"IN TERROR OF JACK THE CLIPPER": SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND NEW (HETERO)SEXUAL DESIRE IN TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY AMERICA

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Using archival materials, court documents, contemporary scientific research, and newspaper articles, my work analyses the cultural meaning of widespread haircuttings perpetrated by a figure known as 'Jack the Clipper' against young, white women in Boston, Chicago, and New York between 1888 and 1910 to reveal the mechanisms by which a new infrastructure of (hetero)sexual desire was formed. Rather than understanding heterosexual desire to be an innate or unified attribute that finds different social and cultural expression, my work uses these violent encounters with Jack the Clipper as ways of examining the changing and conflicting direction(s) of sexual desire at the turn of the century. Building upon interrogations of the 'orientation' in sexual orientation from queer and spatial theorists, I re-frame the emergence of heterosexuality as a spatial transformation that leveraged the formidable social, physical, political, and economic *dis*orientations of the 1890s to narrow appropriate sites of desire by enacting violence against urban-dwelling women, and bring into alignment sexual desire, new constructions of whiteness, and the form of the American city.

Chapter 1 introduces the narratives of the women who were attacked by a clipper, implicating haircutting as a form of sexual violence and mechanism of gender oppression and arguing that bodies were re-oriented from constellations to locations

of sexuality through sexual violence. Chapter 2 examines hair as a sexual fetish, using the emerging language of sexology to reveal the process of re-orienting sexual objects and object choices. Chapter 3 reveals the reorientations of white identity vis-a-vis Blackness that minimised the (white) violence of Jack the Clipper and left the cultural space of the mythic Black Rapist unchallenged. Chapter 4 argues that the refusal of police departments and courts to acknowledge the transgressive behaviours of clippers prompted communities to police clippers on their own, revealing the tensions between popular sexual beliefs and sexual norms advocated by middle-class proponents of the American state. Finally, chapter 5 theorises large-scale spatial dis-orientation in American cities as newspapers and train networks annihilated time, space, and scale, creating a form of 'spatial nausea' that re-shaped the cultural infrastructure reproducing heterosexual orientations.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sean Cosgrove received his Bachelor of Arts with Honours (Class I) in 2009 from the University. He received a Masters of Arts from the University of Chicago in 2012 and a Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy from Cornell University in 2017 and 2022, respectively.

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I have re-written this short section of my dissertation many, many times. Too many times. I had imagined that writing acknowledgements would be easy; that the words would be unleashed having been in some sort of intellectual hibernation for almost a decade. Alas, I have discovered that this is not how acknowledgements are written.

The struggle has not been a lack of people to thank--the dissertation, as all major pieces of work, has been enabled only by the support and sacrifice of family, friends, and colleagues across the hemispheres. Rather, the question is how do you capture the depth of your gratitude for people who listened to you prattle on insufferably about something wildly obscure and profoundly disinteresting with sincere enthusiasm? Or those people who struggled through *unreadable* drafts of chapters and articles, coaxing from the impenetrable writing a cogent argument you did not realise was there (likely because it was not)? Or those who perhaps do not even realise the magnitude of their contribution to your work as they operated beyond the world of academia, ensuring a connection to something more meaningful than the scope of your dissertation? I suspect that I, at least, cannot fully capture these sentiments. But what follows is my attempt to convey my thanks to all those who have made this work possible by actively constructing a world that (socially, intellectually, and financially) has enabled me to do my thing for more than a decade.

Despite the many shortcomings of the dissertation--for which I claim sole responsibility--it is profoundly better for the influence of my committee. Derek Chang, my dissertation advisor, Raymond Craib, Rachel Prentice, and Larry Glickman have been nothing short of generous, kind, and supportive, while also being intellectual

powerhouses whose insights have pushed my project(s) in new and interesting directions.

Derek Chang deserves special mention as a rare kind of mentor whose brilliance has been directed unselfishly toward advancing my work and career goals for the better part of ten years. Whether dredging from the very bowels of a research paper an idea or argument that I, at best, made unwittingly, demonstrating a teaching ethic that I endeavour to replicate in my own classes balancing patience and care alongside rigorous intellectual exchange with students, or committing to day trips to New York City at my behest to participate in a high school teaching project I was involved in organising, Derek has made both my dissertation and my time at Cornell much richer. Not all students walk away from their PhD experience feeling as grateful and indebted to their advisors as I do nor hoping to emulate their career practices, and for that I am incredibly fortunate.

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This project started before I arrived at Cornell. At the University of Sydney, my interest in Jack the Clipper began in an honours class convened by Frances Clarke. Not having studied as an American historian, I owe Frances a debt for her advising, enthusiasm

for my research project, and patience as I learned an entirely new field of history. Although I left the University of Sydney quickly--something for which as I have become older I have some regrets about--I also want to thank Alison Bashford, Mike McDonnell, and Penny Russell for their encouragement.

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To my mother, in particular, living halfway across the world, on my own, to pursue this bizarre (and not at all useful or lucrative) educational qualification is only possible because of you. Any of the bravery, kindness, grit, or dedication that I possess that has made this ten-year adventure possible has come from mimicking your grace, humility, and (quirky?) sense of humour in all manner of situations. The anecdotes and

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Image 1 Map of Boston clipper attacks in January and February 1906.

INTRODUCTION

A NEW SEXUAL MODERNITY: JACK THE CLIPPER, INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE, AND THE REORIENTATION OF AMERICAN DESIRE

At home on a Saturday afternoon in the middle of summer in 1896, a young woman named Mary Jackson heard her doorbell ring. Behind the door stood a man claiming to sell magazines, something neither unusual nor terribly suspicious in the late nineteenth century as door-to-door sales became increasingly common.[1] Once Jackson opened the door, however, this so-called salesman began to 'edg[e] his way inside.' Jackson tried to close the door but a second man appeared and together they burst into her home.[2]

Mary Jackson struggled against her assailants—thrashing, kicking, and screaming—but she was overpowered. 'The first intruder seized [her] by the throat' and warned her not to make a sound. He 'pushed her backwards to a bed on the opposite side of the room and gagged her,' while 'the second man produced a piece of clothes-line' and 'bound the young woman's hands….' With her feet still free the assailants took out a towel and tied them together as well.[3]

With Jackson incapacitated, gagged and bound, 'the two men produced a pair of scissors and a butcher knife' and moved towards her on the bed. Whether Mary Jackson knew what was about to happen to her we will probably never know, but the men were not interested in money or jewellery, they did not rummage through her things, and they did not tear off any of her clothing.[4]

[1] Kathy Peiss, '"Vital Industry" and Women's Ventures: Conceptualizing Gender in Twentieth Century Business History,' *Business History Review*, 72, no. 2 (Summer, 1998), p. 231.

[2] 'They Clip Her Tresses: Counterfeit Book Agents Bind and Gag Mary H. Jackson,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (19 July 1896), p. 1.

[3] 'They Clip Her Tresses,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 1.

[4] 'They Clip Her Tresses,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 1.

Rather, they 'deliberately cut off her hair' and left. 'The braids were carefully put away,' they warned Miss Jackson once more 'against making an outcry, [and] they departed,' without inflicting any serious bodily harm.[5]

Mary Jackson would be found by her brother later that afternoon, still tied up on the bed as her attackers had left her.[6]

This story was my first introduction to the world of 'Jack the Clipper': a collection of hair-cutters across the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century United States who attacked young, white women and girls in a bid to humiliate them and enact upon them the violences of their changing lives and situations, satisfy their own sexual fantasies, and perhaps even sell the hair for material gain.

Although some of the finer details of Jackson's story differ from other narratives presented in the popular press, this description of Mary Jackson's violent encounter captures the ambiguity that sits at the heart of these attacks and, I contend, make them suitable entry points into a world of sexual desire still under construction. There is something both deeply familiar and deeply strange about the encounter. Jackson's story is irrefutably violent. One of the central arguments of this dissertation is that sexual violence not only comes in a variety of forms but that we need to recognise how it has been constructed across time and space to appreciate the severity of personal intrusions and violations such as the one experienced by Jackson. But even acknowledging the violence in this story, it remains perplexing because the object of attention is one that has radically different meanings to us in the twenty-first century. Paying close attention, we see flashes of a world of social

[5] 'They Clip Her Tresses,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 1.

[6] 'Mystery Shrouds Stolen Tresses: Detectives Fail to Secure Clews to the Two Men Who Clipped Off Miss Jackson's Braids,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (20 June 1896), p. 1.

and sexual desire still in formation; one that both accords with some norms of modernity while raising important questions about how desire was being directed and redirected through these narratives.

In reading this story for the first time, I did not expect Jackson's hair to be cut or for her to be left physically unharmed, having been bound, gagged, and thrown onto her bed by two strange men who had invaded her home. It is not that haircutting as a form of social punishment for women is unusual--indeed, haircutting as a form of discipline and control has a long history in the United States as it does in other places[7]--but rather that I brought to the story my own expectation of physical or sexual violence perpetrated against Mary Jackson as a result of my assumptions about both human behaviour and its reporting in the news grounded in the twenty-first century. Jacks the Clipper point us toward a different social and sexual world; one which is just familiar enough to us today to feel as though we can understand the meaning of these actions and be pulled in by the news reports, but one just distinct enough that there are entire systems of knowledge and understanding just out of reach.

I use 'point us toward' here intentionally because this dissertation uses clippers as a means of illuminating in-formation pathways of heterosexual desire. Where other figures of study in histories of sexuality or of the Progressive Era tend to

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[7] In the nineteenth century, before the Civil War and subsequent abolition of slavery, White & White argue that it was Black enslaved women who were most likely to have their hair cut at the hands of white mistresses or slaveowners. It was the 'similarity of the hair of individual slaves to white hair' that upset white women suggesting either that the Black women they were punishing were perhaps offspring of their white, male family members or were alluring to them. See: Shane White and Graham White, "Slave Hair and African American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of Southern History*, 61, no. 1 (1995), pp. 49, 68, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2211360>, last accessed 27 March 2022.

On haircutting and the slave trade, see: Ayana D. Byrd and Lori L. Tharps, *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), pp. 10-1.

On the cutting of Chinese men's queues, see: Adam Goodman, *The Deportation Machine: America's Long History of Expelling Immigrants* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), pp. 17-8.

be understood in relation to their relatively new or still coming-into-being identity categories (the homosexual, the lesbian, the invert, and so on) that sit easily with what are now our understandings of the social and scientific responses to queerness which saw people interpret same-sex sexual desire through the lens of gender expression, Jacks the Clipper point us to different kinds of desires and the different directions from which they stem that seem equally unsettling but for different reasons. The object of a clipper attack would, to us, represent a 'heterosexual' violence (knowing, of course, that 'heterosexual' here is only shorthand for a historically-specific complex system of knowing and being that we will return to later), a man attacking a young girl or women for what appears to be sexual gratification. But to Victorian Americans who conceived of desires differently these attacks drew on not only an array of competing social meanings but different orientations that provided access to these. To really understand the figure of the clipper it is not enough to know that the Victorian world was coming to an end but to understand the often competing and contradictory logics of worlds colliding.

Although this dissertation contains within it a number of arguments and interventions in historiography as I grapple with this new figure in the canon of American cultural history,[8] at its core, I argue for recognition of heterosexuality as a spatial transformation that leveraged the formidable social, physical, political, and economic disorientations of the 1890s and early 1900s to narrow appropriate sites of

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[8] To the best of my knowledge, there are no sustained or even substantial references to or examinations of Jack the Clipper, the spate of associated attacks, or of the clipper John W. Jorgenson in historical scholarship.

One of the few scholarly references I have found includes a single-line mention of 'Jack the Clipper' in an M.A. thesis focussing on schooling in Chicago in the late-nineteenth century. See: Laura Ann Wurzburger, 'Recess Policy in Chicago Public Schools: 1855-2006' (MA diss., Loyola University, 2010).

Other results veer far from historiography. For example, one of the first published mentions of Jack the Clipper that appeared in a targeted web search belongs to a chapter in a science-fiction and fantasy collection by David Langford that focuses on toenail clipping. See: David Langford, 'The Case of Jack the Clipper,' in Mike Ashley, ed., *The Mammoth Book of Comic Fantasy II* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 1999), pp. 52-9.

desire and align them with new understandings of sexed bodies, racial formations, legal and bureaucratic mechanisms of the state, and urban forms. Victorian Americans recognised and acted upon bodies in very different ways, experienced and knew sexuality in capacities strange to us in the twenty-first century, constructed racial categories that would endure throughout the twentieth century, and produced a bureaucracy that would sustain all of this, enabled, ultimately, by new technologies, new media, and the opportunities afforded by fast-growing city spaces. It is these clashing, conflicting, and sometimes ambiguous shifts in the history of the United States, of the Progressive Era, and of human desire and sexuality, that this project unpacks, using Jack the Clipper as a means of identifying the contours of these systems.

This project is one that asks what these attacks meant to Victorian Americans as they approached a new century and sheds light upon the mechanisms through which a new infrastructure of sexuality came into being. To bring into being new sexual identities required new forms of sexual desire--to desire as a heterosexual is to have certain desires encouraged and others removed from reach--and I offer up a history of sexuality reframed by spatial theory to make visible the process through which this transition occurred. Sexuality is not merely the expression of sexual desire towards another, but a way of organising social relations.[9] Clippers, straddling an old world and a new, become case studies through which to examine how bodies themselves were being rewritten, how sexual desire was being reshaped or realigned, and how these spread throughout American urban centres and beyond through newspapers and trains, to create an infrastructure of sexuality that remains with us today.

[9] David M. Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 9.

Each of the chapters of this dissertation grapples with how heterosexual desire was conditioned by and developed alongside emerging aspects of American modernity. Pathways of desire that had existed previously were narrowed, as clippers illuminated both the expansiveness of sexual knowledge systems and the enforcement of middle-class, capitalist norms of sexuality that labelled the kind of attraction to hair as pathological: a 'fetish.' Appropriate forms of heterosexuality were intrinsically linked to reformulations of whiteness that confirmed white supremacy because of an especial and allegedly more highly evolved predisposition to sexual dimorphism, one that unsurprisingly supported a new form of capitalist reproduction. Clippers were met with silence from bureaucratic and legal authorities, if only in the imaginations of the popular press, asserting the importance of particular forms of transgressive sexual desires at the expense of others. And, finally, were firmly planted within the world of the new urban form of the city, a place in which violences of the clipper could flourish and be imagined to flourish, but also places that represented the best and worst of what American modernity might produce.

A concentration on desire follows Sara Ahmed's reckoning with 'orientations' as a fruitful means of analysing how we, and our historical actors, can exist in the world.[10] The creation of these new orientations of desire were contingent on the disorientations that were inherent in Victorian society that experienced rapid demographic shifts, economic and political upheaval, and saw simultaneously sickening and exhilarating new physical realities conquered. The individual and collective violences that were represented by Jack the Clipper were emblematic of a collective form of disorientation; a potential 'slippage' event, that, alongside increasing enforcement from the American middle-class, enabled a new system of

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[10] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

sexual desire to take hold. A product, symptom, and instigator of a rapidly changing world, read critically the figure of Jack the Clipper is a lens through which to understand and appreciate the creation of a new kind of social and sexual modernity, one premised on a new spatial organisation of social relations and made visible by violent manifestations of these changes.

Who was Jack the Clipper?

Over the course of a generation, hundreds of young, white girls and women across the United States had their hair forcibly cut by a figure known in the popular white press as 'Jack the Clipper.'

Clipper attacks came in a variety of forms and their stories are recounted, albeit sensationally, in contemporary white newspapers. Twelve-year-old Ruby Waters with 'jet black... curly' hair was walking home from school on Chicago's West side in the winter of 1898 when a 'young man neatly dressed ran up to her and caught at her hair.'[11] Ruby 'struggled so violently that the scissors' this man was carrying 'fell into a snowdrift and were lost.'[12] The assailant threw Ruby to the ground and 'pinn[ed] her down with his knee.'[13] Without his scissors, he 'wound her curly locks firmly around his fingers' and, 'with a vicious tug, he tore out by the roots all the hair from one side of her head....'[14] Now with the hair in his possession, and with

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[11] 'Clipper Mails a Braid: Sends Stolen Strand to "The Tribune" With a Jocose Note,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (11 February 1898), p. 12; 'Ruby A Fourth Victim: Three Lose Hair Before Little Miss Waters is Assailed,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (29 January 1898), p. 6.

[12] 'Hair Torn Out By a Thief: Ruby Waters Loses Her Locks After a Fierce Struggle in Chicago,' *New York Times* (29 January 1898), p. 7.

[13] 'Ruby A Fourth Victim,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 6.

[14] 'Hair Torn Out By a Thief,' *New York Times*, p. 7.

Ruby screaming in fear and pain, he pocketed the braids and sprinted away.[15] Ruby, escorted by a policeman, arrived home distraught: 'so hysterical that it was necessary to summon a physician.'[16]

For Waters and other young girls like her, clipper attacks were violent and physically intrusive, leaving wounds and physical scars, while also being emotionally taxing and further sensationalised in the press. Some of these clipper assaults were more violent than others, some were quicker and less painful, and some not noticed at all until well after the fact.[17] Others took place with barely a whisper, leaving young women and girls confused and anxious about what had happened to them without their knowledge. Some took place on the street, while others in the home; some under the cover of dusk, and others in broad daylight. Despite their differences, however, the assaults all shared one trait: young women and girls had their braids shorn by men, often without their knowledge and almost always without their consent.[18]

Julia Berger, aged sixteen years and shopping with Mrs. W. L. Woodward in Chicago's Schlesinger & Mayer's department store on Saturday, 21 January 1899, was one victim unaware of the hair clipping until after it had taken place. Berger and

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[15] 'Man Tears Out a Girl's Hair: Assault on Ruby Waters by a "Jack the Clipper" in Jackson Boulevard,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (28 January 1898), p. 5.

[16] 'Hair Torn Out By a Thief,' *New York Times*, p. 7.

[17] For examples of other violent clippings, see: 'Jack Cuts Her Braids: Rosey Carey's Tresses Are Severed By "The Clipper,"' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (5 January 1897), p. 7; 'Hair Clipper in School: Gertrude Jennie is Attacked in the Beale Building,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (13 April 1898), p. 7.
For some clippings that took place without immediate physical violence, see: 'Works With Gentle Hand: Hair Snipper Appears at Wakefield,' *Boston Daily Globe* (14 February 1906), p. 11; 'Woman Slashes Hair of a Chelsea Girl: Annie McCauley, Aged 17, Loses 16 Inches of Luxuriant Tresses,' *Boston Daily Globe* (7 February 1906), p. 1.

[18] There are some female clippers, occasionally referred to as Jane the Clipper, but these are rare. See: 'Think Her A Clipper: Northwest Side People Believe Mary Catorski's Arrest May Clear Up A Perplexing Mystery,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (19 May 1899), p. 7; 'Woman "Clipper" Cuts Hair of Girl in Lincoln Park: Miss Ruth Van Every, Attacked While Sitting On A Bench, Struggles Vainly--Assailant Escapes,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (10 May 1906), p. 3; 'Woman Slashes the Hair of a Chelsea Girl,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1; '"Mollie the Clipper,"' *Los Angeles Times* (10 May 1906), p. 12.

her companion had 'entered one of the elevators' in the department store in the early afternoon. 'In the car was a man who it seemed to both jostled them unnecessarily.' Although they had noticed this man acting strangely they thought it nothing more than an act of rudeness on his part. It was only upon 'lea[ving] the elevator at the second floor and as Berger started down one of the aisles, that Mrs. Woodward discovered the end of the braid of Berger's hair had been cut off.'[19]

Luna Smith was targeted less than a month before Julia Berger and only days before Christmas in 1898. Smith was attending 'the Fair in State street' with her mother when she was attacked by a Jack the Clipper. Smith 'remembered a man had jostled her a moment before the discovery was made'; that 'one of her braids was nearly severed.' The article noted that 'the girl…was unaware of the cutting of her hair until her mother called her attention to the fact.' Having lost a braid which was 'a trifle over thirty inches long,' despite not feeling anything which could not have been ascribed to the movements of a crowd or an impetuous young woman or man, Luna burst into tears. It was her 'tears [which] attracted some attention from the throng of shoppers, but both mother and daughter hurried away without notifying the police.'[20]

Erna Fransky was thirteen in 1899 when she was attacked by a Jack the Clipper. She and her mother, Mrs Elsie Langman, had made their way into downtown Chicago, most likely to do some shopping in one of the many department stores that lined State Street and 'the Loop shopping district.'[21] On their way back to the train

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[19] '"Clipper" Is At Work Again: Miss Julia Berger Loses Part of Her Braid in Schlesinger & Mayer's Elevator,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (22 January 1899), p. 3.

[20] 'Jack the Clipper is At Work Again Stealing Tresses: Lock of Miss Luna Smith's Hair Nearly Severed from Her Head in Front of the Fair in State Street – Miscreant Escapes Detection,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (23 December 1898), p. 8.

[21] Jeffrey A. Brune, 'Department Stores,' *Encyclopedia Of Chicago* <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/373.html>, last accessed 28 March 2022.

station, they had been distracted by ‘the workmen clearing the ruins of McClurg's burned store.’[22]

Rebuilt after having been burnt to the ground in the Great Fire of 1871, it must have caused some consternation amongst the partners at A. C. McClurg & Co. when a gas explosion destroyed their headquarters once more in 1899. The Chicago publishing house, perhaps most famous for printing the *Tarzan of the Apes* series, erupted in flames at around ten o’clock on a cold February morning. Within hours it had been completely destroyed, taking with it a number of ‘rare and priceless volumes’ held at the storefront. Firefighters arrived early at the scene but it was clear there was little to be done; the fire burning fiercely, fuelled by the materials contained within. By all accounts the ruins were a sight: water freezing against the remaining bones of the structure immediately in the sub-zero temperatures, making a macabre ice sculpture out of the wreckage.[23]

While she was watching the rubble being collected and carted away, a man ran towards Erna burnishing a pair of scissors ‘about three inches long, and ground to exceedingly sharp edges.'[24] Before she could move out of his path, the man 'cut half way through her braid of hair' and was seized by a pair of detectives who had spent two hours that morning following him around,[25] alerted by department store managers who had made note of his suspicious behaviour.[26] The man they caught

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[22] 'Jack the Clipper Taken: Caught While Cutting Tresses From Erna Fransky's Head,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (16 February 1899), p. 3.

[23] 'M'Clurg's Store in Ruins: Big Bookhouse and Contents at Madison and Wabash Burn,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (13 February 1899), p. 1.

[24] 'Jack the Clipper Taken,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 3.

[25] 'Mania for Cutting Girls' Hair: Arrest of a Chicago Man, Who Begs to Be Killed,' *New York Times* (16 February 1899), p. 1.

[26] 'Jack the Clipper Taken,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 3.

was twenty-four-year-old John Jorgenson, one of Chicago's most prominent Jacks the Clipper.

Jorgenson would eventually confess to over three hundred of these kinds of attacks against women in Chicago, even while maintaining that he was neither the only nor perhaps even the most prolific Jack moving through the city. Indeed, although Jorgenson remains central as a figure in this dissertation--as perhaps the most famous clipper I have discovered through my research--it is important to bear in mind his own recognition and claim that he was representative of and participated in a much broader cultural phenomenon that ran deep within the heart of a developing urban American.[27]

Newspapers rarely directly recorded the reactions of young girls to these encounters, though judging by the numerous other attacks that took place during this period it is safe to assume that these were deeply personal violations of a young woman's body and personal autonomy. The suggestion here is not that these young women were not violated in a specific and forceful capacity, but rather that the significance of these attacks, the sensationalism and shock that surrounded them, need not only lie in the ways in which these acts were committed but in the object itself that was targeted. It was not the aggression alone that made clippers such unsettling cultural figures, especially to young girls and women; clippers committed acts of sexual violence by knowingly targeting bodily locations of desire and sex and gender expression.

