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“[T]hat Monstrous Machine of his”: The Machine Metaphor in John Cleland’s *Memoir of a Woman of Pleasure*

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Abstract

John Cleland’s *Memoir of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748–49), commonly known as *Fanny Hill*, is regarded as the first pornographic novel in English literature. Its description of sexual activities is explicit but its language is not coarse. It employs a wide range of metaphors to refer to both sexual acts and genitalia and the metaphor used most frequently to refer to the penis is “the machine.” The machine metaphor will be the focus of this paper, which aims to argue that the machine metaphor carries two meanings. The first is the machine as one of military metaphors common in erotica since sexual acts have long been represented as battles. Female sexual pleasure, portrayed in this novel, depends on the state of being destroyed or conquered by a large machine. The second usage of the military metaphor suggests the strong affiliation between the penis and a hydraulic machine – *the hydraulic penis*—as this paper will call it. That is, female sexual pleasure is not only entwined with the state of being ruined but also with a fluid flow.

Keywords

Memoir of a Woman of Pleasure – Fanny Hill – eighteenth-century erotica – pornography

1 Introduction¹

Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure (1748/1749), popularly known as *Fanny Hill*, is regarded as the first pornographic novel in English literature. The general definition of pornography is tied to its explicit sexual representation which aims at arousal and which some people find morally offensive. Moulton (2000, 3) suggests that “pornography may be said to refer to cultural productions that depict human sexual activity in a relatively explicit manner, and that are seen by some observers as being offensive or morally reprehensible”. Harvey (2004, 22) also argues that “pornography portrayed sexual activity as realistic or explicit, [and] erotica was characterized by metaphor or suggestion... Pornography claimed to abandon the figurative for the literal, while erotica was determined to retain this metaphorical technique for expression.” Peakman (2012, 6) categorizes *Fanny Hill* as pornography rather than erotic writing. She argues that pornography “is material that contains graphic description of sexual organs and/or action written with the prime intention of sexually exciting the reader”. It was seventeenth-century French writings which developed this graphic style, English pornography with graphic descriptions and whose main purpose was to inflame the reader, with the exception of *Fanny Hill*, emerged during the late eighteenth century (Peakman 2012, 6). Erotic materials, on the other hand, “pertains to sexual matters, either overtly or in a ‘hidden form’; for example, through metaphor, innuendo or implication” and their purpose was to amuse rather than stimulate (Peakman 2012, 7). However, Peakman employs the word “erotica” as an “overreaching description for all books on sex” (Peakman 2012, 7). *Fanny Hill* is clearly pornography. This paper follows Peakman’s argument by using “erotica” to refer to erotic, pornographic, libertine, obscene and licentious texts or texts on sex.

Fanny Hill is a pornographic text because of its sexual explicitness as discussed above. It is also a novel—the new literary genre emerging in the eighteenth century. Cleland combined two genres of writings—one was writing commonly dubbed a “whore’s dialogues”, and the other was the novel. The whore’s dialogue had existed for a long time. It was generally written in the form of biography or a dialogue between an innocent maid and an experienced bawd; major works include Ferrante Pallavicino’s *The Whore’s Rhetoric* (1642), Michel Millot’s *L’École des filles* (1655), which was anonymously translated into English in 1680 and entitled *The School of Venus*, and Nicolas Chorier’s *A Dialogue between a Married Woman and a Maid* (1740). Cleland applied the

1 This work was supported by the Faculty of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut’s Institute of Technology Ladkrabang (grant number 2561-13-000).

novel's techniques which had started to take shape during the early part of the century to the long-existing whore's writing. One of such earliest attempts was Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), a novel about a woman who becomes a whore and a criminal and, against all odds, emerges triumphant at the end.

