(IL)LEGITIMATE PROBLEMS:
INSTANCES OF QUEER FAMILIAL CREATION AND THE REINFORCEMENT OF
PATRIARCHAL STRUCTURE
IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE

BY

WILL FORDE-MAZRUI

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Approved By:
Claudia Kairoff, Ph.D., Advisor
Mary DeShazer, Ph.D., Chair
Melissa Jenkins, Ph.D.
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Abstract

In this project I will be using a queer lens to investigate five novels from eighteenth century Britain that use queer themes to reinforce the patriarchal and heteronormative power structure of eighteenth-century society. The first two chapters will focus on sapphic sexual initiations and the implications of female same-sex behavior and female sexual agency in conservative texts. The first chapter focuses on Henry Fielding’s *The Female Husband*, and the perceived threat that female appropriation of masculine gender expression and male sexual agency pose to patriarchal power structure. The second chapter explores the sapphic initiation of Fanny Hill into the phallocentric world of prostitution and the subordination of female sexual agency to the sexual potency of male genitalia in John Cleland’s *Fanny Hill*. The third chapter will investigate instances of male-created families through homosocial bonding in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones*, and Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron*. Each of these three conservative texts almost entirely erases the role of the female in familial creation. They instead rely on patriarchal authority to legitimate their family units, and rarely rely on women beyond the literal birthing of the child. Each of these five conservative novels seeks to affirm patriarchal structure through their representations of the visible queer subcultures of the eighteenth century, thereby showing the ways in which, in these novels and eighteenth-century society, potential threats to patriarchal power can be re-appropriated in order to reinforce that which they originally threatened.
Introduction

Heteronormative Texts with Queer Themes:

Patriarchal Reaffirmation through Queer Visibility in Eighteenth-Century Literature

Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, was first published in French in 1976 and translated into English in 1978. Foucault’s work created a space within theoretical discourse for the investigation of sexuality throughout history that has since been appropriated, and expanded, by prominent queer theorists including Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Felicity Nussbaum, G.S. Rousseau, David Halperin, and Randolph Trumbach. While Foucault’s focus was mainly on the Victorian period, he makes mention of both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries throughout his text. Foucault claims that the “birth” of “homosexual” as an identity category occurred in the 1870’s when an article “on ‘contrary sexual sensations’” by John Westphal was published, about which Foucault claims that whereas in previous writings “[t]he sodomite had been a temporary aberration,” Westphal’s work meant that “the homosexual was now a species” (43). For Foucault, what was missing before the late nineteenth century was a visible community of individuals who shared an identity that was attached to same-sex eroticism. It is here that queer theorists who specialize in the eighteenth century take issue with Foucault. In *Men in Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century*, George Haggerty refutes Foucault’s claim that a visible sub-culture and homoerotic identity did not appear until the nineteenth century. Haggerty says that “other histories of sodomy, such as those by Alan Bray, […] Jonathan Goldberg, David Halperin, […] G. S. Rousseau, […] Randolph Trumbach, and others, have begun to
suggest the range of function of male-male desire before 1870” (2). Haggerty goes on to say that “Male-male desire, [...] is as much a part of the ‘dominant fiction’ of the eighteenth century as other seemingly more socially acceptable constructs” (3). Haggerty and his contemporaries seek to provide evidence that Foucault’s theory of the birth of a homosexual identity is incomplete.

The ongoing studies by critics who examine the eighteenth century through a queer lens prove that the work of queer theory in this time period is by no means finished. As Susan Lanser claims, “[h]eteronormative patterns have persisted in eighteenth-century studies despite the burgeoning of both queer scholarship and an increasingly accessible documentary archive: queer sexualities still constitute a minoritized subfield rather than an integral element of women’s history or gender history” (275). I agree with Lanser’s belief that queer theory is a “minoritized subfield” of eighteenth-century studies, and it is from this viewpoint that I began to look through a queer lens at novels that promote heteronormativity and patriarchal structure. For me, the next step in queer studies is to make a place for itself within the heteronormative readings that Lanser says “have persisted” in studies of the eighteenth century. By creating a queer space within the predominately heteronormative academic discourse surrounding the eighteenth century, the application of queer theory to our field will begin to mirror eighteenth-century society.

In the eighteenth century, there was an overarching discourse of conservatism and heteronormativity that often obscured the queer sexualities that existed within the dominant patriarchal system. As Jeremy Black states, in the eighteenth century “[t]he dominant ethos was religious, patriarchal, hierarchical, conservative, and male
dominated. The law and the teachings of the churches decreed monogamy, [...] denounced abortion, infanticide, homosexuality and bestiality” (XVII). This view of the eighteenth century’s view of morality is accurate, but the image he presents is incomplete. There was also a visible and growing subculture of queer sexualities that existed on the margins of heteronormative society visible in the literary production of the eighteenth century. Ian McCormick’s *Secret Sexualities* is a sourcebook that catalogues some of these literary representations of the subculture alongside the dominant heteronormative discourse, including excerpts from anatomy treatises, sodomy trials, literary representations of sodomites, sapphic texts, and pamphlets condemning atypical gender expression. In order to correctly represent this society, it is important that queer theory is used to explore the minoritized space it occupied in eighteenth-century culture while examining ways in which patriarchal, heteronormative texts employ queer themes towards their conservative ends.

In each of my chapters, I will be using a queer lens to explore on novel or a grouping of novels that promote conservative ideology and patriarchal structure. While my reading of each novel will be constructed through a queer theoretical perspective, I will show how the application of a queer lens to these conservative texts does not presuppose a subversive reading. Instead, I will show that in this group of eighteenth-century British novels, the promotion of conservative values and the reinforcement of patriarchal power were often presented through non-hegemonic and non-heteronormative fictive accounts of familial creations and same-sex eroticism.

My first chapter, “Dressing the Part: Dangerous Sapphism and the Appropriation of Masculine Gender Expression in *The Female Husband*,” will discuss female same-sex
initiation into the erotic world and female appropriation of masculine gender expression through *The Female Husband* by Henry Fielding. This novella promotes heteronormative marriage even though the main character is introduced to sex by another, homoerotically experienced woman. The goal of this chapter will be to show that this text does not demand punishment of same-sex acts, nor presuppose a rejection of patriarchal values. Instead, it is the continued enjoyment of same-sex eroticism and the appropriation of a masculine gender expression that threatens patriarchal power and incites punishment in the *Female Husband*.

In *The Female Husband*, the first sexual experience of Mary Hamilton is with another woman. Her first lover escapes what she believes to be their sin by marrying a man. Mary Hamilton is not condemned in the text for her sapphic desire alone, but rather for appropriating masculine privilege through her outward gender expression. Mary dresses as a man and pursues women exclusively. The success of Mary’s appropriation of masculinity is shown through her ability to seduce and marry first an old woman and then two young women in succession. Mary does not choose to marry a man—as her former lover Miss Johnson did—instead, she attempts to pass as a man in order to marry women. This assumption of the male sexual role makes Mary unredeemable in the novella. Because she never rejects same-sex eroticism for phallocentric love, she is unable to rehabilitate herself back into the Patriarchal structure; instead, she is flogged through the streets of the towns in which she seduced other women. Through its punishment of Mary’s transgressive gender expression, *The Female Husband* shows that same-sex sexual acts are not condemned by conservative authors, but rather the assumption of a
transgressive sexual identity, and rejection of heteronormative sexual practices, prevent re-inscription into the patriarchy.

My second chapter, “The Conservative Prostitute: Sapphic Sexual Awakening, Heteronormativity and Fanny Hill’s Desire for “more Solid food”” will discuss the sapphic awakening of title character Fanny, and the ways in which John Cleland represses female sexual agency through phallocentric sexual encounters in Fanny Hill; or, Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure. Fanny Hill is born to a poor, pious country family, but finds herself orphaned by disease. Defenseless, friendless, and innocent, she is duped into becoming a prostitute. Fanny’s sexual awakening comes from a woman, Phoebe, who enjoys the task of igniting sexual passion in novice prostitutes. Even though Fanny is introduced to sensual pleasure through the same-sex eroticism of her first few sexual encounters, Fanny’s desire quickly becomes phallocentric. She describes the “lack” and “empty” feeling of intimacy with Phoebe before she is aware of the source of that “lack.” Her rejection of female-female sexual desire, despite the deviant sexual nature of her profession, allows her to become first a kept woman, and later a bride.

While Fanny Hill sees her same-sex initiation as just that, an initiation, the same cannot be said in The Female Husband. Because Fanny experiences same-sex eroticism as a precursor to her place in the phallocentric world of prostitution she is reintegrated into, a phallocentric view of eroticism is privileged in Fanny Hill. It is also important to note that Fanny and her sapphic guide, Phoebe, are both female. This perhaps is another clue as to Fanny’s ability to rejoin the patriarchy. When Fanny witnesses a sodomitical act between two men, her revulsion is symptomatic of the growing awareness, and
phobia, of a visible male homoerotic identity—the mollie—which emerged in the eighteenth century (Haggerty).

The main difference between the sapphic introductions to sex that will be discussed in chapters one and two is that Fanny retains a feminine style of dress and occupies the submissive sexual role, while Mary Hamilton dresses in masculine clothing and adopts the aggressive sexual role that is reserved for men. Her usurpation of a masculine role brings up common concerns about cross-dressing females and their ability to assume presupposed masculine sexual roles that were satirized in the early seventeenth century, in works including William Austin’s *Haec Homo* (1637: McCormick 175). The assumption of male sexual roles and the ability of a woman to arouse other women were seen as “but a pale shadow of the real thing” as Fanny Hill herself notes; however, “it is not clear how far such scenes were designed merely to titillate male heterosexuals. Yet we should not rule out the possibility that female readers experimented themselves in the light of such episodes, or that they found a measure of legitimization in these textual/sexual encounters” (McCormick 176). According to scholars of eighteenth-century sexuality, like McCormick, the inevitability that female-female sexual encounters would titillate male readers does not erase the significance of the presentation of same-sex female encounters, despite the fact that “the direction of many of these texts is towards heterosexuality” (McCormick 128). The difference between the treatment of the protagonists in *Fanny Hill* and *The Female Husband*, comes out of the perceived threat that cross-dressed females posed to patriarchal society from the seventeenth century onward. Fanny Hill does not assume a masculine role in sex, nor does she try to appropriate the male phallus by posing as a sexually potent male. Fanny is able to be
welcomed into heterosexual society because of her adherence to societally prescribed female sexual roles, regardless of her “queer” introduction to sex and her “queer” place in society as a prostitute.

In my third chapter, “Homosocial Bonds as Familial Creation: Bastardy, Adoption, and Legitimacy in Three Eighteenth Century Novels,” I will explore how Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones*, and *The Old English Baron* by Clara Reeve show their support of conservative, patriarchal convention. All three novels focus on a phallocentric model of familial creation, in which patriarchal society is able to recreate itself through homosocial bonds between men. The novels focus on families created with little to no female involvement, promoting acceptance of both bastards and adoption as acceptable means of legitimization. These novels reinforce more than the patrilineal succession of property. They also legitimize male homosocial bonds as generative relationships that are sanctioned by both divine and earthbound patriarchs. In this chapter, I will employ two important concepts from queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s text *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. Sedgwick’s concept of “homosocial desire” comes out of the word *homosocial* that is “occasionally used in history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex” (1), but Sedgwick adapts it to be “a strategy for making generalizations about, and marking the historical differences in, the *structure* of men’s relations with other men” (2). For this inquiry into the patriarchal structure and its legitimization of male-created families in eighteenth century novels, Sedgwick’s chapter entitled “Gender Asymmetry and Erotic Triangles” will be nearly as crucial as her use of “homosocial desire.” Sedgwick claims that “in any male-dominated society, there is a
special relationship between male homosocial (including homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power: a relationship founded on an inherent and potentially active structural congruence” (25). The erotic triangles place characters on each of the three points of a triangle in order to show the ways in which their relationships are interconnected. In each of the three novels I will discuss, the relationships between the male figures of the triangle are stronger than any relationship to the female. These male homosocial bonds can be more generative than male-female bonds, and often have the potential to erase female involvement in the process of legitimization of male heirs and familial creation, both figuratively and literally.

My goal in this chapter is to show that through their portrayal of “men promoting the interests of other men” (Sedgwick, *Between Men*) the novels of Reeve, Fielding and Defoe present what seems to be a conservative stance on the maintenance of social hierarchy and patriarchal power. I will show how a distinctly queer lens can be applied productively to each of these texts, despite their investment in the conservative reinforcement of patriarchal ideals.

The main goal of all three chapters is to reinforce my argument that a queer theoretical lens does not, as many assume, presuppose a subversive reading of any given text. By showing how conservative texts employ themes outside of the normative hegemonic and patriarchal structures of eighteenth-century Britain, themes that scholars can now call “queer,” in order to reinforce those same hegemonic and patriarchal structures, I will be expanding the variety of ways queer theory can be used when approaching literary and historical inquiries. This project has a valuable theoretical outcome because it presents “queer” readings of texts that are not subversive, thereby
enacting not only the opposite of what queer theory normally achieves, but also broadening the applicability of a queer theoretical lens. The fact that conservative novelists in the eighteenth century were willing and able to use non-normative, titillating, and even vulgar subject matter to reinforce patriarchal power is significant to my claim for queer theory because these novels show how a queer lens can be applied to a text without assuming subversion. Throughout the eighteenth century, authors and critics alike worried that novels without a clear moral message could cause their readers confusion as to what was “right” or “wrong.” As such, many eighteenth-century British novels, like *Pamela, or; Virtue Rewarded*, attempt to show characters as either morally corrupt or pious. The particular group of novels that I address is emblematic of the effects that the rising visibility of queer subcultures had on eighteenth-century British society. Despite the conservatizing trend of the eighteenth-century, the authors of these novels included non-normative sexuality and familial creation to both highlight and reinforce patriarchal authority. While each of these novels employs queer themes—from male-male adoption to sapphic eroticism—they entrench these queer moments within the patriarchal system. This systematic inclusion and appropriation of queer themes by conservative writers suggests that the queer subcultures of the eighteenth-century were more culturally influential, and thereby more threatening to patriarchal power than previously believed. The inclusion of queer themes was instrumental, in this group of novels, in establishing their place in the patriarchal structure of the eighteenth century. I will show how these novelists attempt to restore heteronormativity by depicting queer sexualities and familial creations as components of patriarchal power, thereby
highlighting the space already available to queer theorists within the often heteronormatively dominated world of eighteenth-century studies.
CHAPTER ONE