Jacks the Clipper were but one 'variety' of sexual assailant referred to under the broad banner of the 'Jack' who attacked young white girls and women at the turn of

[27] 'Jack the Clipper Taken,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 3; 'Caught A Hair-Clipper. Success After Years of Hunting -- Story of a Strange Mania Told by the Prisoner,' *Buffalo Express* (20 February 1899).

the twentieth century. In addition to Jacks the Clipper, Jacks the Kisser and Jacks the Hugger, Jacks the Ink Slinger, Doper, Dude-Kicker, even Skirt-Cutter and Stabber, all sprung up performing the acts that their names suggested almost exclusively against white women.[28] Where there weren't attacks reported as taking place in particular locations (as likely because of the size of the town as for their absence) news stories were still circulated across the United States, meaning reading publics from Arizona and California to Connecticut and Massachusetts, and Illinois and Minnesota to Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., knew about these developments.

Although as a trope Jacks exploded across the United States, most of these individuals remained singular or relatively contained. I only uncovered one Jack the Dude Kicker and a single Jack the Ink Slinger, for example.[29] While there are undoubtedly more lying in wait--to be revealed both by broader national studies and by more focussed analyses of single newspapers or single cities enabled by more sophisticated or expansive digital tools--Jacks the Clipper, Jacks the Hugger, and Jacks the Kisser remain overwhelmingly dominant categories. The 'big three' Jacks were products of a world in which street harassment was increasingly commonplace, particularly in cities, and Jacks were as much nuisances as they were violent

[28] For select examples of these various Jacks, see: 'Jack the Kisser,' *National Police Gazette*, 53, no. 597 (23 February 1889), p. 7; 'Six Months in Jail for Kissing,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (13 January 1891), p. 5; '"Jack the Hugger" in Milwaukee,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (27 February 1892), p. 12; 'Identified the Hugger: Curious Charge Against a Well-known Lawyer of Baltimore,' *Washington Post* (9 March 1892), p. 2; 'Squirted Ink on Pretty Gowns,' *Washington Post* (25 May 1890), p. 1; '"Jack the Doper" Appears at Lynn,' *Boston Daily Globe* (16 December 1925), p. 17; 'A Man Who Kicks to Some Purpose,' *Los Angeles Times* (8 June 1891), p. 7; 'Jack the Skirt Cutter Taken: Man Accused of Slashing Dresses of Women in North Clark and State Streets Is Arrested,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (24 August 1903), p. 3; '"Ripper is Busy": Seven Women Cut in St. Louis,' *Los Angeles Times* (23 January 1906), p. 11.

[29] 'A Man Who Kicks to Some Purpose,' *Los Angeles Times*, p. 7; 'General Metropolitan News: "Jack the Ink-Slinger,"' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (14 May 1890), p. 5.

criminals.[30] Of the three, however, Jack the Clipper stands out as an exceptionally relevant object of study illuminating aspects of Victorian society that incorporate the sexual violence of the Jack trope but also push beyond it, raising curious questions about the formation of new directions of sexual desire. Even that Jack the Clipper sat alongside these far more familiar figures of gropers and harassers marks the clipper as an important case study in the articulation of new and official modes and pathways of desiring.

Jacks the Clipper were some of the most prolific assailants reported on by the press, occupying an important place in American imaginaries of sexuality, violence and danger, urban space, and familial responsibilities. Between 1895 and 1906 at least eighty-five young women were attacked by a figure labelled as some variation of 'Jack the Clipper'--perhaps 'Jack the Hair Cutter,' or 'Jack the Shearer'[31]--in Chicago alone. Averaged out, there was an attack on a young girl or woman in Chicago approximately every five weeks for a decade.[32] The overwhelming victims of sexual violence in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century United States, young girls were forced to be more vigilant in guarding their bodies and their

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[30] Wendy L. Rouse, *Her Own Hero: The Origins of the Women's Self-Defense Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), pp. 2-3.

[31] As I read these various cases in the national context of news media circulating through the United States I found no significant differences between the labels of 'Jack the Hair Cutter' or 'Jack the Shearer' and 'Jack the Clipper.' I consider them all to exist under the broad banner of 'Jack the Clipper' for the purposes of this dissertation. It is possible, however, that further studies of the specific regional manifestations of these phenomena may reveal variations indicative of different communities and norms.

See: 'A Man Who Kicks to Some Purpose,' *Los Angeles Times*, p. 7; 'Who Stole the Girls' Hair? Brooklyn Police Are Satisfied that "Jack the Shearer" is a Myth,' *New York Times* (27 June 1893), p. 8; 'Thinks He's the Shearer: Park Policeman Zwisler Arrests a Man with a Barber's Outfit,' *The World* [New York, NY] (evening edition, 6 July 1893), p. 1; 'He May Be the Hair Cutter: Frank Rodgers Answers to the Descriptions of the Stealer of Girls' Braids,' *New York Times* (7 July 1893), p. 9.

[32] Over the course of my research I have compiled a database of clipper attacks across the United States and with a close focus on Boston, Chicago, and New York. These numbers come from my own data set of victims of Jack the Clipper.

honour.[33] Schoolgirls felt the looming presence of the clipper keenly and would come to dress and act differently, hiding their braids from plain sight. Even schoolyard games could take on sinister undertones and give rise to what were thought to be copycat attacks.[34] Commonplace and perhaps previously unnoticed slurs uttered in a drunken stupor across Chicago saloons could inspire riots. Over two hundred victims in cities outside of Chicago can be named, another one hundred unique victims can be identified, and these are the attacks that were reported to police or made their way into the hands of the press.

The Inside Joke

Part of what makes Jack the Clipper such a fruitful object of study is the gulf that exists between this very specific assailant and our own understandings of sexed and gendered bodies, forms of violence, and spatial and desiring orientations. Jack the Clipper existed before our present ideas of sexual orientation developed, before notions of 'heterosexuality' or even 'homosexuality' had become fully incorporated into our sense of selves and society, providing a window into a series of social and spatial arrangements that were decidedly in flux. Without the certainty or stability that heterosexuality has today, Jack the Clipper can reveal important reconfigurations of the interrelationships that governed the emergence of American sexual modernity.

Although discovering Jack the Clipper and his ubiquity in the late nineteenth century was exciting for a then quite young scholar, still completing his undergraduate degree, the first inkling I had that clippers could tell us something

[33] Stephen Robertson, *Crimes Against Children: Sexual Violence and Legal Culture in New York City, 1880-1960* (Chapel Hill; London: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 1-2.

[34] 'Wants to Be "Jack the Clipper": West Side Small Boy Cuts a Curl from a Small Girl's Head,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1 February 1896), p. 1.

important about the American past was not my own sense of the strangeness of these cases (Were these stories euphemisms for more egregious forms of sexual violence? And why were these stories so common?) but in telling these stories to others. In recounting stories of clippers to audiences the most common first reaction I receive is a kind of nervous laughter: an appeal to how ridiculous this all seems, and how ridiculous it all sounds ('Jack the Clipper'? 'Jack the Dude Kicker'!). This was a reaction that I too experienced upon first discovering a handful of these attacks, gradually tempered by my realisation, and now argument, that these attacks constitute forms of sexual violence. But this moment of misrecognition--understanding these news stories to be humorous, unbelievable, even farcical--is a productive one, revealing the complicated ways these clippers were being read, presented, and circulated in the nineteenth-century press and the social and cultural knowledge or frameworks that, in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, simply fail to gain recognition or traction.

Of course, part of this uncomfortable, perhaps unsettling, reaction--part shock and part humour--is a product of the punny nature of the moniker. A play on the infamous Jack the Ripper case of 1888, Jacks the Clipper rocketed to popularity in the late 1880s and 1890s, testifying to the forms of interpersonal violence that were central to American urban life--violence often directed against poor, working-class, and Black and brown women who, without the 'protection' of wealthy male patrons, were forced to support themselves in an America wedded to notions of wealthiness as godliness. Article after article printed across the United States merged and juxtaposed these acts of violence with an element of sensational humour (a practice that has undoubtedly continued to pose a problem within media and news production) designed to extract laughter from us in the face of sexualised violence.

The logic of the comparison, and perhaps the very mechanism for the joke itself, works both to encourage us to consider the severity of these attacks while diminishing the significance of the experience of these women victims. Most of us are familiar with the broadest details of the case of Jack the Ripper: perhaps the first modern serial killer who preyed upon women in Whitechapel, an area in London's east, in the late 1880s, killing and disembowelling at least five victims. Although he was never identified, and one imagines in part because he was never identified, Jack the Ripper captured the imagination of the Western world. The Ripper made news in the United Kingdom and soon after similarly swept across the United States, spread by networks of telephone cables and newspapermen.[35]

On the one hand, a comparison to a serial killer that disembowelled British women makes the nature of these crimes impressively apparent: violent, dark, sexualised, and urban. Yet on the other, the trivilisation of a violence without threat of death or even blood being actively compared to murderous disembowelment forces us to recognise an incongruence here: bristling with misogyny, we laugh at the alleged hysterics of these women. My argument is very much that in this moment of recognition--aligning Jack the Ripper with Jack the Clipper--we can see and know a means of interpersonal violence premised on a different sexual logic, but it is nonetheless important to keep in mind the tension which animated reactions to this figure then and now.

Cultural historians will note that my paying attention to these moments of disjuncture embodied in humour is not a radical methodological pivot, following squarely in the footsteps of Robert Darnton who urged us decades ago to follow the

[35] For more on the fascination with and spread of the Ripper narrative in England, see: Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 171-228.

logic of a joke. Recounting a brutal--and, for his historical subjects, absolutely hilarious--massacre of cats in a small French town in the eighteenth century, Darnton warned historians against 'slip[ping' too easily into 'comfortable assumption[s],' for him about eighteenth-century Europeans and, for us, late-Victorian Americans, who exist on the cusp of modernity, vastly different from the worldviews that we take for granted today and yet close enough that they still seem familiar.[36] 'Our own inability to get the joke is an indication of the distance that separates us from the workers of preindustrial Europe,' the 'starting point of an investigation.'[37]

My own work here follows the logic of the joke as well, if in the inverse. For Darnton and his readers the joke is difficult to appreciate; for those who follow Jack the Clipper, the joke seems all too readily available but the violence behind these actions is dampened. In some ways, my study asks what it means for us to be the ones laughing at the cat massacre. Rather than trying to figure out the joke, if we can figure out why this has become funny, what meanings have fallen away that allow us to be entertained rather than horrified by these actions, 'we should,' to follow Darnton, 'be able to shed some of our modern worldviews and enter into the alien mental world of ordinary persons who lived… before us.'[38]

Recognising this humour helps us to, first, become more cognisant of the gulf that exists between our own understandings of these attacks and those of our nineteenth- and early-twentieth- century counterparts. The point here is not to shame any of my audiences--indeed, I am the most guilty of being enthralled by the strangeness of what Jack the Clipper represents--but rather to use this disjuncture, this sense of strangeness and discomfort that comes with the knowledge of what

[36] Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*, rev. edn. (New York: Basic Books, 2009), p. 4.

[37] Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, p. 77.

[38] Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, pp. xviii-xix.

these attacks looked like, to uncover the changing experiences and norms of sex and sexuality in the Progressive Era United States. In so doing, this sets us up to ask what these attacks meant to Victorian Americans and what has changed such that we now see this as far more trivial than those in the past.

What is lost in time and what I seek to recapture in however imperfect a form, is the undercurrent running through the Jack the Clipper narrative that recognises and validates the experience of these women and the comparison to the brutal violations of women committed by Jack the Ripper that would have escaped few members of the reading public. The sensationalism of the clipper was matched only by the kinds of violences that the attacks embodied. What our laughter reveals is the historical problem at hand; how these clippers are read and received differently for us than it was in the late nineteenth century; new webs of meaning that lie just beyond our reach.

It is a rare opportunity to undertake a study of a new cultural figure, and although I do not (and hope I cannot) claim any sort of comprehensiveness this work has challenged me to think about how we understand sexed bodies, histories of the construction of sexual violence, and reorientations of sexual desire, today. As we see in the conclusion, Jack the Clipper helps us to bookend a period in the history of modern American sexuality that indicates to use the rise of a new discourse of heterosexual orientations and the fraying of this way of structuring the world, as Americans resist the binaries imposed upon them.

Argument 1: New Identities, New Pathways of Desire

One of the most significant pivots in the history of sexuality in the modern United States is the formation and ultimately widespread embrace of the identity categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality over categories of behaviour, such as sodomy, between approximately 1880 and 1920. The architects of the modern interpretations of the historical progression of sexuality in the United States, John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, note this moment of identity construction and subject formation as transformative, defining 'new social experiences' and new forms of relationality, 'especially among men' at the turn of the twentieth century. Echoing Foucault's famous refrain that the 'the sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species,' D'Emilio and Freedman argued that homosexual behaviours came to be understood 'not as a discrete, punishable offense[s], but as a description of the person, encompassing emotions, dress, mannerisms, behavior, and even physical traits.'[39]

D'Emilio and Freedman locate the origins of these new identity categories in the writings of European and American physicians who puzzled over 'cases of "contrary sexual impulse."' Interestingly, and as they note, 'reflecting the centrality of gender in nineteenth-century sexual arrangements, many early students of the phenomenon tended to define it not as homosexuality, but as "sexual inversion," a complete exchange of gender identity of which erotic behaviour was but one small part.'[40] In emphasising gender, doctors, physicians, sexologists, and others, could reconcile homosexuality with the allegedly proper, biological objects of sexual desire.[41] Or, in other words, medical professionals could understand how a woman

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[39] John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, 3rd edn (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 226; Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol 1: An Introduction* (Penguin: New York, 1990), p. 43.

[40] D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, p. 226.

[41] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, pp. 70-1.

could be attracted to another woman--or a man another man--if she were 'really' in possession of the characteristics and traits that made a man. For Victorians, argues Jonathan Ned Katz, 'there existed only *one* sexual desire, focused on the other sex.'[42]

Historians have increasingly worked to historicise heterosexual identity as well; bringing it out from the shadow cast by the study of homosexuality and arguing that it, too, is a product of this pivotal moment in American sexual histories. Jonathan Ned Katz's *The Invention of Heterosexuality* pioneered this turn toward the 'unmarked and unremarked' history of heterosexuality, opening the door for critical attention to heterosexuality as an object made invisible and left unstudied.[43] Katz's work revealed the origins of heterosexuality in the United States as a term in use and as a concept in need of defending and policing to ensure its successful uptake and embrace. Far from natural, heterosexuality required a surprising amount of work to convince people of its salience in their lives.[44]

Where heterosexuality began as a medical term for a form of sexual perversion in which people were attracted to *both* sexes, Katz argues that Richard von Krafft-Ebing was central to the transformation of heterosexuality into something more akin to what we might recognise today by opposing heterosexuality to homosexuality (creating the more familiar binary) and recalibrating the relationship embodied by heterosexuality between reproduction and pleasure. For Krafft-Ebing, Katz argues, heterosexuality contained an *innate* reproductive urge which countered earlier concerns that heterosexuality was a form of excessive sexuality that resisted

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[42] Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (New York: Dutton, 1995), p. 52.

[43] Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, p. 9.

[44] Rebecca L. Davis and Michele Mitchell, 'Introduction, or, *Why* Do the History of Heterosexuality,' in Davis and Mitchell, eds, *Heterosexual Histories* (New York: New York University Press, 2021), p. 3; Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 85.

or obstructed the potential for effective male-female reproductive sex.[45] By historicising heterosexuality, recognising its multiplicity of forms and augmenting our ability to conceive of it as a container for a tenuous relationship between pleasure and reproduction, Katz offers up a foundation through which to understand, as this dissertation does, a burgeoning infrastructure of heterosexuality built across the 1880s and 1890s.

Most recently, Rebecca L. Davis and Michele Mitchell have published the first edited collection on the history of heterosexuality, *Heterosexual Histories*, that interrogates heterosexuality both as an identity category and as an analytic with possible uses beyond the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Pushing to expand the history of heterosexuality to account for 'nonexperts, [that] researches the grassroots, and considers multiple sources of power and authority,' alongside histories of capitalism, urbanisation, increasing rates of college attendance, and 'sensational reporting of crimes, in the representations of racial otherness that pervaded accounts of interracial male-female sex, and within the very prison systems intended to discipine women who violated the norms of sexual respectability,' Davis and Mitchell undertake a project broader in scope but similar in aim to Katz's.[46] Despite their more expansive mission, they too affirm the period 'Between 1870 and 1930,' as one of the most significant in which 'a new system of describing the ostensible differences between men and women took hold in Europe and North America,'' for which 'the solution was heterosexuality, [something] which was never simply a descriptive term for sexual desire of men for women or of women for men.'[47] But in their insistence on using heterosexuality as an organising principle

[45] Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, pp. 19-22, 28.

[46] Davis and Mitchell, 'Introduction, or, *Why* Do the History of Heterosexuality,' pp. 10-1.

[47] Davis and Mitchell, 'Introduction, or, *Why* Do the History of Heterosexuality,' p. 8.

across the breadth of American history, they too miss an opportunity to consider an analytic framework that might reveal transformed and newly created channels of desire.

In few of these renderings do historians argue that any new forms of desire were being brought into being. For D'Emilio and Freedman, the sexual desire present in this transition is one which remained relatively static even as it adopted a new social form. 'It seems clear,' they argue, 'that [the] writings [of medical and scientific practitioners] were responding to real changes in the social organization of same-sex eroticism.' Yet, with 'the spread of a capitalist economy and the growth of huge cities… *diffuse homosexual desires… congeal[ed] into a personal sexual identity*.'[48] The congealing of 'diffuse homosexual desires' represented a new organisation of an existing drive toward homosexuality that found new form and a new politics, but it nonetheless remained the same form of desire.[49]

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[48] D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, p. 226; my emphasis

[49] Other scholars of homosexuality have seen this transition in similar terms, emphasising a continuity in sexual desire even as it manifested differently between individuals. As histories of sexuality and of homosexuality blossomed in the United States in the late 1980s and early 1990s, clashes over the nature of sexuality and the extent to which it was socially constructed diverted attention away from the ways in which desire itself might also need to be similarly investigated. Despite significant disagreements as to whether 'homosexuality' was a category that could be applied to historical actors across time, both 'essentialists' and 'social constructionists' assumed the relatively static nature of desire itself. Whether people would have known themselves as homosexuals or whether this was a useful analytic category assumed the continuity of something recognisable as homosexuality. For side-by-side comparisons of these positions, see: John Boswell, 'Revolutions, Universals, and Sexual Categories,' in Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey. Jr., eds, *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York: NAL Books, 1989), pp. 17-36; David M. Halperin, 'Sex Before Sexuality: Pederasty, Politics, and Power in Classical Athens,' in Duberman, Vicinus, and Chauncey, *Hidden from History*, pp. 37-53.

Lisa Duggan's *Sapphic Slashers* offers an exciting and genre-shifting account of the imbrication of sexuality and modernity, but its concern is not with questions of desire either. Where homosexual desire was slowed and found form--'congealed'--in the identity of the homosexual, for D'Emilio and Freedman, for Duggan, the 'homosexual' as a identity and as a trope comes together as a result of the silencing of any number of alternative sexual discourses that enabled people to make sense of what would soon come to be understood as an 'aberrant' sexuality. Through her analysis of the Mitchell-Ward case, Duggan illustrates how white elites controlled the narrative of deviance, fusing homosexual panic with a sensational news story and pre-existing anxieties around interracial sex that supplanted any alternative models of non-heterosexuality and defined the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable in exactly these binary terms. See: Lisa Duggan, *Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence, and American Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

If scholars of queer history have, in some cases, skirted the concern of differing forms of desire, historians of heterosexuality have remained even less able to shake the weight of the identity category itself in their exploration of its historical construction. Daniel Wickberg offers a cogent critique of the use of heterosexuality as a category of analysis, arguing (and following scholars of the history of homosexuality) that heterosexuality simply did not exist before the late nineteenth century and that to use it is to misrepresent the experiences of our historical actors:

> The evidence for the novelty of heterosexuality is the existence of the term itself. The premise of the history of heterosexuality, as a concept, has been mistakenly applied to all times and places as a universal identity category when in fact it has been a historically specific creation. For historians of heterosexuality to then find evidence of the thing in the absence of the term or concept is to repeat the same mistake of attribution that those who see it as a universal identity category have done.[50]

Wickberg's is not a position taken by Davis and Mitchell in their 2021 collection. Rather, they explicitly contest his claims, 'challenging his assertion that no history of heterosexuality exists prior to the word's invention.' In this particular exchange I find myself siding with Wickberg even as I recognise Davis and Mitchell's reasons for disagreeing: 'Heterosexuality has history,' they argue, 'and that history is intrinsically bound up with the history of the relatively recent idea of the sexually normal.'[51] My own research, however, prompts me to ask how we might pivot to see how both Wickberg's and Davis and Mitchell's positions on the history of heterosexuality can be complementary and even productive. This is not an easy task because of how central, how hegemonic, heterosexuality is, but one of the goals of my research is to ask the question of how our histories of (hetero)sexuality might be changed through

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[50] Daniel Wickberg, 'Heterosexual White Male: Some Recent Inversions in American Cultural History,' *Journal of American History*, 92, no. 1 (2005), p. 155 <https://doi.org/10.2307/3660528>, last accessed 28 March 2022.

[51] Davis and Mitchell, 'Introduction, or, *Why* Do the History of Heterosexuality,' p. 3.

attention to orientations of desire rather than through the lens of a social and political identity that simply did not exist before the latter half of the nineteenth century. Might attention to orientations of desire allow us to examine 'straightness' or reproductive sexuality, as Mitchell and Davis are invested in, while avoiding the pitfalls raised by Wickberg?

With its relatively recent roots and the difficulty of identifying heterosexual subcultures that unsettle our own ways of thinking about heterosexuality, expansive as this term is, perhaps it is no surprise that one of the most important foundations for my rethinking of our approach to these histories of sexuality stems from gay and queer history. Maybe the most influential book in the canon of queer history, George Chauncey's *Gay New York* offers a sophisticated mapping of a queer world based upon radically different touchstones of sexuality, sex, and gender. Recuperating New York's gay community at the turn of the twentieth century, Chauncey argues for a different constellation of sexuality and sexual desire in which queer men understood themselves not to be 'homosexuals' but 'fairies,' or 'queers,' or 'trade,' among other designations with specific social and political recognition. For Chauncey, to mistake a 'fairy' for a gay man of the twentieth century is to miss the crucially different markers of a world 'that mapped gender, sexuality, desire, and subjectivity differently than homosexuality and heterosexuality did.' 'The fairy,' Chauncey writes, 'stood at the center of that conceptual universe, not the gender-normative homosexual, because that system gave much more weight to gender than sexuality, per se.'[52] In uncovering the different lives, relationships, and stakes of being for members of a diverse and vibrant queer community in the late nineteenth century, Chauncey expressly critiques the construction of gender norms and leaves open the door for

[52] George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*, updated edn (New York: Basic Books, 2019), p. xxii.

analyses of different historical constructions of desire that would come to exist under the banner of homosexuality and heterosexuality.

The first plank of this dissertation's overarching argument, then, builds upon the foundation provided by Chauncey and other scholars who have argued not that sexuality, queerness, or queer people are an ahistorical constant but that the constellations of gender, sex, and desire constitute these communities in new and different ways depending on their place and time. I offer an expansion of these claims, suggesting that we follow queer theorist Sara Ahmed in historicising sexual desire as itself a form of directed being in the world and, in this instance, revealing the new forms of desire that were part of the package of creating new sexual identifications and communities. To put it more simply, the new 'species' of sexual personhood did not merely rename a constant flow or singular direction of (homo)sexual desire but required the construction of an entirely new infrastructure of sexuality--new pathways, newly created grooves of attraction--to inhabit.

