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The Jew's penis: circumcision and sexual pathology in eighteenth-century England

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ABSTRACT

This essay explores the contradictory, prejudicial attitudes towards circumcision and Jewish male sexuality circulating in eighteenth-century English print culture. I argue that while Jewish men had long been accused of lustfulness, effeminacy and sexual deviance, eighteenth-century culture added to these concerns a unique interest in sexual pathology, borne in part from the growing medical anxiety around venereal disease. Consequently, while Jewish men were still widely condemned for their lechery, they were also increasingly ridiculed for a range of penile and sexual disorders that were believed to make sex unsatisfying, difficult or even impossible—most notably impotence, a condition often associated with venereal disease. I link these paradoxical eighteenth-century characterisations of Jewish male sexuality with a similarly paradoxical understanding of circumcision as a procedure that could prevent, but also cause, various penile or sexual disorders. I conclude that these prejudices not only constitute an example of what Sander Gilman has identified as the 'bipolar' nature of anti-Semitism; they also indicate a darker trend towards the pathologising of the Jewish body.

William Hogarth's best known work, *A Harlot's Progress* (1732), tells the story of a beautiful young woman named Moll Hackabout who arrives in London, fresh off the Yorkshire stagecoach, and is immediately lured into a life of prostitution.[1] The six images in this series chart Moll's grim and seemingly inexorable descent into a life of vice and brutality, with the final plate depicting her tragic death from venereal disease. In the second plate of the series, Moll is shown enjoying the relatively prosperous position of a kept mistress—but the household in which she works, and the trappings of that household, obliquely foreshadow her subsequent descent into disease and corruption, because the man who has taken her into keeping is a Jew (figure 1).

The keeper's Jewish identity is established in part on the basis of his surroundings: his lavish apartment boasts two large paintings of Old Testament scenes, and his household includes a mistress, a fashionable black servant boy and a pet monkey—the latter possibly an oblique reference to the anti-Semitic trope of comparing aspirational Jews with monkeys attempting to 'ape' their Christian social superiors (Gallagher 2019, 163). The other major indicator of the merchant's Jewish identity is his physical appearance: although his hair is concealed beneath a powdered wig, he sports the same bushy black eyebrows and exaggerated nose used in hundreds of other seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century anti-Jewish satires.

While many critics have remarked on the keeper's 'Semitic' facial features, I want to suggest that there is another part of the merchant's body that identifies him as Jewish, a part with far greater significance in relation to the *Progress*' larger themes of sexual disease and bodily corruption: the Jew's penis. While Moll and the merchant sit at their tea, a maidservant is hastily ushering another man out the door behind them. This second man's state of undress—his belt hangs at his waist and his sword is unsheathed—parallels Moll's partially exposed breast, and confirms his identity as Moll's lover. Sneaking out behind the merchant's back, he is unable to resist a final gesture of ridicule at his rival's expense: with his free hand, he holds up his thumb and forefinger, as though indicating a length of two or three inches. For many, perhaps most, of Hogarth's viewers, this gesture would have been instantly recognisable as a sexual slur: Moll's lover is ridiculing the diminutive size of the merchant's penis. (The same gesture also appears in other eighteenth-century satires on penis size, including, for example, a 1742 caricature of Colley Cibber ridiculing Alexander Pope's 'little tiny-Manhood' (figure 2)).[2]

Hogarth was by no means unusual in identifying diminutive genitalia as a marker of Jewish identity, nor was he unique in associating the Jewish penis with sexual inadequacy, dysfunction and disease. Indeed, I want to suggest that plate 2 of *A Harlot's Progress* constitutes just one example of a much larger discussion—one that began in the late seventeenth century and continued during the eighteenth and beyond—concerning the size, potency and health of Jewish men's penises. While Tim Hitchcock has argued persuasively that this period witnessed the development of an 'obsession with the penis' and 'an assumption that there was only one thing to do with it', eighteenth-century English culture's particular fixation on the *Jewish* penis also exemplified a much darker trend: a trend towards conceptualising Jewish men's bodies as dysfunctional, deformed or disease-prone (Hitchcock 1996, 79; see also Hitchcock 2012). Although physiological anti-Semitism of this kind is usually associated with the nineteenth century, works like Hogarth's demonstrate that such ideas were developing long before the advent of scientific racism (see Gilman 1991, 109–27).

Anti-Jewish discourse throughout the early modern period accused Jews of lustfulness, effeminacy and sexual deviance, and persistent myths that Jewish men menstruated, for example, or that their

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Figure 1 William Hogarth, *A Harlot's Progress*, Plate 2. Reproduced courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

skin emitted a repulsive smell, helped to establish the notion that Jews might be *physiologically,* and not just culturally, different.[3] In the Restoration and eighteenth century, these ideas about Jewish difference intersected with wider cultural anxieties about sexual pathology, and particularly, about the spread of venereal disease. Accordingly, at the same time that Jews continued to be widely condemned for their lechery in eighteenth-century English print culture, they were also, paradoxically, ridiculed for a range of sexual disorders believed to make sex difficult, unsatisfying or impossible, including impotence (a condition often attributed to venereal disease or its treatment).[4]

These contradictory characterisations of Jewish sexuality constitute just one example of what Sander Gilman has identified as the 'bipolar' nature of anti-Semitism, with Jewish men simultaneously attacked for their love of 'whoring' and ridiculed for their inability to obtain sexual satisfaction (Gilman 1986, 4; see also Felsenstein 1995, 13–14). Yet this bipolar characterisation of Jewish men as both sexually aggressive and sexually dysfunctional also ran parallel to an equally paradoxical discourse around circumcision, a ritual that was understood as a prophylactic against, but also a potential cause of, various penile and sexual pathologies. Although most eighteenth-century accounts of Jewish male sexual behaviour do not explicitly describe the Jew's penis, the persistent recurrence of epithets like 'one of the circumcised', 'among the circumcised race' or 'a circumcised son of Eve' in scenarios of prostitution and illicit sex is indicative of a wider tendency to connect Jewish male sexuality with the physiology, and alleged pathology, of the circumcised penis. Ultimately, then, the interconnectedness of these two bipolar discourses—one around circumcision, and one around Jewish sexual misbehaviour—give the penis an important symbolic value in depictions of Jewish masculinity, enabling it to serve as both explanation and symbol for the various sexual and reproductive abnormalities attributed to male Jews.

CIRCUMCISION AND PENILE PATHOLOGY: DISEASE, DEFORMITY AND DYSFUNCTION

As Robert Darby has shown, circumcision was understood as a practice with serious implications for male sexual health, function

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Figure 2 *The poetical Tom-Titt Perch'd on the Mount of Love, being the representation of a merry description in Mr Cibber's letter to Mr Pope*. The Trustees of the British Museum. shared under a creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.

and ability (Darby 2005, 22–43). For many eighteenth-century English commentators, the removal of the foreskin symbolised not just God's covenant with his chosen people, but also mankind's willingness to abandon his selfish desires—including desires for sexual gratification. Both Daniel Defoe and George Berkeley, for example, echoed the Anglican divine Jeremy Taylor in claiming that circumcision was a mystical symbol of chastity—a reminder of the pledge to 'suppres[s] all irregular Desires in the Matter of carnal and sensual Pleasures' (Defoe 1727, 48; Berkeley 1714, 1:61; Taylor 1650, 80–81). Understood in this light, the removal of the foreskin was emblematic of a much broader 'circumcision of the heart' or 'circumcision of the spirit'—a cutting away of all those impulses that ran contrary to religious morality (Cheyn 1718, 86).