Fanny Hill was published while Cleland was in prison. In February 1748, he was arrested and thrown into the Fleet Prison for failure to pay debts and remained there until March 1749. During his imprisonment, he finished both parts of the novel. The first part was published in November 1748 and the second part in February 1749, a few weeks before his release. Both parts were published by “G. Fenton”, the pseudonym of Fenton Griffiths, in order to pay off the debts for which Cleland had been detained. It was Fenton's brother, Ralph, who probably paid Cleland's debt to secure his release from the prison and it is believed that Griffiths paid Cleland 20 guineas for the copyright of *Fanny Hill*. In November 1749, Cleland, along with Ralph Griffiths, was arrested again for the publication of this novel. However, they were soon released and then published an expurgated, restructured and shortened version then entitled *Memoirs of Fanny Hill*, in March 1750.

The conception of *Fanny Hill* began when Cleland was working in Bombay. He had arrived in India in August 1728 as a foot soldier in the service of the British East India Company and, because of his writing skill, had advanced to various positions and, finally, to secretary of the Bombay Council in 1738, the city where he lived until 1740. While working for the East India Company, he formed a friendship with Charles Carmichael, the youngest son of the second Earl of Hyndford. It was this young man who Cleland mentions in his letter written on 13 November 1749 to Lovel Stanhope, law clerk to the Secretary of State, to secure his release from imprisonment. In this letter, Cleland stated that “the plan of the [novel's] first Part was originally given me by a young Gentleman of the greatest hopes that ever I knew . . . above eighteen years ago, on an occasion immaterial to mention here” (quoted in Gladfelder 2012, 8). The “young gentleman” in the letter remained nameless until James Boswell revealed his identity in his diary, dated Tuesday 13 April 1779, in which he recorded his visit to Cleland. Cleland confirmed the origins of the novel to Boswell, as he recorded,

Cleland said he had wrote [sic] his Woman of Pleasure to show the Hon. Charles Carmichael that one could write so freely about a woman of the town without resorting to the coarseness of *L'École des filles*, which had quite plain words. My printer and publisher certainly were deceived by my avoiding those rank words in the work, which are all that they judge obscenity by. (BOSWELL [1779]1993, 76–77)

Charles Carmichael is thus the “young gentleman” mentioned in the letter to Stanhope. The novel originated from their reading of the French erotica *L'École des filles* (1655) and their subsequent conversations and exchanges. As Gladfelder (2012, 19–20) suggests, *Fanny Hill* “does not originate with or belong only to Cleland—that it took shape as a series of exchanges, challenges, borrowings, revisions, and dares between Carmichael, Cleland, and the books they were secretly reading.”

To the significant degree then, *Fanny Hill* is a bowdlerized version of *L'École des filles* (*The School of Venus*) in terms of the language used. *L'École des filles*, written in the form of a dialogue between the innocent Katherine and her sexually experienced cousin Frances, who lectures her upon sex subjects, uses explicit and coarse words to describe sexual activities and the body while *Fanny Hill* contains no such coarse and vulgar descriptions. Take this passage from *The School of Venus* as an example;

“Then let me tell you (Katherine), the Thing with which a man pisseth, is sometimes call'd a Prick, sometimes a Tarte, sometimes a Man's Yard and other innumerable Names, it hangs down from the bottom of their Bellys like a Cows Teat, but much longer, and is about the place where the Slit of our Cunt is, through which we piss” (MILLOT 1680, 13).

Fanny Hill avoids coarseness and monotony in its lavish descriptions of male and female sexual parts by employing over fifty metaphorical variations for the genitalia; the penis being called “master member of the revels,” “picklock” and “nipple of love” and the vagina “soft laboratory of love,” “pleasure-thirsty channel” and “embower'd bottom-cavity” (Sabor 2008, xix-xx). The metaphor used most frequently to refer to the penis is “machine” and this metaphor will be the focus of this paper.