Through an analysis of Jack the Clipper's divergent objects of sexual attraction that become the subject of popular anxiety again and again in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth, we reveal a narrowly defined (hetero)sexual desire and the force that would be exerted to ensure its persistence. This is true, first, because of the clipper's insistence on straddling the worlds of queer and 'straight' sexuality. Clippers were 'heterosexual' in their choice of victims--men, almost always, attacking young women--but decidedly queer by middle-class standards in their choice of object: hair. Clippers did not explicitly draw quite so clearly or easily on the emerging sexual identity classifications that depicted individuals as any kind of 'species' in ways that we we would recognise in the present, in large part because clippers were most often 'average,' white,

American-born men. Yet the ‘bizarre’ object choice, the hair, particularly when read alongside the communities of often working-class women who were victimised, became a symbol which acted as a constant reminder of the very different sexual cultures and values of white, working-class and immigrant Americans, in need of rectifying by the moral bastion of the middle-class. Clippers, then, point to pathways of heterosexuality and heterosexual desire in a way that becomes much more difficult as heterosexuality is increasingly rendered invisible across the first decades of the twentieth century and all but absorbed into the social, cultural, political, and administrative fabric of the United States by the middle of the century, and requires particular and careful attention so as not to be lost in the discourse of aberrant sexuality.

The second opportunity provided by Jack the Clipper is that these cases were intrinsically about desire. Certainly, this was a desire caught in a web of violence, urban space, class, and race--all of which this dissertation attempts to unpack as it weaves together a narrative of the formation a new heterosexual and capitalist desire--but it was foremost a story circulated among Americans about what could be desired, what shouldn’t be desired, and how people should feel and police those desires themselves. Even the eventual petering out of clippers as markers of a social problem, as we will see in the conclusion, flags this as a moment of transition not only for sexual identities but for sexual directionalities. By following the various paths of desire illuminated by clippers--towards specific objects and away from others, and shaped by particular cultural, racial, and physical forms of a new American modernity--what becomes clear is a contested practice by which sexual desire itself was coming into being.

When Chauncey spoke of the fairy as being the centre of the gay male world of early twentieth-century New York, for example, the customs, behaviours, and desires of those men who inhabited that world were no less different than the identity categories that we have come to know and understand. Sexuality involves more than objects, or bodily or physical urges, or even sexual expression and behaviour, of course. It also requires and leverages imaginations of desire. To desire a 'fairy,' that is to say, is not to desire a homosexual. To desire a fairy is to desire a differently gendered subject, perhaps different bodily locations, and different manifestations of power relations. And to understand this desire, is to leave open the possibility that different imaginaries are at play in these chance encounters.

This project attempts to reconstruct some of these imaginaries. It is in this vein that it is a cultural history, and it is in this capacity that it uses Jack the Clipper: a battleground in which various forms of sexual desire competed for saliency. If the fairy 'anchored' the sexual world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, serving as a marker for a different sense and set of social and sexual relations between same-sex attracted peoples, then Jack the Clipper also operated as an anchor of the web of now-lost meanings that constituted a (hetero)sexual modernity still very much in flux.[53] Jack the Clipper offers us a means of anchoring both 'aberrant' *heterosexual* desire as it was coming to be defined at the turn of the century, and new and increasingly enforced pathways of appropriate sexual expression that delimited a new form of heterosexuality that, ultimately, would come to be named as such.

To illustrate what I mean here about the emergence not merely of different sexual identities but the construction of different directions of desire, I turn briefly to

[53] Chauncey, *Gay New York*, p. xxii.

Walt Whitman who articulates the clashes of culture and biology that drive the recognition of desire. For John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, 'Whitman's life embodied the tension between romantic and sexual love among same-sex friends.' Whitman 'championed manly love as a form of intense, romantic friendship, yet at times, he struggled to suppress his erotic desires for men.' When John Addington Symonds, the English poet and queer advocate, questioned the homoerotic overtones of poems from *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman wrote that he was interested in communicating the '"adhesiveness"' of friendship and not the "'amativeness' of sexual love."'[54]

Some time after his exchange with Symonds, Whitman, having 'contemplated Symond's questions,' wrote to a 'confidant' that he was more confused by these designations and meanings than he had indicated in his letter. 'Perhaps it means more or less than what I thought myself… [P]erhaps I don't know what it all means--perhaps never did know.' Whitman's 'reluctance to be identified as a homosexual,' D'Emilio and Freedman argue, 'may have been due to the growing importance of the medical model of sexual disease' that pathologised homosexuality, but what if we take Whitman's sexual dis-orientation at face value?[55]

While it seems undoubtedly true that without the category of 'homosexuality' Whitman's endeavours constituted a different kind of bond than that which he might have been able to recognise almost half of a century later, the notion that he 'struggled' with his 'erotic desires for men' presumes a parity between sexual friendships and sexual relationships that rests on a similar sense of desire. In other words, what if we try to de-couple the easy relationship we see (and Symonds perhaps saw) between homosexuality and a homosexual desire? To struggle with

[54] D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, pp. 128-9.

[55] D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, pp. 128-9.

homosexual lust for men presumes that he was orientated toward late nineteenth-century notions of masculinity but perhaps Whitman's orientations here relied on other markers or imaginaries that were not in alignment with a homosexual identity. Perhaps, rather than assuming that as shame was attached to these sexualities Whitman became less and less comfortable with what he understood himself to experience, what he really charted was the shifting of objects and subjects of desire in new directions.

Recognising that 'heterosexuality' itself is a difficult term (as much as 'homosexuality' or other sexual identifiers), and the subtleness of the analytic movement between desire and sexual identity, clippers make an important but slippery intervention in our understandings of the creation of American sexual modernity. Neither I nor my scholarly predecessors are arguing that same-sex attraction or same-sex sexual relations are new. Homosexual communities had been emerging for some time, and by the 1890s large American cities like New York, Chicago, Boston, and San Francisco, among others, had 'flourish[ing]' gay subcultures.[56]

When I invoke the terms 'homosexual' or 'heterosexual,' I invoke the constellations of social, sexual, political, and even physiological meanings that constitute the ideas that ground and organise the world in which we live. It is these meanings that gave rise to the identities of the homosexual and heterosexual, but it is also these relationships that help us to determine the desires that made these meaningful distinctions from the forms of organisation that existed previously or contemporaneously. Neither homosexuality nor heterosexuality were monolithic in the early nineteenth century anymore than were their counterparts--the invert, the

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[56] Jennifer Terry, *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 92; Chauncey, *Gay New York*, p. xviii-xix.

urning, the pervert--each of which constituted different world-building capabilities.[57] Rather, particular lines of desire, merged with and leveraged by transforming structures of capitalism, were cultivated and enforced to make them the norms which governed American society. By disconnecting these identities from their attached desires, it is possible that entire new worlds of social and sexual meanings are opened up to us through a critical interrogation of sexuality in our historical documents.

In examining the construction of a particular form of sexual desire at a moment of crucial importance in the history of sexuality in the United States, Ahmed's work on queer orientations reminds us that sexual desire itself requires attention as something conditioned or tended to over time. Not natural or even individual, sexual orientation, a literal direction in space, is constantly under construction. To be 'straight' is to be both 'turned toward the objects that are given to us by heterosexual culture' and '"turned away " from objects that take us off this line.' To be queer 'within straight culture,' then, is to 'deviate… and [be] made socially present as a deviant.'[58] Following these various lines are both acts of creation and entrenchment: 'The lines that direct us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion, are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of course and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition.'[59] Importantly, these lines are rendered invisible through their increased repetition. In understanding desire to be an ongoing enactment, its silence becomes more palpable as repetition deepens the groove of a path, making this an action

[57] Chris Brickell, 'Sexology, the Homo/Hetero Binary, and the Complexities of Male Sexual History,' *Sexualities*, 9, no. 4 (October 2006), p. 424 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460706068043>, last accessed 28 March 2022.

[58] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 21.

[59] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 16.

easier in its next iteration. 'This paradox--with effort it becomes worthless--is precisely what makes history disappear in the moment of its enactment,' writes Ahmed.[60]

Put more concretely, where Foucault offered up a phrase and model that historians of sexuality have latched onto, Ahmed offers us an addendum through which we can analyse the processes by which this 'transformation' of the sodomite into the homosexual takes place. 'The transformation of sexual orientation into "a species" involves the translation of "direction" into identity…. So sexual desire orientates the subject toward some others (and by implication not other others) by establishing a line or direction…. It is not simply the object that determines the "direction" of one's desire; rather the direction one takes makes some others available as objects to be desired. Being directed toward the same sex or the other sex becomes seen as moving along different lines.'[61]

The task of the historian, then, is to discover how these lines are constructed and lived, resisted and embraced, policed, and even enjoyed, as a means of organising one's life. But as social constructs that guide collective behaviour, they also move beyond individual experience to demonstrate the reordering of social relations that produce different forms of desiring bodies and pathways of desire. Heterosexuality (and its various counterparts, challengers, and iterations) becomes a spatial constellation that directs and delimits the opportunities for feeling and being in the world. The repetition of these lines, their eventual disappearance, make the Progressive Era a particularly fruitful one for investigating the emergence of this new cultural map of desire; before the ongoing repetition of heterosexual desire had

[60] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 56.

[61] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 70.

become entrenched by the 1930s and all but invisible by the 1950s and 1960s.[62] Attention to Jack the Clipper reveals these reorientations in a world before heterosexuality and heterosexual desire were naturalised and offers up a way of thinking about heterosexuality and its attendant desires that side steps the conversation about when heterosexuality emerged in the United States as a defining social category, pushing us to ask how different kinds of heterosexualities, plural, define critical decades or periods of the modern era.

Argument 2: Disorientation and Social Change

If we accept, then, that orientational analyses are important for understanding the creation of new forms of sexual desire, in tandem with and independent of sexual identity formation and behaviour, then we are also left demanding more from our explanations of why particular constellations of sexuality emerged and were embraced at any particular moment. If, as Ahmed argues, desire is not static then the explanations for why turn-of-the-century American sexual identities and expressions of desire gathered momentum need reassessing. In other words, if we accept that desire requires shaping in order to find expression, then the convergence of urban space, economic and social freedoms, and new technologies of mobility become necessary but not sufficient on their own to explain new structures of hetero- or homosexuality that took root. On their own, they assume a nascent culture of sexual desire ready to emerge encapsulated in a desiring body that perhaps finds a different language or expression for those desires but otherwise remains

[62] Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 8-10; Katz, The Invention of Heterosexuality, pp. 19-20.

fundamentally directed in the same ways. The assumption is that same-sex or different-sex attracted people, walked into particular social and spatial circumstances and found expression for their desires, rather than these different circumstances cultivating and ingraining different modes of sexual expression.[63]

Historians frequently cite a various combination of significant challenges and upheavals that faced the late-nineteenth-century United States as a means of explaining the social changes that followed. The United States ended a bitter and bloody Civil War mere decades before the beginning of the twentieth century that destabilised the economic and political foundation of the entire country.[64] Rapid industrialisation alongside and in tandem with the expansion of rail both within and between major urban centres made significant moves to 'the city' possible and desirable.[65] Indeed, the United States became, for the first time, a predominantly urban nation.[66] Along with this mass domestic migration came new forms of urban living, new forms of wage labour, sex segregation, and racial and class mixing.[67] Immigrants arrived in cities in large numbers and from different locations than had been traditional.[68] And the technologies of mobility that connected all of these people

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[63] D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, pp. 227-8.

[64] James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: the Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) <https://hdl-handle-net.proxy.library.cornell.edu/2027/heb.00677>, last accessed 11 May 2022; Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), pp. xi-xviii.

[65] Leah Boustan, Devin Bunten, and Owen Hearey, 'Urbanization in American Economic History, 1800-2000,' in Louis P. Cain, Price V. Fishback, and Paul W. Rhode, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of American Economic History*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 75-99.

[66] James Connolly, 'Bringing the City Back In: Space and Place in the Urban History of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era,' *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 1, no. 3 (July 2002), pp. 260-1; Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, second edn. (New York: Perennial, 2002), p. 122.

[67] Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class In New York, 1789-1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986); Lisa M. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper: Female Clerical Workers in Chicago, 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).

[68] Daniels, *Coming to America*, pp. 122-6.

to their social and cultural networks across towns, states, countries, and oceans forced a reckoning with imaginaries of time, space, and scale.[69]

Historians and others have painted a vivid portrait of queer life at the turn of the century that was impacted by these material shifts. Queer people took advantage of the relative anonymity of the city and, especially for men, some of the freedoms offered by wage labour.[70] New heterosexually-inclined opportunities for leisure and recreation emerged in part as a result of a new sense of urban time and opportunity and bolstered by many women's reliance on men for the costs of socialising.[71] Medical categories of indeterminacy came to a close at the beginning of the twentieth.[72]

Of course, the urban, economic, social, and political factors identified by historians are important as a foundation, but this dissertation pushes beyond this to argue that historicising desire means asking why these identities found (a sometimes forced) acceptance at the level of the body and how more abstract spaces were conducive and receptive to that expression of desire. What our current framework is less useful for is identifying why specifically these material conditions encouraged the embrace and acceptance of new social and sexual desires and, importantly, how they were put into dialogue with bodily experiences (or, orientations). To consider orientations of desire, then, as the key framework for our analysis pushes us to move beyond explanations for why homosexuality and heterosexuality became so dominant as identity categories in the moment they did. This dissertation suggests that these and other myriad changes in the social and material conditions of

[69] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

[70] D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, p. 123.

[71] D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, p. 197.

[72] Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

Americans produced a sickening *dis*orientation which allowed for a reconfiguration of the social relations that governed their worldview. It is not just that things are happening. It was not busyness or a new system of wage labour necessarily, or the opportunities presented by the danger, anonymity, or freedom of an urban environment. Rather, it is that together they caused a spatial slippage that enabled new social, sexual, and intellectual bonds to be formed; for reorientations in how people knew, understood, and anchored their world. These disorientations illuminate how together a sexual infrastructure was being brought into being that required and produced new forms of desire and desiring by recognising the interplay between expressions of sexuality at a bodily and at a societal and institutional level.

Cultural geographers and spatial theorists have been perhaps the most adept at articulating the physical and historical evidence of the sickening upheaval that comes with acclimating to new spaces and orientations. One of the most striking arguments of Paul Carter's *The Road to Botany Bay*, for example, is how many colonisers, newly arrived in Australia, were unable to situate themselves in their environments--literally unable to imagine or describe their surroundings--as a result of their profound disorientation. From sometimes daily journal writers, many newcomers found that no writing was possible upon their arrival; they simply could not make sense of the spaces they inhabited until it had been cobbled together, beaten down, and trodden upon. Carter's settler narratives are instructive because they give us an insight into the importance of disorientation, placelessness, or 'spatial nausea' that emerges when the cultural landscape shifts in unexpected ways and their impacts on the body.[73]

[73] Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: an Essay in Spatial History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), pp. 137-9, 149-52.

As Carter notes, journals and diaries are plentiful, and indeed a critical primary source base for historians looking to understand the recent Australian past:

> There is no end of settler diaries detailing the journey out. They have been equally informative about their ports of arrival, generations of settler writers recording their first impressions of the new country. Nor, even, do we run into any difficulties *once* the newcomers have settled down: letters, diaries and journals, both published and unpublished, abound detailing the established settler's business affairs, social life, even his passing reflections. But the intermediate period, when the settler is actually settling, this, it seems, is beyond description.[74]

For Carter, it was 'the act of language that brought a living space into being and rendered it habitable, a place that could be communicated, a place where communication could occur.'[75] What is perhaps most fascinating about this process is not that white colonisers offered up new or appropriated names for these places, some which reflected merely sour moods or unpleasant experienced,[76] but rather that the moment of settlement itself seemed to go almost entirely unremarked at the time. Diaries and journals remained silent, almost as if the act of writing oneself into that record *at the time* that it was occurring was an impossible task. Colonisers were unable to render narratives of their moment of settlement because of the 'absence of relations,' only after the fact could they 'conjur[e]' a description of something that they had since worked to establish.[77]

Absences, of course, are impossible to turn into proof positive of anything, however, the sense of dis-ease that came with occupying non-settled spaces--physically inhabiting space that had yet to be made sense of, reoriented, renamed--is key for understanding the disorientation--the 'spatial nausea'--that

[74] Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, p. 149.

[75] Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, p. 143-4.

[76] Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, p. 137-9.

[77] Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, p. 151.

existed in moments of settlement. Unsettled places caused a feeling of social *and* physical dislocation that were eased only with the intervention of language: the act of naming, the beginnings of settlement, the recounting of that moment of settling to bring into existence what was lacking. This sense of dislocation is important for it foreshadows how we can understand the move between, and the generation of, new spaces. Grounding social change in 'nausea' foregrounds the importance of the human body as a site of change in and of itself, recognising the site of impact of any broader social upheaval.[78]

The world of the 1890s United States did not mimic the conditions under which explorer-settler narratives were (or were not) produced, but it does represent the convergence of the Victorian-modern narratives which brought new challenges for expression and representation. Americans did not encounter the same kind of settlement issues as did white colonists moving through the Australian landscape. But as these people found themselves disoriented by their surroundings, so did Americans who increasingly moved into urban spaces. It is not that people weren't writing about their lives or desires, but rather that this entire period is marked by an indeterminacy or coming-into-being that offered up experiences of profound spatial nausea. Through Jack the Clipper we can see the ambiguity, indecision, and instability of this period that would lead to a new form of heterosexal desire that, by the 1920s, emerged as the only form of spatial organisation available to 'normal,' white Americans. Americans worried themselves over who was being attacked, what was happening to the hair, disciplined 'appropriate' desire by embracing the language of the fetish, and increasingly attached heterosexuality to white normativity.

[78] Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, p. 151.

Cities like Chicago were prime examples of the late-Victorian obliteration of space, annihilation of time, and distortions of scale, that produced sickening disorientations encountered daily by Americans. By the 1890s Chicago was the second largest city in the United States, easily the fastest growing and, to many, a new centre for culture, industry, fashion, and fortune. The rate with which Chicago emerged as a major and bustling metropolis created a collective sense of awe. According to Carl Smith, 'the city as it is known today [simply] did not exist before the early 1830s.' By the time the 'World's Columbian Exposition opened in 1893, there were over 20,000 Chicagoans who were older than the town they inhabited.'[79] By 1890, Chicago laid claim to 'over a million' residents, a number that would double again 'by 1910, making Chicago second in population only to New York [City].'[80] Chicago loomed over its residents, it cast shadows both literally and imaginatively across the landscape.

Contemporary essayists and fiction writers captured the dread, awe, terror, excitement, and disorientation that came with entering the city. 'During the nineteenth century, when Chicago was at the height of its gargantuan growth, its citizens rather prided themselves on the wonder and horror their hometown evoked in visitors.'[81] But this horror was more than mere shock at the size or the scale of the city: it was a grappling with the unknown and the unknowable elements of this new and unfamiliar space. Authors struggled to communicate what Chicago, what the new urban form, had become and their disquietude was transferred to their characters.

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[79] Carl S. Smith, *Chicago and the American Literary Imagination 1880-1920* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. ix.

[80] Smith, *Chicago and the American Literary Imagination*, p. x.

[81] William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York; London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1991), p. 90.

The size, scale, power, and pull of the city, both its allure and its hunger for resources, made Chicago uniquely disorienting. Writers trying to capture Chicago were repeatedly stumped in a manner not dissimilar to Carter's world of settlement Australia. George Warrington Steevens, for example 'was a skilled author who here used hyperbole for effect in trying to convey a sense of Chicago's overwhelming energy by claiming that it left him at a loss for words.' But, according to Smith, this was an 'admi[ssion]' that he had lost 'his [...]ability as a writer to penetrate very deeply into the subject of Chicago.' Steevens 'questioned whether the city could be explained' at all 'in a system of signs and meanings such as standard language.' Julian Street, 'a native Chicagoan… raised the same issue of the inadequacy of words in dealing with Chicago when he commented in mock exasperation, "Call Chicago mighty, monstrous, multifarious, vital, lusty, stupendous, indomitable, intense, unnatural, aspiring, puissant, preposterous, transcendent--call it what you like--throw the dictionary at it! It is all that you can do, except to shoot it with statistics.'"[82]

The difficulties that writers experienced in capturing what Chicago was and perhaps where it was heading were reflected in the experiences of their characters. Published in 1899, Hamlin Garland's *The Rose of Dutcher's Coolly* followed the life of Rose Dutcher as she outgrows her small-town life in rural Wisconsin, moving first to Madison to study and then onto Chicago to, as she puts it, 'see the world,' to see 'thousands of people.'[83] Rose's journeys to Madison and Chicago are both characterised as culturally and physically shocking transitions and focus on the train as a means of transitioning between rural life and the city. Coming into Madison for

[82] Smith, *Chicago and the American Literary Imagination*, p. 2.

[83] Hamlin Garland, *The Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*, Sunset ed. (New York: Harper, 1899), p. 127.

the first time, Rose is aghast at the tunnels the train goes through, ‘cl[inging] to the seat in terror’ ‘every time they went through one.’[84]

Rose’s journeys were new, exciting, and terrifying, but they were also accompanied by a complete sensory overload. Chicago is not merely grand or intimidating, it was ‘appalling,’ it ‘assaulted’ her, the city contained ‘horrors’, Rose was ‘tortured.’ By the time Rose exited the train, taking a seat on the platform to recuperate, she was physically ill. Garland repeatedly informs us of Rose’s sickly condition which is contrasted with the almost endless descriptions offered of her as a girl and young woman made strong, robust, and healthy by her rural upbringing. The city had left Rose disoriented; her sense of spatial nausea was palpable.[85]

The disorientations that took place in Chicago were two-fold: the changing nature of the city rendered it unknowable at an abstract level but it also made it difficult to know and to navigate at the level of the individual. These experiences of the city--the ‘black halo’ of soot and ash, the snarl of the steel tracks, the mesmerising eyes of its inhabitants[86]--were expressions of the overwhelming changes taking place. The sense of breathlessness, ‘claustrophobia’ or ‘vertigo,’[87] the assault on the nose, the dread, and the wonder were all expressions of the fundamental disorientation produced by these new urban forms. William Cronon notes this in passing as well in his classic history of Chicago: as ‘they watched the Illinois prairies give way to railroad yards and slaughterhouses,’ Chicago-bound travellers experienced a collective ‘disorientation.’[88]

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[84] Garland, *The Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*, p. 77.

[85] Garland, *The Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*, pp. 155-8.

[86] Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, p. 10-1.

[87] Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, p. 9.

[88] Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, pp. 15-6.

Victorian Americans of all ilks encountered these disorientations in city life, emerging out of new buildings and into new skyscrapers, ther sense of scale and scope profoundly altered. They emerged from the underground into the light of day from mass transit systems, disoriented and confused. They armed themselves on the streets to protect themselves from what lay around the proverbial and literal corner. And amongst all of this, the uncertainty, the confusion, and the anxiety of these new city spaces opened up the possibility for radical social change. Disorientations, here, became key to understanding the process through which the body could not just be reimagined but could be remade in space and time. In a city, scale, temporality, distance, even fear were all obliterated and made anew, and with them, so was the social and physical body.