DRESSING THE PART: DANGEROUS SAPPHISM AND THE APPROPRIATION OF MASCULINE GENDER EXPRESSION IN *THE FEMALE HUSBAND*

In eighteenth-century literary representations of female sexuality, a woman’s ability to champion heteronormative ideals was not dependent on a lack of homoerotic experience, but rather on the rejection of sapphism in favor of a heterosexual, phallocentric model of desire. Literary representations of female same-sex eroticism in eighteenth-century Britain are often ambiguous. Literary representations of female eroticism may have been scarce, but sapphic sex references in legal discourse were virtually nonexistent. According to Elizabeth Wahl, “England stands out among the European nation-states not only for its lack of any prosecution of female sodomy but also for the absence of any reference to female homosexuality in its legal code” (Wahl 23). The lack of laws that forbade sapphic practices early in the century led scholars to believe that eighteenth-century British culture tolerated sapphism, especially when “compar[ed to] public responses to ‘molly clubs’ of male homosexuals”; members of these “molly clubs” were executed if proven guilty (Craft-Fairchild 408). It is this inequality of representation in the written laws that led scholars to believe there was a level of tolerance afforded to sapphists in eighteenth-century Britain, but as Terry “Castle suggests […] a fear of acknowledging and articulating” non-heterosexual female sexuality is another likely cause of the lack of representation of female homoerotics as supposed tolerance (Fairchild 409). By the middle of the eighteenth century, publications

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1 *Secret Sexualities: A Sourcebook of 17th and 18th Century Writing*, ed. Ian McCormick, pp. 64-83. These sections discuss accusations and trials of sodomites, most of whom were put to death by hanging.
discussing sapphic behavior and their erotic implications became more widely available. Some of these works include Adamson’s *L’Espion Anglois* (1777-8), Diderot’s *The Nun*, Erskine’s *The Adventures of Mademoiselle de Richelieu* (1744), and the “anonymous English Work” *Satan’s Harvest Home* (1749; Faderman 52). “Within a Foucauldian logic, the very proliferation of Sapphic representation, recently confirmed by an impressive body of scholarship, is itself compelling evidence that female homoeroticism became in the eighteenth century a new kind of problem demanding new recuperative strategies” (Lanser 22). In fact, “[t]he discourse on female-female sex ‘ranging’ from medical and moral treatises to novels and poems, most intense in England at midcentury, marks an ideological crisis in the larger project that Tim Hitchcock rightly describes as the ‘naturalization of heterosexuality’” (Lanser 22). As this “naturalization of heterosexuality” became a cultural mainstay, representations of female homosexuality began to be seen as a threat to the patriarchal, phallocentric power structure. According to Terry Castle,

in the eighteenth century, with the gradual attenuation of moral and religious orthodoxies, the weakening of traditional family structures, urbanization and the growing mobility and economic independence of women, male authority found itself under assault. [W]ith such far-reaching social changes in the offing, the ‘repressed idea’ of love between women […] began to manifest itself more threateningly in the collective psyche that was at once fascinated and repelled by the possibility of women without sexual allegiance to men (62)
Before the eighteenth century, the concept of masculine women had been well documented. Writings such as the pamphlet *Hic Mulier*, printed in 1620, served as a warning to—and a condemnation of—women who dressed in masculine clothing. The pamphlet was concerned with hyper-heterosexuality in these women, without being aware of the potential for homoeroticism. Susan Lanser claims that “even though sex between women had long been connected to notions of a mannish anatomy, most references to women as ‘masculine’ in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had not to do with homoerotics. [...I]nstead the worry [was] that women might engage in unlicensed sex with men” (26). The potential for same-sex desire in women who wore men’s clothing became widely acknowledged, shown in part by the popular nature of the public trials of women like Molly Hamilton and Annie Marrow, two women who were convicted of impersonating men and marrying other women. The reaction to these women was often violent, though less so than violence directed towards men accused of sodomy. In fact, “[e]ven more anger was excited by lesbianism and other sexual behavior” than by any other crimes in which women were involved (McLynn 130). The punishment for same-sex behavior between women was often severe, if they could be convicted. Fielding based his novella *The Female Husband* on the real Molly Hamilton, who “married fourteen women, then left them shortly after the wedding,” (McLynn 130). She was convicted after a trial in which it was discovered that she “bamboozled [her wives] by using a dildo” (130). Although Hamilton “was whipped through town for her offence, she was luckier than Annie Marrow, who committed a similar offence” (130).²

² Annie was “[p]laced in the pillory at Charing Cross, [she] was so savagely pelted by the crowd that she lost both her eyes” as punishment for seducing and marrying three women while dressed as a man (McLynn 130).
Confusion arises when discussing the eighteenth century’s reaction to female same-sex eroticism because of the disparate representations of two distinct types of sapphic practitioners that can be identified through their outward gender expression and clothing. The common notion that the eighteenth century was accepting of female same-sex eroticism arises because of a perceived lack of threat some women posed. “If she dressed in clothes suitable to her sex, it might be assumed that she was not sexually aggressive, and two unaggressive females together would do nothing to violate men’s presumptive property rights to women’s bodies” (Faderman 17). As long as women publically behaved in adherence to prescriptive gender roles, the sex they engaged in did not challenge patriarchal authority. The view of an eighteenth-century culture that was “accepting” of female homoeroticism fails, however, to take into account the tribade. Tribades were sapphists who often dressed in masculine clothing. These “[t]ransvestite women […] who engaged in same-sex love were often persecuted and sometimes even executed,” because unlike their passive counterparts, “it was assumed that she behaved as a man sexually” (Faderman 17). Through the appropriation of masculine gender expression, these women destabilized assumptions about the hierarchized gender dichotomy. It was this threat to male power that caused an adverse reaction to sapphism. The fact that these two groups of sapphic practitioners were regarded so differently shows that it was not participation in female homoerotic activity that was threatening, but rather the appropriation of male sexual agency and power (Faderman 17). The way literary representations of female homoeroticism take their cues from these cultural notions is obvious when looking at the protagonists of The Female Husband and Fanny Hill respectively. Each novel employs one of the two forms of female homoeroticism to
promote conservative ideals, yet despite their conservative similarities, each of the novels depicts homoeroticism and sexual agency differently. The authors’ didactic interjections suggest that the varied responses to sapphism in eighteenth-century culture are present in the literature as well, though both in service of heteronormative ends. This chapter will explore the ways in which queer theory can be applied to *The Female Husband* in order to show that the use of what I would term queer methodology can be applied to this text without failing to acknowledge its conservative aims.

Henry Fielding’s *The Female Husband* was based on the real case of the cross-dressing Mary Hamilton and could be purchased for just a few pence (Peakman 35). Fielding’s fictional reprisal of Mary Hamilton’s case was cheap, and reflected the public interest in these cases of female same-sex eroticism. Julie Peakman mentions *The Female Husband* in her book *The Development of Pornography in Eighteenth-Century England*, showing that this real-life case turned fiction fits alongside John Cleland’s *Fanny Hill, or; Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, a work in which the explicit sex scenes earn its place in the genre of pornography. Despite the fact that *The Female Husband* avoids the graphic sex scenes of *Fanny Hill*, Peakman is correct to include it in her discussion of pornography in the eighteenth century. Not only does Fielding use euphemisms that barely obscure the sexual moments of the text, *The Female Husband* is a “moral” tale that is almost overflowing with obscure references to sapphic intercourse and dildos. The two pieces are disparate in their representation of women who engage in same-sex eroticism. *The Female Husband* takes a hard line against women who cross-dress and engage in same-sex eroticism, while *Fanny Hill* represents female-female eroticism as a harmless
sexual initiation that is not socially condemned so long as the women prefer heterosexual sex.

*The Female Husband* and *Fanny Hill* each deal with both hetero- and homosexual female sexuality. To discuss the sexuality present in both works it is necessary to consult two chapters of theorist Judith Butler’s text, *Bodies that Matter*. Firstly, her chapter “Subversive Bodily Acts” is useful for the analysis of these two texts, as it discusses the panic associated with female sexual agency and it analyzes the way in which bodily acts and presentations can destabilize the supposedly natural delineation between the sexes. Butler states:

> [t]hat the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. This also suggests that if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body, the gender border control that differentiates words, acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality (2549)

For Butler, gender performativity questions the idea of an “organizing gender core” whose purpose is “regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality.” By questioning the concept of a core gender and seeing gender as ultimately the interpretation of outward actions, Butler questions not only the
natural-ness of gendered behavior, but also the heterosexual familial structure. If gender is enacted and not innate, the patriarchal power wielded through assumptions of masculine superiority is available for appropriation by both sexes. One of the key ways that masculine power can be adopted comes from another chapter in Butler’s *Bodies that Matter:* “The Lesbian Phallus.” The notion of the “lesbian phallus” will prove invaluable to the discussion of both *The Female Husband* and *Fanny Hill* because it stresses the ability of the phallus to be decentered and re-appropriated and the threat that this transmutability poses to the heteronormative gender binary. Both *The Female Husband* and *Fanny Hill* are concerned with reintegrating women who exhibit sexual agency—and can be said to appropriate the phallus—into normalized gender roles. Butler’s “The Lesbian Phallus” is a discussion of the phallus as a symbolic representation of the male penis that is both separable from, and a signifier for, the male sexual organ. Because the phallus is a signifier for the “real thing,” it is removable, mutable, and transferrable. According to Butler, “the simultaneous acts of deprivileging the phallus and removing it from the normative heterosexual form of exchange, and recirculating and reprivileging it between women, deploys the phallus to break the signifying chain in which it conventionally operates” (87). Butler claims that the phallus being removed from its role in “normative heterosexual” practice interrupts the “signifying chain” of heterosexual sex. This breakage of heterosexual norms is threatening to the masculine power that normatively controls the phallus because “it both wields the threat of castration […] and suffers from castration anxiety […]” (84). The threatening nature of the lesbian phallus is that it shows the phallic symbol is not controlled by men alone; instead, it produces “castration anxiety” precisely through appropriation. The potential power of the lesbian
phallus threatens heteronormativity and must therefore be rejected and shamed. Butler discusses the implications of the lesbian phallus by saying that:

> the phallus signifies the insuperability of heterosexuality and constitutes lesbianism as a vain and/or pathetic effort to mime the real thing. Thus, the phallus enters lesbian sexual discourse in the mode of a transgressive ‘confession’ conditioned and confronted by both the feminist and misogynist forms of repudiation: it’s not the real thing (the lesbian thing) or it’s not the real thing (the straight thing) (86)

For Butler, then, the phallus takes on the role of delineating lesbian sex as a “vain and/or pathetic” shadow of “the real thing.” Butler also claims that the phallus, “in the cultural context of lesbian relations, can be quickly assimilated to the sense of an inadequate derivation from the supposedly real thing, and, hence, a source of shame” (86). This view that female-female intimacy and sexual fulfillment can be seen as a “pathetic effort to mime the real thing” and an “inadequate” substitution that becomes “a source of shame” is pervasive in both *The Female Husband* and *Fanny Hill*. The most important aspect of the lesbian phallus for this exploration comes when Butler claims of the phallus: “If a lesbian ‘has’ it, it is also clear that she does not ‘have’ it in the traditional sense; her activity furthers a crisis in the sense of what it means to ‘have’ one at all” (88). The ability of a woman to “have” a phallus questions masculine power. This questioning of masculine power through lesbian appropriation of the phallus often manifests in a violent reaction against female same-sex desire. This violence is especially clear in *The Female Husband*. 
Henry Fielding wrote *The Female Husband* as a fictional retelling of the factual case of Mary Hamilton. The court case that was published left out any discussion of sapphism, and focused on the fraud inherent in the marriages. “Perhaps as a response to the court’s reluctance to attempt a codification of sexual criminality Fielding offers an almost obsessive focus on Hamilton’s sapphic practices that is his own spin on the material” (Craft-Fairchild 418). The opening of *The Female Husband* is a conservative tirade against same-sex eroticism that leaves no doubt as to the tone of this text. Although the title page of this text claims to be a confession by Mary Hamilton “taken from her own mouth since her confinement” (26), the work opens with a diatribe against same-sex desire without reference to the supposed confessor: “THAT propense inclination which is for very wise purposes implanted in the one sex for the other, is not only necessary for the continuance of the human species; […]but of the most rational felicity” (29). If heterosexual desire is rational, same-sex desire therefore becomes irrational and counter to the survival of “the human species.” This belief leads to the following passages that describe the potential dangers in unleashing sexual desire. The narrator believes that “once our carnal desires are let loose, without those prudent and secure guides, there is no excess and disorder which they are not liable to commit” (29). The notion here is that once sexuality is expressed and experienced, human beings would then be open to all manner of sins. Fielding suggests an inability on the part of humans to control themselves once their sexuality is expressed; that the beginning of sexuality opens a person to the ability to engage in all manner of sins and criminal behavior. He goes on to say that “of these unnatural lusts, all ages and countries have afforded us too many instances; but none I think more surprising than what will be found in the history of Mrs. *Mary,*
otherwise Mr. *George Hamilton*” (29-30). The narrator here moves to tell the story, which seems to go against his point that releasing our “carnal desires” is problematic, as the tale was purposely titillating to his audience. It is interesting to note that while many critics who write about eighteenth-century sexuality stress the idea that female-female sex was tolerated, Fielding’s narrator cites this example of sapphic eroticism as more surprising than any other male or female homoeroticism he has heard. This suggests that Fielding himself does not see this instance of female-female eroticism as unthreatening, but instead finds it worthy of note despite the supposed plethora of similar stories he has heard.

Representations of sapphists in the eighteenth century often coded these women as monstrous and ugly, but the initial representation of Mary Hamilton provided by Fielding does not follow this trend. Instead she is said to be “a very pretty woman” (33). Her physical beauty is important in terms of defying traditional representations of masculine women, but less so than the description of her education and her character as a youth. Mary’s turn to sapphic relations is described as surprising because “the girl was brought up with the strictest of principles of virtue and religion; nor did she in her younger years discover the least proneness to any kind of vice, much less give causes of suspicion that she would one day disgrace her sex by the most abominable and unnatural pollutions” (30). What is implied here is that there was nothing biological or innate about Mary Hamilton that made her turn to homoeroticism; instead she was introduced to sapphic practices by another woman, her neighbor Annie Johnson. The two women were close during their youths, and when Annie Johnson inherited a substantial income and had her own home, Mary moved in with her. As Fielding says, “[t]hese two young
women became now inseparable companions, and at length bed-fellows” (31). Although Mary “began to conceive a very great affection for her friend,” she “declares her love, or rather friendship was totally innocent, till the temptations of Johnson first led her astray” (31). Fielding represents Annie as leading Mary into vice through her sexuality, but also shows the means through which Annie is capable of being Mary’s guide. Annie is financially independent, which allows her to have her own residence and affords her the opportunity to seduce Mary. Annie is represented as dangerous not only because of her aberrant sexuality, but also because she is a financially independent woman.

