, pp. 92-3.
[1431] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 202.
[1432] *Idem*, p. 180.
[1433] *Ibidem*.
[1434] *Idem*, p. 194.
[1435] DOUGLAS, Mary, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, p. 3.
[1436] GILMAN, Sander L., "The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality", p. 95.
[1437] ELIAS, Norbert, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, pp. 150, 152.

3.3. Threat, Danger, Pollution

The idea of threat, danger, and pollution lies at abjection's very core. On one side, abject is that which threatens boundaries, classifications, norms, order, which, as we have seen, the prostitute did. On the other, abject-Others have been consistently represented as a threat: a threat to me, to "us", "to what is", to "life as we know it", or even "life itself".[1438] The representation of the prostitute is no exception. In fact, the idea of danger is probably the most noticeable characteristic of her representation in the nineteenth century. She was depicted as a source of physical, social, and moral pollution.

Once again, syphilis needs to be brought in, as through it the three types of threat the prostitute was charged of constituting could find justification. In the same tradition of other sexually transmitted diseases, syphilis was a particularly charged illness. It was, first of all, a feminized disease. As we have seen in Part Two, it became so at around the Enlightenment. It was not until then that the image of syphilis shifted from male to female, women becoming, in popular imagination and cultural representation, its prime source.[1439] This served an important function, since it allowed the old image of women as physically corrupt to carry on way into the twentieth century.[1440] Yet, syphilis was not only associated with women in general; it was specifically associated with the prostitute. Medical theory would both express and perpetuate such connection. On the one hand, with the idea that syphilis was a reaction to female inflammatory secretions, which caused the disease in men without affecting the women who transmitted it,[1441]and, on the other, with the idea that syphilis was not a contagious but an allergic reaction to impure intercourse.[1442] From this it was only a short step to William Acton's claim that women only transmitted syphilis while practicing

[1438] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 64.
[1439] GILMAN, Sander L., "AIDS and Syphilis: The Iconography of Disease", p. 95.
[1440] *Ibidem*.
[1441] SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", pp. 42-43.
[1442] *Idem*, p. 42.

prostitution[1443] or Holmes Coote's assertion that syphilis was "engendered by the mode of life to which prostitutes are exposed".[1444]

So, the prostitute was firmly established as syphilis sole cause. And that constituted her as a source of physical and social danger. Yet, in what concerns the danger the prostitute offered to society, syphilis had still much to say, since this was not only a life-threatening disease but also a most important source of degeneracy in a time obsessed with racial superiority. The discovery of the congenital form of syphilis and the belief in the non-existent hereditary syphilis were crucial in firming the connection of the disease with degeneracy. It is worth quoting Alfred Fournier once again on the topic:

> […] syphilis can because of its hereditary consequences, debase and corrupt the species by producing inferior, decadent, dystrophic and deficient beings. Yes, deficient ... or they can be mentally deficient, being, according to the degree of their intellectual debasement, retarded, simple-minded, unbalanced, insane, imbecilic or idiotic.[1445]

Syphilis, however, was not the only reason why the prostitute was perceived as a risk to society, for the kind of danger she posed was not only physical but also moral. Sexual immorality was another essential reason of her perception as a "festering sore" on "the body politic".[1446] Prostitutes tempted men,[1447] brought street disorder into "healthy neighbors",[1448] and exposed good women to the public spectacle of vice.[1449] But in an important sense, their secrecy was even more worrying. By infiltrating respectable middle-class homes as servants, clandestine prostitutes posed an even greater danger of contaminating society with sexual debauchery.[1450] This, in a time when sexuality was not only seen as the most essential

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[1443] *Idem*, p. 50.
[1444] COOTE, Holmes, *A Report Upon Some of the More Important Points,* p. 20, as cited in SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 53.
[1445] FOURNIER, Alfred, 1904, as cited in SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 160.
[1446] MILLER, James, *Prostitution Considered in Relation to Its Causes and* Cure, p. 5, as cited in SPONGBERG, Mary, Feminizing Venereal Disease, p. 45.
[1447] WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, p. 34.
[1448] *Idem*, p. 41.
[1449] *Idem*, pp. 13, 21, 23.
[1450] *Idem*, p. 34; CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 4.

criterion of morality, but also as a requirement for social stability. As Lynda Nead observes, in England, the French revolution became a paradigm of such connection, as the moral depravity of the French aristocracy was claimed to have been its cause.[1451]

As we can already anticipate, the idea of the prostitute as physical, moral, and social danger went hand in hand with that of her blame. As discussed in the previous section with regard to AIDS, the social construction of sexually transmitted diseases frequently involves a distinction between innocent and guilty victims.[1452] And that was definitely the case with syphilis in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the prostitute being socially represented as its ultimate cause and thus its blameful victim. We have already seen why and how. On one side, the idea of syphilis as an allergic reaction to impure intercourse and, more precisely, to intercourse with prostitutes was medically established as syphilis' cause. On the other, congenital and hereditary syphilis made room for the possibility of innocent victims who contracted the disease without engagement in sexual immorality. This was the case of good wives and mothers and their children.

> Prostitution is pregnant with disease, a disease infecting not only the *guilty* but contaminating the *innocent wife and child* in the home with sickening certainty almost inconceivable; a disease to be feared as a leprous plague; a disease scattering misery broadcast, and leaving in its wake sterility, insanity, paralysis, and the blinded eyes of little babes, the twisted limbs of deformed children, degradation, physical rot and mental decay.[1453]

That sexual immorality and even more specifically prostitution was put at the root of syphilis in such a literal way makes it particularly clear two important things in the process of blaming. First, the danger posed by the prostitute was not only of a physical but of a moral nature. While, as seen previously, this was expressly acknowledged in relation to the prostitute, my point is that the fear of the disease itself and the reaction with which syphilis

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[1451] NEAD, Lynda, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*, pp. 92-3.
[1452] BRANDT, Allan M., "AIDS and Metaphor: Toward the Social Meaning of Epidemic Disease", p. 429.
[1453] My emphasis. VICE COMMISSION OF CHICAGO, *The Social Evil in Chicago: A Study of Existing Conditions*, pp. 25-6, as cited in BRANDT, Allan M., *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in The United States Since 1880*, p. 32.

was met was already completely intermeshed with the fear of sexual immorality.[1454] Second, it was not that syphilis was added to the representation of the prostitute, but that the representation of the prostitute was what allowed her connection with the disease to be made in the first place. What I mean is that the social construction of the prostitute as sexual immoral preceded and determined the social construction of syphilis and was, therefore, what led to her being blamed for the disease. Her blame, thus, emerges from the violation of moral norms, a violation which was already inscribed in her (social) identity. For the prostitute was then, as she is now, one of those Others who, as Sarah Ahmed puts it, "come to embody the failure of the norm to take form".[1455]

Blame has important and devastating consequences. Selectivity and lack of empathy are some of them, as blame provides their rational justification and it allows for their emotional possibility. An obvious example of the first is the fact that only prostitutes and not clients were seen as responsible for syphilis. Both engaged in "immoral intercourse", and it was the clients, not the prostitutes, who took the disease back to their wives and children. Yet, it was prostitutes who were seen as the cause of the disease and its spread. And this not only in the eyes of the general public, but also in the "objective" vision of medicine and in the supposedly neutral hand of Law.

The Contagious Diseases Acts in England (1864) are a flagrant example of this. With the objective of controlling venereal disease in the army, the Acts established compulsory "medical and police inspection of prostitutes in garrison towns and ports […] while refusing to impose periodic genital examination of the enlisted men who were their clients".[1456] These, of course, were the real major source of the spreading of the disease. Yet, the 1857 report of the Royal Commission on the Health of Army, which eventually led to the approval of the Acts, "specifically called for the discontinuance of the periodic genital examination of soldiers, on the grounds that it destroyed the men's self-respect".[1457] The same empathy was never directed at prostitutes, of course. In fact, quite the opposite. And blame had everything

[1454] BRANDT, Allan M., "AIDS and Metaphor: Toward the Social Meaning of Epidemic Disease", p. 429.
[1455] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 78.
[1456] WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, p. 23.
[1457] WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, p. 74.

to do with it. So, for instance, when speaking of the arbitrary right Parisian civil authority had to imprison prostitutes without trial, Parent-Duchâtelet argued that "civil liberties are a privilege that prostitutes renounce when 'they abandon themselves to the disorder of the passions and to all the excesses of a dissolute life'".[1458] And W.R. Greg in England expressed the same claim when dismissing "the objection that the sanitary supervision of prostitutes, involving the periodic inspection and confinement of prostitutes in lock hospitals, constituted an infringement on their personal liberty."[1459] In his view,

> the same rule of natural law which justifies the officer in shooting a plague-stricken sufferer who breaks through a cordon sanitaire justifies him in arresting and confining the syphilitic prostitute who, if not arrested, would spread infection all around her.[1460]

Medical practice was not immune to the denial to prostitutes of a type empathy that was easily accorded to others. A good example is the use of the speculum to diagnose gonorrhea and syphilis. Whereas this instrument was commonly used "among Parisian specialists as a means of examining inscribed prostitutes for venereal disease and of applying caustic lotions to local lesions",[1461] the attempt to introduce it in general gynecological practice in England was met with strong opposition, for being perceived as a degrading act, which "inflicted mental and physical pain on the female sufferer".[1462] Such pain and suffering, however, was only an issue in relation to virtuous women, never being even considered when what was at stake was the "instrumental rape" of prostitutes. In fact, there seemed to be an absolute indifference to the prostitute's pain and suffering. That is what nineteenth century scientific studies of prostitutes clearly show. Among them, the examination of the bodies and vaginas of thousands of prostitutes by Parent-Duchâtelet and his followers and, even more shockingly, Cesare Lombroso's study on prostitutes' (lesser) sensibility to pain, in which prostitutes were tortured through electrodes "attached to their hands, tongs, noses, foreheads,

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[1458] PARENT-DUCHÂTELET, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste, *De la Prostitution dans la Ville de Paris, Vol. II*, p. 382, as cited in BERNHEIMER, Charles, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 29.

[1459] WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, p. 43.

[1460] GREG, W. R., "Prostitution", p. 491, as cited in WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, pp. 43-4.

[1461] WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, p. 56

[1462] *Idem*, p. 57.

thighs, stomachs, breasts, and genitals, and graded electric shocks were applied to them."[1463] Prostitutes were, thus, a paradigmatic case of bodies that did not matter, of lives that were not deemed worth protecting, saving, grieving. It was as if, as Judith Butler puts it, they did not qualify as fully human.[1464]

It is unsurprising then that when, in 1888, "Jack the Ripper" brutally murdered five prostitutes in London, leaving behind their mutilated bodies, the victims soon "became unsympathetic objects of pity for radicals and conservatives alike."[1465] On the one hand, public worry was channeled into respectable women. After all, prostitutes were just "drunken, vicious, miserable wretches whom it was almost a charity to relieve of the penalty of existence".[1466] In fact, there were even theories that the murderer was a prostitute, for prostitutes, "in the words of one influential commentator, were so 'unsexed' and depraved that they were capable of the most heinous crimes".[1467] On the other hand, many "blamed 'women of evil life' for bringing the murders on themselves",[1468] and that led to the idea – shared by the police – that respectable women had nothing to fear.[1469] And it also led to "renewed demands for the reintroduction of state-regulated prostitution to restore order".[1470] First, because of a general idea that focus in dealing with the problem should be on the causes rather than on the symptoms,[1471] which was how the murders came to be seen: "a product of a diseased environment whose 'neglected human refuse' bred crime."[1472] And second, because, as cleric and social reformer Canon Barnett put it, "the 'disorderly and depraved lives of the women' […] were more 'appalling' than the actual murders."[1473]

[1463] ROBERTS, Nickie, *Whores in History: Prostitution in Western Society*, p. 230.
[1464] BUTLER, Judith, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, p. 16.
[1465] WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, p. 201.
[1466] PMG, 10 Sept. 1888, as cited in WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, p. 200.
[1467] Letter to the Editor, SJG, 12 Nov. 1888, as cited in WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, p. 218.
[1468] *Star,* 8 Sept. 1888, as cited in WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, p. 218.
[1469] WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, p. 224.
[1470] *Idem*, p. 199.
[1471] *Idem*, p. 226.
[1472] *Idem*, p. 195.
[1473] *The Times,* 16 Nov. 1888, as cited in WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, p. 226.

Such an utter indifference with the prostitutes' lives and suffering testify to a vision of prostitutes as a kind of subhuman creatures. This is what Parent-Duchâtelet discloses with his multiple references to the civilized society outside of which he is convinced prostitutes decide to live in. He expressly speaks of them as "a class that separates itself from society, renouncing it, and, by scandalous conduct, brazenly and constantly public, declares its abjuration of that society and of the common laws that govern it".[1474] It is interesting to see how a single declaration can be so expressive of the articulation between several of abjection's functions. Here, blame, norms, and the idea of community are brought together in justifying the lack of empathy implied in a treatment not admitted in relation to other human beings. The idea is that because prostitutes violate fundamental (moral) norms of "civilized society" they are the ones to blame for the treatment "civilized society" accords them. The idea of being outside "our" community, the idea of prostitutes as outcasts, is also all too present. And so, it is really fascinating to find out that Parent-Duchâtelet's declaration is introduced precisely by the idea of abjection. His exact words are: "the state of abjection of a class that separates itself from society […]".[1475] Words that mingle abjection in its two senses: as a condition of lewdness and as a state of being outside the community to which that who is allowed to speak belongs to. And also, words through which the process of abjecting abject prostitutes comes to be rationally and emotionally justified.

3.4. Abjecting

We have, in the previous section, talked about the two major forms by which societies deal with Others. Zygmund Bauman refers to them as assimilation and exclusion.[1476] The first consists in erasing in othered people the differences that distinguish them from the norm. With that aim, conformity with the society's normative standard is both promoted and enforced. The second, instead, refers to what, in my view, are three very different strategies

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[1474] PARENT-DUCHÂTELET, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste, *De la Prostitution dans la Ville de Paris, Vol. I*, pp. 26-27, as cited in BERNHEIMER, Charles, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 28.
[1475] *Ibidem*.
[1476] BAUMAN, Zygmunt, "Making and Unmaking of Strangers", p. 2.

of managing Others. Let us remind them: 1) expulsion "beyond the frontiers of the managed and manageable territory"; 2) confinement "within the visible walls of the ghettos or behind the invisible"; and 3) physical destruction.[1477] With this precision on the different strategies exclusion comprises, what Bauman describes seems to reflect in a most accurate manner the way in which prostitutes have been treated throughout history.

We have defined abjection as both a condition and a process. As a condition, abjection designates the meaning of lowness, wretchedness, and repulsiveness Others are endowed with. Until now, the present section has been mainly focused on showing the meaning as abject-Other through which nineteenth century eyes saw the prostitute. It is my claim that her representation cannot be adequately understood if not in strict connection with that abject condition. In fact, the condition as abject-Other is, in my view, the very core of the prostitute's representation in the nineteenth century. My aim now is to move from the analysis of abjection as a condition to the examination of abjection as a process. A process of casting off, repelling, and expelling those in condition of wretchedness and repulsiveness.

Silvia Federici has told us of how modernity met the prostitute with criminalization and death.[1478] Her rejection as female identity,[1479] together with the general attack on women's reproductive rights,[1480] which were part of a general movement towards "the exclusion of women from the sphere of socially recognized work and monetary relations" and the "imposition of maternity upon them",[1481] culminated with the prostitute's criminalization, atrocious punishments, and death.[1482] As Federici further elaborates,

> Everywhere, between 1530 and 1560, town brothels were closed and prostitutes, especially streetwalkers, were subjected to severe penalties: banishment, flogging, and other cruel forms of chastisement. Among them was "the ducking stool" or *acabussade* – "a piece of grim theatre," as Nickie Roberts describes it – whereby the victims were tied up, sometimes they were forced into a cage, and then were repeatedly immersed in

[1477] *Ibidem*.
[1478] FEDERICI, Silvia, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation*, p. 197.
[1479] *Ibidem*.
[1480] *Idem*, p. 214.
[1481] *Idem*, p. 94.
[1482] *Idem*, p. 214.

> rivers or ponds, till they almost drowned. Meanwhile, in 16th-century France, the raping of a prostitute ceased to be a crime. In Madrid, as well, it was decided that female vagabonds and prostitutes should not be allowed to stay and sleep in the streets and under the porticos of the town, and if caught should be given a hundred lashes, and then *should be banned from the city for six years* in addition to having their heads and eyebrows shaved.[1483]

Furthermore, in England, for instance,

> they were branded on the forehead with hot irons in a manner reminiscent of the "devil's mark," and they were whipped and shaved like witches. In Germany, the prostitute could be *drowned, burned or buried alive*. Here, too, she was shaved — hair was viewed as a favorite seat of the devil. At times her nose was cut off, a practice of Arab origin, used to punish "crimes of honor" and inflicted also on women charged with adultery.[1484]

While the atrocious punishments prostitutes were subjected to at this time are, to my eyes, another clear evidence of the lack of empathy and the subhuman status to which the prostitute's condition as abject-Other relegated her, my interest at this point rests on two of the punishments reported by Federici: banishment and death. The reason for my interest is these punishments' perfect correspondence with Bauman's first and third form of exclusion of Others. And whereas these are nowhere to be seen in nineteenth century Europe official policy, they are witness to the general process of abjection of prostitutes, which, in the nineteenth century, took mainly the form of confinement. The regulationist system, which arose in France and quickly spread throughout Europe during the century,[1485] both imprisoned prostitutes and confined them "behind the invisible".

Enclosure and invisibility were, in fact, the basic principles of the regulationist system. As I see it, they were at the very root of the system's whole architecture. As Corbin puts it, the application of those principles led to a system organized around four enclosed places:

[1483] My emphasis. *Idem*, p. 94.
[1484] My emphasis. *Idem*, p. 214.
[1485] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 111.

> the "house," the hospital, the prison, and, if required, the refuge or establishment where a prostitute could repent of her life and find some rehabilitation. She would circulate from one to the other in the new enclosed carriage, to which[,as we know,] Parent-Duchâtelet attached great importance […].[1486]

The axis of the system was, as Corbin tells us, the brothel – the "tolerated house" as it was named in French –, which was meant at concentrating vice behind closed doors and away from public eyes.[1487] "In 1829, Mangin, the Parisian prefect, would even try to enclose in this network all the prostitutes whom he had succeeded, for several months, in prohibiting from the streets".[1488] Ideally, brothels would only be allowed in certain districts. Yet, in Paris, they were instead scattered around the city, its characteristics being adapted to the neighborhood in which they were located, so they could succeed in passing unnoticed. [1489] The way the brothel worked was also meant at maximum concealment:

> The house was to be enclosed; entry could be gained only through a dual-door system; the windows were to be of frosted glass and barred. As far as possible placement of rooms on the ground level was to be avoided, thus increasing isolation. The girls would be allowed out only on rare occasions, and medical check-ups would take place in the house[1490]

The politics of invisibility was equally applied to women who, instead of joining a *maison de tolérance*, exercised prostitution independently. For instance, in Nancy, since 1874, by-laws established that

> the windows of apartments where independent prostitutes live must be glazed with frosted glass and remain permanently shut, unless they have lockable shutters ... Inside

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[1486] *Idem*, p. 10.
[1487] *Ibidem*.
[1488] CORBIN, Alain, "Commercial Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France: A System of Images and Regulations", p. 214.
[1489] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 10.
[1490] *Ibidem*.

> their homes, prostitutes will abstain from all noise, brawling, and generally whatever might attract the attention of neighbors and passers-by.[1491]

And it was such policy that led to the harsh restrictions to the presence and behavior of prostitutes in public spaces.

> In Paris they were forbidden to solicit or even to appear in the street or in public places before 7 P.M. and after 10 or 11 P.M. They had to avoid provocative dress and behavior and could not circulate wearing a hat.[… They were also] forbidden to touch passers-by in any way, to provoke them by gestures or by obscene words, and above all to attract attention from their windows. [… As late as 1904,] 351 by-laws forbade them to enter a café, 329 to loiter in a public place, especially in the vicinity of schools and barracks, 247 to appear at their windows, 51 to use obscene language that could be overheard, and 62 to keep children in their living quarters; 334 by-laws laid clown the times at which they could walk the streets; 17 forbade them to go out in open carriages or to travel in carriages with men, 13 to attend the theater without permission. At La Rochelle an order of 1886 provided that they should keep to certain parts of the auditorium assigned to them by the commissioner of police.[1492]

Let us now move into the prison. Premised as it was upon the idea of prostitution as necessary evil, the regulationist system tolerated rather than prohibited prostitution. As a result, as Corbin explains in relation to France, "prostitution was not in itself an offense."[1493] Yet, the quantity of prohibitions surrounding prostitution and, more specifically, the behavior of prostitutes was such that prison was an ever-present reality in the life of any prostitute under that system. In fact, prison was for Parent-Duchâtelet, the "architect" of *Regulationism*, "an indispensable element" of that system.[1494] It is unsurprising then that, as we have seen before, he supported the arbitrary right of police officers to imprison, without trial, any woman who they thought to be soliciting on the street.[1495]

[1491] *Idem*, p. 85.
[1492] *Ibidem*.
[1493] *Idem*, p. 100.
[1494] *Idem*, p. 13.
[1495] BERNHEIMER, Charles, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 29.

When in prison, in addition to being strictly segregated from other inmates,[1496] prostitutes were severely restricted in their contact with the outside world. In Paris, for instance, "their correspondence was opened and they were allowed to communicate with visitors only through the parlor griller."[1497] Corbin speaks of the harsher treatment that the Sisters of Marie-Joseph gave the prostitutes in relation to other prisoners: neither were they allowed visitors nor could they receive clothes and food from the outside.[1498] Prisons, however, did not exclusively perform the function of hiding, separating, and excluding the prostitutes from the rest of society. Prostitutes were further divided among themselves according to criteria of "social and geographic background and sexual behavior".[1499] As such, Parent-Duchâtelet argued that prisons should avoid mixing what, for him, were very different types of prostitutes: "lesbians, the lowest category of prostitutes," should be kept apart from "'ordinary prostitutes,' 'newcomers to the profession,' and young women from the provinces."[1500]

The hospital was another institution used as a means to confine and conceal the prostitute. In fact, in Paris, "[t]he infirmary where prostitutes were treated for venereal diseases […] was […] part of the penitentiary establishment at Saint-Lazare",[1501] and, in there, they were prisoners like any others. They could only leave when the department head was convinced of their cure,[1502] "an opinion that had to be confirmed by a second medical examination carried out by the dispensary physicians."[1503] And also here they "were almost totally cut-off from outside world[:] visits took place as if through a convent grille, under the supervision of the nuns, on Tuesdays and Fridays between midday and 2 P.M.".[1504] In addition, segregation was equally in place. "[S]pecial departments in certain general hospitals or infirmaries in prisons" were established for prostitutes,[1505] and "[i]n some of the larger towns,

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[1496] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 109
[1497] *Idem*, pp. 109-10.
[1498] *Idem*, p. 110.
[1499] *Idem*, p. 12.
[1500] *Ibidem*.
[1501] *Idem*, p. 93.
[1502] *Idem*, p. 94
[1503] *Idem*, p. 95.
[1504] *Ibidem*.
[1505] *Idem*, pp. 86-7.

[…] a distinction was made from prostitutes suffering from venereal disease and members of the general public suffering from it."[1506] Parent-Duchâtelet further demanded "the setting up of a special hospital for prostitutes with venereal disease" and criticized both "the introduction of venereal departments in the general hospitals and the mingling of sick prostitutes and 'unregistered girls' within the same establishment."[1507]

The prison and the hospital had, however, functions other than confinement and concealment. One of them was vigilance. As Corbin tells us, supervision was another essential pillar of the regulationist system.[1508] This seems an inevitable consequence of the depiction of the prostitute as a source of danger. If prostitution had to be tolerated, then it also had to be closely supervised due to the threat it posed to society at large. And so, while prostitutes were made invisible to the rest of society, they became absolutely transparent to the system.[1509] From the compulsory registration and health checks to the brothel keeper and its very architecture, not to mention, of course, the prison, the hospital and the refuge – these were all designed to watch prostitutes closely at all times. Supervision was, in addition, "strictly hierarchized and compartmentalized". As Corbin demonstrates, "[t]he desire for panopticism, discussed by Michel Foucault in the case of the prison, finds expression in a quasi-obsessional way in regulationism."[1510]

Another function of the prison and the hospital was rehabilitation. The same way refuges, whose primary function was the reform of prostitutes, also functioned as places of confinement, so did the prison and the hospital were also thought as instruments of rehabilitation. Parent-Duchâtelet's defense of hospitals exclsuive to prostitutes was indeed based, among others, on the idea that the hospital was a place for preparation for repentance. And the same rationale was behind the demand of a strict separation between different types of prostitutes both in the hospital and in prison. It is unsurprising, then, that, for him, therapeutic action was aimed at moral good as much as, if not more than, physical cure.[1511]

[1506] *Idem*, p. 87.
[1507] *Idem*, p. 12.
[1508] *Idem*, p. 9; CORBIN, Alain, "Commercial Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France: A System of Images and Regulations", p. 214.
[1509] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 9.
[1510] *Ibidem*.
[1511] *Idem*, p. 12.

His envisioning of the prison followed the same logic: by making “it possible to reveal of the deep impulses of personality”, the prison would also allow to prepare the prostitute for repentance.[1512]

Yet, if the prison and the hospital were places for *preparation* for repentance and rehabilitation, the refuge was the main and proper institution for its achievement. We have seen in Part Two how the rehabilitation of prostitutes in these institutions operated by means of a program of physical and moral disciplining, which was aimed at transforming them in respectable wives and mothers and perfect angels of the house. Through domestic work, they would relearn the values and skills proper to respectable women.[1513] Linda Mahood´s analysis of the Glasgow Magdalene Asylum confirms this. She details, first, how the daily routine at the Asylum “was designed on the principle of an efficiently run home, characteristic of ‘respectable’ family life in the households of the directors.[1514] Then, the behavior demanded of the inmates was one typical of respectable middle-class ladies:

> [they] were expected to observe a ‘becoming silence at all times.’ No ‘snuff. . . no letters, or parcels, or messages’ were allowed in the house and felonies such as swearing, fighting, and lying (which were always a problem) were punished either by expulsion, solitary confinement, or hard physical labour.[1515]

In addition, “inmates were taught a morality centred on self-sacrifice and duty” and they “learned [… their] appropriate gender role” through the sanctioning of “female inferiority, self-abnegation and duty”.[1516] Finally, their routine. As Mahood, puts it,

> what is striking about the evening curriculum and special events is the overall 'gentility' and similarity to the manner in which middle-class women might spend their evenings. The emphasis on gentility reflects how closely penitentiaries associated middle-class

[1512] *Idem*, p. 14.
[1513] MORT, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830*, p. 63.
[1514] MAHOOD, Linda, *The Magdalenes: Prostitution in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 78.
[1515] *Idem*, p. 80.
[1516] *Idem*, p. 83

> manners with reform. It was not intended that inmates become learned, or 'ladies', but rather they should appreciate the values associated with being a 'lady' […].[1517]

Middle-class standards of feminine propriety were, in fact, the standard upon which the judgment of the rehabilitation of the prostitute was made. Only when the prostitute incorporated and converted to those standards, was she considered to be morally reformed.[1518] What Mahood describes is a perfect fit to what Corbin has claimed of the regulationist system as a whole: that "[t]he history of regulationism is that of a tireless effort to *discipline* the prostitute".[1519] What I would add is that it is also the history of a particular discipline: that of the norm of femininity.

In speaking of reform, we are moving on into a different strategy of management of abject-Others: assimilation. Reform, then, is not, strictly speaking, a mode of abjecting, of excluding or casting out abject-Others. In fact, it might even be said to be, on the contrary, a mode of inclusion. Still, the reform of prostitutes is intrinsically bound up with abjection. First, because it is abjection, in the sense of condition, that stands as its cause. And second, because it could also be argued that reform is a mode of exclusion in the sense that the abject-Other is transformed into the norm, thereby ceasing to exist. On this view, there is not much difference between assimilation and physical destruction, and if the latter is classified as a form of exclusion – of abjecting –, there seems to be no reason why the former could not equally be so. If we accept this reasoning, the difference between assimilation and other forms of exclusion would be its object and nature. On one side, what is excluded is not the person herself but her condition as abject-Other; on the other, the exclusion is not physical or spatial/geographical but rather behavioral.

