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Doctor Faustus Impotent? Fantasizing the Male Body in the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*

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The notion of masculine sexual potency relies on the fiction of the penis as phallus. It is, however, the penis that perpetually challenges the phallus as privileged signifier of masculinity. This article discusses how the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*—one of the most popular fictions of masculine potency in early modern Germany—represents a cultural fantasy about the penis as phallus. It shows that the transformation of the male body into the masculine body requires the transformation of the penis into the phallus as well as the construction of non-phallic ‘others’—both male and female. (BM)

Impotence: *Lack of self restraint; violent passion* (OED vol. 7, 734)

Narratives of male sexual potency do not simply reflect gender stereotypes; rather, they actively participate in the cultural construction of masculinities and masculine bodies. By so doing they permit insight into the mechanisms of identification and disavowal by which gender is constituted (Butler 3). The construct of masculine potency thus presupposes the disavowal of impotence.

Viagra, despite current publicity, is certainly not the first treatment for impotence promising “to return afflicted men to proud full function,” as John Leeland put it in a November 1997 issue of *Newsweek* (64). In the sixteenth century, Doctor Johann Faustus turns to the devil in order to pursue a life of continual potency, having “any woman in the whole city brought to him at his command; the which he practised and persevered in a long time” (DL 11; H 29).¹ To those men suffering from impotence who did not want to seek the help of the devil, Johann Wittich, an early modern physician and author of medical self-help books, recommends the following cure:

[T]ake a sparrow brain, an orchid root (*Sterndelkrautwurz*), florum palmæ, incense, 1 ounce (2 *lot*) each. Make pills out of these ingredients, and hand them to the impotent male—but not more than 6 or 7, because otherwise the wife will die under him (*sonsten wird das Weib vnter dem Manne vmbkommen*) (437).

Note how this prescription for the impotent penis easily turns into a fiction about the phallic power of an extraordinary erection that finds its ultimate goal in the extermination of the female. This short passage, indeed, is an example for the immediate transformation of the penis into the phallus. As a signifier of masculinity, of power, strength, and control, the phallus depends on the invisibility and negation of the penis. In fact, as Judith Butler has argued, for the phallus to function as privileged signifier “the penis becomes the privileged referent to be negated” (84). Butler notes that “[t]o have the penis is to have that which the phallus is not, but which, precisely by virtue of this not being, constitutes the occasion for the phallus to signify (in this sense, the phallus requires and reproduces the diminution of the penis in order to signify—almost a kind of master-slave dialectic between them)” (263, note 30).

The dependency of the phallus upon the weakness of the penis might be denied by displacing this weakness and powerlessness onto the other. For the physician Wittich this other clearly is the wife who, in contrast to her husband, seems utterly without control. She seems to be no more than the helpless victim of her husband’s phallic sexuality. While he *has* the phallus, she *is* the phallus for him. The concept of the phallus as privileged signifier of masculinity therefore not only presupposes the invisibility of the penis, but brings about the naturalization of the phallus as well. Since, however, the phallus is predicated upon the penis, it is perpetually haunted by the latter’s impotence. The question, then, is what becomes of masculinity if the penis is disclosed? The problem with answering this question is, of course, that the penis usually remains invisible. Anatomy books, however, allow one of those rare glances at the penis.

In Adrian Spiegel’s *De humani corporis fabrica libri decem*, published in 1627, one of Giulio Casserio’s plates (figure 1) features the muscular anatomy of the penis *in situ* rather than as isolated and abstract anatomical illustration. It shows a young male surrendering his partly anatomized penis to the unrestrained and penetrating gaze of the spectator/anatomist. The semi-recumbent position of the male with his legs wide open, his head and eyes averted, and the inviting gesture of his right hand signal sexual availability, passivity, even helplessness. His



Figure 1. Penis and anus *in situ* from Adrian Spiegel and Giulio Casserio, *De humani corporis fabrica libri decem*, Venice 1627. (Courtesy Zweigbibliothek Wissenschaftsgeschichte, Humboldt University Berlin.)

position, as Sander Gilman has noted, echoes representations of *female* sexuality and eroticism (126) so very popular not only in early modern anatomy books—as Gilman suggests—but even more so in art. Casserio's engraving employs an iconography that in Renaissance erotic images, as Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat has shown, was almost entirely reserved for the representation of women (393–401). Within the heterosexual “economy of the gaze” that identified looking with masculinity and being looked at with femininity (Simons 50), Casserio's plate, which requests the masculine gaze, ties the display of the penis to effeminization. Furthermore, the invisibility of scrotum and testes suggests a complete lack of semen and enhances the male's effeminization even more. His penis as well as his position do not flaunt phallic strength and control. Rather than having the phallus, this male *is* the phallus, while at the same time his desire for the phallus is displayed by the phallic tree he clings to. The illustration resists conventional gender stereotypes. While the figure from an anatomical point of view undoubtedly is a man, he is represented in a feminizing fashion. The illustration denies the seemingly “natural” congruence between gender performance and anatomy, between sex and gender, as it were. The phallus appears as a structure detached from any particular body, and the supposedly masculine penis is represented as feminine. The pose of the penis in the shape of a question mark seems to express exactly this insecurity and ambivalence about its gender identity. In its representation of the relation between penis and phallus the illustration demonstrates, in the words of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, that “sometimes masculinity has nothing to do with men” (12).