Mary’s “confession,” according to Fielding, was that her “love” was “innocent” until she was tempted by Johnson. Her sexual introduction comes at the hands of another woman, one who “was, it seems, no novice in impurity, which, as she confess’d, she had learnt and often practiced at Bristol with her methodist-ical sisters” (31). Mary’s sexual appetite for other women is awakened by a seasoned sapphist. The narrator blames Johnson for Mary’s deviant sexuality, saying that “it would not have been difficult for a less artful woman, in the most private hours, to turn the ardour of enthusiastic devotion into a different kind of flame” (31). According to Fielding’s narrator, Mary’s love and “devotion” for the “artful” Johnson made her seduction of Mary an easy one. Because of Johnson’s artfulness “[t]heir conversation […] soon became in the highest manner criminal, and transactions not fit to be mention’d passed between them” (31). Fielding refuses to describe what occurred between Mary and Annie Johnson, but instead relies on implication. This places Fielding alongside many other “[e]ighteenth-century authors, […]who] resorted to metaphors” while “referring to irregular sexual practices” (Craft-Fairchild 411). This circular language allows authors to represent sexual behavior,
without overtly mentioning “irregular” sexual activity. Fielding continues to avoid overt references to female-female sexual behavior when Miss Johnson and Mary Hamilton move together to Brighton, where “they took up their lodgings together, and live[d] in the same detestable manner as before; till an end was put to their vile amours, by the means of one Rogers” (31). The first female-female sexual relationship that Mary has is ended by the reinscription of Miss Johnson into the normative heterosexual world through her marriage to Rogers. Mrs. Johnson attempts to get Mary to abandon sapphic practices as well, through a letter in which she takes the blame upon herself: “For I take the whole shame and guilt of what hath passed between us on myself. I was indeed the first seducer of your innocence, for which I ask GOD’s pardon and yours.” (32). In this section of the letter, Mrs. Johnson places the shame that Judith Butler associates with the lesbian phallus on herself, as the “seducer of [Mary’s] innocence. By placing the shame on herself for their sexual relationship, Johnson recalls Butler’s claim that “lesbian relations, can be quickly assimilated to the sense of an inadequate derivation from the supposedly real thing, and, hence, a source of shame” (86), an idea which she continues when she tells Mary that there are joys in marriage with a man that they had not been able to experience. It is “through the anecdotes he selects [that] Fielding repeatedly asserts that women naturally desire the masculine and cannot remain satisfied with inadequate male impersonation” (Craft-Fairchild 419). More importantly, Mrs. Johnson has taken her place within the prescriptive, normative familial structure and desires that her friend and former lover do the same. This is an attempt at discipline, to reinscribe those who practice aberrant sexual behavior back into the recognizeable, patriarchal familial structure. The fact that Mrs. Johnson attempts this reinscription of Mary is surprising, because in their relationship
Mrs. Johnson inhabited the traditionally masculine role of the seducer. Through her marriage to Rogers, Mrs. Johnson abandons her masculine role of sexual seducer, and attempts to prevent Mary from assuming a similar role.

Mary Hamilton does not follow Mrs. Johnson’s advice, but rather begins to formulate a plan that will allow her to engage in more same-sex eroticism by cross-dressing. The fact that same-sex interaction comes before Mary adopts masculine clothing shows that “[i]n The Female Husband, homoeroticism clearly precedes and motivates Hamilton’s efforts at masculinity” (Lanser 32). At the time of Johnson’s marriage, Hamilton has not yet donned male clothing for the first time. Mary’s reaction to the wedding of her former lover is another way in which the story clearly places her same-sex desire chronologically before she begins to wear male clothing. Mary “became almost frantic, she tore her hair, beat her breasts, and behaved in as outrageous a manner as the fondest husband could, who had unexpectedly discovered the infidelity of a beloved wife” (32). Her initial sapphic relationship with Johnson occurs, in its entirety, before Mary assumes the male identity of George Hamilton. Her reaction to Johnson’s marriage to a man codes Mary as masculine, as she “behaved” in an “outrageous” way, as only “the fondest husband could.” Prior to Mary’s assumption of masculinity, Fielding places Mary in the role of the “husband,” showing that her future marital schemes are not caused by her masculine dress alone. Despite Fielding’s narrator being vehemently against same-sex erotic behavior, he nevertheless provides the reader with a heterosexual analogue to explain Mary’s emotional outburst. Mary behaves as “outrageous” as a loving husband, a description which does not seek to elicit the same revulsion as The Female Husband’s first few pages would suggest. Instead, Mary is coded in such a way
that she is placed outside of the role of a monstrous aberration and into a recognizable male role: the husband. As Butler claims in “Subversive Bodily Acts,” “gender does not necessarily follow from sex, and desire, or sexuality generally, does not seem to follow from gender” (*Gender Trouble*, 2548). At this moment, where the external sex characteristics of Mary Hamilton are preempted by her emotions concerning Miss Johnson, she proves that gender is performative. Her erotic love for Miss Johnson causes Fielding to code her as the “husband,” while her outward gender expression remains female. What then becomes important is that Mary’s desire for women—typically restricted to masculinity in the eighteenth-century—will soon be matched by her outward gender expression. As Butler states, “acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause” (2548). Mary’s outward masculine expression fits into Butler’s theory that internal desire produces itself on the surface of the body. Mary’s sexual desire for women is more easily fulfilled through the outward expression of a masculinized sexual identity. By expressing her inner desire through appropriation of male sexual behavior and dress, Fielding presents Mary as a woman who has (mostly) become a man, with the exception of her genitalia.

Mary Hamilton’s masculine disguise allows her to fully assume the role of “husband.” Mary decides to “dress herself in mens cloaths, to embark for Ireland” (33). Mary’s masculine role is effective: “[a]s she was a very pretty woman, she now appeared a most beautiful youth” (33). Once Mary has assumed a masculine outward appearance, Fielding’s references to her gender begin to destabilize. When Mary courts a widow, she
is alternately referred to as male and female. The widow is “lodging at the same house as her” and she begins to make addresses to this widow. Here Fielding switches gendered pronouns:

as *he* at present wanted a tongue to express the ardency of *his* flame, *he* was obliged to make use of actions of endearment, such as squeezing, kissing, toying, etc.

These were received in such a manner by the fair widow, that her lover thought *he* had sufficient encouragement to proceed to a formal declaration of *his* passion. And this *she* chose to do by letter, as *her* voice still continued too hoarse for uttering the soft accents of love (35, italics mine)

Fielding’s fluid use of gendered pronouns to describe his protagonist further destabilizes the sex of Mary, who now goes by George. Fielding’s use of the gendered pronouns is seemingly interchangeable. This lack of definability suggests that Mary/George’s sex is not only mutable, but also that gender itself is fluid within this text. As Mary begins to express her masculinity in terms of appearance, she is then expressing what Butler discusses in *Gender Trouble*, the enactment of gender that undermines the societal fallacy of natural gender expression. After this first widow rejects her advances, she meets another: the widow Rushford. During her courtship of widow Rushford, “a device entered her head, as strange and surprizing, as it was wicked and vile; and this was actually to marry the old woman, and to deceive her, by which means decency forbids me to even mention” (37). Mary embarks on the “wicked” and “vile” scheme to marry Rushford, as Fielding again tells us that “decency forbids” the mention of the means by which Mary
will “deceive” the widow. He continues to avoid a frank discussion of female same-sex eroticism, yet he also continues to titillate his reader by hinting towards that same sexual behavior. What decency forbids Fielding to mention is an integral part of Butler’s theory in “Subversive Bodily Acts.” The means through which Mary is able to appropriate the male sexual position is indicative of the fear associated with female ability to assume the male role, or as Butler states: “[f]or that masculine subject of desire, trouble became a scandal with the sudden intrusion, unanticipated agency, of a female ‘object’ who inexplicably returns the glance, reverses the gaze, and contests the place and authority of the masculine position” (2540). The “trouble” here is that Mary “contests the place and authority” of the male, surprising men by taking “unanticipated” agency. When she is able to deceive the widow to the point of accepting her proposal of marriage, Mary shows that the “authority of the masculine position” does not necessarily belong only to the male sex, but rather to whoever assumes the masculine role.

Mary Hamilton succeeds and marries the widow Rushford, but her deception is short lived. Rushford is observant enough to recognize that something is amiss in their relationship. Being an experienced woman, she realizes that the lack of sexual intercourse in their short marriage is abnormal; “[s]aying therefore with a tender smile to her husband, I believe you are a woman, her hands began to move in such a direction, that the discovery would absolutely have been made, had not the arrival of dinner, at that very instant, prevented it” (39). Mary is saved the discovery of her sex, not through her disguise, but rather circumstantially. Her body is unable to maintain the deception that her clothing initially made easy. It is not long before Rushford discovers that her young lover is a woman. Rushford’s reaction to Mary’s deception recalls Fielding’s diatribe
against same-sex eroticism from the beginning of the text: “Villain, rogue, whore, beast, cheat, all resounded at the same instant, and were followed by curses, imprecations and threats” (39). Mary’s deception of the widow makes the use of “villain, rogue” and “cheat” unremarkable; however, the use of “beast” is a mirroring of Fielding’s views on aberrant sexuality. Widow Rushford’s use of the word “whore” immediately strips Mary of her assumed male gender, as the term places Mary in a prescriptively deviant female sexual role. Mary’s attempt to assume the masculine sexual role makes her a “beast”—she is inhuman. Mary’s decision to usurp the male familial role of the husband is perhaps more important to the failure of her deception than her aberrant sexual desire. As a widow, Rushford is aware of the husband’s role, especially in the bedroom, and thereby can sense Mary’s difference from a traditional husband. Mary is unable to uphold her end of the marriage contract because she lacks a penis. Her physical lack, then, prevents her from assuming the male role in a sexual relationship despite her initial success in deceiving the widow, perhaps through the use of a dildo.

Mary escapes from her first wife and schemes anew in Dartmouth. Despite the failure of her first deception, she is unfazed and maintains her disguise as George Hamilton, the doctor. In Dartmouth, “she soon became acquainted with a young girl, the daughter of one Mr. Ivythorn, who had the green sickness” (40-1). Mary’s gender again becomes slippery in this section, as Fielding states that “the doctor had not been long intrusted with the care of this young girl before he began to make love to her” (41). Mary

3 “Greensickness, or chlorosis, is an eighteenth-century term used to describe what was probably an iron-deficiency anemia found in young girls, which is characterized by a greenish color of the skin” (61). The sickness most commonly affected “virgins, widows, and nuns” and was “causally related to sexual abstinence” (61). “The cure for greensickness—prompt marriage, sexual awakening, and maternity” (62). Blackwell, Bonnie. “‘An Infallible Nostrum’: Female Husbands and Greensick Girls in Eighteenth-Century England.” Literature and Medicine, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Spring 2002), pp.56-77. Web. 03/08/13.
again is referred to as “he,” and takes the masculine role of pursing a woman. Unlike the widow Rushford who quickly realizes her error, “[t]his Girl became an easy conquest to the doctor, and the day of their marriage was appointed, without the knowledge, or even suspicion of her father” (41). The young girl is unequipped with the same sexual knowledge and experience of Mary’s first wife and even her father consents to the union. The two first run away together, but on “[t]he third day they returned to Totness, where they both threw themselves at Mr. Ivythorn’s feet, who was highly rejoic’d at finding his daughter restor’d to him, and that she was not debauched, as he suspected of her” (41). Her father subsequently consents to their marriage because he is relieved that his daughter has not lost her virginity, and also because the cure for greensickness was believed to be a quick marriage and the act of reproduction—both sexual union and becoming a mother (Blackwell 62). Mary again assumes the role of the husband, calling further into question the stability of gender delineations. If Mary is so successful at tricking other women into believing her masculinity, the patriarchal power structure is itself called into question.

The fact that she succeeds in the deception of both Mr. and Miss Ivythorn with her masculine gender expression is emblematic of a key point on transvestism from Butler’s *Gender Trouble*. As Butler states, “[t]he notion of an original or primary gender identity is often parodied within the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing, and the sexual stylization of butch/femme identities” (2549). By assuming a male mode of dress, Mary is able to enact a gender identity that is not her own so successfully that she destabilizes the idea of an essential maleness. Her success with the Ivythorns shows that there is truth to the notion that “[i]f a woman passed successfully and was at all
prepossessing, there was a possibility that she would be considered an eligible bachelor and receive serious attention from girls and their families” (Faderman 49). The ability to pass successfully was paramount for women like Mary because “if a transvestite’s community discovered that she was passing as a man and was romantically involved with a woman, her liberty and even her life were at stake” (Faderman 49), because “cross-dressing women claimed for themselves a variety of privileges ordinarily reserved for men—self-sufficiency, freedom to wander unmolested, freedom to explore occupations more varied than those open to women” (Faderman 52). The danger for these women was that they posed a threat to men by being able to operate with the same freedom they themselves had; this produced a kind of anxiety that led to the punishment, or even execution of these women. Because of the danger involved in passing as a man, Mary chooses to pursue inexperienced young women. Unlike experienced widows, these young women lack sexual knowledge that could expose her physical sex. As long as Mary avoids sexually experienced women, she will be able to continue masquerading as a man, thereby suggesting that the masculine power that the patriarchy is founded upon is not essential to the male gender.

Despite Hamilton’s initial success, her second attempt at marriage is also short. After overindulging in alcohol, she wakes up to find her wife crying. She tells Mary that:

I always thought indeed your shape was something odd, and have often wondered that you had not the least bit of beard; but I thought you had been a man for all that, or I am sure I would not have been so wicked as to marry you for the world (42)
While Mary successfully woos the young girl, her body fails her. Indeed, her lack of masculine characteristics show that her body is feminine, but do not cause the girl to believe she had married a woman. Her assumption of the masculine role works only when she is able to hide the femininity of her genitalia, easily discovered by her wife as she slept. The success of the conjugal aspects of the two woman’s marriage prior to this point is likely due to Mary’s use of a dildo that goes unmentioned before her eventual trial. Mary’s dildo is a physical representation of Butler’s concept of the lesbian phallus in that it highlights “the displace-ability of the phallus, its capacity to symbolize in relation to other body parts or other body-like things,” and allows her to enact male sexual potency with Miss Ivythorn. Problematically for Mary, her phallic representation is not “the real thing;” and in this instance, it is her body’s lack that causes the failure of her masquerade. Despite her body’s failings, Mary is undeterred. In order to persuade Miss Ivythorn, Mary “endeavoured to pacify her, by every kind of promise, and telling her she would have all the pleasures of marriage without the inconveniences” (42). Through the temptation of a life of sexual pleasure without the “inconveniences” of reproduction, Mary offers a life of sexual fulfillment that will be an escape from the female reproductive role in heterosexual marriage. As Butler posited about female sexuality, Mary challenges the “false stabilization of gender in the interests of the heterosexual construction and regulation of sexuality within the reproductive domain” (2548). Miss Ivythorn’s emphatic rejection of this proposal places her into the accepted space of female gender; in effect, she embodies the unease typical of the eighteenth century, “a panic over love, female pleasure, and the possibility of women breaking free—together—from their male sexual overseers” (Castle 34). Mary offers this
possibility to Miss Ivythorn, whose vehement denial and promise to expose Mary to her father forces Mary to flee her marriage for the second time.