Either way, a certain ambivalence between inclusion and exclusion seems to be a characteristic of the way prostitutes have been dealt by official policy in the nineteenth century. Evidence of this is the fact that regulationism both fuses and disturbs the two models of power Michel Foucault has referred to as "exclusion of lepers" and "inclusion of plague victims". The strategies of the former model seem to have been entirely appropriated by the

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[1517] *Idem*, p. 84.
[1518] *Idem*, p. 85.
[1519] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 9.

regulationist system: 1) the distancing, the "rule of no contact between one individual (or group) and another"; 2) the casting of "these individuals […] beyond the limits of the community"; 3) the constitution of those two groups, "each foreign to the other"; 4) the disqualification of the individuals excluded, which, in Foucault's view, might be moral or not – and in the case of the prostitutes it definitely was –, but it is certainly juridical and political;[1520] and finally, 5) the aim of purification of the community as the reason for the exclusion of the "disqualified" group.[1521] Yet, regulationism has also incorporated some important characteristics of the second model: the marking out and closing-off of a certain territory,[1522] which is meticulous portioned and "object of a fine and detailed analysis", together with the exercise upon it of a power which is continuous both in the sense of being pyramidically and hierarchically organized and in the sense that surveillance is exercised uninterruptedly, and the recording of information in big registers,[1523] and finally the intent of normalization[1524] – this was all undeniably part of the system governing prostitutes in the nineteenth century.

Still, Foucault's account of these different strategies of power seems to leave out what, in my understanding, are some of the most important elements in the management of prostitutes at that time. Such management seems instead to fall neatly into what Lauren Berlant, drawing on Walter Benjamin, has called hygienic governmentality: a mode of government which operates "by asserting that an abject population threatens the common good and must be rigorously governed and monitored by all sectors of society."[1525] Berlant speaks of the "wielding of images and narratives", which, as we have seen in some detail, in the case of the prostitute were widely disseminated. Those were images and narratives of both wretchedness and danger, which lied at the root of the regulationist system, being absolutely determinant of the way in which such system was thought and applied.

[1520] FOUCAULT, Michel, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*, p. 43.
[1521] *Idem*, p. 44.
[1522] *Idem*, pp. 44-5.
[1523] *Idem*, p. 45.
[1524] *Idem*, pp. 43, 46-9.
[1525] BERLANT, Lauren, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*, p. 175.

3.5. Conclusion: The Prostitute as the Nineteenth Century Female Monster

> All human societies have a conception of the monstrous-feminine, of what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject.[1526]

Michel Foucault has, in my view brilliantly, connected the nineteenth-century sexual abnormal to the figure of the monster. As he puts it, somewhere around the end of the eighteenth century, "[t]he monstrous individual and the sexual deviant link up" and the figure of the sexual monster emerged.[1527] Foucault has further described the monster in a most accurate manner: "[t]he monster combines the impossible and the forbidden."[1528] It violates at once the laws of nature and the laws of society.[1529] In a single sentence, then, Foucault manages to capture what Noël Carroll and Jeffrey Cohen, coming from very different areas, have elaborated in depth about the monster: that the monster is the Other to the norm in both its descriptive and normative sense. And Foucault has also approached the monster from a much illuminating perspective: not that of fiction or myth but rather that of the relations between systems of power and knowledge, which was the object of my analysis in the Part Two.

Foucault, however, fell short in two most significant respects. The first is the affective and symbolic economy the monster both engenders and is a part of, and which Carroll and Cohen have skillfully grasped: the monster is not just the Other; the monster is the abject-Other, which repulses and disgusts for its wretchedness and lowness, which is hated for its defiance of life as it is and as it should be, and which at once horrifies and fascinates. The second is a much-noted problem of Foucault's analyses: the masculine perspective masked of apparent gender neutrality. As I hope I was able to show in Part Two, in what concerns sexuality, this is a crucial and ineludible downfall, as sexuality and sexual norms are in no way gender neutral but rather specific and very different for men and women. And if that is so, and if the monster and the sexual deviant have, as Foucault claimed, fused in the nineteenth century,

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[1526] CREED, Barbara, *The Monstruous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, p. 1.
[1527] FOUCAULT, Michel, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*, p 60.
[1528] *Idem*, p. 56.
[1529] *Idem*, pp. 55-6.

then there is a lot he has missed in the analysis of those two figures. His lack of attention to the prostitute is, to my mind, a clear evidence of precisely that. For the prostitute, as the essential female sexual abnormal, was also a most crucial figure of the nineteenth century monstruous landscape. The prostitute, in fact, was, at that time, the ultimate female monster.

The aim of the section that now approaches its end has been to show the monstruous nature of the representation of the prostitute in the nineteenth century. To talk about the monster is, of course, just another way of referring to the abject-Other, since that which makes a monster and that which the monster elicits is precisely what makes and what is elicited by the abject-Other. My preference for the latter expression is merely owed to its less fantastic character and its more literal or at least more direct reference to everything that is at stake when someone is socially made into an abject-Other. Where we tend to think of monsters as creatures of fiction with no relation to culture and society, the abject-Other has been elaborated in social and political sciences as a very real condition of those many social outsiders to dominant norms and cultures. Still, the idea of monster conveys some important meanings attached to the representation of the prostitute, which might not become so clear when one talks of the abject-Other. One of them is the idea of (abnormal) type of person, the sense of biological destiny. As discussed in Part Two, the prostitute was, in the nineteenth century, definitely endowed with that meaning. The attribution of special and abnormal physical and psychological characteristics was both expression of and cause to it. But the idea that the prostitute suffered from the (non-existent) hereditary syphilis was crucial in the sedimentation of that meaning, as it both rationalize it and medically explained it. Through it, the prostitute's sexual difference would be linked to her very nature as a deformity, and she would emerge as a mental, moral, and physical degenerate.[1530] As a real-life monster, therefore. Repulsive, revolting, abject, as all monsters necessarily are.

Throughout the present section, I have attempted to show how the prostitute fills in all the boxes of what I have previously referred to as elicitors of abjection. First, ambiguity in relation to cultural categories and the violation of deep-seated cultural norms: the prostitute, with her abnormal female sexuality, infringes the heterosexual norm which institutes the most

[1530] SPONGBERG, Mary, "Femininizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse", p. 181.

basic categories of human beings, that of men and women. As such, she becomes a kind of androgynous being, with her body and psychic being strongly represented as masculine. As we have seen, the fusion of different types of individuals is probably the most typical characteristic of monsters, as described by Carrol,[1531] and it can equally be observed in relation to the grotesque body. In fact, as Mikhail Bakhtin tells us, "[t]he androgyne theme was [a] popular [one] in Rebelais' time."[1532]

And speaking of the grotesque body, this is a second and most crucial elicitor of abjection to which, as previously elaborated on, the prostitute has been very strongly attached. The starting point was, of course, sexuality, but other physical and psychological stereotypes, and even the way she was metaphorically spoken of and understood, have inextricably linked the prostitute to the grotesque, disgusting, and intolerable body. In addition, the grotesque body further associated the prostitute to uncivilization and animality, a third elicitor of abjection. The same stereotypes observed in her depiction as grotesque are now mobilized in favor of her meaning as primitive, degenerate, and uncivilized. Once again, it cannot go unnoticed as the idea of grotesque body, and also that of uncivilized, is very closely connected with that of the monster. In fact, many of the motifs Carroll describes in monsters seem an exact reproduction of the ones Bakhtin identifies in his study.

As I believe it became clear by now, sexuality – the fourth elicitor of abjection – lies at the root of all others, and it can equally be said to be inextricably linked to the fifth one: morality. After all, the prostitute, with her transgressive sexuality, violated some of the most cherished moral norms nineteenth century Europe inherited from many centuries of Christian tradition. And so, at that time, she would become not only a sexual and physical monster, but also a moral one. It is no wonder then that the prostitute was turned, by that society, into a source of dreadful danger. She was, after all, that which did "not respect borders, positions, [or] rules", bringing chaos into "identity, system, [and] order."[1533] And she could not, therefore, but be abjected from respectable and civilized society, either by exclusion and confinement within the invisible or by elimination through reform and rehabilitation.

[1531] CARROLL, Noël, *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, p. 44.
[1532] BAKHTIN, Mikhail, *Rebelais and His World*, p. 323.
[1533] KRISTEVA, Julia, *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 4.

There is a final matter I would like to add. It has to do with the fascination aroused by the figure of the prostitute. I have so far focused mainly on the disgust and horror raised by her representation as abject and monstruous being. And, at the end of Part Two, we have also become aware of the hatred the prostitute inspired in the nineteenth century. Eric Trudgill's account of how "she was treated as some kind of moral monster" and was "victim of brutal ostracism and persecution" can now be put under a different light. As it can the relationship he established between that treatment, that emotion and the fear of sexual female immorality of which the prostitute became a scapegoat.[1534] It all belonged to the same affective, ideological, and material economy I have been referring to as abjection. Fascination is a crucial part of it. One which was an undeniable mark the prostitute's representation and life at that time.

The ubiquity of the prostitute and her world in the novels and paintings of that period has been widely noted.[1535] Corbin relates it with what he says to have been a "collective neurosis" with female sexuality, "that found expression through a vertiginous attraction for, as well as a morbid fear" of prostitution.[1536] It inevitably comes to mind here Carroll's and Cohen's explanations for the attraction the monster elicits. The first argues that the monster arises interest and attention for being the Other to the norm in its descriptive sense. Applying it to the prostitute, it seems most reasonable to think that her "unnatural" sexuality, standing as it was "outside the bounds of knowledge",[1537] would elicit the desire to learn about it and that learning would generate gratification and pleasure.[1538] Cohen, instead, explains the attraction generated by the monster with its position as Other to the norm in its normative sense. This account can also be perfectly applied to the prostitute. As forbidden body, it is not difficult to imagine her appeal "as temporary egress from constrain."[1539]

[1534] TRUDGILL, Eric, *Madonnas and Magdalens: The Origins and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes*, p. 104.
[1535] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 126; BERNHEIMER, Charles, Figures of Ill-Repute, p. 2; NEAD, Linda, "The Magdalen in Modern Times: The Mythology of the Fallen Woman in Pre-Raphaelite Painting", p. 26.
[1536] CORBIN, Alain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, p. 126.
[1537] CARROLL, Noël, *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, p. 184.
[1538] *Idem*, pp. 181-2.
[1539] COHEN, Jeffrey Jerome, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", p. 17.

Charles Bernheimer has a slightly different explanation for the ubiquity of the prostitute in nineteenth century literature and art. He speaks of the prostitute's "function in stimulating artistic strategies to control and dispel her fantasmatic threat to male mastery."[1540] And with this we are once again led to the figure of the monster. This time, to a specifically female monster. Speaking of the monster in the context of horror film, Barbara Creed has successfully demonstrated that the reasons why a female monster "horrifies her audience are quite different from the reasons why the male monster" is able to do so.[1541] In fact, she even adopts the expression monstruous-feminine to convey the idea that the female monster is not a simple reversal of her male counterpart. In Creed's view, then, "when a woman is represented as monstruous it is almost always in relation to her mothering and reproductive functions" or then – and this is what interests me here – in relation to her sexuality. A sexuality that appears under a very specific light: that of castration.[1542] One cannot avoid thinking here of the depiction of the prostitute as simultaneously nymphomaniac, sadist, and frigid, as the combination of those three sexual perversions were synonym precisely of the attribution to prostitutes of an intent, whether conscious or not, of male castration. This comes out very clearly in the already mentioned paper that German psychoanalyst Karl Abraham wrote on the female castration complex. It is worth, for this reason, quote him here once again:

> By taking the active, dominating role and appearing to care about sex as much as or even more than a man, the prostitute, who typically is frigid despite her outward appearance of active sexual interest, is making conscious what is unconscious in her proper, middle-class sisters - the wish to be *more* than a man and more sexually potent than any man.[1543]

Creed both observes and demonstrates that the "[f]ear of the castrating female genitals pervades the myths and legends of many cultures."[1544] And Louise Kaplan has shown how in any discussion of sexual perversions the theme of men's fear of female genitals "keeps

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[1540] BERNHEIMER, Charles, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 2.
[1541] CREED, Barbara, *The Monstruous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, p. 3.
[1542] *Idem*, p. 7.
[1543] KAPLAN, Louise J., *Female Perversions: The Temptations of Emma Bovary*, p. 180
[1544] CREED, Barbara, *The Monstruous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, p. 105.

reappearing in different guises”. [1545] As she says, it is as if there was “something innately horrifying about the vagina, something about that life-giving passage of sexuality and procreation that has perpetually brought to men’s minds the stigmata of humiliation, degradation, mutilation, and death.” [1546] Given the connection between danger and disgust, it is rather unsurprising that, as William Miller has observed, vaginas have a long tradition in patriarchal society in “evok[ining] disgust and horror in their own right”.[1547] That is most certainly what lies at the root of the *vagina dentata* as one of the most prominent forms the female monster assumes.[1548] As Creed argues, it “clearly points to male fears and phantasies about the female genitals as a trap,” which “promises paradise in order to ensnare […its male] victims.”[1549] In it, then, desire and horror come together in a clear expression of the affective ambiguity, which is but another of abjection’s characteristics. To finish with the topic that motivated this small digression into the male fear of castration, I must say how fascinating it is to think that, in the nineteenth century, the female abnormal came to embody the fears with which femininity at large haunted men. One cannot help to think if that was precisely what led an extremely patriarchal culture to constitute the threatening prostitute as abject-Other.

> In writing this book [on the figure of the prostitute in the nineteenth century] I had to confront powerful expressions of disgust for female sexuality. These become increasingly repellent as the century progresses and as imagery of infectious disease and biological rot comes to supplement the already widespread images of animality, carnality, regression, and *castration* associated by men with women’s sexual function.[1550]

[1545] KAPLAN, Louise J., *Female Perversions: The Temptations of Emma Bovary*, p. 44.
[1546] *Ibidem*.
[1547] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 102.
[1548] CREED, Barbara, *The Monstruous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, p. 7.
[1549] *Idem*, p. 106.
[1550] My emphasis. BERNHEIMER, Charles, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 4.

4. The Abject-Other in Abolitionist Feminism

> A philosophical statement always involves us in some trafficking with the meaning of a term or an assertion, pushed to its furthest consequences. It makes explicit what is implicit in our beliefs or denials – that is, what we are assuming, usually without realizing it, when we make what seems like a plausible assertion.[1551]

We are finally back to abolitionist feminism. As this work's target, the abolitionist feminist discourse was my first step, and it will be my last. Whereas I first approached it with a descriptive intent, my aim now is to look, behind the arguments set forth in Part One, for the positioning of the prostitute as Other and the footprints of abjection in relation to her. In order to do that, I will mobilize those arguments in a very different order and according to a very distinct logic. One that is not emancipatory but rather patriarchal.

Abolitionist feminist's arguments against prostitution are multifold. In Part One, I identified three main types of arguments: the meaning of sexuality, objectification, and freedom. It is my contention now that all of them presuppose a specific standard of sexuality which is uphold in an essentialist manner. Such standard corresponds to the good woman's sexuality. And since such standard is essentialized, the good woman is transformed into the subject Woman: what *all* women *are* like, what femaleness in sexual terms *is*. That places the woman who affirms to freely choose prostitution, the "bad woman", as the Other. And, as a result, abjection comes into play.

4.1. The Standard of Sexuality at Stake

The purpose of this section is to prove the claim that abolitionist feminists uphold the good woman standard of sexuality. I will attempt to do that in two main steps. The first consists of

[1551] LANGER, Susanne K., "Why Philosophy? *To Clarify Concepts, Not to State Facts – Such Is the Philosopher's Purpose*".

showing that behind the abolitionist argument about the objectification of the prostitute lie two standards of sexuality. The second is about showing that only one of those standards is in fact operative. To show that is the case I will make use of comparison. More specifically, I will look into marriage and the labor contract to demonstrate that all abolitionist feminists say about prostitution they could also say – and in fact do so – of marriage and the labor contract in general, and so, the only thing that explains the singling out of prostitution by them is a standard of sexuality deemed incompatible with prostitution: the good woman sexuality.

4.1.1. What Lies Behind Objectification

As seen in Part One, abolitionist feminists put forward three claims concerning prostitution and objectification. The first concerns prostitution in itself, which is argued to be a form of sexual objectification. The second refers to prostitution as being a result, a consequence of women's sexual objectification more generally. And, finally, the third argues that prostitution is a cause to all women's sexual objectification. In my view, it is in the first version of this argument that the standards of sexuality at stake in abolitionist feminism can more clearly be identified, and so it is in this version that I will focus on the following lines.

To begin with, let us be reminded that objectification does not hold a single meaning within abolitionist feminism, being, instead, used in different senses and to refer to different wrongs and harms. I identified six different uses of objectification. The first concerns someone's use as a mean to another's ends, and the harm it refers to is the loss or decrease of autonomy. The second regards the reduction of the objectified person to a specific aspect of her being, which tackles the harm of denying someone's individuality, and which, in turn, results in the interchangeability and fungibility of people. The third use of objectification by abolitionist feminists regards depersonalization, and the wrong it refers to is the separation between individuals. In its fourth sense, objectification is used as a synonym of dehumanization, which is claimed to lead to the harm of physical and psychological ill-treatment. A fifth meaning of objectification is what I have called comparative downgrading, which equates it

with inequality in the enjoyment of rights and respect. And, finally, in a sixth sense, objectification is simply used as a synonym of commodification.

Unveiling the different senses with which objectification is used by abolitionist feminists has proved extremely useful in understanding the specific charges made against prostitution by means of the idea of objectification. For when saying something is objectifying one is certainly not saying that what is claimed to be objectifying actually and literally has the power to transform people into objects. What is really at stake in an accusation of objectification, then, is a treatment of people deemed incompatible with the treatment owed to every human being. A treatment which, on a more fundamental level, is simply wrong and harmful. And to understand what the treatment claimed to be wrong and harmful consists of leads us to the criteria based on which that treatment is evaluated as such. To be clearer, what I mean is that examining the specific wrongs and harms one is referring to through the idea of objectification inevitably takes us to the standard of rightness implicitly or explicitly uphold by the judgment of something as wrong and harmful, and thus objectifying. In this sense, then, the claim that prostitution is in itself a form of sexual objectification is inseparable from a conception of acceptable sex, from a standard of sexuality which one considers every human being is entitled to. And it is that standard of right sexuality that the analysis of the meanings of sexual objectification uncovers.

I identified two standards of sexuality behind abolitionist feminists' arguments concerning prostitution as a form of sexual objectification.

The first concerns desire and pleasure and imposes freedom in the choice of partners and sexual practices. It is the "chosen and wanted sex", to use Catherine Mackinnon's expression.[1552] This first standard can be concluded from arguments that use objectification in the first and fifth senses. Arguing that prostitution is objectifying because the prostitute is used as a means to another's sexual ends is to uphold a standard of right sexuality that equates it with freedom and choice, on the one side, and desire and pleasure, on the other. And the same can be said of arguments that use objectification to refer to the wrong of inequality in

[1552] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 281.

the enjoyment of rights. The rights at stake here are precisely those of expression of desire, pleasure, and, completely interwoven with it, the choice of partners and practices.

Carole Pateman puts the idea of the lack of desire and pleasure at the core of the definition of prostitution. According to her,

> [p]rostitution is the use of a woman's body by a man for his own satisfaction. There is no desire or satisfaction on the part of the prostitute. Prostitution is not mutual, pleasurable exchange of the use of bodies, but the unilateral use of a woman's body by a man in exchange for money.[1553]

Pateman further defines prostitution as the "unilateral subjection to sexual acts with the consolation of payment".[1554] In her view, there is not and there could never possibly be in prostitution "*mutual* physical attraction" and "*reciprocal* expression of desire".[1555] It is precisely this lack that characterizes it.

Mackinnon concurs. In her view, "the difference between prostituted people and those who buy and sell them are that one is served, the other serves".[1556] Prostitution is, thus, the "'you do what I say' sex".[1557] And, in her perspective, that is precisely what is sold in prostitution: power not sex. This is why sex needs to be clearly distinguished from prostitution. "Sex is supposed to be chosen and wanted".[1558] When that is the case, there is no money involved. The only thing you "get out of sex as such is that you are doing it."[1559] So, it seems to be fair to conclude that for Mackinnon money is incompatible with desire and pleasure.

The desire and pleasure standard of right sexuality is, of course, spoused, one way or another, by all the abolitionist feminists analyzed in this work. This standard, however, is not the only one they uphold. Arguments that use objectification in the second and third sense to refer to

[1553] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 198
[1554] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 563.
[1555] My emphasis. *Ibidem*.
[1556] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 291.
[1557] *Idem*, p. 294.
[1558] *Idem*, p. 281.
[1559] *Ibidem*.

fungibility and depersonalization in sex are a privileged route for uncovering a second standard of right sexuality, which equates sex with love and stable relationships.

Kathleen Barry, who speaks of objectifying sex as a depersonalized experience that separates the sexual experience from the person as a whole,[1560] directly opposes it to a sexual experience involving "the whole psychic, social, and spiritual being",[1561] and which is connected "with warmth, affection, love, [and] caring."[1562] She also characterizes the non-objectifying sexual experience as one of closeness, and closeness in two senses. First, in the sense of intimacy or privacy, which Barry understands as involving a limited quantity of people: "it can only be shared with those *few* people in which one trusts and wants to get to know us on that level";[1563] "not something to be given lightly but something that has to be earned", [1564] not something automatic, but something that "grows and is cultivated".[1565] And, second, in the sense of true and deep sharing, since, according to her, sex constitutes an "exchange of deeper parts of ourselves",[1566] which is not limited to the erotic but rather involves "the most sensitive parts of our physical and psychic being".[1567] It involves those ideas and thoughts that "stem from the very depths of my being and in a sense define a very important personal part of me."[1568]

This looks very much like the idea of romantic love described in Part Two. For a start, it is an idea about sex that goes much beyond it: it involves both an emotional element and a more psychological one. In this it recalls Anthony Giddens' characterization of romantic love's relation to sexuality: "[l]ove breaks with sexuality while embracing it".[1569] Then, what Barry describes in her version of non-objectifying sex sounds a lot like Eva Illouz' description of love as understood by Victorians: "a template for the authentic […] expression of their inner

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[1560] BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 266.
[1561] *Idem*, p. 267.
[1562] *Ibidem*.
[1563] My emphasis. *Ibidem*.
[1564] *Ibidem*.
[1565] *Ibidem*.
[1566] *Ibidem*.
[1567] *Ibidem*.
[1568] *Ibidem*.
[1569] GIDDENS, Anthony, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, p. 40.

self'.[1570] It is no wonder then that the sense of intimacy so dear to Barry's conception of right sexuality is, as Giddens tells us, equally present in romantic love.[1571] But there is more to it. The idea of a strong connection with another is of essence in both notions. Barry speaks of "privileged sharing"[1572] and we have already seen that the conception of romantic love has at its core a sense of unity, an associative quality, an idea of "meeting of souls".[1573] As I also elaborated on, the conceptualization of sexuality by the first sexologists attributed sex not only an individual and physical significance but also a social one, with sex being claimed to lead to interpersonal bonding.[1574]

This idea is particularly present in Margareth Radin's arguments against prostitution. In her view, (one of) the problem(s) with prostitution is the separateness arising from commodification, where just the opposite is true of noncommodified sex. Upholding, as Barry does, the idea of sex as a "sharing of selves",[1575] Radin maintains that "sex ideally diminishes separateness",[1576] thus supporting a normative conception of sexuality that connects sex with some kind of intimate relationship.

This, in turn, brings us back to the notion of romantic love, for, as Irving Singer says, "[r]omantic idealization of love between the sexes is frequently directed towards the attainment of a permanent and stable union."[1577] Behind it lies the idea of *non-interchangeability*: of the uniqueness and irreplaceability of the loved one.[1578] Ideas of romantic love have, of course, been subject to change. Yet, it is possible to say that in the final decades of the twentieth century, when the abolitionist feminist authors under analysis were writing, romantic love was still generally perceived as incompatible with a wide variety of partners. And precisely the same can be said of the present-day conception of love. This

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[1570] ILLOUZ, Eva, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, p. 29.
[1571] GIDDENS, Anthony, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, p. 45.
[1572] BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 267.
[1573] GIDDENS, Anthony, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, p. 45.
[1574] OOSTERHUIS, Harry, "Sexual Modernity in the Works of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll", p. 142.
[1575] RADIN, Margaret Jane, *Contested Commodities*, p. 94.
[1576] *Ibidem*.
[1577] SINGER, Irving, *The Nature of Love, Volume 2: Courtly and Romantic*, p. 299.
[1578] ILLOUZ, Eva, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, p. 3.

idea of "few" partners is, as we saw, very much present in the conception of right sexuality defended by Barry, who makes it a criterion of non-objectifying sexuality.

Another author who seems to uphold in her arguments against prostitution a standard of sexuality incompatible with a high multiplicity of partners is Andrea Dworkin. Prostitution, she says, "in and of itself is an abuse of a woman's body".[1579] When claiming that "[i]n prostitution no woman stays whole",[1580] Dworkin is not referring to psychological or emotional damage. She is specifically referring to the body: "nobody gets whole, because too much is taken away when the invasion is inside you, when the brutality is inside your skin."[1581] The idea of brutality could, of course, be an indication that Dworkin is in fact referring to physical violence. Yet not only does she expressly discard this possibility –

> Let me be clear. I am talking to you about prostitution per se, without more violence, without extra violence, without a woman being hit, without a woman being pushed. Prostitution in and of itself is an abuse of a woman's body. [1582]

– as when she defines prostitution, she does it not by reference to violence but by describing what could perfectly be a nonviolent and noncommodified type of sexuality involving multiple partners and desired and wanted practices:

> Prostitution is not an idea. It is the mouth, the vagina, the rectum, penetrated usually by a penis, sometimes hands, sometimes objects, by one man and then another and then another and then another and then another. That's what it is. [1583]

So here is my conclusion. Behind the argument on objectification, it is possible to uncover two standards of right sexuality at work: one is the desire and pleasure sexuality and the other is the one that attaches sex to romantic love and stable and intimate relationships. While the first is much more explicit, the second is present in a much surreptitiously manner. Still, when set against the backdrop of a definition of romantic love that involves elements such as the authentic expression of the inner self, intimacy and privacy, the sense of deep sharing and

[1579] DWORKIN, Andrea, "Prostitution and Male Supremacy", p. 3.
[1580] *Ibidem*.
[1581] *Ibidem*.
[1582] *Ibidem*.
[1583] *Idem*, p. 2.

association with another, and the non-interchangeability owed to the specialness of the beloved one, who, hence, cannot be easily replaced, the standard of sexuality that connects sex with love and stable and intimate relationships emerges very clearly. In what follows, I will attempt to demonstrate that it is this criteria of right sexuality rather than the "desire and pleasure sexuality" that justifies the abolitionist position against prostitution.

4.1.2. Selectivity

My reasoning starts from the singling out of prostitution among other institutions in relation to which the arguments used against prostitution are equally applicable. I am speaking specifically of marriage and the labor contract. And my contention is not merely a logical one. Abolitionist feminists do in fact direct against marriage and the labor contract many of the same – if not more – accusations they charge prostitution of. That is what I will aim at demonstrating in the next two subsections.

My point is that the reason for such singling out is the incompatibility of prostitution with the standard of sexuality that connects sex with romantic love and stable and intimate relationships. Whereas marriage is the appropriate domain of such criteria of right sexuality, the market and the public sphere are part of a strong cultural dichotomy which oppose it to love and intimacy. Such dichotomy is the object of the third subsection on selectivity, whereas the fourth will address its assimilation by abolitionist feminism.