Johann Wittich seems to be well aware of the embarrassing difference between penis and phallus, for it is exactly the avoidance of this embarrassment for which his drug is designed:

This [medication] must not be deliberately misused, but was designed as a device for those husbands who find themselves weak in sexual matters; so that the wife, if she finds her husband to be weak, does not leave him for another man. Indeed, the medication shall be used to prevent this great mishap. It shall help the male to prove himself a man towards his wife (*darnit der Mann besetze bey seinem Weibe*) (437).

The argument betrays male gender anxieties concerning the consequences of impotence. A wife whose husband could not fulfill his conjugal duty because of impotence or infertility could legally divorce him. Impotence, therefore, was a frightening condition for the male who, as Vern L. Bullough put it, “was defined in terms of sexual performance,

measured rather simply as his ability to get an erection” (43). Wittich's warning of the drug's power to transform the penis into a phallic weapon, therefore, seems not so much motivated by his care for women's lives but by the humiliating consequences impotence entails for the man. While Wittich's version of the penis focuses on the phallic strength of the male body, Casserio invites a reading from the perspective of the male body's “vulnerabilities rather than the dense armor of its power—from the ‘point of view’ of the mutable, plural penis rather than the majestic, unitary phallus” (Bordo 697). Such a point of view does not presuppose that “everything pertaining to men can be classified as masculinity, and everything that can be said about masculinity pertains in the first place to men” (Sedgwick 12). Rather, it focuses on the performative construction of masculinity regardless of the anatomy of the body. Such a point of view, moreover, is concerned with the abject, with this “zone of uninhabitability” (Butler 3) where bodies that do not matter are forced to dwell. As Julia Kristeva notes, abjection is provoked by the subject's recognition of the impossibility of stable identities; it strives to secure precarious boundaries and differences “[a]s if the fundamental opposition were between I and Other, or in more archaic fashion, between Inside and Outside” (7). In this sense, the impotent penis belongs to the realm of the abject. While the boundary between I and other is maintained by creating impotent others, the boundary between Inside and Outside requires the construction of an enemy that imposes impotence onto the male from the outside.

The difference between penis and phallus allows a reading of the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* from the point of view of impotence. The text both recognizes and rejects threatening frailties of the male body, especially the penis; it thereby establishes what Julia Kristeva calls “a defensive position, one that implies a refusal but also a sublimating elaboration” (7). From this perspective, the *Historia*'s specific “performance” within contemporary gender discourses becomes accessible. After discussing the defensive construction of Faustus's potency, which construes impotence as a characteristic of the other, I shall show in what way the *Historia* represents a fantasy about the nature of masculinity.

Although the literature on the *Historia* is extensive, a gender-sensitive reading of Faustus's body has not been undertaken. So far, the representation of his masculinity has only been discussed in the context of early modern discourses of science, marriage, and melancholy (Marie E. Müller; Williams). Barbara Becker-Cantarino's thought-provoking thesis that the *Historia* was “a fictional representation of gender anxiety, of apprehensions of the male subject” (32), however, prompts questions

about the *bodily* implications of this male anxiety. If, as Becker-Cantano recognizes, there is also a "subtext of gender conflict and (dis)empowerment" (32) in the *Historia*, this conflict extends not only to the threat the female body poses to the male—as she argues—but also to contradictions and anxieties inherent in early modern notions of the male body and its relation to contemporary constructions of masculinity.

The *Historia von D. Johann Faustus* tells the story of a sixteenth-century theologian who trades his soul to the devil in order to "speculate the elements" (H 22) and enjoy a luxurious life. The text frequently emphasizes Faustus's sexual potency. Immediately after signing the pact, Faustus resumes a "swinish and Epicurish life" (H 27), which he pursues until the end of his life. On one occasion, Mephistophiles produces "seven of the fayrest women... whom he [Faustus] liked so well, that he continued with them in all manner of love... yea even to his last end" (DL 73, H 109). In the nineteenth and twentieth year he "commanded seven devilish succubae and he lay with them all" (DL 72; H 109). In his last year, "Faustus might fill the lust of his flesh and live in all manner of voluptuous pleasures" (DL 73, H 110). He commands his spirit to "bring him the faire Helena, which he also did. Whereupon he fel in love with her, and made her his common Concubine and bedfellow... and in the end [she] brought him a man childe" (DL 73; H 110). In these sexual adventures Faustus is portrayed as extraordinarily potent, quite clearly not threatened by impotence.