Mary escapes and quickly begins the search for another young wife. The third wife of George/Mary Hamilton is the young Mary Price. This marriage is significantly different from the first two, because “[w]ith this girl, hath this wicked woman since her confinement declared, she was really much in love, as it was possible for a man ever to be with one of her own sex” (43). Mary has not been said to be in love with her previous wives, but this time she loves Price as much as a “man” can be in love with a woman. In this passage, the narrator claims that she describes gender as fluid. The fluidity of her gender is not unique to this moment of the text, but it is the first time that she has equated her own emotions to those of a man. Because she loves Price like “a man” loves a woman, Mary—according to Fielding—describes her emotions in love as masculine, rather than having Fielding liken her emotions to those of a man without referencing the way she describes herself.

Hamilton’s success is again limited. This time, Mary Price’s mother hears first of the other marriages and tells her “the great sin she would be guilty of, if she concealed a fact of this kind, and the great disgrace she would bring on her own family, […] by living contentedly with a husband who was in any degree less a man than the rest of his neighbors” (48). Mary Price remains defensive of her husband’s masculinity, though she is unable to avoid the truth: her husband is not a biological man. Word spread quickly through the town and “[…] the mob, especially the women, all paid [Mary Price] their compliments of congratulation. Some laughed at her, others threw dirt at her, and others made use of terms of reproach not fit to be commemorated” (49). Miss Price is heckled
by other women for being unable to distinguish the lesbian phallus from the “real thing.” These women attempt to shame Mary Price; as Butler says, the phallus “in the cultural context of lesbian relations, can be quickly assimilated to the sense of an inadequate derivation from the supposedly real thing, and, hence, a source of shame” (86). The other women of the town seize on this notion that female-female sexual intercourse is “an inadequate” substitute for the “real thing,” and teach Mary Price through shame.

Because of her usurpation of the masculine sexual and familial role, Mary Hamilton must be punished in order to preserve the phallocentric power structure, predicated on the fact that masculine power is essential to the male gender. As she goes to trial, she is accused of ownership of a dildo as well as deceitful practice. Fielding writes that “something of too vile, wicked and scandalous a nature, which was found in the doctor’s trunk,” (49) was among the chief causes of Mary being “committed to Bridwell” (49). The dildo is a physical manifestation of Butler’s “lesbian phallus” and the primary reason for Mary’s imprisonment, because it threatens patriarchal structures through female appropriation of male sexual power, effectively removing the need for men and inevitability of children from sexual enjoyment.

During the proceedings at Mary’s trial, Fielding writes that “the Doctor was indicted for the abovementioned diabolical fact, and after a fair trial convicted, to the entire satisfaction of the whole court,” (49-50) and was sentenced for “this base and scandalous crime” to be “publically and severely whipt four several times, in four market towns […] and to be imprisoned” (50). The crime is the impersonation of male sexual power that Mary wields through her dildo, and the threat that female sexual agency poses to a male dominated society is punished severely. Mary had her “skin scarified with rods,
in such a manner that she was almost flead,” something that made some spectators feel “some pity toward her” (51), yet Fielding hopes that the example of Mary can be used to “deter all others from the commission of any such foul and unnatural crimes” (51). Mary’s punishment is a painful reminder of her own corporeality and the power the patriarchy holds over her. Fielding’s titillating tale attempts to return to its opening stance against same-sex eroticism, threatening that “should they escape the shame and ruin” they deserve in life, they will find “their full punishment in the next” (51). Fielding’s novella attempts to reify the heterosexual contract through its devaluation of same-sex eroticism in its final didactic moments, thereby reinforcing the heteronormativity of the eighteenth-century family. Despite Fielding’s attempt at heteronormative closure, the fact remains that “so little effect had the smart of shame of this punishment” on Mary that “the very evening she had suffered the first whipping, she offered the goaler money, to procure her a young girl to satisfy her most monstrous and unnatural desires” (51). Fielding shows that Mary does not abandon her “unnatural desires” through physical punishment; rather, she refuses to be reinscribed into a gender binary that privileges reproductive sex, a binary that can be described as “compulsory heterosexuality” (Adrienne Rich). Fielding’s retelling of Mary Hamilton’s true-life case is heavy handed in its desire to dissuade the practice of same-sex eroticism, as it purports to reject aberrant sexual behavior in favor of reproductive, heterosexual intercourse. It may seem like Fielding is presenting a woman who rejects male-female intimacy in a positive and strong way until one considers the violent attempts at reinscription she undergoes, and when he immediately follows her continued rejection of heteronormative values with the threat of punishment to come after death. Bonnie Blackwell claims that Fielding, by representing
Mary Hamilton’s young wives as innocent, asks the “young naïve reader to misread and therefore to identify with Mary Price, the lover and defender of the female husband, rather than the behavior-policing older women whose sexual experience allows them to define what is normal marital consummation” (73). While the belief that the girls naivety could be positively viewed is logical, Blackwell believes that in “constructing an ideal reader from the qualities of Hamilton’s unwitting brides [The Female Husband] strays so far from condemning the ‘pollution’ of female homosexuality that it ultimately amounts to a lesson for a reader in how to fall for a female husband” (Blackwell, 59). Blackwell’s statement is incorrect, especially considering the evidence to the contrary the text provides. Although The Female Husband has moments in which the tone feels ambivalent, the tale opens and closes with promises of punishment in the afterlife for those who engage in same-sex activity. The novella is meant to condemn female sexuality—especially sapphic practices—as it exploits the popularity of a contemporary trial in order to promote the reproductive heterosexual binary, through the embellished story of a woman whose attempts to appropriate male sexual agency inevitably fail.

I agree with critics like Bonnie Blackwell and Susan Lanser for using feminist, gender, and queer theories alongside The Female Husband, and their decision to view this short work as subversive when they refer to Fielding’s inclusion of non-heteronormative marriage bonds, and the pervasiveness of female same-sex desire. But the analyses by these same critics are incomplete because the inclusion of same-sex desire and the employment of feminist/queer theory does not ensure a subversive message. In a work like The Female Husband, even though there is obvious fascination with female sexuality, the didactic message of the text is made clear through Fielding’s
opening and closing comments on the subject of non-heterosexual intimacy and their consequences in both this life and the next. Mary Hamilton is violently punished while her brides mostly escape unscathed, and her former lover marries a man. Her refusal to conform to the culture of compulsory heterosexuality around her by way of reproductive marriage leaves her a monstrous figure who is unredeemed and forever an abject other. The use of queer theory to examine this conservative text does not necessarily offer a new view into subversive eighteenth-century gender and sexuality politics, but instead provides us with examples of how even conservative works by eighteenth-century authors often employed themes to which we in the post-Foucauldian world of gender studies can apply queer methodologies in order to study authors who promote conservative agendas and maintain the strength of patriarchally structured society.
CHAPTER TWO

THE CONSERVATIVE PROSTITUTE: SAPPHIC SEXUAL AWAKENING, HETERONORMATIVITY AND FANNY HILL’S DESIRE FOR “MORE SOLID FOOD”

John Cleland’s erotic novel *Fanny Hill; or, Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* follows the life of a woman whose sapphic initiations to sex do not prevent her from becoming a traditional wife and mother. Unlike Mary Hamilton in *The Female Husband*, Fanny is not satisfied by female homoerotic activity from nearly her first experience. As a young woman Fanny suddenly finds herself without a family:

> I was now entering on my fifteenth year, when the worst of ills befell me in the loss of my tender parents, who were both carried off by the smallpox, within a few days of each other; my father dying first, and thereby hastening the death of my mother, so that I was now left an unhappy friendless Orphan (40)

As Fanny records, she is now in a position that leaves her unprotected. She knows “nobody left alive in the village” and therefore resolves to go with an acquaintance, Esther, and to “mak[e] a launch into the wide world by repairing to London in order to seek my fortune, a phrase which, by the bye, has ruined more adventurers of both sexes, from the country, than ever it made or advanced” (40-1). This choice is a dangerous one, as Fanny herself now understands. Esther entices Fanny with tales about “how several maids out of the country had made themselves and all their kin forever, that by preserving their VARTUE, some had taken so with their masters that they had married them [...]
and some, mayhap, came to be duchesses” (41). Fanny is enticed by this information she receives from Esther, but as her tale will soon reveal, “preserving” her “VARTUE” proves difficult. Once they enter, London Fanny realizes that Esther has no intention of helping her find employment, and she once again finds herself alone.

Fanny’s lack of relatives and friends in London leads her to search for employment through a woman who aids young women in finding both lodging and work. Fanny writes that it was in this home that “Mrs Brown, my mistress, frequently attended on the watch for any fresh goods that might offer there, for the use of her customers and her own profit.” (45) Fanny is, as yet, unaware of Mrs. Brown’s trade. Fanny accepts Mrs. Brown’s offer of employment and during their trip to Mrs. Brown’s home their conversation proceeds “without one syllable from which [she] could conclude anything but that [she] was by the greatest good luck fallen into the hands of the kindest mistress” (45). Fanny is “dazzled and altogether persuaded [by her] that [she] must be got into a very reputable family” (46). Fanny’s use of the word “family” can be seen as her way of replacing the biological family she has lost as well as the standard eighteenth-century way of describing a household that included both biological relations and their servants. Fanny’s understanding of Mrs. Brown’s house turns out to be false, as she has unknowingly been brought to a brothel as a potential new prostitute.

During her stay at Mrs. Brown’s house, Fanny is initiated into the sexual world by an experienced prostitute named Phoebe. Together, Mrs. Brown and Phoebe introduce Fanny to the world of pleasure. Phoebe is assigned to Fanny as a bedmate and will become her first sexual partner. Fanny says that Phoebe
turned to me, embraced and kissed me with great eagerness. This was new, this was odd; but imputing it to nothing but pure kindness, which, for aught I knew, it might be the London way to express that manner, I was determined to be behind-hand with her and return her the kiss and embrace with all the fervor that perfect innocence knew (48).

Fanny believes these advances are normal in London, and is therefore unwilling to reject them. This unwillingness to reject what she believes to be customary is indicative of her character: Fanny is a proponent of upholding societal convention throughout the text. But Phoebe does not restrict herself to kisses. Fanny proceeds by saying that Phoebe “now attempts the main spot,” which does not repulse her; instead, “her lascivious touches had lighted up a new fire that wantoned through all my veins but fixed with violence” and “I was transported, confused, and out of myself” (48). When Phoebe moves from kissing Fanny to clitoral stimulation, she feels “a new fire” that spreads “through all [her] veins.” Fanny’s first sexual experience “transported” and “confused” her, but effectively serves to awaken Fanny’s sexual desire.

Phoebe’s sexual stimulation of Fanny is an example of Butler’s “lesbian phallus,” because her fingers highlight “the displace-ability of the phallus, its capacity to symbolize in relation to other body parts” (84). Phoebe’s ability to sexually excite Fanny, and even bring her to orgasm, suggests that a degree of sexual fulfillment is achieved through the attribution of phallic sexual agency to “other body parts,” in this case, Phoebe’s fingers. While Fanny feels pleasure during this liaison with Phoebe, it is important to note that “all Fanny feels is pleasure […] she] carefully records that Phoebe ‘raised no other emotion’ than pleasure” (Parker 147; added italics for emphasis are
mine). What Fanny “does not understand is that her encounter with Phoebe can be sexual in its own right” (Parker 147). Although Fanny admittedly feels pleasure during this encounter with Phoebe, she quickly downplays any sexual fulfillment received from the encounter:

What pleasure she had found I will not say; but this I know, that the first sparks of kindling nature, the first ideas of pollution, were caught by me that night, and that the acquaintance and communication with the bad of our own sex is often as fatal to innocence as all the seductions of the other (50)

Fanny claims that “communication with the bad of our own sex” can be “as fatal to innocence as all the seductions of” men, even though it was often believed in the eighteenth century that sexual relations between women were harmless due to the lack of penetration. Fanny understands the potential of female-female sex to lead innocent girls into a life of vice.

It is through this sexual awakening of Fanny by Phoebe that “Cleland assigns the responsibility for a woman’s being taken into prostitution to women themselves, through the arousal of desire brought on by homoerotic pleasure” (Nussbaum 106). Nussbaum’s claim is supported by Fanny’s representation of Phoebe as a woman to whom all modes and devices of pleasure were known and familiar, found, it seems, in this exercise of her art to break young girls the gratification of one of those arbitrary tastes for which there is no accounting. Not that she hated men or did not even prefer them to her own sex, but when she met with such occasions as this was, a satiety of
enjoyments in the common road, perhaps to a secret bias, inclined her to make the most of pleasure wherever she could find it, without distinction of sexes (49-50)

Fanny is aware that there are women who have “arbitrary tastes,” but is quick to reassure her reader that Phoebe was not a woman who “hated men”; in fact Phoebe does “prefer them to her own sex.” Fanny also acknowledges that Phoebe’s “art to break young girls” could be “a secret bias” that leads her not to make any “distinction of sexes.” Both Fanny and Phoebe believe that there is something missing in their sexual encounter together, suggesting that Cleland regards sex between women as inherently lacking. While Phoebe is manually stimulating Fanny, she exclaims “Oh! that I were a man for your sake -!” (49) suggesting that Fanny’s enjoyment of sex is dependent on the male genitalia that she lacks. Fanny’s realization that something is missing comes when she observes a prostitute in the brothel entertaining a client. After viewing a man’s “weapon of pleasure” (70) for the first time, Fanny engages in another sexual encounter with Phoebe. This second female-female sexual encounter of Fanny’s disappoints her because Phoebe’s body did not have “the main object of [her] wishes”; it was “so flat! [and] so hollow!” (71). Despite the fact that she is still a virgin, Fanny is now unable to be satisfied by Phoebe’s female form. Fanny decides then that she now “pine[s] for more solid food, and promised tacitly to [herself] that [she] would not be put off much longer with this foolery from woman to woman” (71). Fanny describes Phoebe’s body as “flat” and “hollow” because she lacks a penis. According to Parker “[t]he lesbians in Cleland’s [text] have tongues, hands, fingers and imaginations, but unfortunately no penises” (140). For Cleland’s heroine, the sight of another woman engaged in sex with a man is all that is required to
teach her that she desires a more “solid food” and immediately puts her off of sex with other women.

This moment is significant because Cleland represents heterosexual intimacy as innate. When she is first kissed by Phoebe, Fanny is unsure because she has not let learned if female-female intimacy is merely a London societal norm, or just Phoebe’s pleasure, yet she feels no such ambiguity when she witnesses heterosexual intercourse. Heterosexual intimacy is presented as obviously normative through her immediate desire to have sex with a man following her view of a prostitute entertaining a client in Mrs. Brown’s home. Fanny uses the term “foolery” to describe sexual encounters between women, thereby suggesting that she sees sex between women as a game that is inherently unable to fulfill her new-found sexual appetite. The moment where Fanny realizes that sexual interaction with Phoebe is unsatisfying is another example of Butler’s concept of the lesbian phallus, in that she views sex with a woman as an “inadequate derivation of the real thing”; in this case, heterosexual sex. Fanny’s dismissal of sexual relations with Phoebe show that “[C]leland’s lesbian relationships are not manifestations of the female desire for intimate relations with another woman; instead they are [presented] as either a poor substitute or a necessary precursor for the penis” (Fowler 62). While Fowler is correct when it comes to discussing Fanny, Phoebe’s obvious enjoyment of female-female sexual acts—despite her experience in heterosexual intercourse—is ignored here. Fowler would be more correct if Phoebe’s “arbitrary taste” for female intimacy were noted as a foil to Fanny’s conventionality.

