"Women Should Become Thinner When They Are Pregnant": Corpulency and Women's Reproductive Health in the Long Eighteenth Century

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> It is justly remarked by Dr. DENMAN, when speaking of this restlessness, which is generally troublesome towards the conclusion of pregnancy, that those women who suffer most from it, though reduced in appearance, bring forth lusty children and have easy labours. But, if the mother has little uneasiness, and grows corpulent during pregnancy, the child is generally small; and if the child should die before the time of parturition, the inquietude entirely ceases. In the first case, as this judicious writer observes, the absorbing powers of the child seem too strong for the parent; but, in the latter, the retaining powers of the parent are stronger than the absorbing ones of the child: so that, on the whole, it appears natural that women should become thinner when they are pregnant.
> —William Buchan, *Advice to Mothers* (1803)[1]

A modern audience might find William Buchan's assertion, in his *Advice to Mothers*, that "women should become thinner when they are pregnant," quite absurd. This perspective, nonetheless, is entirely in line with the abhorrence with which Georgian society considered corpulent mothers, putative or actual.[2] Throughout the long eighteenth century, corpulency (or corpulence) was understood as a self-inflicted and inhibitive disease,

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much like obesity is today.[3] According to physiologist Malcolm Flemyng (1700–64), corpulence was identified as exclusively "caused by an increased quantity of fat" in the body, hence the "synonym[ity]" of "fat and corpulent," terms which I will use interchangeably in this article.[4] To return to corpulence in the context of fertility, as eighteenth-century medical opinion frequently reiterates, the offspring of fat parents—and especially fat mothers—were often anticipated to be inviable. Yet, as I will argue, by exploring the fat mother in nonmedical literary and visual culture, that the medical condemnation of her was as often fueled by social norms as it was derived from scientific thought. In examining fictional fat women alongside contemporary medical opinions on corpulence's effect on female health, I hope to uncover the cultural bias that informs eighteenth-century physicians' preoccupation with perceived unfemininity and nonconformity. Indeed, these fictionalizations of the corpulent woman reveal how the period's popular imagination was often at odds with medical belief.

Sarah Toulalan's pioneering work emphasizes the significance of fat women in the nascent medical attitudes surrounding reproduction from the sixteenth to the early eighteenth century. She asserts that the assumed infertility of the corpulent woman offended early eighteenth-century expectations of a woman's reproductive capacity.[5] Most pertinently, Toulalan observes that it is by the eighteenth century that the reproductive disruptiveness then associated with the corpulent female body came to indicate the corpulent woman's wider disregard of social values. For an eighteenth-century audience preoccupied with the idea that "the health of the nation" was secured by continuous reproduction, a female body that was assumed to interrupt this continuity was deemed to perform "intentional murder" (Buchan, *Advice to Mothers*, 21).[6] It is therefore unsurprising that in the eighteenth century, the corpulent woman was so extensively criticized in medical writing—this was, after all, the period that firmly cemented the idea that "unsuccessful childbearing" was the sign of a woman's "[un]fulfilled social and reproductive destiny."[7]

However, and as I will argue, eighteenth-century fictive portrayals of corpulent mothers did not always simply perpetuate medical condemnations. In fact, often the fat fictional woman challenged medical and social assumptions made about the detrimental effect of corpulence, either by her explicit fecundity or by her refusal to fulfill the expectations of female reproductivity altogether. Both literary and visual depictions of the fat woman not only matched medical writers' disapproving attitude toward

her reproductive health, but also frequently undermined it. To demonstrate the popular dissent from medical opinion, I will focus on three fictional fat women: the assumed infertile socialite, Albinia Hobart, Countess of Buckinghamshire (1737/38–1816), caricatured by James Gillray; the "weighty" and actively impenetrable alcoholic Rachel Hodges, from Maria Edgeworth's "Angelina: or, L'aime Inconnue" (1801); and the unexpectedly fecund Miss Groves, from Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752).

In order for us to understand how these three figures serve to ridicule the fat woman's reproductive health, it is important first to consider the period's understanding of corpulence, and the stance of medical writing more broadly. Fundamentally, it appears that in medical writing, women's health is marginalized until safeguarding it is required to achieve a specific social purpose. Eighteenth-century medical writing on corpulence, and indeed medical writing in general in this period, tends to assume a male reader-patient. This preoccupation is apparent in texts that present themselves as comprehensive guides, but nonetheless offer a section dedicated exclusively to women's diseases. No such separate section exists for men.[8] In those rarer instances when medical writers do address a female reader-patient, and especially focus on her potential for corpulence, they are primarily concerned with how this disease conflicts with cultural expectations of femininity rather than with her individual well-being. As this article reveals, such concerns are particularly noticeable when medical writers consider the effects of corpulence on a woman's reproductive capacity. According to Buchan, pregnancy is the most important period in a woman's life: it is the "moment, from which they may begin to date the real perfection of their being" (*Advice to Mothers*, 24).[9] Corpulence was assumed to prevent a woman from achieving this "moment," and therefore signified noncompliance with the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century procreative expectations placed on women. As I will show, the fat woman of popular imagination contests not only the medical broadcasting of her infertility, but also the assumption that her noncompliance with procreative expectations is exclusively the result of her having become mindlessly corpulent.

This article will begin with a more detailed investigation of contemporary medical perspectives on how corpulence directly affects female procreation by addressing: the initial assumption of the fat woman's barrenness; her assumed physical impenetrability and the anticipated inhospitableness of her womb; and last, the medical expectation that, even when pregnant,

the corpulent woman's body will either internally crush the developing fetus, or ultimately produce weak offspring. Then, I will explore how various popular genres treat these medical opinions, in three stages. First, I will consider instances in literary and visual culture where the fictional fat woman, at least superficially, appears to confirm the medical anticipation of her infertility. This will be followed by an exploration of how this expectation is refuted by the depiction of fecund corpulent women. Finally, I will demonstrate how the fictional fat woman who actively precludes pregnancy situates herself as a deliberate antagonist within a broader argument centering around sociocultural expectations of female reproductivity.

By both perpetuating and challenging these medical beliefs, the fictional fat woman "writes back" against the prevailing medical discourse. In writing back, that is, these texts reinstate the lived experience of the fat women who are nullified or otherwise ignored in physicians' ideologically freighted case studies. My account of the fictional fat woman reveals that literary and visual depictions of her expose the frequently unscientific basis for the arguments put forth in medical writing. In addition, through scrutinizing the fictionalized corpulent mother in conjunction with medical attitudes regarding the impact of corpulence on women's health, I hope to expose the cultural bias that influences medical writers' projection of the fat woman's apparent lack of femininity and propriety. Although at times to an exaggerated degree, the portrayals of Rachel Hodges, Miss Groves, and the caricaturized Albinia Hobart, nonetheless further reveal how concerns over female fatness are seldom exclusively health related. By having their cake and eating it too, these literary figures underscore how the fat woman is not simply an object of satire, or a pathologized and useless body, but fertile, autonomous, and even healthy.