4.1.2.1. Marriage

When arguing against defenses of prostitution which stress the commonalities between prostitution and marriage, Carole Pateman claimed that "[t]he conjugal relation is not necessarily one of domination and subjection, and in this it differs from prostitution."[1584] This

[1584] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 563. Laurie Shrage follows up on this idea by saying that "…[s]ince the majority of marriages in our society render the wife the domestic and sexual subordinate of her husband, marriage degrades the woman who accepts it (or perhaps only the woman who accepts marriage on unequal terms), and its institutionalization in its present form oppresses all women. However, because marriage can be founded on principles which do not involve the subordination of women, we can challenge oppressive aspects of this institution without radically altering it. For example, while the

claim, however, is very much at odds with Pateman's critique of marriage, since she speaks of the wife's duty of obedience to her husband as an essential element of the marital relationship.[1585] Drawing on William Thompsons's analysis of marriage, Pateman specifically says that

> [t]o become a 'husband' is to attain patriarchal right with respect to a 'wife'. […] even if a husband renounces his power, his wife's freedom is always contingent on his willingness to continue the renunciation. Some husbands may, as Thomson puts it, allow their wives equal pleasure to their own. However, the wife's enjoyment depends entirely on the benevolence of her husband and what he does, or does not, *permit* her to do.[1586]

Sexuality is not, in any way, exempted from this duty of obedience. Quite the contrary, in fact. According to Pateman, marriage legitimates men's sexual access to women's bodies. As she puts it, "[t]he marriage contract establishes legitimate access to sexual property in the person."[1587] Such masculine right does not correspond to the same right for women, as Immanuel Kant has claimed. Opposing his version of marriage as "the Union of two Persons of different sex for life-long reciprocal possession of their sexual faculties",[1588] Pateman argues that "the right is not to one another's bodies; the right is that of masculine sex-right."[1589] In fact, the wife "has no right to enjoyment at all; she can beg, like a child or a slave, but even that is difficult for women who are not supposed to have sexual desires."[1590]

This brings about the wife's objectification: "[i]n the Marriage contract an individual acquires a right to a person – or, more exactly, as Kant states, 'the Man acquires a Wife' –

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desire to control the sinful urges of men to fornicate may, historically, have been part of the ideology of marriage, it does not seem to be a central component of our contemporary rationalization for this custom. Marriage, at present in our society, is legitimated by other widely held values and beliefs, for example, the desirability of a long-term, emotionally and financially sustaining, parental partnership." (SHRAGE, Laurie, "Should Feminists Oppose Prostitution?", p. 360.)

[1585] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p.165.

[1586] *Idem*, p. 158.

[1587] *Idem*, p. 168.

[1588] KANT, Immanuel, *Philosophy of Law,* §24, p. 110, as cited in PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 168.

[1589] *Idem*, p. 168.

[1590] *Idem*, p. 159.

who thus becomes a *res*, a thing, a commodity or a piece of property."[1591] As seen before, however, Pateman does not usually talk in terms of objectification. Instead, she uses the idea of a master-slave relationship: "[t]o have right over a person as a thing, as a piece of property, is to have the power of a slave-master".[1592] According to Pateman, thus, wives have not only been slaves throughout history as, even at the moment in which she is writing, "[t]he comparison of wives with slaves, unfortunately, is not yet completely redundant."[1593]

In fact, Pateman's claim is that the meaning of femininity is precisely that: "[w]hat being a woman (wife) means is to provide certain services for and at the command of a man (husband)." [1594] And marriage is an essential instrument in the construction of (this type of) femininity and its corresponding form of masculinity: "[t]he recognition that a husband obtains from a wife is precisely what is required in modern patriarchy; recognition as a patriarchal master, which only a woman can provide."[1595]

Marriage, thus, is, in Pateman's view, "sexually ascriptive".[1596] And this is so in two different senses: first, in what concerns the meaning and social status of femininity and masculinity, and second, in what regards sexuality. So, on the one hand, "the marriage contract merely confirms the natural sexual inequality of birth",[1597] and, on the other, marriage also constructs masculine sexuality as the parameter for both men and women:

> The patriarchal construction of sexuality, what it means to be a sexual being, is to possess and to have access to sexual property. […] In modern patriarchy, masculinity provides the paradigm for sexuality; and masculinity means sexual mastery. The 'individual' is a man who makes use of a woman's body (sexual property); the converse is much harder to imagine.[1598]

[1591] *Idem*, p. 170.
[1592] *Ibidem*.
[1593] *Idem*, p. 124.
[1594] *Idem*, p. 128.
[1595] *Idem*, p. 179.
[1596] *Idem*, p. 167.
[1597] *Idem*, p. 169
[1598] *Idem*, p. 185.

Now, despite the obviousness of the domination of men and the subjection of women in marriage, this relationship is hidden by the idea of contract. Pateman strongly objects to its use in regard to marriage: "[w]ith the establishment of marriage and the pretence of a contract, men's domination is hidden by the claim that marriage allows equal, consensual sexual enjoyment to both spouses."[1599] Yet, her criticism of the idea of contract in what concerns marriage is not merely related with its concealing capacity. It also concerns consent or, more precisely, the idea of women's free consent to marriage. Speaking of "the coercive conditions of entry into contracts",[1600] Pateman says:

> workers are 'collectively unfree, an imprisoned class'. Similarly, women collectively are coerced into marriage although any woman is free to remain single. William Thompson compared women's freedom to decline to marry with that of the freedom of peasants to refuse to buy food from the East India monopoly which has already cornered all the supplies […].[1601]

She refers specifically to economic conditions and pressure as conditions that make women's consent to marriage unfree:

> Most women can find paid employment only in a narrow range of low status, low-paid occupations, where they work alongside other women and are managed by men, and, despite equal-pay legislation, they earn less than men. Marriage thus remains economically advantageous for most women. Moreover, the social pressures for women to become wives are as compelling as the economic. Single women lack a defined and accepted social place; becoming a man's wife is still the major means through which most women can find a recognized social identity.[1602]

Given such conditions, Pateman concludes that "[c]oercion to enter the marriage […] contract casts doubt on the validity of the contract".[1603]

[1599] *Idem*, p. 159.
[1600] *Idem*, p. 131.
[1601] *Idem*, p. 132.
[1602] *Ibidem*.
[1603] *Idem*, p. 133.

Finally, the idea of resistance, which adds unfree consent to the fundamental value attributed by Pateman to marriage in the construction of masculinity and femininity in the form of a master-slave relationship: "if women exercised their freedom to remain single on a large scale, men could not become husbands – and the sexual contract would be shaken."[1604]

So, let us get this straight. Women's duty of obedience and Men's right of command, men's sexual access to women's bodies, women's reduction to a thing, a piece of property, the fundamental role of marriage in the construction of both masculinity and femininity as mastery and slavery and of a masculine type of sexuality, the lack of conditions to a truly free consent, and the potential of the refusal to marriage in overthrowing the sexual contract: all this which Pateman denounces in marriage is precisely what she charges prostitution of. In fact, the extension of some accusations is actually wider in marriage. For instance, the mastery of men and the duty of obedience of women in marriage go much beyond sexuality. Pateman speaks of the general power of husbands over wives:

> The husband can make the marital home into a prison and cut off 'his household slave from all sympathy but with himself, his children, and cats or other household animals'. A wife can be excluded from all intellectual and social intercourse and pleasures, and can be prevented from forming her own friendships; 'is there a wife who dares to form her own acquaintances amongst women or men, without the permission, direct or indirect, of the husband…or to retain them when formed?'[1605]

Furthermore, marriage comprises activities other than sex. Pateman speaks at length of the wife's unpaid householding shores: "a wife who works full time in the conjugal home is not entitled to pay. Wives are housewives and housewives, like slaves, receive only subsistence (protection) in return for their labours".[1606] But not only.

[1604] *Idem*, pp. 132-3.
[1605] *Idem*, pp. 158-9.
[1606] *Idem*, p. 124.

> One of the features of the unfree labour of the slave, or the labour of a residential servant, is that they must serve their masters at all times. A wife, too, is always available to provide for her husband. Thus, (house)wives work extremely long hours.[1607]

And Pateman also speaks of the duration of marriage: "[p]erhaps a wife is like a civil slave. The marriage contract can still, in principle, last for a lifetime, and the civil slave contract also runs for life."[1608]

Finally, marriage is intimately connected with an important feature of patriarchy: the division between the private and the public spheres. As Pateman puts it, "[a] sexual division of labour is constituted through the marriage contract."[1609] In her view, "the private and public sphere of civil society are [simultaneously] separable, reflecting the natural order of sexual difference, and inseparable, incapable of being understood in isolation from each other."[1610] And this is so in what concerns both politics and the market. On the latter, Pateman says,

> the employment contract presupposes the marriage contract. Or, to make this point another way, the construction of the 'worker' presupposes that he is a man who has a woman, a (house)wife, to take care of his daily needs. […] The sturdy figure of the 'worker', the artisan, in clean overalls, with a bag of tools and lunch-box, is always accompanied by the ghostly figure of his wife.[1611]

On the former, instead, she elaborates as follows:

> The civil sphere gains its universal meaning in opposition to the private sphere of natural subjection and womanly capacities. The 'civil individual' is constituted within the sexual division of social life created through the original contract. The civil individual and the public realm appear universal only in relation to and in opposition to the private sphere, the natural foundation of civil life. Similarly, the meaning of civil liberty and equality, secured and distributed impartially to all 'individuals' through the

[1607] *Idem*, p. 128
[1608] *Idem*, p. 124.
[1609] *Idem*, p. 118.
[1610] *Idem*, p. 131.
[1611] *Ibidem*.

civil law, can be understood only in opposition to natural subjection (of women) in the private sphere.[1612]

All this bring us to the question begged to be asked: if marriage equals prostitution in all that which for Pateman justifies and requires the abolition of prostitution and actually goes further in what concerns women's domination, why is it then that, in her view, "[t]he conjugal relation is not necessarily one of domination and subjection" [1613] and prostitution is?

Such obvious incoherence is not limited to Pateman. Precisely the same can be said of other abolitionist feminists. Kathleen Barry, for instance, says that "sexual slavery is the underpinning of the institution of prostitution as well as marriage";[1614] Sheila Jeffreys calls the (heterosexual) family "the fundamental institution of male supremacy";[1615] Andrea Dworkin claims that "[m]arriage and the family are the twin pillars of all patriarchal cultures";[1616] Kate Millett argues that "marriage and the family with its ranks and division of labor play a large part in enforcing" patriarchal ideology";[1617] and, finally, Catharine Mackinnon compares wives and prostitutes in that they are always assumed to consent to sex, "and cannot but to", thus being "unrapable" before the law.[1618]

Why is it then that none of them has ever come even close to defend the abolition of marriage? What is the reason for the singling out of prostitution when marriage sounds, in their own words, to have a much more important role in the construction and maintenance of patriarchy? I suspect the answer is the conceptual compatibility of marriage with a criteria of sexuality that connects it with romantic love and intimate and stable relationships. Our culture does not understand marriage as incompatible with that standard of sexuality. Quite the opposite: marriage is its appropriate domain. Prostitution, on the contrary, stands culturally as its opposite and denial.

[1612] *Idem*, pp. 113-4.
[1613] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 563.
[1614] BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. xii.
[1615] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *Anticlimax: A Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution*, p. 172.
[1616] DWORKIN, Andrea, *Woman Hating*, p. 104.
[1617] MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 54.
[1618] MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 175.

4.1.2.2. Labor Contract

Pateman argues against the claim that prostitution is a job like any other.[1619] Her arguments, however, are unable to show the difference between prostitution and any other job. Everything she charges prostitution of she equally notes of the labor contract in general. In fact, her main thesis in *The Sexual Contract* is precisely that contract is not, has generally held, the paradigm of freedom and the opposite to servitude, but rather "the specific modern means of creating relationships of subordination".[1620]

One of Pateman's main points of contention in regard to prostitution is the idea that the prostitute sells sexual services and not herself. This is quite an important issue as what is at stake here is whether or not the prostitute is a sexual slave in any relevant sense. And for Pateman she is. Her reasoning goes as follows:

> "Labour power" and "services" are abstractions. […] neither the labor power nor services can in reality be separated from the person offering them for sale. Unless the "owners" of these abstractions agree to, or are compelled to, use them in certain ways, which means that the "owners" act in a specified manner, there is nothing to be sold. The employer appears to buy labor power; what he actually obtains is the right of command over workers, the right to put their capacities, their bodies, to use as he determines.[1621]

This means that "[s]ervices and labor power are inseparably connected to the body and the body is, in turn, inseparably connected to the sense of self."[1622] As a result, what is sold in prostitution is not services but the prostitute's (right to command of her own) body, and so, her very self. According to Pateman, this is precisely what it means to be a slave: not someone

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[1619] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p.191. Pateman seems to make two different claims. One is that contract is not a synonym of freedom, constituting, instead, and making invisible a relation of domination and subordination. In this sense prostitution would be a job like any other. She, however, denies this. Her claim is that there is something different in prostitution.
[1620] *Idem*, p. 118.
[1621] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 562.
[1622] *Ibidem*.

who sells something external to herself, but rather someone who is herself sold and who, as a result, has no right of command over her own body.

This, however, is far from exclusive to prostitution. It can equally be applied to any job or service. All jobs and services imply the use of the body in one way or the other, and, in that sense, the surrender of the right of command of one's body. And, in fact, this is precisely what Pateman says: "[t]he employment contract gives the employer right of command over the use of the worker's labour, that is to say, over the self, person and body of the worker during the period set down in the employment contract."[1623]

She then needs a further element that distinguishes prostitution from the employment contract in general in order to substantiate her abolitionist stance in relation to prostitution, since she does not, of course, defend the abolition of the employment contract in general: "economic production – and social life – would be very difficult if not impossible."[1624] Such element is the intrinsic interest of the client in the prostitute's body and self:

> The capitalist has no intrinsic interest in the body and self of the worker […]. The employer is primarily interested in the commodities produced by the worker; that is to say, in profits. [… That is why] the employer can and often does replace the worker with machines […]. In contrast to employers, the men who enter into the prostitution contract have only one interest; the prostitute, and her body. […] In prostitution, the body of the woman, and sexual access to that body, is the subject of the contract.[1625]

But this raises further objections, since there are specific activities, employments, and services in which the interest of the employer also lies in the body of the employee. Pateman does not deny this, and she refers specifically to the case of sport:

> A prostitute's body is for sale in the market, but there are also other professions in which bodies are up for sale and in which employers have an intrinsic interest in their workers' bodies. For example, now that sport is part of patriarchal capitalism, the

[1623] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 203.
[1624] *Idem*, p. 146.
[1625] *Idem*, p. 203.

> bodies of professional sportsmen and sportswomen are also available to be contracted out.[1626]

Again, thus, a further element of distinction is required. And this time that element is sexuality:

> However, there is a difference in the uses to which bodies are put when they are sold. Owners of baseball teams have command over the use of their players' bodies, but the bodies are not directly used sexually by those who have contracted for them.[1627]

But why is it sexuality more important than other aspects of one's body and self? Pateman's answer is this:

> sex and sexuality are constitutive of the body in a way in which the counseling skills of the social worker are not […]. Sexuality and the body are, further, integrally connected to conceptions of femininity and masculinity, and all these are constitutive of our individuality, our sense of self-identity.[1628]

What is at stake here is, of course, the prostitute's self. But that is certainly not just it. Pateman's issue with sexuality goes beyond the prostitute. It concerns the construction of femininity and masculinity more widely.

> […] the patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection, and […] sexual mastery is the major means through which men affirm their manhood. […] Womanhood, too, is confirmed in sexual activity […].[1629]

Sexual mastery of women by men, however, is not exclusive to prostitution. As we have seen, Pateman and other abolitionist feminists charge marriage with the exact same thing. And they even speak of sexuality in general, of our society's current sexual paradigm as one which is characterized precisely by a relation of domination and subordination between men

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[1626] *Idem*, pp. 205-6.
[1627] *Idem*, p. 206.
[1628] *Idem*, p. 562.
[1629] *Idem*, p. 207.

and women. What is it then, according to them, so particular to prostitution after all? In my view, Pateman provides us with the most clear-cut answer:

> […] when a man has bought a woman's body for his use as if it were like any other commodity […] the sex act itself provides acknowledgement of patriarchal right. When women's bodies are on sale as commodities in the *capitalist market*, the terms of the original contract cannot be forgotten; the law of male sex-right is publicly affirmed, and men gain public acknowledgement as women's sexual masters – that is what is wrong with prostitution.[1630]

The issue, thus, is the market. And, more specifically, the mixture between sex and the market. We have seen in Part One how the problem with the market and commodification was said, particularly by Pateman and Margaret Radin, to be subordination, objectification, and maldistribution of rights. However, when looking at abolitionist feminists' characterization of marriage and sexuality more broadly, one is faced with the fact that those harms and wrongs they charge prostitution of are not, in their own views, exclusive to it. And still, it is only prostitution they defend it should be abolished and nothing else.

My suspicion is that the reason for that has to do with the opposition between the market and the private sphere, this and not that being the proper domain of romantic love. In my view, thus, what is at stake is the idea of incompatibility between the market and romantic love. This is the topic of the next subsection.

4.1.2.3. The Market, Sex, and Love

Cultural anthropologist Constance Perin tells us of the boundaries "between business and pleasure, home and work. […] between the things we do for love and those we do for money, between what is private and public" as some of those most deeply entrenched in our culture.[1631]

[1630] My emphasis. *Idem*, p. 208.

[1631] PERIN, Constance, *Belonging in America: Reading Between the Lines*, p. 4, as cited in LUPTON, Deborah, Risk, p. 176.

Eva Illouz, in turn, further elaborates on the cultural opposition between love and money, which she speaks of in terms of romantic love and capitalism:

> In capitalism, two parties come together explicitly on the basis of self-interest and mutual economic benefit […]. In romantic love, by contrast, two individuals are bound together by the "capacity to realize spontaneity and empathy in an erotic relationship." In the marketplace, trading partners are ultimately interchangeable; relationships shift with economic circumstances. In romantic love, the person we love and feel united with is unique and irreplaceable; furthermore, "love is the most important thing in the world, to which all other considerations, particularly material ones, should be sacrificed." Romantic love is irrational rather than rational, gratuitous rather than profit-oriented, organic rather than utilitarian, private rather than public. In short, […] romantic love stands above the realm of commodity exchange and even against the social order writ large.[1632]

Economy sociologist Viviana Zelizer elaborates on the idea of separate and hostile spheres in what concerns intimate relations and economic activity. On this account, not only are these distinct arenas, as contact between them produces contamination and disorder.[1633] Intimacy within the economic sphere generates inefficiency and commodification in the intimate sphere would destroy solidarity and sentiment.[1634]

This is related to a particular view of money as "the purest reification of means", to use Georg Simmel's words.[1635] Zelizer calls it the utilitarian approach to money. As she explains, "monetary accounting certainly promoted impersonal rational markets. But traditional social thinkers argued that the effects of money transcended the market".[1636] In their view, "money became the catalyst for the pervasive instrumentalism of modern social life."[1637]

[1632] ILLOUZ, Eva, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, pp. 2-3.
[1633] ZELIZER, Viviana A., *The Purchase of Intimacy*, p. 22.
[1634] *Idem*, pp. 23-4.
[1635] SIMMEL, Georg, *The Philosophy of Money*, p. 211, as cited in ZELIZER, Viviana A., *The Social Meaning of Money: Pin Money, Paychecks, Poor Relief, and Other Currencies*, p. 6.
[1636] ZELIZER, Viviana A., *The Social Meaning of Money: Pin Money, Paychecks, Poor Relief, and Other Currencies*, p. 6.
[1637] *Ibidem*.

This had to do with money's characteristics. For a start, its capacity of reduction of quality to quantity: "[w]ith money, all qualitative distinctions between goods were equally convertible into an arithmetically calculable 'system of numbers.'"[1638] Then, its consequent homogenizing power. As Karl Marx observed, in its money form, "all commodities look alike",[1639] as money allows the "equation of the incompatible", the surrender of the priceless to price. And, finally, "unconditional interchangeability": "the internal uniformity […] makes each piece exchangeable for another."[1640] The result is the perversion of the uniqueness of personal and social values. As George Simmel puts it, "[w]ith its colorlessness and indifference [… money] hollows out the core of things […] their specific value, and their incomparability."[1641]

It is no wonder then that money is generally thought of in completely opposite terms to love, the locus where people are valued for their unmaterial characteristics, regarded as unique and hence felt as non-interchangeable. And it is also unsurprising that money is considered to have a corrupting force on the intimate sphere, which is generally thought of as being characterized by opposite attributes.

The idea of separation, however, cannot resist even an uncareful look at reality. As many have pointed out, love and intimate relationships are irremeably intertwined with money. Speaking of dating and divorce, Eva Illouz highlights "the pressures that new definitions of leisure and consumption exerted on marriage and its prospects."[1642] More specifically, she talks of how "the meaning of romance became enmeshed with that of consumption, commodities, and technologies of leisure" by means of a twofold process: "the romanticization of commodities and the commodification of romance." Not only did commodities acquire "a romantic aura in early-twentieth century" as "romantic practices

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[1638] *Idem*, pp. 6-7.
[1639] MARX, Karl, *Grundrisse,* p. 222, as cited in ZELIZER, Viviana A., *The Social Meaning of Money: Pin Money, Paychecks, Poor Relief, and Other Currencies*, p. 8.
[1640] Simmel, Georg, *The Philosophy of Money,* p. 427, as cited in ZELIZER, Viviana A., *The Social Meaning of Money: Pin Money, Paychecks, Poor Relief, and Other Currencies*, p. 7.
[1641] SIMMEL, Georg, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, p. 414, as cited in ZELIZER, Viviana A., *The Social Meaning of Money: Pin Money, Paychecks, Poor Relief, and Other Currencies*, p. 8.
[1642] ILLOUZ, Eva, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, p. 25.

increasingly interlocked with and became defined as the consumption of leisure goods and leisure technologies".[1643]

A further distinction is then brought in. One that is not about money or material goods in themselves but rather their mode of transaction. On this view, money enters the intimate sphere only in the form of gifts, while commodities remain restricted to the market. And so, the idea goes, within loving and intimate relationships people give things to each other, and only in the market do they buy and sell them.

James Carrier tells us about the "ideology of the gift". With it he refers to the Western industrial understanding of the gift (1) as something which transcends its material expression and economic worth,[1644] and (2) as something which is voluntarily given and creates no obligations.[1645] At closer look, however, these two elements reveal several other ideas – the same which are generally thought to characterize love and intimacy.

The idea of transcendency first relates with *immateriality*. The perfect gift, Carrier observes, is immaterial: "[i]ts material form and, especially, its monetary worth […] are beside the point, because they are transcended in the sentiment the [gift] contains."[1646] What is really being given in a gift is *affection*.[1647] And affection bears *the identity of the giver*. In this sense, then, the material aspect of the gift is also transcended in that a gift constitutes an expression of the giver's identity: "the only gift is a portion of thyself."[1648] It is in this sense that gifts are immaterial: their value lies not in their utility or monetary worth but in the sentiment and the being they are an expression of. The perfect gift is priceless.

So, immateriality is related with transcendence, affection, and the idea of giving oneself in. Gifts are thus absolutely *personal*. And in being personal, gifts are *unalienating*: "[in] gift transactions objects are not alienated from the transactors. Instead, the object given continues to be identified with the giver and indeed continues to be identified with the transaction

[1643] *Idem*, p. 26.
[1644] CARRIER, James, G., *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700*, p. 150.
[1645] *Idem*, p. 22.
[1646] *Idem*, p. 146.
[1647] *Idem*, p. 147.
[1648] EMERSON, Ralph Waldo, "Gifts", p. 94, as cited in CARRIER, James, G., *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700*, p. 147.

itself".[1649] This sense of inalienability of the gift, its association with the person who gives it, is most visible when the present is rejected. As Carrier notes, rejecting a gift is, in a sense, to reject the giver as well as the giver's relationship to the recipient.[1650]

This leads us to yet another idea within the ideology of the gift: that of *connection* between the giver and the recipient. A gift's fundamental purpose, Jonathan Perry says, is to cement social relations.[1651] The perfect gift creates "a wholly new form of relationship".[1652] And "[m]ost gift transactions, on the other hand, occur within stable relationships".[1653] In fact, according to this view, gifts are almost always "manifestations of the personal relationship between the transactors".[1654] It is not surprising then that people generally "think of the household, family, friends and neighbors as defining an area of life characterized by gift relations."[1655]

From the idea of connection and relationship derives the one of *morality* or, maybe more accurately, *correctness*. The disembodied and immaterial present is "altruistic, moral and loaded with emotion".[1656] Under this view, gift exchange is mediated by moral norms which oppose the self-interest and the utility maximization that characterize commodity exchange. The focus of the gift is the other, the recipient, not the giver. And the other is the focus in a positive sense, of course: it is her interest, her well-being that the gift aims to accomplish. Were it not the case, the gift would be unsuccessful in expressing the affection it is aimed at and in establishing and reaffirming the relationship in the context of which is exchanged. As a result, within gift exchanges, people act as moral and altruistic agents, and not as selfish and possessive individuals.[1657]

[1649] *Idem*, p. 21.
[1650] *Idem*, p. 27.
[1651] PARRY, Jonathan, "*The Gift,* the Indian Gift and the 'Indian Gift'", pp. 466,467 as cited in CARRIER, James, G., *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700*, p. 153.
[1652] *Idem*, p 149.
[1653] *Idem*, p. 23.
[1654] *Idem*, p. 24.
[1655] *Idem*, p. 21.
[1656] PARRY, Jonathan, *"The Gift,* the Indian Gift and the 'Indian Gift'", p. 466, as cited in CARRIER, James, G., *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700*, p. 156.
[1657] *Idem*, pp. 158, 31.

The idea of affection and intersubjective connection is also related with the second element of the ideology of the gift. As Carrier puts it, "the perfect present is given freely, purely as an expression of sentiment that binds neither giver nor recipient."[1658] Gifts are offered out of affection and will, not obligation. As a result, they are allegedly *free and unconstrained*. The giver "is neither bound to give nor bound by the giving." [1659]

The final element of the ideology of the gift is its strict opposition to commodities. Where gifts are immaterial, personal, unalienating, connecting, altruistic, moral, free, and willed, commodities are material, unpersonal, alienating, segregating, selfish, immoral, obligation-based, and unwilled. In Carrier's words,

> in commodity relations the objects are alienated from the transactors: they are not especially associated with each transactor, nor do they speak of any past or future relationships between transactors. Instead, such objects are treated solely as bearers of abstract value or utility.[1660]

Furthermore, in commodity relations "transactors are not linked in any enduring or personal way. Instead, they are related only temporarily through the impersonal objects that they transact."[1661] What is transacted does not bear on transactors' "inalienable beings, but on their accidental and alienable aspects."[1662] This is thus the realm of things, not people.[1663] Here people act not as moral, altruistic agents, but as autonomous, individualistic, and possessive individuals, whose objective is self-interest and whose actions are determined not by affection but rational instrumentality.[1664]

My point thus is this: the opposition between gifts and commodities is but another expression of the cultural deep-rooted dichotomy between love and the market. A dichotomy which, as we shall see in the following subsection, is not only upheld by abolitionist feminists but constitutes the very lens through which they understand prostitution.

[1658] *Idem*, p. 156.
[1659] *Ibidem*.
[1660] *Idem*, p. 21.
[1661] *Idem*, p. 24.
[1662] *Idem*, p. 31.
[1663] *Ibidem*.
[1664] *Idem*, p. 196.

4.1.2.4. The Gift/Commodity Dichotomy in Abolitionist Feminism

It is Margaret Radin who most obviously brings the opposition between gifts and commodities – together with the family of meanings attached to it – into abolitionist feminism. Gifts, she says, are "expressions of the interrelationships between the self and others. A gift takes place within a personal relationship with the recipient, or else it creates one."[1665] Commodification, instead "stresses separateness both between ourselves and our things and between ourselves and other people."[1666] That is why, in Radin's view, noncommodified sex, which "is ideally a sharing of selves", "ideally diminishes separateness", whereas "[c]ommodified sex leaves the parties as separate individuals and perhaps reinforces their separateness".[1667]

Connection/separateness, inalienability/alienability, sharing of selves/materiality, personal/unpersonal: all these opposing elements from the dichotomy gifts/commodities are brought into the distinction established by Radin between noncommodified and commodified sex. But there is more to it. Radin speaks, in addition, of the reduction of quality to quantity and the fungibility enacted by money.