While such metaphorical interpretations of the ritual were commonplace, eighteenth-century commentators also believed circumcision served more practical purposes, acting not merely as a symbol of chastity, but as a concrete tool for enforcing it. According to one eighteenth-century theologian, the rite was introduced as a 'carnal [and] political ordinance, intended to deter the men from committing fornication, and other lewdness, after the manner of the heathen' (Four arguments 1780, 6; see also Stackhouse 1729, 341–43). Even the Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides—whose writings would have been familiar to some eighteenth-century readers from a jocular reference in Laurence Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy*—believed that circumcision was designed 'to bring about a decrease in sexual intercourse and a weakening of the organ in question' (1963, 2:609).[5]

Secular commentators agreed with these assessments, and many either implicitly or explicitly identified the rite as detrimental to sexual pleasure. As Robert Darby has shown, popular sexual manuals like *Aristotle's Master-Piece* (1684) and Nicholas Venette's *Tableau de l'amour Conjugal* (1702) identified the prepuce as central to sexual satisfaction for both male and female partners (Darby 2005, 22-43). Medical writers similarly privileged the foreskin in discussions of sexual pleasure, with some contending that the glans of an uncircumcised man retained a more 'exquisite' sensitivity and others asserting that

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it was actually the movement of the foreskin up and down the penis that produced most of the pleasure in penetrative intercourse (Dionis 1719, 21).

Yet while many eighteenth-century commentators agreed that circumcision had been intended to curb lust or fornication, it remained an open question whether the ritual really had the desired anaphrodisiac effects. Some medical writers reasoned that circumcision would actually *enhance* feelings of lust, as the circumcised man would yearn for a sexual satisfaction he could never fully obtain. According to the seventeenth-century medical practitioner John Bulwer, for example, circumcision was meant 'to bridle and restraine inordinate lust and concupiscence of the flesh', but in reality it did the opposite—'for no Nation is more given to carnall lust, than the *Egyptians*, *Saracens*, and *Turkes* that are Circumcised' (Bulwer 1653, 368; see also Marten 1707, 420). The Dutch physician Herman Boerhaave—a key figure in the development of modern physiology—similarly believed circumcision was no impediment to lechery, describing the Jews as a 'lascivious people' despite their removal of the foreskin. Indeed, for Boerhaave, the practice of circumcision *facilitated* rather than hampered excessive sexual activity, because it protected Jewish 'fornicators' from the penile disorders otherwise attendant on sexually promiscuous men (Boerhaave 1763, 10, 13).

As these claims suggest, circumcision was believed to have an impact on sexual health as well as sexual pleasure—yet here, too, scholarly opinion fluctuated over the course of the century. There was considerable debate in medical, religious and scientific texts over whether circumcision might damage a man's potency, with 'potency' defined in some contexts as the ability to get an erection and in others as the ability to sire children (see Greenfield 2020, 1–17). Although the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo, whose work was discussed and debated by many scholars—including Boerhaave—claimed that circumcision was 'a help to fertility', such assertions were disputed by those who reasoned that cutting off part of the penis would inevitably have detrimental effects on reproductive function (Dictionary 1759, 1:310). Samuel Humphreys, whose Biblical commentaries of the late 1730s were frequently cited by subsequent scholars, insisted that the ritual posed such obvious risks that it could only have been intended as a test of Abraham's faith: since God had promised the 99-year-old patriarch another child, the subsequent demand to cut off his foreskin must have 'seem'd the finishing obstruction to all his hopes' for a son—unless one were provided through divine intervention (Humphreys 1735, 1:51). And while such an operation would have been dangerous for any would-be father, Humphreys argued, it was especially daunting for one whose old age already augured against virility:

> The command of circumcision did undoubtedly terrify those who first received it; it was dangerous to adult persons, in hot climates, but for an old man to receive the token of circumcision, in so advanced an age, was, in all appearance, to be put out of the condition of ever seeing himself a father (Humphreys 1735, 1:51).

For scholars like Humphreys, circumcision was not just undesirable but 'dangerous'—an injurious rite that threatened a man's potency, his health—even his life (Brekell 1763, 6; see also Four arguments 1780, 7).

Other writers turned to contemporary birth rates to dispute the 'enhanced fertility' theory. Jean LeClerc, whose commentaries on Genesis were frequently translated, reprinted and discussed throughout the eighteenth century, cited 'the Example of Modern *Jews* and *Mahometans*' as proof that circumcised men did not sire more children than their uncircumcised counterparts (Le Clerc 1696, 186). The military officer turned antiquarian Monsieur De La Créquinière similarly referenced contemporary populations in refuting Philo's claim:

> [T]o discover its Falshood, we need only reflect a little upon the pretended Fecundity of the circumcised Nations. The *Jews, Turks, Arabians*, and generally all People among whom Circumcision is us'd, are not more fruitful than others; and on the contrary, I am persuaded, that if the matter were well Examin'd, it would appear that they are less Populous (Créquinière 1705, 20–21).[6]

Novelists and essayists also weighed in on this topic, with Richard Griffith, for example, conjuring up a comparison between a polygamous Muslim pasha and a monogamous Christian cobbler to declare that circumcised pashas 'have seldom more than four or five children, among all their wives, at most; and, in general, hardly exceed two or three. While your common Psalm-Singing Cobler, among us, will double that Nursery, *ne ultra crepidam*, without ever stirring out of his stall' (Griffith 1772, 1:170). For Griffith, as for many others, the uncircumcised Christian was more virile *and* more fertile, with no need to 'stir out of his stall' to fulfil his lusts or sire multiple children.

Similar scholarly debates surrounded the question of whether circumcision ameliorated or caused various sexual and penile disorders. Just as some practitioners endorsed Philo's claim that circumcision improved fertility, so some contended that circumcision had been introduced to treat some endemic Jewish disease or deformity. The physician Thomas Gibson was one of several early eighteenth-century anatomists to claim that Jews used circumcision to 'correct' an abnormally long foreskin. 'In Jewish Children', Gibson asserted, the prepuce 'is six times as large as in Christians, and hangs a great way over the *Glans*, before it is cut off (Gibson 1703, 168; see also Freeman, [Stephen] n.d, 25; Drake 1707, 1:248; Heister 1743, 2:130). Other practitioners claimed that the rite had been introduced to treat or prevent certain penile infections to which Jewish men were especially prone (Wallis 1793, 65; Physical Essays 1734, 11). Sir John Floyer was one of many scholars—physicians, theologians and historians—to endorse Philo's claims that 'the Jews were subject to an *Anthrax* or *Carbuncle* on their *Penis*, for which *Circumcision* was useful' (Floyer 1702, 10; see also Kennedy 1715, 147; Universal History 1744, 1:427nR; Créquinière 1705, 20).

Although scholars disputed whether such Jewish pathologies were hereditary or caused by environmental factors like heat and 'uncleanly habits', assertions about the ritual's therapeutic value inherently strengthened a developing set of associations between Jewishness, circumcision and sexual disorder (Foot 1792, 111). So too did medical speculations that the rite had been introduced as a hygiene measure, designed to protect Jews from those 'Diseases of the private Parts' to which 'Whoremongers, Adulterers, and lascivious Persons' were otherwise naturally vulnerable (Astruc 1737, 1:49).[7]

Concerns about the ritual's health implications were further explored within the burgeoning medical discourse on venereal disease. Although the pathologisation of circumcision began with claims about foreskin deformity and anthrax infection, eighteenth-century English culture increasingly connected the ritual with venereal disease and its attendant complications—including impotence (Gallagher 2019, 18–29). And as with the relationships between circumcision and lust or circumcision and fertility, the links between circumcision and venereal infection could cut both ways. In many medical treatises from the period, the rite was identified as a protective measure, with practitioners

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claiming it prevented or ameliorated venereal infections in male Jews (see, for example, Astruc 1737, 1:404; Turner 1724, 67–68; Atkins 1730, 15). Boerhaave, for example, claimed that Jewish men were 'extremely addicted to venery' but 'less affected with a *gonorrhœa* than others whose *præputium* is entire' (1763, 13). Others speculated that the 'anthrax' and 'carbuncle' identified by Philo as common Jewish health problems were really venereal chancres: seen in this light, Jewish removal of the foreskin was not a prophylactic against minor skin infections but a means of ameliorating endemic Jewish venereal disease (Kennedy 1715, 147).