Phases of Female Procreation Affected by Corpulency

When eighteenth-century medical authors considered how corpulence affected women's health, as established in this article's introduction, it was invariably in relation to a woman's fertility. For instance, in the entirety of Thomas Short's text dedicated to the topic of "corpulency," the only mention of a specifically female corpulence is made in the brief and unsubstantiated remark that "corpulent women are often barren."[10] In sum, women were generally deemed solely responsible for "reproductive failure," even

though there was a growing awareness that infertility could occur in both men and women.[11] Later on in the eighteenth century, physician John Ball claimed that the retention of "too much fatness" in the corpulent woman was the cause for her "barrenness."[12]

This belief in an inhibitive surplus recalls a similar understanding of the menopausal body. In the long eighteenth century, there was an implied similarity between the corpulent woman's body and the postmenopausal woman's body on the grounds that both were believed to retain a substance to an excess that rendered their bodies "barren." Well into the eighteenth century, Michael Stolberg asserts, physicians believed that women accumulated a "surplus" of "nutritious blood" during their "fertile years" to "nourish the fetus" when growing inside the womb, which was then "transformed into milk and directed towards the breasts" once the child had been born.[13] When a woman was neither pregnant nor lactating, this "nutritious blood" was expelled from the woman's body through the process of menstruation (Stolberg, 408–09). Since the menopausal body could not discharge this fluid, it was believed to render a woman "plethoric," particularly in her appearance (408–09).[14] The corpulent woman, it was implied, possessed a similar surfeit of a substance (fat) believed to be harmful to the development of a fetus, just as the menopausal woman was assumed to retain a substance (blood) she could not expel, nor provide to a fetus (should she have been able to produce one), because it had become "vitiated" from being retained in her body—in other words, spoiled (421).[15] The bodies of both the corpulent woman and menopausal woman, from a medical perspective, were deemed too congested for maternity.

Moreover, as Stolberg observes, some eighteenth-century medical practitioners proposed that the "surplus blood," which was "trapped and accumulated" in the menopausal body, could also be converted into fat, thereby causing menopausal women to "grow fat, heavy, and sickly" (410).[16] By the early nineteenth century, the retention of fat, particularly in the "omentum, situated in the front of the abdomen" and "generally known by the term caul," was deemed "the cause of the thickened waist in elderly people."[17] Thus, the fatness of the premenopausal and corpulent woman's body, at least superficially, was likely associated with the menopausal state of the "elderly" woman and therefore understood to suggest barrenness.

If the corpulent woman was expected to be barren, then this was perhaps because she is understood to be physically impenetrable. In eighteenth-century medical writings, a corpulent woman's bloated body, swollen with a

surfeit of vitiating fat, was believed to compact her vaginal entrance to such a degree that she could not be penetrated by a penis. According to John Maubray and Henry Bracken, the "neck of the Womb" is so "compress[ed]" by the "epiplo[ö]n" of the "Fat Wom[a]n" that it either "cannot open to receive the seed" (sperm) or "impedes" the "seed" from reaching "the cavity of the womb."[18] The part of the corpulent woman's body that is believed to contribute to the compression of the vaginal entrance most significantly was the omentum, given its position directly above the vagina. As a solution to this oppressive barrier of fat, medical writers proposed to reposition it "by putting the Woman in a proper Posture, so that the *Omentum* may fall back and leave the Neck of the Womb at Liberty" (Bracken, 20). This suggestion was often met with skepticism, as I will explore later, in the visual satire by James Gillray, "A SPHERE projecting against a PLANE" (figure 1). Even from a superficial perspective, the mere shape of the corpulent woman's body is anticipated to frustrate attempts at procreation.

Medical authors assumed that the dysfunction signified by the corpulent woman's external bodily form also implied the dysfunction of her internal body. The medical consensus was that an inability to conceive or bring a fetus to full term was due to the imperfect condition of a woman's body and womb. Such imperfect conditions—especially those attributed to corpulence—were often described using humoral language, despite the move away from this classical theory of the body during the eighteenth century.[19] In particular, as a humoral balance was deemed "essential" for "successful conception," the corpulent woman was frequently assumed to be either less fertile or completely infertile.[20] This is because it was believed that an imbalance in the humoral constitution of a woman was expressed by the extremes of her body's "size," in this instance, her fatness (Toulalan, "Bodies, Sex, and Sexuality," 34). Women were assumed to be constitutionally colder and wetter than men, and since fat as a substance was likewise deemed cold and wet (and would "congeal" in the body if it remained cold), this meant that the corpulent woman was deemed *excessively* cold and wet (Toulalan, "'To[o] Much Eating,'" 74). It was thus believed that the presence of excess fat in the womb both made it either too cold for the semen or developing fetus to survive, or caused either the semen to be ejected, or the later fetus to be miscarried because the overly fatty composition of the womb was too slippery to retain it.

These assumptions are exemplified by the assertions of John Maubray, the man-midwife, regarding the causes of "Abortion":

Figure 1. James Gillray (1756–1815), *A SPHERE projecting against a PLANE*, hand-colored etching (3 January 1792), 11 3/4 in. x 9 1/4 in. (NPG D12438). Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London.

> V. The Womb's too *frigid* and *siccid Intemperature*; which Qualities are the greatest Enemies to *Nature* and all the *Actions* of *Female Life*.
>
> VI. Its *frigid* and *humid Intemperature*; which (abounding with *Muscosities* or *slimy Humours*) so relaxes the *Ligaments*, that they cannot hold or detain the Infant. (121)

As Maubray's fifth "cause" of "Abortion" reminds us, discussions of women's health were principally concerned with them fulfilling their reproductive responsibilities, according to "Nature," rather than with their own well-being. Maubray is more concerned here with how the "Intemperature" of the "Womb" affects the "*Actions* of *Female Life*" than with the health of the "Female" in question. That Maubray is discussing a *corpulent* woman's "Womb" here is indicated by his description of it as "too frigid" and possessing a "humid Intemperature." From Maubray's perspective, this too cold (frigid) and moist (humid) constitution causes the "*Ligaments*" of the womb to "relax" to such a degree that the "Infant" (fetus) is aborted from the womb.[21]

However, the effect of overindulgence on the humoral imbalance of the corpulent woman, specifically on her womb, was not limited to an increase in the cold and wet state associated with an excess of fat. Indeed, the overconsumption of alcohol was believed to overheat the body and to cause a humoral imbalance that led to reproductive inviability. Hence John Leake's recommendation that putative mothers adhere to the consumptive habits of the "poor female cottager," who is only able to drink "from the *cooling* stream" (my emphasis).[22] In more explicit detail, George Cheyne explains the abortive influence alcohol has on the pregnant woman:

> *Wine* and all fermented Liquors, give too great a Velocity to the Blood, push it onwards with too strong a *Momentum,* force open the *uterin* Vessels, and drive off the *Placenta* from the *Fund* of the *Uterus*, by opening the *Sphincters* of the *menstrual* Flux; so that the *Foetus* must necessarily come off.[23]

In other words, unlike the relatively passive impact the abortive slipperiness of the too-cold and too-wet womb has on the fetus, the untoward overconsumption of alcohol by the pregnant woman stimulated a horrifically aggressive expulsion of the fetus due to the alcohol's feverishly extreme pressurization of the blood. Thus, the premenopausal woman who recur-

rently indulged in "*Wine*" or "fermented Liquors" *and* was corpulent would have been doubly objectionable to her contemporaries. Not only would the expected presence of excess fat in her womb be deemed too cold or too wet for a fetus either to be conceived or retained, but, paradoxically, it would be anticipated that her alcoholism would overheat her womb and then violently expel the fetus. The corpulent, premenopausal woman, because of her consumptive indulgences, would have been understood to be purposefully resisting conception.