Once Fanny realizes that she desires a sexual relationship with a man, it is not long before she encounters what she has termed “more solid food.” Fanny comes across a
young man sleeping in a chair in the brothel and is overwhelmed by the sight of the man who will eventually become her husband:

heavens! what a sight! no! no term of years, no turns of fortune could ever erase the lightening-like impression his form made on me…Yes! dearest object of my earliest passion, I command for ever the remembrance of thy first appearance to my ravished eyes,-it calls thee up, present; and I see thee now!” (72)

Her orgasmic exclamations and her insistence that the “lightening-like impression” he has made upon her will be with her forever show a passion that surpasses her recounting of her first sexual experiences. For Fanny, just the sight of this man is more exciting than any sexual pleasure she received at the hands of Phoebe. The attraction Fanny feels for Charles is not only immediate; it is also reciprocated. Charles “asked me briskly at once if I would be kept by him, and that he would take lodging for me directly, and relieve me from any engagements he presumed I might be under in the house” (73). Fanny does not make this arrangement through Mrs. Brown. In fact, Fanny runs away with Charles without telling anyone. From the moment she meets Charles, Fanny in unable to deny him anything: “the prodigious love I was struck with for him had put a charm into his voice there was no resisting, and blinded me to every objection: I could, at that instant, have died for him; think if I could resist an invitation to live with him!” (73). Fanny’s obsession with Charles is evident from this first meeting is obvious. She is inextricably drawn to Charles and easily rejects female-female “foolery” and her budding career in prostitution, in an attempt to form a bond with Charles that in some ways mirrors a heterosexual marriage.
When Fanny and Charles consummate their relationship, it is clear that female-female sexual exploits are no danger to virginity in this text. Fanny says that Charles supposed “that I was no novice in these matters, since he had taken me out of a common bawdy-house; nor had I said one thing to prepossess him of my virginity” (77). When he inquires after her virginity Fanny says, “I answered, with a simplicity framed to persuade, that he was the first man that ever served me so.” (77). While Fanny has retained her virginity, it is important to note that she says Charles was the first “man” to have “served” her. Because Fanny regards her erotic experiences with Phoebe as “foolery between women” she can claim chastity, but she does not claim to never have been “served” by anyone. Fanny’s previous sapphic experience seems almost to be erased in this scene, perhaps due to the arrival of her first male sexual partner. The fact that Fanny loses her virginity to Charles is precisely the reason that she is accepted into a traditional marriage plot as the novel progresses. Fanny realizes that her sexual encounters with Charles differ from others, as soon as she has her first experience with another man. After having sex with Mr. H-, Fanny says “I felt the usual consequences of the first launch into vice; (for my love attachment to Charles never appeared to me in that light” (102). Sexual intercourse with Charles does not count as “vice” to Fanny due to the “love attachment” she has for him. Fanny claims later that, despite not hearing from Charles during his long voyage at sea, she had never forgotten him “and amidst all my personal infidelities, not one had made a pin’s point impression on a heart impenetrable to the true love-passion, but for him” (212). Fanny rarely mentions Charles until his reappearance, though she occasionally makes reference to her first love prior to sexual encounters. By losing her virginity to him, Fanny physically becomes his wife and the experiences she has between
their initial relationship and later marriage are largely ignored in Cleland’s narrative. As Patsy S. Fowler claims, “[t]he number of lovers Fanny takes between her defloration by and her reunion with Charles seems almost irrelevant […] When Charles takes Fanny’s virginity […] he has effectively claimed her as his own private property,” (56-7) allowing her to assume the role of wife in a heteronormative family. The notion that she is “private property” is not exclusive to the relationship between Fanny and Charles; her sexual body as owned property can be seen throughout the text. Fanny spends time as both a prostitute and as a kept woman, professions through which her body is a purchasable commodity.

Fanny remains an acceptable choice for heteronormative marriage despite moments where she takes the masculine role of seducing a young man. Fanny’s seduction can be read as masculine because of the way she places her revenge as equal to the actions of her male client, as well as her use of feminizing words to describe the youth she seeks to debauch. After Fanny discovers her second lover Mr. H- engaged in sexual acts with a female servant, she decides to repay “him, as exactly as [I] could for the soul of me, in the same coin” (106). Fanny sets herself as a kept woman on the same level as her client Mr. H- by claiming that his betrayal of her will be met in kind; if he will sleep with a servant, so shall she. Fanny’s choice is a “tenant’s son, just come out from the country, a very handsome young lad, fresh turned of nineteen, fresh as a rose” (106). Fanny is between fifteen and sixteen years of age, and yet to her, this man from the country is infantilized by his lack of sexual experience. Fanny’s description of him in this manner is especially feminizing, because “fresh as a rose” refers to the tenant’s son as if he were a virginal young woman. The use of floral imagery—typically reserved for female sexuality and sexual organs—places the servant in the role of the pursued young
woman. Through her feminization of the young man, Fanny is shown to employ masculine sexual agency. The fact that Fanny calls him “fresh” is indicative of his virginity because it suggests that the “rose” of a boy is untainted, or unspoiled. When Fanny asks whether or not he has a mistress who is prettier than her, she says “the blushing simpleton answered to my wish, in a strain of perfect nature, perfect undebauched innocence, but with all the awkwardness and simplicity of country breeding” (108). Fanny again places herself as the superior member of the pair, due to his rustic “simplicity” that leaves him innocent and awkward. She continues to place him as the pursued object of her sexual desire as she continually usurps the male role of sexual aggressor. Fanny feminizes the young man as their sexual encounter begins, when she says that she “was indeed no longer able to contain myself or wait the slower progress of his maiden bashfulness (for such it seemed he really was)” (109). Here, Fanny again becomes the masculine aggressor bent on the defloration of a young country virgin.

Fanny’s sexually predatory nature in this scene threatens to liken her behavior to that of Fielding’s Mary Hamilton, yet Cleland quickly reinscribes her desire into the phallocentric sexual model. The young man’s “essential object of enjoyment” is said to be “not the plaything of a boy, not the weapon of a man, but a maypole of so enormous a standard that, had the proportions been observed, it must have belonged to a young giant” (109). Fanny’s sexually aggressive behavior is immediately overshadowed by this “oversized machine” (110) that she calls an “object of terror and delight” (109). Because Fanny is sexually bold, Cleland’s use of a giant penis that inspires fear takes the power away from the experienced Fanny and returns sexual domination to the virgin male. Fanny’s acceptance of her subservient sexual role is explicit; she says that “it now fell to
my lot to stand his first trial” of sex, an experience she claims is “violent, and to me, most painful” (110), but fills her with “such a mixture of pleasure and pain as there is no giving definition of” (110). Fanny’s acceptance of her painful experience of the young man’s first trial is part of Cleland’s privileging of heteronormativity through the preferential treatment of the male phallus. In this section and indeed throughout the novel, Fanny’s empowerment of femininity and frankness in terms of sex often appears to subversively privilege female sexuality, but scenes like this one reveal Cleland’s tendency of:

using descriptors steeped in aggression and choosing to endow all of his sexually successful male characters with organs much longer than the recognized average, Cleland not only strokes the egos of his audience, but more significantly, he emphasizes the physical domination of the male and offers the subtle reminder that the penis can and does deliver pain just as easily as it does pleasure (Fowler 54)

This young man’s penis is said to “batter stiffly” (110) and to be ready for “renewed invasion” (111) almost immediately. Cleland’s reminder of the sexual and “physical domination” of the woman is not as subtle as Fowler claims. Fanny’s sexual aggression quickly turns into a “trial,” through which she is dealt, as Fowler claims, both “pleasure and pain” in a way that shows the audience how Fanny’s sexual aggression cannot compare to ownership of the male phallus.

Cleland’s use of an oversized penis to subjugate aggressive female sexuality is shown again in a more violent episode when Fanny and fellow prostitute Louisa seduce a young man. Similar to Fanny’s seduction of the young servant of Mr. H- , this second
episode turns a female attempt to exercise sexual agency into the painful acceptance of male sexual power. Fanny and Louisa see the “son of a poor woman” who sold nosegays to “eke[] out his mother’s maintenance of them both” (197). The poverty of this young man is important in that he is coded as being a member of a lower socioeconomic class than the prostitutes. Fanny has been said to be “in a state of ease and affluence” (180) that offers her a sort of freedom that the young man is without because he is not “fit for any other way of livelihood” (197) than selling flowers. While he is “perfectly well made” and “pretty featured” (197), he is also “a perfect changeling, or idiot […who] stammered so that there was no understanding even those sounds that his half-a-dozen, at most, animal ideas prompted him to utter” (197). The “changeling” is placed below the women even further as he is stripped of the human ability of speech, and even attributed with “animal ideas.” For Fanny and Louisa, seducing this young man comes out of Louisa’s “desire to be satisfied” and hope that “the general rule held good with regard to this changeling” (198). Fanny does not participate with the pair sexually, but she is in attendance as Louisa finds herself violently reinscribed into a phallocentric model of sexual dominance. As soon as he is sexually aroused, Fanny finds that though they were “prepared […] to see something extraordinary, it still, out of measure, surpassed our expectation” (199). Louisa’s quarry is found to be in possession of what Fanny calls a “master-tool” (200). The use of the term “master” indicates that the sexual dynamic of this scene is changing. Louisa is no longer exerting sexual power over a nearly mute “changeling,” because simple ownership of the male sexual organ outweighs his animalistic description and gives him power over Louisa; a point that is violently emphasized by the sexual act that follows. Once the sexual encounter begins Fanny
reports that “Louisa cried out so violently […] that she was killed” (200). Louisa is now the sexual victim of the boy who was previously denigrated. A change comes over the boy, who now “felt so manfully his advantages and superiority” that “his joys began to assume a character of furiousness” (200). The power and advantage gained by the changeling are brought out through the sexual power of his gender, as evidenced by the use of his superiority which he felt manfully. This suggests that his superiority is tied solely to his possession of the phallus, which Cleland seems to place as the only viable agent of sexual power. Like Fanny before her, Louisa’s attempt at sexually aggressive behavior ends in the passive acceptance of a violent, painful sexual encounter. Fanny normalizes this rape-like encounter, through which the man remains “all insensible of Louisa’s complaints” (200), by claiming Louisa enjoys the pain that comes with acceptance of the phallus. She says that “all though she suffered, and greatly too, yet ever true to the good old cause, she suffered with pleasure and enjoyed her pain” (201). In this passage, Fanny claims that painful, and even violent sexual encounters are pleasurable for a woman, seemingly because they are fulfilling male sexual desire. This second example of the reintegration of a sexually aggressive female into the phallocentric power structure is observed and narrated by the often conventional Fanny in such a way that it normalizes the aggressive sexual nature of men and reminds women of their subservient role.

*Fanny Hill* completes the conventional marriage plot when Charles returns from his journey at sea. Charles’s sudden absence is explained as a plot by his upper-class family to remove him from his sexual relationship with Fanny because of her profession. Fanny searches for Charles when she learns that he may return from the “South Seas” and could “in a few months return to England” (213). Her excitement over the possibility of
his return causes Fanny to “journey for Lancaster [...] with a design purely to revisit my place of nativity” (213). This journey to her homeland seems to symbolize Fanny’s rebirth, a cleansing that will allow for her marriage with Charles. Cleland confirms this idea when a chance rainstorm as she nears home forces Fanny to take refuge in an inn. Charles takes shelter there as well and Fanny “shot into his arms, crying out as I threw mine round his neck: ‘My life! –my soul! –my Charles!’” (214). The reunion of Fanny and Charles is coded as familial, as the “landlady, who currently took him for my husband, cleared the room,” (214). The landlady sees the two as a married couple, and Fanny seems to echo that view when she says that “we exchanged hearts in our eyes, and renewed the ratifications of a love unabated by time or absence” (215). Fanny presents this reunion as a renewal of marriage vows that the two will consummate when they are “in quality of man and wife, shown up together to a very handsome apartment” (217). She claims she is “moved” to share the bed with “the dear possessor of [her] virgin heart” (217), which serves to remind the reader of the legitimacy of her relationship with Charles. Because she is “no real virgin,” she blushes “in view of the nuptial bed” because she feels that she “did not deserve [Charles]” (218). Fanny feels unworthy because of her sexual past, regardless of the fact that he first found her in a brothel. She finally reveals to him “the course of life” she has taken, but Charles is unsurprised when he “reflect[s] on how he had left me circumstanced” (222). Fanny’s apologetic, self-abasing opinion of her work as a prostitute is a self-determined subservient position that reflects Cleland’s ideological view that women should not only remain subservient, but that they should place themselves in that role. Fanny is apologetic for her work, though Charles himself left her so suddenly without prospects that a woman in her position would have little
choice. Fanny has earned a significant fortune through her work, which she asks Charles for “his acceptance of,” and which he refuses until she agrees to marry him. Fanny believes that Charles has “bartered his honor for infamy and prostitution, in making one his wife who thought herself too much honoured in being but his mistress” (222-3). Fanny believes her past as a prostitute makes her unworthy to be “but his mistress,” but she instead becomes his wife. Fanny’s work may have been considered immoral, but it provided her with financial independence most women in the eighteenth-century were unable to manage.