Leo Brady's “*Fanny Hill* and Materialism” (1970) is one of few works that discusses the machine metaphor. He reads *Fanny Hill* against the materialism of Julien Offray de La Mettrie's *L'homme Machine* (*Man a Machine* in English) in which La Mettrie contended that a man is a mere machine.² Brady argues

2 La Mettrie's *Man a Machine*, which was first published in 1747, extended the Cartesian animal-machine doctrine. He argued that not only animals but also human beings were machines. That is, the soul or the mind was not a spiritual entity but matter presented in the body. La Mettrie reduced the human soul and thoughts to pure imagination and this imagination arose out of the organization of the brain. La Mettrie emphasized that “since all the faculties of the soul depend to such a degree on the proper organization of the brain and of the whole body, that apparently they are but this organization itself, the soul is clearly an enlightened machine” (La Mettrie 2016).

that the novel celebrates the materialist or physiological view of human nature. Caught in the intense sexual moment, a couple respond mechanically like a mere machine. This loss of consciousness in the sexual act, including sex and sexual instinct, emphasizes the dignity of the body and its physiological makeup. Sex and sexual instinct are not a threat to the control of the mind. When properly understood, they connect with the mind in the total human character. Here the body is elevated to the same level as the mind. Kang (2011, 139), when referring to Braudy's work, also suggests that the fact that the characters' sexual bodies are described as machinery indicates the influence of materialist or mechanistic ideas.³ As he points out, that “the physical act was imagined in terms of mechanical motions by organic automata attests to the powerful hold of the man-machine idea on the imagination of the period.” These two works read *Fanny Hill* in connection with materialist or mechanistic philosophy, viewing the novel as referring to both the penis and man as a machine being influenced by those ideas. This paper focuses on the machine as a sex metaphor and acknowledges the influence of the Mechanism.

2 The Machine Metaphor

Frances, in *The School of Venus*, tells her pupil, Catherine, that “we do not Fuck brutally like Beasts, who are only prompted thereto for Generation's sake by nature, but with knowledge and for Loves sake” (Millot 1680, 91). *The School of Venus* favors amatory sex driven by love and lust. *Fanny Hill*, however, does not subscribe to such meek copulation—“Fuck[ing] brutally like Breasts” becomes *celebrated* in the novel. Take the most intense sex scene in the novel as an example:

his eyes shooting sparks of fire; his face glowing with ardours that gave another life to it; his teeth churning; his whole frame agitated with a raging ungovernable impetuosity: all sensibly betraying the formidable fierceness with which the genial instinct acted upon him. Butting then and goring all before him, and mad and wild like an ower-driven steer, he ploughs up the tender furrow all insensible to Louisa's complaints; noth-

3 Mechanism, in philosophy, is the predominant form of Materialism. Its view is that natural phenomena are explicable by reference to motion, matter and their governing laws (*The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2007). In this view, the natural world and the organism are seen as complicated machines with a rational construct of regular movements and natural laws.

ing can stop, nothing can keep out a fury like his: with which, having once got its head in, its blind rage soon made way for the rest, piercing, rending, and breaking open all obstruction. (CLELAND [1748/1749] 2008, 164)

This is the description of the good-natured Dick who at one point of this copulation is described as “the brute-machine.” In addition, sexual activities in this novel are not only amatory ones, some are initiated by pure lust.

Virtually, all sexual activities in the novel are fierce mainly because the couple enjoys it. Sabor observes that Fanny (and her fellow whores) are different from other preceding whores such as Daniel Defoe’s Moll Flander because Fanny enjoys sex (Sabor 2008, xviii). Central to this pleasurable and fierce sex is vigor and the big penis. Indeed, men in this novel are notable for their size. As the size of the penis matters for the sexual pleasure experienced by women, the penis must be large, vigorous and, importantly, *lasciviously destructive*. The machine therefore emerges as one of the appropriate metaphors for the penis. The ideal penis, as represented in the novel, must be similar to a machine, especially a hydraulic one, to be able to provide extreme sexual pleasure and gratify women. However, this paper does not dismiss other male attributes such as age, physique and, in some cases, career as these are linked to sexual vigor. All these do combine to create sexual pleasure for women; the penis takes the primary role and a large and vigorous one is represented as performing its duty best.