Alongside beliefs in the abortive effects of humoral imbalance, some medical writers claimed the corpulent mother's body would crush the fetus during development or birth, either due to her bulk or because of the excessive quantity of food and drink the corpulent mother was imagined to have consumed. For instance, early in the eighteenth century, Maubray claims that "VICTUALS; if taken *too much* at a time, suffocate the Infant" (122). This opinion was echoed at the very beginning of the nineteenth century by Buchan:

> To overstep the bounds of temperance in the early stages of pregnancy, from an idea of the embryo's wanting such supplies, would be almost as frantic as to drown an infant for the purpose of quenching its supposed thirst, or to gorge it even to bursting, in order to satisfy the cravings of imaginary hunger. (*Advice to Mothers*, 41)

Buchan asserts that a mother's intemperate consumption during pregnancy would have been inherently (although misguidedly) motivated by a desire to "suppl[y]" her "embryo's want[s]" and not her own. He suggests also that those mothers who do "overstep the bounds of temperance" are "almost" infanticidal. These mothers are so selfish that they will "drown" and "gorge" their fetuses to "bursting" with their intemperate consumption under the pretence of "satisfy[ing]" the "infant['s]" "hunger," when really they are "satisfy[ing]" *their* "cravings." Buchan's assertion epitomizes the attitude expressed by much medical writing on the corpulent mother, in that these works were fundamentally disinterested in the "want[s]" of the pregnant woman. Instead, these works focused almost exclusively on how best to address the "thirst" and "hunger" of the fetus.

A further reason that Maubray gives for why "Women too fat" are "much endanger'd in Abortion" is "the great *Astriction* and *Narrowness* of the *Passages*" (127). Setting aside the rarity of a medical text that focuses

on the well-being of the mother, what Maubray alludes to here is a belief that the sheer mass of the "too fat" mother has caused her vaginal "*Passage*" to constrict, making it difficult for the fetus to be expelled from her body. Maubray also suggests that, if the fatness of the corpulent mother has constricted her vagina, it is likely that her excessive weight has caused "*Astriction* and *Narrowness*" elsewhere in her body. For instance, the overweighted omentum that was believed to render the corpulent woman's vagina inaccessible, given its location, may also have put undue pressure on, and constricted, the womb.

On the supposedly unusual occasions that the corpulent woman did see her pregnancy to full term, authors of medical texts commonly claimed that her offspring would be weak. This is because they believed that, due to her weight and the general inhospitableness of the mother's corpulent body, the fetus would suffer arrested development. Writers likewise believed that the corpulent mother's body retained all, or most, of its nutritional intake for itself, leaving the fetus little or nothing. In this respect, attitudes toward the corpulent female body's selfishness do not seem to have altered much from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. As Toulalan asserts, some physicians avowed that the fat female body "diverted all nutriment that should have been used for generative purposes to maintaining and augmenting itself" instead of "nourishing the child in the womb," thus "making it a body that was unfit for generation" ("'To[o] Much Eating,'" 84). Medical writers continued in this belief well into the eighteenth century. Maubray claimed that the selfishness of the corpulent female body was so considerable, which he described as "a nimious and too great an *Obesity* or *Fatness*," that it converted "the Child's *Nourishment* to itself" and could *only* lead to "Abortion" (119). More disturbingly still, Buchan promoted the idea that a visibly undernourished pregnant woman promised healthy, strong progeny, while the woman who "grows corpulent during pregnancy" produced a "child [that] is generally small" (*Advice to Mothers*, 62). This is because "the retaining powers of the [corpulent] parent are stronger than the absorbing ones of the child," which meant that the circulation of nutrients essentially bypassed the fetus (62). According to Buchan, the corpulence of the mother's body manifested greed, as if it were a conscious decision on the mother's part to starve her unborn child and "retain" "nutrients" for herself. Buchan, a representative and respected voice, completely overlooked the well-being of the mother; his only concern was that she repro-

duced, and that she reproduced well. Buchan deemed it more "natural that women should become thinner when they are pregnant" (62). The "thin" pregnant mother's body signified a woman's selfless devotion to, as Toulalan phrased it, her "reproductive destiny," whereas the "corpulent" pregnant mother's body signified an "[un]natural" rejection of these generative expectations (62).

The Fictional Fat Woman Cannot Reproduce

The medical disproval of the corpulent woman as a prospective mother did not occur in a vacuum. Literary and visual culture also variously influenced and encouraged the medical conception of corpulency's detrimental effect on a woman's ability to reproduce, as well as sometimes complicating or disputing the assertions made by medical writers. In the rest of this article I will explore in more detail the ways in which fiction and satire "write back" to the medical claims surrounding the reproductive inviability of the corpulent mother.

On many occasions, medical writers' conceptions of corpulence and reproduction seem simply to have been echoed and, at times, informed by works of the popular imagination. This is notably demonstrable in the epithet "fat, fair, and forty" that surfaces in the early nineteenth century, which illustrates the parallelism, outside of medical discourse, drawn between the "barren" state of the corpulent, premenopausal woman and the menopausal woman.[24] For instance, the phrase is often repeated in the anonymous *Real Life in London* (1821–22):

> "Who is that fat, fair, and forty-looking dame, in the landau?" says BOB.—"Your description shews," rejoined his friend, "you are but a novice in the world of fashion—you are deceived. . . . She has been such as she now appears to be for these last five and twenty years: her figure as you see, rather *en-bon point*, is friendly to the ravages of time, and every lineament of age is artfully filled up by an expert fille de chambre, whose time has been employed at the toilette of a celebrated devotee in Paris.[25]

Here, the epithet is ironic. It combines the physicality of fatness with the age then culturally associated with menopause and a loss of fertility, sometimes termed "the malady of the woman of forty," that subsequently signified a "loss of physical attracti[veness]" or "fair[ness]." That "the malady of

the woman of forty" (Stolberg, 423–24)—which was distinctly associated with Frenchified fashionability—is implied here is emphasized by the "fat, fair and forty-looking dame['s]" employment of a "fille de chambre" of a former "celebrated devotee of Paris."[26] The "*en-bon point*" of the "dame" indicates that her body is yielding to the "ravages of time," and in this instance, it cannot be hidden, unlike her wrinkles, or "lineament[s] of age" that have been successfully "filled up" and disguised.