While Cleland implies that Fanny is independent due to the fortune made through her short career, he does not condone her self-sufficient status, because he has her give her money to Charles instead of retaining her own wealth. In marrying Charles and making him master of her body and her fortune, “Fanny changes into a bourgeoise, and thus a ‘woman’ whose earnings from prostitution are given over to Charles. No longer a sexual threat, [Fanny’s tale] becomes a bourgeois matron’s lovingly erotic tale rather than a whore’s rhetoric” (Nussbaum 111). I agree that Fanny’s marriage to Charles effectively places her in a subservient role and removes her sexual agency; however, Nussbaum’s claim that Fanny is a “sexual threat” is incorrect. Even though Fanny is occasionally sexually aggressive, Cleland immediately undermines any transgressive action she attempts through his implementation of phallocentric sexual aggression. Her sapphic experience is immediately followed by a rejection of female intimacy, and any attempt to infantilize or seduce a man ends the in submissive acceptance of painfully large phalluses. The marriage merely serves to turn “a whore’s rhetoric” into a redemptive tale that reintegrates a sexually potent female into the subservient role in what Butler calls a
heteronormative, reproductive marriage. Although she claims her heart remained faithful to Charles, Fanny’s past prostitution and explicit recitation of sexual acts from heterosexual to homosexual, even sadomasochistic sexual experiences cannot be erased by a short discussion of her reformation into a wife. While Cleland’s goal may be to have Fanny’s memoir be read as a “matron’s lovingly erotic tale,” his use of graphic sexuality throughout serves to teach heteronormative morality through his heroine’s sexual experiences. Her multitude of sexual acts reproduce a heteronormative view of morality, because though she experiences a wide variety of pleasures, Fanny—through Cleland—“chooses” the patriarchal ideal of heterosexual intercourse. Fanny’s openness with Charles and his acceptance of her sexual past show that “Cleland sees sexuality not as necessarily opposed to but as a means to moral agency; that is, the capacity for judgment in sexual matters develops out of an avowal rather than a denial of sexual experience” (Smith 185). Because Fanny has explored her sexuality throughout the text, she finds her morality, not through abstinence, but rather through experimentation with sexual behaviors that lead her to reject all but heterosexual intercourse with her first male partner. Fanny learns from sex with Phoebe that she is unsatisfied sexually without “more solid food,” and her feeling that she started down the road to “vice” after her first heterosexual experience apart from Charles teaches Fanny, through experience, that she has found her place as a heterosexual partner to her first male lover.
Throughout the eighteenth-century novel, the themes of familial creation, bastardy, and quests for legitimacy are nearly unavoidable. All three can be combined into one overarching theme, illegitimacy. The theme of legitimacy and what makes someone or something legitimate is so pervasive in the eighteenth-century novel that at first, one wonders where the fixation on illegitimacy stems from. Authors of both sexes and all social strata, educational levels, and political orders penned works on this theme. In order to fully appreciate the obsession with illegitimacy in the eighteenth century, it is important to look not solely to the fictional works that foreground the topic, but also into the society in which these works were produced. Eighteenth-century culture was not only obsessed with illegitimacy in literature; the society itself was rife with illegitimacy and bastardy. According to Edward Shorter, “[s]tarting around the mid-eighteenth century a dramatic increase in percentage of illegitimate births commenced all over Europe” (238), making illegitimacy a major cultural concern and not just a literary fixation. “Demographers and historians refer to the eighteenth century as the ‘century of illegitimacy’” (Zunshine, 1), and while they may have differing evidence or ways of proving their claims, “they all agree that this phenomenon must have touched everyone who lived at that time and played a crucial role in the economic, social and cultural life” (Zunshine, 1). Concerns about illegitimacy are not surprising, considering the political
atmosphere of England in the eighteenth century, which can be seen in the laws pertaining to inheritance, including various the property laws, and also in the passing of Parliament’s Act of Settlement in 1701⁴ which ensured Protestant succession to the English throne. For Zunshine, the laws and societal restrictions concerning the illegitimacy of bastards, orphans, and foundlings “matters only so far as it frees them from an allegiance to a specific family or social class” (Zunshine, 15), freedom that was paramount to the ever changing political, economic and social order of eighteenth-century society.

The focal interest in illegitimacy in eighteenth-century society and literature is not surprising in a time when illegitimate births rose exponentially and German-speaking Hanoverian rulers sat on the throne. Despite being related to the British monarchy by blood, the Hanoverians showed the instability of the English monarchy, because in order to avoid catholic ascension foreign rulers were chosen, a fact that their language highlighted. Though literary works such as Samuel Richardson’s Pamela promoted class mobility and social change, many novels took a more conservative approach to discussions of illegitimacy. Novels such as Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe, Henry Fielding’s Tom Jones, and The Old English Baron by Clara Reeve show their support of conservative, patriarchal convention with regard to legitimacy. All three novels focus on a phallocentric model of familial creation, in which patriarchal society is able to recreate itself through homosocial bonds between men. These novels focus on families created with little to no emphasis on female involvement, promoting acceptance of both bastards and adoption as acceptable means of legitimization. These novels thus legitimize more

⁴ The Act of Settlement of 1701 ensured that no Catholic could inherit the throne of Britain and Ireland. Instead, the throne would pass to the Hanoverian dynasty. Queen Anne’s distant cousins, the Hanoverians were her closest Protestant blood relatives.
than patrilineal succession of property; they also legitimize male homosocial bonds as generative relationships that are sanctioned by both divine and earthbound patriarchs. Through their employment of male homosocial bonds, *The Old English Baron, Tom Jones,* and *Robinson Crusoe* present male-male adoption and the legitimization of bastardy as viably generative in terms of phallocentric familial creation, thereby producing the ultimate patriarchal fantasy in which men can procreate and insure their own succession with minimal female participation.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* provides the theoretical lens that I will employ to investigate the way in which the patriarchal structures of *The Old English Baron, Tom Jones,* and *Robinson Crusoe* are not only legitimized, but also able to assure their own continuation. Sedgwick’s concept of “homosocial desire” and her chapter entitled “Gender Asymmetry and Erotic Triangles” will be invaluable to the understanding of the ways in which the patriarchal structure of these three novels is legitimized through male-created families. Sedgwick adapts René Girard’s concept of erotic triangles⁵, a concept which she claims “presents itself as one whose symmetry is undisturbed by […] differences of gender” (22). Sedgwick argues, however, that “in any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (including homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power: a relationship founded on an inherent and potentially active structural congruence” (25). The erotic triangles place characters on each of the three points of a triangle, in order to show the ways in which their

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⁵ Rene Girard’s erotic triangles that Sedgwick intends to alter comes from his book *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel,* which she claims “was itself something of a schematization of the fold-wisdom of erotic triangles” (Sedgwick, 21). His focus was, according to Sedgwick, on the “bonds of ‘rivalry’ and ‘love’” which “are equally powerful and in many cases equivalent” (Sedgwick, 21).
relationships are interconnected. In each of the three novels I will discuss, the relationships between the two male figures of the triangle are not only stronger than any relationship to the female. These male homosocial bonds can be more generative than male-female bonds and often have the potential to erase female involvement in the process of legitimization of male heirs and familial creation, both figuratively and literally.

Clara Reeve’s Gothic novel *The Old English Baron* is a work full of adoptions of men by men, both attempted and actualized, which serve to legitimize heirs, defeat usurpers, and remove female agency in terms of familial creation. Having created a reprisal of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, Reeve wrote in an “Address to the Reader” that she saw Walpole’s book as one that had merit, though it was full of defects, and claimed that a work could be done in “the same plan, wherein these defects might be avoided” (139). Her aim was to remove the heavy-handed supernatural “machinery [that] is so violent, that it destroys the effect it is intended to excite” (138). While Reeve was successful in that the supernatural is limited to a few appearances of a groaning ghost and bloody armor, perhaps her biggest change came in her “savvy reconstruction of the ‘prerogatives of masculine power’ that Walpole seeks to undermine” (Coykendall, 7). Despite the novel’s overt creation of a patriarchal structure that focuses on the importance of male power, and its promotion and validation of men, and its few female characters, who lack not only agency, but voice, Coykendall claims that “Reeve’s project continues to be construed as nonconformist, meritocratic, and feminist” (6). I would argue, in contrast, that instead of questioning the patriarchy’s use and misuse of power, or the ends to which it will go to ensure its continuation, Reeve champions men promoting
men, to the point of removing the female role of giving birth, paramount to the biological creation of families. From her depiction of Sir Philip Harclay’s repeated attempts to adopt Edmund for his own legitimate heir to her representation of Edmund’s gifting of sons to his male friends, Reeve does not question patriarchal power; rather she promotes and even strengthens it.

*The Old English Baron* focuses on a young man named Edmund Twyford, who works for Baron Fitz-Owen and his sons. Edmund has been educated very much along the same lines as the Baron’s sons, and is the favorite of William Fitz-Owen. Edmund is the true heir of the Lord Lovel, whose castle the Fitz-Owen family has taken over, and the novel follows Edmund’s journey to reclaim his family’s castle and take over his family title, Lord Lovel. His ascendance to his rightful place is made possible through his promotion by other men of power with whom he forms homosocial and familial bonds. Edmund’s relationships with the men of the novel secure not only his place, but also the continuation of his friends’ familial lines through homosocial forms of adoption. Reeve’s first presentation of adoption occurs when Sir Philip Harclay returns from mainland Europe and visits the castle of his deceased friend. There he meets Edmund and is taken with the boy who bears “a strong resemblance […] to a certain friend [he] once had” (15), the late Lord Lovel. Harclay asks Baron Fitz-Owen to give Edmund to him so that Harclay can “adopt him for my son, and introduce him into the world as my relation” (15). Harclay, an unmarried man with no blood relations to inherit his title, offers to take Edmund as his son and heir, thus cementing his own bloodline and raising the social status of the young man. Fitz-Owen agrees that Harclay can raise Edmund to a “higher station” than he can himself, but he is unwilling to “oblige [Edmund] to leave [his]
service against his inclination” (16). Indeed, Edmund is unwilling to leave the Fitz-Owen family; professing his “eternal gratitude” (16) to Harclay, he feels his “heart is unalterably attached to this house and family” (16). Through her depiction of this first unsuccessful attempt, Reeve sets up homosocial adoption as a viable vehicle through which the men of the novel can ensure the continuation of their “bloodlines” without fathering children.

Edmund’s initial rejection of Harclay’s offer does more than present the viability of adoption as a generative option; it also provides Edmund and Harclay with a homosocial bond that allows Edmund to rely on Harclay when he needs aid in putting forth his claim as the rightful heir of Lord Lovel. Although Edmund has learned the truth of his past through dreams and from the woman who raised him, Margery Twyford, Edmund is unable to claim his property alone. Edmund is in possession of the jewels that are both “proofs of his birth, and the death of his unfortunate mother” (75), but these proofs serve him only in the acceptance he receives from Sir Philip Harclay and his helpful friend Father Oswald; they are not enough for Edmund to safely come forth and proclaim himself. Harclay exclaims that Edmund is a “child of providence!” and that he “will be [Edmund’s] parent from henceforward, and thou shalt be indeed my child, my heir” (74-5). When they are not able to prove Edmund’s legitimacy through this second adoption, Harclay and Edmund enter into a phallocentric familial structure. Harclay introduces Edmund to his servant, John, as “[n]ot my natural son, but my relation; my son by adoption, my heir” (77). Through homosocial bonding Edmund has in effect become Harclay’s “son” and “heir,” showing that in this patriarchal society, the role of a woman in familial creation and the production of a legitimate heir is nearly invisible. The only
aid Edmund’s birth mother can give him in his self-authorization as Lord Lovel comes from the jewelry she had to die to leave behind. This jewelry, which was passed to Edmund by Margery Twyford, was removed from his mother’s agency, as it is legitimized by his adoptive mother. In turn, Twyford’s ability to place her ward in his proper place is nullified by Edmund’s need of Harclay’s paternal masculine aid to legitimize his claim.

Harclay’s adoption of Edmund serves to appropriate what little agency both women were given by Reeve to legitimate their son. When Harclay claims that “everything has befallen [Edmund] by [God’s] direction” and that he “shall be [God’s] instrument to […] restore the orphan of my friend to his rights and title” (76), he takes the actions of both women and places them under the power and direction of God, before he then appropriates the title of God’s “instrument” to restore Edmund to his rightful place. In Harclay’s exclamation that Edmund is a “child of providence” (74), suggesting divine help that brings Edmund to him with proof of his birth, Reeve echoes Daniel Defoe’s providential appearance of Friday as Robinson Crusoe’s “Servant” and “Companion” (Defoe, 217). Yet, in *The Old English Baron*, unlike *Robinson Crusoe*, whose employment of providence will be developed later, providence is not an active agent of familial creation, but rather a protective force that allowed Edmund to find his paternal, homosocial protector, Sir Philip Harclay. Harclay takes the homosocial bond between himself and Edmund seriously, pledging to “use all [his] power and interest to see [Edmund] restored to his fortune” (78). He then extends the homosocial bond between himself and Edmund to include his Greek companion Zadisky and their two servants. Harclay tells Edmund and Zadisky to embrace, and that they “must love each other for
my sake; hereafter you will do it for your own” (77), effectively showing that Edmund’s acceptance into Harclay’s family extends beyond a relationship between two men, and instead includes Harclay’s household within their homosocial family. Here Sedgwick’s notion of homosocial bonding is clear: Harclay and his household have accepted Edmund into their family, and seek to protect and promote him.

*The Old English Baron* ends in a heterosexual marriage between Edmund and Emma Fitz-Owen that allows the creation of a separate pair of families through male-male adoption that express with the utmost clarity the lack of female importance beyond the birthing process in the creation of legitimate heirs. The first of these two families is made up of Edmund and his wife Emma with Sir Philip Harclay, and the second again includes Edmund and Emma, this time with William Fitz-Owen, in what queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick discusses as an erotic triangulation of desire. In “Gender Asymmetry and Erotic Triangles,” the first chapter of *Between Men*, Sedgwick critiques the triangulation of desire as it was presented by Giraud for its symmetry. For Sedgwick, and in *The Old English Baron*, there is inherent asymmetry “in any male-dominated society” that is intent on “maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power” (Sedgwick, 25). The asymmetry of the triangles created in the relationships that Edmund and Emma form with Sir Philip Harclay and William Fitz-Owen is blatant. While Emma is an inextricable part of the births of the children that Harclay and William adopt, the only mention of her existence in terms of children comes when “within a year from his marriage she brought him a son and heir” (134). Not only is Emma subtracted from the equation when she provides “him” with an heir, she is also removed from Edmund’s marriage, which Reeve calls “his” marriage. With this first birth, Reeve proves the
asymmetry of the triangulation of desire that Sedgwick claims must exist in patriarchal systems (Sedgwick, 25).

The gender asymmetry in the creation of their own nuclear family that designates Emma’s role as marginal is only exacerbated in the creation of the families with Sir Philip Harclay and William Fitz-Owen; in fact, Edmund’s own fathering of children seems insubstantial, as we are told “the year following was born a second son, who was called Philip Harclay” (134), this second son is given to Philip Harclay, who takes “the name and arms of that family” (134). Reeve thus removes both biological parents from the narrative of this birth, and then solidifies the fact that the child will not be theirs, but rather the son and heir of the man whose name he shares, Harclay. The legitimization of this adoption is gained “by the king’s permission” (134), so that the ultimate earthly patriarch allows the continuation of the “bloodline” of Philip Harclay through the adoption of what is essentially his non-biological grandson. Earlier in the novel, Harclay has pledged to make Edmund his “son” and “heir” (74-5). Now it is the biological son of Harclay’s adopted heir who will inherit Harclay’s land. When the next son of Edmund and Emma is born, Reeve goes a step farther: “The third son was called William; he inherited the fortune of his uncle of that name; who adopted him” (134). We thus learn that the third child is adopted by William Fitz-Owen, Edmund’s favorite brother-figure throughout the novel. Once he took over as Lord Lovel, “Edmund besought his beloved William not to leave him” (133). This second adoption differs from the first in that the child is not said merely to be born, he is named William. He is therefore the son of William Fitz-Owen brought into existence by his sister Emma and her husband Edmund, his former servant and confidant. But this child is clearly meant for William; there is no
need of the assent from the King that was given to Sir Philip Harclay’s heir. William simply “inherited the fortune of his uncle of that name” (134). This child is thus legitimized through the triangulation of bonds that his uncle, father, and mother share. Sedgwick’s erotic triangles take on two possible meanings here: either the child is presented as a legitimate heir through the blood relation between Emma and her brother William, or he is made legitimate through the relationship between Edmund and William. The relationship between William and Emma would be unlikely to legitimize the child, because a connection through a female as the sole tie to solidify legitimacy is unrealistic in terms of the precedents set throughout the novel. Instead, then, young William must be made a legitimate heir through the relationship between his father and his uncle; he is, in effect their son. Not only is his blood the same mixture as it would be if Edmund and William could have a biological child of their own, but Edmund’s son by blood becomes William’s son by legal right. In this way the men who have been emotionally tied throughout the novel come to share the same offspring.

Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* is not unique in its exploration of the self-promotion and solidification of patriarchal power through homosocial bonding in the eighteenth-century novel. On the contrary, legitimacy and social hierarchy were frequently explored by writers of fiction. Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* is one of the novels that, as Reeve’s would later, explored inheritance and the creation of legitimacy between male characters with minimal focus on the female role in the continuation of bloodline. Fielding’s work departs from his contemporaries on the subject because *Tom Jones* seeks to legitimize a bastard, the title character. Tom Jones’ bastardy holds him back from inheriting his adoptive father’s land and fortune and from marrying his love, Sophia
Western. The combination of these impediments to his happiness, in combination with his often misunderstood actions, sends Tom on a journey that initially further complicates his life and ends by revealing his parentage and legitimacy. Tom Jones’ legitimacy comes through not only his own homosocial bond with his adoptive father Mr. Allworthy, but also through the alignment of Mr. Allworthy and Squire Western, who both legitimize Tom and tie their estates together simultaneously.

Unlike Edmund in *The Old English Baron*, the leading character seeking legitimacy in *Tom Jones* is presented to both the reader and his future redeemer in his infancy. Mr. Allworthy returns to his home after a three-month stay in London to find “an infant, wrapped up in some course linen, in a sweet and profound sleep, between his sheets” (34). From the beginning of the novel, the women in Mr. Allworthy’s life, both his sister Miss Bridget and servant Mrs. Deborah, express distaste for the child due to his bastardy. Mrs. Deborah says “it goes against [her] to touch these misbegotten wretches”; indeed, she does not even believe they are “her fellow-creatures” (35). Mr. Allworthy feels differently; he believes the child’s mother “hath only taken this method to provide for her child; and truly I am glad she hath not done worse” (34). In placing her child within the home of Mr. Allworthy, he believes she has done what she can to provide a better life for the child. He hints at “worse” that could have been done to the child, most likely a reference to infanticide. Mrs. Deborah’s reservations give way to Mr. Allworthy’s demands and she leaves with the child, “declaring it a sweet little infant”

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6 A relatively common practice in history, there as a movement to prevent women from leaving infants to die after birth, for fear of losing jobs or social standing. Often the economic burden of children was impossible to maintain for poorer people. The London Foundling Hospital was one of the institutions that attempted to take in unwanted infants. One rule was that children were given a new name upon their entrance into the hospital. Fielding was a supporter of this hospital, one of the common male names used was Thomas. Zunshine, Lisa. *Bastards and Foundlings: Illegitimacy in Eighteenth-Century England*. OSU Press. Columbus: 2005. Pp. 98-9. Print.
From the beginning of Tom Jones’ arrival at the house, Mr. Allworthy feels connected to the child. This connection grows into a paternal-filial bond that protects Tom from the exclusion he would have faced without the patriarch’s blessing. Although Mr. Allworthy “had given his own name of Thomas” (67) to the child he found in his bed, he is nonetheless pleased when his sister Miss Bridget becomes Mrs. Blifil and bears him an “heir” who “did not alienate his affections from the little foundling; to whom he had been godfather” (67). Because Mr. Allworthy has no children of his own, his sister’s son becomes his heir. Here Fielding departs from the normative patrilineal line of inheritance, as did *The Old English Baron*, at least early on.

Fielding seems initially to hold onto this matrilineal line of inheritance, having young Blifil serve as as Mr. Allworthy’s heir for the majority of *Tom Jones*. The turning point comes when the true parentage of Tom is finally revealed by Mrs. Waters, once called Jenny Jones and Tom Jones’ mother by confession. She reveals to Mr. Allworthy that his “‘sister was the mother of that child you found between your sheets’” (832) and that Tom’s father was a man named “Summer,” the son of a clergyman whom Mr. Allworthy had put through school and who “after living a whole year in [Mr. Allworthy’s] house as if he were [his] own son” died of small pox. Mr. Allworthy says he would “willingly have consented to such a match” (833) had he known of the lovers’ relationship. Mr. Allworthy soon hears of his sister’s recent death and that her last words were “Tell my brother Mr Jones is his nephew. –He is my son” (840). When Mr. Allworthy learns that his heir Blifil has kept a letter sent to him a secret, as well as paid lawyers to aid in a murder case against Tom, Blifil is replaced as Allworthy’s heir-apparent by Tom.
Mr. Allworthy’s acceptance of Tom seems at first to uphold the matrilineal succession predicated by Miss Bridget’s legitimate son Blifil, yet Tom’s circumstances are initially not much changed. His rank via his parents has greatly increased, from the son of a schoolmaster and a poor woman, to the son of a gentleman and Mr. Allworthy’s sister, but the fact remains that Tom Jones is still a bastard and Blifil is not. This is significant because, despite Tom’s increased status through his parents and their social status, Blifil’s legitimate birth ensures his primacy in terms of inheritance. While in the cases of bastards born of parents who “both belonged to nobility, their illegitimate offspring could marry well” (Zunshine, 3), Tom stands no chance of inheriting or marrying ahead of Blifil unless Mr. Allworthy chooses to disinherit Blifil. Fielding does seem concerned with the question of the legitimacy of bastard by inheritance when he includes much mention of the Monmouth Rebellion through Tom Jones. Tom, however, succeeds where the Duke of Monmouth failed, because he is accepted by the dominant figure of patriarchal power in the novel, Mr. Allworthy. Where Edmund of The Old English Baron finds legitimacy through his blood son, which incites the creation of phallocentric familial bonds, Tom Jones does not find legitimacy through these things alone.

Mr. Allworthy does not accept Tom Jones as his heir until he has proven himself worthy through his actions. Because of their estrangement, Mr. Allworthy learns of Tom’s good deeds through other characters upon his arrival in London. One deed that Mr. Allworthy learns of is Tom’s role in aiding Nancy Miller, the daughter of the young

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7 The Monmouth Rebellion of 1685 was an attempt to remove James II the Catholic successor to Charles II. James Scott, the first Duke of Monmouth was James II’s eldest, favorite and illegitimate son. He was Protestant, like his father and had some support in his attempt to take the throne. He was executed for treason after his defeat in 1685.
man’s landlady, to preserve her honor by engaging her to his friend, Nightingale. Although Nightingale has impregnated Nancy and the young couple professes to love one another, Nightingale refuses to marry her because his father would not approve. Tom prevails on his friend to marry Nancy in order to “raise [the family] from the brink of misery and despair to the highest pitch of human happiness,” not failing to remind Nightingale that it is his “duty to do so” because “the misery from which [he] will relieve these poor people is the misery which [he himself has] willfully brought upon them” (674). Despite Tom’s own somewhat lascivious past, he feels the need to do whatever he can to promote a match between the young lovers and save the honor of both Nancy and her mother, Mrs. Miller. Nightingale confesses to Tom that if only his father would “be induced to comply with [his] desires, nothing would be wanting to complete [his] own happiness or that of [his] Nancy” (674). Jones tells Nightingale he is “resolved to” (674) gain the assent of Mr. Nightingale. Although initially unsuccessful with Mr. Nightingale, Jones gains the help of his friend’s uncle, who also changes his mind regarding marriage between young Nightingale and Nancy Miller. However, Tom makes an impact on Nightingale, who escapes his uncle and returns to Mrs. Miller’s house, and the next morning “Miss Nancy was […] made an honest woman” (716). In this episode Jones is the instigator in the creation of a phallocentric family. When Tom chooses to aid Nightengale, he is exhibiting one of Sedgwick’s main components of homosocial bonding by promoting the interest of another man. Sedgwick believes that the continuation of patriarchy is achieved when men promote the interests of other men, thus solidifying their power and increasing the strength of their homosocial bonds (3). It is through his homosocial bond with Nightingale, and his discussions with his friends, Old
Nightingale and Nightingale’s uncle, that Jones is able to engineer familial creation, a
family that the Miller women must agree to in order to maintain their honor. Through his
effort to aid her family and the devotion he showed to preserving Miss Nancy’s honor,
Jones gains a loyal proponent of his character in Mrs. Miller.

Mrs. Miller’s gratitude, as well as her adamant belief in the goodness of his
caracter, is one of the factors that serves to reassert the worth of Jones to Mr. Allworthy.
Tom’s protection of her daughter’s honor causes a drastic change in Mrs. Miller. When
she tells Tom her story, she asks that he not interact with “wicked women” (664). She
asks this because of his connection to Mr. Allworthy and her debt to him. After her
husband’s death, “the blessed Mr Allworthy […] placed [her] in the house” she now runs
and “gave [her] a large sum of money to furnish it, and settled an annuity of £50 a year
on me” (664) that Mr. Allworthy has never neglected to send her. Despite the debt she
feels she owes Mr. Allworthy, she is unable to contain her vehemence against any slander
to the name of Tom Jones. When the dishonest Blifil says that Jones has “proved one of
the greatest villains upon earth” (774), Mrs. Miller exclaims that “Mr. Jones is no villain.
He is one of the worthiest creatures breathing” and claims that had it been anyone but
someone Mr. Allworthy is related to who “called him a villain, [she] would have thrown
all this boiling water in his face” (774). Mr. Allworthy’s surprise at her vehemence
includes the fact that he is unaware Mrs. Miller is acquainted with Tom; when she hears
this, she replies that not only does she know Tom, but that she “should be the most
ungrateful of all wretches if [she] denied it,” for he has “preserved [her and her] little
family” (774). Mrs. Miller later tells Mr. Allworthy the story behind her family being
saved, which is corroborated by Nightingale, who adds his own understanding of Tom’s
character in relation to Mr. Allworthy by saying that Tom “had sworn he would rather die a thousand deaths than he would have his conscience upbraid him with one disrespectful, ungrateful, or undutiful thought towards” Mr. Allworthy” (816). Both Mrs. Miller and Nightingale attempt to sway Mr. Allworthy’s opinions of Tom back to the loving father figure he had become to his adopted son, and while they seem to soften him, Mr. Allworthy receives a letter that serves to ingratiate Tom back to his good graces.

The most important report pertaining to the character of Tom Jones that Mr. Allworthy receives comes in the form of a letter from Mr. Square. The letter addresses the incident that led to Tom Jones being cast out of Mr. Allworthy’s home. Mr. Allworthy was very ill, and when they learned he was not going to die, Jones was ecstatic and celebrated with so “many bumpers to the doctor’s health” that he became “literally drunk” (218). After a drunken fight with Blifil, followed by another sober one, Jones was eventually turned out of the house by Mr. Allworthy, who was convinced by Thwackum and Square that Jones had gotten drunk in celebration of the impending death of Mr. Allworthy, which would have made him a rich man. When Mr. Allworthy is in London he receives a letter from Square, who is dying. Square tells Mr. Allworthy that he has “been guilty” of injustice “to that poor wretch your adopted son” (819). Square dispels the earlier claims about Jones, saying that while Mr. Allworthy “lay upon [his] supposed death bed, [Jones] was the only person in the house who testified any real concern” and that his drunkenness “afterwards arose from the wildness of his joy” (819) when Mr. Allworthy was declared healthy. By coming clean and attempting to absolve Tom Jones’s name, Square hopes that his letter will help restore Jones to Mr. Allworthy’s favor (820). Almost directly following this, Allworthy learns that his nephew Blifil is involved in
schemes not only to hide the truth about Jones’s mother, but also to aid in the murder case against Jones. Thus Mr. Allworthy accepts Jones back as his adopted son and heir after the testimonies he hears of Tom’s worthiness. For Tom Jones, his own good deeds, his mother’s identity and Blifil’s poor character combine to make him a worthy heir, whom Mr. Allworthy is finally able to accept.

Once Mr. Allworthy has made it clear that he has accepted Tom as his heir, other patriarchal figures legitimize Tom as well. Mr. Western, though always strongly against Tom’s love for Sophia, begs forgiveness from Tom as he “took [Tom] for another person” (853). Western here implies that Tom’s change in birth has made a change in his person, though as we know Tom remains an illegitimate child in terms of birth. What has changed is not Tom’s essential nature, but rather his acceptance by these patriarchal figures as a legitimate heir. Western even offers to “carry [Tom] to his mistress” (853), the same daughter he obstinately refused to marry to Tom for the majority of the novel. In *Bastards and Foundlings*, Lisa Zunshine claims that because “Tom’s father was a gentleman […] upon marrying Sophia, [he] will be in possession of two great estates” (99). However, as we have seen, Tom’s bastard identity has not been changed because his father was a “gentleman.” What changed instead was his acknowledgement by Mister Allworthy, and thereby by Mr. Western. While both men seem to promote Tom’s legitimacy and grant his wishes to wed Sophia, the two men are also able to fulfill a desire they have held since early in the novel: to unite their houses, originally through the proposed marriage of young Blifil and Sophia. At Mr. Western’s suggestion, Mr. Allworthy had previously “sincerely hoped” (243) for a union between their estates through the marriage of Blifil and Sophia. When Mr. Allworthy learned of Sophia’s
refusals to wed Blifil, he refused to allow her to be forced into marriage, though he did allow Blifil to attempt to sway Sophia. Once Tom is legitimized by both Mr. Allworthy and Mr. Western, however, the desired economic and familial union between their estates is finally actualized. The two men form a homosocial bond in which they both desire a union between their estates and achieve it through their joint acceptance of the bastard Tom Jones as a viable heir.

The creation of families through homosocial bonds is most clearly visible in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. Not only is the patriarchal fallacy of familial creation without women most evident in this novel, the phallocentric creation of family is also at its most extreme. Defoe’s novel details the adventures of an Englishman, the title character Robinson Crusoe, who is the lone survivor of a shipwreck. Crusoe is stranded for more than twenty years before he realizes that his island is used for the sacrifice, and cannibalization, of prisoners by the “savage” tribes who inhabit surrounding islands. It is through his rescue of one of these so-called “savages” that Crusoe forges not only a family, but also an exclusively male and homosocial society. When Robinson Crusoe notices that one of the prisoners has made an escape and is being chased, he says “it came now very warmly upon my Thoughts, and indeed irresistibly, that now was my Time to get me a Servant, and perhaps a Companion, or Assistant; and that I was call’d plainly by Providence to save this poor Creature’s Life” (217). Crusoe sees Friday as a potential “Servant,” which implies that Friday will labor for him, but Friday also has potential to be more. Crusoe also believes Friday could be an “Assistant”, which implies more cooperation than would slavery, or even the status of “Companion.” As Crusoe’s companion, Friday can potentially ease his loneliness and allow him to begin recreating
the society he lost in Europe. As the novel progresses, Friday shows himself to be a worthy “Companion,” and as he becomes more “westernized” by Crusoe’s teachings, Friday moves from being a “Servant” to an “Assistant.” Although Crusoe’s desire for both a laborer and a companion is evident in these first thoughts he has about the man he will later name “Friday,” there is another important presence in this passage: Providence. Crusoe believes that God has shown him this “Savage” and has determined that he should be saved so that Crusoe can obtain “a Servant” or “a Companion.” In the works of Fielding and Reeve, the bonds between men that create and legitimize families are formed by human patriarchs like Edmund and Mr. Allworthy; Defoe’s novel takes the patriarchal fantasy further than both, as the creation of a homosocial family between Crusoe and “the Savage” is instigated by the ultimate patriarchal figure, God.