This paper thus aims to show that the machine metaphor carries two meanings. The first is the machine being one of those military metaphors commonly found in the erotic writing tradition. The sexual activities in this novel are traditionally represented as an attack or assault on the female body and as battles to be won by men. And again, central to this attack is the big machine or weapon and vigor. The second is the machine metaphor showing a strong affiliation between the penis and a machine, especially a hydraulic one. The destructive and weaponized penis is not enough to create sexual pleasure. The ideal penis must be similar to the hydraulic machine. That is, it must be strong and contain a large amount of liquid because largeness, strength and liquid are vital for sexual pleasure. If it is “broken”, an adjustment to the liquid, similar to the way the hydraulic machine is fixed, by means of flogging is required.

3 The Machine as a Military Metaphor

The weapon/sword metaphor has been used in erotica to refer to male genitalia and this usage reaches back to classical times, as Moulton (2000, 51)

suggests, “[i]t is a cliché that the penis is represented as a weapon throughout Western cultures.” This is because sex has been represented as a war in which a man needs to use his weapon to conquer his opponent. A man whose weapon is ineffective cannot be engaged in love warfare; his masculinity is hence in question. Similarly, the sexual activities in *Fanny Hill* are also traditionally represented as attacks on women and battles to be won by men whose big penises become important weapons or machines. In this novel, having a weapon is not enough, it must be large. In other words, an effective and destructive weapon is a large one.

The first sex encounter among Fanny and her fellows in the novel is between Fanny’s friend, Polly, and her young Italian gallant. Their intercourse is presented as a battle and Polly’s sexual pleasure derived from the state of being ruined by a large and destructive weapon. The young man’s physical description is supplied at considerable length and his penis is presented as the machine producing a delightful fear. He has square shoulders and a broad chest. His “eyes large, black, and sparkling”—black and sparkling eyes usually suggest lasciviousness (Harvey 2004, 214). He also has “a few sprigs about his paps, that garnish’d his chest in a stile of strength and manliness” and the virtue of his machine lies in its destructive quality. His penis is “of a size to frighten me [Fanny]” (Cleland [1748/1749] 2008, 30). It continues to be described as a “fierce erect machine...which threatened no less than splitting the tender victim” (Cleland [1748/1749] 2008, 31). Fanny here presents the image of a tender victim about to be ravished and the woman to become “the object of its fury” (30). His vigor combined with his penis-machine produces “such fury long [and] both [seem] to me out of themselves” (31). Polly’s broken verbal utterance, “Oh! oh!—I can’t bear it—It is too much. – I die. – I am a going—(31), indicates the destructive and fatal quality of this machine. But it is a delightful destruction. Her broken utterance is a sign of her extreme pleasure, a state of semi-consciousness. The injured victim image continues until the end when Fanny describes the “lips of that recently opened wound” (31). Fanny assures her readers such is “an agony of bliss” (31). It seems as if Fanny presents the image of a deflowered virgin but Polly is an experienced prostitute and such an image emerges owing largely to the large and destructive machine.

The image of the penis as a destructive machine becomes more apparent in Fanny’s defloration scene, which is traditionally presented as a fierce battle. The scene begins with the military description of the penis as “the engine of love assaults” (40) and ends with the penis being weaponized as “that terrible spit-fire machine, which had not long before, with such fury broke into, torn, and almost ruined those soft, tender parts” (45). The word “spit-fire machine” can simply refer to the fierce penis or might bring to the contemporary reader’s

mind James Puckle's revolving firearm, known as one of the earliest machine guns and patented in 1718. Cleland who started work in 1728 as a soldier in the service of the British East India Company might have been familiar with Puckle's gun. Charles' "compleat triumph over [Fanny's] maidenhead" (41) owes a great deal to "[t]he largeness of his machine (for few men could dispute size with him)" and his vigor shown during the intense intercourse as when he is "outrageous and no longer his own master" (40). His size and vigor lead to triumph and produce sexual satisfaction in Fanny. That is, pain, induced by the large and destructive machine, is an onset of pleasure as Fanny admits, "I arriv'd at excess of pleasure through, excess of pain" (42).