The idea that the fatness of a woman signified a lack or loss of fertility is further reinforced by Lady Anne Hamilton's thinly veiled criticism of Maria Fitzherbert, the unsanctioned first wife of the Prince of Wales, later George IV, in her satirical *Epics of the Ton* (1807): "What though dear wrinkles on her brow be seen, / And fat alone remains where fair has been?"[27] That "fat[ness]" appears to have replaced "fair[ness]" in Fitzherbert's body echoes the medical belief that equated a surfeit of vitiated blood, as emblematized by a fattened physique, with a loss of fertility. Fitzherbert is no longer attractive, and hence, no longer "fair," because she is assumed to be barren. The connection is emphasized by Hamilton's footnote to the line "And fat alone remains where fair has been," where she draws attention to Fitzherbert's status as a has-been by claiming "the reader will readily recollect the celebrated toast, fat, fair, and forty" (*The Epics of the Ton*, 16n68).[28] Age and corpulence are conflated in order to counteract any assumptions of "fairness," and therefore the state of fertility, associated with women under the age of "forty." But, as we have seen, the epithet also stresses the superficiality of perceptions of reproductive viability: that a woman was, or appeared, either "forty" or "fat" was not a guarantee that she was infertile. This epithet reminds us that medical writers tacitly compared the bloated menopausal woman to the corpulent, premenopausal woman, who is interchangeable with the "barren" menopausal woman because each is expected to be filled with a vitiating and vitiated excess of fat and blood. In both instances, fatness has become inextricable from the barrenness associated with the anticipated enlarged physique of older age.

The anticipated barrenness of the corpulent woman often went hand in hand with the assumption that she was impenetrable. Such an assumption is clearly evoked by James Gillray's 1792 depiction of Prime Minister William Pitt "the Younger" (1759–1806) and the celebrated socialite Albinia Hobart, Countess of Buckinghamshire in *A SPHERE projecting against a PLANE* (figure 1). The image presents many ideas associated with the fat female figure, such as an overindulgent lifestyle (note Hobart's attire) and

immobility (Hobart is so fat that she has to be wheeled around). Yet it most obviously connects suppositions about the corpulent woman's barrenness and impenetrability. It was likely widely known that by 1792 the fifty-something Hobart, a well-reported-on member of the ton, had long since fallen into the category of the "fat, fair, and forty," and her exaggerated shape would have been accepted as her default physique. But her rotundity signifies more than age. Her spherical body symbolizes her impenetrability.

Gillray's facetious visual depiction of Hobart evokes the medical belief that the corpulent woman's vaginal entrance was compressed and therefore could not be penetrated. If this was not made obvious enough by the visual caricatures of Pitt and Hobart, Gillray also alludes to this belief in the print's inscription, asserting that when a "PLANE" is "applied ever so closely to a SPHERE, [it] can only touch its Superfices, without being able to enter it." Hobart's spherical contour, particularly at the front of her body, clearly iterates the medical beliefs of Maubray and Bracken that a corpulent woman's "omentum" constricts the entrance to the womb, thereby preventing penetration.[29] Her impenetrableness is further emphasized by the "PLANE"-like figure of Pitt, who is completely without protuberance, as it were. The humorous implication of this image is that Hobart's omentum is so distended, that any attempt at repositioning it so that the weight of it on the cervix (the neck of the womb) is alleviated, as directed by Bracken, would simply cause her to roll away. Hobart, a prolific mother in real life, is thus rendered an emblem of reproductive inviability, her corpulence indicative of both a barrenly menopausal body, and a body that, even if it were fertile, resists insemination.[30]

Gillray's caricatured Hobart has a textual counterpart in Maria Edgeworth's antagonist Araminta, or Miss Rachel Hodges, who features in the short story "Angelina; Or, L'aime Inconnue" from *Moral Tales for Young People* (1801). The plot of "Angelina" follows the sixteen-year-old titular heroine (otherwise known as Miss Anne Warwick), who deems her family and friends to be without sensibility and who therefore decides to seek refuge at the home of her recent and enthusiastic correspondent, Araminta. Araminta is, in fact, Hodges, authoress of "The Woman of Genius," which Warwick had previously read and in whom she felt she had found a kindred spirit.[31] When Warwick eventually finds Araminta/Hodges, she is horrified by the hulking masculinity of her "unknown friend" (134). Unlike Albinia Hobart, although also rendered grotesque because of her corpulence, *Miss* Rachel Hodges is still of marriageable and therefore fertile age,

as implied by the simultaneous introduction of Nathaniel Gazabo, Hodges's fiancé. The illustration in literary culture of Maubray's suggestion that corpulence dangerously astricted not only the vagina but also the womb is notably implied by the way Hodges overwhelms Warwick:

> "Heavens what a scene!" said Miss Warwick to herself; "and the woman so heavy I can scarce support her weight; and this is my *unknown friend*?" How long Miss Hodges would willingly have continued to sob upon Miss Warwick's shoulder, or how long that shoulder could have possibly sustained her weight, is a mixed problem in physics and metaphysics which must ever remain unsolved; but suddenly a loud scream was heard—Miss Hodges started up—. (139)

Hodges's corpulent body is in fact so ponderous, that the more delicate Anne Warwick cannot withstand her "weight" for long. Indeed, so "heavy" is Hodges's body, that Warwick's ability to "support" her extreme "weight" at all defies the logic of "physics and metaphysics." If the "weight" of Hodges is unsupportable by a fellow *adult*, the implication is that the anticipated fetus of her and Gazabo's imminent conjugal union, if conceived, would eventually be crushed internally under Hodges's "heavy" body. As her fictionality brings to the fore, Rachel Hodges's significant weight is rendered abhorrent because it visually indicates a female body believed to be reproductively inviable.