At the point at which someone emerged into a new city environment, overwhelmed by new faces, perhaps disturbed by unfamiliar lifestyle choices, technological feats, and environmental appropriation, their world and the social bonds that sustain them slackened. In that moment--which Carter notes could last seconds, minutes, days, or even years[89]--that person is unable to understand their place in an environment which is absent the social, cultural, political, and economic markers that otherwise reassure them of how they are situated. Set adrift, albeit momentarily, they seek to reestablish themselves within that environment; to reimagine their place and reconstruct the social bonds that make them legible. This is a literal process of orienting oneself in the environment.

For Sara Ahmed, these disorientations can be likened to the multiplicity of form embodied in lines on tracing paper, explaining not merely cultural or societal

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[89] Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, p. 150.

shifts but bodily dislocations 'unseat[ing] the body' itself.[90] Ahmed asks us to consider a scenario in which:

> the lines on the tracing paper are aligned with the lines of the paper that has been traced, then the lines of the tracing paper disappear: you can simply see one set of lines. If lines are traces of other lines, then this alignment depends on straightening devices that keep things in line, in part by "holding" things in place. Lines disappear through such processes of alignment, so that when even on thing comes "out of line" with another thing, the "general effect," is "wonky" or even "queer."[91]

For Ahmed, these disorientations are not trivial: they move the body and reorient the world and allow slippages in structures or norms which need not always be impactful or enduring but that offer moments of potential rupture; moments in which two sets of straightening lines are available and which, if they are not returned precisely in the same place, if they cannot be unseen, allow people to inhabit slightly new and different spaces.

One might think of this as a process of replicating an image from memory. One has a frame of reference--they understand the task ahead of them, they have seen what they need to reproduce--but in that reproduction there are opportunities that arise for change: both significant and slight. One might make small but crucial errors, but one might also encounter material conditions which alter the possibilities for that world to be recreated in this new environment. Images created from memory range from wildly inaccurate to almost identical but where small inconsistencies might stand out as a challenge to the original. The point here is not to articulate a model of inevitable change, but rather an opportunity for a misalignment that generates new and unexpected shifts in the social orientations being constructed.

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[90] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 67.

[91] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 66.

When Rose Dutcher exited her train and arrived in Chicago for the first time, overwhelmed by the din and the smell and the smog, she was unfamiliar with the various markers which otherwise allowed her to embed herself within that world. As Rose emerged from her train carriage Garland twice describes the enclosed nature of the train station in consecutive sentences. Rose steps 'out under the prodigious arching roof' into the 'tumult of clanging bells, of screeching, hissing steam, and of grinding wheels.' She hears 'the shouts of men echoed here and there in the vaulted roof, mysteriously as in a cavern, while 'electric lamps sputtered overhead.'[92] It is entirely possible that Rose loses her sense of even *when* she is, cut off from the sky, from the sun or the moon. At this moment, Rose is unable to orient herself in that space or time. It is only shortly after that we see Rose begin to emplace herself within Chicago in a process that Garland makes clear.

The day after her distressing introduction to Chicago, Rose visits Lake Michigan. An immense body of water, Rose went 'as the New Hampshire girl goes to the sea.' The calm that descended over her was in complete opposition to the screeching, hissing, cacophony that had greeted her upon her arrival. On the lakefront, Rose hears the 'babble of a few soft-voiced children on the grass, and the crackling, infrequent splash of the leaping breakers.' Looking behind her, Rose sees 'rows of immense houses, barred and grated like jails or fortresses; palaces where lived the mighty ones of Chicago commerce. Before their doors carriages stood, with attendants in liver, such as she had read about and had never seen.'[93]

Although gazing upon the immense wealth of these Chicago elites would have shocked Rose, in them she sees her own potential and ambition and begins to settle herself into the city. Flickers of recognition come to her in ways that were not present

[92] Garland, *The Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*, p. 158.

[93] Garland, *The Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*, pp. 169-70.

as she had awaited her friend at the train terminal the day before. Rose sees the carriages driving 'up and down the curving ribbon of lavender sand…. The horses flung foam from their bits,' and Rose observes that they were 'magnificent teams' for 'she knew horses as well as any coachman.' And her 'quick imagination peopled [the] mansions with beautiful women and lordly men,' of which 'she felt herself rightful claimant to a place among them.' In her moments of reflection, Rose is not only able to better understand the city she has now decided to make her home but engages in a process of refamiliarising herself with the norms that guide it. Whether she relied upon her own knowledge of horses, as good 'as any coachman,' the fiction she had read or second-hand accounts she had heard of great wealth in these new and magnificent American cities, or projected her ambition and desire for success, Rose began the process of attaching herself, reconnecting, to the social, physical, and political worlds that she recognised and conjured anew; different, but not so different that she could not see herself within this new environment.[94]

When Rose looked out at Chicago, it looked back. Standing at the lake's edge, Rose was seen in a variety of ways by passersby. 'To Mrs. Oliver Frost,' Garland wrote of Rose, 'she was a girl in a picturesque attitude; to the coachmen on the carriages she was a possible nurse-girl; to the policeman she was a speck on the lake-front lawn.'[95] As Rose surveys Chicago, we can see the process of reorientation that allows Rose to function in the city. Almost literally, we can see the connections being made as Rose looks and is looked upon; tendrils reaching out that embed Rose in her surroundings relative to the various other peoples, professions, and experiences that she encounters and is encountered by. When Rose finally feels at home in the city, when she has settled herself and gained her bearings, she is

[94] Garland, *The Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*, p. 170.

[95] Garland, *The Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*, p. 171.

literally entangled in her surroundings, 'plunged in[to]' the world around her, 'enveloped by it'; that 'first *confusion* was past.'[96]

The point here is not to imagine disorientation as an unique experience to Rose, or to a newcomer to a city, overwhelmed by the environment in which they find themselves (though this is likely true). Rather, examining the process of disorientation produced by these wildly new environments allows us to account for moments of slight, but perhaps significant, social change. Rather than a binary, the flipping of a switch, or even a spectrum of continuity, imagining social change as an orientational process allows us to consider the contingency of historical change alongside both the imperatives for structural reproduction and bodily experience and incorporation into social and cultural norms. Disoriented, Rose and others like her find themselves unable to recognise the markers that would situate them relative to other people and objects in their environment. The search for these markers offers a moment in which the social bonds that Rose knows slacken, she has to work to recreate them: perhaps these recreated bonds are slightly off, perhaps they were impossible to reproduce exactly and instead new forms of sociality are called into existence.

Orientation constitutes a framework for analysing what I call an infrastructure of sexuality that allows us to trace the different ways that individuals were directed toward or away from particular objects and subjects of desire through the figure of Jack the Clipper. Understanding change as a reorientation is not a superficial renaming of the mechanisms for constructing sexual modernity, even though it does accommodate these regulatory mechanisms with which we are familiar. Rather, it allows for us to understand--with a broad framework--how and why the urban, social,

[96] Garland, *The Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*, pp. 223-4; my emphasis.

and political transformations of the Progressive Era produced the conditions under which new sexual desires could and did emerge. It was not merely the size, scope, scale, or velocity--though these are immensely important--or the individual or collective violences demonstrated by Jack the Clipper, but the constellation of these that produced radical forms of disorientation that conjured conditions under which new forms of desire were made possible.

Chapter Outline

Each chapter of my dissertation addresses key empirical questions about Jack the Clipper and articulates an aspect of the spatial reordering of late-Victorian America. Chapter one introduces the narratives of the women who were victimised by a clipper to argue that unwanted haircuttings were sexually violent in nature. By analysing the tone and sentiment, language choice, and narrative description in these articles alongside a changing medical and cultural context of the (white) sexual body in the United States, this chapter reveals the experience of coming into contact with a clipper. Unpacking the myriad sexual and gendered meanings of the hair itself—from medical texts on the constitution of sex through to hair jewellery, and the changing nature of representations of hair such as in 'The Rape of the Lock' by Alexander Pope—further reveals that hair was an integral component of the sexed and gendered Victorian body even as this would come to be challenged. As we see in subsequent chapters, as the definitions of bodies, sex, sexuality, and sexual desire all narrowed, American bodies were reoriented from constellations to locations of sexuality through sexual violence.

By the end of the nineteenth century, hair increasingly came to be pathologised and excluded from 'normal' sexuality as a means of reorienting sexual objects and object choices toward those we would now regard as heterosexual and reproductive. Analysing the circulation and impact of Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* in the United States, chapter two argues that sexologists contributed to the re-routing of the 'normal' direction of sexual desire by creating fetishistic categories that enabled heterosexual, reproductive, and white sexuality to be disciplined.[97] This chapter charts the rise of the new discourse of fetishes and its role in labelling sites of non-bodily desire (such as the hair, the feet, or silk cloth) abnormal while designating other physical and gendered features (the genitals, or the breasts in women) as natural and appropriate. Sexological case studies from scientistis like Krafft-Ebing were deeply connected with the world of everyday white sexuality and, merged with the increasingly popular trope of Jack the Clipper in the United States, dispersed new sexological norms far beyond the academy. Incorporating the fetish into the everyday lexicon of sexuality, as a concept if not a word, contributed to the shifting of understandings of appropriate sexual desire from an older and more generous model which more readily (though not totally) recognised various objects of desire, to 'appropriate' and much narrower lines of object identification defined by heterosexuality and reproduction.

That the violence of clippings was committed by white men against white women forces us to question the role and place of Jack the Clipper in fictions of racial violence in the American imagination. Examining the published works of prominent racial scientists in the United States and the papers of Frederick Starr, a Chicago-based anthropologist and prosecution coach in a famous Jack the Clipper

[97] Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis, with Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct*, Franklin S. Klaf, trans. (New York: Stein and Day, 1978).

case, chapter three argues that 1) Jack the Clipper was understood to be intrinsically white, 2) this racial designation bolstered myths around Black sexual violence that were used not only to oppress Black people but to minimise the threat of white violence in American society, and 3) that this alignment with structures of race fused heterosexuality and whiteness to make heterosexuality a more enduring category of identification. Not coincidentally, Jack the Clipper emerged as a cultural figure directly alongside the Black Rapist in late 1889. A cultural companion-narrative, white clippers provided a space through which white sexual violence could be contained and diminished, leaving the social and cultural space inhabited by the Black Rapist unchallenged and fusing 'normal' (hetero)sexuality with whiteness through a juxtaposition with the uncontrollable passions possessed by Black peoples.

Chapter four argues that the unwillingness of police departments and courts to acknowledge the transgressive behaviours of clippers prompted communities to police clippers on their own, revealing the tensions that existed between popular sexual beliefs and the sexual norms advocated by middle-class proponents of the American state. Definitions of sexual violence and avenues for prosecuting clippers were limited, even as historians have argued for both the increased surveillance of sex and sexuality and the increasing use of the legal system by working-class and middle-class Americans at the turn of the century to enforce new social and sexual norms. For all the intense scrutiny of clippers publicly, the lacklustre, almost non-existent, judicial response ultimately demonstrates the importance of the state in selectively transforming Victorian sexual sensibilities into those distinctly modern and eugenic, embracing and coercing adherence to the norms of heterosexual desire. Through the trivialisation of haircutting, we can also see how sexual violence itself

was contained and constrained, delimited to a very specific act against a very specific American person.

Finally, chapter five theorises large-scale spatial dis-orientation in American cities as newspapers and train networks annihilated time, space, and scale, creating a form of 'spatial nausea' that reshaped the cultural infrastructure reproducing heterosexual orientations. By examining different forms of spatial becoming and spatial undoing, this chapter illuminates the mechanisms by which a new infrastructure of sexuality could be built and circulated. Trains and newspapers, specifically, not only forged new American spaces and polities but literally and figuratively moved clippers around American urban and suburban spaces. New commuter rail lines flummoxed police who now were forced to contend with much larger geographic areas in which clippers might reside and to which they could flee. Newspapers spread clipper narratives across the country, networking Americans into a new form of sexual sensibility. Where new sexual identities have long been understood as a cornerstone of the American narrative of contemporary sexuality, this chapter offers up an explanation of a re-routed desire that produced these categories and a means by which to understand how this restructuring was brought into being (and perhaps could be effected again).

CHAPTER ONE

PERVERTING NARRATIVES OF HAIR GIVING: JACK THE CLIPPER AND HAIR CUTTING AS SEXUAL VIOLENCE

This first chapter introduces the narratives of some of the women who were victimised by Jack the Clipper to argue that unwanted haircuttings were sexually violent in nature. By investigating distinct but overlapping social, cultural, medical, and literary aspects of narratives of Jack the Clipper attacks and their relationship to the sexual body (most often understood to be synonymous with the white body in the United States), I reveal the resources that were drawn on by victims and newsreaders to make sense of an interaction with the clipper and to render the hair a specifically fraught site of conflict. Distinct forms of sexual violence in their own right, clippings challenged the individual and familial honour of young women, had the potential to shape their gender presentation and projections of sexuality as they moved about their lives, and inverted cultural meanings of intimacy and familiarity associated with hair as a gift.

Central to this worldview is the recognition of a differently sexed body; one that was not at the turn of the century singularly defined, either popularly or by medical professionals, by a site or location of sex or sexuality (the genitals, ones chromosomes, or ones genetics). Clippings were serious transgressions that rested on an understanding of a body defined by a dispersed sense of sex; a sense in which a constellation of secondary characteristics were required to fully comprehend ones 'true' biology. Different from the binary-sexed body that would come to prominence in the twentieth century, a more narrowly-defined sexual entity, this older

understanding of the body collapsed notions of gender, sex, and sexuality, allowing an attack on a woman's hair to constitute a violent transgression against their sexed bodies. It is this recognition of hair as a component of the sexed body that enables us to fully embrace the hair itself not only as a target of these attacks but as a central figure in this story; an object of identification and reclamation with its own histories and meanings. Girls and women wanted their hair back if it had been shorn, they wanted to know what had become of it, because it was a part of their identity.

Estelle Freedman's examination of rape in the latter half of the nineteenth century offers one means by which we can begin to ascertain the distinct ways in which clipper attacks were presented in the media, using different keywords or phrases than would otherwise indicate to readers a euphemism for rape. 'As a crime,' Freedman says, '[rape] has been defined in Anglo-American law as the carnal knowledge of a woman by force and against her will (and, until recently, by a man other than her husband).'[1] Using this definition, Freedman found 'abundant reports of rape, outrage, ravishment, and seduction in nineteenth-century American newspapers.'[2] Yet the language Freedman highlights is largely absent from the descriptions of the clipper that I have identified. Words such as '"ravish"' or '"infamous outrage"' or 'seduction' do not appear in the accounts of these clippings.[3]

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[1] Estelle B. Freedman, '"Crimes which startle and horrify": Gender, Age, and the Racialization of Sexual Violence in White American Newspapers, 1870-1900,' *Journal of the History of* Sexuality, 20, no. 3 (September 2011), p. 465.

[2] Freedman, '"Crimes which startle and horrify,"' p. 465.

[3] Freedman, '"Crimes which startle and horrify,"' pp. 470-1.

It is worth noting that Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore highlights similar terms used by Southern Americans to describe rape, particularly the rape of white women by black men. Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: the Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009), p. 125.

Certainly women lose their 'crowning glory' or, as we will see, their family's 'pride and joy,' but these are not the same as the loss of a woman's 'most precious jewel.'

In noting explicitly that haircutting fell outside the vocabulary of rape in the nineteenth century press, I recognise that I run the risk of moving haircuttings entirely outside of the domain of sexual violence--in opposition to the point that I am trying to make. But it is important, first, to acknowledge the differences between rape and sexual violence such as haircutting; a haircutting was not a rape even if it was sexually violent. Second, this is also a question that I have fielded quite often in conversations about my research project: 'Could not these attacks be euphemisms for something more sinister which could not be spoken of in the press?' In answering no, I move away from this explanation that I argue often underlines how central the genitals are in our own social and legal constructions of sexuality. Instead, my hope is to meet haircutting on its terms, so to speak; to ask questions of these acts that help us make sense of them in the context of very different norms of sex and sexuality. I argue, then, both that there is much overlap between the varying categories of street harassment and sexual violence in the nineteenth century and that a more generous approach to how sexual desire and sexual violence were engaged with the sexed and gendered body reveals how clipper attacks, violence against hair, fit very much into an acknowledged spectrum of sexual violence.[4]

Even if a 'clipping' was not a euphemism for rape these attacks were orchestrated attempts to challenge a woman's status and identity, and waged against an important aspect of her physical person. Not unlike today, Victorians invested hair

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[4] Freedman, '"Crimes which startle and horrify,"' p. 471.

For references to a woman's hair as her 'crowning glory,' see: 'Pretty Styles for the Hair: A Woman Need No Longer Be Freakish in Order to Be Fashionable,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (21 October 1888), p. 27; or, 'Over Six Feet of Hair,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (11 April 1896), p. 16.

with social and cultural meanings. Hair histories were written, as were tips for beautifying one's mane. Baldness cures, for men and women, were advertised regularly in newspapers, with the Seven Sutherland Sisters becoming stalwarts of these pages, their hair cascading to their feet and stretching across the floor.[5] Hair was a fraught marker in the nineteenth century: a marker of ones femininity or masculinity, of a deep and affectionate bond between friends, or family, or lovers, of your sexual proclivities, of your political persuasions, or your economic status. Only by engaging the various meanings of the hair in different contexts will it be possible to grapple with the full implications of Jack the Clipper not as a nuisance pest but as a sexually violent offender that ruptured the social and sexual identities that women understood themselves to possess.

I. Inverting the Meaning of Hairgiving: Hair as Person, Hair as Symbol, Hair as Sex

For late-nineteenth-century Americans hair was not only an individual marker of fashion or beauty or display of personality but a material extension of themselves that, when exchanged or given, acted as a physical expression of the intense and affectionate relations that existed between close companions or friends, family

[5] For examples, see: Hermann Beigel, *The Human Hair: Its Structure, Growth, Diseases, and their Treatment* (London: Henry Renshaw, 1869), which dedicates the entire first chapter to 'Historical Remarks'; 'The Philosophy of Beards,' *New York Times* (6 April 1873), p. 2; or, 'Hair: Beards, Whiskers, Mustaches, and Imperials from Early Egyptian Days Till Now,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (25 Dec 1881), p. 11.

The Sutherland Sisters were a troupe of seven women with extraordinarily long hair who built a successful business based upon their reputation for increasing hair growth. Often letters written into the newspaper with regard to their products (albeit as an advertising tool) express the importance of long hair to women and the unattractiveness and undesirability of baldness. See, for example: 'Mabel Dailey: Her Mother's Letter to 7 Sutherland Sisters,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (20 Jan 1889), p. 8; or, 'D. D. Dakin', *Chicago Daily Tribune* (7 July 1889), p. 28.

members, or lovers. Although especially popular between the 1850s and 1880s, Americans into the early twentieth century, across cities and smaller towns alike, engaged in a variety of forms of hairwork which transformed individual strands of hair provided by willing donors into hair jewellery and other wares that conveyed community, love, longing, and both mourning and loss.[6] Made for men and women, hair jewellery might take the form of a hair ring, perhaps exchanged between lovers, or a chain attached to a man's pocket watch that travelled with him as he carried about his business for the day, or mourning miniatures that could also be used as pendants and celebrated and memorialised those who had died by allowing their loved ones to carry a piece of them on their person.[7] Larger objects made from hair were also possible, including hair wreaths, which could be feet long and acted as centrepieces in their own right; paintings, where hair might be mixed with paint or sprinkled on top of drying paint for a more tactile product; and sculptures, in which hair was woven into complicated structures that reflected the coming together of different families and family members in a manner sometimes mirroring a genealogy tree.[8]

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[6] Helen Sheumaker, *Love Entwined: The Curious History of Hairwork in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); *Deborah Lutz, Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Although both Sheumaker and Lutz identify the peak of hairwork as the 1850s through to the 1880s (Sheumaker, p. x; Lutz, p. 132), hair jewellery and other ornaments made out of human hair were still available and widely dispersed throughout the 1890s and early 1900s. In the American context, Sheumaker notes a number of businesses and products that were still available and circulating beyond 1900 (Sheumaker, pp. 38, 80-81, 87, 101, 140). Indeed, she argues that even hairworkers themselves were unlikely to have noticed the declining popularity of hairwork in the 1890s (p. 145).

[7] Sheumaker, *Love Entwined*, pp. 16-19, 125-9.

[8] Sheumaker, *Love Entwined*, pp. 35-6, 77-86; Elisabeth G. Gitter, 'The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination,' *PMLA*, 99, no. 5 (October 1984), p. 942.

Sitting at the core of these practices of producing and exchanging hairwork was a recognition of the hair as not merely representative of the person--as a photograph might have been, for example--but as the person themselves. Lost to us today, Helen Sheumaker argues, is the deep significance of this hair as an extension of one's body and one's self: 'self-evident to many Americans at the time,' she writes, 'being made of human hair, hairwork *was* the person whose hair was used.'[9] To exchange hair was not to exchange a ring or similar memento that replicated a person's likeness or reminded someone of a relationship through an engraved message or initials. Rather, to give hair was to give over oneself: 'The gift of hairwork was intended to be a living conduit between individuals. The hair's filaments would transmit one's self to another, and as the recipient took possession of the gift, he or she accepted the giver's self.'[10] To carry or possess one of these highly personal and personalised gifts was to engage and interact with something akin to a relic of the person.[11]

In 1885, Mary E. Wilkins published a short story in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* illustrating, as much through narrative cues as its subject matter, the overlapping value of hair and hairwork not only as an aesthetic but as a widely-recognised embodiment of familial and amorous love. Mrs Charlotte Steadman, a 'tall' and 'spare woman,' used the visit of her out-of-town friend and relative, Mrs Paulina Loomis, as an excuse to call on her sister, Mrs Nancy Weeks.

9 Sheumaker, *Love Entwined*, p. viii.

10 Sheumaker, *Love Entwined*, p. 53.

11 Deborah Lutz argues that for Victorians hair and other '"substances"' could take on relic-like qualities that provided them 'the capacity to be marked by or *to be* the physical presence of a beloved or revered individual.'

See: Lutz, *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture*, pp. 1-2, 130, 134.

Charlotte had been speaking to Paulina about an object of great interest and beauty in Nancy's parlour room. Nancy, taller, paler, and grayer than her sister, was coy, protesting that there was little worth seeing. Bolstered by Charlotte's bragging and proud of her workmanship, however, Nancy 'opened the door opposite the sitting room... with an air at once solemn and embarrassed, [and] motioned her callers to precede her in.'[12]

Upon entering the parlour, Paulina was taken aback by all of the fine goods that she saw:

> gilded paper on the walls, and a Brussels carpet with an enormous flower pattern on the floor. The furniture was covered with red plush--everybody else in town had hair-cloth, plush was magnificent audacity. Every chair had a tidy on its back; there was a very large ruffled lamp mat for the marble-top table; there were mats for the vases on the shelf, and there was a beautiful rug in front of the fire-place.[13]

Nancy was 'innocently proud' of her parlour which had, just two years before, been filled with the 'commonest and poorest things in the way of furniture.' But if the parlour itself, filled with these impressive goods, was 'the perfect flower... of all her wishes and fancies,' it was her latest addition that was her crowning achievement. [14]

Paulina 'darted' toward the wall, asking Nancy, '"*Is* this it?"'[15]

Amidst all of the new possessions, Paulina pointed to the hair wreath that Nancy had recently hung. Replete with '"rose-buds, an' lillies, an' pansies, an'

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[12] The characters in Wilkins' story are referred to most often by their first names, which I replicate here.

See: Mary E. Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 70, no. 418 (March 1885) p. 590 <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008919716>, last accessed 11 April 2022.

I found reference to this short story in Sheumaker, *Love Entwined*, pp. 118-9.

[13] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 591.

[14] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 591.