The defloration of Fanny's fellow whores is also represented as a battle in which the women are ruined or defeated. At one point in the novel, Fanny and her friends relate to each other how they have been deflowered. Emily describes how "an omnipotent thrust murther'd at once [her] maidenhead" (99). Harriet, while in a state of unconsciousness, relates how her partner "completely triumph'd over [her] virginity" (103). Louisa describes her initial sexual experience as "the imminent attack" (109) and the "second attack" (110) and at the end "delicious ruin" (110). Similar to soldiers fighting in battles, the sign of women's destruction is nothing other than the blood which is emphasized as the result of being deflowered. Emily says, "I lay now bleeding" (99) while Harriet talks about "the streams of blood" (103).

The use of the military metaphor is highlighted by the novel's inclusion of a "man-of-war." These men are not only engaged in actual battles but also love ones. There is an association here. Those who could fight in carnal battles were able soldiers in real wars. Harvey (2004, 126) explains that erotic representations of male bodies expose concerns about masculinity. That is, as "[m]ale genitals stood for whole male bodies", male potency and sexual vigor became indicators of men's strength and masculinity. The security of the nation thus rested upon these bodies (Harvey 2004, 126). For one thing, the potent male bodies were able to populate the nation (this comes from the belief that male seed is the most vital for conception). In addition, sex was often perceived as an activity which would restore the nation's fearsome fighters, replacing the current insipid and effeminate bodies (143). Two men-of-war are present in the novel and they are sexually potent. The first is a "young horse-grenadier"—"a soldier who threw grenades" according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) (quoted in Sabor 2008, 192). He has a "wonderful machine" (Cleland [1748/1749] 2008, 25) and is able to satisfy even the most experienced woman like the brothel-keeper, Mrs. Brown. Another one is a young sailor who has sex with Fanny and their activity is described with both military and nautical metaphors. The sailor triumphantly "seize[s] [Fanny] as a prize" and he "[falls] directly on board

[her]” (140). The presence of these two military men who are sexually robust emphasizes the machine/weapon metaphor used to refer to the penis. The fact that they have and can handle a large figurative weapon suggests that they are good at using a literal one.

One can see that this appreciation of big male genitalia is persistent in the erotica culture. Toulalan (2007, 67–68) suggests that seventeenth (and eighteenth-century) culture and society gave primacy to penetrative sexual intercourse. This means that, since mutual sexual satisfaction requires penile penetration, the penis, especially a large and erect one and the testicles are represented as objects of female desire and they become the dominant image in descriptions of sexual activity, as she argues: “[t]he male body, and especially the penis, are frequently described in this literature, and described in terms that emphasize not only the strength of the penis, but also its beauty”. Sexual vigor and strong genitalia can produce satisfactory sexual intercourse and this satisfaction becomes an indicator of one’s masculinity. And this masculinity is tied up with the security of the nation.

However, it also should be noted that while men in *Fanny Hill* are notable for their size, the big penis is not always represented as an ideal one in erotica. Frances in *The School of Venus* poses her friend a question, “What sorts of Pricks are the best and aptest to satisfy us?”, to which her friend answers, “the milding ones” (Millot 1680, 100). “The great ones”, for her, “often pain tryed Women as well as Virgins” (Millot 1680, 101) and they are “like unwieldy ladders, which take a great time to rear Them” (Millot 1680, 102). The difficulty in achieving and sustaining an erection of the big penis is later echoed by the women in *A Spy on Mother Midnight: or, the Templar Metamorphos’d. Being a Lying-in Conversation* (1748), published probably months before *Fanny Hill*. In this work, women are debating penis size when a mother midnight (a midwife-bawd), whom these women consider to be the arbiter of sexual knowledge, opines that a big penis is not an ideal one: “what signifies a great lubberly Machine, which moves but slowly, and must be propt like an old House, or splinter’d like a broken Leg to keep it from falling” (Anonymous 1748, 28). The great ones represented in *Fanny Hill* however suffer no such drawbacks. But when they do, they can be fixed like a hydraulic machine.