Within eighteenth-century venereological discourse, circumcision was further identified as a potential treatment for two conditions strongly associated with infection: phimosis, a condition in which the foreskin is drawn over the glans too tightly to be pulled back, and paraphimosis, a parallel condition in which the foreskin is drawn back and cannot be pulled forward over the glans (Turner 1714, 206 and Turner 1724, 68; Croissant de Garengeot 1723, 234–29; Marten 1707, 421; Darby 2005, 25–27). Practitioners recognised that both conditions could occur naturally, but most venereological case studies attributed phimosis and paraphimosis to syphilitic chancres that 'fused' the foreskin to the penis.[8] Circumcision could be required in such cases as a therapeutic measure, allowing the surgeon to 'come at some latent *Chancre*' that might be trapped beneath the patient's foreskin (Turner 1724, 68).

Yet circumcising a patient wouldn't necessarily cure him of his infection, nor would it prevent him from transmitting the disease to his sexual partners. Indeed, most medical practitioners seem to have viewed therapeutic circumcision with hostility, reasoning that while it might treat the phimosis, it could cause premature ejaculation and erectile dysfunction. Surgical manuals identified the procedure as a last resort, and most surgeons recommended slitting the foreskin open rather than removing it altogether. Both Daniel Turner and John Atkins, for example, endorsed complete circumcision only when there were extenuating circumstances like severe infection, or a foreskin so long that the slit pieces would create unsightly 'Lips hanging down' on either side of the organ (Turner 1714). Indeed, most medical texts from the period didn't reference 'circumcision' at all, explaining euphemistically that severe phimosis and paraphimosis might require treatment with 'Surgery' or an 'Operation'.[9] Those surgeons who *did* perform the practice took pains to distinguish their own techniques from those of the mohel: Turner, for example, dismissed 'the *Jewish* Manner of Circumcision' as 'so very rude and slovenly, as to be not worth the Recital' in a medical context (Turner 1714, 218). And given the range of problems believed to be caused by removing the foreskin—from perpetual lust to infertility—it was no surprise that even the severely infected were 'afraid of Incisions', as the renowned French surgeon René-Jacques Croissant de Garengeot put it, and refused circumcision unless 'there [were] no other Remedy' (Croissant de Garengeot 1723, 244; see also Jourdan de Pellerin 1750, 255; Bell 1795, 156–57).

Ultimately, even in the context of serious venereal infection, circumcision was believed to be capable of causing more problems than it solved. The rite's association with sexual or reproductive pathologies was sufficiently strong for some medical practitioners to classify circumcision as in itself a kind of disorder. Bulwer, for example, identified 'the shortnesse of the Prepuce' as 'among the organicall diseases of the Yard', explaining that it caused both the immoderate lust and the premature ejaculation suffered by 'Turkes, Persians, and most Orientall Nations' (Bulwer 1653, 378),[10] John Marten, whose intellectually dubious but profitably popular treatises on venereal disease were repeatedly reprinted and expanded over the early decades of the eighteenth century, echoed and elaborated on Bulwer's claims:

> The shortness of the *Prepuce* is reckon'd among the Organical Diseases of the *Yard*, whether naturally or artificially so; and tho' neither of these kinds of brevity, doth incommode the action of the *Yard*, as to its extension and ejaculation of the Seed, or in the least hinders Fruitfulness, yet it is observ'd that the *Jewish* Women do more desire Copulation with the *Christians* than their own Nation, affecting Christian Carnality before Circumcis'd *Venery*, as the Ingenious Dr. *Brown*, in his *Pseudoxia Epidem*, well notes; And indeed both Men and Women, like, where the Pleasure is most, and also where it holds longest (Marten 1707, 420–21).[11]

Marten's views here handily illustrate the 'bipolar' attitudes to circumcision and the Jewish penis in this period. Although he himself happened to believe that circumcision had no effect on fertility, Marten nonetheless reiterated the myth—attributed to John Browne's 1646 treatise *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*—that Jewish women 'affect[ed] Christian carnality above circumcised venery' because uncircumcised men were better at maintaining an erection, and therefore, at giving and receiving sexual pleasure (Browne 1646, 202). Marten concluded with an endorsement of the skin-stretching techniques devised by Ambroise Paré, a sixteenth-century surgeon also famed for his treatment of syphilis-induced nasal deformities: such treatments offered hope for *'Jews* that have abjur'd their Religion', Marten explained, and who sought a 'Cure' for this 'preternatural defect' (Marten 1707, 420; Paré 1634, 662).

REPRESENTING 'THE CIRCUMCISED': JEWISH PATHOLOGY IN POPULAR CULTURE

The same contradictory prejudices reflected in the medical and scientific lore around circumcision also surfaced in the wider print culture of the era; such prejudices ultimately underpinned eighteenth-century England's obsessive concern over what Jewish men were doing—or wanted to do—with their penises. Although Jews were by no means the only group to be vilified for their sexuality or attacked for their removal of the foreskin, prejudicial views of circumcision were far more likely to be directed at Jews than at Muslims in this period.[12] Indeed, despite the lively scholarly debate that persisted throughout the early modern period over who first practised circumcision and how it had spread across different 'Eastern' cultures, popular prints and literary works were so consistent in identifying the ritual specifically with Jews that circumcision became, in Frank Felsenstein's terms, a 'metonym' for Jewishness, 'used both descriptively and as an elementary means to distinguish the Jews from the rest of mankind' (Felsenstein 1995, 146).

As Felsenstein shrewdly observes, this obsession with circumcision sprang from a desire to repudiate Jews as foreigners: 'circumcision connotes the perpetual stigma of the Jewish people in their self-inflicted Otherness' (Felsenstein 1995, 147). Yet the paradoxical medical lore around circumcision also gave the metonym a pseudo-scientific function: by focusing on the sexual misadventures of 'the circumcised', eighteenth-century writers and artists supported broader developing associations between Jewish genitalia and sexual or reproductive pathology. While this pathological 'othering' was neither entirely consistent nor entirely linear, increasingly, eighteenth-century English print culture characterised Jewish difference not just as a matter of religion or culture, but as a matter of anatomy and health.

One might consider, as a starting point, some of the period's many popular depictions of Jewish lechery. It is not hard to find

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examples: lascivious Jewish men feature in hundreds of visual and textual works, from popular novels like Tobias Smollett's *Roderick Random* (1748) and Sarah Fielding's *David Simple* (1744) to engravings like *The Harlot's Progress* (1732).[13] What is remarkable about many of these depictions is their emphasis on Jewish men's alleged desire to 'pollute' Christian women—that same desire to 'stir out of their stall' attributed by medical and cultural commentators to the 'defect' of a circumcised penis. And while some works depict Jewish lechers as would-be rapists ('would-be' because the unsuccessful attempt often serves as proof of Jewish impotence), many more imagine a man of means who attempts to 'buy' an Englishwoman's favours through prostitution or mistress-keeping.[14] Indeed, the stereotype of the Jewish 'whoremonger' is one of the most prominent in the literature and art of this period—so much so that some scholars have argued that we should interpret representations of Jewish sexuality as essentially representations of Jewish finance: Laura Rosenthal, for example, suggests that Jews and prostitutes are aligned in eighteenth-century novels because both groups 'represent the unbounded drive toward accumulation' (Rosenthal 2015, 72). Jewish lustfulness, by this logic, is really a stand-in for Jewish avarice, sexual predation a metaphor for bullishness in the marketplace.