Money equivalence, she says, entails commensurability, the linear ranking of the value of things, which are equated with a sum of money. And commensurability, in turn, implies fungibility, that "things are fully interchangeability with no effect on value to the holder."[1668]

Now, her problem with this is, first of all, reductionism: the reduction of what is priceless to price.[1669] Commodification, she says, "'reduces' all values to sums of money."[1670] Yet, not "all values are commensurable in this way."[1671] Commodification "cannot capture – and may debase – the way humans value things important to human personhood."[1672] And, in her view, sex is definitely one of those things. In fact, as she sees it, sex is an essential attribute of

[1665] RADIN, Margaret Jane, *Contested Commodities*, p. 93.
[1666] *Idem*, p. 94.
[1667] *Ibidem*.
[1668] *Idem*, p. 118.
[1669] *Idem*, p. 8.
[1670] *Ibidem*.
[1671] *Idem*, p. 9.
[1672] *Ibidem*.

personhood.[1673] The second problem is fungibility, and when it comes to sex that is a problem because, according to Radin, the treatment of sex as a fungible object, "denies the integrity and uniqueness of the self." [1674]

Finally, objectification: "[c]ommodification (of attributes of) personhood implies objectification."[1675] Objectification, as said before, is used by Radin in the Kantian sense to refer to the use of people as means to the satisfaction of another's needs and desires rather than their owns.[1676] This, of course, is a way of referring to the lack of autonomy and will of those objectified. And the lack of autonomy and will is another characteristic attributed not only to commodities but also to commodity transactors within the ideology of the gift. Whereas gifts are supposedly voluntary given and create no expectation of compensation,[1677] commodities are sold precisely because and only because of the expectation of compensation. Allegedly, neither the giver nor the recipient are bound by the gift; commodity transactions, instead, bind both the seller and the buyer. Obligation, on this account, is thus attributed exclusively to commodities, while gifts are thought as immune from it and as true expressions of free will.

There is still a further element of the dichotomy gifts/commodities in the idea of objectification. I am referring to the opposition between objects and people. Gifts are the realm of people; commodities, on the contrary, are the realm of things. It comes as no surprise then that selling an essential attribute of personhood is "objectifying", whereas giving it is not. Selling it denies humanity, giving it does not. Quite the contrary, in fact. When it comes to sexuality, giving it is, in Radin's view, a condition of human flourishing.[1678] It is also unsurprising thus that Radin defines the objectification arising from the commodification of sex as a failure "to recognize the other as bearing the same *human status* as oneself."[1679]

[1673] *Idem*, p. 56.
[1674] *Idem*, p. 127.
[1675] *Idem*, p. 161.
[1676] *Idem*, p. 156.
[1677] CARRIER, James, G., *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700*, p. 157.
[1678] RADIN, Margaret Jane, *Contested Commodities*, p. 134.
[1679] My emphasis. *Idem*, p. 157.

Margaret Radin, however, is not alone in understanding prostitution through the lens of the dichotomy gifts/commodities. In fact, abolitionist feminism as a whole is permeated by such dichotomy, which lies at the bottom of several of its arguments.

A good example is the arguments concerning exploitation and paid violence. As seen in Part One, both these arguments come down to the same idea: that the value of sexuality is incommensurable and thus priceless, and so it should never be for sale. When it is, it cannot but be a form of exploitation and "paid violence". One which, under this view, is absolutely intrinsic to prostitution. As we can see, then, what lies behind these arguments is the idea of reduction of quality to quantity, of surrender of what is priceless to price, an idea that is absolutely central to the characterization of money and commodities within the wider view that opposes it to gifts, love, and intimacy.

Another example of how the dichotomy between gifts and commodities is imbued in abolitionist feminism is the argument according to which prostitution is intrinsically connected with violence and ill-treatment. Such argument seems to presume the morality/immorality binary logic of such dichotomy, which portrays the buyer as a selfish and possessive individual and the giver as a moral and altruistic agent. In fact, what seems to be at stake here is the widespread idea of money as "source of evil",[1680] as necessarily antithetical to nonpecuniary values.[1681]

But not only. Another idea from the gift/commodity dichotomy seems to equally underpin this argument. I am referring to the opposition between objects and people. One of the meanings of the idea of objectification of people is that of violability. Martha Nussbaum defines it as the treatment of a person "as lacking boundary-integrity, as something that it is permissible to break up, smash, break into."[1682] That is precisely one of the meanings the argument that prostitution is a form of objectification takes on within abolitionist feminism. Objectification here implies what I referred to in Part One as ontological downgrading and

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[1680] Viviana Zelizer refers to this idea as follows: "[c]onservatives have deplored the moral decay brought by prosperity while radicals have condemned capitalism's dehumanization, but both have seen the swelling cash nexus as the source of evil." (ZELIZER, Viviana A., *The Social Meaning of Money: Pin Money, Paychecks, Poor Relief, and Other Currencies*, p. 2.)

[1681] *Idem*, p. 12.

[1682] NUSSBAUM, Martha C., "Objectification", p. 257.

is related with – in fact is charged with being the cause of – "cruel and brutal treatment", a treatment which denies the humanity of the objectified person.[1683]

The opposition between objects and people and the ontological downgrading assumed to derive from commodification is also present in a more straightforward manner in abolitionist feminism. What I have in mind here is the arguments that accuse prostitution of objectification and degradation simply in virtue of commodification, without reference to any other harm or wrong. According to those arguments, the problem with prostitution is not the lack of autonomy, fungibility, lack of connection and intimacy in sex, violence, or inequality. The problem is the downgrading effect on the person "commodified". As if money, by itself, had that effect on the person being paid.

Andrea Dworkin and Kate Millett use the idea of objectification precisely this way. The former says that a person is made less than human, turned into a thing, when commodification is involved;[1684] the latter describes prostitutes as those who "offer themselves for sale as objects" and the act of those who buy as one "of buying person as objects".[1685] For Millett, prostitution is itself a declaration of value, since, in her view, "it's not sex the prostitute is really made to sell: it is degradation".[1686] Once again, then, we are confronted with the idea of reductionism associated with money and commodity transaction within abolitionist feminism. An idea which, as we know, is an essential one in the dichotomy gift/commodity.

Precisely the same point can be made about the ideas of alienability, fungibility, and depersonalization in prostitution. In what concerns alienability, it is interesting to note how this idea is used in abolitionist feminism as if sexuality, when commodified, was literally detached from the person. It is this image of literal detachment that supports the idea of degradation and detriment to the self so often invoked by abolitionist feminists. An image which is completely interwoven with the ontological downgrading associated with objects when these are understood in opposition to humans.

[1683] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Prostitution and Civil Rights", p. 13.
[1684] DWORKIN, Andrea, "Against the Male Flood: Censorship, Pornography, and Equality", p. 30.
[1685] MILLETT, Kate, *The Prostitution Papers: A Candid Dialogue*, p. 50.
[1686] *Idem*, p. 56.

Fungibility and depersonalization can be object to the same observations. The idea of fungibility brings us the denial of individuality, experiences, uniqueness – all which makes humans humans: all which confer humans their specific and special worth. What lies behind it is the idea that fungibility belongs to the realm of objects, not humans. When fungibility exists in relation to humans it brings about the loss of their status – again a kind of ontological downgrading. Finally, depersonalization. To depersonalize is precisely to undress the human of all that, and so it is also to denude her of her worth.

As I see it, however, the presence of the dichotomy between gifts and commodities in abolitionist feminism goes much beyond specific arguments. In my view, that is what lies behind the inexplicable selectivity of prostitution to charges that can be – and indeed are by abolitionist feminists – equally directed to both marriage and the labor contract in general. This is my main point in this subsection.

When distinguishing prostitution from marriage, Pateman argues that in marriage there is not a necessary relation of domination and subjection between men and women whereas in prostitute that is definitely the case. Yet, when one looks at her and other abolitionist feminists' analysis of marriage, this claim becomes highly contradictory, since precisely the same problems pointed out in prostitution are identified by them in marriage. And the same can be said of the attempt at differentiating prostitution from the labor contract in general. Pateman's answer ultimately comes down to the importance of sexuality to the self and to the role of prostitution in perpetuating a patriarchal notion of femininity. This answer, however, is quite unsettling. One the one hand, it is highly disputable that sexuality is more important to one's notion of self than things such as knowledge for a scholar, the art product for an artist, or the care of children for parents. Yet, we commodify all this and see no detriment to the self in such commodification. On the other hand, it is also quite questionable that prostitution perpetuates a patriarchal notion of femininity any more than activities such as cleaning and care, which, till today, are almost exclusively female professions. This is particularly so in what concerns the former, whose very designation in the domestic sphere – "cleaning *lady*" – bears the stamp of femininity which our society still insists on attaching to it. Still, once again, abolitionist feminists seem to see no problem or damage to femininity in those markedly female professions. At least not to the point of claiming a detriment to the

self of those "commodified" and much less to the point of defending the abolition of those activities through the criminalization of the ones who pay for it or the ones who otherwise profit from it.

When all that abolitionist feminists point as specific in prostitution is shown to be far from exclusive to it, the dichotomy between gifts and commodities can be quite illuminating. The idea that marriage does not necessarily involve a relation of sexual subordination for women while prostitution does can then be seen under the light of a dichotomy that puts immorality, selfishness, and harm, as well as obligation and lack of (true) consent on the commodification pole, while completely removing those from the gift sphere. Such dichotomy seems to act as a rigid scheme that resists even in face of obvious evidence to the contrary.

Many have theorized the downfalls of the ideology of the gift in what concerns obligation. As Carrier observes, "at the level of structural cultural expectations and everyday behavior the obligation that giving generates can be strong and the obligation to give can be overwhelming."[1687] Precisely because gifts are usually offered in the context of relationships and as a form of expression of affection, they involve strong obligations. The "not wanted sex" abolitionist feminists speak about in relation to prostitution has been widely identified and problematized by feminists in the context of marriage. And love and affection have a great deal to do with the obligation to sex women not uncommonly feel within a relationship. At the same time, the role of love and affection in women's subordination more widely within marriage has also been amply noted. Zelizer rightly observes how intimate relations involving warm feelings do not exclude anger, despair, or shame.[1688] As they certainly do not exclude lack of care and attention or asymmetry between the parties in this regard. As also thoroughly noted, the imbalance does not usually lean towards women. So, selfishness and other much more serious kinds of ill-treatment are very far from being foreign to marriage or intimate and stable relationships between men and women.

On the other side – the commodification side –, it is important to note that people are not generally harmed or subject to violence or any other sort of ill-treatment just because

[1687] CARRIER, James, G., *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700*, pp. 156-7.
[1688] ZELIZER, Viviana A., *The Purchase of Intimacy*, pp. 16-7.

someone is paying for the activity or service they are providing. The same way the mere fact of payment does not necessarily amount to lack of consent or desire to perform the activity. We generally have no problem in accepting this when what is at stake is anything other than sexuality. When it comes to sexuality, however, we do not seem to be able to think beyond this rigid dichotomy. And this despite the multiple empirical studies showing that the interactions in prostitution do not necessarily conform with the idea of immorality and lack of values generally attributed to the realm of commodity exchange. Monica Prasad, for instance, has interviewed prostitutes' customers and her findings suggest that the moral/market dichotomy does not hold, since the reason why her interviewees recured to prostitution was their praise of the lack of "ambiguity, status-dependence, and potential hypocrisy that they see in the 'gift exchange' of sex-characteristic of romantic relationships."[1689] On the same page, Elizabeth Bernstein's ethnographic study has shown that many clients' reason for paying for sex is not power or the possibility of abuse and harm, as abolitionist feminists claim, but rather an "explicitly stated preference for [a] type of bounded intimate engagement over other relational forms."[1690]

This opposition to relational forms of sexuality is a fundamental point. And it is so, in my view, not only in relation to society's general understanding of prostitution but also in what concerns abolitionist feminism.

Carrier tells us that gifts and commodities are generally understood as two polar types of social relations. Where gift relations are supposedly durable and personal, commodity relations are transient and impersonal.[1691] It is now time to remember that the gift/commodity opposition is just another form of the dichotomy love/money and that relationships or, more accurately, enduring and intimate relationships are an essential element of the notion of romantic love I have discussed in Part Two and which I have been uncovering in abolitionist feminism in the present one. The importance of such element is related with the idea of deep union between two people, which can be said to be the very core of the notion of romantic love. Such union, in turn, is connected with the idea of uniqueness of the loved one, which

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[1689] PRASAD, Monica, "The Morality of Market Exchange: Love, Money, and Contractual Justice", p. 181.
[1690] BERNSTEIN, Elizabeth, "The Meaning of the Purchase: Desire, Demand and the Commerce of Sex", p. 399.
[1691] CARRIER, James, G., *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700*, p. 19.

finally leads us to my point regarding stable relationships. As Irving Singer has said, "[r]omantic idealization of love between the sexes is frequently directed towards the attainment of a permanent and stable union."[1692] It is no wonder then that, according to him, in the conceptualization of romantic love throughout history there has been an idea of desire finding "love within and by means of marriage." [1693]

It also comes as no surprise that we find in the path that ties love and stable relationships elements that are completely antithetical to the sphere of commodities. Interchangeability is one of them. The uniqueness of the beloved one, her irreplaceability, her special value for the loving one stands in direct opposition to the homogenization and interchangeability of commodities. And precisely the same can be said of the altruism that is often thought to characterize love. Eva Illouz has told us of how romantic love is conceptualized in opposition to rationality and utilitarian considerations: it is irrational rather than rational, organic rather than utilitarian, gratuitous rather than profit oriented.[1694] That is why, as she says, it "seems to evade the conventional categories within which capitalism has been conceived",[1695] standing, "above the realm of commodity exchange".[1696] As such, it seems to stand in direct opposition to the public realm of the market. It is, instead, the absolute province of the private sphere.

My point thus is this: the problem with prostitution for abolitionist feminists – the problem with sexuality in the market – is that it is not it its right place: the private, sacred, and feminine sphere of love. In the previous section, I identified two standards of sexuality behind abolitionist feminists' arguments regarding prostitution as a form of sexual objectification. One concerns desire, pleasure, and freedom, and the other equates sex with love and intimate relationships. My aim in the present section has been to show that despite the coexistence of these two criteria of right sexuality on a more straightforward level of abolitionist feminist argumentation, a more deep-seated analysis with a comparative focus unveils that it is actually the second that lies behind the selective abolitionist position in relation to

[1692] SINGER, Irving, *The Nature of Love, Volume 2: Courtly and Romantic*, p. 299.
[1693] *Idem*, p. 299.
[1694] ILLOUZ, Eva, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, p. 2.
[1695] *Ibidem*.
[1696] *Idem*, p. 3.

prostitution. It is this normative standard that links sex with love and relationships – along with the dichotomy of which it is part of – that explains the singling out of prostitution among other institutions against which abolitionist feminists direct precisely the same accusations they charge prostitution of. Other institutions are not incompatible with that standard and dichotomy. And that is why, contrary to prostitution, they are not envisioned as intrinsically harmful. In them there always seems to be space left for goodness, freedom, and equality or, at the very least, the absence of harm. Prostitution, instead, always seems to be doomed from the start.

4.2. Essentializing Female Sexuality

The criteria of right sexuality which links sex with love and stable and intimate relationships is not gender neutral. As we have seen in Part Two, the notion of romantic love is essentially femininized. This means that women have been, throughout centuries, depicted as being naturally oriented towards romantic love, while men have been perceived as naturally inclined to what Anthony Giddens calls passionate love.[1697] The difference between both is sexuality, which in romantic love holds little importance but in passionate love predominates. Men have, in addition, been often perceived as simply oriented towards sex rather than love, or, at least, as able of sexual desire and pleasure independently of love, which women, on the contrary, have been widely assumed not to. This different representation of men and women in respect to love and sexuality came across quite clearly in the analysis of the theorization of sexual perversions and is completely intertwined with the representation of women more generally: spiritual rather than carnal, emotional rather than utilitarian, altruistic rather than selfish, private rather than public, and ultimately, loving rather than sexual. It is thus in relation to women, not men, that sexual desire has a long history of being conceived as necessarily attached to love and intimacy.

This was one of the conclusions I drew from my analysis of the patriarchal discourse on prostitution. My contention now is that abolitionist feminists share, to a great measure, the

[1697] GIDDENS, Anthony, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, p. 37.

same conception of female sexuality. I would like to make very clear what I mean by this. My argument is not that abolitionist feminists use love and relationships merely as a normative standard of sexuality. Not only, at least. My argument is stronger. What I claim is that abolitionist feminism assumes this to be women's "normal" sexuality. They take that standard in the descriptive sense and, by doing so, they essentialize it. This is what I hope to show in the coming lines.

I will start with Kathleen Barry, for it is in her writings that this view comes across more clearly. After criticizing what she considers to be our society's current sexual values, Barry calls for new values. Values that, in her view, are specifically female.

> In going into new sexual values we are really going back to the values women have always attached to sexuality, values that have been robbed from us, distorted and destroyed as we have been colonized through both sexual violence and so-called sexual liberation. They are the values and needs that connect sex with warmth, affection, love, caring. To establish new sexual values is actually to resurrect those female principles, giving them definition and form in the present context.[1698]

As I see it, by claiming that the connection between sex and love is specifically female, Barry essentializes female sexuality. This is a crucial step. For not only is this a patriarchal conception of (normal) female sexuality, as it completely determines notions of women's sexual freedom and oppression.

Barry, however, is not the only abolitionist feminist author who seems to espouse and essentialize a notion of female sexuality which connects it with love. The same conception can be uncovered in Catherine Mackinnon's theory of sexuality and in her critiques to our society's sexual paradigm. Her words are these:

> Thus the question Freud never asked is the question that defines sexuality in a feminist perspective: what do men want? […] From the testimony of the pornography, what men want is: women bound, women battered, women tortured, women humiliated, women degraded and defiled, women killed. […] Not that sexuality in life or in media

[1698] BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 267.

> never expresses *love and affection*; only *that love and affection* are not what is sexualized in this society's actual sexual paradigm, as pornography testifies to it. Violation of the powerless, intrusion on women, is.[1699]

Mackinnon opposes our current paradigm of sexuality, which she calls "male sexuality" for being constituted by male desire and interests and whose content corresponds entirely to violence against women, to the one based on love and affection, which, we can conclude, is not a male model, and if it is not a male model, it is a female one.

What is here said of Mackinnon is equally applicable to Andrea Dworkin, who is even more explicit than Mackinnon in this regard. When talking of sexuality in general and intercourse, Dworkin says that

> *[w]omen* have a vision of *love* that includes men as human too; and women want the human in men including in the act of intercourse. Even without the dignity of equal power, women have believed in the *redeeming potential of love*. There has been – despite the cruelty of exploitation and forced sex – a consistent vision for women of a sexuality based on a harmony that is both sensual and possible.[1700]

As Mackinnon and Dworkin, Sheila Jeffreys, when arguing against prostitution, does not say that prostitution is wrong because it is not a type of sex conforming with love and relationships. This, however, is the standard she adopts when developing her theory of sexuality. Jeffreys' endorsement of that standard is often veiled. Except for rare occasions, she does not uphold it expressly but does instead by means of critiques to authors who defend a model of sexuality which opposes the link between sexuality, feelings, and stable and intimate relationships.

In the context of a general critique to the sexual revolution of the 1960s, Jeffreys says that "more intercourse, in more positions, and more initiating sexual activity" "might not be in women´s interests".[1701] In her view, that is a male model of sexuality, one which wrongly

[1699] My emphasis. MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 138.
[1700] My emphasis. DWORKIN, Andrea, *Intercourse*, p. 162.
[1701] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *Anticlimax: A Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution*, p. 164.

depicts women as "capable of separating sex from loving emotion".[1702] According to her, the "separation of sex from loving emotion" is precisely one of the characteristics of male sexuality.[1703] Not women's for sure, as she goes on by criticizing Pat Whiting for attacking the "myth that woman have to be 'in love' to enjoy sex"[1704] and Erica Jong for claiming that women could "experience attraction to strangers".[1705] And she also criticizes that model of sexuality for envisioning women as "continuously capable of sex and always desiring"[1706] and for trying to make them "efficient, aggressive sexual performers,"[1707] who make "use of all sexual opportunities".[1708] Under that model, sex became "goal-oriented. The goal was orgasm and sex ended when the orgasm was achieved."[1709] Yet, women, she says, "are bound to be unsuccessful in seeking to acquire [that] form of sexuality",[1710] since, in her opinion, they do not "respond to sexual pleasure and orgasm in the same way as male".[1711]

The essentialization by abolitionist feminism of a standard of sexuality that connects female sexuality with love and relationships is, in my view, also present in a much more indirect way in these feminists' very conceptualization of sexual oppression.

Oppression has been widely theorized as having two dimensions: a repressive and a constitutive one.[1712] The repressive is probably the most intuitive to us all: it is the idea that

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[1702] *Idem*, p. 166.
[1703] *Idem*, p. 169.
[1704] WHITING, Pat, "Female Sexuality: Its Political Implications", p. 204, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *Anticlimax: A Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution*, p. 169
[1705] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *Anticlimax: A Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution*, p. 169.
[1706] *Idem*, p. 166.
[1707] *Ibidem*.
[1708] *Idem*, p. 168.
[1709] *Ibidem*.
[1710] *Idem*, p. 169.
[1711] *Idem*, p. 168.
[1712] The constitutive dimension of power has been most notably developed my Michel Foucault, particularly in his *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. As he explained, "it seems to me […] that the notion of repression is quite inadequate for capturing what is precisely the productive aspect of power. In defining the effects of power as repression, one adopts a purely juridical conception of such power, one identifies power with a law which says no, power is taken above all as carrying the force of a prohibition. Now I believe that this is a wholly negative, narrow, skeletal conception of power, one which has been curiously widespread. If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse." (FOUCAULT, Michel, "Truth and Power", p. 119.) Foucault sees the constitutive dimension of power operating particularly in sexuality. As he put it, "'[s]exuality' is far more of a positive product of power than power was ever repression of sexuality." (*Idem*, p. 120.)

oppression is something that forbids, restricts, or impedes people's desires and needs from realization and fulfilment. In this sense, people do things because they are obliged or forced in some way, and they are impeded to do what they really want. Desire and consent are here in direct opposition to oppression. Contrary to this negative notion of oppression, the constitutive dimension can be said to be a positive one: instead of denying what people want to do, oppression makes us want things that are against our own interests and "true" desires. It is the idea that oppression acts on desire and people become endowed with desires which harm them in some way and which they would not have were it not for the very fact of oppression.[1713] Rather than opposed, desire and consent here are completely in line with oppression: they are both the result of and complicit with it.

Abolitionist feminist's conception of sexual oppression relies exclusively on the second dimension of oppression. They do not conceive or at least never refer to the repressive side of women's sexual oppression. While developing their theory of sexuality, they make three types of critiques to the current paradigm of sexuality: 1) it is a male model, in which only men's interests, desire, and pleasure are taken into account – and this can be seen by the centrality of intercourse in sexuality; 2) violence against women is absolutely pervasive in sexuality and there seems to be no escape from it; and 3) it is a sexuality that eroticizes men's position of domination and women's position of subordination. What is sexually desirable for men is women's objectification and subordination and what women erotize is men treating them as subordinate sexual objects. So, since the current paradigm of sexuality is a male one and all possible heterosexual sex is objectifying, women that do feel sexual desire, feel it because they have internalized this model of sexuality which is oppressive towards them. There is no room, thus, for a repressive conception of oppression even if, as Silvia

[1713] This phenomenon is usually referred to as "adaptive preferences". The term was coined by Jon Elster, who defined it as "the adjustment of wants to possibilities – not the deliberate adaptation favoured by character planners, but a causal process occurring non-consciously. Behind this adaptation there is the drive to reduce the tension or frustration that one feels in having wants that one cannot possibly satisfy." (ELSTER, Jon, *Sour Grapes: Studies in the Subversion of Rationality*, p. 25). The notion of adaptive preferences has been widely applied and developed within feminist theory, giving rise to what Natalie Stoljar has referred to as "feminist intuition": "preferences influenced by oppressive norms of femininity cannot be autonomous." (STOLJAR, Natalie, "Autonomy and the Feminist Intuition", p. 95.)

Federici has both noted and shown, the repressive dimension of female sexual oppression has been the most present and salient throughout history.[1714]

Such exclusive reliance in the positive dimension of oppression is crucial to the point I want to make about abolitionist feminists' conception of female sexuality and desire. Under their view of sexual oppression, there is no space for female sexual desire that is not, at the same time, a form of female oppression. For them, oppression is always to have sex, not to have it is freedom. And, in fact, this is expressly stated by abolitionist feminists when they say "I do not know any feminist worthy of that name who, if forced to choose between freedom and sex, would choose sex. She'd choose freedom every time."[1715]

This opposition between freedom and sex is quite telling of the idea of female sexual desire presupposed by abolitionist feminists: the lack thereof. It is unsurprising then that consent – "true consent" – becomes highly dubious for them. As Pateman puts it, women's consent to sex "in any meaningful sense […] becomes increasingly hard to discern."[1716] And this leads us to a crucial point of this work: the woman – the subject woman – presupposed by abolitionists feminists. The lack of female desire that seems to hoover over abolitionist feminism looks very much like the passionless good woman that emerged to us from the analysis of the nineteenth century theorization of sexual perversions. A woman for whom, as we saw, sex was completely attached to love and a stable and intimate relationship.

4.3. The Subject of Abolitionist Feminism

Let me clearly and summarily state my argument so far. Behind abolitionist feminists' arguments in favor of the abolition of prostitution lies a standard of sexuality that attaches sex to love and stable and intimate relationships. Such standard is essentialized, i.e., made into every (normal) women´s sexuality. And this means the assumption of a (universal)

[1714] FEDERICI, Silvia, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation*, p. 16.
[1715] These are the words of Ti-Grace Atkinson (ATKINSON, Ti-Grace Atkinson, 'Why I'm Against S/M Liberation', p. 91) as cited by Mackinnon (MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 166) and Jeffreys (JEFFREYS, Sheila, *Anticlimax: A Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution*, p. 222).
[1716] PATEMAN, Carole, "Sex and Power", p. 403.

female subject based on which claims of (sexual) oppression and revindications of (sexual) freedom are made. This latter is my point in the coming lines.

Gayatri Spivak tells us that essentialist politics are the result of running together two senses of representation:[1717] "representation as 'speaking for', as in politics, and representation as 're-presentation', as in art or philosophy."[1718] In the same path, Nancy Hirschmann, observes how often discussions of freedom imply the question of who and how is the subject of freedom.[1719] In fact, as Jane Flax claims, "[p]olitically, [it is the] subject [who] grounds the [very] possibility of freedom – freedom from determination and domination, freedom to be self-determining and sovereign."[1720] The idea here seems to be that representing someone in the first, political sense often implies a representation of that very someone in the second philosophical sense: it implies presupposing how that someone is, what are that subject's interests and desires, and what social conditions keep that subject from fulfilling them. This, of course, implies the idea of an inner and true self who exists prior to socialization and oppression. And that is precisely what essentialist politics is all about.

To this, one needs to add *choice* and its role in freedom. Choice is at the core of notions and discussions on freedom. As Hirschmann says, "most, if not all, conceptions of liberty have at their hart the ability of the self to make choices and act on them."[1721] If we attain ourselves to the most notorious classification of freedom as proposed by Isaiah Berlin,[1722] we can see how the distinction between the negative and positive concept of freedom lies precisely in the importance and meaning granted to choice. Negative freedom, which "consists in the absence of external restraints", assumes choices to be the expression of "desires, preferences, interests, and needs," which are seen has conscient and as emerging exclusively from one's inner self.[1723] On this view, then, freedom is reduced to the possibility of making choices without interferences, which are perceived as exclusively external. The positive conception of freedom, instead, extends freedom beyond choice. And this is so because it also expands

[1717] SPIVAK, Gayatri Chakravorty, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", p. 276.
[1718] *Idem*, p. 275.
[1719] HIRSCHMANN, Nancy, J., *The Subject of Liberty: Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom*, pp. 3-4.
[1720] FLAX, Jane, "Multiples: On the Contemporary Politics of Subjectivity", p. 33.
[1721] HIRSCHMANN, Nancy, J., *The Subject of Liberty: Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom*, p. 3.
[1722] BERLIN, Isaiah, "Two Concepts of Liberty".
[1723] HIRSCHMANN, Nancy, J., *The Subject of Liberty: Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom*, p. 4.

the notion of interference or barriers to freedom (1) from interference to the absence of necessary action on the state's part and (2) from the exterior to the interior of the self. Choice, thus, might, first, be the result of the lack of alternatives and not an expression of desire, and second, desire itself might be object of restricting and oppressive forces, which results in our immediate desires being at odds with our "true will".[1724] This, in turn, most often implies a notion of true self, one which might, therefore, be untransparent to the choosing self. How is it possible, then, to come to know who and how that true self is? Theories of autonomy provide us with different types of answers.