4 The Male’s Genitalia as a Hydraulic Machine

It is not unusual to liken the penis to a machine. *A Spy on Mother Midnight*, as quoted above, uses the word “machine”, though only once, to refer to the penis. Thomas Stretzer must have seen the similarity between the penis and

the hydraulic machine in particular. In his *A New Description of Merryland. Containing, a Topographical, Geographical, and Natural History of that Country* (1740)—a type of erotica disguised as a travelogue and employing topographical and geographical metaphors—Stretzer mentions “a small Animal, some-what of the serpentine Kind, known by the Name of PNTL; it is often found plunging about in the great Canal (a reference to a vagina). Due to the “vast Strength of its Muscles [PNTL] has a Power of erecting itself” and its body “filled with a Liquor of such a Nature” (Stretzer 1740, 38). PNTL here clearly alludes to the penis which is referred to in this work as “an hydraulick Machine.” The similarity between the penis and the machine rests upon the ability to move *up and down* and the flow of fluid.

To say that the penis functions like a hydraulic machine is to suggest that the novel, as mentioned earlier, is influenced by the mechanistic view which imagines the body as a hydraulic machine, composing of pipes (equivalent to vessels) through which fluids are perpetually circulating. Any physiological dysfunctions were believed to be caused by the obstruction of these vessels by bodily fluids causes. As Ishizuka (2012, 570) explains, “Early eighteenth-century medical practitioners, who saw the body as a hydraulic machine, commonly assumed that life depends on the uninterrupted circulation of fluids through innumerable winding, ‘hollow’ vessels.” (This will be discussed in connection with flogging later.) *Fanny Hill* does not refer specifically to the penis as a hydraulic machine. Their similarities, however, can be traced throughout the novel and they rest upon the flow and importance of liquid.

Indispensable to sexual pleasure is the large amount of male sexual liquid. The novel tantalizes and celebrates excessive expulsion of semen from men’s hydraulic penises. Not only does it portray a large amount of semen but also violent and repeated ejaculation which does not debilitate male bodies. The emission of semen is usually depicted as a violent shoot and the huge quantity of semen emitted as a “flood.” Fanny’s very first sexual partner Charles’s “warm gush darts through all the ravished inwards” and Fanny exclaims, “what flood of bliss” (Cleland [1748/1749] 2008, 43). Not to mention his penis is described as a “spring-head” (45). Her third man is Mr. H.’s servant, Will, with whom she has repeated sex for a month. His penis is probably the biggest Fanny has ever experienced in her entire career, being described as a “may-pole”, “an over-siz’d machine...belong[s] to a young giant” (73). Will’s large amount of semen is described as “the stream of a warm liquid” (83) in his subsequent intercourse with Fanny in which they usually “[melt] in a flood” (75). Equally important to size in producing such an amount of semen is vigor. Indeed, all Fanny’s men are physically and sexually vigorous. The most vigorous sex scene in the novel is between Louisa and Good-natur’d Dick whose penis is “so tremendous a

size” (162). From such a violent carnal union in which Louis looks like “she [is] killed” (163) there is produced “the surge of pleasure foaming, and raging to a height, drew down the pearly shower that was, to allay this hurricane” (165). Such a portrayal of a large emission of semen can be found in other erotic works such as *A Dialogue Between a Married Lady and a Maid* (1740) in which one character remarks: “I presently felt my Hand and my Belly, as far as my Navel, all wet with a warm Shower which flowed from him” (Chorier 1740, 8). Contrary to popular medical belief in the dangers of excessive expulsion of sexual fluid, in erotica, strong ejaculation and the quantity produced by men or their strong machines are signs of their strength and attractiveness.