The Fictional Fat Woman Can Reproduce

Lay awareness of the medical belief that (even if internal crushing had been avoided) the corpulent woman produced weak offspring is similarly evident from the experiences of Miss Groves from Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote Or, The Adventures of Arabella* (1752). Miss Groves, like Miss Hodges, is both fat and of marriageable age. Yet, unlike Edgeworth's Miss Hodges, Lennox's Miss Groves becomes pregnant. Miss Groves is a commonly overlooked character in literary criticism and at best is treated as a foil to the ignorant but otherwise well-intentioned title character, Arabella.[32] The central narrative of Lennox's novel focuses on Arabella, who has been raised in motherless seclusion by her father, the unnamed marquis, educating herself on the (significantly fictionalized) "histories" of women provided by French romances. For the majority of the narrative,

Lennox details a series of encounters where, due to Arabella's ignorance of social norms and her internalization of these French Romances as fact, Arabella either: believes she is pursued by an improper lover; or inappropriately asks other (young) women that she meets about their "histories." In so doing, Arabella intends only to discover their backgrounds, but she offends them, because of the contemporary meaning of the word "history," which implies that these women have an unseemly past. Such an instance occurs when Arabella asks Mrs. Morris to recount the "history" of her mistress, Miss Groves, after first noticing Miss Groves at church: "Tho' she did not seem to be more than eighteen Years of Age, her Stature was above the ordinary Size of Women; and, being rather too plump to be delicate."[33] The indelicacy of Miss Groves's plumpness and unordinarily large stature conveys a sense of unwieldiness, and therefore fatness, to her body. There is also the implication that Miss Groves's unordinary body type emblematizes her unusual behavior and deceptive "history."

As Mrs. Morris gleefully relates in the section of Lennox's novel that is roughly covered by the chapter "The History of Miss Groves," Miss Groves, despite her youth, had already lived an overindulgent and dissipated life. This appears to have been enabled by her mother's later marriage to a duke after her merchant father's passing, a union that, although it promised a better education and life to the then preteen Miss Groves, coincided with her mother's disinterest in her. Miss Groves soon after enters fashionable society at an extremely young age, unsupervised, with a seemingly limitless income as a "celebrated Beauty," indulging her desires both material and coquettish, until she becomes illegitimately pregnant by a "Mr. *L*——" (74). Yet what is of interest here is not the cause and illegitimacy of Miss Groves's pregnancy, although her corpulence would have reinforced the image of her dissipation, but the effect it has on her body: "As she had a very strong Constitution, she returned to Town at the End of three Weeks: The Child was dead, and she looked handsomer than ever" (75). Miss Groves's "too plump" "physical condition" seems to signify her "poor nutritional status" as a mother.[34] It is implied that her firstborn, who is unnamed and ungendered, died only "three Weeks" after its birth because it had suffered from a "restriction" in its "growth," making it similar to the aborted fetus of an "antepartum stillbirth" that was "too small for its gestational age" (Woods and Galley, 20). In addition, Miss Groves is "handsomer than ever" shortly after the birth of her firstborn, which supports Buchan's assertion that only the mother who appeared exhausted

by her pregnancy would produce healthy offspring. Hence, Miss Groves's "strong Constitution" appears to embody both Maubray's and Buchan's assertions that the corpulent woman's pregnant body diverts nutrition away from the fetus.[35] In fact, so "strong" is Miss Groves's "Constitution" that she "return[s]" to the boisterousness of "Town" life far more quickly than, presumably, thought possible for a recently pregnant woman.

Conversely, Miss Groves later challenges medical and social expectations of the corpulent woman's inability to produce viable progeny by having a second child by Mr. L—— shortly after the first (this one, too, in secret): "In her [Mrs Barnett's] House she [Miss Groves] lay-in of a Girl, which Mr. *L*—— sent to demand, and will not be persuaded to inform her how, or in what manner, he has disposed of the Child" (Lennox, 76). Although no further "inform[ation]" is provided as to what happens to Miss Groves's daughter, the implication is that she *survives*, as suggested by the future tense of the verb "will." It is unimportant both that it is Mr. L—— who continues to oversee the responsibility of caring for "the Child," and that, if we are guided by Samuel Johnson's definition of "depose," this will likely be by "the hands of another."[36] Miss Groves may not be responsible for raising her daughter, but this "Girl" does not suffer the fate of Miss Groves's firstborn. Contrary to eighteenth-century medical opinion, Miss Groves proves that the corpulent woman can produce viable offspring and without detriment to herself. By acting as a reproductively ambiguous figure, the "too plump" Miss Groves challenges the belief that female corpulence equated to barrenness or an exclusively abortive maternity.

Buchan's emphasis on the pregnant body's appearance, its inappropriate fatness and desirable bodily exhaustion, illustrates the superficiality of medical writing and of broader attitudes toward women's health. This superficiality is called into question by the stress placed on the abdomen of the fictional Miss Groves, which brings to mind the controversies associated with the fat female belly. Her nonconformity arises from the ambiguity of her corpulent physique. Not only is Miss Groves's corpulence implied to be the cause for her firstborn's early death, but it also acts initially to disguise this first (and illicit) pregnancy:

> Miss *Groves* approved of this second Proposal [to "lie-in outside of Town"], but took Advantage of her Shape, which, being far from delicate, would not easily discover any growing Bigness, to stay in Town as long as she possibly could. When her Removal was necessary, she went to the Lodgings provided for her, a few Miles distant from *London:* And,

> notwithstanding the Excuses which were framed for this sudden Absence, the true Cause was more than suspected by some busy People, who industriously enquired into her Affairs. (Lennox, *The Female Quixote*, 75)

Miss Groves's ability to hide the "growing Bigness" of pregnancy because of her "[in]delicate" "Shape" is ironic, but also stresses her autonomy in that it is she who decides to utilize her already "Big" body and work it to her "Advantage." It is likewise Miss Groves's insistence on maintaining her "showy behaviour" that effectively prohibits others from "discover[ing]" her secret and thus means that she is not, as David Marshall proposes, "punished."[37] This is further evidenced by Miss Groves's pregnancy not being discovered until she is "sudden[ly]" removed from "Town" under the encouragement of another's "Proposal." It is only when Miss Groves desists from the "showy behaviour" that enabled her to hide her pregnancy in plain sight—Miss Groves instead enacts the "banal" plot of removing herself from society, a decision that Anna Uddén implies is typical of the debauched young woman in the "popular novel" of the period—that her illegitimate pregnancy becomes "suspected."[38] Because of her corpulence and its association with female barrenness, those who see Miss Groves are incapable of discerning her pregnancy, an ignorant misapprehension that Miss Groves both acknowledges and, through her explicit masquerading, mocks.