[15] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 591.

poppies, an' acorns, besides the leaves,"' Nancy had '"made the whole wreath"'; everything down to the '"sprig of ivy."'[16] All but one part of the intricate design had been made out of hair from her family:

> "I had some of my great-grandmother's hair, an' my grandmothers. That little forget-me-not in the corner's made out of my great-grandmother's--I didn't hev much of that--an' that lily's grandmother's. She was a light-favored woman, an' her hair turned a queer kind of a yeller-gray. I had a great piece of it mother cut off after she died. It worked in real pretty. Then I had a lot of my mother's, an' some of my sister's that died, an' a child's mother lost when he was a baby, and a little of my uncle Solomon White's, mother's brother's, an' some of my father's. Then thar's some of the little boy's that Charlotte lost." [17]

Only '"the reddish rose-bud"' had been made out of the hair of someone still alive.[18]

The visitors praised the piece and took their leave, providing Nancy the space to admire her own creation. Although exhausting to make, Nancy 'felt as much throbbing wonder and delight over her hair wreath as any genius over one of his creations. As far as happiness of that kind went she was just as well off as a Michael Angelo or a Turner...'[19]

Soon after, Nancy was 'taken sick with a slow fever. She lingered along a few weeks' but, weakened by the illness, died soon after. Charlotte felt little for Nancy's husband, Thomas, who made it clear that he had plans to move on from his late wife 'as soon as decency would permit,' and became increasingly convinced that 'some of these fine things' in her sister's possession 'ought, by right, to belong to her.' Sitting in that same parlour, Charlotte 'visited [Thomas] often and hinted' at her desire for

[16] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 591.

[17] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 591.

[18] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 591.

[19] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 591.

the furniture and decorative ornaments her sister had prized, 'but he smiled knowingly and switched the subject.'[20]

Six months after Nancy's death, Thomas announced his engagement to a widow from a nearby town. Even more '"than their usin' poor Nancy's best plush furniture..."' or the '"tidies an' mats an' rugs," Charlotte hated that they still kept the '"beautiful hair wreath made out of my folks' hair!"' Who possessed this hair wreath 'disturb[ed] Charlotte more than anything else.' She could not imagine that 'that other woman should have it!'[21]

So Charlotte stole it.

Charlotte '"walked into the house an' took it... I meant to have it. Nancy made it, an' worked herself 'most to death over it, an' it's made out of my folks' hair, an' I had a right to it."'[22]

Although Charlotte insisted that she had a right to it, this was much more likely to have been a hope based in polite acknowledgement of the importance of the hair wreath to Nancy, Charlotte, and her family, than any legally binding claim. Rather than confidence in the justness of her actions, Charlotte remained 'afraid,' hiding the wreath 'out of sight' as she awaited the inevitable visit from Thomas. [23]

When Thomas turned up, presumably with the knowledge she had stolen this possession right out of his house and the expectation that he would receive his property back, Charlotte answered the door with 'trepidation.' Yet Thomas appears to have recognised the value of the hair and the uncomfortable nature of possessing

[20] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 593.

[21] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 594.

[22] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 594.

[23] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 595.

the hair of Charlotte's family members, including one of her own children. Ultimately, he told Charlotte that she could keep the wreath. Their brief exchange left him "'ashamed'" and "'wilted,'" and he surrendered the piece.[24]

The exchange between Charlotte and Thomas is written up as a heated one, in which Charlotte anxiously berates Thomas with the many reasons that she should be able to lay claim to the wreath, but no specific reasons are provided by Wilkins. That the hair was the centrepiece of the story, weaving together different familial relationships, would have been recognisable to American readers not as a legal claim but as an important claim to ownership of a family member or loved ones memory and person that moved beyond Thomas's legal right to the possession of Nancy's items, items which were likely always his after their marriage. Charlotte's victory is premised on the importance of reuniting the hair, these people, with their rightful kin. For Thomas to have kept the hair wreath, the story implies, would not have been illegal but immoral, severing an emotional and physical connection between living and deceased family members.

But Wilkins' story speaks not only to the bonds of familial love but to the importance of hair in amorous love as well. A parallel narrative follows the question of whose hair made up "'the reddish rose-bud'" on the wreath--the only donor of hair who was still alive when Paulina viewed the item in Nancy's parlour--and turns to Emmeline, Charlotte's daughter.[25]

Emmeline lived with her mother and worked out of their home as a dressmaker, taking in enough to financially support them both. While her mother was

[24] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 595.

[25] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 591.

at her prayer meeting, Emmeline would wait at home in the hopes that Andrew Stoddard, the man who had been courting her, would visit. Andrew made regular visits, seeing Emmeline for six consecutive weeks. People mentioned to her in passing that 'he was a great match' for her, and her mother was convinced that he would propose.[26]

One night, however, Andrew simply stopped coming around. Emmeline continued to prepare for Andrew's visits for weeks, only to be disappointed time and time again, left waiting in her parlour.[27] She would 'put on her best dress' and sit, 'alone in the fading light, waiting' for Andrew to appear.[28] When it became clear that Andrew would not be returning, one of Emmeline's neighbours informed her that 'Andrew had gone West.'[29]

Once Charlotte had hung up the wreath she had stolen from Thomas, she would show it off to neighbours, friends, and other passersby.[30] An object of beauty and of familial pride designed to be displayed and asked after, it is likely unusual that an unidentified piece of hair would adorn the wreath and even less so that the hair would be an outright secret.[31] Many women went to great lengths to ensure the details of who was incorporated into their hairwork were recorded, in recognition of the emotional attachments that were displayed. Some wreaths were annotated in pencil on their underside, others attached 'paper tags to… each leaf or flower' that contained numbers corresponding to an individual 'listed on a separate' reference

[26] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 592.

[27] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 593.

[28] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 592.

[29] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 593.

[30] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 595.

[31] Sheumaker, *Love Entwined*, pp. 119-21.

card. Other women incorporated an organisational system into the wreath itself to indicate 'those represented.'[32] The presence of an unmarked flower, then, drew not inappropriate questions from Charlotte's audience.

After one such neighbour had asked after the mysterious red rose, to which Charlotte declined to answer, Emmeline approached her mother applying more pressure in hopes of an answer. When Charlotte 'shrank before her daughter's look,' it was clear that Emmeline knew whose red hair had been woven into the wreath. Nancy had mentioned to Charlotte her craving for the red-coloured hair for her design, and Charlotte had taken hair from her daughter's drawer. [33]

Wilkins does not mention Andrew by name in revealing the identity of the person whose hair made the stunning rose display on Nancy's wreath, and she would not have needed to. An act of intimate exchange between a man and a woman who were engaged in the slow ritual of courting, the story is set up such that the reader is left with no other appropriate individual from whom Emmeline could have received a lock of hair. In asking her mother if Andrew knew about this, she asks, '"Mother, did *he* know it?"'[34]

Proud of her handiwork, Nancy invited Andrew in one evening to see the wreath she had finally completed. Whether she revealed his inclusion directly or whether he asked the same follow-up question Charlotte's neighbour had asked her that spurred Emmeline's more forceful query, Andrew came to believe that Emmeline had given up possession of his hair entirely. In her exasperation, Emmeline tells her mother that this was clearly, '"The reason he stopped coming, and--everything."' The

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[32] Sheumaker, *Love Entwined*, p. 120.

[33] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 595.

[34] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 595.

hair was a token of his affection that he expected her to cherish and hold dear and he thought she had given it away as if it were nothing: '"He--gave it to me, and he thought that was all I cared for it, to give it to Aunt Nancy to put in a hair wreath."'[35]

Where for Charlotte the wreath was the embodiment of her family and the work of her recently deceased sister, for Andrew the hair he had given was intended for Emmeline in lieu of his person proper. As Deborah Lutz argues, 'Amorous exchanges of hair stand as a simple example' of the synecdoche at work: 'to give a lock is to give one's body in promise.'[36] And to give this lock away to anyone, let alone someone with an insubstantial connection to the gift giver, did not only render the gift meaningless but was to offer up an insult and rejection of this promise through callous rejection. For Emmeline to abandon the hair gifted to her was for her to literally throw Andrew away and any indication that she wished to pursue that engagement.

While hair and its displays had different meanings to different communities of people, as we see in Wilkins, to say that hair merely possessed the traits of the person from whom it was clipped or was a likeness of is to underplay the importance of hair to nineteenth-century Americans. The hair stood in for the person in question and maintained ties between that person, deceased or living, and the people to whom that hair was given. It was an intimate exchange that, at least in Wilkins' idealised and fictional world, trumped any legal claim to a possession that otherwise left the hair and its rightful owners separated, and that, in cases of romantic love, was given as a token of affection that was required to be cherished. To give away the

[35] Wilkins, 'A Souvenir,' p. 595.

[36] Lutz, *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture*, p. 141.

hair, even for inclusion in a wreath that itself was of emotional value, was to disavow the hair *as* the person who had offered themselves up.

In the stealing of a braid of hair, then, one can see the immense personal, social, familial, and sexual inversions in understandings of relationality. To not be in possession of one's hair was to have lost oneself, but to have been forcibly deprived of one's hair was to have a part of one's self, a promise of one's body, stolen. The hair was not merely symbolic of the woman, hair *was* the woman in question. Each strand, each braid, was uniquely identifiable. Clippers perverted not only the narrative of the hair gift or hairwork itself, replacing any voluntary giving of self with the violent taking of another's self, but the relationships that were supposed to exist between those who gave hair to another willingly, either in a familial or romantic or sexual capacity.

While the giving of hair was a literal giving of self, sexual symbolism, particularly outside of familial exchanges, existed alongside and in alignment with the production of hair meaning, further ensuring recognition of the stealing of the braid as analogous to a sexual violation and a forceful taking of virtue. Often following Freud's theories of sexual fetishisation, in which an object becomes the focus of sexual desire as substitute for the whole, social scientists and humanists have long explored the meaning of hair in the past and venture to explain the investment of the self in this appendage that seems to have been lost to us in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.[37]

[37] Lutz, *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture*, p. 210.

Anthropologists across the twentieth century, for example, have argued not only for the sexual symbolism of hair but explicitly for the representational significance of violently cutting someone's hair as a form of castration. E. R. Leach, a British anthropologist, found no reason to discount Charles Berg's 1936 suggestion that 'hair is conspicuously a genital symbol' and, in the proper circumstances, could stand in for the phallus, establishing hair as a sexual symbol for anthropologists working in locations as disparate as Samoa and India.[38] Literary scholars and art historians have argued for the overt sexual nature of depictions of long and flowing manes of hair on women during the Victorian era, some channelling similar psychological and psychoanalytic principles. Elisabeth Gitter, for example, analyses English-language literary texts across the Victorian period to argue for the powerful and sexual magic of hair, even if these powers are embraced and villified in different ways. Christina Rosetti's 'Goblin Market,' for example, both illuminates the sexual and economic potency of a woman's hair and the devaluation of both of these attributes when women use their skills for their 'own pleasure or profit.'[39]

Accounts of clipper attacks frequently gesture not only toward the significance of the attack for the victim in question, but to the social and sexual ramifications of such a severance and misplaced possession upon the family. When Ella

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[38] See: E. R. Leach, 'Magical Hair', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 88, no. 2 (July-December, 1958), pp. 147-64; and Charles Berg, 'The Unconscious Significance of Hair,' *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 17 (1936), p. 85, or Berg, *The Unconscious Significance of Hair* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1951).

[39] Gitter, 'The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination,' pp. 946.

See also: Olivia Gruber Florek, '"I Am a Slave To My Hair": Empress Elisabeth of Austria, Fetishism, and Nineteenth-Century Austrian Sexuality,' *Modern Austrian Literature*, 42, no. 2 (2009), pp. 1-15; Galia Ofek, *Representations of Hair in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009); Jeannette Marie Mageo, 'Hairdos and Don'ts: Hair Symbolism and Sexual History in Samoa,' *Journal of Women Studies*, 17, no. 2 (1996), pp. 138-67; Gananath Obeyesekere, 'Medusa's Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience,' in Michael Lambek, ed., A *Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), pp. 383-97.

Soentgerath, a thirteen-year-old resident of Lake View, was attacked by a clipper on 19 February 1902, for example, newspapers indicated the wide scope of implications that the forcible hair loss entailed to both Ella and her family. Ella's 'curls, reaching almost to her waist, hung with a ribbon bound about them close to her head.' Walking home from her father's shop in the early afternoon, she met with a clipper in an alley 'on Perry street, between Belmont avenue and Fletcher street.' The man 'was running,' and 'as the little girl heard the hurrying footsteps she glanced back.' As she turned around, Ella was 'seized' by this man; 'her hair in his left hand [he] cut it a few inches below where the ribbon held the bright strands.' Having taken his treasure he fled. Ella's reaction to the attack is telling, she 'fainted' immediately after reporting the crime and 'it was some time before she was revived,' but whether a direct quote or an editorialisation, the subsequent comments about the importance of the hair shifted the discussion of the transgression from one of an individual to a familial nature. Ella was 'one of two daughters,' the report stated, 'and her long golden curls were the pride of the family.'[40]

Ella's attack was traumatising at an individual level, but it also revealed the webs of social and sexual meaning that connected Ella's hair and her sexual availability to her family's reputation. That Ella's hair was the 'pride of the family' gestures to the role hair played not only as analogous to her femininity or womanhood, but as an object of sexual virtuousness in need of protection that had been stolen from her. The hair was something to be cherished by the family, needed by the girl herself, defended from the unwanted attention (or indeed the actual possession) of others, and traumatising to be without. Indeed, to have lost the hair

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[40] 'New Hair-Clipper Here: Unknown Man Cuts off Girl's Curls in Lake View,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (20 February 1902), p. 3.

appears as a kind of castration of social position and possibility borne both by Ella and by her parents.

Where anthropologists and literary critics have drawn on psychoanalysis to demonstrate the sexual symbolism of hair, historians have argued for gendered analyses of the meaning of the tools Victorians used in acts of penetration or dissection. Obviously the loss of the hair was vital to these violent encounters with clippers, but the clippings also involved young girls and women coming into contact with adult males, who were otherwise strangers to them, wielding sharp instruments of penetration against an aspect of their body especially imbued with sexual meaning.

In her work on the relationship between women and medical dissections in the late nineteenth century (their presence at and practice of), Alison Bashford argues that the act of cutting or incising was designated as intrinsically male. Women and men argued that women were either ill-equipped to conduct dissections and other more physically-inclined forms of science--indeed, as Bashford argues, '*any* practice which involved the use of knives'--or that they required their own spaces for dissection, separate from the male students who would be performing the same task.[41]

At stake was not merely an anxiety about the vast array of opportunities being taken up by (mostly middle- and upper-class white) women, but a complete rescripting of gendered narratives of penetration.[42] For Victorians, Bashford argues, 'the knife is too phallic to contemplate its use, its appropriation by women: knives

[41] Alison Bashford, *Purity and Pollution: Gender, Embodiment and Victorian Medicine* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 107; my emphasis.

[42] Bashford, *Purity and Pollution*, pp. 114-6.

belong to men.'[43] Recognising the 'woman-dissector' as a 'disrupt[or]' of expected gender relations reveals the deep associations of cutting, dissecting, and penetrating, of any kind, with an active and male role premised on a passive and receptive female recipient (or victim).[44] In one of the few spaces in which women were likely to take up this more aggressive action--which, in the worst of circumstances for white, Victorian men, made women subjects and the men under their dissection the objects of their gaze and control--we see that it was not the cutting of a woman's hair alone that was cause for consternation but the symbolic relationships around it as well.[45]

To understand implements, like shears, as possessing a certain intrinsic masculinity, as objects which penetrate, dissect, and represent destruction and harm, is to read the complex narrative structure (and inversion, in the case of hair giving) that underpinned an encounter with a clipper. The scissors, representing male power, hack away at the 'crowning glory' of these women, their hair; hacking away not only at these appendages but at their femininity and their presumed sexual innocence. Much like the doctor's scalpel or speculum, clippers with their shears or scissors channelled anxieties about who was performing these actions, with women being passive vessels for dissection or experimentation.[46] The scissors themselves,

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[43] Bashford, *Purity and Pollution*, p. 120.

[44] Bashford, *Purity and Pollution*, p. 112.

[45] Bashford, *Purity and Pollution*, p. 114.

Bashford is not alone in her findings of the correlations between knives and phallicism, drawing on the findings of Rosemary Pringle and Susan Collings in their work on women and butchery, and Ludmilla Jordanova's work on the gendering and sexualising of dissection. See: Rosemary Pringle and Susan Collings, 'Women and Butchery: Some Cultural Taboos,' *Australian Feminist Studies*, no. 17 (1993), esp. pp. 29, 36, 39; Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), esp. p. 103.

[46] Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), esp. ch. 3, p. 99.

in other words, should also influence our reading of clipper narratives as trangressive and sexual in nature, adding violent boundary crossings into narratives of a taking of personhood.

In noting the scissors, shears, or other blades that were found on clippers, then, newspaper stories reported simultaneously a factual statement about a weapon used in these assaults and a more abstract image of sexual violation that was bound to the imaginary of young girls and women as unfit for the kind of carnal knowledge that men otherwise possessed and often as innocent victims of such violence. Story after story recounted the various means through which clippers enacted their violence, from the spring-loaded shears favoured by John Jorgenson (and others, undoubtedly), to Frank Gallo's 'little pair of scissors,' and the various implements used by other clippers who would remain anonymous.[47]

If hair was an iteration of the person who gave themselves to another--not a symbol but a gift of the self--and leveraged symbols of Victorian sexual expression and restraint, as well as psychoanalytic ideas of castration and penetration, it also drew on nineteenth-century scientific and medical knowledge of sexual categorisation that offered up another resource for American newsreaders to make sense of the hair as sexualised and a haircutting as sexually violent.

For Victorians, sex, gender, and sexuality were less delineated concepts than they are today. The idea of sex, as Geertje Mak aptly puts it, had yet to 'curdle' into its three distinct components where 'gender' could be understood as a performative

[47] 'Jack the Clipper Taken: Caught While Cutting Tresses from Erna Fransky's Head,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 16 February 1899, p. 3; 'Hair Snipper Caught After Big Commotion: Cut Off Girl's Locks on Tremont Row And Was Chased by Angry Throng,' *Boston Daily Globe* (2 January 1907), p. 1.

identity, ‘sex’ as a biological marker, and ‘sexuality’ as oriented desire or attraction.[48] These analytic tools have provided scholars with invaluable access to myriad social and cultural experiences and phenomena, but in this particular constellation they can make discussing the significance of haircutting more difficult; its social significance cannot be divorced so neatly from its biological importance. Victorian doctors and scientists regularly used gender presentation as a way of determining ones ‘true’ sex in cases of ambiguous sex in children or adults, or ones (various) sexual characteristics for proscribing an individual’s gender identity, and thus their social position, from who they could marry to where they could work. The genitals were not the sole markers even of biological sex, but rather part of this constellation that could include the density or thickness of hair or the timbre of one’s voice, the broadness of one’s shoulders, or the propensity for feminine or masculine pursuits.

To understand how it is that clippers impacted their victims, we need to consider how the bodies of these women were read differently to how they might have been in the late twentieth or early twenty-first century. To fully understand the nature of these attacks as sexually violent one must participate in the project of reinscribing the sexual geography of the body to take into consideration characteristics that would later be precluded from consideration, both social and biological.

This decentralisation of the genito-centric conception of the human body builds upon scholarship within the history of sexuality and the history of medicine. Historians Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Caroline Walker Bynum championed a critique of this model of biological sex as central to our understandings of identity

[48] Geertje Mak, 'Doubting Sex from Within: A Praxiographic Approach to a Late Nineteenth-Century Case of Hermaphroditism,' *Gender & History*, 18, no. 2 (August 2006), p. 333.

formation more than three decades ago.[49] Illuminating romantic friendships, Smith-Rosenberg questioned the validity of this genital dominance in the twentieth, and now, twenty-first, century arguing that:

> The twentieth-century tendency to view human love and sexuality within a dichotomized universe of deviance and normality, genitality and platonic love is alien to the emotions and attitudes of the nineteenth century and fundamentally distorts the nature of these women's emotional interaction.[50]

To recognise the full impact and extent of the violation of a clipper attack, to take seriously the outrage that victims felt and displayed, we must consider how hair itself was key to both social identity and biological sex amongst the muddle of gender/sex/sexuality. The disentanglement of these concepts, of biological sex from gendered representations of it, discount the historical inability to speak of the separation of these three categories. Much as the hair did not only represent the person, hair did not only represent sexuality or sexual organs: hair could be and was sex.

Medical cases of intersexuality--what in the nineteenth century were cases of 'hermaphroditism'--were not uncommon, engaging individuals in conversations spanning Europe, European colonies, and the United States. At the heart of the concern surrounding hermaphroditism, however, were exactly these issues of what constituted an individual's sex: how one might define their sexed body. Although notions of sex were becoming increasingly stabilised as a biological category, the sexual body was still a significantly dispersed entity. It required a constellation of

[49] Caroline Walker Bynum, 'The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg,' *Renaissance Quarterly*, 39, no. 3 (Autumn, 1986), pp. 399-439; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America,' *Signs*, 1, no. 1 (Autumn, 1975), pp. 1-29.

[50] Smith-Rosenberg, 'The Female World of Love and Ritual,' p. 8

sexual characteristics to make a proclamation of sex that distributed the symbolic weight, now carried almost exclusively by the genitals, across a variety of aspects of the body.[51]

An 1888 paper by Fancourt Barnes, read before the British Gynaecological Society, for example, indicates the degree to which physicians and surgeons could disagree over the category of hermaphroditism as a result of these various, ambiguous, and overlapping criteria. Dr. Fancourt Barnes opened a meeting of the British Gynaecological Society on Wednesday, 25 April 1888, stating that he had a 'case of an individual who has been brought up to the age of nineteen as belonging to the female sex, when it is perfectly clear that he is a male.' The mother had apparently had a fright while pregnant and began to notice an abnormality in the genitalia only two weeks after birth.[52]

The conflict in the patient's appearance, demeanour, and body were key signs for Barnes, with hair representing one significant means through which he assigned a sex determination. According to the mother, the patient was, 'affectionate and gentle,' and 'decidedly feminine' in her 'tastes'; and yet, she had grown hair on the arms, 'especially the forearm,' at age nine. About the same time her pubic hair began to grow upwards, 'nearly up to the umbilicus.' Only a couple of years prior she had begun to develop both a 'moustache and beard,' and began to shave.[53]

Other members of the society were called upon to voice their opinions on the matter creating an intellectual scene of chaos and confusion. Mr Lawson Tait and Dr.

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[51] Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[52] Fancourt Barnes, 'The British Gynæcological Society: Wednesday, April 25, 1888,' *British Gynaecological Journal*, 4 (1888), p. 205.

[53] Barnes, 'The British Gynæcological Society,' pp. 205-7, 209.

Bantock were absolutely certain that the patient was of the male sex. Whereas Drs. Routh and Aveling remained less than convinced of the 'true' sex of the patient in front of them, going so far as to say that, 'Such a conclusion was mere guess work.' By the end of discussion no consensus had been reached and it was decided that the, 'Society should divide on the question of the sex.'[54]

Although Fancourt Barnes and his colleagues offer up an excellent demonstration of the power of the medical profession the reliance on a wide variety of sexual characteristics to make any determination of sex both caused utter confusion, the men entirely unable to agree upon what these different signs meant, but also tied various iterations of bodily hair directly to sexed characteristics. Hair did not stand in for the genitals as indicators of sex--there was no need for this--it simply was an indicator of biological sex, in much the same way that the hair was no mere symbol of personhood, it was the person.