The depiction of the copious emission of semen is extolled as it causes extreme sexual pleasure. This can be understood in the context of the Galenic-Hippocratic two-seed reproductive theory and the humoral system. The Aristotelian one-seed theory suggests that only the male seed matters in the conception and formation of the embryo. Harvey (2004, 81–82) explains that, in the Aristotelian model, since the female seed was not required, female ejaculation was not necessary; female orgasm was then dispensable for conception. In the Galenic-Hippocratic model, both male and female seeds were crucial for conception although the male seed played a more active role. According to this vision, extreme sexual pleasure is entwined with conception or when both a man and a woman reach orgasm, both emitting the seed. As Thomas Laqueur (1992, 46) argues, “both sexes experience a violent pleasure during intercourse that was intimately connected with successful generation; both generally emitted something”. This belief is reflected in Fanny’s sex with Will,

the sweet youth [Will], overpower’d with the ecstasy, died away in my arms, melting a flood, that shot in genial warmth into the innermost recesses of my body, every conduit of which, dedicated to that pleasure, was on flow to mix with it; thus we continu’d for some instants, lost, breathless, senseless of everything, and in every part but those favourite ones of nature, in which all that we enjoyed of life and sensation was now totally centered. (CLELAND [1748/1749] 2008, 75–76)

This instant illustrates the pleasure experienced by Fanny and Will. The pleasure occurs when their fluids are released and mixed. The Galenic-Hippocratic theory is also connected to the humoral system. That is, in this theory, men were hot and dry whilst women were cold and moist. To experience sexual intensity, women must become hotter. Toulalan (2007, 75) suggests that “[a] woman’s sexual temperature must be raised during the intercourse until she reaches the point of orgasm, which may occur before or after her male

partner, but it will be most intense if it occurs at the moment when the heat of the sperm touches the womb". Hence, more sperm means more heat; there is connection between the amount of sperm and the level of sexual pleasure experienced by women. This explains why the excessive expulsion of liquid is emphasized throughout the novel. Fanny at one point exclaims after finishing the business, "what floods of bliss!" (Cleland [1748/1749] 2008, 43). The flooding image becomes even clearer in her subsequent intercourse in which Fanny says, "I swam, I bath'd in bliss" (50). One woman in *The Dialogue of Luisa Sigee* envies women who are married to men born with three testicles and thus can produce more semen (Toulalan 2007, 75).

A man may fail to satisfy his woman because of erectile dysfunction; his machine fails to operate just like a machine which may stop functioning. This dysfunction, however, can be cured by means of flogging. Using the hydraulic machine as a metaphor for the penis points to this similarity. The penis and a machine can become malfunctional but both can be fixed by adjusting the liquid.

Flagellation as a sexual predilection had been explored before the publication of *Fanny Hill*. This exploration was usually found in French anti-Catholic pornography such as *Vénus dans le cloître, ou la Religieuse en chemise* (1683) (the English translation is *Venus in the Cloisters*), which features the flagellation practice among priests and nuns and thereby exposes the sexual misdemeanors and hypocrisy of the clergy. This led Peakman (2005, 248) to suggest that "[p]rior to this book [*Fanny Hill*], there had been little fictional exploration of flogging for sexual pleasure in British erotica writing." So, in *Mighty Lewd Books*, Peakman (2012, 161) argues that *Fanny Hill* is "a defining moment in English erotica, not just in applying novelistic technique to erotica, but in recognising that flagellation was a method to exploit English sexual fantasies." The novel features a long flagellation episode between Fanny and her impotent client, Mr. Barville. British erotica with a dominant theme of flagellation would emerge as a sub-genre in the late eighteenth century and continue to the nineteenth century.