Catriona MacKenzie and Natalie Stoljar "divide theories of autonomy into *procedural* and *substantive*."[1725] The latter are theories that rely on "the content of a person's desires, values, beliefs, and emotional attitudes".[1726] As opposed, the former are allegedly content neutral, relying instead on the capacity for critical reflection.[1727] Substantive notions of autonomy are, of course, more obvious in upholding a specific content of the inner self. On these accounts, a choice is free and autonomous when is in line, when is coherent with the desires, preferences, and values of the inner self presupposed by the ones judging the autonomy of that choice. Procedural notions of autonomy, however, often come down to the same. Leticia Sabsay has called attention to how the content of a choice can operate as the criterion based on which the capacity for reflection and reason of the choosing person is judged. When that is the case, there is a kind of reversal: the starting point is not, as supposed, the capacity to reason of the choosing subject, but rather the choice itself – its content –, which is defined a priori as wrong or, as Sabsay calls it, as a "non-choice."[1728] When made, then, such choice is perceived as evidence of the subject's incapacity to reason.[1729] This, of course, – and this is my point – implies a particular and substantial notion of the self: one with which the content of the choice is incompatible, and so, one that would never make that choice. The result is

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[1724] *Idem*, p. 7.
[1725] MACKENZIE, Catriona, and STOLJAR, Natalie, "Introduction: Autonomy Refigured", p. 13.
[1726] *Ibidem*.
[1727] *Idem*, pp. 13-4.
[1728] SABSAY, Leticia, "Abject Choices? Orientalism, Citizenship, and Autonomy", p. 19.
[1729] SABSAY, Leticia, "The Emergence of the Other Sexual Citizen: Orientalism and the Modernisation of Sexuality", p. 617.

the perception of those choices as compulsory and as expressing the subject's lack of autonomy.[1730]

One of the cases in which Sabsay sees this reversal mechanism operating is precisely prostitution, and she specifically identifies it in abolitionist feminists' "assumption that people selling sex cannot really be freely choosing to do so, because nobody would freely choose this."[1731] I completely agree. Scott Anderson, for instance, gives voice to the commonly heard abolitionist feminist argument by means of which the reversal Sabsay speaks about operates: "[s]ince no rational person would willingly be consumed as a sexual object, prostitution is necessarily a form of exploitation."[1732] As Sabsay equally notes, the false consciousness argument in its individual sense works in the same sense, for it is but another way of expressing the impossibility of consent and explain why some prostitutes do indeed claim they freely choose prostitution.[1733] I, however, would like to extend Sabsay's idea to say that the inconceivability of (true) consent and the argument of false consciousness in the individual sense are further witnesses to the assumption of a substantive notion of self. One whose desire and sexuality more widely is attached to love and stable and intimate relationships: the good normal woman of the patriarchal discourse.

I can now update my argument to say that abolitionist feminists assume the good woman stereotype as the subject woman. It is this woman that they represent in the two senses Spivak has referred to: it is her, her desires, preferences, and values that serve as basis for abolitionist feminists claims of (sexual) oppression and revindications of (sexual) freedom. Now, we should be reminded that the good woman representation of femaleness does not stand alone. It is part of a dichotomy that opposes the good and the bad woman, one being constitutive of the other. Each bears the trace of the other in its very meaning and so cannot but be understood in conjunction with its opposite. They are, thus, mutually implied, as they stand as the two opposing poles of the spectrum of normal and abnormal womanhood. As we also know, the personification of the bad woman representation of femaleness has, throughout centuries of Christian tradition, been the prostitute. And so, my claim is that abolitionist

[1730] SABSAY, Leticia, "Abject Choices? Orientalism, Citizenship, and Autonomy", p. 19.
[1731] SABSAY, Leticia, "The Ruse of Sexual Freedom: Neoliberalism, Self-ownership and Commercial Sex", p. 183.
[1732] ANDERSON, Scott, "Prostitution and Sexual Autonomy: Making Sense of the Prohibition of Prostitution", p. 365.
[1733] SABSAY, Leticia, "Abject Choices? Orientalism, Citizenship, and Autonomy", p. 21.

feminism assumes the prostitute as the female abnormal and abject-Other. Not any prostitute, however – and this is crucial. Rather, the prostitute who claims to freely choose prostitution: the self-affirming consenting prostitute. In Sheila Jeffreys' words:

> The idea of consent or choice in prostitution effectively separates prostituted women from other women. Non-prostituted women, including feminists who take this approach, can then exclude themselves from the discussion of prostitution. Since these women would not "choose" to be prostituted, *prostituted women must be a different kind of woman* for whom experiences that other women see as violating can be quite acceptable, or even desired.[1734]

4.4. The Consenting Prostitute as Abject-Other

> There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated.[1735]

So here we are: on one side, the good, loving and passionless woman as standard of femininity; on the other, the consenting prostitute as abnormal woman. The former as the norm, the latter as the Other, the abject-Other.

The argument that abolitionist feminists reiterate of the good-normal/bad-abnormal woman divide is not an easy one to make. First, because of the very rare explicit references to it. And second, due to the open and strong claim to the opposite. Abolitionist feminists, indeed, claim to make no distinction between prostitutes and other women, and so, by no means uphold the Madonna/Whore divide.

[1734] My emphasis. JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 137.
[1735] KRISTEVA, Julia, *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 1.

4.4.1. The Coerced Prostitute as Good Woman

This claim is based on the opposition to what Sheila Jeffreys calls the "deviancy approach to prostitution".[1736] We are already familiar with it. In the nineteenth century, this approach relied on the pathologization of the prostitute as sexual abnormal, who was thought as choosing to live outside civilized society. By the 1970s, the idea of sexual pathology had been abandoned, and the deviancy approach relied exclusively on the notion that prostitutes "engaged in a collective denial of the social order."[1737] This, however, did not imply the dispense with the idea that the prostitute had a "spoiled identity",[1738] and it was that identity, as well as the prostitute's subculture, which was seen as the cause of prostitution.[1739] Hence the focus of the sociologists of deviancy on the prostitute rather than the client, on women rather than men. Jeffreys talks of "the male bias of deviancy sociology":[1740] it "obscured the men and stigmatized prostituted women again as constituting the problem of prostitution."[1741]

Abolitionist feminists switched the focus from women to men. According to them, the cause of prostitution is not the prostitute but her client (and pimp). As Catherine Mackinnon explains, abolitionist feminism or, as she calls it, the "sexual exploitation approach", "highlights the other people and social forces who are acting upon them [the prostitutes]"[1742] This is the reason for the adoption of the designation "prostituted women" instead of prostitutes. As Jeffreys further elaborates, "[t]raditional definitions of prostitution by male commentators have seen prostitution as a sexual activity of women." Men "have been omitted from the definition entirely, and thus from any consideration in most research and analysis to the present day."[1743] To the contrary, abolitionist feminists define prostitution as a form of

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[1736] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 59.
[1737] GOOFFMAN, Erving, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, p. 171, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 59.
[1738] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 59.
[1739] *Idem*, p. 60.
[1740] *Ibidem*.
[1741] *Idem*, p. 62.
[1742] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 273.
[1743] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 3.

male – and not female – sexual behavior:[1744] "it is 'a crime committed against women by men'".[1745]

By rejecting the prostitute as the cause of prostitution, abolitionist feminists also deny the idea of the prostitute's deviant identity or of her difference, sexual or otherwise, in relation to other women. And that is why they claim to in no way uphold the good/bad woman distinction. In a way, that is true. Abolitionist feminists do in fact liken the prostitute to every other woman in two significant respects. On the one hand, in what concerns sexuality, as the prostitute's sexuality is claimed to be exactly as any other woman's: one in which sexual desire and pleasure are only possible when associated with love and stable relationships. On the other hand, prostitutes are said to live in the same situation all women do in a patriarchal society: one of sexual subordination and violence. As we shall see in a moment, this latter point is absolutely crucial, for it is precisely the understanding of prostitution as a common condition to all women that leads abolitionist feminists to adopt the position they do not only in relation to prostitution but also in what concerns other instances of violence and abuse against women.

That is what Kathleen Barry starts to disclose when, in the very first page of what was probably one of the first and most important second wave feminist works on prostitution, she says:

> By understanding the experience of woman in prostitution as common to the experiences of all women, we have taken the label "prostitute" from where it has been relegated to the convenient and invisible category of "deviant" and prostitution became an essential aspect of the study of women.[1746]

Barry was here referring to the experience of violence that the Woman's Movement was, at that time, exposing as structural, and so, as common to all women. Yet, that is far from it.

[1744] *Idem*, p. 4.
[1745] GIOBBE, Evelina, "Confronting the Liberal Lies About Prostitution", p. 80, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 77.
[1746] BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. xi.

And this is where it gets interesting to us. Barry deserves for this reason to be quoted at length here:

> But there is another reason, even as critical as the violence against women in prostitution that requires attention of scholars and students to the subject of prostitution. Since the mid-1970s with the massive proliferation of pornography, the graphic depiction of what men require of whores, prostitution has been brought into the daily lives of millions of American women. Pornographic movies, magazines, video tapes and paraphernalia are no longer the province of combat zones and prostitution areas of the city. They have found their way into homes through the sexual expectations some men make of their wives, daughters, girlfriends and lovers. As a result, society is experiencing a social redefinition of woman who is reduced to her sexual utility – the functional definition of prostitute. Evidence of these changes in the meaning of "woman" can be found in the use of the popular slogan "all women are whores" […].[1747]

Very shorty, then, pornography was bringing prostitution to the house and transforming good women into whores. That is why, in Barry's view, prostitution deserved feminists' full attention. And Barry did not seem to be alone in this, as, in my view, it was precisely this confusion between prostitutes or, more broadly, whores and good women that led abolitionist feminists to bring the prostitute to the good side of womanhood. Let me explain.

When speaking of how courts deal with cases of sexual violence against women, Catharine Mackinnon noted how "women's sexuality as such is a stigma" and how, as a result, women's credibility in court depends on passing an image of asexual or virgin.[1748] Mackinnon was here rightly identifying Law's division between innocent and promiscuous women – the old Madonna/Whore divide. And this is far from exclusive to Law. Margaret A. Baldwin has shown in detail that such divide is a most common presence in cases of violence against women. In wife beating cases, for instance, which are commonly motivated by the jealousy of the aggressor, allegations of the victim being a whore "repeatedly emerge as the stated

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[1747] *Idem*, pp. xi-xii.
[1748] MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Sex and Violence: A Perspective", p. 91.

origin of that jealousy."[1749] In cases of murder of wives and girlfriends, that same allegation keeps coming up over and over again, as if the "whorish" behavior of the victim gave the aggressor a "punitive entitlement".[1750] And the same can equally be observed in cases of sexual harassment. As Baldwin puts it, "the presumption of a working woman's ardent sexual availability to her co-workers, inferred either from her presence in the […] workplace […] or from the assumption that sexual availability *is* her work […] echoes throughout the reported cases."[1751] Last but definitely not least, rape. The idea that all women are whores and so deserve to be raped is frequently voiced by rapists. Diana Scully's study of 114 convicted rapists showed the high rate of those who denied having committed the crime "by claiming that the victim was known to be a prostitute, or a 'loose' woman, or to have had a lot of affairs, or to have had a child out of the wedlock."[1752] And this not to mention how often victims of rape report having been thrown money at by the aggressor after the attack.[1753] Baldwin accurately summarizes the situation:

> Declared to be "whores" and "sluts" by the men who abuse them, women then confront a legal system which puts the same issue in the form of a question: was she in fact a "slut" who deserved it, as the perpetrator claims, or not-a-slut, deserving of some redress? (The outcome of this interrogation is commonly referred to as "justice.") [1754]

Faced with a social and legal scenario of profound division between good and bad women, feminists, according to Baldwin, responded with strategies that, rather than disrupting those categories, tried to show that women who had been victims of violence fell on the "innocent" side of the divide.[1755] This is to me a crucial insight, as, in my view, that is exactly what abolitionist feminists have done with prostitute. But this is as far as I go with Baldwin. And the reason is that what she claims is that those feminist strategies specifically distinguished

[1749] BALDWIN, Margaret A., "Split at the Root: Prostitution and Feminist Discourses of Law Reform", p. 60.
[1750] *Idem*, p. 62.
[1751] *Idem*, p. 65.
[1752] SCULLY, Diana, *Understanding Sexual Violence: A Study of Convicted Rapists*, p. 108, as cited in BALDWIN, Margaret A., "Split at the Root: Prostitution and Feminist Discourses of Law Reform", p. 66.
[1753] BALDWIN, Margaret A., "Split at the Root: Prostitution and Feminist Discourses of Law Reform", p. 66.
[1754] *Idem*, p. 48.
[1755] *Ibidem*.

women in general from prostitutes.[1756] Such conclusion, however, is merely the result of a one-sided vision. If rather than focusing exclusively on the feminist strategies used in cases of violence, Baldwin had also looked at what some of the same feminists were saying about prostitution, she would have found precisely the same ideas and strategies.

For instance, the distinction between consented and "wanted sex" has been used in prostitution and marriage alike to argue for rape. The lack of consciousness of having been raped was equally pointed out in prostitution[1757] and marital rape. And the same can be said of rape trauma syndrome or, to put it differently, "the physical, psychological, and behavioral symptoms commonly consequent to sexual assault",[1758] which has been used not only in rape cases, as Baldwin claims, but also in prostitution.[1759] Economic dependence is another good example, as it has been equally applied to prostitution and cases of battered women to substantiate the claim of coercion in relation to prostitutes and battered wives alike. In both cases, the idea is that if those women stayed was not out of free will but because they had no other real possibility. Finally, the idea of love, psychological dependency, and lack of self-esteem. As Baldwin rightly notes, one of the feminist explanations of why a battered wife stays in the abusive relationship has been her "hope for the man's eventual change, within a downward spiral of collapsing self-esteem extinguishing her feeling that she is entitled to better treatment."[1760] This precise idea, however, can equally be found in relation to prostitution, most notably in what Kathleen Barry has called the strategies of "befriending or love" and "seasoning", which, according to her, are employed by procurers to lead women into prostitution and keep them from leaving.[1761]

Prostitutes, therefore, were not left alone in the bad side of womanhood; they were instead brought together with victims of violence to its good and innocent side. And this was hardly

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[1756] *Idem*, p. 70.
[1757] See JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, pp. 137-8; MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, pp. 149-50.
[1758] BALDWIN, Margaret A., "Split at the Root: Prostitution and Feminist Discourses of Law Reform", p. 69.
[1759] GIOBBE, Evelina, "Prostitution: Buying the Right to Rape", p. 155, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 268; MACKINNON, Catharine A., "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality", p. 286: JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 269. Both authors base their claim in in Melissa Ferley's work on the topic.
[1760] BALDWIN, Margaret A., "Split at the Root: Prostitution and Feminist Discourses of Law Reform", p. 72.
[1761] BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, pp. 89-95.

any news to abolitionist feminism. In fact, twentieth century abolitionist feminists were merely following up on a feminist approach that was at least a century old by then.

Judith Walkowitz gives us an excellent insight into the shapes that approach took in the nineteenth century, when the first wave of abolitionist feminism came into being through the hands of feminist activist and social reformer Josephine Butler. As Walkowitz tells us, Butler "emerged as the moral and charismatic leader" of the repeal campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts in England,[1762] with her views on prostitution standing as paradigmatic of the perspective assumed by the abolitionist movement as a whole. For a start, to Butler, the Acts "punished the sex who are the victims of vice [women] and leave unpunished the sex who are the main causes both of the vice and its dreaded consequences [men]".[1763] This was the result of the unfair discrimination women suffered on sexual matters. As Butler noted, "[a] moral sin in a woman was spoken of as immensely worse than in a man; there was no comparison to be found between them."[1764] It is unsurprising then that the movement's aim was, as Walkowitz puts it, to eradicate vice and impose "a single standard of chastity on men and women."[1765] This might sound very familiar to us as the abolitionist feminism of late twentieth century seems to follow the exact same steps. And this is so not only in what concerns the allocation of blame for prostitution and the sexual standard uphold, but also in what respects the depiction of the prostitute, which is where I wanted to get to.

Much before the role she assumed as activist against the Contagious Diseases Act and following the death of her younger daughter, Butler devoted herself to rescue work with prostitutes. "From the workhouse, jails, and streets of Liverpool, Butler brought poor 'ruined' young women, friendless, all physically worn out from their hard lives, to be nursed by her in her own home."[1766] And she kept a diary of her experiences with these women she brought home, which is quite telling of the way both Butler and later the abolitionist movement saw

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[1762] WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, p. 93.
[1763] BUTLER, Josephine, *Personal Reminiscences*, pp. 9-10, as cited in WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, p. 93.
[1764] BUTLER, Josephine, *Recollections of George Butler*, pp. 97-8, as cited in WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, p. 88.
[1765] WALKOWITZ, Judith R., *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, p. 82.
[1766] *Idem*, p. 88.

the prostitute. Walkowitz' sharp analysis of how Butler described those women is very enlightening of those views:

> The protagonists in Butler's sketches were dying magdalens who had finally found maternal protection and personal salvation under Butler's care. They were victims and heroines, 'poor wondering lambs' ennobled by their suffering sad life. Compared to the 'outcasts' of the workhouses, these women were dignified, speaking subjects. […] they tended to display 'natural' refinement and gentility. […] Butler's magdalens all died in a state of grace, having acquired spiritual insight and potency from their fall. Like the original Magdalen, they were closer to Christ for having sinned and been redeemed."[1767]

In a time when delicacy and propriety in modes were put at the core of what womanhood meant, the description of prostitutes in those terms meant precisely a movement of bringing the prostitute from abnormal to normal womanhood, from its bad and vicious side to its good and innocent realm. To quote Wolkowitz one more time, by deploying "the melodramatic convention of suffering womanhood", Butler inverted "the prevailing view of 'fallen women' as pollutants of men; instead she defended them as victims of male pollution, as women who had been invaded by men's bodies, men's laws, and by that steel penis, the speculum."[1768] And by doing so she also articulated "a new constellation of feeling and identification"[1769] with prostitutes, based on charity and pity towards them, on the one hand, and horror for what they were subjected to, on the other. This, however, turned out to be a "complicated identification", as the fallen woman was at once "a version of the self and [a] residual Other"[1770] to the ones who would never have fallen and in fact never did.

With Walkowitz's observation about the complicated identification of nineteenth century abolitionist feminism with the prostitute, I come back to the twentieth century, as we finally got to the exact point I wanted to get to. As I see it, this ambiguity, although in a different form, is equally present in contemporary abolitionist feminism. The reason is this: if, on one

[1767] *Idem*, p. 89.
[1768] *Idem*, p. 92.
[1769] *Idem*, p. 87.
[1770] *Idem*, p. 89.

side, prostitutes are depicted as being forced into prostitution and, by means of that depiction, are assimilated to and into the good women, on the other, prostitutes who deny being coerced and affirm instead their willingness and free will in engaging in prostitution are excluded, cast out, ejected from the movement. This, of course, could not be any other way. After all, if, as I have argued, the subject woman presupposed by abolitionist feminism is the good woman for whom sex is necessarily attached to love and intimate and enduring relationships, then, the self-affirming consenting prostitute has absolutely no place in it. She is the Other to that subject, and so she could not but become the abject-Other to abolitionist feminism itself.

In fact, as I see it, the movement of bringing the (non-consenting) prostitute to the good side of the Madonna/Whore divide can already be seen as a manifestation of the prostitute's othering. As previously mentioned, there are two main forms of management of Others: assimilation and exclusion. We have also seen how in the nineteenth century, assimilation of prostitutes was put at work by the regulationist system through institutions – refuges – aimed at "rehabilitating" them. Such rehabilitation consisted in learning and incorporating the values and behavior of the good woman. It consisted, then, in transforming prostitutes into good women, thereby destructing/excluding/expelling their abject condition, which, as elaborated at length before, is an inescapable element of otherness. My argument in what concerns the abolitionist feminist discourse is that, in it, assimilation takes the form of depiction of the prostitute as good woman by means of the claim of her coercion in engaging with prostitution, which is assumed as abject – low, wretched, disgusting.

4.4.2. Prostitution as Abject

This is a crucial point, as, in my view, the idea of prostitution as abject is to abolitionist feminists not (only) a conclusion drawn from the theory of sexuality they endorse, but rather the very starting point of that theory. Let me explain. Kate Millett opens her seminal work *Sexual Politics* with a quote from Henry Miller's book *Sexus*. It is a quote which describes a sex scene between the protagonist, Val, and the wife of his friend, Ida. And it is not just any sex scene. It is one of display of aggressiveness and power on his part, and of passive

acquiescence on hers.[1771] And it is also one which Millett describes in terms of humiliation, degradation, and objectification of the female character. The reason to all this is disclosed by Millet in another quote of Miller's book, in which Val says of Ida:

> I just didn't give a fuck for her, as a person, though I often wondered what she might be like as a piece of fuck, so to speak. I wondered about it in a detached way, but somehow it got across to her, got under her skin.[1772]

Now, as Millett tells us, Ida is not new to Miller's work. She appears in an earlier work, *Black Spring*, in which her "'whorish' nature" is properly contextualized: Ida, now a (un)respectable wife, has previously been a prostitute.[1773] And it is as prostitute – as the lowest human being, in fact – that her husband treats her when he first finds out about her previous profession:

> And so saying he makes her bend over and spread her legs apart. "Now," he says, "I'm going to pay you as usual," and taking a bill out of his pocket he crumples it and then shoves it up her quim.[1774]

The fact that Millett chose to introduce and illustrate her ideas about everything that is wrong with heterosexual sexual relationships with a scene in which the woman had been a prostitute and is treated and punished as one is no accident. For it is precisely in terms of that treatment – violent, sadistic, humiliating, degrading, subordinative, unpersonal, and completely lacking in the most basic empathy for any human being – and that vision of women as nothing but sex – "If she had a soul at all! Lived entirely in the body, in her senses, her desires" –[1775] that prostitution is commonly understood. As the ultimate instance of degradation, lewdness, and wretchedness. As abject, therefore.

I have previously talked of prostitution as a rigid scheme of ideas that resist even in the face of obvious evidence to the contrary. Testimony to that is the ample use of prostitution as a

[1771] MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 5.
[1772] MILLER, Henry, *Sexus*, p. 179, as cited in MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 4
[1773] MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 8.
[1774] MILLER, Henry, *Black Spring*, pp. 227-8, as cited in MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 9.
[1775] MILLER, Henry, *Sexus*, p. 178, as cited in MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 4.

"supreme metaphor"[1776] of degradation. Georg Simmel, for instance, claimed to be "in the nature of money itself something of the essence of prostitution."[1777] And Karl Marx talked of the "prostitution of the laborer."[1778] What they both were referring to was the objectification, the alienation, and the degradation brought about by money and labor respectively. That is what prostitution stands for not only for them but for most of us as well. It is simply taken for granted, as if intrinsically associated with it. And that is why prostitution could stand alone in those charges against money and labor as a perfect synonym that required no further explanation. The comparison, furthermore, has a strong rhetorical value, as it inspires emotions of repulsion, horror, and indignation. In these cases, then, prostitution, with its meaning of wretchedness, is the starting point of a metaphorical chain aimed at the transference of that meaning and emotions to whatever comes after. And what comes after effectively becomes understood not in terms of an exchange of sex for money – which is what prostitution literally is – but rather in terms of that constellation of ideas and emotions which, as we have seen in the previously, has been historically forged into prostitution. A constellation I have been referring to as abjection.

Let us now come back to Millett and the opening of the book which is no doubt a benchmark in the history of feminism and of the theorization of sexuality. Millett used prostitution precisely as Simmel and Marx did in the examples above. As a starting point, an unquestioned referent of the degradation, dehumanization, and wretchedness she meant at claiming in relation to her own object of analysis: the sexual treatment of women in heterosexual relations. The idea of prostitution as abject, then, is there from the beginning, as the silent premise based on which conclusions about female sexuality are drawn. And Millett is not alone in this.

Molly Smith and Juno Mac have pointed out feminism's general metaphorical use of prostitution to refer to everything that is wrong with women in a patriarchal society.[1779] They

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[1776] BERNSTEIN, Elizabeth, *Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity, and the Commerce of Sex*, p. 7.
[1777] SIMMEL, Georg, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, p. 414, as cited in ZELIZER, Viviana A., *The Social Meaning of Money: Pin Money, Paychecks, Poor Relief, and Other Currencies*, p. 8.
[1778] MARX, Karl, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, p. 133, as cited in PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 201.
[1779] SMITH, Molly, and MAC, Juno, *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Worker's Rights*, p. 2.

could not be righter. In 1790, Mary Wollstonecraft equated marriage and prostitution by saying that as prostitutes, wives openly trade their bodies but unlike them they are not paid in return.[1780] In 1910, Emma Goldman would follow up on that idea by claiming that "it is merely a question of degree whether [a woman] sells herself to one man, in or out of marriage, or to many men."[1781] In 1949, it would be Simone Beauvoir's turn to elaborate on the topic: "the wife is hired for life by one man; the prostitute has several clients who pay for her by the piece. The one is protected by one male against all the other; the other is defended by all against the exclusive tyranny of each".[1782] Given such ubiquity, it is unsurprising, then, that Millett herself has admitted to this metaphorical use of prostitution when, in her *The Prostitution Papers*, she talked of the movement's rhetoric "that all women are prostitutes, that marriage is prostitution".[1783]Abolitionist feminism is no exception. Quite the contrary, in fact. And this is precisely where I wanted to get to.

Abolitionists argue that prostitution is an expression of women's general sexual objectification and subordination, and, as such, it only exists because of it. But how could they reach any other conclusion if the theorization of women's sexual objectification and subordination is mirrored precisely on a specific idea of prostitution as such? Consider the following example. When stating what, in her view, is wrong with prostitution, Christine Overall talks of the prostitution's dependency "both for its value and for its very existence upon the cultural construction of gender roles in terms of dominance and submission."[1784] As we have seen in Part One, this is one of the strongest abolitionist feminist arguments. Yet when she moves on to analyze gender roles and what is wrong with them what she finds is prostitution and, more specifically, a particular negative meaning of prostitution that she assumes but sees no need to make explicit or to substantiate in any way:

> While women are taught to render sexual services for recompense and often to regard that rendering as part of what it means to be a woman, men are encouraged to seek and expect sexual services and, indeed, to regard the acquisition of sexual services as part

[1780] WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 148.
[1781] GOLDMAN, Emma, "The Traffic in Women", p. 179.
[1782] BEAUVOIR, Simone de, *The Second Sex*, p. 619.
[1783] MILLETT, Kate, *The Prostitution Papers: A Candid Dialogue*, p. 17.
[1784] OVERALL, Christine, "What's Wrong with Prostitution? Evaluating Sex Work", p. 719.

> of what it means to be a man. To demonstrate this point, consider an old and dreary joke. A man says to a woman, "Would you sleep with me for a million dollars?" "I suppose I would," replies the woman. "Would you sleep with me for five dollars?" he asks. "What do you take me for?" says the woman angrily, but the man responds, "We've already established that; now we're just negotiating your price." This joke invites the listener's complicity with the notion that all women are whores at heart; we all have a price. Prostitution is called "the oldest profession," suggesting that women have always done it, will always do it, and will choose to do it, even if a full range of other options is made available. The implication is that there is something inherent in women and independent of sexist cultural conditions that makes us want to sell sexual services to men.[1785]

What I am trying to put my finger on is the tautology of this type of argument. One which always comes back to a specific idea of prostitution as abject: low, degrading, wretched. This is an idea which, I will say it once again, works as a rigid scheme that not only resists even when confronted with strong evidence to the contrary, but which also determines the selectivity of many of the things we generally think and say exclusively of prostitution despite the fact that those things could equally be thought and said of other activities we, however, do not see as low, degrading, and wretched.