The Fictional Fat Woman Does Not Want to Reproduce

Edgeworth's "weighty" Rachel Hodges more directly challenges medical writers' implicit advocacy of female reproductivity by precluding procreation altogether. The acknowledgement in literary culture of the medical aversion to a putative mother's overconsumption of liquor due to its association with selfishly rendering her womb inhospitable to a fetus is clearly illustrated by the excessive drinking habits of Edgeworth's Rachel Hodges. As soon as Warwick enters Hodges's lodgings, she is overwhelmed by "such a smell of brandy" that its scent (amongst other factors) causes Warwick to recoil physically ("Angelina," 136). During their brief meeting, Hodges not only drinks a "bumper of brandy" three times, but also her consumption of the alcohol appears near uninterrupted. Indeed, through notably counterproductive ignorance, Hodges's fiancé and would-be impregnator, Gazabo, immediately "replenishe[s]" her glass with the promise to Warwick that

Hodges "has brandy enough if you want spirits" (136, 139, 140). Warwick is quite "overpowered" by Hodges's overconsumption of alcohol, much as Hodges's hypothetical fetus would be should her corpulently (and simultaneously overheated) cold and moist womb allow one to develop (136). The assumption that Hodges would be unable to retain a fetus is twofold: first, because of the "intemperate" and "relaxed" state of her corpulent womb, as claimed by Maubray; second, because of her enthusiastic drinking, which would have, as Cheyne avers, a violently expulsive effect. The excessive volume of liquid Edgeworth's Rachel Hodges consumes, paired with its alcoholic content, would certainly have been deemed in the eyes of physicians Maubray and Buchan "*too much*" and likely to "suffocate" or "drown" a fetus.[39] Hence, Hodges's body is doubly abortive: both the state of her corpulent womb and the extent of her alcoholic consumption are emphatically "stifling" (136). Thus, Edgeworth presents a figure who flouts reproductive expectations. Hodges has married, it seems, only to show how thoroughly inhospitable she has rendered her body for procreation.

This deliberate inhospitableness is made readily apparent in Warwick and Hodges's first meeting through Hodges's described posture: "She was at this time sitting cross-legged in an arm-chair at a tea-table. . . . At the feet of this fair lady, kneeling on one knee, was a thin, subdued, simple-looking quaker, of the name of Nathaniel Gazabo" (134). Note that Hodges is sitting "cross-legged," an odd position for a woman to take in company in this period but, given her proximity to the "kneeling" Gazabo, it seems to foreshadow an imminent attempt at marital copulation. For, as Toulalan asserts, despite the "missionary position" "prescribed" for women to ensure sufficient penetration and deposition of the "seed" into her body, by the end of the eighteenth century it was observed by at least one author (physician Robert Couper) that "conception was still possible" even if the semen was only just deposited into the vagina ("Unfit for Generation," 310). Therefore, Hodges's "cross-legged" positioning could initially be understood to be preemptively moving her enlarged "omentum" out of the way of her vagina (as advised by Bracken) so that it no longer renders her impenetrable.

However, the awkward composition of Hodges and Gazabo—with Gazabo and Hodges at different levels, Gazabo kneeling, and Hodges in a defensive cross-legged position—ultimately implies that Hodges is defying penetration. Hence, the final scene to feature Hodges and Gazabo can be read as ironic: "We leave this well-matched pair to their happy prospects of conjugal union and equality" (Edgeworth, 143). Like the "PLANE" and

the "SPHERE" that are Gillray's Pitt and Hobart, Hodges and her fiancé Gazabo are not "well-matched" and so will not be able to partake in "conjugal union." As Toulalan explains, "negative attitudes" toward "particularly fat female bodies" were due to the assumption that they "resist[ed]" the "gendered social role" that "women should marry and become mothers" ("'To[o] Much Eating,'" 73). Yes, Hodges is to be married, but her bodily "union" with Gazabo cannot be achieved because her body is impenetrable, and consequently Hodges cannot realize the "prospects" of motherhood. That it is Hodges who has arranged their marriage in this way and is the "happ[ier]" of the "pair" is implied by their lack of "equality" in that first visual introduction to Hodges and Gazabo. Gazabo will always be kept at a remove from Hodges and especially from her body, and thus Gazabo is kept out of penetration range by Hodges's intentional impenetrability.[40]

The Fictional Fat Woman Prevents Other Women from Procreating

Not only is the impenetrability of Hodges's corpulent body self-imposed, but it is also imposed on others, namely Warwick. That Hodges's corpulent body precludes heteronormative penetration is first suggested when Hodges appears overcome with exasperation at the prospect of marrying Gazabo: "She [Hodges] burst into tears and threw herself into the arms of her pale astonished Angelina [Warwick]. 'O my Angelina!' she exclaimed, 'I am the most ill-matched! most unfortunate! most wretched of women!'" (Edgeworth, 138). In the same breath, Hodges condemns her "match" with Gazabo and seeks physical consolation from Warwick (Angelina) by forcing "herself" into Warwick's "astonished" embrace. Hodges is likewise unwilling to extricate herself from Warwick's "arms" (to revisit a quotation used earlier in this article):

> "Heavens what a scene!" said Miss Warwick to herself; "and the woman so heavy I can scarce support her weight; and this is my *unknown friend*?"
>
> How long Miss Hodges would willingly have continued to sob upon Miss Warwick's shoulder, or how long that shoulder could have possibly sustained her weight, is a mixed problem in physics and metaphysics which must ever remain unsolved; but suddenly a loud scream was heard—Miss Hodges started up—. (Edgeworth, 139)

In this particular instance, the literal weight of Hodges has become conflated with the implied "weight" of her sapphic desire for Warwick. Caro-

line Gonda disagrees with existing Edgeworth scholarship (especially that of Hugh Parry and Sarah Raff) that she believes too quickly dismisses the queerness of the relationship between Hodges and Warwick on the basis of Warwick's overt disgust at Hodges upon their long-awaited meeting.[41] Gonda counters this dismissal by claiming that Hodges and Warwick's connection is one of "romantic friendship" whose "significan[ce]" is proved because of the "*significant* threat" (my emphasis) it "poses," "as is evident from the overwhelming thoroughness with which the relationship must be mocked and exploded" (Gonda, "Queer Materiality," 282). It is therefore unsurprising that Warwick does not understand the "significan[ce]" of this sapphic weight, as indicated by her "unknow[ing]" how to respond to this weight-as-lesbian-desire and by her hesitancy in responding to it; Warwick can "scarce support" it. That this implied weight-as-lesbian-desire is further obfuscated by its conflation with an "unsolv[able]" "problem in physics and metaphysics" likewise stresses its nonconformity with heteronormative expectations regarding reproductivity. Who is to say what might have occurred between Hodges and Warwick had not Hodges "started up"?