Clippers came into being at the same time that the ways in which ones biological sex was determined were undergoing significant changes, whereby pinpointing the location of biological indicators of sex was incredibly contentious. As such, when we return shortly to Mary Jackson and examine her distaste for short haired women, we certainly read a denunciation of a social identity but one that could not be separated from the idea of a sexual body that reflected these aberrant conditions. Cutting a woman's hair was analogous to marking her as a deviant but it was also analogous to an attack on her womanhood, on her sexed body.

With this sense of bodily construction in mind then, the literature on the sexual symbolism of hair takes on a new meaning. Certainly, hair was symbolic of

[54] Barnes, 'The British Gynæcological Society,' pp. 205-12

sexuality--one could not conceive of a child with or through their hair--but in another real sense, it was one embodiment of a sex and sexuality that was only produced through a constellation of interconnecting signs. The figure of the clipper challenges us not only to question when and for whom genitals became these markers of sex, but to, perhaps counterintuitively, become more aware of these preconceptions about twentieth century sexuality so as to ask different questions of Victorian sexuality which seems so akin to ours.

Recognising the exchange of hair as an act wedded to notions of friendship, familiarity, and intimacy, prompts us to more fully consider the impact of a hair clipper's actions and the methods and tools which were employed as signs of an interpersonal assault on a woman's sexed body and gender identity. From the hair as person, to the symbolism of the hair or the act of cutting and the associated concerns about female respectability and politeness, and ultimately the state in which women were left which was defined by its own potential for gender inversion, to cut a young girl's or woman's hair without her permission and in such an aggressive and potentially public fashion was an act which inverted the sentiments and actions associated with hair as a gift. Jack the Clipper, in other words, took a deeply gendered and sexualised act of familial exchange and tarnished that symbolic relationship with a selfish and sexual desire that refused consent.

II. After Severance: Social Death, Reunification, and Rebirth

A common theme in clipper narratives about women who lost their braids was the desire to reclaim ownership over the hair that had been stolen. The lengths that both

women and police departments sometimes went to, over the course of weeks, months, or years, indicated an emotional and familial attachment to the hair that recognised and responded to the different meanings invested in it by late-nineteenth-century Americans. Mary Jackson, for example, the young woman whose violent attack opened this dissertation, spoke publicly about her 'anxious [desire] to recover her tresses.'[55] Although there is no evidence to suggest that she was successful in this endeavour, her attempt at reclamation and reunification was one that spoke to the hopes of many clipper victims.

With so few clippers ever caught, most braids were irretrievably lost, however on occasion police officers or reporters would find themselves in possession of missing braids. In cases such as these, police could mount efforts to find the women who had been attacked and provide them an opportunity to be reunited with their lost hair. The women and girls who had been attacked by clippers were active participants in this process, prepared to make a case for hair they believed rightfully belonged to them if necessary.

Scant details are available recounting Susan Sherman's search for her braids, for example, but after having been attacked by a clipper in an alley Sherman kept the 'other braid in a parcel' preparing herself for the possibility that she would be afforded an opportunity to identify her missing hair. Although not all cases ended as this one did, her diligence paid off and when contacted by police she was able to match up the braids and take home the lost possession.[56]

[55] 'They Clip Her Tresses,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 1.

[56] 'Susan Sherman Claims the Braid: Victim of "Jack the Clipper" Identifies the Stolen Locks,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (24 January 1896), p. 5.

Lengthier reports on these attempts at reunion suggest that more than merely repossessing a piece of property the narratives that characterised the search and desire for a braid to be returned relied upon familiar tropes of loss and reunion that indicated the importance and intimacy of these missing braids. On 10 February 1898 the *Chicago Tribune* received a package which contained 'a braid of hair and a brief note,' ostensibly from a Jack the Clipper. A reporter for the newspaper turned this into an opportunity to attempt to reunite this braid with its proper owner, visiting 'six of the most recent victims': Ruby Waters, Leila Helleck, Rose Carey, Catherine Railton, Myrtle Berry, and Gracie Lloyd. When the *Tribune* received this braid, it curated an experience for the reading public that attested to a loss and a subsequent reunion, perhaps even a form of closure: from the language with which the braids were described through to the process of identification. This was clearly a publicity stunt, and yet it played on a silently agreed-upon significance of the hair to these young women and an assumption that there was a desire to have these bodily appendages returned. It was a ritual of closure reminiscent of those involved in restoring social order through the identification and reclamation of a body.[57]

Perhaps unexpectedly, the morgue--a site merging scandalous narrative with bodily identification--reveals a script used by nineteenth-century Americans to, as art historian Vanessa Schwartz argues, restore order to their social worlds through a process of reincorporating what had been lost back into the collective of the city.[58] Although the morgue participated in the culture of spectacle not dissimilar from that

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[57] 'Clipper Mails a Braid: Sends Stolen Strand to "The Tribune" with a Jocose Note,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (11 February 1898), p. 12.

[58] Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siécle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 49.

which drove the department store or the theatre, equally formidable social and cultural formations, the morgue was a site of social repair in which everyday people could identify wayward individuals who had been lost to and within the city. In this process of identification and reunion, the morgue provided a blueprint for a narrative of reclamation that existed beyond the electrified consumer experience of shopping or entertainment and structured one way of knowing and engaging with a stolen braid, and returning to some semblance of order the narrative of loss that was associated with the braid's theft.

Nineteenth-century Paris claimed the quintessential morgue experience that lay the foundation for the purpose and presentation of morgues across Europe and the United States. Boasting, at times, *daily* visitors numbering almost forty thousand people, the Paris morgue fused anxieties about the anonymity of the urban environment with sensational narratives that could frame the human 'displays,' all encapsulated in a setting designed to maximise the visual experience: located in a prime position behind Notre Dame with marble slabs, glass panes, and electric lighting.[59]

The intense patronage of the morgue existed in a symbiotic relationship with other key pillars of urban modernity. The morgue and the newspaper were intrinsically connected: the morgue relied upon sensational news stories to generate the foot traffic necessary for identification of bodies within a reasonable period of time. In this sense, newspapers were not only responsible for advertising the morgue's existence but for framing the narrative around new corpses, inscribing them with meaning to provoke particular reactions of sympathy or outrage and

[59] Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities*, p. 48.

encourage patronage. In displaying these bodies, the morgue concretized or augmented, and at times both, the salacious narratives of danger that defined city life.[60]

The department store and theatre were still reference points by which the experience of being in a morgue was embraced by its visitors, however. For patrons, the morgue was not entirely dissimilar to the world of the department store in which they were to relish being dazzled not merely by artifacts but a predetermined narrative; visitors could consume the sensorial and emotional experience of the morgue much as they would a department store. For ‘curators’ of the bodies, the department store offered a model through which to display their wares to the world. Even tourism became entangled in the morgue’s activities with guidebooks listing the site as a must-see attraction for those visiting the city.[61]

Although the spectacle of the morgue in the United States never reached the heights of the famous Parisian morgue, morgues were nonetheless public spaces with which urban Americans were intimately familiar. New York’s morgue was said to be explicitly modelled on its Parisian counterpart. Although less glamorous, it was designed with the same intention: to help individuals identify deceased persons who had died in the city. The morgue was open to all for extended periods of time and in addition to the body itself, the clothing of the deceased person would be hung on a rack behind or next to the body to assist in identification.[62] Chicago’s morgue, rebuilt

[60] Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities*, p. 68.

[61] Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities*, pp. 53, 64, 66.

[62] James D. McCabe, *Lights and Shadows of New York Life; or, The Sights and Sensations of the Great City. A Work Descriptive of the City of New York in All Its Various Phases; With Full and Graphic Accounts of Its Splendors, and Wretchedness; Its High and Low Life; Its Marble Palaces and Dark Dens; Its Attractions and Dangers; Its Rings and Frauds; Its Leading Men and Politicians; Its Adventurers; Its Charities; Its Mysteries, and Its Crimes* (Philadelphia; Chicago; St. Louis: National Publishing Co., 1872), pp. 839-42.

in 1881, relied upon the same logics: it was a place in which Chicagoans engaged in reparative processes of identification and recovery and reincorporation into the social body. Indeed, the new morgue was built specifically so as to ensure individuals had greater access to the service to help them identify others encountering the 'tragic in city life.'[63]

Although drawing on similar cultures of display and narrative, the morgue offered something different than the department store or the theatre. In addition to its practical function the morgue facilitated a participant-driven experience of reunification; one that was as accessible to working-class people as to those of a higher social and economic status. A visit to the morgue hinged on narratives of death and loss but provided an opportunity for closure and reappropriation, even for those who were not themselves seeking to find a missing person. Though less grand than their Parisian counterpart, as much for the size of American cities compared to the French capital across the majority of the nineteenth century, morgues and their mortuary practices were a part of life for Victorian Americans and the narratives around recovery and reintegration familiar to the reading public, much as those surrounding Jack the Clipper.[64]

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[63] Quote taken from: 'Unclaimed at the Morgue,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (5 June 1906), p. 8. See also: 'City Council: City Morgue,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (7 July 1881), p. 12.

Interestingly, there appears to be little written about the morgue or its role in the culture of the late-nineteenth century United States. On the NYC morgue, see: Jane DeLuca, 'Morgues,' in Kenneth T. Jackson, Lisa Keller, and Nancy Flood, eds. *The Encyclopedia of New York City* , second edn. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 851 <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/lib/cornell/detail.action?docID=3421196>, last accessed April 5, 2022.

[64] If we accept, as I argue here, that the morgue offered up a site for nineteenth-century practices of social reunification and a script the repair of the social disconnection forced upon women whose braids were stolen, Helen Sheumaker argues along similar lines for the warehouse as the opposite site: a location of profound disconnection.

Hair jewellery, she argues, straddled the world of commerce and sentiment uneasily. Hair jewellery was intended to be centred on individual personhood and energy even as it offered a means through which to demonstrate and sustain links of community and interpersonal relations. For hair jewellery to be personalised it required someone to collect the hair and perform the work of turning

Descriptions of how the *Tribune* acted on this mysterious mailed braid adhered to both the clinical and restorative narratives of reunification found within the city morgue, leveraging the hair as a physical manifestation of their sensational news stories in place of a corpse. How the braid was presented in news articles differed depending on who possessed it. When briefly describing the process in which the braid was delivered to the *Tribune* by the clipper, the hair had been 'handled... gently,' for even after all that it had endured it was still in such good condition that 'most any girl might be proud to have so tight and well braided a length of hair.' When, however, the subject shifted to the women and their loss, the braid was described in distinctly clinical terms. It was not, euphemistically, a young woman's 'crowning glory' or 'source of pride.' Nor was it described as beautiful or well-tended. Instead, for the women who had lost the braid, it was rendered detached and

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this into an enduring item for wear or display. While simple items could perhaps be completed at home, more complex designs and patterns that necessitated the skills of a jeweller required either the hair to be mailed or, in larger cities or towns, presented to an artisan. If one was going to the trouble of hiring a professional, these requests often, as one would expect, included specifications for a design or pattern that had some personal meaning. Assuming that this request was not mailed to a friend or local acquaintance, it was both important and also technologically likely that the work would be performed by hand. To provide generic or mass produced hairwork was to miss the value of attachment.

As Sheumaker writes, warehoused hair was 'a nightmare vision for nineteenth-century sentimentalists, for here hair was cruelly dissociated from its owner and any possible sentimental meaning. The hair was merely the leavings of the uncaring market.' In a reference that invokes the earlier discussion of dissection and reference to women's butchery, Sheumaker further writes: 'The hair warehouse was the site of the bizarre contrast of the commodity of hair, stored in piles, bags, and drawers for resale, and the inescapably intimate character of hair itself. Hair used for such a purpose seemed both *distressingly "dead," hung from the ceiling like recently butchered animals*, and yet animated as it "disagreeably caressed" our narrator, the walls, chairs, and the inkstand.' (my emphasis)

The comparison here is not between the morgue and the warehouse as spaces in which bodies and their component parts were stored or displayed (even though this is an interesting one), but rather between the warehouse and morgue as sites of social disconnection. The morgue displayed bodies of people who had been severed from their social world and sought to reincorporate them into the fabric of city life, and the warehouse, although not a public display, was a space in which braids of hair, entirely divorced not simply from the body, as all hair for hairwork would be, but from the social relations that imbued them with power, were hung, 'distressingly "dead," as Sheumaker writes.

Sheumaker, *Love Entwined*, p. 43.

remote; as something that had been severed from their physical body and needed to be restored. The braid was:

> about eight inches in length, of a dark golden hue. At the end the braid was tied with a blue ribbon, badly faded. The knot was what is known as the "lady's bow." From the appearance of the end that had been cut it would seem that at least two cuts of the scissors or knife had been necessary, as the third strand of the braid is fully two inches longer than the other two and is not cleanly cut.[65]

The bow around the braid stood in for the clothes that were otherwise hung behind a body to assist in identification, and in place of a medical examiner the braid ‘was submitted to a hairdresser,’ an expert who was responsible for determining the approximate time that the hair had been cut from the girl's head. The hairdresser assessed the hair, giving it 'as her opinion that it had been recently cut from the head of a young girl between the ages of 12 and 16 years.'[66]

Having determined how the braid was severed, approximately when it had been cut, and from what age of girl--a post-mortem of sorts--the list of women asked to review the hair was limited to six girls who had been attacked, with the exception of one, within the last few months. Each of the girls was visited and asked to identify whether or not the hair was theirs. Although in some instances it was easy to discount someone from ownership of the braid, this was both a communal and tactile experience: girls and their mothers were present to examine the braid in person and invited, where necessary, to touch it to determine exactly whether it was theirs.[67]

Five of the six women who were consulted had been attacked within the last three months, some as recently as only a fortnight prior to the investigation. All were

[65] 'Clipper Mails a Braid,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 12.

[66] 'Clipper Mails a Braid,’ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 12.

[67] 'Clipper Mails a Braid,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 12.

disqualified quickly. Ruby Waters, 'whose braid was torn from her head... by the Clipper, was seen in her home.' Unfortunately, Ruby's hair was 'jet black and curly' disqualifying her entirely and immediately. The same was true for three other girls: Leila Helleck, Rose Carey, and Catherine Railton. Myrtle Berry was disqualified not because her hair was darker but rather because it was lighter than the ‘dark golden hue’ of the braid in question. The only remaining woman for the braid to be brought to and inspected was Gracie Lloyd. Gracie had been attacked ‘almost two years’ prior while ‘on her way home from school,’ already making her an unlikely match for the braid and outside the scope determined by the reporter’s experts. Her mother, identified only as Mrs. Lloyd, 'made a careful examination of the braid submitted... but decided it was not her child's hair. The hair in the braid was coarser than Gracie's but almost the same shade.'[68]

There are striking differences between the identification of a corpse and the reclamation of a braid of hair, a fact as plain to Victorian Americans as to us. But in instances where experts were consulted to determine how recently the braid had been severed from its host, and then individual girls invited to come identify and claim whether or not this was a braid of theirs, the procedural and ritual symbolism connected the hair to something more important than merely a braid, something that needed a social resolution or reincorporation for the individual and for those around her. Although there was no final resolution to the *Tribune*’s search for this braid’s rightful owner, the tropes deployed indicate the intense emotional attachment that existed between the woman and her lost bodily appendage. The emotional investment in this was produced into a spectacle familiar to late-nineteenth-century

[68] 'Clipper Mails a Braid,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 12.

Americans, but it also alluded to the kind of relationship that existed between this woman and the attack; it revealed both an understanding of loss as well as a ritual of discovery and reunification.

In inverting the meanings associated with an exchange of hair, clippers also inverted the social and sexual identities of the women they attacked. Targeting the the hair of young women and girls, clippers, sometimes intentionally, rendered women not only embarrassed as victims of violence that marked them as different and made it difficult for them to speak about or report their encounters, but left them with the outward signs of a burgeoning New Womanhood and a more masculine countenance.

For Mary Jackson, who had been attacked in her own home, left tied up and without her braids, these stakes were especially clear. Jackson refused to name those who she suspected were involved in her assault. This was not an uncommon position for women to take with regards to sexual violence, then or now, and it illustrates Mary Jackson's understanding of the politics surrounding such an issue. Women had the most to lose by coming forward, their character and reputation coming under intense scrutiny. Indeed, in many parts of the United States for a conviction against someone on the grounds of sexual violence, women needed to prove that they were chaste and of good character, a status impossible for most poor women and women of colour to ever attain.[69]

[69] Estelle Freedman, *Redefining Rape: Sexual Violence in the Era of Suffrage and Segregation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 12-32; Kali N. Gross, *Colored Amazons: Crime, Violence, and Black Women in the City of Brotherly Love, 1880-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). pp. 22-3.

In time, the police investigation would confirm suspicion that this was an intrusion of an intimate nature designed not simply to take Miss Jackson's hair but to embarrass her publicly. The police were 'working with the theory that the hair-cutting was planned by a jilted lover and executed by his friends,' a theory that Miss Jackson '[did] not deny' even though she refused to 'reveal the identity of the jilted lover in question.' That this was an act committed by an ex-lover cast it as retribution designed to humiliate Jackson in the way that the suitor had been shamed. The hair was not a convenient or spontaneous grab but was specifically targeted so as to hurt Mary Jackson.[70] That Jackson had herself experienced 'affairs of the heart' painted her as a working-class woman of ill repute, fickle and perhaps sexually aggressive even if not a prostitute.[71] She would not have been successful, most likely, in punishing her assailants for any manner of assault.

This did not mean that Jackson viewed her assault as a trifling affair. Mary Jackson blasted her assailants publicly, taking aim at their manliness: Jackson '"consider[ed] this indignity cruel and cowardly"'. Jackson also, however, attempted to defend her own femininity by explicitly condemning short hair, as an aesthetic and marker of identity. '"Of all the things I detest a short-haired woman. I would not have joined their ranks for the world."'[72]

When Mary Jackson decried short hair as the worst thing that could befall a modern woman, she revealed not just the politics of these hair choices that moved beyond aesthetics, but the judgements that women themselves experienced as a

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[70] 'They Clip Her Tresses,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 1.

[71] 'Mystery Shrouds Stolen Tresses: Detectives Fail to Secure Clews to the Two Men Who Clipped Off Miss Jackson's Braids,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (20 July 1896), p. 1.

[72] 'Mystery Shrouds Stolen Tresses,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 1.

result of clipper violence. It was not that she perhaps felt less desirable or attractive or that she was inconvenienced by the time required to grow her hair back, although these are genuine and legitimate concerns, but rather that her public identity had been challenged. With the cutting of the braid--the severing of an aspect of her person, as we have seen--came with it a form of forced social reorientation.

Perhaps the most obvious images associated with shorter hairstyles fell upon the burgeoning New Woman: the mannish, bike-riding, pants-wearing pioneer of a new social role for women who embraced new technologies and urban spaces.[73] An unwanted haircut thus marked women as members of new and evolving identity groups, regardless of whether they had been admitted to these ranks voluntarily. In her new short-haired state Jackson illuminated a new identity she was forced to assume and the associated shift in her public orientation.

In each of these cases--from the headlines of newspaper articles declaring missing or stolen braids, through to the harrowing recounting of the experiences of these victims and their families, to the details of the clippers' mode of operation, and the structure of narratives of reunion and identification--the reader's attention was directed to the braids as an object of loss and the consternation this loss caused. Shorn of their locks, women were subject to different social and sexual markers. Women were rendered modern New Women as a result of their shorter, 'bobbed' hair, but the way in which sexual bodies were understood to come into existence meant that these social identities were also deeply connected to suspicions about

[73] Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1990), esp. Chs. 1, 5, 6. Martha Vicinus, '"They Wonder to Which Sex I Belong": The Historical Roots of the Modern Lesbian Identity,' *Feminist Studies*, 18, no. 3 (Autumn 1992), pp. 479-85.

their biological sex. The explanation for the broadening of our understanding of contemporary sexual violence to include unwanted haircuttings is found in the entanglement of the social and medical or bodily identities of these victims. Although these incidents differed in important ways from other narratives of sexual violence, in particular from allusions to rape in the press, these clipper attacks still aligned with notions of how a sexual transgressions might look.

III. Conclusion

For late nineteenth-century Americans, hair was a vital touchstone of social and sexual meaning. Hair was not merely representative of a person as a photograph may have been, reproducing a likeness but not synonymous with the person depicted, but a literal extension of the person to whom it belonged. To give hair was a gesture of love, either familial or sexual, that acted as a promise of ones body and future or as a reminder of an enduring past connection. Hair allowed for close friends and lovers to carry you with them either as a living testimony to the intensity of the relationship, an ongoing and literal linkages of selfhood, or as an ongoing connection to a person of significance now deceased, relic-like in its approach to death. Stealing this bodily appendage, then, was not a trivial matter.

Although hair was an extension of the person, this logic was grounded in cultural and biological forms of knowledge circulating through American society. On the one hand, hair was rife with sexual symbolism. As historians, anthropologists, and literary critics have argued, hair's malleability as a bodily appendage rendered it uniquely desirable and alluring, and its severance stood in for reenactments of

castration and displayed fetishisation. The shears or the scissors that clippers wielded further compounded the sexual anxieties embodied in clipper attacks, perverting not merely the meaning of a hair exchange but exacerbating the script of penetration that unsettled notions of women's place and role. On the other hand, medical and scientific knowledge upheld a sexed body that relied on a constellation of sexual characteristics. Hair was a central means of determining sex and thus, when we consider a haircutting as a symbolically sexed act we also need to acknowledge that this was also an act which unsettled medical recognition of where sex lay and, in a practical sense, has the potential to obscure 'true' sex.

To have one's hair forcibly cut, then, constituted a deeply personal violation of a woman's sense of self and safety for late-nineteenth-century Americans. Clippers represented the complete inversion, and perversion, of the acceptable social, emotional, and desiring economies of hair giving, literally taking possession of extensions of young women's bodies and selves. The manner in which these clippings took place, forcing interactions between young women and male strangers that mimicked scenes of penetration and dissection that Americans found so unsettling in other contexts, reinforces the argument that these acts were not merely inconvenient, aggressive, or upsetting, but were immersed in a sexual world of being and meaning that rendered them forms of sexualised violence.

As sexual violence, clipper attacks demanded a response and attempts to repair one's social position and the sense of orientation one possessed in the world were made through narratives of and attempts at reunification. Although department stores and theatres offered the greatest spectacles of a new and urban consumerism, it was the morgue that provides us with a blueprint for how to

understand the significance of attempts to return braids of hair to young victims. Women, their families, police officers and departments, and journalists orchestrated and participated in practices of reunification; to reincorporate the hair and themselves back into the social order. Much as the morgue offered a means through which to identify and reincorporate 'lost' members of the community, those without protection or aid, narratives of reunification offered both individual and collective support for the transformations that were effected by this inappropriate possession.

What these narratives of reunification indicate were attempts to ameliorate the changes women experienced as a result of being attacked. Young women like Mary Jackson were unwillingly made into symbols of new social and sexual relationships in publicly displaying their short hair. If the intention of the attack was to humiliate, the means by which this was accomplished was an unsexing of the women in question who were thrust further toward identities that accorded with shorter and more 'mannish' aesthetics. If the hair was an extension of one's person, imbued with sexual and sexed significance, the forced severance of the braid constituted something akin to social death and rebirth. Marked by violence, literally, women were forced to navigate the world from a new vantage point.

By demonstrating the intertwined cultural and biological significance of hair, as well as the scripts surrounding these attacks that gestured towards a public understanding of this as sexual violence, even as it was delineated from rape, this chapter necessitates recognition of the changing nature of the sexed body during this period and a revision of our historical understanding of the scope of sexual violence. These clippings reveal how central hair was to how Americans understood

bodies to be sexed, changing notions of sexual corporeality or of maps of sexed and sexual bodies.