There is undoubtedly truth to these claims: most anti-Semitic tropes in this period do make reference to Jewish immigrants' involvement in commerce, and most representations of Jewish lechery centre around wealthy Sephardic Jews.[15] Yet sex in these scenarios is no empty metaphor. Sander Gilman first noted some three decades ago that one of the key components of nineteenth-century European anti-Semitism was the shared association of Jews and prostitutes with venereal disease (Gilman 1991, 104–27). Works like *A Harlot's Progress* demonstrate that such connections were already alive within English popular culture in the early 1730s (Gilman 1991, 121; see also Gallagher 2019, 173–75). It is, after all, Moll's cohabitation with the Jewish merchant that seems to mark not only her social downfall, but also the onset of the venereal infection that will ultimately kill her: while it is unclear whether Moll infects the merchant or the merchant infects Moll, she emerges from his household bearing several suspicious-looking 'beauty spots' that critics have identified as symptoms of venereal disease (see Lowe 1992, 71–79; Gilman 1985, 245–55; Gallagher 2019, 175).

Literary works throughout the period similarly play on the associations between Jewish lechery, prostitution and venereal disease. One 1730 scandal chronicle revealing the 'Amorous and Diverting Intrigues' of rakes and prostitutes in London includes the story of 'two *Jews*, *Moses* and *Abraham*, who aped the part of two *Beaux* most ridiculously', and who are punished for their sexual ambition by a non-Jewish rival who arranges for a liaison with an infected prostitute (Ramble 1730, 44).[16] Another comic text tells of 'a Peeress, stript at Loo' who decides to 'Associate with an am'rous Jew,/ To mend her fortune in the Stocks' and who becomes 'Fair partner of his scrip [i.e. purse] and pox' (Bedlam 1776, 15). While it is the 'am'rous Jew' who carries the disease in one example and the prostitute who is—to use her madam's terms—'poxed over Head and Ears' in the other, both illustrate the wider tendency to associate Jewish men's penchant for transactional sex with the spread of venereal infection (Ramble 1730, 44).

Further, even within depictions of Jewish 'whoremongering', the 'bipolar' nature of anti-Semitic discourse persists, for at the same time that Jew-prostitute pairings are used to invoke the dangers of shared disease, they are also, paradoxically, used to establish a triumphalist contrast between the healthy body

Figure 3 *Kitty Fleecing the Old Jew*. Reproduced Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

of the Christian and the pathologised body of the Jew. Prints like *Beau Mordecai Inspir'd* (1773) and *Kitty Fleecing the Old Jew* (1764), for example, cast the prostitute as a fresh-faced young beauty and the Jew as a dirty old man, using old age as a proxy for physical debility and sexual impotence (figure 3).[17] Eighteenth-century stage comedies similarly exploit the alleged contrast between Jewish and Christian bodies, with the coquettish heroine of Henry Fielding's *Miss Lucy in Town* (1742), for example, dismissing her wealthy Jewish admirer as 'an old gentleman', and the gossiping characters of Samuel Foote's *The Bankrupt* (1778) ruling out 'Jacobs the Jew' as a 'paramour' on the grounds of his seeming 'as old as one of the patriarchs, with his beard down to his breeches' (Fielding 1742, 30; Foote 1778, 16). In these examples, what Sophie Carter describes as the 'standardized contrast between age and beauty' is used to imply that 'this customer's eyes may be bigger than his stomach'—or, to put it more crudely, this Jewish man's lusts exceed the capabilities of his circumcised penis (Carter 2004, 56).

In some cases, the contrast between virile Christian and impotent Jew is established explicitly through sexual failure. In the 1729 biography of prostitute-turned-madam Mary Parrimore, for example, we learn of a sexually frustrating encounter between the heroine and a Jewish client known only as 'S-----r':

> [T]ime and Opportunity now began to cry aloud on *S-----r* to begin to play his Part; he offered to do it but in vain, whether he had been playing his Part too freely with some other of the fair Sex not long before, whether he had drank too plentifully at and after Supper, or whether by some Spell or Inchantment he lost his wonted Courage, our *Heroine* her self could never find out. This she found however to *S-----r*'s eternal Shame and Confusion, that he was impotent, his Blood chilled, and maugre all that the fair One could do, he (like Mr[s]. *Behn*'s Insensible) remained a stupid senseless Mass ((Life and Intrigues 1729, 15–16).

Here, as in depictions of elderly Jews with young prostitutes, the vigorous sexual health of the prostitute is effectually used to denigrate the shameful sexual dysfunction of the Jew: despite Parrimore's enthusiastic ministrations, S----r remains flaccid, his penis 'a stupid, senseless Mass'. And while the hot-blooded prostitute departs from this encounter 'enraged' with sexual frustration, the humiliated S----r can only 'curse his Stars and the Cause of his fatal Impotence'. It is no coincidence that the

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episode concludes with S---r forced to consume 'Lobsters, Crabs, Prawns, Oysters, and other Shell-fish' to restore his potency: it is only by breaking with kosher food laws—'their Law prohibiting the Use of Shell-fish', the narrator explains—that the Jewish lover can attain something akin to Christian virility (Life and Intrigues 1729, 34).

NARRATIVES OF JEWISH SEXUAL HUMILIATION

While *The Life and Intrigues of the Late Celebrated Mary Parrimore* concludes with the Jewish client finally able to satisfy his lusty English partner, most representations of such sexual mismatch conclude with the Jewish man rejected by the woman he desires. The same narrative that informs plate 2 of *A Harlot's Progress*-—a narrative in which a Jewish man is humiliated on the grounds of his inadequate penis—is also the basis for scores of other anti-Jewish tales in this period. In some such narratives, the Jewish lover's inferiority is cast into sharper relief by the assured sexual success of an uncircumcised Christian rival. In *A Harlot's Progress*, for example, the merchant's sexual inadequacy is signalled not only by the escaping lover's hand gesture but also by the large, unsheathed sword—here, as elsewhere in Hogarth's work, symbolic of a large and virile penis—hanging at his waist. According to the iconography of Hogarth's image—and as noted more explicitly within some of the narrative 'spinoffs' from the *Progress*—Moll cheats on the Jewish merchant not just out of religious hatred, but also out of sexual frustration.

In *The Harlot's Progress: Or, the Humours of Drury-Lane* (1732), for example, Moll and her bunter—here named 'Betty' or 'Bess'—decide to punish the wealthy Jew for both his predatory sexual impulses and his inability to sustain sexual arousal—two seemingly opposed conditions that are traced back to his status as a 'Son of Circumcision' (Harlot's Progress 1732, 19).[18] In this clunky dramatisation of Hogarth's series—presented in six cantos of 'hudibrastick verse'—the merchant is described as 'a fickle Fornicator' who aggressively lures beautiful Christian women into keeping and then loses all sexual interest in them within 'one short Week or two' (Harlot's Progress 1732, 19). As in the medical treatises by John Bulwer and John Marten, circumcision is associated here with both excessive lust and inadequate staying power. And just as Marten compares Jews unfavourably against Christians, who can make sex last 'longest' and thus ensure 'the pleasure is most', so Betty denounces Jews as anatomically inferior to uncircumcised Christians:

> Besides, he is no Christian—then---
> He's not all o'er like other Men;
> *Jews* clip, and pare—Dogs! they diminish
> The Instrument that Man does finish (Harlot's Progress 1732, 20).