Chapter 26 offers a lengthy account of such sexual adventuring. On his journey across the world Faustus appears at the Turkish emperor's court in Constantinople, where he almost immediately invades the Turk's harem. In the guise of Mohammed he "went into the Castell where hee kept his Wives and Concubines, in the which Castell might no man upon paine of death come, except those that were appointed by the great Turke to doo them service, and they were all gelded" (DL 43, H 69). He "caused a great foggie to bee round about the Castell" (DL 43, H 69) during the six days he remains within, "having each day his pleasure" (DL 44; H 69). When he finally leaves, the Turk "sent for his Wives and Concubines, demanding of them if they knew the cause why the Castell was beset with a mist so long: they said, that it was the God Mahumet himselfe that caused it... and for more certaintie, he hath lien with sixe of vs these six nights one after another," saying that out of his seed "should be raised a mighty generation" (DL 44; H 69). The Turk, moreover, inquires if their visitor "had actual copulation with them, according as earthly men have, yea my Lorde quoth one... hee lay with us stark naked, kissed and colled us, and so delighted me, y for my part, I would he came two or three times a week to serve me in such

sort againe" (DL 44, H 69). The women also emphasize that he was indeed "well endowed" (*vnd were in summa wol gestaffert*) (H 70).

Clearly, this episode portrays Faustus as a "real man"—sexually potent and successful. Women, on the other hand, are either projections of the masculine mind and/or convenient servants longing for sexual satisfaction by the male. In this view the *Historia* offers a particularly misogynistic version of early modern gender stereotypes. Paradoxically, though, Faustus is a "real man" to the extent that he is not preoccupied with the frailties and failures that afflicted "real men's" bodies. The phallic logic of the text becomes quite evident when considered from the perspective of early modern society's preoccupation with male impotence. Such a perspective encompasses fields as diverse as the legal apparatus, men's fashion, witchcraft, medical literature, and national and racist stereotypes.

In the early modern period, potency and impotence were not regarded as private matters but possessed social and political significance. In marriage, male impotence undermined the power relations between husband and wife, which required the husband to rule and the wife to be subservient. If a man, however, was impotent and hence did not fulfill his duty, he could not expect his wife to fulfill her part. Considering that the married couple and their family were regarded as a kind of role model for the whole of society, as Heide Wunder has shown (89–118), impotence might threaten to disrupt men's social and political power. A man who was accused of impotence by his wife had to submit his penis to an examination, the so-called "congress"—a kind of public potency test. Doctors and midwives examined the male's genitals as to size, shape, and suitability for an erection (Fischer-Homberger 62). They also examined the character and quality of the semen to find out if it was fertile. Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset cite the following description of a typical congress in the late Middle Ages:

[T]he doctor must first of all examine the complexion and structure of the reproductive organs; then he must go to a matron used to such [procedures] and he must tell [the husband and wife] to lie together on several successive days in the presence of the said matron... Then she must report what she has seen to the doctor (172).

If the husband was indeed found impotent or infertile, the marriage was either annulled or divorced. The husband, moreover, lost not only his wife, but, more importantly, his masculine honor. This practice "inextricably links sexual ability and male identity and shows that a man who was sexually dysfunctional was considered less than a real man"

(Murray 139). Obviously, masculinity was not just a question of the right set of genitals, but a question of performance. Felix Plater, who served as medical consultant to the ecclesiastical court in sixteenth-century Basel and was as such frequently present at potency tests, reports that many men tried to hide their defect as long as possible, because they feared the "shame and ridicule" it entailed (155). In the sixteenth century the practice of the congress became very much disputed. Many physicians claimed it was an instrument that helped malevolent wives to get rid of their husbands, but which, in fact, only betrayed women's lust and carnality. They declared that "a man's potency first of all depended upon his relationship to the wife as well as on the situation" (Fischer-Homberger 62). In other words, women, not men, were held responsible for male impotence.

Men's penises were, furthermore, a favorite target for witchcraft. Witches were thought to cast spells on the penis that prevented the production of semen or left the man incapable of achieving an erection. Supposedly, "witches tied knots in thread or laces of leather, thus creating ligatures or knots in the seminal vessels; impotence so caused would remain until the hidden knots were discovered or untied or until the witch lifted her spell" (Bullough 42; Paré 964). Faustus, too, is said to have the ability to produce impotence. In a chapter included in a later edition he prevents a married woman and her lover from committing adultery by rendering the man temporarily impotent (H 137-39).

However, men were not just passive victims, they also tried to reclaim control over their penises. Sexually potent masculinity, for example, was represented by the fashion of the codpiece. Consisting of a "front flap forming a pouch and . . . worn with trunk-hose," the codpiece, often overstuffed and heavily decorated, "assumed the shape of a permanent erection" (Persels 89). The codpiece was the embellishment and glorification of the phallus "of what it physically meant to be a man" (87). It effaces the difference between penis and phallus and transforms the penis into the proud phallus, rejecting suspicions of impotence. The fact that the codpiece was regarded as a form of "nudity," as if it indeed displayed the penis, shows how successfully this strategy worked. But, of course, the codpiece could also be worn by cross-dressing women who used it to pass as men. As Marjorie Garber has noted, the codpiece symbolizes the state of "seeming" the phallus and points to the "artificiality and detachability of maleness" (301): "More importantly—and less intuitively—the codpiece confounds the question of gender, since it can signify yes or no, full or empty, lack or lack of lack" (302). The codpiece, moreover, illustrates young men's preoccupation with sexual

potency and again reveals the negative relationship between penis and phallus.