My argument, however, is not only one about tautology and selectivity. As I see it, the idea of prostitution as abject operates as a rigid scheme also in *what* is said of prostitution and in *how* it is said as well.

Let me start with the latter. Andrea Dworkin's work is the best example of a way of speaking about prostitution that both expresses and arouses disgust and repugnance – in terms of abjection, therefore. Here are some good examples:

> […] a prostitute lives the literal reality of being the dirty woman. There is no metaphor. She is the woman covered in dirt, which is to say that every man who has ever been on top of her has left a piece of himself behind […] She is perceived as, treated as – and I

[1785] *Ibidem*.

> want you to remember this, this is real-vaginal slime. She is dirty; a lot of men have been there. A lot of semen, a lot of vaginal lubricant. This is visceral, this is real, this is what happens. Her anus is often torn from the anal intercourse, it bleeds. Her mouth is a receptacle for semen, that is how she is perceived and treated.[1786]
>
> Prostitution is not an idea. It is the mouth, the vagina, the rectum, penetrated usually by a penis, sometimes hands, sometimes objects, by one man and then another and then another and then another and then another. That's what it is. I ask you to think about your own bodies – if you can do so outside the world that the pornographers have created in your minds, the flat, dead, floating mouths and vaginas and anuses of women. [1787]

Dworkin, however, was not the first to refer to prostitutes in this way, as she would not be the last either. Much before her, Kathleen Barry had already talked of prostitutes as "plastic dolls complete with orifices for penetration and ejaculation",[1788] and, in the same vein, Dorchen Leidholdt referred to the prostitute's body as a "seminal spittoon". [1789]

Dirt, semen, slime, spit, blood, vagina, rectum, mouth: all crucial elements in the imagery of abjection. As we have seen in the first section of Part Three, dirt and filth can be said to constitute the very core of abjection both in ideological and emotional terms. Slime is another most frequent element in any depiction of an object or subject as abject. Mary Douglas, drawing on Jean-Paul Sartre, has explained slime's central place in our ideas of dirt with its anomalous, ambiguous condition: "half-way between solid and liquid."[1790] Spit and blood can also easily be framed within Douglas' idea of "dirt as matter out of place."[1791] Out of their proper place, the inside of the "closed body", spit and blood are very easy and obvious elicitors of disgust. Then the mouth. Mikhail Bakhtin has talked of the mouth as playing a "most important part in the grotesque image of the body."[1792] In particular, the "gaping

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[1786] DWORKIN, Andrea, "Prostitution and Male Supremacy", p. 6.
[1787] *Idem*, p. 6.
[1788] BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality*, p. 35.
[1789] LEIDHOLDT, Dorchen, "Prostitution: A Violation of Women's Human Rights", p. 138-9.
[1790] DOUGLAS, Mary, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, p. 39.
[1791] *Idem*, p. 36.
[1792] BAKHTIN, Mikhail, *Rebelais and His World*, p. 316.

mouth", to which, in Bakhtin's view, "[t]he grotesque face is actually reduced to […]; the other features are only a frame encasing this wide-open bodily abyss."[1793] This, of course, is not to diminish the importance of the lower bodily stratum in the grotesque. Genital organs and rectum are, in its opposition to the upper part of the body, the very essence of the grotesque in virtue of its symbology as non-spiritual, and consequently, as degradation.[1794] It is no wonder then that William Miller has given the mouth and the lower bodily stratum a prominent place in his work on disgust.

> The mouth and anus, the endpoints of a tube that runs through the center of the body, are crucial to the conceptualization of the disgusting, as indeed is the vagina to the extent that it gets assimilated to both mouth and anus. The anus and excrement are the great reducers of human pretension. Disgust is as married to the genitals as it is to the alimentary canal. I argue that semen is perhaps the most powerfully contaminating emission. Semen has the capacity to feminize and humiliate that which it touches.[1795]

I would like to pick up on the idea of "reduction of human pretension" as this is a perfect fit to what Bakhtin said about degradation. The notion of reduction of human value is, according to both authors, what lies behind the disgust arising capacity of all those symbols of abjection. In fact, such notion can even be associated with those bodily products that most seem disgusting in and by themselves. As Miller puts it,

> Even when the source of disgust is our own body the interpretations we make of our bodily secretions and excretions are deeply embedded in elaborate social and cultural systems of meaning. Feces, anuses, snot, saliva, hair, sweat, pus, the odors that emanate from our body and from those of others come with social and cultural histories attached to them.[1796]

And the reason why the notion of degradation is of so much interest to me is the fact that, in my view, this notion is at the core of the way abolitionist feminists speak of prostitution. Let me be clearer. It is the meaning of degradation and reduction of human value that abolitionists

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[1793] *Idem*, p. 317.
[1794] *Idem*, p. 21.
[1795] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 19.
[1796] *Idem*, p. 8.

express and convince of when they speak of prostitution in abject terms. In fact, degradation lies at the heart not only of *how* they speak but also, and maybe more importantly, of *what* they say of prostitution. For a start, the idea that "[p]rostitution degrades the prostitute"[1797] is expressly and frequently stated. Then, this meaning is ineluctably attached to what is probably the most prominent argument in the abolitionist feminist discourse: objectification. The opposition subject/object equates objectification with a reduction in human status and value. And it is that same idea of degradation, of reduction of the human status and value that underpins the charges if alienability, depersonalization, and fungibility in prostitution. Furthermore, the contention that the prostitute sells herself rather than her sexual services, together with arguments that talk of the prostitute's reduction to body parts are particularly evocative of the meaning of wretchedness and abject. Eveline Giobbe provides us with a good example:

> The word 'prostitute' does not imply a 'deeper identity;' it is the absence of an identity: the theft and subsequent abandonment of self. What remains is essential to the 'job': the mouth, the genitals, anus, breasts [. . .] and the label.[1798]

It is very difficult as a woman to remain untouched by words and ideas as these. More than repulsed, we are left horrified by them. It comes to mind here what Adriana Cavarero has proposed about horror and what elicits it: the offense to the human condition and to "the ontological dignity of the human figure".[1799] As we might recall, in her view, what is at stake in horror is "the human condition itself as incarnated in the singularity of vulnerable bodies."[1800] And it is precisely that condition and vulnerability that words and arguments as the above touch upon.

As we know, horror, as disgust, is part of the emotional economy of abjection. An economy that links the two senses of abjection. It both makes us think of, see, represent a certain object as low, degraded, and wretched, and, through that very representation, leads us to repel it. Emotions, of course, are permeated by ideas. And we have talked previously about the

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1797 SATZ, Debra, "Markets in Women's Sexual Labor", p. 73.
1798 GIOBBE, Evelina, "The Vox Fights", as cited in FARLEY, Melissa, "Prostitution, Liberalism, and Slavery".
1799 My translation. CAVARERO, Adriana, *Horrorismo: Nombrando la Violencia Contemporánea*, p. 25.
1800 My translation. *Ibidem*.

different ideas associated with abjection and the emotions that compose it. It is to one of them that I would like to turn now. I am referring to pollution and defilement. As we shall see in the coming lines, it is through that idea that the consenting prostitute comes to be excluded from abolitionist feminism. To illustrate my point and to show one more time how a specific idea of the prostitute as abject-Other was there right from the beginning of feminist theorization of sexuality, I will go back to Kate Millett and her *Sexual Politics*.

Indeed, Millett is not over with abjection in the opening of her book. After the analysis of Henry Miller's works *Sexus* and *Black Spring*, she directs her attention to Norman Mailer's *An American Dream*. The focus now is a scene of heterosexual sodomy between Stephen Rojack, who had just finished killing his wife, and his maid Ruta. Ruta was not and had never been a prostitute. Neither does she appear to become one at the end of the story. But, as we might remember from our previous analysis, as a proletarian maid, she was the closest there was to it. As Millett tells us, the three pages long description of the sex scene is followed by a passage in which Rojack notes Ruta's smell, one which almost makes him "too repelled to continue":[1801]

> But then, as abruptly as an arrest, a thin high constipated smell (a smell which spoke of rocks and grease and the sewer-damp of wet stones in poor European alleys) carne needling its way out of her. She was hungry, like a lean rat she was hungry, and it could have spoiled my pleasure except that there was something intoxicating in the sheer narrow pitch of the smell, so strong, so stubborn, so private, it was a smell which could be mellowed only by the gift of furs and gems.[1802]

Smell, sewers, and rats: all elicitors and expressions of disgust and, more specifically, all symbols of the abject-Other, too often a presence in her depiction. It is difficult not to think here of William Miller's observation about how Others are always said to smell.[1803] Or of Peter Stallybrass and Allon White's claim that people at the bottom of social hierarchy are consistently associated with the lower bodily stratum and with the lower geographical

[1801] MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 11.
[1802] MAILER, Norman, *An American Dream*, p. 43, as cited in MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 11.
[1803] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 245.

spaces,[1804] with sewers being a constant reference in their representation.[1805] And, of course, David Sibley's remark about the description of members of othered groups in terms of contaminating animals such as rats.[1806] It is also impossible not to think immediately of the prostitute, who, as Alain Corbin has showed, has been represented throughout centuries and particularly in the nineteenth century precisely in those terms.[1807] As a dirty Other, she brought disease into the physical and the social body, being an ultimate source of pollution and defilement.

And it is precisely that meaning of the prostitute as defiling that we are faced with in the third piece of literature analyzed by Millett right at the opening section of *Sexual Politics*, this time closing it. Now, not in relation to society, men, or morality, but instead in relation to revolution and female freedom. This notion appears upon Millett's analysis of Jean Genet's *The Balcony*, which, in her words, "is Genet's theory of revolution and counterrevolution".[1808] As Millett explains, "[t]he play is set in a brothel and concerns a revolution which ends in failure, as the patrons and proprietors of a whorehouse are persuaded to assume the roles of the former government."[1809] In it, the figure of the prostitute as corrupt and corrupting is given life by the character Chantal, "a talented former whore", who "becomes corrupt and betrays its radical ideals under the usual excuse of expediency." [1810]

The theme of the prostitute's betrayal and complicity with the patriarchal enemy for personal convenience is not new to anyone who has ever had any encounter with the visceral arguments between abolitionist feminists and women engaged in prostitution. In the introduction to her *The Prostitution Papers*, Millett actually describes an episode in which such accusation against prostitutes was voiced out loud by an abolitionist feminist. The year

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[1804] STALLYBRASS, Peter, and WHITE, Allon, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, p. 3.
[1805] *Idem*, p. 133.
[1806] SIBLEY, David, *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West*, p. 28.
[1807] CORBIN, Alain, "Commercial Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France: A System of Images and Regulations", p. 211.
[1808] MILLETT, Kate, *Sexual Politics*, p. 20.
[1809] *Ibidem*.
[1810] *Idem*, p. 21. Millett uses "its" instead of "her" due to the point she is trying to make in relation to Chantal and Irma, the brothel's administrator: "they do not even exist in themselves; they die as persons once they assume their function […]. Their function is to serve as figureheads and abstractions to males […]." (*Ibidem*.)

was 1971 and the context was “the first feminist conference on prostitution”.[1811] Despite the topic, there were no prostitutes on the panels. Yet, “prostitutes did in fact attend the conference. [… and t]hey had a great deal to say about the presumption of straight women who fancied they could debate, decide, or even discuss what was their situation not ours.”[1812] In the second day of heated argument, in a panel entitled “Towards the Elimination of Prostitution”, “[t]he place finally erupted when a member of The Feminists declared herself an “honorable woman” because she lived in a tenement, worked as a secretary, and yet refused to sell her body.”[1813] As Millett puts it, “[t]he accusation, so long buried in liberal goodwill or radical rhetoric – ‘you’re selling it, I could too but I won’t’ – was finally heard.”[1814]

In my view, the idea of the prostitute and prostitution as defiling, as a source of threat to the movement is equally present in the very content of the abolitionist feminist discourse. Most specifically in two of its arguments: first, the idea of prostitution as cause to women’s general objectification and subordination, and second, the claim of false consciousness in relation to women who claim they freely chose to engage in prostitution.

As we have seen in Part One, prostitution is claimed by abolitionist feminists to be not only an expression of women’s general objectification and subordination, but also, and most significantly, a cause to it, a tool in the social construction of women as sexual objects. This argument takes on different forms. Carole Pateman and Kate Millett, for instance, talk of *confirmation*. On this view, prostitution provides a locus where masculinity as domination and femininity as subordination are confirmed and interiorized. Kathleen Barry and Catharine Mackinnon, instead, refer to *normalization*. The idea here is that prostitution’s existence and ubiquity normalize the status of women as sexual objects, thereby leading to the interiorization of such status by society at large. A third form of the argument is what I have called *schooling*. What is argued here, namely by Andrea Dworkin, is that prostitution indoctrinates men and women in a type of sexuality that is objectifying and subordinative of

[1811] MILLETT, Kate, *The Prostitution Papers: A Candid Dialogue*, p. 14.
[1812] *Ibidem*.
[1813] ECHOLS, Alice, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967-1975*, p. 194.
[1814] MILLETT, Kate, *The Prostitution Papers: A Candid Dialogue*, p. 18.

women. Finally, the idea of obstacle. According to Sheila Jeffreys, prostitution is an impediment to the transformation of the current masculine model of sexuality into one which respects women as human beings.

Prostitution, therefore, appears here as a source of pollution and defilement of women in general or, more accurately, of women's condition and their possibility of emancipation. What is at stake, then, is the idea of danger and threat, which, as seen before, is an ineludible part of the constellation of ideas that permeate abjection. And what this idea leads to is abjection in its sense of exclusion of those seen as threatening and dangerous. That is precisely what, in my view, the argument of the consenting prostitute's false consciousness achieves: it both represents the prostitute as a threat to feminism and excludes her from it.

As also elaborated on in Part One, the idea of false consciousness is used in two senses in abolitionist feminism: individual and collective. What interests me now is the second, collective sense. Faced with many prostitutes' claim of free choice, abolitionist feminists resorted to the idea of lack of class consciousness. In it two important ideas are joined together to constitute the meaning of the prostitute as traitor and corruptor of feminism. First, the idea that prostitutes who claim to freely choose prostitution are not adopting women's perspective but rather the perspective of men and, more specifically, the perspective of their clients whom, according to abolitionists, prostitution benefits.[1815] And second, the idea of freedom as resistance, which, in my understanding, abolitionist feminists adopt when they locate freedom in the individual resistance and opposition to oppressive institutions, of which prostitution is a crucial example. Sheila Jeffreys, drawing on Janice Raymond, puts it as follows:

> It is deeply problematic to identify as agency the situations in which women opt into oppressive institutions which originate precisely in the subordination of women. Radical feminists […] have seen women's agency as most clearly expressed in their "resistance to those oppressive institutions, not in women's assimilation to them".[1816]

[1815] JAGGAR, Alison, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, p. 370, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 157.

[1816] RAYMOND, Janice G., "Sexual and Reproductive Liberalism", p. 109, as cited in JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 144.

Now, if the prostitute adopts the perspective of those who subordinate us and is complicit with the institutions that oppress us, what is she if not a traitor to all women, an agent of corruption to feminism, and an element of defilement in the "revolution" against patriarchy? Additionally, the argument about the lack of class consciousness works to exclude – abject – the consenting prostitute from the movement: lacking the consciousness of her membership in the class and being complicit with the system that subordinates all women, the prostitute is not and could never be a feminist. She does not see nor know what we do: she is ignorant "of the complexity of women's oppression",[1817] as opposed to us, who "know about sexuality and sexual violence from our extensive feminist knowledge".[1818] And she stands against us and for herself as her referent of freedom is individual rather than collective. In sum, she does not belong, she is not a part to our community.

When establishing my conceptual framework, I have introduced abjection through the lenses of the process of identity creation. Abjection in the sense of expulsion has been elaborated by Julia Kristeva as a first stage in the overall process of differentiation in relation to a not-me, an Other, which ultimately leads to the creation of the I. It is, as Judith Butler calls it, a "founding repudiation",[1819] even if abjection's role in identity is not limited to an initial stage of identity creation. Instead, abjection has a central function in the perpetual maintenance of subjectivity.[1820] Butler has also called attention to the fact that the formation of subjects "requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings […] who form the constitutive outside of the domain of the subject." [1821] Those abject beings constitute a "threatening spectre"[1822] that haunts the subject's "boundaries as the persistent possibility of their disruption and rearticulation."[1823] As I see it, this is precisely what happens with abolitionist feminism and the consenting prostitute. She is excluded from the movement – from being "a feminist" – and transformed into its constitutive outside – the abject referent of what (abolitionist) feminists are not. And this is both a cause and a consequence of the

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[1817] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, pp. 158-9.
[1818] *Idem*, p. 158.
[1819] BUTLER, Judith, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, p. 3.
[1820] *Ibidem*.
[1821] *Ibidem*.
[1822] *Ibidem*.
[1823] *Idem*, p. 8

threat she poses to abolitionist feminism: the persistent possibility of its disruption. The conclusion is simple and, at this point, quite obvious: the consenting prostitute is the abject(ed)-Other to (from) abolitionist feminism.

4.4.3. Bodies That do Not Matter

It is time for a brief summary of the general argumentative path that brought me to the consenting prostitute's otherness. It is a two-fold argument. On one side, the essentialization of the good woman sexuality; on the other, the assumption of a particular and dominant view of prostitution as abject. Either way, the result is the same: the impossibility of consent to or, more widely, the impossibility of freedom in the choice to engage in prostitution.

In fact, I can now update my argument on this matter. I have previously argued that the inconceivability of consent to prostitution within abolitionist feminism was a consequence of the assumption of a substantive notion of the self – the good woman – with which free choice to prostitution is irreconcilable. The present section has added the notion of prostitution as abject to the equation. And abjection, I claim, has a most crucial role here as it functions as an epistemological frame which makes free choice to engage in prostitution unintelligible: unthinkable, unconceivable, unbelievable.[1824]

Now, the result of the inconceivability of consent is the othering of the consenting prostitute. She is Other to the subject represented by abolitionist feminism. And she is Other to the represented subject both in the philosophical and political senses of representation to which Spivak has referred to.[1825] We have already talked of the former, philosophical sense: the consenting prostitute is Other to the good woman, which abolitionist feminism takes as a norm of femininity. My aim now is to discuss the othering of the consenting prostitute in the political sense. And when I speak of othering in the political sense what I am referring to is this: those – abject-Others – in the interest and to the benefit of whom revindications are *not* made and political actions are *not* taken. Let me be clearer. When I say that the consenting

[1824] I am here drawing on Judith Butler's notion of "a domain of unthinkable, abject, unlivable bodies". (*Idem*, p. xi.)
[1825] SPIVAK, Gayatri Chakravorty, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", p. 275.

prostitute is Other to abolitionist feminism in the political sense what I mean is that the revindications made and the political actions undertaken by the movement are not aimed at her. She is not the object of its concern. For abolitionist feminism neither aims at the improvement of the general conditions of existence of the consenting prostitute, nor does it care about the devasting consequences the policies it advocates has in her already dreadful situation of lack of rights.

This otherness in concern, however, does not become apparent only in the political actions and policies revindicated and fought for by abolitionist feminists. It is already quite evident in the theorization of prostitution and its harms. Debra Satz and Laurie Shrage provide us with very good examples of abolitionist feminist arguments that locate the wrongful of prostitution not in the harms suffered by prostitutes but instead in those caused by it on other women. It is these rather than those that are presented as justifying the abolitionist stance.

> My claim is that, unless, such arguments about prostitution's causal role in sustaining a form of gender inequality can be supported, I am not persuaded that something is morally wrong with markets in sex. In particular, I do not find arguments about the necessary relationship between commercial sex and diminished flourishing and degradation convincing. If prostitution is wrong, it is not because of its effects on happiness or personhood (effects which are shared with other forms of wage-labor); rather, it is because the sale of women's sexual labor may have adverse consequences for achieving a significant form of equality between men and women.[1826]

> Just as an Uncle Tom exploits noxious beliefs about blacks for personal gain and implies through his actions that blacks can benefit from a system of white supremacy, the prostitute and her clients imply that women can profit economically from patriarchy. Though we should not blame the workers in the sex industry for the social degradation they suffer, as theorists and critics of our society, we should question the existence of such businesses and the social principles implicit in our tolerance for them.[1827]

[1826] SATZ, Debra, "Markets in Women's Sexual Labor", p. 81.
[1827] SHRAGE, Laurie, "Should Feminists Oppose Prostitution?", p. 357.

While Satz and Shrage expressly state the focus of their attention and concern, not all abolitionist feminists do so. This, however, is precisely what comes up in arguments that focus on the harms suffered by prostitutes, but which, by themselves, do not hold together. As I see it, Pateman's claim that the prostitute sells herself and not sexual services is one such case. As we might recall, when substantiating her allegation, Pateman resorts to the idea that the notion of "services", precisely as that of "labor power", is an abstraction, as services cannot be separated from the person. What is really being sold, then, is one's self-government, the right of command over our bodies and capacities.[1828] This argument, though, brings up an important problem, as it commits her to the view that *all* workers are slaves. As she defends the abolition of prostitution but not of employment in general, Pateman needs to show what is it in prostitution that distinguishes it from other jobs and services. Her answer is the intrinsic interest of the client in the prostitute's body,[1829] which she argues to be problematic because of the inextricable relation between the body and the self. Yet, this argument is far from settling the issue: what about other jobs, such as sports, in which the interest of the employer is also the body of the employee? That is when sexuality finally comes into the picture.[1830] What Pateman argues is that sexuality has an importance to our sense of self that other uses of the body do not.[1831] Yet, once again, this is highly controversial. Many of us would argue that numerous other things are far more important to our sense of self than sex. That is finally when she says it: sexuality is "integrally connected to conceptions of femininity and masculinity".[1832] And prostitution confirms not just any conceptions of femininity and masculinity but patriarchal notions of masculinity as sexual mastery and femininity as subjection.[1833]

> […] when a man has bought a woman's body for his use as if it were like any other commodity […] the sex act' itself provides acknowledgement of patriarchal right. When women's bodies are on sale as commodities in the capitalist market, the terms of the original contract cannot be forgotten; the law of male sex-right is publicly

[1828] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 562.
[1829] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 203.
[1830] *Idem*, p. 206.
[1831] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 562.
[1832] *Ibidem*.
[1833] PATEMAN, Carole, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 207.

affirmed, and men gain public acknowledgement as women's sexual masters – that is what is wrong with prostitution.[1834]

So here it is: the argument about the prostitute's slavery, the idea that she does not sell sexual services but her very self ultimately comes up not to the prostitute but to women more generally. It is no wonder then that Pateman sums up the "central feminist argument" against prostitution and in favor of its abolition not by reference to prostitutes, their freedom or rights, but rather in relation to the meaning prostitution conveys of all (other) women: "prostitution remains morally undesirable, no matter what reforms are made, because it is one of the most graphic examples of men's domination of women."[1835]

What is at stake, of course, is more than just meaning. We have already seen how prostitution is claimed by abolitionist feminists to cause other women's general objectification and subordination. When I first introduced that argument, I presented it as one among many other abolitionist feminist allegations. My claim now is that is not just another item in a large list. From the perspective of the consenting prostitute's political otherness, that argument needs to be put at the very top of that list, as the crucial and most significative one. Kathleen Barry's contextualization of her interest and work on prostitution in the 1970s certainly seems to confirm the placement of that argument right at the top of abolitionists feminists' concerns. As she sees it, women were, at that time, being "reduced to her sexual utility – the functional definition of prostitute." Prostitution was being brought home, transforming good women into prostitutes.[1836] Sheila Jeffreys concurs. To her mind, the entire model of sexuality was being socially redefined according to the model of prostitution.[1837] As she puts it, "[t]he sex that was being constructed through sexology and pornography in the sexual revolution can be seen to be the sexuality of prostitution."[1838] Sexologists "prescribed the practices of prostitution for wives and girlfriends", advised them to "be prepared to behave in ways that seem to them 'indecent'" and perverse, and recommended them "to dress in the

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[1834] *Idem*, p. 208.
[1835] PATEMAN, Carole, "Defending Prostitution: Charges Against Ericsson", p. 561.
[1836] BARRY, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, pp. xi-xii.
[1837] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 42.
[1838] *Idem*, p. 41.

uncomfortable and degrading fetish costume of prostitution".[1839] Evelina Giobbe reproduces this very same vision and worry:

> The line between wife and prostitute – madonna and whore – has become increasingly blurred, beginning in the 1960s when women's attempts to free themselves of the double standard was frustrated by the liberal left's adoption and promotion of the "Playboy Philosophy." This resulted in the replacement of the double standard by a single male standard in which sexual liberation became synonymous with male sexual objectification of and unconditional sexual access to women. With the invasion of the home by pornographic cable programs and video cassettes, the "good wife" has become equated with the "good whore," as more and more women are pressured into emulating the scenarios of pornography or forced into the role of the prostitute while her husband adopts the role of the "John."[1840]

Right from the start, then, abolitionist feminists' worry seems to have been "the prostitution of sexuality", as Barry put it and as she would name her next book after *Female Sexual Slavery*, one which started as a mere revision of that first one.[1841] It makes us wonder if "the prostitution of sexuality", and not prostitution and prostitutes, was not her main point from the very beginning.

Let me anticipate an obvious objection: being concerned with prostitution as a class condition, having in mind the objectification and subordination of *all* women is not (necessarily) to exclude prostitutes. They are, of course, members of the "class of all women" which seems to be abolitionist feminists' main concern, and would supposedly be benefited by any improvement in the general conditions of the class they are part of. This, however, is not what becomes apparent at an even superficial look at the political positions and actions taken by abolitionist feminists. Here, rather than the sisterhood with prostitutes that they so often claim, what becomes quite evident is instead an "us against them" type of logic. It is not only that the actions undertaken and the policies defended are directed not at prostitutes'

[1839] *Idem*, p. 42.
[1840] GIOBBE, Evelina, "Confronting the Liberal Lies About Prostitution", pp. 76-7.
[1841] BARRY, Kathleen, *The Prostitution of Sexuality*, p. 15.

but other women's interests and benefit; it is that actions are taken and policies defended *despite* and *against* prostitutes' interests and benefit.