Hodges once again uses her significant "weight" (and its related sapphism) to preclude Warwick's penetrability when interrupted by the interventionist intent of Warwick's former friend, Lady Frances Somerset:

> "And is this your independence of soul, my Angelina?" cried Araminta, setting her back to the door, so as effectually to prevent her from passing; "and is this your independence of soul, my Angelina, thus, thus tamely to submit, to resign yourself again to your unfeeling, proud, prejudiced, intellect-lacking persecutors?" (142)

This time, Hodges (Araminta) utilizes her doorframe-filling body as a barrier to prevent Warwick (Angelina) from pursuing heteronormative expectations of reproduction. Warwick's departure from Hodges's lodgings with Lady Frances would effectively confirm Warwick's pursuit of these expectations. Hodges draws further attention to the nonconformity of her plea for Warwick to stay by stressing how, in rejecting Hodges's weight-as-lesbian-desire, Warwick would be "submit[ting]" herself to the "prejudiced," *penetrative* "persecut[ion]" of conventional society. (Tim Hitchcock asserts that in the "latter half" of the eighteenth century, those "literatures" that contributed to the period's "sexual knowledge" increasingly promoted the idea that "the point of sex was penetration and impregnation" by a

"penis.")[42] This is contrary to Gonda's assertion that even after she departs from the queered space of Hodges's lodgings, because of the "absence" of an interloping, heterosexual male "suitor" at the close of the "Angelina" narrative, Warwick's awakened lesbianism would remain unaffected (Gonda, "Queer Materiality," 288). For it is Hodges who Warwick "unknow[ingly]" desires, and so to be removed from her presence is to deny Warwick's lesbian desire. It is Warwick who "longed" for and sought epistolary contact with Hodges after reading her "novel," "The Woman of Genius," and it is Warwick who, after a "correspondence" of "nearly two years," "formed a strong desire to see her *unknown friend*" and tried to find Hodges's location (Edgeworth, 102–03). Warwick's aversion to Hodges upon physically meeting her is merely a verification of Gonda's assertion that Hodges and Warwick's connection "must be mocked" because of the "threat" posed by its "romantic" potential. As Warwick's "unknowing" proves, so thoroughly is their potential relationship "mocked" that its romantic nature appears obscure even to her. That the expectation of female penetrability is the social norm is likewise implied by Hodges's belief that to lose one's "independence" is to "submit" "tamely" to these "persecutors." Thus, the characterization of Hodges equates impenetrability with nonconforming and sapphic "independence," and penetrability with its loss.

At every stage of female reproduction, medical writers of the long eighteenth century unequivocally anticipate the corpulent woman's inability to procreate. More disturbingly still, these medical writers betray a noticeably unscientific, cultural influence in their greater concern for prioritizing a woman's reproductiveness over her personal well-being. Buchan's prefatory statement epitomizes this attitude, advocating that it is better that a woman be thinner and more likely bear children, than be fatter and individually healthy but produce either weak or no offspring at all. Yet, this wholesale medical assertion of the sterility of the corpulent woman and this social investment in female reproductivity more generally, is not unthinkingly adopted in the period. Instead, as I have argued in this article, the fictional fat woman presents a distinct challenge to medical belief regarding female corpulence. As the reality of Albinia Hobart's extensive progeny and Miss Groves's fecundity exemplify, these fat female fictionalizations disrupt the stereotype of infertility associated with the corpulent woman. Similarly, Rachel Hodges, in her various, deliberate preclusions of her own reproductivity, dismisses the social expectation of the fat woman's stymied procreative capacity by removing herself from the procreative equation alto-

gether. The fat fictional woman proves the complexity of her engagement with medical writing—she is not simply a cypher of medical opinion, but a discordant figure of criticism.

Notes

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1. William Buchan, *Advice to Mothers, on the Subject of their own Health; and on the Means of Promoting the Health, Strength, and Beauty, of their Offspring* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1803), 61–62. "Dr. DENMAN" is presumably Thomas Denman (1733–1815), a well-known man-midwife.

2. I use "Georgian" to indicate the Anglocentric focus of this research rather than an interest in the monarchy, and my use of "Georgian" and "eighteenth century," where relevant, also refers to those works, persons, and so forth, from the early nineteenth century.

3. In the eighteenth century, "obesity" and "obese" were used less frequently in medical parlance than "corpulence" and "corpulent," and were more often employed to describe a person's appearance. It was not until the nineteenth century that "corpulency"—as illustrated by the title of surgeon William Wadd's *Cursory Remarks on Corpulence; or, Obesity Considered as a Disease* (1810)—was (eventually) replaced by the term obesity.

4. Malcolm Flemyng, *A Discourse on the Nature, Causes, and Cure of Corpulency. Illustrated by a Remarkable Case, Read before the Royal Society, November 1757* (London: L. Davis and C. Reymers, 1760), 2.

5. Sarah Toulalan, "'To[o] Much Eating Stifles the Child': Fat Bodies and Reproduction in Early Modern England," *Historical Research* 87 (2014): 65–93; the quotation is from 84.

6. Sarah Toulalan, "'Unfit for Generation': Body Size and Reproduction," in *The Secrets of Generation: Reproduction in the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. Raymond Stephanson and Darren Wagner (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto, 2015), 298–318; the quotation is from 300. This social hysteria for continuous reproduction is encapsulated by Linda Colley's assertion, in *Britons Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale Univ., 2009), that "a cult of prolific maternity [as promoted by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78)] was immensely attractive to those who believed (as

many did before the introduction of a census in 1800) that Britain's population was in decline" (239–40).

7. Sarah Toulalan, "'Elderly Years Cause a Total Dispaire of Conception': Old Age, Sex, and Infertility in Early Modern England," *Social History of Medicine* 29 (2016): 333–59; the quotation is from 333, and Toulalan, "'To[o] Much Eating,'" 86.

8. William Buchan's much-reprinted *Domestic Medicine, or, The Family Physician*, first published in 1769 and influential well into the nineteenth century, is exemplary in this respect: the "Diseases of Women" are confined to a single chapter (one of over fifty). See also David Gentilcore, in *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe: Diet, Medicine, and Society* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), who claims that there was "a paucity of regimens written specifically for women" in European Enlightenment medical texts (45–56); Daniel Lea and Andrew Mangham's exclusion of the female patient in *The Male Body in Medicine and Literature*, ed. Lea and Mangham (Liverpool: Liverpool Univ., 2018); and both Wendy Churchill and Roy Porter's failure to acknowledge the implicit masculinity of the hypothetical medical patient in their separate considerations of the de-individualization of this patient in premodern medical writing, in *Patients and Practitioners: Lay Attitudes to Medicine in Pre-Industrial Society*, ed. Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1985), and Wendy Churchill, *Female Patients in Early Modern Britain: Gender, Diagnosis, and Treatment* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 159.

9. See John Maubray, *The Female Physician, Containing all the Diseases incident to that Sex, in Virgins, Wives, and Widows* (London: James Holland, 1724), as an example of a medical treatise that more obliquely endorses Buchan's assertion. Despite implying that the work will look at "diseases" peculiar to the different stages of womanhood listed in the title, this text considers almost exclusively only those diseases that either affect a woman's ability to conceive, or her pregnant or postnatal state.

10. Thomas Short, *A Discourse Concerning the Causes and Effects of Corpulency* (London: J. Roberts, 1727), 54.

11. Jennifer Evans, *Aphrodisiacs, Fertility, and Medicine in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2014), 66.

12. John Ball, *The Female Physician: Or, Every Woman Her Own Doctress* (London: L. Davis, 1770), 70.

13. Michael Stolberg, "A Woman's Hell?: Medical Perceptions of Menopause in Preindustrial Europe," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 73 (1999): 404–28; the quotation is from 408. Stolberg's article refers mostly to the influence of French medical discourse, especially from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, because, according to Stolberg, French physicians were the first to write on the subject of menopause at length (see especially 412–13).