The terms of Betty's attack here invoke the well-worn comparison between circumcision and coin-clipping, as she identifies the removal of the foreskin as part of an alleged Jewish compulsion to 'clip and pare' things of value, including currency—yet the conclusion of her declaration privileges sexual over financial worth: in 'diminishing' the penis through circumcision, Betty argues, Jews disfigure the most important part of the male anatomy—the 'Instrument' that 'finish[es]' the man.[19] Other textual adaptations of the *Progress* make similar comparisons, with the ballad opera *The Jew Decoy'd; Or the Progress of a Harlot*, for example, pitting Moll's effeminate Jewish keeper against 'Squire Spruce'—a rival whose name signals not only his Christian heritage, but also his tree-like size, strength and hardness (Jew Decoy'd 1733).[20]

While Hogarth's series generated a flurry of such material, even a cursory survey of eighteenth-century literature yields many other examples of the sexual humiliation plotline. One version worth considering at greater length, in part because it gives such explicit consideration to the myth of the dysfunctional Jewish penis, appears in the 1779 text *Nocturnal Revels* . In this scandal chronicle—ostensibly offering reportage of the real life intrigues of 'the Most Celebrated Demireps and Courtezans of this Period'—we learn of a Jewish 'merchant of opulence' named 'Mr. M----z' (clearly 'Mendez') who pursues a coquettish Italian opera singer named 'Signora G' (Nocturnal Revels (1779) 1:251).[21] Like another 'rich Jew' mentioned earlier in the text, Mendez 'is very fond of Christian flesh'—but the object of his desires 'has an utter aversion to circumcision' (Nocturnal Revels 1779, 1:177). In the narrator's description of Mendez, as in several other anti-Jewish satires from the period (one might compare the 1772 print *A Certain Little Fat Jew Macaroni & His Spouse Going to Y^e Pantheon* (figure 4)), short stature functions as a proxy for inadequate penis size:

> This extraordinary petit personage about thirty years ago figured away in high life; and considering he was scarce three feet high, was a paragon of foppery: he would, had his powers of dress continued till this day, [have] been pronounced the *greatest, little* Maccaroni in Europe. He was moreover the professed *Enamorato* of every fine woman pronounced a *Toast* upon the *Ton* (Nocturnal Revels 1779, 1:250–51).[22]

Here, as in other tales of Jewish sexual humiliation, the Jewish 'beau' is characterised by misplaced vanity, believing himself desirable when he is ugly, 'the greatest' when he is 'little'. And because he suffers from the same 'addict[ion] to venery' as other circumcised men, he pursues Signora G with a fervour that renders him credulous as well as risible (Nocturnal Revels 1779, 1:252).

When Signora G finally does allow Mendez to see her, she goads him into making increasingly explicit confessions of his desires—and then ridicules him for his anatomical inadequacies. As he kisses her hand, she recoils in mock fear, declaring: 'Good Heavens!—You really terrify me!-- *Canine Madness* I protest! I was fearful you would have bit my little finger off' (Nocturnal Revels 1779, 1:257). The characterisation of Mendez as a frenzied dog afflicted with rabies ('Canine Madness') references the long-standing commonplace of comparing Jewish men with dogs—yet it also plays on the cultural associations between lustfulness and rabies identified by Lucinda Cole in poems like Gay's 'The Mad Dog' and Rochester's 'Ramble in St James's Park' (Cole 2016, 121–38).[23] In this context, the invocation of what Cole describes as the 'nexus of dogs, disease and desire' works to identify Jewish lust as a contagious infection, with Mendez' saliva the feared means of transmission (Cole 2016, 135).

The canine metaphor serves still more important purposes, however, in the ensuing conversation, reproduced by the narrator in dramatic dialogue:

> Signora G. Love! all-powerful love! My stars!-- Why, Mr. Mend-z, only look in the glass, and consult for one moment, if that pretty, little, dear, sweet person, not so high as a walking-stick, with those piercing eyes, and those—enchanting rabbits teeth, can possibly inspire the tender passion!
> [M—z *much nettled at this expostulation.]*
> Mr. M. Why, Madam, let me tell you in a vulgar, but true proverb—LITTLE DOGS HAVE LONG TAILS.

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Figure 4 *A Certain Little Fat Jew Macaroni & His Spouse Going to Ye Pantheon*. The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence

> Signora G. LONG TAILS!—Oh ridiculous!—LONG TAILS!—Ha! ha! ha! Why, Mr. Mend-z. IF YOU WERE ALL TAIL, YOU WOULD NOT BE HALF LONG ENOUGH FOR ME (Nocturnal Revels 1779, 1:258).

Signora G's zoomorphic insults here demote Mendez from rabid dog to timorous rabbit, as she references his short stature as evidence of his inevitable penile inadequacy. When Mendez tries to reclaim the canine metaphor by boasting that he has a 'long tail', Signora G ties his inferiority to his Jewish status: in claiming that Mendez 'would not be half long enough' even if he 'were all tail', G implies that *no* circumcised penis—even one wholly disproportionate in size to the rest of the body—would be sufficient to satisfy her needs.

The encounter concludes with Signora G expounding arrogantly on the mismatch between her own virile, healthy body and the weak, impotent frame of her 'miniature lover':

> [She] told Mr. M—z, half in jest and half in earnest, that it was out of pure regard for him that she would not indulge him; as she was convinced that one single night's gratification would dissolve his little mass into a mere jelly, and that there would be nothing left but the mere *Caput Mortuum* of his extravagant

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passion and imaginary concupiscence (Nocturnal Revels 1779, 1:260–61).

In imagining Mendez 'dissolved' into 'a mere jelly' or reduced to a '*Caput Mortuum*'—worthless remains—Signora G indulges in a fantasy of anti-Semitic sexual violence, boasting of her own potency while denigrating the 'imaginary concupiscence' of her suitor. The episode concludes with the narrator reiterating the link between Mendez's inadequacies and his Jewishness, characterising his humiliation as a second circumcision:

> Signora G---- circumcised once more the little Jew in a most unchristian-like manner, not by robbing him of his prepuce, or even handling any of the appurtenances, but by literally [sic] flaying him alive, and leaving him no covering to his bones (Nocturnal Revels 1779, 1:261).

Here, as in other such narratives, circumcision is paradoxically invoked as both insult and threat, with the Jewish lover simultaneously denounced as a lustful predator in need of a penectomy and ridiculed as an impotent weakling emasculated by the loss of his foreskin.

CONVERSION AND CONTAGION: THE CIRCUMCISION OF NON-JEWS

Like most tales of Jewish sexual humiliation, the story in *Nocturnal Revels* centres around the interaction between a Christian woman and a Jewish man (we are told by the narrator that Signora G is a Catholic). Yet eighteenth-century English print culture also pathologised the Jewish penis via depictions of social or sexual encounters between men. Novels, poems and prints from the period routinely imagined the botched, forced or accidental circumcision of Christian Englishmen, from the absurd window-sash accident that slices off the end of Tristram's penis in *Tristram Shandy* to the flurry of satires depicting mass circumcision as the outcome of the 1753 Jewish Naturalisation Act. These depictions provide a cautionary counterpart to the triumphalist narratives of sexual humiliation in *Nocturnal Revels* or *A Harlot's Progress*; in effect, they warn of an imagined future in which the virile Christian does *not* triumph over the circumcised Jew. These representations marshal the same associations between Jewishness and sexual pathology fomented by tales of Jewish 'whoremongering', but they warn against homosocial relations, depicting circumcision as the unfortunate consequence of consorting—either sexually, through shared prostitutes, or financially, within the metaphorically prostituting milieus of politics and commerce—with Jews.