In this context the *Historia's* insistence on Faustus's potency takes on a special meaning. It does not just symbolize his undisciplined lifestyle, but also represents a particular validation of the penis as phallus in a culture that was very much preoccupied with its vulnerability and failure. The *Historia*, like the codpiece, represents the ideal masculine image "of a somewhat exaggerated and overwhelming virility" (Persels 89). However, whereas the codpiece just alludes to potency, Faustus proves to be successfully potent—always. Moreover, his sexual adventures are not really condemned by the otherwise moralistic narrator so that his potency is accepted rather than criticized. It is precisely this uncontested representation of the phallus that makes the *Historia* a heterosexual pornographic fantasy. To be sure, the text is not pornographic in terms of flaunting explicit images of sexual activities and genitals. But pornography is more than that, or else anatomy books would have to count as utterly pornographic (Kimmel 6), and—given their prevalence in the sixteenth century—would hold a considerable share of the "new marketplace for the obscene" (Hunt 26). In the recent collection *Men Confess Pornography*, Michael Kimmel has argued that for men, pornography's "value appears to be contained in its function" (1), which is first and foremost the identification of the penis with the phallus and, as a consequence, the unconditional glorification of the penis as phallus. As Susan Bordo has observed:

Pornography thus becomes a context in which the repressed penis . . . can come out of hiding and exhibit itself without shame or fear of rejection. And in this reading, it is the penis which has the stake here, *not* the phallus; for despite the pervasive presence of erections in pornography, these are erections that are exposed precisely in order to be validated. Their validation—the transformation of the embarrassed penis into proud phallus—is the point of pornography (706).

Pornography represents a fiction in which the penis-phallus is never weak, but strong; it depicts, in Kimmel's words, "a world of fantasy to the male viewer—a world of sexual plenty . . . a world in which gorgeous and sexy women are eager to have sex with us, . . . a world, in short, utterly unlike the one we inhabit" (314). As a sexual fiction pornography suggests to the male reader/spectator that sex may be had at all times on the conditions of the male.

Unlike his contemporaries, Faustus does not have to bother with dissatisfied wives, malevolent witches, physical weakness, etc. For

Faustus, erections are always possible; his maleness is admired enthusiastically and completely. The women with whom he has intercourse are in no way active, demanding, or critical—on the contrary, they only exist to fulfill Faustus's sexual desire. To stress that the *Historia* represents a fantasy, however, does not mean to suggest that it is an unrealistic dream world. Rather, this fantasy represents an important aspect of normative masculinity and is therefore constitutive of masculine gender identity. Masculinities are not naturally given but are constructs that rely on norms, phantasmas, performances, and representations, of which (pornographic) fantasies are an important part. In a way, such fantasies provide a space for the masculine subject to construe himself as masculine and virile. Not in the sense, however, that the masculine subject necessarily has to imitate or repeat this fantasy, which would, after all, require a confrontation of penis and phallus, but rather in the sense that the subject feels empowered by identifying with this fantasy. Faustus's potency might therefore at once be called realistic and unrealistic. Unrealistic, because it denies very real frailties of early modern male bodies; realistic, because it articulates and circulates normative notions of masculinity that enable masculine self-fashioning.

Although Faustus's potency denies male gender anxieties, the threat of impotence is not completely banished from the text. In the *Historia* the penis, after all, is not always already the phallus; rather, impotence and sexual rejection are displaced onto the figure of the other—onto the gelded servants at the Turk's palace as well as onto the emperor himself. The text underlines the exceptional position that Faustus occupies in the harem, where, as a rule, "no man upon payne of death [may] come" (DL 43, H 69). Regardless of the high esteem and position eunuchs could achieve at the Ottoman court, in the *Historia* they function as the embodiment of defective masculinity, as the impotent other to Faustus's potency. The eunuchs secure the boundary between penis and phallus, because they do not challenge Faustus's potency; he will invariably be more potent. Furthermore, in the Christian imagination eunuchs not only represented the threat of castration but also the collapse of gender difference. According to the renowned physician Ambroise Paré, "the nature of eunuchs is to be referred to that of women, because they seem to have completely assumed a womanish nature (*als welche der Weiber Natur fast ganz und gar an sich haben*) by deficiency of heat; they have a smooth body and a soft and small voice just like women" (29). Eunuchs, in other words, were feminized because they lacked the phallus. In underscoring the eunuchs' difference, the *Historia* suggests that Faustus was protected from effeminization or gender change because of his potency, which at once secures and enhances his masculinity.