My argument is once more twofold: on one side, the negative consequences to prostitutes of the policies defended by abolitionist feminists; on the other, its symbolic value. Let me start with the latter. Hendrik Wagenaar and his colleagues talk of the symbolic value of prostitution policy as follows: "[t]he purpose of the policy is to send out a signal to the world – both to supporters and opponents – that proponents of a certain policy proposal hold the right position on the issue.[1842] Hence the "lack of interest in the outcomes of the policy". As they explain, "the formulation and announcement of policy is seen as more important than its implementation."[1843]

A good example of this is both the postponement of the evaluation of the impact of the Swedish law that criminalized the buying of sexual services – that was proposed by Catharine Mackinnon and Andrea Dworkin –[1844] and the reactions towards its disappointing results. As Jane Scoular tells us, "a number of evaluations and sources, including those conducted by governmental departments"[1845] showed that the law led to a deterioration of the prostitutes' situation, who are now exposed to greater danger. A displacement from street sex work to "more hidden forms of sex work"[1846] resulted in the "worsening of the conditions for those who remain on the streets"[1847] as well as for those who were "forced to move into illegal brothels or to work alone from indoor locations."[1848] As Scoular further explains, "[s]uch a

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[1842] WAGENAAR, Hendrik, AMESBERGER, Helga, and ALTINK, Sietske, *Designing Prostitution Policy: Intention and Reality in Regulating the Sex Trade*, p. 45.
[1843] *Idem*, p. 44.
[1844] "American lawyer Catharine A. MacKinnon in 1990, during a speech together with writer Andrea Dworkin, organized by the umbrella association Swedish Organization for Women's and Girls' Shelters (ROKS) under its first chair Ebo Kram, independently argued publicly that gender inequality and sexual subordination could not be fought effectively by assuming a gender symmetry that empirically does not exist. Thus, in an unequal world, she argued, a law against men purchasing women is called for, together with no law against the people, mainly women, being bought for sexual use and hence, 'ending prostitution by ending the demand for it is what sex equality under law would look like.'" (WALTMAN, Max, "Prohibiting Sex Purchasing and Ending Trafficking: The Swedish Prostitution Law", p. 137.)
[1845] SCOULAR, Jane, "What's Law Got to Do With it? How and Why Law Matters in the Regulation of Sex Work", p. 18.
[1846] *Ibidem*.
[1847] *Idem*, pp. 18-9.
[1848] *Idem*, p. 19.

move leaves these women more isolated than before, which arguably exposes them to greater risks of violence, and leaves them open to the forms of harm that are more common indoor settings, for example, economic exploitation".[1849] The reaction of the Swedish minister to these results is illustrative: he "brushed it aside as insignificant in light of the larger pedagogical goals of the law."[1850]

In fact, this very objective was clearly stated by female and feminist MPs in parliamentary discussions over the law. For instance, "a woman MP from the Christian Democrats stated, 'through criminalizing the buyers of prostitution society indicates that the gross violation and degradation of women that prostitution entails is unacceptable'."[1851] And Yvone Svanström observes that "[t]he same formulation was also used by the government":[1852] "[t]he Swedish sex purchase legislation is a statement of the kind of society we want".[1853]

In addition, Laura Agustín tells us that

> [s]wedish feminists who support their law's criminalization of clients have admitted, in informal conversations, that they know perfectly well that the law criminalizing the purchase of sex does not end prostitution and that many buyers of sex have simply moved out of police sight. Nonetheless, they praise and defend their law on the grounds that it is more progressive than any other legislation anywhere and claim that Sweden's role is to be a model of progressiveness, particularly in the moral realm.[1854]

Progressive for whom? And at the expenses of whom: of whose food, whose integrity, whose lives? As the evaluation of the impact of the Swedish law shows, it is definitely not progressive for women who sell sex. Yet, abolitionist feminists remain both silent and passive in the face of the impact on prostitutes of the policies they continue to defend. There are

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[1849] *Ibidem*.
[1850] WAGENAAR, Hendrik, AMESBERGER, Helga, and ALTINK, Sietske, *Designing Prostitution Policy: Intention and Reality in Regulating the Sex Trade*, p. 45.
[1851] RP 1992/93:45, Anf. 186, as cited in SVANSTRÖM, Yvonne, "From Contested to Consensus: Swedish Politics on Prostitution and Trafficking", p. 34
[1852] SVANSTRÖM, Yvonne, "From Contested to Consensus: Swedish Politics on Prostitution and Trafficking", p. 40.
[1853] RP 2010/11:101, Anf. 4, as cited in SVANSTRÖM, Yvonne, "From Contested to Consensus: Swedish Politics on Prostitution and Trafficking", p. 40.
[1854] AGUSTÍN, Laura, "Sex and the Limits of Enlightenment: The Irrationality of Legal Regimes to Control Prostitution", p. 76.

several other examples of the symbolic value pursued by abolitionist feminists despite and against prostitutes' best interests. But there is one I find particularly disturbing. It concerns the cut of US governmental funds in 2003 to groups providing HIV/AIDS services, which supported the legalization of prostitution, or which did not explicitly oppose to it.[1855] Crystal A. Jackson and her colleagues tell us of the abolitionist feminists' deciding influence on the Public Office (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons) that made this happen:

> The election of born-again Christian President George Bush in 2001 […] allowed unrivalled access of faith-based organisations into federal government. These organisations and their abolitionist feminist allies took over TVPA administration and subsequent amendments […] The Bush Administration appointed anti-prostitution feminist leaders and conservative Christians to key positions in the TVPA offices […and the] head of that Office from 2002–2006, [John] Miller worked closely with faith-based and feminist organisations including CATW to establish an 'abolitionist outpost' in the State Department. As Miller commented to a New York Times reporter in 2003 about these neo-abolitionists, 'They're consumed by this issue. I think it's great. It helped get the legislation passed, it helped spur me. I think it keeps the whole government focused.'[1856]

Examples as this leave very little room for doubts about an "us against them logic", which, in my view, permeates abolitionist feminism. And even though such logic emerges very clearly from the policies defended by these feminists despite and against (consenting) prostitutes, it can already be spotted by a more attentive look into theory, where now and then what seems to me both a kind of justification and an implicit attribution of responsibility to consenting prostitutes pops up:

> […] if, as some sex workers claim, some prostitutes genuinely choose the work they do, then they carry a responsibility for that work: at the very least, to recognize and

[1855] JACKSON, Crystal A., REED, Jennifer J., and BRENTS, Barbara G., "Strange Confluences: Radical Feminism and Evangelical Christianity as Drivers of US Neo-Abolitionism", p. 75. See also WEITZER, Ronald, "The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade", p. 464.
[1856] JACKSON, Crystal A., REED, Jennifer J., and BRENTS, Barbara G., "Strange Confluences: Radical Feminism and Evangelical Christianity as Drivers of US Neo-Abolitionism", p. 74.

evaluate its meaning, its implications, and its effects on other women and on themselves.[1857]

> However, this defense is implausible since it ignores the possible adverse impact of her behavior on herself and others, and the fact that, by participating in prostitution, her behavior does little to subvert the cultural principles that make her work harmful.[1858]

When discussing abjection, I have talked of how it functions to deactivate empathy in relation to the abject-Other. On one side, that seems to be related with the idea of threat and danger which is a constant presence in her representation. On the other, the emotion of disgust is crucial. As William Miller has said, disgust "works to prevent concern, care, pity, and love."[1859] It is, as he puts it, an "impenetrable barrier".[1860] As I hope I was able to demonstrate, both the idea of threat and the emotion of disgust are present in abolitionist feminism in relation to the consenting prostitute and prostitution. And it is through both of them that I look at the lack of empathy and concern in relation to prostitutes that results so evident in abolitionist policies and discourse. They emerge out of those policies and discourse as "bodies that do not matter" to quote Judith Butler one more time: as bodies that fail "to qualify as fully human", that do *not* "count as 'life,' [as] lives worth protecting, lives worth saving, lives worth grieving".[1861] Once again, abjection shows its face.

4.4.4. Affect Aliens

Sara Ahmed has coined the term "affect aliens" to refer to "those who are alienated by virtue of how they are affected by the world and how they affect others in the world."[1862] As I interpret her, Ahmed is trying to capture a difference in the emotions felt by those aliens.[1863] I would like to propose an inversion of the feeling subject of this term: from the alien to those

[1857] OVERALL, Christine, "What's Wrong with Prostitution? Evaluating Sex Work", p. 723.
[1858] SHRAGE, Laurie, "Should Feminists Oppose Prostitution?", p. 357.
[1859] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 251.
[1860] *Idem*, p. 242.
[1861] BUTLER, Judith, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex",* p. 16.
[1862] AHMED, Sara, *The Promise of Happiness*, p. 164.
[1863] *Idem*, p. 49.

who are, as she puts it, members of an affective community. And I would also like to propose a change in the object at which affect is directed, which, on this different view, would cease to be something external to the member of the affective community and its alien.[1864] Finally, I propose a restriction of the meaning of "affect" to its more common-sense usage as positive emotion. I am, of course, completely subverting the meaning of the notion "affect alien", as presented by Ahmed. So maybe it would just be better to use another term. Yet, interpreted in this different sense, the idea of "affect alien" seems to perfectly capture the sense I get of the affect directed at the prostitute by abolitionist feminists: none. It is the striking indifference, the impressive lack of empathy to what happens to those women, who abolitionists claim to defend, that the notion of affect aliens seems to me as capable of putting into words.

There is, I believe, another good reason for keeping with the idea of affect aliens. And it is once again related to one of abjection's functions. This time what is at stake is abjection's capacity of community creation. And the reason why I think the notion of affect aliens is important in this regard is the fact that it is suggestive of the role of affect "in the very making of boundaries."[1865] Ahmed begins to explain the role affect plays in boundary formation with a simple example involving pain:

> […] say I stub my toe on the table. […] it leaves its trace on the surface of my skin and I respond with the appropriate "ouch" and move away, swearing. It is through such painful encounters between this body and other objects, which included other bodies, *that "surfaces" are felt as "being there" in the first place*.[1866]

She then moves from the individual to the collective realm, as her point is not the physical skin but rather "the skin of the community". Her thesis is this:

> […] affects and emotions work to align the subject and community in specific and determinate ways. This alignment does not take place through the subject simply

[1864] "We become alienated – out of line with an affective community – when we do not experience pleasure from proximity to objects that are attributed as being good." (*Idem*, p. 41.)
[1865] AHMED, Sara, "The Skin of Community: Affect and Boundary Formation", p. 102.
[1866] *Idem*, p. 101.

> inhabiting the skin of the community, rather the skin of the community is an effect of the alignment of the subject with some others and against other others.[1867]

The question now is then alignment: how do we become aligned with some and against others? Ahmed's answer is once again affect. And she speaks specifically of disgust, as, in her view, the emotion and the expression of disgust "generates a community of those who are bound together through the shared condemnation of a disgusting object or event."[1868] William Miller agrees. When speaking of the "powerful communalizing capacities" of disgust, he says that disgust brings people together around the same indisputable norms and values.[1869] This seems to be precisely Ahmed's point when, speaking of affective communities, she says:

> we *tend to* like those who like the things we like. This is why the social bond is always sensational. […] To be affected in a good way by objects that are already evaluated as good is a way of belonging to an affective community. We align ourselves with others by investing in the same objects as the cause of happiness.[1870]

This, of course, works precisely the same way in the negative sense: we tend to like those who *dislike* the things we *dislike*, those who are affected in a *bad* way by objects evaluated as *bad*. We align ourselves with others by investing in the same objects as cause of *disgust*, as in it we find ourselves bound in the condemnation of that object and, ultimately, in the sharing of the same norms and values. That is how the skin of a community "surfaces": how it comes into being.

I would like to apply this insight about the affective community to abolitionist feminism. We have seen how abolitionist feminists are united in their disgust toward prostitution. I would now like to suggest that the consenting prostitute becomes an affect alien in the sense I proposed in virtue of being an affect alien in the sense initially proposed by Ahmed. In her claim to freely choose to engage in prostitution, the consenting prostitute rejects the disgust with which free choice is incompatible. And by doing so, she becomes an affect alien for

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[1867] *Idem*, p. 104.
[1868] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 94.
[1869] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, pp. 194-5.
[1870] AHMED, Sara, *The Promise of Happiness*, p. 38.

being affected by prostitution in a different manner of those who belong. She is not united with abolitionist feminists by the condemnation of the disgusting object. She does not dislike what they do, she is not affected in a bad way by the object evaluated as bad, and so she ultimately does not share the same norms and values. Finally, in being an affect alien in this sense, she becomes an alien in the sense I proposed: object of a shocking indifference and lack of empathy.

It is interesting – and in my view very sad – that this starts precisely with a claim of an utmost empathy: we are all women, we all share the same condition, your pain is mine, and I will not leave you behind. It makes us think of all the downfalls of empathy, which have not gone unnoticed by feminism more broadly. Ahmed makes the important remark that empathy is generally given in accordance with our expectation of what the other feels rather than what she actual feels.[1871] In this sense, rather than a sign and a means of "real intersubjective connection", empathy, as Clare Hemmings says, might actually forces us apart due to the imposition upon the one we are empathizing with of our views of her situation, which is not, after all, our own.[1872] This, of course, might just not be real empathy but instead that "lazy and false empathy in which we take the other's place".[1873] As Maria Lugones and Elizabeth Spelman have emphasized, real empathy requires "recognition that you do not have the authority of knowledge; it requires coming to the task without ready-made theories to frame our lives." It demands "a striving to understand what is it that our voices are saying."[1874] And this, as we know, was always emphatically denied by abolitionist feminists to consenting prostitutes.

That, of course, is not what abolitionist feminists say. What they claim is, instead, that they chose one of the two "totally conflicting accounts" of prostitution by prostitutes.[1875] Yet, as Molly Smith and Juno Mac have accurately observed, the account abolitionist feminists have

[1871] AHMED, Sara, "Becoming Unsympathetic".
[1872] HEMMINGS, Clare, "Affective Solidarity: Feminist Reflexivity and Political Transformation", p. 152.
[1873] DEAN, Carolyn J., "Empathy, Pornography, and Suffering", p. 96, as cited in HEMMINGS, Clare, "Affective Solidarity: Feminist Reflexivity and Political Transformation", p. 152.
[1874] LUGONES, Maria C., and SPELMAN, Elizabeth V., "Have We Got a Theory For You!: Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism and the Demand for 'The Woman's Voice'", p. 581.
[1875] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 156.

chosen is of ex prostitutes, "exited women", as they call it.[1876] Indeed, as they also point out, abolitionist feminism is "exclusively comprised of those who previously sold sex and those who have never sold sex," women who will not be affected by the prostitution policies that they defend and fight for.[1877] And this leads us to a third sense of prostitutes as affect aliens to abolitionist feminism: the pain inflicted on them by abolitionist policies is not felt by abolitionist feminists in a very literal sense. The consequences of those policies are not brought upon them. And this is because prostitutes are Others to abolitionist feminism in this third, very literal sense of otherness: they are just not part of it.

In the first section of Part Three of this work, I have talked of epistemic violence as a most important feature of otherness. While doing it, I tried to establish a relationship between ontology and epistemology. Very simply, what I was trying to point at was that the representation of the Other as such depends on the silencing of those established as Others within a particular discourse. Were they not silenced, the specific content of that discourse and their position in relation to the norm – as Other – would certainly be different. I would now like to apply that idea to the consenting prostitute and abolitionist feminism. Were she a part of it in a literal sense, the discourse would probably be very distinct and, with it, also the representation of prostitution that emerges from it would be otherwise. Most importantly, in it, the consenting prostitute would not be othered neither in the philosophical nor in the political sense. Her place could then finally be *not* that of "a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable."[1878] And a new skin of a community now touched by her pain could surface.

5. Closing Remarks

> How the object impresses [upon] us may depend on histories that remain alive insofar as they have already left their impressions. […] feelings do not

[1876] SMITH, Molly, and MAC, Juno, *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Worker's Rights*, p. 13.
[1877] *Idem*, p. 14. More accurately, the authors speak of the movement being "*almost* exclusively comprised" (my emphasis) of women who currently do not engage in prostitution.
[1878] KRISTEVA, Julia, *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 1.

> reside in subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation.[1879]

Emotions have histories. Being as they are completely intertwined with ideas, emotions have histories because the ideas to which they are attached have histories, and emotions are both an effect and a crucial element in the construction of those histories. From this perspective, then, emotions are, in an important sense, discursive: they shape and are shaped by our views on a certain object. And so, if objects – and subjects – emerge out of and are constructed by discourse, the same could not be truer of emotions.

In asking "what do emotions do?", Sara Ahmed goes about by investigating how emotions "stick" to bodies.[1880] Drawing on Descartes, she starts by suggesting that objects do not cause the emotions we have towards them.[1881] Instead, those emotions depend on a process of reading the object, which in turn depends on discourses that come before the subject and the object and that shape the reading of the object by the subject.[1882] Ahmed illustrates this idea with a simple example of a child's encounter with a bear:

> The child sees the bear and is afraid. The child runs away. […] Why is the child afraid of the bear? The child must 'already know' the bear is fearsome. This decision is not necessarily made by her, and it might not even be dependent on past experiences. This could be a 'first time' encounter, and the child still runs for it. But what is she running from? What does she see when she sees the bear? We have an image of the bear as an animal *to be feared*, as an image that is shaped by cultural histories and memories.[1883]

This is how an emotion comes to stick to a body, an object, a subject: through a reading of it that makes the emotion appear as an "inherent quality of the object" itself.[1884] And it is with and through that sticking that the object comes to be constituted: the bear, before just a bear, is now a fearsome, dangerous (bear). This, of course, is not just a matter of "reading". Not at least in its strict, "ideational" sense. Emotions play an essential part in this process, as the

[1879] AHMED, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 8.
[1880] *Idem*, p. 4.
[1881] *Idem*, p. 5.
[1882] *Idem*, p. 6.
[1883] *Idem*, p. 7.
[1884] *Idem*, p. 88.

emotions felt in the encounter between the subject and the object both confirm that reading and make it circulate. It transforms that idea of the object, that knowledge, into a bodily knowledge. One which makes the subject (re)act immediately without need to think first: the child does not need time to think before she runs from the bear. "But the 'immediacy' of the reaction is not itself a sign of a lack of mediation. It is not that the bear *is* fearsome, 'on its own', as it were." [1885] Instead, the bear appears as such due to this process of reading – now in its wider sense –, which involves both ideas, emotions, and bodily sensations.

My point thus is this: neither discourses nor the objects and subjects that emerge from them are purely ideational; emotions are an essential part of both. And this is, in my view, a fundamental matter in what concerns the patriarchal and the abolitionist feminist discourses on prostitution, as the representation of the prostitute as abject-Other, common to both, can only be captured through the lens of a notion of discourse that takes into account the role of emotions in the process of meaning-making.

I have defined abjection as an affective economy: a system involving the circular interaction and mutual implication of ideas and emotions, with discursive and material effects. The idea of affective economy is also aimed at capturing the dynamic nature of abjection: abjection is not passive or static; it affects, it does things – it is performative. As a predicate of otherness, abjection constitutes that which it refers to: the abject-Other. And it does so in a double sense: both discursively – in the sense of representation of the Other as low, degraded, and repulsive – and materially – in the sense of exclusion either of the Other's abject condition or of the Other herself.

Reflecting on discourse's capacity to bring about that which it names, Judith Butler has elaborated on the notion of performativity as citationality. Drawing on Jacques Derrida reformulation of the performative in speech act theory, she stands with him in claiming that performativity results from the repetition of a "'coded' or iterable utterance".[1886] On this view, performativity is a function of the citation of that which has already been established. This idea links performativity with historicity, as performativity relies on previous

[1885] *Idem*, p. 7.
[1886] DERRIDA, Jacques, "Signature, Event, Context", p. 18, as cited in BUTLER, Judith, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, p. 13.

"conventions of which it is a repetition."[1887] To use the classic example, it can be said that if the words "I do" uttered in the course of a marriage ceremony produce the effect of uniting two people in marriage, it is because those words – and not any others at free choice of the uttering subjects – have been established as the ones capable of bringing about that effect.

I would like to apply the idea of performativity as citationality to the representation of the prostitute as abject-Other in the abolitionist feminist discourse. My claim is in it that the constitution of the prostitute as abject-Other relies in a citation of the patriarchal discourse, where the prostitute has long been established as such. And this brings us back to the idea of interdiscursivity.

Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin,[1888] Julia Kristeva,[1889] and Michel Foucault,[1890] I have talked of discourses as a "ceaseless play of citation and allusion".[1891] As Ian Parker says, a discourse always "embed[s], entail[s], and presuppose[s] other discourses."[1892] I find Jacques Derrida's grafting metaphor extremely useful to think of interdiscursivity. My point is that, as plants, also discourses are "the product of various sorts of combinations and insertions".[1893] There are, of course, multiple ways in which a discourse can cite and allude to another. A discourse might refute, affirm, supplement, or rely on another in different ways. Foucault speaks of relations of analogy, opposition, complementarity, and also relations of multiple delimitation between different discourses.[1894] The relation between different discourses, therefore, is not necessarily one of continuity and confirmation.

My claim in relation to abolitionist feminism, however, is precisely that of a type of citation of the patriarchal discourse on prostitution involving a continuity in what concerns the representation and positioning of the prostitute as abject-Other. It is around such representation and positioning that the two senses of citation just referred to come together. For abolitionist feminism cites and alludes to the patriarchal discourse on prostitution

[1887] BUTLER, Judith, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, p. 13.
[1888] BAKHTIN, Mikhail, "The Problem of Speech Genres", p. 91
[1889] KRISTEVA, Julia, "Word, Dialogue and Novel", p. 37.
[1890] FOUCAULT, Michel, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 111.
[1891] NORRIS, Christopher, *Derrida*, p. 64.
[1892] PARKER, Ian, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, p. 13.
[1893] CULLER, Jonathan, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*, p. 135.
[1894] FOUCAULT, Michel, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 67.

precisely by citing – in the sense of reiterating – the representation of the prostitute that emerges from it. In this sense, then, the idea of the prostitute as abject-Other is the trace abolitionist feminism bears of the patriarchal discourse on prostitution. The hidden picture my reading of both discourses has unveiled under abolitionist feminism's surface.

CONCLUSION

> […] discourses that challenge power are often tangled with oppressive discourses.[1895]

1. Abolitionist Feminism's Prominence

Why is abolitionist feminism so convincing as a discourse of protection and emancipation of women despite its devastating effects on the lives of those among us engaged in prostitution? Why does it travel so well across disparate political platforms and beyond geographical and cultural borders? What is it in it that explains its flourishing in the most diverse settings and its adaptability to very different contexts and actors? The answer provided by the work that now reaches its conclusion is abolitionist feminism's *representation and positioning of the prostitute as abject-Other*.

This answer draws on the important insights offered by cognitive science in the last decades about how human beings think and are persuaded: not mainly by rational, logic, and conscious arguments, but rather by impressions, emotions, and associations that are most often implicit – "unconscious" in the sense that are unavailable to introspection –, automatic, and governed by biases. In what concerns persuasion, an important bias is what is referred to as *illusion of truth*: we assume what is familiar to be true. That is why repetition is an important instrument of persuasion. The more we hear about something, the more we become convinced of its truthfulness. And what this means is that we are easily convinced of widely shared ideas, ideas that are deeply rooted in our culture. In suggesting that abolitionism feminism's power of persuasion is, to an important extent, related with its representation and positioning of the prostitute as abject-Other, I begin from this insight about how human beings reason and are convinced. As I see it, this notion is completely intertwined with ideas that are firmly entrenched in our culture.

[1895] PARKER, Ian, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, p. 18.

On one side, sexuality's understanding in terms of love, intimacy, and monogamic and enduring relationships. On the other, a deep-rooted cultural dichotomy that separates business from pleasure, the things we do for love from the things we do for money, home from work, and ultimately, the private from the public sphere. The two are completely interwoven, as the model of sexuality that attaches sex to loving and intimate relationships also places sex on the private pole of that dichotomy, thus conceiving it in opposition to money, work, and business. Prostitution crosses the boundaries of such dichotomy, removing sex from its "proper" location in the private sphere and placing it instead in the public realm. And that automatically seems and feels wrong, as if prostitution was intrinsically degrading and disgusting.

Now, that thought and feeling are not gender neutral. It is the idea of women having sex for money that is particularly repulsive. The thought of men selling sex does not generally touch us in the same way or at least not with same intensity. It is women, rather than men, that are generally thought and felt as being stained, downgraded, and offended in their dignity by being engaged in prostitution. A specific gendered meaning that is reflected in the fact that it is in relation to women, not men, that the worst word for prostitute in many languages is generally used as an offense outside the context of prostitution. "Whore" is not applicable to men as an offense nor there are generally in relation to them a corresponding offensive word. There is a reason for this: it is women, not men, that have historically been associated with the model of sexuality that attaches sex to love, intimacy, and monogamous and enduring relationships. And this both on a descriptive and a normative level. Such model, therefore, has a gendered character, which, in my view, is still very much ingrained in our culture.

When examining the abolitionist feminist discourse on prostitution, I came across this very same notion of female sexuality. And this, in turn, led me to the idea of interdiscursivity. Having defined discourse as a coherent system of meanings about a specific subject, a particular way, among others, of representing an object, which always alludes, implies, and embeds other discourses, I set myself up to demonstrate that rather than opposing the patriarchal discourse on prostitution, as it supposedly does, abolitionist feminism shares with it important notions. Since the relationship with other discourses is an important part of a discourse's coherence, to disclose a relationship of continuity with another discourse which

supposedly stands in opposition it is to attack its system of coherence – is to *deconstruct* it, in the terminology I have adopted. But that is not only it, though. To deconstruct a discourse is also to expose the historical and cultural roots of its notions. Notions which, when a discourse is deemed true, are taken for granted – considered as natural, self-evident, and beyond dispute –, as if the meaning constructed by that discourse was intrinsic to the object represented by it. To deconstruct the abolitionist feminist discourse in the two senses of deconstruction just referred to has been this work's purpose.

When digging into abolitionist feminism in search for the points at which it overlaps with the patriarchal discourse on prostitution, women, and sexuality, I uncovered more than just a shared notion of female sexuality. Directly emerging from it, I was faced with the representation and positioning of the prostitute as abject-Other. A notion which also seems to be deeply rooted in our culture. When analyzing and discussing prostitution policies and their effect on people who commercialize sex, Hendrik Wagenaar, Helga Amesberger, and Sietske Altink touched upon what is to me a fundamental matter:

> Perhaps the most telling aspect of this breach of sex workers' rights is the *indifferent*, commonplace nature of it; measures or conditions that would be unacceptable when imposed on or suffered by members of another occupational group under the rule of law, are met with unconcern by politicians, officials, the media, or the public when foisted on sex workers.[1896]

What I am trying to put my finger on is the general indifference and lack of empathy directed at women engaged in prostitution. One that, in my perception, is completely intertwined with the idea of the prostitute as not-me, as not-us, as something less than human. A degraded, abnormal, and dirty woman. That is what the notion of abject-Other is all about. And it is to it that I will devote the lines that follow. First, by addressing the prostitute's otherness as elaborated in the development of this work, and then, by focusing exclusively on the notion of abjection as a most crucial predicate of otherness.

[1896] My emphasis, WAGENAAR, Hendrik, AMESBERGER, Helga, and ALTINK, Sietske, *Designing Prostitution Policy: Intention and Reality in Regulating the Sex Trade*, p. 32.

2. The Prostitute as Female Other

2.1. The Concept

The idea of the prostitute as abject-Other is rooted in a particular view of female sexuality, which is subsequently universalized and essentialized. That view equates female sexuality with love, intimacy, and enduring monogamous relationships. As if sexual pleasure, desire, and fulfilment were not possible for women outside that model. By doing so, it essentializes it, as that view is assumed to be what is natural and normal in *all* women.

To this it must be added the idea that meaning is relational, working through difference and opposition. "The meaning of a sign resides not intrinsically in the sign itself, but in its relationships to other signs."[1897] On this view, meaning is established through difference in relation to something else. A difference that often assumes the form of binary opposition: night and day, beauty and ugliness, full and empty. In this case, each pole of a binary opposition is mutually constitutive: if the meaning of one pole is constituted by means of difference in relation to the other, they are mutually dependent. From this follows the *Derridean* idea of *trace*: each pole in the opposition leaves its mark on the other. Finally, a binary opposition is never neutral. Each pole has a different value – axiologically, logically, etc. –, one being perceived as superior and the other as inferior. As a result, binary oppositions are always hierarchical. And this leads us to the idea of norm: the upper side of a binary opposition incorporates a norm, both in its descriptive and normative senses. That side is perceived not only as what is natural but also as what it should be. And this finally brings us to the notion of the Other: the lower pole in a dichotomous opposition, which is both what is not normal or natural and what it should not be. The Other, hence, is the opposite of the norm – the "abnormal" in both its descriptive and normative senses.

[1897] BURR, Vivien, *Social Constructionism*, p. 60.

2.2. The Prostitute's Otherness in Patriarchal Discourse

Let me now come back to women and specifically the prostitute. Womanhood has a long history of dichotomous representation. The inquiry into the Christian doctrine of the Middle Ages in Part Two has revealed a deeply entrenched idea concerning the existence of two types of women: the good, asexual woman and the bad, sexualized woman. While the epitome of the former became, by the beginning of Modernity, the respectable wife and mother, the paradigmatic figure of the latter has always been the prostitute. In fact, Modernity brought with it an important change in this regard: while the promiscuous sexualized woman was previously perceived as women's true nature, from then onwards it was the respectable and chaste wife/mother who assumed that place, with the bad woman being relegated to the position of exception, of a corrupt state of femaleness. A new standard of femininity has thus emerged around that time, with the consequent swap in the positions of the good and bad woman.

Soon after, the roots of a most important idea begun to surface. An idea that "marked an important discursive and conceptual turn".[1898] I am referring to the notion of the normal – and abnormal –, whose historical antecedents can already be found in the conceptual landscape of the eighteenth century, and which was fully elaborated in the following century in the context of medicine. It is no wonder then that the concept of normal became imbued with a meaning of "healthy state", with its opposite, the "abnormal", acquiring the stamp of pathology. To this it must be added another conceptual novelty of the nineteenth century: the idea of types of people. Put together, those ideas led to the notion of normal (/healthy) and abnormal (/pathological) types of people. To complete the picture, the nineteenth century was witness to a rising importance of sexuality, with sex coming to be seen as an expression of the inner and ultimate truth of the self, of one's true nature. With it, the stage was finally set for the emergence of the figure of the sexual abnormal, one which relied on the implicit referent of the normal, and which was object of detailed theorization.