To wit, some of the clearest expressions of the link between Jewishness and venereal disease appear in satires on infected Englishmen. Although circumcision was only ever practised as a last resort for treating severe venereal chancres, the cultural links between sexual infection and Jewish 'whoremongering' were sufficiently strong that infected Englishmen were routinely denigrated as Jewish by association. The epilogue to Sir John Crowne's 1703 play *Sir Courtly Nice*, for example, mocks those 'city gallants' who, by rivalling Jewish men in their indiscriminate use of prostitutes, must also ultimately 'turn Jew' in the removal of their foreskins (Crowne 1703):

> Sad fate, that all the Christian Youth o'th'Nation,
> Should be oblig'd to Jews for Procreation.
> Nay, what is worse, that's, if reports be true,
> Many a Christian Gallant there turns Jew;
> That is, so oft some rotten Strumpit [sic] plies him,
> The Surgion's forc'd at last to circumcise him (Crowne 1703, A4v).

Here circumcision is both the treatment for and the symbol of venereal infection, with the fate of unwary 'Christian gallants' reaffirming larger associations between Jewish lechery, prostitution and disease. Interestingly, the passage implies not only that Jewish men are more likely to engage with 'some rotten Strumpit', but also that circumcised men may be more, rather than less, vulnerable to infection. On a metaphorical level, the phrasing unsettlingly suggests that Jewishness itself could be contagious: like a bad case of the pox, circumcision and its concomitant penile deficiencies can be transmitted from Jew to Christian through the shared use of 'rotten' female partners.

Similarly, in *The Progress of a Rake: Or, The Templar's Exit* (1732), venereal disease is associated with the allegedly Jewish pathologies of impotence and penile deformity. In this uneven five-canto mock-epic—clearly produced to capitalise on the success of Hogarth's later series *The Rake's Progress*—the libertine hero contracts a venereal infection that he fears will require disfiguring—and 'Judaizing'—treatment. Examining his damaged penis, he exclaims:

> O Blood and Thunder!
> I dread this must be cut asunder.
> Gods!—here's a Cord,-- and here's a Lump,
> The Doctors will not leave a Stump:
> I shall be Circumcis'd i'th' ----
> Tho' I am neither *Jew* nor *Gentile* (Progress of a Rake 1732, 47).

The excised rhyme word here links the 'Gentile' with the 'penile', pairing non-Jewish status with healthy male genitalia and Jewishness with 'a Stump'. The hero equates circumcision with a full-scale penectomy, concluding that the surgical treatment for his infection will leave him impotent and sexless.

Similar logic runs through the attacks on Christian Englishmen accused of prostituting themselves to Jewish men in business or in politics. In Alexander Pope's *Strange but True Relation How Mr. Edmund Curll, of Fleet Street, Stationer, Out of an Extraordinary Desire of Lucre, went into 'Change-Alley, and was Converted from the Christian Religion by Certain Eminent Jews*1732), for example, a bookseller's mercenary dealings with Jewish business associates result in brutal penile disfigurement and long-term sexual dysfunction. In this deeply offensive pamphlet—written in revenge against one of Pope's long-standing enemies, the bookseller Edmund Curll—Pope imagines the avaricious Curll agreeing to convert to Judaism in exchange 'for the filthy Prospect of Lucre', only to discover that he must seal the bargain by undergoing a violent and disfiguring sexual assault posing as circumcision (Pope 1732, 30).[24] The prologue to the tale aligns Jewishness not just with avarice, but also with old age and impotence, as Pope rails against those young Englishmen who, like Curll, choose wealth over virility, Jewish over Christian values: 'the Concupiscence of Youth is converted into the Covetousness of Age, and those Appetites are now become Venal which should be Venereal', he laments (Pope 1732, 28). Pope's clever play on words here opposes the 'venal' to the 'venereal', describing Curll's greed as a kind of disease—a 'pecuniary Contagion'—that damages his sexual appetites and potency (Pope 1732, 29). And, rather predictably, it is this same 'pecuniary Contagion' that provides Curll's entrée into a world inhabited by sexually deviant Jewish men.

The subsequent narrative of Curll's attempted conversion draws on the same links between Jewishness, pathology and prostitution evident in works like *A Harlot's Progress,* condemning the mercenary bookseller for engaging in what is effectually an alternative form of prostitution. Like Hogarth's

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heroine, Curll sells his body to a Jewish man (or rather, a gang of Jews) in exchange for their money; and like Hogarth's heroine, he is punished for his avarice—and his proximity to Jewishness—with permanent damage to his sexual health. Curll's Jewish associates refuse to accept his conversion until he agrees to the 'unmanly Ceremonial' of circumcision—but the ritual as described is clearly a kind of proxy for genital mutilation: six Jewish men seize the reluctant bookseller and, 'unbuttoning his Breeches, thr[o]w him upon [a makeshift operating] Table' (Pope 1732, 33). Having 'roared', 'swore' and finally urinated out of fear, Curll prepares for the worst—only to make 'an unfortunate Jerk upward' during the operation that causes him to 'los[e] five times as much as ever Jew did before' (Pope 1732, 34).

By this account, circumcision is both sexualised and violent, a brutal form of assault that results in social and sexual humiliation: we learn that Curll is subsequently shunned by Christians *and* rejected by the Jewish community on the spurious grounds that he is 'too much circumcis'd'. The ritual also leaves Curll with permanent penile dysfunction; we are told that Curll's mutilated member not only renders him 'piteous, woful, and miserable', but distresses his wife, who 'is at this Hour lamenting over him, wringing her hands and tearing her Hair; for the barbarous Jews still keep, and expose at *Jonathan's* and *Garraway*'s, the Memorial of her Loss, and her Husband's Indignity' (Pope 1732, 34, 46). Ultimately, then, Curll's Jewish associates not only betray him by seizing on the unfortunate 'accident' as an excuse to renege on their agreement; they also act as the aggressors in a violent battle over sexual and reproductive resources, displaying Curll's foreskin as though it were a hunting trophy. Seen in this light, the Jewish gang seem afflicted not just with 'pecuniary Contagion', but also with a kind of 'foreskin envy' that compels them to circumcise their Christian rivals in a bid to level the sexual playing field.

CODA: CIRCUMCISION AND PATHOLOGY IN SATIRES ON THE JEWISH NATURALISATION ACT

While this period produced many more anti-Jewish and anti-circumcision satires, I'd like to conclude this essay by touching on an episode within Anglo-Jewish history that may already be familiar to some readers: the paper war over the 1753 Jewish Naturalisation Act. This embarrassing moment in England's ostensibly tolerant history has already been examined within a range of different contexts, so I won't go into exhaustive detail here. Rather, I want to use the outburst of anti-Semitism that accompanied the Act to sketch out some of the wider implications of eighteenth-century culture's pathologising of the Jewish penis, demonstrating how an awareness of the links between circumcision and sexual dysfunction might help us understand the 1753 paper war in a new light.