The similarity between a malfunctioning hydraulic machine and erectile dysfunction is that they both can be mended, among other means, by correcting or adjusting the liquid vital for their operation. It was believed that flagellation promoted blood circulation and caused the blood to rush to the brain and this, as a result, led to sexual stimulation. "A Dissertation upon Flogging" in *The Gentleman's Magazine* states that "there is a great sympathy between the bum and the head; and that a proper application made to the posterior draws the stupefying humours from the *cranium*, thoroughly purges the brain, and quickens the fancy wonderfully" (Thyrsis 1735, 17). In the novel, Fanny observes that

in spite of his young age, Mr. Barville “recourse[s] to this experiment, for quickening the circulation of their sluggish juices” (Cleland ([1748/1749] 2008, 143). His sluggish juices need to be adjusted and, once adjusted, his penis grows to “a prodigious stiffness of erection” (147). In this episode, Mr. Barville’s “inactive, torpid machine”, by the proper application of flagellation which stimulates his fluid circulation, is aroused into “a noble size, and distinction indeed” (151).

The moment the penis comes closer in description to a hydraulic machine is found in Fanny’s defloration scene. At the very beginning of intercourse, Fanny’s partner, Charles, is described to “[draw] out the engine of love assaults, [drive] it currently, as at a ready-made breach” (40). The word “currently” here does not mean “at the present time” in its modern sense. *OED* defines the word “currently” as “In the manner of a flowing stream; with easy rapid movement” and the word is illustrated in *OED* by an example from *The Woman of Honor* (1768) which is Cleland’s final novel (Sabor 2008, 193). On one hand, the novel describes Charles’ expectation of “easy rapid movement” because Charles, who has met Fanny at a brothel, thinks that Fanny is an experienced prostitute. On the other hand, the word “engine” described in connection with a flowing stream recalls a hydraulic machine whose operation depends on a flowing liquid.

This paper also acknowledges that the machine metaphor can be one of extended agricultural or topographical metaphors persistent in bawdy poetry and erotica. In erotica dubbed “Merryland” such as *Erotopolis, the Present State of Betty-Land* (1684) by Charles Cotton and *A New Description of Merryland* by Stretzer, the female body is represented as a land to be explored, conquered and cultivated, and the penis as an agricultural tool being referred to as “tool” or “instrument.” In *Fanny Hill*, the most intense copulation in the novel belongs Louisa and “good-natured Dick” as shown above. Their sexual fervor at one moment is described by topographical and agricultural metaphors: “Butting then and goring all before him, and mad and wild like an ower-driven steer, he ploughs up the tender furrow all insensible to Louisa’s complaints; nothing can stop, nothing can keep out a fury like his” (Cleland ([1748/1749] 2008, 164). Dick turns into a ploughman and his penis a plough pool working upon the soil representing the female body.

5 Conclusion

As the sexual activities in *Fanny Hill* are repeatedly represented as battles, destruction as well as, at some points, agricultural activities, this paper has shown that the machine, the most frequently used metaphor to refer to the

penis, is one of the military metaphors common in erotica. The machine-weapon-penis in the novel is not only destructive but also large, suggesting that the ideal penis must be large and vigorous. However, the largeness and vigor are not enough as the female sexual pleasure depends not only on the state of being destroyed but also the copious expulsion of sexual fluid. With so influential a philosophical idea of Materialism and Mechanism which critics and historians such as Braudy and Kang argue for its influence on *Fanny Hill*, it is thus tempting to see the penis, as this paper has shown, as a hydraulic machine. Again, sexual pleasure owes a great deal to the *hydraulic penis* which contains liquid and can be fixed by an adjustment of liquid if it is malfunctional. In this novel, the penis produces sexual satisfaction because it is “formidable”, “fierce”, “terrible” and “oversized” and expels excessive amounts of liquid. No metaphor can capture these desirable qualities of the penis better than, perhaps, “the machine.”

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