Crusoe’s integration of Friday into his family begins almost immediately after he prevents Friday from being cannibalized. As soon as he is liberated, Friday places Crusoe’s foot upon his head in an action that “seems [to be] in token of swearing to be my Slave for ever” (218). After Crusoe accepts him, they find that one of the cannibals is alive. Crusoe says that “upon this my Savage, for so I call him now” (218) borrows his sword to behead the former captor. In one paragraph, Crusoe has gone from being called by Providence to save “the Savage,” to being in possession of him, as “my Savage.” Crusoe further takes possession of “the Savage” as he begins to teach him to speak: “I made him know his Name should be Friday, which was the Day I sav’d his Life; I call’d him so for the Memory of the Time; I likewise taught him to say Master, and then let him

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8 The Oxford English Dictionary online defines Providence as “God or nature as providing protective or spiritual care”. It is important to note that capitalization of Providence in the eighteenth century may have been less normalized than it is today. In which case, the word could also be “providence” which is defined along the same lines as “the protective care of God or of nature as a spiritual power” by the same source.
know, that was to be my Name” (220). Crusoe teaches Friday his place in their relationship, which reads as a typical master-slave dynamic in its early stages; however, as the story progresses their relationship is shown, often through Crusoe’s own words, to become familial. Crusoe creates barriers between himself and Friday so that he can “be perfectly easy” in his sleep, including “a kind of Trap-door” that if opened “would have fallen down, and made a great noise” (222), Crusoe even brings all of his weapons “in to [his] Side every Night” (222). He takes many precautions in securing his safety at night because at first he does not trust Friday. But Crusoe tells the reader that he ultimately “needed none of all this Precaution; for never Man had a more faithful, loving, sincere Servant than Friday was to me” (222). Beyond being a loving servant, Friday’s “very Affections were ty’d to me, like those of a Child to a Father; [...] he would have sacrific’d his Life for the saving mine” (222). This passage begins to complicate the master-servant relationship he has claimed between the two men by showing that Friday sees Crusoe as a paternal figure.

As Crusoe and Friday grow closer, Crusoe discovers that he harbors some mistrust of his man, believing Friday may desire to return to his people. Crusoe says that Friday’s “Eyes sparkled” and he showed a “strange Eagerness” (235) at the discussion of being able to “see [his] Country, there [his] Nation” (235). In witnessing Friday’s eagerness Crusoe finds himself afraid that Friday will go back to his people and “not only forget all his Religion, but all his Obligation to” Crusoe and even “come back […] with a hundred or two of them, and make a Feast upon” (235) Crusoe himself. While Crusoe worries, he begins to be more careful around Friday, asking him questions. Eventually Crusoe asks Friday if he would like to go back to his people, and when Friday admits his
desire to do so, Crusoe asks if he would “turn Wild again, eat Mens Flesh again, and be a Savage as [he] was before” (236). Friday says he would not, but rather would teach his people to be good like him and make them love Crusoe for saving Friday. Friday goes on to tell Crusoe “he would go, if I would go with him” (236). Crusoe even goes so far as to tell Friday he should make a boat and “go home in it” (237), assuming that Friday would rather leave. But Friday’s response is not what Crusoe expects. He tells Crusoe to “kill Friday, no send Friday away,” words that Friday “spoke so earnestly, [with] Tears […] in his eyes” (238). Crusoe says at that moment he “plainly discovered [that Friday had] the utmost Affection in him to [Crusoe],” which causes Crusoe to promise he “would never send him away […] if he was willing to stay” (238). This exchange makes Crusoe realize the strength of his familial bond with Friday. This bond also complicates the servant-master relationship Crusoe initially intended to form with Friday. Instead of owning Friday, Crusoe now states that Friday will be his companion as long as he “[is] willing to stay.” Crusoe’s decision to make Friday’s freedom contingent on his own will implies that regardless of the way their relationship formed, their familial bond has become one of a choice between two men.

The homosocial/familial relationship formed by Crusoe and Friday is strengthened most crucially, as it was initiated, through their relationship to God. Crusoe instructs Friday in the “Christian Doctrine” (232), and admits that while he taught, “I really inform’d and instructed my self in many Thin gs” (232). Friday’s education not only brings him knowledge of the Christian faith, but it also changes the way Crusoe thinks about, and understands his own faith. Through Crusoe’s thankfulness for his greater understanding of his own faith, he feels that “whether this poor wild Wretch was
the better for [him], or no, [Crusoe] had great Reason to be thankful that [Friday] came to
[him]” (232). This reason for Crusoe’s gratitude is his ability to share his religion and his relationship to God with Friday. It is this religious conversation that Crusoe says “made the three Years which we liv’d there together perfectly and compleatly happy, if any such Thing as compleat Happiness can be form’d in a sublunary State” (233). Crusoe believes that the happiness he has found through God and Friday on his island is as complete as he could feel, outside of Heaven. The familial bond between Crusoe and Friday, purportedly initiated by Providence, is strengthened and turned into “compleat Happiness” through their shared relationship with God. Thus Crusoe believes that the familial bond between himself and Friday is created and legitimized again here, through the patriarchal figure of God. This is a patriarchal fantasy of quite literally divine proportions; Crusoe and Friday’s familial bond is sanctioned by God with a complete absence of female involvement, thus providing a phallocentric model of familial creation even less reliant upon women than the Virgin birth of Jesus.

The divinely sanctioned familial bond between Crusoe and Friday is tested by the arrival of Friday’s father, and proves to be strong enough to supercede biological family ties. When a group of cannibals appears on Crusoe’s island, he decides that he and Friday must rescue their captives, one of whom they perceive to be European. After the battle resulting in the freedom of one Spaniard and one savage, Crusoe reports the cannibals numbered “21 in all” (246). When Crusoe frees the tied “Savage” and asks Friday to speak to him, he sees that Friday “kiss’d him,” “cry’d,” “danc’d, sung” (247), and that when Friday “came a little to himself, he told [Crusoe], that it was his Father” (247). Crusoe is moved by Friday’s reaction to his father’s deliverance, shown through the care
he gives him and the “extasy and filial Affection” (247) that he displays. With the Spaniard and Friday’s father added to his island, Crusoe hears of “fourteen [Spaniards] still alive” (254) on the island that he lived on with Friday’s father before they were captured by cannibals. Crusoe decides to “send the old Savage and th[e] Spaniard over to them” (253) to ask them to join in an attempt to reach Europe. After ensuring they had the supplies to handle fourteen new people, Crusoe sends “the Spaniard, and the old Savage the Father of Friday” (256) to meet with the Spaniards and bring them back. However, when the opportunity arises to capture and restore order on a British ship, Crusoe and Friday leave the Island “eight and twenty Years, two Months, and 19 days” (280) after Crusoe was stranded upon it. Crusoe relays to the English sailors left on the island “the story […] of the sixteen Spaniards that were to be expected” (279) to return. Yet there is no mention of Friday’s father, by either Crusoe or Friday. Once he leaves the island, Friday’s father seems to lose all connection to Friday, who instead of remaining to wait on his father’s return, followed Crusoe “very honestly in all” of his travels, “proving a most faithful Servant upon all Occasions” (282). Despite their familial bond, Crusoe maintains the hierarchy between himself and Friday as he no longer refers to Friday as his companion. Although Crusoe and Friday’s patrilineal family is created outside of either man’s original society, it is able to exist beyond their isolated community due to its creation based on their divinely sanctioned homosocial bond.

Through their portrayal of male self-promotion, the novels of Reeve, Fielding, and Defoe present what seems to be a conservative stance on the maintenance of social hierarchy and patriarchal power. Homosocial bonds through which men promote the interests of men are what Sedgwick claims to be irremovable from heteronormative
patriarchal societies such as those presented in *The Old English Baron, Tom Jones,* and *Robinson Crusoe.* Regardless of their conservative intentions, each of the novels has an underlying queer theme of male-male primary affiliation, through which patriarchal structure is maintained. *The Old English Baron* downplays female involvement in the generation of family through male adoption of males, culminating in what can be read as the symbolic birth of an heir by two men who are connected through familial or homosocial bonds. In *Tom Jones,* the acceptance of his sister’s illegitimate son by Mr. Allworthy allows Tom Jones to transcend his bastardy and become a viable heir in patriarchal succession. In *Robinson Crusoe,* Friday and Crusoe’s familial bond is legitimized by the patriarchal figure of God through what Crusoe believes is Providence, and is completely devoid of female involvement. The subversive familial creations of all three novels lends itself to study through a queer theory lens due to their breakdown of heteronormative family structure and because of their subtraction of the female role in reproduction and the nurturing of children. While the female role in familial creation is often trivialized in patriarchal society, as patrilineal succession produces legitimacy, women are generally understood to be biologically necessary to produce offspring. In each of these novels, however, patriarchal structure insures its future through the dissolution of heteronormative families, in effect using subversive themes to enact a conservative reaffirmation of patriarchal power.
Conclusion

It is true that the study of queer sexuality is often minoritized in eighteenth-century studies, but the idea that the prevalence of heteronormative readings has the potential to distort the field implies that there is a boundary between heteronormative and queer readings that cannot be breached. This view limits the applicability of queer theory and ensures the continuation of queer sexualities as a “minoritized subfield” of eighteenth-century studies. The goal of this project is to show that examining eighteenth-century texts from a queer theoretical lens does not necessitate a rejection or subversion of a heteronormative plot, thereby broadening the applicability of queer theory in the aim of bringing it out of the margins of eighteenth-century studies. By foregrounding texts that can be read through a queer lens without distorting their conservative messages, a space opens for queer theory to operate within the dominant, heteronormative ideology upon which the society of eighteenth-century Britain operated. This is important when examining the eighteenth century because, despite the rising visibility of sexual minorities throughout the century, there was an inherent conservatism in many aspects of the literature, society, and culture that renders wholly subversive queer readings incomplete. This idea is posited by Lanser as well; as she wants to examine the ways that queer theory “also operates in the very midst of ordinary heteronormative structures and spaces” (277). This is how the field of queer theory can provide itself room to grow. As Lanser claims,

[b]y integrating non-heteronormative material into heteronormative history, each of these projects helps not only to restore an eighteenth century that is queerer that scholarship has been inclined to allow, but also
to recognize that the boundaries of heteronormativity itself cannot be understood apart from the resistant and divergent practices that lie both within and beyond it (287)

Lanser’s assertion that there is much work left to do in the project of exposing queer spaces in heteronormative structures expresses the necessity of broadening the use of queer theory. What Lanser does not discuss is that queer readings do not necessarily expose resistance to heteronormativity, but instead queer moments within texts like the ones in this project can be read as supportive of a heteronormative methodology.

The prevalence of queer themes in conservative texts, including the plethora not included in my investigation, shows that not only were there visible queer subcultures in eighteenth-century British society, but that they were significant enough to warrant appropriation into conservatively themed texts. They were not only appropriated in terms of vilification and reaffirmation of patriarchal normativity—like Mary Hamilton in *The Female Husband*—but also as agents of the patriarchal apparatus. These queer familial creations and lesbian initiations to sex show that the role of queer sexualities in the eighteenth century was more influential on heteronormative culture than originally believed. The multitude of representations of aberrant sexualities in some of the most patriarchally conservative texts of the period suggests that queer subcultures of the eighteenth century were more identifiable than early historians of sexuality believed. Not only were these subcultures identifiable and potentially threatening to patriarchal supremacy, but also their cultural influence was significant enough to warrant a level of literary legitimization through their employment as tools to reinforce the conservative structure within these novels.
References


Curriculum Vitae
fordwn11@wfu.edu

School
5195 Winster Drive Apt 002
Winston-Salem, NC 27106
22901
(434) 825-0843

Permanent
610 Wilder Drive,
Charlottesville, VA
(434) 293-0772

EDUCATION

Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem, NC
Fall 2011-Present
Program: English Masters
Honors and Awards
Awarded Summer Research Grant: Summer 2012
Selected to Attend Medieval Studies Congress in Kalamazoo: May 2012
Presenter at 2nd Annual Student Research Symposium on Gender and Sexuality at
Wake Forest University: March 4, 2013.

James Madison University
Harrisonburg, VA
Fall 2008-Spring 20011
Major: English
Minor: Spanish
Honors and Awards
President’s List: Summer 2009
Dean’s List: Fall 2008, Fall 2009, Fall 2010
Golden Key Honor Society: JMU Chapter 2008-present
National Society of Collegiate Scholars: 2008-present

Instituto Sampere
Madrid, Spain
May 2010

University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI
2003-2004, Spring
2006
Major: English in Residential College

WORK EXPERIENCE

The Miller Center, Wake Forest: Athlete Tutoring
January 2012-May 2013
English and Spanish Tutor

The Medieval Studies Student Assistant: Wake Forest
August 2012-May 2013
Purchasing food and wine for events, set up
And break down of events. Proctoring exams

Research Assistant: Dr. Jessica Richard  
Awarded research grant in order to aid Dr. Richard’s work on the website eighteenth-Century Common. 

The Shebeen Pub and Braai  
2012  
Waiter, Trainer

The Boar’s Head Inn  
2008  
Waiter, Bartender, Trainer

Northern Exposure  
Waiter, Scheduler

The Colonnade Club  
2004  
Night Security
Coordinated guests and caterers

University of Virginia Law Library  
Shelving, loose-leafing
Interlibrary Loan copying

Clarinet Tutor  
2001-2002

Oldfield’s Nursery  
Nursery (plants) Assistant

Volunteering and Organizations

Madison Equality 2009 On-campus LGBTQIA group at James Madison University

Volunteered for campus play “49”  
Spring 2009
Play about Native Americans’ struggle to retain tradition in modern world
In charge of advertisement
Ran box office during show
LGBT Commission 2003-2004

University of Michigan on-campus group
Organized National Coming Out Week 2009
Led East Quadrangle discussion group 2004, including campus-wide dorm screening of The Laramie Project
Spoke on diversity panel as representative of LGBT Commission in spring of 2004

Music in Nursing Homes
Fall 2003, Christmas 2003 with trio from University of Michigan Chamber Music class
Christmas 2002, Played clarinet in nursing homes with Park Street Christian Church

AWARDS

Member of Virginia All State Band (Clarinet) 2002-2003
Winner of Martha Dugan Concerto Competition, Fall 2002
Awarded International Rank of Black Belt 1st Dan in the Art of Jidokwan Taekwondo
April 28, 2002