The Jewish Naturalisation Act—known informally as the 'Jew Bill'—was intended to allow certain key Jewish immigrants to petition for citizenship without having to demonstrate their Christian faith by taking the Eucharist; in practice, as many historians have noted, it would have been applicable only to a vanishingly small number of wealthy men who could afford to put forward a private act of naturalisation (see, for example, Rabin 2006; Wolper 1983). Introduced by the Whig government in the spring of 1753, the 'Jew Bill' passed through the Commons by a healthy majority and through the Lords without comment. Shortly after its passage into law, however, the bill became the subject of considerable public outcry. Groups united in their opposition to the Pelham ministry seized on the Naturalisation Act as an example of Whig corruption—and as evidence of a conspiratorial 'New Interest' (a phrase disturbingly similar to today's 'New World Order') between Whig politicians and wealthy Jewish financiers (Christian's New Warning Piece 1753, 6).

For historians like David S Katz, the debate over naturalisation proved to be of little consequence: it was not targeted at reducing Jewish immigration to England, and ultimately 'had no effect whatsoever on the status of Jews in this country' (Katz 1994, 240). Yet the debate clearly did provide an expedient outlet for anti-Jewish sentiment, and it seems likely the satires reinforced negative perceptions of Jewishness in the public imagination. Indeed, Roy Wolper has argued that opposition to the Act was fuelled as much by anti-Semitism as by political partisanship, with Tory satirists exploiting the long-standing popular prejudice against Jews to support their political machinations (Wolper 1983). And however dark or uncertain their secondary aims, the satires certainly *did* prove effective in ending the move towards Jewish naturalisation: after months of bombardment by Tory pamphlets, prints and periodicals, Parliament was forced to repeal the unpopular 'Jew Bill' at the end of the year.

The many anti-Jewish satires that were produced in the furore over naturalisation have been used to illustrate the complex workings of party politics, the development of ideas about British national identity, the ongoing existence of old anti-Semitic tropes, and even new imaginings of queer sexuality (Rabin 2006; Perry 1974; Endelman 1999, 89–91; Felsenstein 1995, 187–214; Gonda 2007). But I want to suggest here that we might learn still more about these satires, and the prejudicial culture from which they sprang, by considering them in relation to the period's contradictory associations between Jewishness, circumcision and pathology. As Wolper and others have noted, an overwhelming number of the anti-naturalisation satires used circumcision as a marker for Jewishness, falsely portraying the mass circumcision of Englishmen, not the naturalisation of Jews, as the bill's ultimate goal (Wolper 1982, 28–36); see also Rabin 2006, 260; Gonda (2007), 261–73). Although this focus on Jewish genitalia did serve ideological purposes, recent work by Dana Rabin and Caroline Gonda has demonstrated that the 1753 satires also have much to tell us about eighteenth-century attitudes to gender and sexuality. As Rabin explains, propaganda against the bill 'expressed fear that the naturalization of Jews would inaugurate a vast Jewish conspiracy to circumcise British men and to rob them of their masculinity and virility' (Rabin 2006, 160). As Rabin notes, the satires vilified Jewish men as 'armed, aggressive and dangerous' yet they also denigrated Jewish masculinity by equating circumcision, as Gonda observes, with 'castration or loss of sexual functioning' (Rabin 2006, 160; Gonda 2007, 262).

These seemingly contradictory characterisations of the anti-naturalisation propaganda constitute another handy illustration of the 'bipolar' nature of anti-Semitic discourse in general and anticircumcision rhetoric in particular—but they also gesture towards the contradictory medical lore linking circumcision with sexual or reproductive pathology. Many satires on the Act directly equate the naturalisation of Jewish immigrants with the transmission of impotence, erectile dysfunction, penile deformity or infection, using ideas about Jewish sexual abnormality to reflect wider fears about the *literal*, and not just the metaphorical, emasculation of the body politic. It is for this reason that circumcision is identified as a surgical procedure in several prints, with satirists substituting the razor and bleeding bowl of the barber-surgeon for the traditional tools of the mohel.[25] In one print—*A Stir in the City, or Some Folks at Guild-Hall* (1754)—Englishmen who are 'ready for Circumcision' are

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Figure 5 *The Circumcised Gentiles, Or a Journey to Jerusalem*. The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.

directed towards a group of butchers who have been recast as 'Surgeons' and who declare aloud their dubious qualifications for this new office: 'Not one of us but have dissected a Body', one affirms—while another boasts that he 'can cure a Rupture'. Other prints suggest circumcision causes penile infection: *The Circumcised Gentiles, Or a Journey to Jerusalem* (1753), for example, displays 'circumcision Salve' and 'Israel's Court Plaister for Green Wounds' as essential remedies for those with gangrenous ('Green') or infected penises[26] (figure 5). And many texts and images from the 1753 paper war equate circumcision with impotence or inadequate penis size; one untitled print 'Publish'd for Mr. Foreskin at the great pair of Breeches in the Parish of Wesm[ins]ter', for example, identifies the Duke of Cumberland, a supporter of the Act, insouciantly agreeing to circumcision even though he'll 'have nothing left then.'[27]

Perhaps most significantly, a number of satires produced in the aftermath of the Act imply that mandatory circumcision will level the reproductive playing field for Jews and Christians, thus effectually allowing the former to enjoy proportionately higher birth rates. The unsettlingly graphic *The Christian's New Warning-Piece* (1753), for example—analysed in dazzlingly forensic detail by Caroline Gonda—not only uses the sexually charged language of pornography to suggest that circumcision is an act of sexual violence; it also identifies the severed foreskin as a valuable sexual and reproductive aid, and thus a commodity hotly coveted by genitally deficient Jews (Gonda 2007,4).

Like Pope's *Strange Relation* (on which it is explicitly based), The *Warning-Piece* tells the story of a circumcision gone awry. In this case, it is Edward Turner, a Whig candidate in the notoriously corrupt Oxford Parliamentary elections for 1754, who agrees to undergo the procedure in exchange for the support of Samson Gideon, a prominent and wealthy Jewish businessman.[28] When Turner's newly severed foreskin goes missing after the operation, Gideon insists that being 'in full Possession' of the flesh is an 'indespensable [sic] Condition' of their agreement, and so refuses to honour his half of the bargain. Although we subsequently learn that Turner's foreskin has been stolen by a Christian clergyman attending the event—a 'Reverend Timothy Boots' identified by Gonda as the Reverend Thomas Bray of Exeter College—the text's description of how this thief uses the 'invigorating Contrivance' of the foreskin to enhance his liaisons with 'the *Mountain-Nymphs* of *Shotover* and the *Dryads* of *Maudlin-Wood*' signals why Gideon would covet this tool: it serves as a means of increasing his sexual and reproductive power (Christian's New Warning Piece 1753, 13). (Bray was not only rumoured to have been sexually promiscuous, but also, Gonda observes, to have impregnated a local prostitute (Gonda 2007, 266)). The prospect of Christian conversion to Judaism is thus presented here, although allusively, as a prospect of anatomical levelling: Gideon insists on possessing the foreskin not because he wishes, like the sinister gang in Pope's *Strange Relation*, to display it as a battle trophy, but because he wants to use it to Jewish sexual and reproductive advantage. Fears about increased Jewish birth rates clearly also underpin other antinaturalisation satires, such as the 14 July 1753 issue of the Tory periodical *The Craftsman* (Wolper 1983, unpag).[29] Here the writer imagines a dystopian future in which *The Craftsman* has become *The Hebrew Journal*, and naturalised Jewish immigrants have masterminded a cultural and biological takeover of the nation. *The Hebrew Journal* for 1853 records the imagined circumcision of 'twenty-five Children…at the Lying-In Hospital in Brownlow street' and the imagined execution of 17 Christian men who choose 'to lay down their Lives rather than be curtail'd of the Honour of their Ancestors by the Act of Circumcision' (Wolper 1983, unpag). Taken together, these disconnected news items invoke a future in which Jewish birth rates are skyrocketing while Christian Englishmen are dwindling into extinction. In this context, the foreskin is not only a badge of sexual 'Honour', but also a means of identifying a dying ancestry.