However, the text also reveals the defensive character of Faustus's masculinity, which appears to depend upon the securing of boundaries as well as on the construction of inferior others.

The eunuchs, however, are not the only others the text creates. The representation of the Turkish emperor negotiates another aspect of the dynamics of othering. Blended into this pornographic fantasy are notions of cultural superiority of the Occident over the Orient. In sixteenth-century Germany "the Turk" was perceived as a threat to Christian civilization. The expansive politics of the Ottoman Empire since the second half of the fifteenth century, resulting in the conquest of Constantinople (1453), Belgrade (1521), and Rhodes (1522); the occupation of Hungary (1526); and, most importantly, the siege of Vienna (1529), contributed to an increasing and exaggerated fear of the Turkish enemy. In countless broadsheets, sermons, and treatises, religious and political propaganda construed the male Turk as voluptuous, carnal, and constantly fornicating; he was said to be of "swinish and Epicurish" nature, practicing polygamy in order to satisfy his exorbitant sexual desire (Kleinlogel 39; cf. also Göllner 312–55; Heinrich Müller 13–15). The medical profession accounted for the otherness of the Orientals in terms of complexion theory. Because of the predominantly hot climate Orientals were "more vigorous... more virile... whereas by contrast, Occidentals were much more effeminate and soft" (Paré 19). The Turk represented the cultural stereotype of uninhibited sexual power, "of the penis as animal, powerful and exciting by virtue of brute strength and size" (Bordo 701). This racist stereotype not only served to idealize the institution of Christian marriage, as Göllner and Kleinlogel have noted, but also set the stage for the empowerment of Christian males. For despite the condemnation of the Turk's legendary potency by Christian propaganda, it could nevertheless be instrumentalized to enhance one's own sexual superiority in fantasies of occasions when the Christian phallus would appear superior.

Hans Sachs articulates this kind of empowerment in *Der Knecht Hinzlitz*. Here, a husband returning from warfare in Turkey asks his servant to test his wife's sexual fidelity by seducing her. The servant consequently tells his master's wife that her husband had accidentally been killed when the Turks performed a castration on him (*Da ist dem junkhern worden ausgeschnitten*) (88). The Turks, however, had not intended to kill him; rather, the castration had to be performed because by Turkish standards, his penis was too small, in which case the law required a castration (88–89). The servant himself had only survived, because his penis was bigger than his master's (*Knecht Hinzlitz sprach: "meiner grosser war"*) (89). On hearing this, the wife immediately stops mourning her presumably dead husband. Repeatedly inquiring about the

size of the servant's penis (*Dw hest den grosseren, als man Euch der schawen?*) (89, 43, 49), she starts seducing him. Eventually, the husband, who was hiding under the bed, makes himself known, confirming that his penis, after all, was not too short. Clearly, in this tale, the servant's penis appears so admirable because he supposedly fulfills the "strict" Turkish requirements but is *not* Turkish. In this tale, the Turks are not completely alien to the Christian world; rather, their difference seems to be integrated into the scheme of Christian sexual superiority. As Lynne Tadlock has noted, "[i]n one sense, one might say, they were fully assimilated" (307).

Faustus's adventure at the Turkish court takes this form of masculine empowerment even further. The emperor's wives, who praise Faustus's sexual performance enthusiastically, assert that it is Faustus's penis—not the Turk's—that is the object of their desire and admiration. This glorification of the white Christian penis reveals the empowering quality of this racist stereotype. The Turk's penis might be powerful and strong, even determining his character, but it is utterly undeserving of validation or esteem—not even by his own wives. Having sex with the sultan's wives, furthermore, might be read as a form of masculine heterosexual empowerment based on the struggle over the other's women, which eventually brings about the other's effacement since Faustus is said to have "raised a mighty generation" (DL 44, H 69). In the *Historia*, the male Turk seems twice marginal—a voluptuous monster and therefore eternally inferior to the Christian male. The representation of sexuality in the *Historia* thus confirms Michel Foucault's claim that sexuality was "an especially dense transfer point of power relations endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of maneuvers and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin for the most varied strategies" (Introduction 103). It is an activity, as Sander Gilman notes, which is "constantly creating borders between our personal sexual identity and that of the other" (4).

So far I have argued that Faustus's potency could be regarded as a pornographic fantasy, compared to the very real danger of impotence that threatened early modern men. From a broader perspective, however, the text represents a fantasy about the very nature of masculinity—a fantasy that denies the contradictions inherent in the male body. In order to explore this dimension in the *Historia* more fully, we have to shift our attention away from the penis to the early modern physiology of the male body. The medical literature indicates that the phallus is not only threatened by the penis but by the male body as a whole.