14. Although "plethora" could denote a humoral overabundance of one of many substances in the body, it typically referred to an overabundance of blood. See "plethoric, *adj*.," *OED* online; "plethora, *n*.," Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols. (London: J. and P. Knaptor, 1755).

15. See "vitiated, *adj*.," *OED* online.

16. John Bond, *An Essay on the Incubus, or Night-mare* (London: D. Wilson and T. Durham, 1753), 50.

17. William Wadd, *Cursory Remarks on Corpulence; Or, Obesity Considered as a Disease* (1810), 3rd ed. (London: J. Callow, 1816), 11.

18. See "epiploön, *n*." "The caul or omentum, a fatty membrane enwrapping the intestines," *OED* online; Maubray, *Female Physician*, 387; and Henry Bracken, *The Midwife's Companion; Or, a Treatise of Midwifery: Wherein the whole Art is Explained* (London: J. Clarke, 1737), 20.

19. Kate Fisher and Sarah Toulalan, "Introduction," in *The Routledge History of Sex and the Body: 1500 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2013), 1–20, especially 11. In brief, "Humoral Theory" refers to the classical model of the body, first proposed by Hippocrates and later developed by Galen, in which the body was believed to be composed of four humors, each constitutionally different: "yellow bile" ("choler") was "dry"; "phlegm" was "wet"; "black bile" was "cold"; "blood" was "hot." See also Toulalan, "'Unfit for Generation,'" 302–03. There are some variations attributed to each of the humors, but for the purpose of this article, I shall leave my explanation in this simplified state. See, for example, David W. Haslam and Fiona Haslam, *Fat, Gluttony, and Sloth: Obesity in Medicine, Art, and Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool Univ., 2009), 77–79.

20. Sarah Toulalan, "Bodies, Sex, and Sexuality," in *The Routledge History of Women in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Amanda L. Capern (London: Routledge, 2020), 29–52; the quotation is from 34.

21. Maubray's assertion would have seemed substantiated by the ultimately heirless, and, according to Robert Bucholz, indisputably fat Queen Anne (1665–1714). Bucholz, "The 'Stomach of a Queen,' or Size Matters," in *Queen and Power in Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed., Carole Levin and Bucholz (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska, 2009), 242–72; the quotation is from 253. Prior to the start of her reign in 1702, Queen Anne had experienced "as many as seventeen pregnancies," but only one had resulted in a live birth. See Lisa Forman Cody, *Birthing the Nation: Sex, Science, and the Conception of Eighteenth-Century Britons* (Oxford: Oxford Univ., 2005), 79.

22. John Leake, *Medical Instructions towards the Prevention, and Cure of Chronic or Slow Diseases peculiar to Women* (London: R. Baldwin, 1777), 137.

23. George Cheyne, *The Natural Method of Cureing the Diseases of the Body, and the Disorders of the Mind Depending on the Body* (London: Geo. Strahan, 1742), 286.

24. Christopher Forth, in *Fat: A Cultural History of the Stuff of Life* (London: Reaktion, 2019), has mistakenly attributed the origination of this epithet to "some point between the early 1900s and 1935," when it was clearly already in use by the late eighteenth century (263–64).

25. *Real Life in London*, 2 vols. (London: Jones, 1821–22), 1:31.

26. See also note 13.

27. Anne Hamilton, *The Epics of the Ton; Or, The Glories of the Great World: A Poem, in Two Books, with Notes and Illustrations* (1807), 2nd ed. (London: C and R. Baldwin, 1807), 15, ll. 67–68.

28. The description of Maria Fitzherbert as "fat, fair, and forty" is not unique to Hamilton's poem; Fitzherbert is likewise connected to this epithet in the

anonymous, satirical hand-colored etching, *The Royal Toast: Fat, Fair, and Forty* (1786), now in the British Museum.

29. See note 18.

30. This fictionalized version of Hobart, although a caricature, also acts to undermine the medical assertion of the corpulent woman's impenetrability. As Matthew Kilburn reminds us, in "Hobart, George, third Earl of Buckinghamshire (1731–1804), theatre manager and politician," *ODNB*, online at <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13390>; despite the numerous, public allusions to her (supposedly lifelong) corpulency, the real-life Albinia Hobart was mother to nine children who, bar one, each survived into adulthood. Therefore, even if by 1792 Albinia Hobart (born in 1737/38) was "fat" and well past "forty," the actuality of her fecundity fundamentally raises questions about the medically presupposed investment in her inability to procreate as a fat woman.

31. Maria Edgeworth, "Angelina; Or, L'aime Inconnue," in *Moral Tales for Young People* (1801) (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1870), 97–151; the quotation is from 102.

32. For instance, Miss Groves is absent from Susan Carlile's otherwise comprehensive work on Lennox: *Charlotte Lennox: An Independent Mind* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto, 2018); she is also noted as the "sexual" counterpart to Arabella by Laurie Langbauer in "Diverting Romance: Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*," in *Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ., 1990), 62–92.

33. Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote; Or, The Adventures of Arabella* (1752), edited by Margaret Dalziel (Oxford: Oxford Univ., 1998), 67.

34. Robert Woods and Chris Galley, *Mrs Stone & Dr Smellie: Eighteenth-Century Midwives and Their Patients* (Liverpool: Liverpool Univ., 2014), 20.

35. According to Johnson's *Dictionary* entry, "constitution, *n*.," refers to both a person's "corporeal frame" and the "temper of [the] body, with respect to health and disease."

36. See "dispose, *v*." Johnson's *Dictionary*.

37. David Marshall, "Writing Masters and 'Masculine Exercises' in *The Female Quixote*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 5 (1993): 105–36; the quotation is from 134.

38. Anna Uddén, "Narratives and Counter-Narratives—Quixotic Hermeneutics in Eighteenth-Century England: Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote*," *Partial Answers* 6 (2008): 443–57; the quotation is from 445.

39. Maubray, *Female Physician*, 122, and Buchan, *Advice to Mothers*, 41.

40. Gazabo is exclusively depicted as either kneeling to Hodges (139) or on an errand for her (135), never next to her.

41. Caroline Gonda, "Maria Edgeworth's 'Angelina, or L'amie Inconnue': Queer Materiality and the Woman Writer's Grotesque Body," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 17 (2013): 279–90, especially 281–82; Hugh Parry, "'There's No Romance in That': Review of Sharon Murphy, Maria Edgeworth, and Romance," *Newsletter of the Thomas Lovell Beddoes Society* 14 (2010): 43–49, especially 46; and Sarah Raff, "Quixotes, Precepts, and Galateas: The Didactic Novel in

Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Comparative Literature Studies* 43 (2006): 466–81, especially 479.

42. Tim Hitchcock, "The Reformulation of Sexual Knowledge in Eighteenth-Century England," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 37 (2012): 823–31, especially 829.