While there were many other texts and images produced during the naturalisation controversy, these examples suggest that beliefs about Jewish male sexual pathology may have exercised some influence even within major political debates. The satires against the 'Jew Bill' may also, paradoxically, provide some context for the later *endorsement* of circumcision by the British medical establishment, who promoted it as a prophylactic against venereal infection and as an aid to fertility. This shift in attitudes—documented at length by Robert Darby in *A Surgical Temptation*—is not merely indicative of what Darby identifies as a growing masturbation phobia; it is also indicative of the bipolar attitudes towards Jewish sexuality that characterised English culture for centuries, with Jewish men seen as both asexual and hypersexualised, disease-prone and disease-proof ((Darby 2005). The endorsement of circumcision and the repudiation of it are, in this sense, flip sides of the same allosemitic coin; both expose the same underlying fears about the impact of Jewish sexual activity.

Perhaps because he is campaigning ardently *against* circumcision, Darby concludes that the 1753 satires were 'good-humored and often funny'; Thomas Perry similarly downplays the anti-Jewish element, insisting that many contributions to the paper war were 'innocently intended and innocently enjoyed' (Darby 2005, 36; Perry 1974, 198–99). Yet these historians' rejection of what Wolper identifies as 'virulent anti-Semitism' misses the inherent prejudice in associating Jewishness specifically with *pathologised* or *medicalised* difference (Wolper 1982, 28). Such associations—although they appeared in disparate works and at disparate moments throughout the century—demonstrate an underlying anti-Semitism that influenced English attitudes to the Jewish penis well beyond the eighteenth century.

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NOTES

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2. For Cibber's description of Pope's penis, see Cibber (1742), 24. On the print, see Stephens and George 1870), 2:2046.
3. On pre-1700 attacks on Jewish sexuality, see Shapiro 1996, 37–38; Webster 2006; Biberman 2004. On Jewish male menstruation, see Katz 1999; on the Jewish smell, or fœtor Judaicus, see Tullett 2016.
4. On ideas of impotence in this period, see Mueller 1999, 91; Freitas 2003; Greenfield 2020.
5. As Melvyn New explains, Sterne would have encountered through John Spencer's 1685 work *De Legibus Hebræorum Ritualibus* (*On the Ritual Laws of the Hebrews*). See Sterne 1978, 3:371–72.
6. On De La Créquinière's text in relation to Enlightenment views of 'Oriental' history (including Jewish history), see Ginzburg 2015, 462–72.
7. On the notion that too much sexual activity could damage the penis, see Mueller, 'Fallen Men', 91–92.
8. See, among many examples, Nicholson 1718, *The Modern Siphylis: or, The True Method of Curing Every Stage and Symptom of the Venereal Disease* (London: N. Crouch, c. 1718), 69; Boulton 1714, *Physico-Chyrurgical Treatises of the Gout, the Kings-Evil and the Lues Venerea*. (London: W. Brand, c. 1714), 316; Cockburn 1713, *The Symptoms, Nature, Cause, and Cure of a Gonorrhoea* (London: John Graves, 1713), 84–87; Armstrong 1737, *A Synopsis of the History and Cure of Venereal Diseases* (London: A. Millar, 1737), 256, 395, 454; Atkins 1742, *The Navy Surgeon* (London: J. Hodges, 1742), 238; E. Jourdan de Pellerin, *A Treatise on Venereal Maladies* (London: A Millar, 1750), 248–56; Boerhaave, *Lectures,* 138; Turner, *De Morbis Cutaneis*, 204; Astruc, *Treatise of the Venereal Disease*, 1:423–28.
9. Pierre Dionis is one of vanishingly few who refer to 'circumcision' (Dionis 1719, 21). John Marten refers to it as 'Surgery' (Marten 1707, 421); René-Jacques Croissant de Garengeot refers to surgical 'operations' for paraphimosis and phimosis (Croissant de Garengeot 1723, 234–39).
10. Bulwer (1653) further claims that the 'Turkes, Persians and most Orientall Nations' use opium 'to prolong the act, and spin out the motions of Carnality'.
11. On Marten's career and reputation as a venereologist, see Porter 1996.
12. Jewish circumcision may have attracted more attention because of the increasing size, visibility and permanence of the Jewish community in England after 1656; on this topic, see Katz 1994; Endelman 1999; Endelman 2002, 15–78.
13. For specific episodes in these texts, see , 1:77–82; Fielding 1744, 1:47. On Hogarth's print, see Stephens and George 1870, 2.2046.
14. In Voltaire's *Candide*, for example, a wealthy Jewish man 'buys' Cunegund as a prisoner of war and lays 'close Siege to (her) Person', but never manages to consummate the match. See Voltaire [François-Marie Arouet] 1759, 33. On Jews as a woman's first 'keeper', see Rosenthal 2015.
15. For exceptions to this trend, see, for example, *Slippery Weather* (1795) and *Moses in the Bulrushes!!* (1810?). Further details in Stephens and George 1870, 7.8592 and 8.11697.
16. For more on the figure of the 'beau Jew', see Ragussis 2010, 80–81.
17. For further details on these prints, see Stephens and George 1870, 4.4525.
18. The heroine is variously identified as 'Poll' and 'Moll' and the servant as 'Betty' and 'Bess'. I will be using 'Moll' and 'Betty' here for clarity.
19. On circumcision and coin-clipping, see Felsenstein 1995, 140–41.
20. The decision to name the opera after Moll's keeper seems to have been an attempt to capitalise on the popularity of the 'stage Jew'; see Ragussis 2010.
21. Mendez/Mendes was a well-known Sephardic surname in Britain at this time, but it is likely the same Mendez, described by Frederick George Stephens as a '"man-about-town" and merchant of considerable note at this period' depicted in *The Sinister (of Left-Handed) Theatrical Duel* (1770). See Stephens and George 1870, 4.4382. The singer 'Signora G' may be Caterina Gabrielli, 1730–1796, an Italian coloratura famed for 'her beauty and caprice'. See Burney 1776, 4:503. Mezzo-soprano Caterina Galli, c. 1724–1804, is identified as a prior object of Mendez's affection.
22. For further details on the print, see Stephens and George 1870, 5.5077.
23. On the comparison of Jews with dogs, see Felsenstein 1995, 124–25.
24. On the work's contexts, see Rogers 2019; on its anti-Semitism, see Felsenstein 1995, 143–45.
25. See, for example, *A Scene of Scenes for the Year 1853* (1753); *The Iews Shaving the Parl'm't or the Know[g] Ones Taken In* (1753); *A Stir in the City, or Some Folks at Guild-Hall* (1754). For the first print, see https://www.loc.gov/item/94509121/; for the latter two, see Stephens and George 1870, 3.3208 and 3.3266.
26. See Stephens and George 1870, 3.3205; Felsenstein 1995, 198–99.
27. For further details on this print, see Stephens and George 1870, 3.3209.
28. On Gideon, who was in fact opposed to the Jewish Naturalization Act, see Endelman 1999, 28–31; Katz 1994, 248–49.
29. As Wolper explains, the issue was reprinted in *The London Evening Post*, *Jackson's Oxford Journal* and *The London Magazine* (Wolper 1983, viii).

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