Early modern medicine and natural philosophy regarded biology as destiny (Salisbury 81). According to the predominant Galenic regime of

humors inherited from the classical age, gender difference, as Joan Cadden has noted, was a question of body heat: "It operated as the basis for the conceptualization of the masculine and the feminine both within and beyond reproduction" (280). Galen, the main authority on humoral pathology, which prevailed well into the seventeenth century, stated that "within mankind the man is more perfect than the woman, and the reason for his perfection is his excess of heat, for heat is Nature's primary instrument" (630).² Body heat was, among other things, responsible for the concoction of semen and the development of the genitals. Because of their heat, men's bodies were able to refine pure and powerful semen, whereas women, because of their coldness, were thought to possess defective semen. While semen was the essence of masculinity, menstrual blood was perceived to be the essence of femininity (Salisbury 89). Heat allowed men's genitals to develop fully and grow out of their bodies, whereas women's were imperfectly developed and remained inside their body. Heat, furthermore, affected one's psychology and identity, making men strong, determined, and rational. As Nancy Strasi notes, "complexion theory usefully accounted for psychological and social as well as physiological characteristics or stereotypes" (103). In this sense, biology indeed was destiny, but biology was by no means stable or immutable.

Galenic physiology considered the human body a fragile system, in constant exchange with the immediate environment. As Gail Paster has noted, "[e]very subject grew up with a common understanding of his or her body as a semipermeable, irrigated container... dependent on a differential caloric economy... and characterized by corporeal fluidity, openness, and porous boundaries" (8). Apart from season and age, the body's temperature—so essential for gender identity—was influenced by diet and the equilibrium of bodily fluids such as blood and semen. A man who wanted to preserve his masculinity had to pay close attention to his body temperature. As the sixteenth-century physician Christoph Wirsung explains: "Excessive heat or coldness might be responsible for the diminishing of masculinity.... While coldness paralyzes [the body], heat consumes it" (318). Excessive sexual activity, for example, might lower the body's temperature to the point where semen could not be produced anymore. Medical literature thus advised men to abstain from too much sexual intercourse, because it would weaken them extraordinarily and might cause impotence or infertility (Salisbury 90; Wirsung 320). For the female, by contrast, sexual intercourse was considered necessary, since it prevented the uterus from drying out or wandering about the body; it also supplied women with the necessary heat to keep their bodies functioning. Ambroise Paré mentions that men had lost their semen because of too much sexual activity "and instead had released

some raw, undigested and unprepared bloody moisture" (*eine rohe unverdawete und unbereyete blutige Feuchtheyt*) (958), which resembled menstrual blood and was, according to Galen, "not the suitable material for the generation of the animal" (623). According to Galen, a transformation from male to female had occurred because of too much sexual activity. The humorologists, moreover, felt that the penis needed special attention, because, as Wirsung notes, "the male member suffers from more illness-causing injuries, because it is a very fragile and irritable organ" (*ein fast zur und empfindlich Glied*) (297).

What was true for sexuality was even more true for food (Straisi 115-23). According to humoral pathology, every food possessed a certain degree of heat, which, in turn, influenced the body's temperature. A predominantly hot diet could alter the male body's natural heat in dangerous ways. It might increase the production of semen and thus increase desire, which could lead to excessive and therefore harmful intercourse. It might even burn the body altogether. If the diet was too cold, it might cool the body down to the point where the production of semen as well as the achievement of an erection were no longer possible. Paré warns his readers that "the business of all members is weakened, indeed turned into its opposite, if a change of the body's natural complexion occurs" (6). Indeed, food was early modern medicine's most important medication. Wirsung warns that impotence and infertility were most likely caused by the wrong diet, especially by overeating and ingesting too much alcohol (320) (*stets essen... trunckenbolz seyn*). As a rule, any form of excess would alter the body's natural complexion. Of course, given the volatility of the body's complexion, temperance was a relative principle that made monitoring and self-control an urgent requirement for the individual. Although the need for self-control applied to both men and women, men's bodies, because of their frailty, required especially careful self-control. As Michel Foucault in *The Use of Pleasure* has shown, masculinity was a matter of correct diet and modest sexuality. Those who failed to control their own desires and appetites, who indulged in gluttonous gorging and unrestrained sexual intercourse, might risk losing their masculinity. Thus, if a man did not want to risk his "radical undoing," he had "successfully to essay that risk" (Bray 162), that is, he had to learn to become the master of his desires. As Peter Brown put it, "each man trembled forever on the brink of becoming 'womanish.' His flickering heat was an uncertain force.... It was never enough to be male: ... he had to learn to exclude from his character and from the poise and temper of his body all telltale traces of softness that might betray, in him, the half-formed state of a woman" (11).