As we will see in the next chapter, however, the sexual desire inherent in the hair clipped by a Jack the Clipper operated on two different levels: on the one hand, Americans recognised that clippers were specifically invested in the hair but understood this within a larger framework of acceptable sexual expression. On the other, however, this obsession with hair could also be known as pathological and worked to excise 'aberrant' or 'wayward' sexual desire.

CHAPTER TWO

A HAIR FETISH: CLIPPERS AND THE REORIENTATION OF (HETERO)SEXUAL DESIRE

Introduction

'Sexual orientation' is a slippery term, especially as it applies to the past. New orientations of sexuality, as we would understand them, emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. Chief among them, the 'homosexual' and the 'heterosexual'; two enduring categories that find a place of significance in the organisation of social and sexual life across the Western world in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Historians and other theorists have long identified this shift as a pivotal one in the creation of the structures of American sexuality that govern our identities, our spaces of interaction, and our social relationships. At its broadest and most general, American sexual modernity was characterised by the shift from expressions of behavioural categories--the sodomite--to expressions of identity categories--the homosexual, the heterosexual, the invert, and so forth.[1]

But 'sexual orientation,' when used to describe an identity, belies the seismic shift in the directionality of desire--a more literal sexual orientation--that accompanied the creation of these paradigmatic categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality. By this

[1] See: Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol 1: An Introduction* (Penguin: New York, 1990), esp. p. 43; Estelle B. Freedman and John D'Emilio, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, third edn. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), esp. ch. 10; Estelle B. Freedman and John D'Emilio, 'Problems Encountered in Writing the History of Sexuality: Sources, Theory, and Interpretation', *Journal of Sex Research*, 27, no. 4 (November 1990), p. 489; Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (New York: Dutton, 1995); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (BasicBooks: New York, 1994); David M. Halperin, 'How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 6, no. 1 (2000), pp. 87-123.

I mean that creating a homosexual or a heterosexual required a significant reorientation of sexual desire. This reorientation was as much bodily as it was imaginary: a turn in the direction in which people were pointed towards and faced--their heads, eyes, ears, and hands--as well as more abstract conjurings of sexual desire to which these were linked. What one finds attractive, or should find attractive, is different in a behavioural as opposed to an identity-based model.[2] A new way of moving through the world, of acting and enacting sexuality, required a new matrix--an infrastructure of (hetero)sexuality--to be created to transform older sexual impulses into new sexual identities. As Sara Ahmed argued, adapting Foucault's famous phrasing, 'The transformation of sexual orientation into "a species" involves the translation of "direction" into identity.'[3]

As Jacks the Clipper stormed the United States in the wake of the English Jack the Ripper murders, clippers became a means of wrangling with what this new desire looked and felt like and how it faced outward from the body. In enacting their violence, clippers straddled at least two constellations of sexual desire. Clippers were a means of disciplining new forms of sexual desire, pathologizing non-reproductive loci of sexuality, but they achieved this through the recognition of older forms of bodily sexuality and desire that allowed for a more expansive understanding of sex, sexuality, and gender presentation. Jacks the Clipper embodied both a broad sexual desire--one that engaged multple sites of sexual attraction, like hair, with a generous outward gaze--and the new

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[2] Much of this has been inspired by George Chauncey's analysis of queer communities in New York City at the turn of the century. See: Chauncey, *Gay New York*, p. xxii.

For a more in-depth discussion of the importance of different forms of desire as outlined in his work, see the introduction to this dissertation.

[3] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 70.

(hetero)sexual desires that were marked by much narrower fields of ‘acceptable’ desire--limited to gender-defining or reproductive characteristics of the opposite sex.

Sexology responded to and propelled this transition in systems of sexuality of which clippers were but one example. Drawing on Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s immensely popular *Psychopathia Sexualis*, I argue that clippers represented and sustained new understandings of sexual deviancy in direct conversation with the concept of the fetish.[4] The fetish was intrinsic in establishing heterosexuality as the benchmark or key criteria for a new and modern system of sexuality based upon identity, redirecting sexual desire by indicating what was non-normative and suggesting the mechanisms, often ‘proper’ medical attention and intervention, through which sexual desire could be reoriented (sometimes quite literally). My contention here is not that clippers were purely subsumed under the banner of sexology or the fetish--fetishes were born of a dialogue between scientific authority and cultural and social anxiety--but rather that the concept and language of the sexual fetish operated as an important aspect of the process of constructing new lines of desire that enabled the containment and, ideally, correction of non-reproductive sexuality.

Interestingly, while fetishes were used, and continue to be used, as a means of articulating the ‘norm,’ they also, perversely, revealed heterosexuality to be a queer form of sexuality itself. Although heterosexuality would ultimately come to be a dominant and invisible form of sexual desire and expression in the United States,

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[4] Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis, with Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct*, Franklin S. Klaf, trans. (New York: Stein and Day, 1978).

I rely upon Krafft-Ebing specifically not only because of his popularity and influence but because he fundamentally reorganised *Psychopathia Sexualis* to grapple with the significance of the fetish, see: Andreas De Block and Pieter R. Adriaens, ‘Pathologizing Sexual Deviance: A History’, *Journal of Sex Research*, 50, no. 3-4 (2013), pp. 276-98.

hetero-orientations were still blossoming in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the fetish revealed the fragility of the category and the importance of difficult sexual desires in constructing heterosexuality itself.

Fetishes explained the actions of clippers, providing a motive while fanning the flames of anxiety about the slow decay of (white) society. But they weren’t the only potential motivations, and so we begin not with the fetish but with the financial concerns raised by clipper attacks; the veneer that sometimes found more explicit attention in media reportage even as it was revealed to be a flimsy excuse for clippings upon closer inspection of both social and economic considerations in late-Victorian America. Ultimately, these financial explanations held little weight, but, as a preface, they tell us about the deep reformulation of social and cultural spatial relations that were taking place through their bid to reorder and re-emplace these problematic clipper tropes.

The Flimsy Veneer of the Financial

On the 18th of September 1899, Mary Vandrasek (also referred to as Mary Vandraser in some newspaper accounts), a Bohemian girl from Chicago’s West Side, was attacked and robbed in an alley near her house. Walking home, two ‘well-dressed’ men in coats with derby hats obscuring their faces approached Vandrasek. 'One of [the men] drew a revolver and held it to her head while his companion searched her pockets and took her purse.' 'Dissatisfied' with the sixty cents Vandrasek was carrying 'the man... drew a knife

and clipped from the girl's head two braids of hair.' The man and his accomplice then ran south and disappeared into the darkness.[5]

The attack was reported to the Canalport Avenue Police Station that same evening and Captain Wheeler 'gave instructions to all patrolmen to look for the men.' One approximately '5 feet 10 inches... and [wearing] a black overcoat and a brown derby hat. The other... dressed in a dark sack coat and a black derby. He was 5 feet 9 inches tall.' Despite police efforts, however, there is no evidence to indicate that either of these men were caught.[6]

When eleven-year-old Louise Carroll and sixteen-year-old Anna Depreding were attacked in Chicago in April 1897, the Washington D.C. *Evening Times* went so far as to suggest that, 'It is now believed that there is an organized gang in the employ of hair stores working on an extensive plan.'[7] No evidence of any organised crime syndicate was recorded in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* (where one might expect the report to have originated), who merely noted that that two young women were attacked by 'Jack the Clipper,' one a 'well-dressed' assailant and the other wearing a 'red handkerchief over the lower part of his face.'[8]

Frank Gallo's clippings were also attributed directly to the money to be made from the hair he had wrested from young girls. Gallo, a nineteen-year-old Sicilian living in Boston, had been 'caught in the act of cutting off a young girl's hair' in 1907. Not only had he been caught red-handed but in his 'possession were found five braids of hair.'

[5] 'Two "Jack the Clippers" Now: Mary Vandrasek Attacked Near Center Avenue, Her Tresses Cut Off, and Pocketbook Taken,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (19 September 1899), p. 1.

[6] 'Two "Jack the Clippers" Now,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 1.

[7] 'Girls Deprived of Their Tresses,' *Evening Times* [Washington, D.C.] (13 April 1897), p. 4.

[8] 'Hair-Clipper Snips Off Two Braids,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (13 April 1897), p. 1.

The case is similar to other clippings with the exception that his intentions were not seemingly shrouded in doubt or concern: ‘Regarding the snipper’s motive in cutting the braids,’ it was reported, ‘the police believe it was purely a commercial one, as human hair brings big money from wig dealers. The police say one braid a day would enable him to make a good living.’[9]

These news stories, occurring years apart, are some of the few attempts to explain hair cutting as financially, rather than sexually, motivated. The attack on Vandrasek, the conspiracies at the heart of Carroll’s and Depreding’s cases, and even Gallo’s bald-faced attempt at turning hair into gold differ from the vast majority of clipper attacks not only in their relative infrequency but in that the hair appeared to be a secondary target for the assailants. In these imaginings of clipper attacks, the prize was not the hair itself but rather the financial gain that it represented. The men who robbed Vandrasek held her at gunpoint checking her purse for money or change before they decided to cut her hair, perhaps in the hopes of pawning it, much as one might stolen jewellery; Carroll and Depreding were victims of an alleged conspiracy orchestrated by hair stores and sellers; and Gallo was thought to have attempted to make a fortune for himself by carefully snipping braids from women’s heads. The suggestion here, among this small cadre of cases, was that clippers were selling the hair that they had cut to satisfy an American craving for ‘real’ false hair.

Hair could indeed fetch high prices in the late-nineteenth-century United States. As early as 1867 ‘there [were] four houses in New York that [made] the importing of human hair their business,’ and the value of hair imported annually was reported as

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[9] ‘Hair-Snipper Caught After Big Commotion: Cut Off Girl’s Locks on Tremont Row And Was Chased by Angry Throng,’ *Boston Daily Globe* (2 January 1907), p. 1.

between '$500,000 [and] $1,000,000.' The prices of individual pieces of hair in 1867 are perhaps even more astonishing. Depending on quality, source, and colour, the *Chicago Tribune* noted that 'the price of hair varies from $6 to $100 per pound, except in cases of grey or white hair, when as much as $150 and $200 is considered not too exorbitant a price.'[10] By 1882, described by the *Chicago Daily Tribune* as a time of 'scarcity of fancy human hair in the market,' the price of white hair was astronomical:

> Its value is constantly increasing, and if it is unusually long, that is, from four or five feet, the dealer can set almost his own price, while if it is of ordinary length it is worth from $75 to $100 *an ounce*.[11]

By 1896 it was said that 'Chicago women' alone '"consume[d]" 20000 pounds [or ten tonnes] of borrowed tresses each year.'[12]

To put these prices into perspective, one Brooklyn hairdresser indicated that in 1891 the price to 'cut and curl the bang' was 'twenty-five cents.... [And] For singeing, which takes half an hour, dressing, half an hour, and shampooing, from half an hour to

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[10] 'Chignons: The Trade in Human Hair,' *Chicago Tribune* (20 March 1867), p. 0_2.

To give some idea of how expensive hair was as a consumer good, I have used the MeasuringWorth 'Purchasing Power' calculator to convert the dollar amounts into their approximate 2022 equivalents. This calculator uses the consumer price index to determine the '"present worth"' of a commodity. Six American dollars (US$6) in 1867 would be worth approximately $118.71 in March 2022. One hundred American dollars (US$100) is estimated to be worth approximately $1,978.49 in March 2022. One hundred and fifty American dollars (US$150) is estimated to be worth $2,967.74. Finally, two hundred American dollars ($US200) is estimated to be worth approximately $3,956.99.

See: Samuel H. Williamson, "Purchasing Power Today of a US Dollar Transaction in the Past," *MeasuringWorth* (2022), <www.measuringworth.com/ppowerus/>, last accessed 26 March 2022.

For a brief explanation of the calculator's use: 'Choosing the Best Indicator to Measure Relative Worth,' *MeasuringWorth* (2022), <https://www.measuringworth.com/indicator.php>, last accessed 26 March 2022.

[11] 'Fancy Hair--The Demand for Pure White Hair and Tresses that Resemble Virgin Gold,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (24 August 1882), p. 5; my emphasis.

The second figure in this quote ('$100') is unclear in the original text. I have provided the lowest possible figure for ease but the price may in fact be higher than this.

[12] 'Tons of False Hair: Chicago Women "Consumer" 20,000 Pounds of Borrowed Tresses Each Year,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (23 February 1896), p. 29.

For more on hair prices and importation, see: 'Hirsute Adornments: Some Observations Concerning Transplanted Hair,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (4 November 1886), p. 10.

an hour, fifty cents each.' To dye or lighten your hair, this hairdresser charged 'one dollar an hour' though usually 'two or three applications are sufficient to make the darkest hair a most beautiful tint.'[13] There was, it is clear, money to be made in hair. The question, however, was whether this was money being made by clippers.

Despite the claim that all that was needed was ‘one braid a day,’ hair dealers and dressers were sceptical of any clipper’s ability to profit from haphazardly cut hair. The Brooklyn hairdresser noted that all the hair she used in her trade was imported: 'We never buy hair in this country because it is what we call "raw"--of uneven length and uncleaned.' European, imported hair was 'bought [from] peasant girls... boiled and sorted according to colour [and then] into various lengths of 26, 24, 22 and less inches.' This commodity chain of hair products made it highly unlikely that clippers were selling their wares: 'no dealer could take [hair] "raw"'.... Certainly he could not sell the locks.'[14]

A hair merchant was asked a similar question about whether and how one might sell hair that had been stolen from young women, or even from corpses, and his answer was emphatically ‘no.’ Even in print the author of the article indicated that the merchant smiled as he answered the question; a nod to its ridiculousness: '"Many people think so, but they are mistaken. If we did purchase the hair we would not give 50 cents for the prettiest braid."' The merchant had never been solicited by a 'tramp or other suspicious-looking individuals,' and had no use for hair even provided 'legitimately.' Confirming the hairdresser's understanding, he noted that 'Most of the hair used in this country comes from France.' Before making it to any individual seller or hair dresser, it

[13] 'Trifles Light as Hair: Some of the Folderols that Make Up this Wigged World,' *The Wichita Daily Eagle* (Saturday Morning, 12 September 1891), p. 6.

[14] 'Trifles Light as Hair,' *Wichita Daily Eagle*, p. 6.

needs to be treated and sorted. Small amounts of hair, clipped in haste from the head of a young girl or woman would simply not be a viable commercial product.[15]

The same article referring to the ten tonnes of hair consumed in Chicago devoted an entire section at the end of the report to the doings of Jack the Clipper, and the question of whether he could be clipping for economic gain. The author's sources concluded that such a potential was limited:

> Asked what they thought Chicago's Jack-the-hair-clipper did with his spoils the dealers said that in the first place, judging from newspaper accounts, the fellow fails to get fully a third of the hair that he might if he knew anything at all about merchanting it. Then, his alleged favoritism for red hair argues, they say, sadly against any commercial purpose, since the very grey and pure white shades of hair bring the highest prices, with the "dead shades of drab and the ash colors" coming next, and the brown and others following.[16]

A few years later, another article summarised this problem far more succinctly: 'No one hears of fortunes being made in hair.'[17]

Clippers were snipping too little, of the wrong shade, for a market in which individual hairs were becoming less popular. Not only do these financial gains seem insufficient to account for the attention these clippers received but, with some exceptions, the idea of clipping for any economic benefit did not seem to have gained much traction in the late nineteenth-century press. The problem with the clippers was

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[15] 'Jack the Clipper, Stories: Hair Dealers Put No Faith in Them, and Tell Why,' *Anaconda Standard* [Montana] (Monday Morning, 19 December 1898), p. 8.

[16] 'Tons of False Hair,' *Chicago Daily* Tribune, p. 29.

[17] 'Do So Many Wear Wigs,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (15 November 1903), p. 16.
This sentiment was shared by the *Boston Daily Globe*, see: Woman is Brutally Beaten by "Snipper": Mrs Brausard of East Boston Was at Door of Her Home,' *Boston Daily Globe* (8 February 1906), p. 1.

that they were clipping incorrectly if their ambitions were to profitably tap into the lucrative hair market.

Despite their scepticism that clippers were cutting hair for cash, the Brooklyn hairdresser was, at least publicly, at a loss to explain why a clipper might be doing such a thing: 'Unless a man cuts the girls' hair from a spirit of mischief, there could be no motive for his act.'[18] Fortunately, other outlets were less shy in publishing their anxieties about the sexual undertones of these attacks, especially in light of the flimsy evidence clippers were making any profits from the hair they seized. Even in cases like Mary Vandrasek's where the cutting could very well have been a last-ditch bid to exact more money from the victim, the ambiguity and wariness that financial motivations could explain clippings continued to present itself. In a follow-up article, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* referred to these assailants not as muggers but as 'cranks,' deeply affected by their manias, and 'mentally irresponsible.'[19] And there was no shortage of individuals willing to weigh in on the different and potential psychological and pathological motives that clippers had for cutting hair.

John Jorgenson

John Jorgenson, one of Chicago's most famous and well-documented Clippers, was arrested by Sergeant Elliott and Detective Evans in February 1899. Jorgenson was apprehended as he followed Erna Fransky and her mother to the 'elevated station to

[18] 'Trifles Light as Hair,' *Wichita Daily Eagle*, p. 6.

[19] 'Chicago "Hair Clippers": Epidemic of Braid Robbert Breaks Out Once More,' *New York Times* (24 September 1899), p. 28.

take a train… home' after a day of shopping in downtown Chicago. Elliott and Evans were notified by the managers of Chicago's downtown department stores of a suspicious individual. The pair made their way to State Street, when they spotted Jorgenson weaving in and out of a crowd 'watching for possible victims.' Elliott and Evans noticed another young girl, later identified as Ella Tuthill, standing 'directly in front of him... shorn of her braids,' suggesting that they had a clipper in their sights. Moreover, the two detectives came to realise that they already recognised Jorgenson from the day before when he had been 'pointed out' as a potential person of interest. Evans and Elliott followed Jorgenson 'north on State street,' then turned 'east on Madison,' to McClurg's burned book store.[20]

Jorgenson closed in on Erna Fransky as she stopped to examine the ruins of the old bookstore and publishing house. Elliott and Evans split up, approaching Jorgenson from either side as he reached for his scissors. When Jorgenson motioned for Fransky's hair the officers pounced. Jorgenson 'turned quickly and struck at Elliott with the scissors viciously. The blood spurted' from his hands 'as the steel struck his fingers, but Elliott grappled with [Jorgenson] and both fell to the sidewalk.' Locked together, Elliott and Jorgenson 'struggled fiercely.'[21]

Elliott and Evans were both wearing plain clothes, so when Evans intervened in the struggle it seemed to many spectators that Jorgenson was the victim. Passersby came to Jorgenson's aid, trying to pry Elliott and Jorgenson apart. Uniformed police

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[20] 'Jack the Clipper Taken: Caught While Cutting Tresses from Erna Fransky's Head,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (16 February 1899), p. 3.

[21] 'Jack the Clipper Taken,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 3.

officers arrived on the scene shortly after, having heard the altercation, but quickly came to focus on preventing Jorgenson's escape.[22]

Subdued by the handcuffs Jorgenson 'broke down and cried. He begged the police to kill him and said he was insane.' Taken to the station he made a full confession. Although he stoutly maintained that he was not the only clipper plaguing the city, he had attacked numerous women over the previous four years. He was 'possessed... so strongly at times' by 'a mania for despoiling girls of their tresses... that he was unable to resist the temptation.' Jorgenson said: '"I have to yield to my mania… At times I must cut hair. I dream of it at night, and the impulse is no more to be resisted than the appetite of an opium eater."' Although women were the main targets of this urge, 'he also said that when no girls were on hand to be disfigured the same impulse would strike him if he saw a man who wore long hair.' Jorgenson was so familiar with the danger he thought he posed to others that when he married the previous year, he 'chose a girl of scanty hair, so that he would not be tempted to turn his scissors against his wife,' who knew '"nothing of this habit..."'[23]

Clippers and Sexological Expertise

Jorgenson was depicted as being subject to uncontrollable sexual and psychological urges that compelled him to cut hair; his fixation was monomaniacal, perverted, and all-consuming. And Jorgenson was not alone. Clippers, sometimes alongside other Jacks, were variously described as 'strange freak[s]' with 'morbid passions,'

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[22] 'Jack the Clipper Taken,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 3.

[23] 'Jack the Clipper Taken,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 3.

melancholics, monomaniacs, maniacs, cranks, degenerates, and perverts.[24] One Chicago clipper who attacked at least nine young girls and women across 1895 and early 1896—Jeannette Carpenter, Pearl Thompson, Amy Clements, Mabel Chase, Rene Bacharach, Helen Webb, Susie Sherman, Julia Rinquin, and Fannie Reddington—was decried as being insane. Police noticed that the women who were reporting their hair stolen were largely those with long blonde or red-blonde coloured hair 'hanging down their backs,' leading them to believe that this particular clipper had a type. The "'very smoothness and ease with which he does the job and gets away and the queer characteristics of his operations, such as taking only a single braid and picking out girls with blonde hair, stamp it as indisputably the work of a crank,'" noted Inspector Shea. The urge for this clipper was sparked by seeing a braid, ripping him from sensibility and causing him to snap: "'He seems to go along the street calmly enough, and attends strictly to his own business in a way which disarms suspicion so long as there are any other officers or adult citizens in sight, but the moment he catches a little girl alone or with a companion he sneaks up on them and clips off a braid.'"[25]

While the police could observe these behaviours and comment on them, scientific experts were also called on to explain them. One 'expert in insanity,' who 'decline[d] to permit his name to be used on the ground that laymen might think he was a little "off" himself,' was provided with 'all of the evidence at hand' to form an opinion on

[24] See, for example: 'Squirted Ink on Pretty Gowns,' *Washington Post* (25 May 1890), p. 1; 'Another "Jack the Clipper,"' *National Police Gazette* (8 June 1901), p. 3; 'Rich Man Accused: Millionaire to Be Arrested as "Jack the Slugger,"' *Washington Post* (4 November 1902), p. 1; 'In Terror of "Jack the Clipper": His Mania is Cutting of Long Braids of Hair--Men Organize to Catch Him,' *New York Daily Tribune* (26 November 1902), p. 4; 'Pronounced a Pervert: Medical Authority Say "Slashers" Are Subjects for Treatment,' *Salt Lake Tribune* (20 November 1904), p. 1; '"Ripper" is Busy: Seven Women Cut in St. Louis,' *Los Angeles Times* (23 January 1906), p. I1; 'Man With Hair Mania: Police Theory on Snipper,' *Boston Daily Globe* (9 February 1906), p. 1.

[25] 'Who is Jack the Clipper,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (30 January 1896), p. 1.

the clipper's motivations. For him, the fixation was easily explained as a result of a monomania: 'the hairstealing [was] done by someone who has gone insane over the popular ditty, "Her Golden Hair Was Hanging Down Her Back."' A song from 1894 well known across the United States and the United Kingdom,[26] *Her Golden Hair Was Hanging Down Her Back* propelled a fascination that allegedly consumed the clipper:

> "To the student of brain disease... the reasoning to the conclusion I offer is plain and satisfactory. Every move of this offender proves that the topic of golden hair in hanging locks is uppermost in his mind, and powerfully affects his actions. He attacks none but girls who have golden hair, or something akin to it in shade, and then only when they wear it in braids. Whenever he meets with a girl having hair of a light hue and hanging down her back in braids he is seized with an uncontrollable desire to cut it off."[27]

The urge was literally written on the clipper's brain; visible to all those who were trained to see it.

Sexologists, not immune from being thought of as a 'little "off"' themselves, took up the mantle of collating, naming, and analysing different sexual proclivites, cementing the relationship between haircutting and sexual aberration and bringing into being a new explanatory framework: the fetish. One of the most influential sexologists, the Austrian-born psychiatrist crucial to the founding of sexology, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, published the incredibly popular *Psychopathia Sexualis* offering case studies documenting new forms of sexual perversion or deviance, including haircutting.