[1898] CRYLE, Peter, and DOWNING, Lisa, "Introduction: The Natural and the Normal in the History of Sexuality", p. 191.

This had important consequences for the representation of the prostitute, as she became, at that time, the quintessence of the sexual abnormal. As the analysis of the elaboration of female sexual perversions by nineteenth century sexology in Part Two has shown, excessive female desire and pleasure in women was argued to be abnormal and thus pathological. And "excessive" meant everything outside the idea of female modesty and passionless. In a nutshell, normal women were claimed to have little sexual desire, and that, in turn, was translated into a set of sexual behaviors considered both as natural and appropriate in women – as normal, therefore. Normal female sexuality was equated with intersubjective, heterosexual, reproductive, penetrative, passive, monogamous, loving, and marital sexuality. As a result, it was equally associated with the house and the private sphere more generally, and so, also with women's role as wives and mothers. It is important to note here the connection between sexuality and gender, as this idea of women's sexuality was a mirror image of how male sexuality was perceived to be. While female sexuality was thought as naturally attached to romantic love, monogamous and enduring relationships, and intimacy, male sexuality was, instead, thought of in terms of passionate love, one in which, contrary to the femininized romantic love, the sexual element predominates, or then just simply detached from love and intimate feelings all together.

Let us now come back to the prostitute. As "the essential sexualized female in the perception of the nineteenth century",[1899] the prostitute was also seen as a female abnormal. Indeed, the public character of her sexuality made her the ultimate female abnormal. A sort of monster, whose abnormality was perceived as part of her very identity, and so reflected in the psychological and physical characteristics attributed to her. Characteristics that acquired a taint of gender inversion: as the opposite of normal womanhood, she was depicted in masculinized terms. And also, characteristics that associated her with disease. It could not be otherwise. After all, the notion of pathology was built into the very idea of abnormality. And so, the epitome of sexual abnormality could not but be understood in terms of disease, which she was equally claimed to bring about. So here we have it: the prostitute as the lower pole in the dichotomous representation of women. That which is neither natural nor desirable. The opposite to the norm in both its descriptive and normative senses. In a word, *the Other*. The

[1899] GILMAN, Sander, "The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality", p. 95.

female Other. This is the picture of the prostitute painted by the patriarchal discourse on prostitution, women, and sexuality. And my claim is that rather than contest it and oppose it, abolitionist feminism endorses it in important senses, once again relegating the prostitute, or more precisely the consenting prostitute, to that very same place of the Other.

2.3. The Prostitute's Otherness in Abolitionist Feminism

My substantiation of this claim centers on the idea that abolitionist feminism upholds the same patriarchal view of female sexuality that equates it with love, intimacy, and enduring relationships: the good woman sexuality. The embracing of such a view of female sexuality by abolitionist feminism is neither express nor obvious. As such, identifying it required an analysis of the arguments put forward by abolitionist feminists that went beyond its explicit meaning. It was by examining the implications and assumptions that lied behind those arguments that I was able to disclose the standard of sexuality at work in the abolitionist feminist discourse.

Still, I could not but start by identifying the explicit abolitionist feminist arguments against prostitution. As I concluded from the analysis undertook in Part One, there are three main types of arguments. The first concerns the special value of sexuality for human beings. This idea takes on different forms: sometimes is defended as a descriptive and contingent claim, others as an essentialist and normative one. The second involves the objectification and subordination of women. Prostitution is not only argued to be a form of objectification, as it is also claimed to be both cause and consequence of women's general sexual objectification. Finally, the third type of argument is related to consent and freedom more broadly.

In what concerns consent, two lines of reasoning can generally be identified. One focus on the absence of the necessary conditions for true consent, conditions which can be said to be external to prostitution: poverty, sexual abuse, and emotional and psychological dependency are claimed to be the reasons leading women to engage in prostitution, thus, transforming that choice into a forced one in virtue of the situation of lack of alternatives they imply. The other examines the conditions internal to prostitution to say that, given those conditions, no one would freely choose to sell sex: physical violence, psychological, emotional, and sexual

harm, and, lastly, what is referred to as "paid violence" or simply exploitation are argued to be intrinsic to prostitution, irremediably attached to it no matter what reforms are made. Either way, what is at stake here is the impossibility of consent with the consequent claim of false consciousness being directed by abolitionist feminists at prostitutes who claim to freely choose to commercialize sex. Finally, the idea of the irrelevance of consent in relation to the general lack of freedom in prostitution. What is claimed here is that independently of the choice to engage in prostitution, selling sex implies the surrender of the right to command over one's body, which, given the intrinsic connection between body and self, transforms the person selling sex into a slave.

When looking at the implications and assumptions that underlie these explicit arguments, my starting point was the argument that prostitution is a form of objectification of women engaged in it. There were, I believe, good reasons for this choice, as objectification is used not literally to say that what is claimed to be objectifying actually has the power to transform human beings into objects, but rather metaphorically, that is, as a language employed to point out a treatment of people deemed incompatible with the treatment owed to every human being. A treatment which, on a more fundamental level, is simply wrong and harmful. Accordingly, understanding to which specific wrongs and harms the uttering subject is referring by means of the language of objectification allows us to identify the criteria based on which the treatment is evaluated as objectifying. Put very simply, what I am trying to say is that behind the idea of objectification lies a criterion of righteousness, and in what concerns prostitution specifically, a criterion of right sexuality.

Following this reasoning, I disclosed two standards of right sexuality at work behind the different senses in which abolitionist feminists use the notion of objectification in relation to prostitution. The first concerns desire and pleasure and imposes freedom in the choice of partners and sexual practices. This standard can be concluded from uses of objectification that refer to (1) someone's use as a means to another's ends and so to that person's loss or decrease of autonomy, and (2) to the inequality in the enjoyment of rights, which entails what I called comparative downgrading. The second standard of right sexuality I identified emerges from uses of objectification that refer to fungibility, depersonalization, and lack of emotional connectedness in sex. To consider that to be what is wrong with prostitution

implies to assume a standard of sexuality that attaches sex to love, intimacy, and monogamous and enduring relationships.

While I found both these criteria at work behind the abolitionist feminist argument on objectification, the singling out of prostitution among other institutions in relation to which the arguments directed at prostitution are equally applicable, led me to conclude that the standard that associates sex with love, intimacy, and monogamous and enduring relationships is what in fact explains the abolitionist position against prostitution. The institutions I am referring to are marriage and labor.

In what concerns the former, abolitionist feminists both argue and assume that marriage is not necessarily a relation of domination and subjection, while prostitution is. Yet, the same authors that defend the abolition of prostitution, accuse marriage of having a fundamental role in the construction and maintenance of patriarchy, identifying in it the same harms they do in prostitution and actually going further by showing how the duty of obedience of women to men is more extensive in marriage than in prostitution. If then the relation between men and women in marriage is one of domination and subordination, why is it that in it abolitionist feminists admit the possibility of a type of sexuality in which women can exercise their desire and pleasure, but they cannot imagine the same in prostitution? My answer is the conceptual compatibility of marriage with a criterion of sexuality that connects it with love, intimacy, and monogamous and enduring relationships. Our culture does not understand marriage as incompatible with that standard of sexuality. Quite the opposite: marriage is its appropriate domain. Prostitution, on the contrary, stands culturally as its opposite and denial.

With regards to labor, despite the claim that prostitution is not a job like any other and that the prostitute sells herself rather than sexual services, abolitionist feminists are unable to show any real difference with any other job that it does not ultimately come up to the selling of sex, which by itself is considered wrong and harmful. The issue then is money or, more generally, the market. And, more specifically, the mixture between sex and the market. Addressing this specific issue, Carole Pateman and Margareth Radin, for instance, argued that the problem with the market and commodification is the subordination, objectification, and maldistribution of rights that accompany it. However, when looking at abolitionist

feminists' characterization of marriage and sexuality more broadly, one is faced with the fact that those harms and wrongs they charge prostitution of are not, in their own views, exclusive to it. And still, it is only prostitution they defend that should be abolished and nothing else. My conclusion, then, is that the real problem with the market is its conceptual opposition to the private sphere – romantic's love proper domain.

Such contention is directly connected with the deep-rooted cultural dichotomy between love and money, or more precisely commodification. The conception of romantic love involves much more than the idea of a specific feeling. It includes elements such as the sense of deep association and sharing with another, the authentic expression of the inner self and the giving of oneself in, intimacy and privacy, a strong notion of altruism and unselfishness, and the non-interchangeability of the beloved one, who, being endowed with a unique value for the loving one, cannot be easily replaced. All these elements are in straight opposition to how we perceive money, commodification, and the market: as reducing all value to a number, as denying all uniqueness, and so as the realm of unconditional interchangeability. Here people are thought to act not as moral, altruistic agents, but as autonomous, individualistic, and possessive individuals whose objective is self-interest and whose actions are determined not by affection and will but rather by rational instrumentality and obligation.[1900] It is the place of the unpersonal, the alienating, and the segregating, as transactors are not linked in any personal or enduring way. And so, the reasoning goes, to put sex on the market is to disentangle it from the personal and intimate, from a place of affection and uniqueness assumed to be its right place.

My argument, however, is not that abolitionist feminism upholds the model of sexuality that attaches sex to love and intimate, monogamous and enduring relationships merely as a normative standard. My argument is stronger. What I claim is that abolitionist feminists assume this to be every "normal" woman's sexuality. They take that model also in the descriptive sense and, by doing so, essentialize it. This is done both in a direct and indirect manner. Whereas some authors are more straightforward, using the association of female

[1900] CARRIER, James, G., *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700*, p. 196.

sexuality with love and intimacy directly in their argumentation against prostitution, others do it in a more implicit way, in the context of their elaboration of a general theory of sexuality.

There is, in addition, another most important factor leading me to conclude the assumption of that model as *female* and thus its essentialization. I am referring to what is claimed to be oppressing and emancipatory in sex for women. The exclusive focus on the constitutive dimension of oppression in complete detriment to its repressive aspect led me to the idea of opposition between sex and freedom. The idea here is that in the current paradigm of sexuality – one which, according to abolitionist feminists, is completely determined by men's interests, desire, and pleasure, dominated by violence against women, and characterized by the eroticization of women's sexual subordination and objectification –, female sexual desire and consent is a function of the interiorization of this paradigm, which is contrary to women's interests and equality. When added to the complete silence in relation to the repressive aspect of female sexual oppression, this view of sexuality, leaves no room for the possibility of a female sexual desire whose very existence and exercise is not the product of female oppression. As if female desire only existed in virtue of female sexual oppression and never independently of it. As if oppression was always to have sex and not to have it was freedom. And, in fact, this is expressly stated by many abolitionist feminists when they say "I do not know any feminist worthy of that name who, if forced to choose between freedom and sex, would choose sex. She'd choose freedom every time."[1901]

This opposition between sex and freedom is very reminiscent of the idea that in women sexual desire is weak or at least weaker than in men. As if hanging over abolitionist feminism was the shadow of the passionless good woman both assumed and constructed by the patriarchal discourse on prostitution, women, and sexuality. The woman for whom sex is necessarily attached to love, intimacy, and monogamous and enduring relationships. A woman, therefore, who could never truly choose prostitution, since the commercialization of sex stands as the exact opposite of the type of sexuality assumed as natural in her. My point thus is this: abolitionist feminism assumes the good woman stereotype as the *subject woman*,

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[1901] These are the words of Ti-Grace Atkinson as cited by Catharine Mackinnon (MACKINNON, Catharine A., *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 166) and Sheila Jeffreys (JEFFREYS, Sheila, *Anticlimax: A Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution*, p. 222.)

and in doing so relegates the woman who claims to freely choose prostitution to the place of the Other: the place of the abnormal type of women. It is worth quoting Sheila Jeffreys one more time, as she puts this in the clearest way possible:

> The idea of consent or choice in prostitution effectively separates prostituted women from other women. Non-prostituted women, including feminists who take this approach, can then exclude themselves from the discussion of prostitution. Since these women would not "choose" to be prostituted, *prostituted women must be a different kind of woman* for whom experiences that other women see as violating can be quite acceptable, or even desired.[1902]

Having established the consenting prostitute as Other to abolitionist feminism, I have moved into the inquiry of a crucial feature of otherness, one which accounts for much of its workings. I am referring to *abjection*.

3. The Prostitute as Abject(ed)

3.1. The Concept

Abjection has been most notably developed by Julia Kristeva in the context of psychoanalytic theory. In such context, abjection was elaborated as a necessary stage in the development of identity. According to Kristeva, identity is formed by means of expulsion, ejection, repulsion – abjection – of that which is not me.[1903] It is, therefore, a matter of differentiation in relation to the Other, a matter of establishment of a border between the I and the not-I. As such, abjection in the sense of *abjecting*, casting out, away, and off, in the sense of throwing away, plays a fundamental role in the process of identity formation. One which is not restricted to an initial period of life, but which extends itself throughout our entire lives. Yet, this is just

[1902] My emphasis. JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, p. 137.

[1903] As I previously said, Kristeva conceives abjection as a necessary but not a sufficient means in the process of identity formation. (ARYA, Rina, "Abjection Interrogated: Uncovering the Relation Between Abjection and Disgust", pp. 49-50; ARYA, Rina, "The Many Faces of Abjection: A Review of Recent Literature", p. 406.)

the first meaning of abjection. There is also a second sense, according to which abjection refers to a *condition* – a condition attributed to those socially marked as Other. Instead of a verb, abjection functions here as an adjective denotating degradation, wretchedness, and lowness. The two senses are closely connected: one *abjects* – repulses, repels – that which *is* abject – repulsive, revolting.

Establishing the bridge between both senses of abjection is a constellation of emotions and ideas. The most prominent emotion is no doubt disgust. But other emotions such as hate (non-immediate/non-isolated) fear, horror, and attraction are also an important part of those living in a condition of social otherness. All these emotions are mediated by an ensemble of ideas. Ambiguity and anomaly in relation to a system of classification, the triad body/animality/sexuality, and morality or, more precisely, the violation of social norms: these are the ideas that resurface over and over again in any closer look at the emotions that are part of abjection. This is what elicits, what causes, what lies behind all those emotions. Together, in a continuous and bidirectional movement, both those ideas and emotions allocate some of us to the condition of abject: repulsive, degraded, and low beings.

It is in this sense that abjection's *functions* must be understood. Abjection is not a passive or inert reality, which is caused but, in any way, contributes to the constitution of that which causes it. Abjection does an incredible amount of work, and, in very significant senses, produces that which simultaneously causes it. Performativity, moralization, hierarchization, association with danger and dirt, blame, reenactment of norms, community creation, deactivation of empathy, and violence: this is what abjection *does*, the way through which it constitutes those socially othered as abject and what leads them to be *abjected* from society.

In what regards abjection in its first sense – abjection as a process of casting off –, I have mentioned two ways societies deal with the abject-Other: assimilation and exclusion. The first consists in making the different similar, in transforming the Other into the norm. What is at stake here is the exclusion of the person's condition as abject. The second, instead, refers to exclusion in a more literal sense, which might take the form of expulsion from the community, confinement within the community, or even physical destruction.

3.2. Abjection in Patriarchal Discourse

Let us now come back to the prostitute. As I have traced the prostitute's representation and positioning as Other to the patriarchal discourse on prostitution, I have also looked into that discourse in search of her condition as abject(ed). My starting point was the heterosexual norm and the system of classification of people such norm institutes: men and women. My claim in this regard is that the prostitute confused, disturbed, and violated both that norm and that system of classification, and that is precisely what connected her with abjection. "[W[hatever disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous": that is what, according to Kristeva, *causes* abjection.[1904] In substantiating this claim, I have recalled the masculinized representation of the prostitute – one which incorporated both physical and psychological characteristics – and I went back to sexuality, as it was the inconformity with the norm of female sexuality that led to the perception of the prostitute as masculine and, hence, as *gender ambiguous*.

Ambiguity, however, was not the only thing connecting the prostitute to abjection. The *triad animality/body/sexuality* is a second elicitor of abjection strongly present in the representation of the prostitute as low, degraded, and repulsive. The idea that prostitutes led an "animal life", as claimed by Parent-Duchâtelet, was frequently translated into their characterization as primitive, degenerate, and uncivilized. Unbridled sexuality was, for nineteenth century eyes "animal like"[1905] and typical of the lower human species, and so a sign of a primitive stage in the scale of evolution. Such connection spilled over into yet other characteristics. Laziness, dirtiness, immaturity, gluttony, and fatness are some of them. They all worked as nods in a chain of equivalences that ultimately associated the prostitute to lack of self-restrain, and, in turn, transformed her into a grotesque body. This is particularly relevant as Renaissance saw the rise of a new notion of the body: one that opposed it to everything that is high, spiritual, and ideal about human beings, and was thus equated with human degradation and debasement. To be represented in terms of the body, then, had the specific meaning of equivalence to what is lowest or even to what is less than human. This,

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[1904] KRISTEVA, Julia, *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 4.
[1905] GILMAN, Sander, "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature", p. 223.

of course, was a specifically gendered notion, since women, as essentially spiritual beings to nineteenth century eyes, were placed further from the body or at least from the lower bodily stratum, and that is why, in them, any reminder of the corporeal element could not but be perceived as uncivilized and cause extreme repugnance. It is unsurprising then that the prostitute was so often associated with and spoken of in terms of obvious symbols and elicitors of disgust and horror. As we have seen, sewers, corpses, disease, smell, and rotting flesh were a too frequent presence in her representation.

A third most crucial idea connecting the prostitute with abjection is that of *threat, danger, and pollution*. Abject-Others have been consistently represented as a threat: a threat to me, to "us", "to what is", to "life as we know it", or even "life itself". The representation of the prostitute is no exception. In fact, the idea of danger is probably the most noticeable characteristic of her representation in the nineteenth century. She was depicted as a source of physical, social, and moral pollution. Disease, and particularly syphilis, was probably the most common manner through which such depiction operated. From Enlightenment onward, syphilis became a femininized disease, with women becoming, in popular imagination and cultural representation, its prime source. Yet, syphilis was not only associated with women in general; it was specifically associated with the prostitute. It became so through the medical idea that syphilis was caused by an allergic reaction to impure intercourse. It was in this way that the prostitute was firmly established as syphilis' cause. And that not only constituted her as a source of physical and social danger, as it allowed for her blaming. Blame, in turn, has important and devastating consequences. Selectivity and lack of empathy are some of them, as blame both provides its rational justification and allows for its emotional possibility. An obvious example of the first is the fact that only prostitutes and not clients were seen as responsible for syphilis, a vision which was reflected in the laws adopted at the time. In what concerns the latter, not only laws, but also medical practices and, more broadly, society's indifference to prostitutes' pain and suffering were a most clear expression of it. Together they showed how prostitutes were a paradigmatic case of bodies that did not matter, of lives that were not deemed worth protecting, saving, grieving for.

Finally, abjection as a process of *casting out* those deemed abject. Having focused on the regulationist system, which arose in France in the nineteenth century and quickly spread

throughout Europe, I have identified both assimilation and exclusion as forms of abjecting prostitutes in that period. Assimilation took the form of rehabilitation. A function performed not only by institutions purposedly aimed at it – refuges – but also by institutions such as the prison and the hospital. In what concerns exclusion, imprisonment and confinement behind the invisible were its two main forms. Prostitutes were managed by means of a politics of invisibility that centered around a fourth institution – the brothel – but which equally reached non-registered prostitutes by means of laws that both excluded them from public spaces and hidden them behind the close doors and windows of their own houses, under a policy of absolute silence.

3.3. Abjection in Abolitionist Feminism

Let us now come back to abolitionist feminism, where I uncovered precisely the same ideas and effects that inhere in abjection.

For a start, the idea of *reduction to the body and consequent degradation of the self*. Not only is this an express abolitionist feminist argument against prostitution, as the language used by abolitionist feminists to describe prostitution commonly evoke both that meaning and the emotions of disgust and horror attached to it. References to dirt, semen, slime, spit, blood, vagina, rectum, mouth – all crucial elements in the imagery of the grotesque body and so also abjection – are a constant presence in the abolitionist feminist depiction of prostitution. Degradation is, in addition, the central motif in many – if not most – of other explicit arguments. Objectification is probably the best example, as the opposition subject/object equates objectification with a reduction in human status and value. But it is certainly not the only one, as that same idea of degradation, of reduction of the human status and value is what underlies the charges of alienability, depersonalization, and fungibility against prostitution. Furthermore, the contention that the prostitute sells herself rather than her sexual services, together with arguments that talk of the prostitute's reduction to body parts are particularly evocative of the meaning of degradation and, consequently, also of that of wretchedness and abjection.

Then, the idea of *threat, pollution, and defilement*. The theme of the prostitute's betrayal and complicity with the patriarchal enemy for personal convenience is not new to anyone who has ever had any encounter with the visceral debates between abolitionist feminists and women engaged in prostitution. Yet, the idea of the prostitute and prostitution as defiling, as a source of threat to the movement is equally present in the very content of the abolitionist feminist discourse. Most specifically in two of its arguments: first, the idea of prostitution as cause to women's general objectification and subordination, and second, the claim of false consciousness in relation to women who claim they freely choose to sell sex.

Faced with many prostitutes' claim of free choice to engage in prostitution, abolitionist feminists resorted to the idea of lack of class consciousness. In it two important ideas are joined together to constitute the meaning of the prostitute as traitor and corruptor of feminism. First, the idea that prostitutes who claim free choice are not adopting women's perspective but rather the perspective of men who prostitution benefits. And second, the idea of freedom as resistance, which, in my understanding, abolitionist feminists adopt when they locate freedom in the individual resistance and opposition to oppressive institutions, of which prostitution is a crucial example. Now if the prostitute adopts the perspective of those who subordinate us and is complicit with the institutions that oppress us, what is she if not a traitor to all women, an agent of corruption to feminism, and an element of defilement in the "revolution" against patriarchy? Additionally, the argument about the lack of class consciousness works to exclude – to abject – the consenting prostitute from the movement: lacking the consciousness of her membership in the class and being complicit with the system that subordinates all women, the prostitute is not and could never be a feminist. She does not see nor know what we do: she is ignorant "of the complexity of women's oppression",[1906] contrary to *us*, who "know about sexuality and sexual violence from our extensive feminist knowledge".[1907] And she stands against us and for herself as her referent of freedom is individual rather than collective. In sum, on this view, the consenting prostitute does not belong, she is not a part to our community. That is how she comes to be *abjected* from it.

[1906] JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Idea of Prostitution*, pp. 158-9.
[1907] *Idem*, p. 158.

Finally, consenting prostitutes as *bodies that do not matter*: lives not worth protecting, saving, grieving for. I have identified the deactivation of empathy as one of abjection's functions. Such function is intimately connected with disgust, since, as William Miller says, disgust "works to prevent concern, care, pity, and love."[1908] When, in the introduction to this work, I first presented the hypothesis of abolitionist feminism's representation and positioning of the prostitute as abject-Other, I referred to that which, in abolitionist feminism, has impressed me and impressed upon me in such a way that moved me in the direction of this hypothesis. One of those things was what I, at the time, referred to as a logic of enmity and have later elaborated on as an "us against them" type of rationale. Such impression initially derived from the public policies defended by abolitionist feminists, all too frequently translated into the further worsening of the already deplorable situation of lack of rights of women engaged in prostitution. And it was later deepened by the understanding of the privileging of the symbolic value of those policies over its effects on women who commercialize sex. Yet, such logic does not become apparent only at the policy level. It also emerges very clearly from the examination of the abolitionist feminist discourse, whose substantiation of the abolition of prostitution often comes down to a concern with and attempt to protect not of prostitutes but rather women not engaged in prostitution. In fact, it is such concern with the "good woman" that seems to have triggered some of the most prominent abolitionist feminists' interest in prostitution.

It is in this sense that I have defended the idea of prostitutes as *affect aliens* to abolitionist feminism. With this expression I mean to put my finger on the lack of empathy directed by abolitionist feminists at the consenting prostitute, who, I defend, is not the object of their concern. But that is not only it. Such expression is equally aimed at pinpointing another of abjection's functions: the capacity of community creation. Emotions work to align us with some and against others. And disgust has the capacity to bound together those who are united in the condemnation of the disgusting object. Around such emotion and condemnation, the skin of a community emerges. One whose very constitution depends on the exclusion of those deemed disgusting as well as of those who share neither the emotion nor the condemnation. As I see it, in claiming to freely choose to engage with prostitution, the consenting prostitute

[1908] MILLER, William Ian, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 251.

rejects the disgust with which free choice is incompatible. And by doing so, she becomes an affect alien in the sense of not being affected by prostitution in the same manner of those who belong. To this it must be added Judith Butler's insight concerning the formation of subjects: it "requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings […] who form the constitutive outside of the domain of the subject."[1909] My claim is that this is the relation that has been established between abolitionist feminism and the consenting prostitute. She is excluded – *abjected* – from the movement – from being "a feminist" – and transformed into its constitutive outside – the abject referent of what (abolitionist) feminists are not. Their abject-Other.

Among my first impressions of abolitionist feminism was what I referred to as a particular "economy of touch": the strange blend of indifference with visceral indignation and repugnance, which puzzled me so much. As I explained then, it just seemed completely contradictory to me that a discourse concerned with women's exploitation, violence, and lack of freedom would be used to further worsen the already deplorable conditions of exploitation, violence, and lack of freedom of those women engaged in prostitution. That such discourse would be used against those women's efforts to improve their situation. And that the negative effects of the policies advocated and justified based on it would have no impact in the continuance of their defense. To that it needs to be added abolitionist feminists' silence and passivity in relation to the everyday injustices suffered by these women. A silence and passivity that quickly transforms into visceral screaming and action when what is at stake is to discuss prostitution abstractly or oppose any initiative aimed at decriminalizing or merely implying state acceptance of any related activity. Now I can put into words what was then just an unclear and blurry impression: the representation and positioning of the consenting prostitute as abject-Other – as both a threat and an affect alien, therefore – makes intelligible that particular blend of visceral action and freezing indifference, which previously made absolutely no sense to me.

Finally, the third impression which both led me to the notion of abject-Other and is now, I believe, explained by it: the silencing of the prostitute in abolitionist feminism or, more

[1909] BUTLER, Judith, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, p. 3.

accurately, her exclusion from the position of speaking subject. I have elaborated on the notion of epistemological violence as a feature of otherness. With it I referred to the silencing of othered groups in their own representation within hegemonic discourses. Such silencing is, of course, absolutely central in the content of their representation: were those groups not silenced, both the specific content of their representation and the place they occupy in relation to the norm would certainly be otherwise. When applying this idea to abolitionist feminism and the prostitute, abjection is crucial: it functions as an epistemological frame which makes free choice to engage in prostitution unthinkable, unconceivable, unbelievable. And the result of the unintelligibility of consent to prostitution is the abjection of the prostitute either by assimilation – by converting her into the good, coerced prostitute – or by exclusion – by othering the consenting prostitute who is thus transformed into the abject being who is not and could never be one of "us".

Silence, however, is not mute. It speaks. And it says a great deal of things. It is, as Adrienne Rich put it, "a presence". "[I]t has a history", "a form". We should not "confuse it with any kind of absence".[1910] As Michel Foucault observed, silence "is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them".[1911] And so, silences have a lot to say about discourses themselves. In what regards abolitionist feminism, as with any other discourse, "[t]here is not one but many silences".[1912] The silence of the consenting prostitute is crucial but is hardly the only one. As I see it, abolitionist feminists' silence before the constant violations of the most basic rights of women who sell sex – often a result of the policies defended and fought for by them – does not only speak. It screams. And it screams a history that has equally been silenced, as if natural and indisputable: that of the representation and positioning of the consenting prostitute as abject-Other.

[1910] RICH, Adrienne, "Cartographies of Silence", p. 17.
[1911] FOUCAULT, Michel, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, p. 27.
[1912] *Ibidem*.

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