With these characteristics attributed to male physiology in mind, let us now consider Faustus's uses of his body. Both his sexual activity and his diet are essentially unrestrained and uncontrolled. Not only does he, as I have noted, indulge in intercourse whenever he feels the urge, but he also eats and drinks without restraint. In general, Faustus is said to have spent most of his time "in Innes and Students company, drinking and eating, with other jollite" (*bey Wirten und Studenten Tag und Nacht gefressen und gesoffen*) (DL 74; H 111). Thanks to Mephistophiles, Faustus enjoys a luxurious diet: "such meate as Faustus wished for, his spiritie brought him in; besides that, Faustus himselfe was become so cunning, that when he opened his windowe, what foule soever he wished for, it came presently flying into his house, were it neuer so dainitie" (DL 74, H 95). The banquets that he celebrated with seven of his students during Carnival reveal detailed information about their menu. On Tuesday "hee served them with very good supper of Hennes, fish, and ether rost" (61) as first course, the second course consisted of "fifteen messe of meat, having three dishes to a mess, the which were all manner of Venison, and other dainitie wild foule" (DL 62, H 93), accompanied by large quantities of wine: "I have three great flagons of wine, the first is full of Hungarian wine, containing eight gallons, the second of Italian wine, containing seauen gallons, the third containing sixe gallons of Spanish wine, all the which we will tippel out before it be day" (DL 62, H 94). This lavish banquet, however, was only the beginning, for "when they were all made drunke, and that they had almost eaten all their good cheare, ... Doctor Faustus desired them to bee his guests againe the next day following" (62; H 94). On Wednesday, they first had an "exquisite meal" (H 94) and after some dancing and singing he served them "innumerable of birds and wild foule... and being rosted they made their supper" (DL 63, H 95). On the following day, "Doctor Faustus was invited vnto the students that were with him the day before, where they had prepared an excellent banquet for him" (DL 63, H 96).

In terms of prevailing ideas on gender, Faustus's diet is decidedly masculine. Meat, the largest component of his diet, was considered a particularly masculine food. As Jakob Tanner observes, since the Middle Ages meat has been regarded as a symbol of masculine power and superiority, since it maintains the male body's strength, making it fit for war and sex alike (403). Vegetables, by contrast, suited the weak and soft female body perfectly. The Duchess of Anhalt seems to be aware of this gendered politics of food. When asked what kind of food she most desires, she answers: "I would eate my bellie full of ripe Grapes, and other dainitie fruite" (DL 58, H 89). Faustus's banquets, furthermore,

constitute a male ritual. As Lyndal Roper has shown, "social drinking [and eating] was an important part of male conviviality" (110) in early modern cities. It was, in fact, one of the rituals that constituted masculinity, since women were usually excluded from this kind of socializing, as were young men and men who for one reason or another had lost their male honor (110).

While this kind of conviviality clearly constitutes Faustus's masculinity, from the point of view of humoral pathology, however, his diet seems especially dangerous for his body temperature and, hence, for his gender identity. Maria E. Müller has reminded us that Faustus's body is a humoral body and that his lifestyle is extremely unhealthy ("Der andere Faust" 580). Müller, however, does not comment on the fact that Faustus seems totally unaffected by this unhealthy diet, as if his body, in a way, was not a humoral body. Johann Dryandrus, for instance, considers the large quantity of fowl Faustus regularly consumes "the most inferior and hottest food of all" (31). Wild ducks—of which Faustus and his company have four in one single day—are especially harmful. The old and therefore hot red wine out of the bishop's cellar likewise should raise his body temperature. In addition, overeating and drunkenness could completely choke the body. Obviously, Faustus's diet risks altering his body temperature. And yet, Faustus neither worries about self-control or temperance, nor does he suffer any harmful consequences. His life seems to defy the laws and limits of the humoral body. When other men become impotent or feminized from excessive eating, drinking, and fornicating, Faustus appears ever more potent and masculine. In his twenty-third year of the pact with the devil he even fathers a son (H 118). He seems to prove that lack of self-control does not necessarily entail impotence. In fact, Faustus affirms that there is no end to masculinity. The *Historia*, in this sense, might be read as a fiction of unhampered masculinity. This promise of uncontested male prowess might very well have been the reason for the *Historia*'s extraordinary popularity among young males (Baron 51), who were—as the fashion of the codpiece indicates—preoccupied with their penises.

This fantasy of secure boundaries between the sexes, of the uncontestability of masculinity, is, however, not unique to the *Historia*. It is a masculine cultural fantasy established in the very same texts that stressed the precariousness of early modern gender difference. Paré, for example, who taught that eunuchs were womanish in nature and that men who had lost their sperm became feminine, also maintained that gender reversal for males was out of the order of nature: "we therefore never find that a man ever became a woman, because nature tends always from what is imperfect towards what is most perfect and excellent

and not vice versa" (*Dag aber jemals auf einem Mann eine Frau worden / wird nirgend gefunden*, 1066). Considering the physiology of the male body, this conclusion comes as a surprise. Moreover, this law of perfectibility ruling out male gender transformation, as Patricia Parker has observed, is brought into existence by a "rhetoric of insistence" (340). Paré claims not to have "found" any incident of a male to female gender reversal, which, of course, does not mean that such cases do not exist. Clearly, the so-called "law" of teleological masculinity appears as a defense against the threat of masculine gender reversal. Recently, scholars such as Thomas Laqueur and Stephen Greenblatt have bestowed this rhetoric of insistence with academic authority, claiming that the Renaissance, indeed, only knew one sex and that this sex was masculine. However, the paradigm of the one-sex body (Laqueur ch. 2-4)—implying that the penis was the telos of gender—not only "elide[s] the very tensions within medical discourse" (Parker 360), but also falsely implies that there was no end to masculinity. As early modern physicians' preoccupation with the precariousness of the male body shows, the position of the genitals alone did not make the male masculine. Patricia Parker has convincingly argued that especially impotence was regarded as an incident of gender reversal "of which castration is the appropriate anatomical adjustment" (347). She cites the case of a near-castration that happened at a congress in France: "The matron, seeing that the husband's member was impossible to raise... taking out her knife, she wished with all her force to cut it off and would have done so, had not the doctor and the surgeon prevented her from it. She would have done well to, was the response, for no one should be allowed to trifle with a wife" (347).

By now it should have become clear that the *Historia* represents a fantasy of the male body that rejects the contradictions and threats inherent in early modern notions of masculinity. However, even within this fantasy, Faustus's potency and stability is not a "natural" condition of his body but an artificial and short-lived state enabled by the devil. To be sure, during the time of his pact he does not suffer any weakness or deficiency. But when his time is due, he is rendered impotent and infertile. On the morning after his death, when entering his chamber, the students "found no Faustus, but at the hall lay besprinkled with blood, his brains cleaving to the wall: for the Diuel had beaten him from one wall against another" (DL 81, H 122). His punishment seems like a symbolic castration, because since antiquity, the brain was thought to play an important role in the production of male semen: "Ancient Greeks located its origin in the brain, believing that it descended through the spinal cord to the testicles" (Salisbury 88). Medical self-help

literature of the time frequently stresses that impotence might be caused by a dysfunction of the brain. Wirsung explains that "a loss of masculinity might occur when the brain is impaired" (318; cf. Dryandrus 3). Faustus's son, who disappears on the day of his death, even renders him infertile. In other words, his punishment clearly shows that the boundary between potency and impotence, other and self, which the text so eagerly tries to secure, might indeed collapse. However, this collapse of boundaries is itself firmly rooted within the logic of the other, since it does not occur within Faustus's lifetime but in hell, after his death.

In contrast to life on earth, hell is a place where male sexual potency is unimportant or even impossible. Instead, the body will be tortured eternally: "there shalt thou abide horrible torments, trembling, gnashing of teeth, howling, crying, burning, freezing, melting, swimming in a labyrinth of miseries" (DL 18, H 40). Clearly, in hell Faustus will not be able to prove himself a man. Moreover, hell was known as a place where castrations were performed. Paintings of hell by Breughel, Bosch, and Cranach, for instance, frequently point to hell's emasculating quality. Hieronymus Bosch, in *The Temptations of Saint Anthony*, shows actual castrations being performed by the devil as well as male figures who have no penises at all or whose genitals have been transformed into dried twigs (Scholz 240). In the *Historia*, impotence is thus not completely absent from Faustus's existence; rather, it is postponed to another realm and period. It is the dead Faustus who will have to suffer from impotence, while the living Faustus is left untroubled by this masculine defect. The *Historia*, therefore, seems ambiguous about the possibility of male potency: while the text offers the inviting fantasy that the ever-fragile male body might be stabilized by a pact with the devil, the price, of course, is eternal impotence and infertility. However, even if Faustus dies impotent, the fantasy of everlasting masculinity and potency survives in the figure of the devil, who, in this sense, appears to be fully integrated into early modern constructions of masculinity. It is, of course, unclear whether the readers of the *Historia* enjoyed the text as pornography, as a particularly reassuring fiction about the strength of the male body, or whether they were discouraged from a pact with the devil precisely because of its castrating consequences. To solve this riddle was, however, not the focus of my analysis. Rather, I wanted to know how the threatening reality of impotence motivated this narrative of potency as well as what position the *Historia* occupied in early modern discourses of masculinity. Confronting the *Historia*'s phallic narrative with the penis has permitted insight into the defensive construction and representation of this particular version of masculinity. The text at once represents a phallic fantasy about the power, strength,

and potency of the male body and a sublimating elaboration of denied aspects of phallic masculinity. By emphasizing the anxious aspects of early modern notions of masculinity and making visible the abject and current that structures the text and surfaces through displacement and othering, it becomes clear that phallic control over signification can never fully succeed—that, in other words, the phallus is perpetually haunted by the penis.

Notes

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¹ Citations are based on the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*. Kritische Ausgabe, henceforth abbreviated H; most of the English translations are taken from the sixteenth-century translation *The Damnable Life of Doctor Johann Fausten*, henceforth abbreviated DL.

² In humoral pathology, heat was one among four basic qualities; the others were coldness, dryness, and moisture. The balance of these qualities was called complexion or temperament. Each of the four humors—blood, phlegm, cholera (yellow bile), and black bile—possessed a certain natural complexion. Blood was considered hot and moist; phlegm cold and moist; cholera was thought to be hot and dry; and black bile was considered cold and dry (cf. Klibansky, et al. ch. 1).

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