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[26] Music Division, The New York Public Library, "And her golden hair was hanging down her back," *New York Public Library Digital Collections*, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/6942951c-c240-445d-e040-e00a18064edb>, last accessed Accessed 30 March 2020.

The Library of Congress has audio of the song recorded in New York City in January 1896: Felix Mcglennon and Maud Foster, 'Her Golden Hair Was Hanging Down Her Back,' (New York: E. Berliner's Gramophone, 1896), <https://www.loc.gov/item/99389699/>, last accessed 30 March 2020.

[27] 'Who is Jack the Clipper,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 1.

It is hard to underestimate the significance of Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* for disseminating sexological knowledge and vocabularies. The tome ran through eleven editions in German between its initial publication in 1886 and 1901, and a whopping 'thirty-five British and American editions' in the years 'between 1892 and 1899.'[28] Although Krafft-Ebing would not mention American clippers by name, his work was fundamental in constructing frameworks through which to understand behaviours such as those exhibited by clippers, while also relying on such behaviours to justify the scientific endeavour of category creation.[29]

Psychopathia Sexualis operated primarily as a collection of observations and anecdotes, drawn from literature as well as from human subjects with differing degrees of agency, that endeavoured to paint a picture of the spectrum of human sexuality. Following the likes of Cesare Lombroso and Alfred Binet, Krafft-Ebing's Italian and French scientific contemporaries, his *Psychopathia Sexualis* did the work of compiling various sexual fetishes and paraphilias.[30] Although it was but one category of perverted desire, the (sexual) fetish became an increasingly important organiser for Krafft-Ebing which, by the release of the fourth edition of his work, had 'relabel[led] a whole set of

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[28] Harry Oosterhuis, 'Sexual Modernity in the Works of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll,' *Medical History*, 56, no. 2 (2012), pp. 135-6.

[29] Krafft-Ebing, does, however, mention American clippers in passing, referencing a spree of clippers who were reported in newspapers across 'several cities in the United States' in late 1890. See: Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: with Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct, A Medico-Forensic Study,* Franklin S, Klaf, trans., 1st Arcade edn (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1998), p. 162.

[30] Renate Hauser, 'Krafft-Ebing's Psychological Understanding of Sexual Behaviour,' in Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich, eds, *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science: The History of Attitudes to Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 221.

data that he had already discussed in earlier editions of the book,' to better reflect the intrinsic importance of the fetish in constructing sexual identities.[31]

Historian Harry Oosterhuis argues that Krafft-Ebing was the architect of our modern systems of sexuality, placing a new emphasis on the importance of understanding the fetish as central to explaining why it was that clippers cut hair.[32] Although Krafft-Ebing himself did not single-handedly bring the fetish to popularity, his work recorded the growing interest in categorising this sexual phenomenon at the same time that clippers burst onto the cultural landscape in the United States and as the proto-identities of heterosexuality and homosexuality gained traction. Fetishes were not new in the sense that a variety of forms of desire had and continue to exist as a part of human experience. What fetishes did do, however, was prescribe a particular aspect to this directionality of desire. By crafting the sexual fetish, and then recrafting his work on sexuality around this category, Krafft-Ebing simultaneously noted the existence of a history or thread of sexual desire directed in a plurality of directions while mapping (and disciplining) a shift in what was appropriate and inappropriate desire.

Krafft-Ebing's recorded fetishes covered the quite common (and still familiar) foot and shoe fetishists, handkerchief and garment fetishists, and even nose fetishists, but also focussed on individuals with proclivities similar to Jorgenson and other American clippers: namely men who stole women's hair out of intense (sexual) desire.[33] A Parisian

[31] De Block and Adriaens, 'Pathologizing Sexual Deviance: A History,' p. 281; Renate Hauser, 'Krafft-Ebing's Psychological Understanding of Sexual Behaviour,' pp. 211, 221.

[32] Oosterhuis, 'Sexual Modernity in the Works of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll,' pp. 133-5.

[33] On fetishes, see: Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1998), pp. 143-86.
Krafft-Ebing does mention American hair despoilers in *Psychopathia Sexualis* very briefly, but as Alison M. Moore notes, there's 'little evidence' that Krafft-Ebing engaged much with English language sources or materials which perhaps explains some of his silence on the subject in the American case. Krafft-Ebing, like so many other continental scientists and philosophers, would have been far less likely to read English on the whole than French, German, or Latin.

man, known only as 'P.' served as one example of what Krafft-Ebing meant when he discussed hair fetishists: individuals who were not merely drawn to or appreciated women because of their hair, but for whom hair eclipsed the woman as a sexual object by becoming a fixation in its own right.[34] P. was one of a collection of case studies that demonstrated hair fetishes with different degrees of pathology. Krafft-Ebing gave the more extreme cases, like P's, the label of 'Hair despoiler[s],' describing the kind of fetishistic desire that brought individuals to the point of committing 'unlawful acts' to obtain it.[35]

P. was a forty-year old man who worked as a locksmith in Paris. He was single and, according to Krafft-Ebing's case report, 'artistic.' On the 28th of August 1889, P. was arrested 'at the Trocadero,' an area in Paris not far from where the Eiffel Tower had only months earlier been finished in time for the 1889 World's Fair. P. had been 'caught in the act of forcibly cutting off a young girl's hair… arrested with the hair in his hand and a pair of scissors in his pocket.' This was not P.'s first arrest--he had also been apprehended under 'similar circumstances' in December 1886, though he was 'released for lack of evidence.' It was, however, perhaps the first time that his compulsion had been escalated in quite this way as a criminal matter. P. confessed that he possessed an 'irresistible passion' that had compelled him to attack at least ten other women, taking 'great delight' in keeping their hair in his home. When the police searched his home, they found 'sixty-five switches and tresses of hair… assorted in packets.'[36]

See: Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1998), p. 162; Alison M. Moore, *Sexual Myths of Modernity: Sadism, Masochism, and Historical Teleology* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), p. 32.

[34] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1998), p. 164.

[35] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1998), p. 158.

[36] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1998), p. 158.

P. had been filled with the urge to ‘touch female’ hair for at least three years prior to this second arrest (and presumably a short while before his first arrest in 1886). ‘When he was alone in his room at night, he felt ill, anxious, excited, and dizzy,’ and it was then that he was ’troubled’ by this impulse. When P. could ‘actually take a young girl’s hair in his hands, he felt intensely excited sexually, and had an erection and ejaculation without touching the girl in any other way.’ For P., while the hair itself was always the goal it needed to be attached to a woman, at least initially; ‘hair exposed in the show-cases of hairdressers’ would never do. ‘If he attained his end, he felt himself possessed by a supernatural power and unable to give up his booty,’ but if he failed to gain a braid ‘he hurried home, and there revelled in his collection of hair.’[37]

Although Krafft-Ebing’s cases were much more explicit in their descriptions of sexual behaviour than their counterparts in the popular press, P.’s story and the language around it is reminiscent of Jorgenson’s case. Both men were afflicted by uncontrollable desires that were particularly distracting at night, causing them to dream about hair or to feel such anxiety and guilt about their desires and actions that they were unable to sleep at all. Both men were obsessed with a woman’s hair to the point of social and financial disruption. And both men needed this hair to come from a woman herself; mere cuttings of hair were not enough to satisfy this need. This latter point, in particular, was important, for it designated both these kinds of hair clippers--those like P. and Jorgenson--‘sadi-fetishists’ for whom part of the thrill and arousal of the act came from inflicting violence, most often upon women.[38]

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[37] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1998), p. 159.

[38] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1998), pp. 74, 77.

Jorgenson was not the only individual who was explicitly labelled a 'hair despoiler.' Josephine Nolan, a sixteen-year old girl from Lynn, Massachusetts, just outside of Boston, was labelled the victim of a man referred to as a 'hair despoiler' in August 1903. Chicago's Ruby Waters, whose hair was violently pulled out by the roots by a clipper as she was walking home from school in January 1898, was 'despoiled' by her attacker. Fourteen-year old Rosa James was attacked in her home outside of Scranton, Pennsylvania, by a man who 'despoiled' her of her hair. Rosa was tied to a chair and drugged with chloroform while a man cut her hair and left the scene. When interviewed by a reporter after the event, Rosa and her mother were asked if there was any hair left on the floor after the incident. Their reply: '"Not a speck... No hair was found in the stove. There was no scissors around."'[39]

While the term 'despoiler' applied in all these cases it is hard to discern where Krafft-Ebing's sense of the word and where the popular sense of the word lies. Was Jorgenson aware of Krafft-Ebing's work and drew on this language, intentionally or otherwise, in making his confession? Were these even Jorgenson's words or were they provided to him by newspaper reporters, perhaps themselves invested in telling a particular version of this story that might have subtly suggested intention to those readers who were trying to make sense of this phenomenon themselves through new sciences and scientific discourses? Or was this merely a usage of the word indicating that someone had violently stolen something of value?

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[39] 'Despoiler of Her Fine Tresses: Miss Josephine Nolan of Lynn the Victim of an Unknown "Nipper,"' *Boston Daily Globe* (10 August 1903), p. 12; 'Man Arrested for Hair Clipping: He Was Found in Wilkes Barre, but Was Not the Right Man,' *Scranton Tribune* (25 February 1897), p. 7; 'Ruby a Fourth Victim: Three Lose Hair Before Little Miss Waters is Assailed,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (29 Jan 1898), p. 6.

This semantic slippage, the difficulty of pulling apart exactly where one cultural current ends and another begins is the kind of cross-pollination--invisible often as much to our historical contemporaries as to us--that is required to shape new ideas and systems of sexuality. Krafft-Ebing chose and then reappropriated this word, providing it with a new meaning that permeated the usage in the popular press as these ideas of sexual cultures found their way into the general lexicon. Clippers informed and were informed by the language that was produced. Regardless of whether the word itself was specifically referencing the pathological hair despoiler or the more colloquial act of despoiling, the co-dependence between clippers and sexological categories meant that those who found themselves unable to control these sexual desires were considered to have similar problems: a fetish disrupting normal sexual object attraction (men, in particular, were now aroused by hair absent and as a substitute for the reproductive female body).[40]

Spatialising the Fetish

Fetishes identified objects of sexual attraction. When Rosa James was asked whether there was any hair left on the floor of her apartment after her attack it was as much about reckoning with the motives of the individual clipper and the directionality of their sexual desire as it was verifying the evidence of her story. When clippers were thought to handle braids gently, or when they carefully bundled up braids to take with them, this

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[40] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1998), pp. 158, Case 100; 160, Case 101.

Although I work with the newer (above) translation of Krafft-Ebing's work, the term 'hair-despoiler' is present in contemporary American translations: Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis, with Especial Reference to the Contrary Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Legal Study*, Charles Gilbert Chaddock, trans. (Philadelphia; London: F. A. Davis Co., Publishers, 1892), pp. 163-4.

was evidence of a pathological sexual object choice (and likely one that was in need of correction). And when hairdressers could find no good reason for Jacks to clip hair once a financial incentive was taken out of the equation the fetish is what remained.

Much as the French became increasingly anxious about outbreaks of kleptomaniacal behaviour, not unheard of in the United States either, Americans manifested their own symptoms of a changing topography of sexual desire.[41] As cultural icons, clippers demonstrated not merely the reach of new sexual concepts, even if the vocabulary was one that many readers of popular newspapers were likely entirely unfamiliar with, but new directions in how desire itself was being directed and new lines (or standards) by which desire was being 'aligned' or 'straightened' to accord with reproductive sex and, eventually, what we can name as hetero-desire. By inhabiting, following, and repeating these new lines of desire, the fetish enacted the new sexual identities it sought to describe.[42]

Fundamental for Krafft-Ebing in explaining how heterosexuals and homosexuals were both born and made, identities of relatively recent but intense scientific interest, fetishes asserted new modes of sexual relationality. As Paolo Savoia has noted, however, the fetish in Krafft-Ebing's imagining was not without its problems as a category as the line between a physiological (and ostensibly 'normal') and a pathological (and 'abnormal' or obstructive) fetish was thin. For Krafft-Ebing and his followers, a certain degree of fetishisation was required to produce a 'natural,'

[41] Patricia O'Brien, 'The Kleptomania Diagnosis: Bourgeois Women and Theft in Late Nineteenth-Century France,' *Journal of Social History*, 17, no. 1 (Fall 1983), pp. 65-77; Thomas Lenz and Rachel MagShamráin, 'Inventing Diseases: Kleptomania, Agoraphobia, and Resistance to Modernity,' *Society*, 49 (2012), pp. 279-83; Peta Allen Shera, 'Selfish Passions and Artificial Desire: Rereading Clérambault's Study of "Silk Erotomania," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 18, no. 1 (January 2009), p. 175.

[42] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 70.

heterosexual and reproductive sexual union. However, an unhealthy and acquired fixation could produce an obstacle to such a union by misdirecting sexual desire.[43] For Krafft-Ebing a woman's hair, her eyes, or even her feet could be natural objects of desire as long as they were made sense of in relation to the woman herself: they were to 'represent a mnemonic symbol of the beloved person.'[44] The goal was to accentuate the woman's desirability in order to achieve 'normal' reproductive sexual intercourse. This was only possible through the narrowing or limiting of the breadth of desire experienced so as to manage the association, or potential reassociation, of this narrow scope with the most appropriate locations (or destinations) of desire.

The language of scope, narrowing, and location present in Krafft-Ebing's accounts indicate the importance of a managed orientation and directionality in his conceptualisation of the fetish. Krafft-Ebing reiterated that the stimulus itself was not what made the fetishist 'abnormal,' rather it was what did not affect him: the 'narrower limits' of 'sexual interest' would intensify those interests at the expense of the woman in question. Yet this narrow interest was, it seemed, totally acceptable when put to the service of reproductive sex:

> The concentration of the sexual interest on a certain portion of the body that has no direct relation to sex (as have the breasts and external genitalia)--a peculiarity to be emphasized--often leads body-fetichists [*sic*] to such a condition that they do not regard coitus as the real means of sexual gratification, but rather some form of manipulation of that portion of the body that is effectual as a fetish.

In so imagining appropriate and inappropriate objects of sexual desire, Krafft-Ebing offered a narrow vision of what sexual desire should look like in normal and allegedly

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[43] Paolo Savoia, 'Sexual science and self-narrative: epistemology and narrative technologies of the self between Krafft-Ebing and Freud,' *History of the Human Sciences*, 23, no. 5 (2010), pp. 20-22.

[44] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1998), p. 145.

‘abnormal’ individuals, wrote sexologists into these encounters as active mediators of sexual ‘normality,’ and proposed measures by which one might manage or, where necessary, reorient entirely such interest.[45]

The slipperiness of the fetish provided opportunities to make sense of ‘wayward’ desire and, if possible, correct course--constructing a line that centred upon reproductive sexuality and heterosexual couplings. Although in his 1998 introduction to Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Joseph LoPiccolo writes that Krafft-Ebing didn’t believe in the ability to make heterosexuals out of ‘congenital’ homosexuals, this did not mean there weren’t attempts to both squash this aberrant sexual desire and to redirect it.[46] Speaking of lesbian desire, which Krafft-Ebing was quite convinced was more common than most of his contemporaries were willing to admit, he noted that the ‘chaster’ social and educational context of the young woman rendered her less likely to fall prey to ‘mutual masturbation,’ more likely to meet and mingle with young men as she hit puberty, and thus ‘naturally led primarily in hetero-sexual channels.’ Krafft-Ebing continued, noting that ‘All these circumstances work in her favour, often serv[ing] to correct abnormal inclinations and taste, and force her into the ways of normal sexual intercourse.’[47]

In those cases where incorrect object attraction could not be socialised away, Krafft-Ebing offered up hypnosis or suggestion as a possible course of action (in addition to a slew of other treatments that ranged from self-discipline to hydrotherapy and/or institutionalisation). Although unlikely to cure an individual with congenital

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[45] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1998), p. 144.

[46] Joseph LoPiccolo, 'Introduction to the Arcade Edition', in Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1998), p. x.

[47] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1998), pp. 262-3.

antipathic sexual instincts it was the ‘only means of salvation’; the best hope that science could offer.[48] Suggestion therapy would involve multiple sessions with at least this one formula offered up as a possible course of action. Male patients received:

> the following suggestions:
> 1. I can not, must not, and will not masturbate again.
> 2. I abhor the love of my own sex, and shall never again think men handsome.
> 3. I shall and will become well again, fall in love with a virtuous woman, be happy, and make her happy.[49]

The goal of such ‘post hypnotic suggestion is to remove the impulse to masturbation and homosexual feelings, and to encourage heterosexual emotions with a sense of virility.’[50]

Theorising and advising on the realignment of sexual fetishes was not limited to European intellectuals; American physicians and neurologists worked with patients to ‘correct’ these mis-alignments in desire. Krafft-Ebing reproduced a case that William A. Hammond, a neurologist and Civil War veteran, had written of in his work on sexual impotence published in 1887.[51] A man that had come to Hammond as a 24-year-old presented with a self-described shoe fetish. This had apparently begun in his youth when a woman working for his family as a servant had taught him to masturbate, and eventually coerced him into having sexual relations with her. The case study alleged that 'upon one occasion she had practised friction on his penis with her foot without

[48] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1998), p. 300.

[49] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1998), p. 302.

[50] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1998), p. 299.

[51] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1998), Case 114, pp. 173-4.

taking off her shoe,' and it was from this moment forward that the young man found himself attracted exclusively to women's footwear.[52] The young man:

> never experienced the least sexual excitement, by thoughts of women, or by the sight of them.... Pictures of naked women, *of their genital organs*, or of men and women in the act of sexual intercourse, such, as in some schools, pass boy to boy, never gave him any other feeling than one of intense disgust.[53]

Again, Hammond gives away the proper (if expected) objects of sexual desire (a woman, her genitals) that existed in opposition to this man's actual sexual desire (shoes), alongside the restructuring of desire within American modernity that was defined by this narrow scope of vision that corresponded to the imaginary of the fetish.

Even though Hammond found it 'strange' that this man had 'no idea that he was doing anything specially degrading or wrong in acting as he did' (speaking of this man's constitution rather than his later sexual indecency toward women), the young man nonetheless continued to live his life indulging in his own particular sexual desires. At 'eighteen... he began a shop-keeping business,' selling, among other items, women's shoes. 'Fitting shoes' on his female customers, even just 'handling the shoes they had worn,' was one of the most enjoyable aspects of the job and he would 'often experience the sexual orgasm while thus engaged.' At one point, having not been in business for terribly long, however, the man had a 'severe epileptic paroxysm' while 'fitting a shoe on a young woman.' 'A few days afterward, while engaging in masturbation in his usual manner, he had, immediately after the orgasm, another seizure.' This episode was more severe than the last and he 'bit his tongue severely, and bruised his face in falling.'

[52] William A. Hammond, *Sexual Impotence in the Male and Female* (Detroit: G.S. Davis, 1887), pp. 44-5, 47.

[53] Hammond, *Sexual Impotence in the Male and Female*, p. 47; my emphasis.

Associating, not without foundation in contemporary medical thought, masturbation with his epilepsy, the man 'determined to make every effort to stop his disgusting practices.'[54]

At first, it seemed to the young man as though he had succeeded. Through sheer force of will, he found he could go 'several weeks,' even months, without masturbating, and he 'gave up fitting women with shoes' entirely. However, without masturbating, he found that he had ‘nocturnal emissions’ produced by dreams of women’s shoes. With these dreams came 'nocturnal epileptic convulsions' and he determined that 'his efforts had all come to naught.' The man, in a desperate bid to rid himself of these desires he believed to be ruining his body, decided he would take a wife.[55]

The man found that he was impotent when faced with his new bride: 'If he thought of his wife's shoes he had an erection,' but he was unable to sustain this long enough to engage in intercourse. According to Hammond’s case study, sexual arousal was possible when the man ‘thought of the usual objects... but the diversion of the thoughts in another direction at once led to its dissipation.' It was for this reason that he sought Hammond’s help in reorienting his sexual desires. The problem, as he understood it, was that his misdirected sexual desire was directly related to his epilepsy, likely brought on by the young man’s masturbation which stressed his already weak constitution. Only by successfully engaging in a reproductive, heterosexual relationship would his woes be lessened.[56]

Concerned with ensuring successful reproductive sex could take place, Hammond did provide the young man with bromides for his epilepsy but also

[54] Hammond, *Sexual Impotence in the Male and Female*, pp. 47-8.

[55] Hammond, *Sexual Impotence in the Male and Female*, pp. 48-9.

[56] Hammond, *Sexual Impotence in the Male and Female*, p. 50.

recommended practices that would actively redraw the lines of desire that the young man experienced. Hammond:

> suggested to him that he should hang one of his wife's shoes at the head of the bed and keep it in sight while he made the effort at intercourse and continue to do so til he had become habituated to his new relation. I also advised that he should keep his thoughts as much on his wife and try to imagine her conversion into a woman's shoe.[57]

Quite literally, Hammond tried to redirect the young man's sexual interest by substituting one object for another socially-acceptable object. Concluding his report, Hammond congratulated himself on his successes in a difficult case, for his work 'exhibit[ed] how much may be done by intense mental effort, even by a person not of very strong intellectual development in bringing matters back to a normal channel.'[58]

In these case studies, the fetish left the door open for the possibility of realigning sexual desire and, in so doing, participated in the construction of competing lines of sexual interest that, through repetition, could be entrenched. For Krafft-Ebing, that fetishes could not be clearly delineated was a problem for predicting 'normal' sexuality, however, without this ambiguity there was not the potential for realignment that made heterosexual desire (and heterosexual and homosexual identities more broadly) compelling structures, then and now. It is this blurring that created flexibility in the ways that they were understood and promoted because one could, theoretically, realign oneself back to a heterosexual position, but this fluidity also rendered homosexuality a perennial and perpetual threat. If you can follow two different lines to desire, if these are not mutually exclusive conditions, directions, or states of being, then you can in fact

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[57] Hammond, *Sexual Impotence in the Male and Female*, pp. 51-2.

[58] Hammond, *Sexual Impotence in the Male and Female*, pp. 51-2.

reorient desire away from or towards acceptable, normal, and heterosexual locations. The slippage between the good and bad fetish, in other words, was a problem for diagnostic purposes but provided a means of conceptually and clinically managing aberrance and aberrant individuals through reorientations of sexual desire.

The depictions of these fetishes were not merely sexual in their suspected objects of attraction but solidifed and defined in relation to 'normal' heterosexual and reproductive relations, even as these were only just coming to be named as such. Unusual in its openness about the role of heterosexual desire in cases of violence perpetuated against women, we stray slightly from Jacks the Clipper here, examining an instance in which a Jack the Hugger illuminated how heterosexuality as a new orientation of desire began to take on the normative qualities that shielded individuals from suspicion and aligned queerness with social and sexual violence.

In 1904, Chicago newsreaders found themselves following the case of a serial Jack the Hugger, who assaulted young women at night near and around Chicago's stockyards. 'For weeks hardly a night passed that some woman did not call at the [police] station and tell of a hugging,' always, according to the *Tribune*, describing the same man: '"A tall, good looking man, middle aged, with a military mustache, and wearing a light overcoat and a derby hat."' It was not until one of the victims, Mrs. Fred Snell, pointed the man out to her husband at 'Forty-fifth and Halsted streets' that the police were able to apprehend him. Having taken this man, Alex Moor, to the stockyards police station, however, the police insisted that he could not have been the hugger because he was married; police officers were confident that 'because of this fact... he

could not be the hugger they were seeking.' It would take 'eight women, married and single,' to identify him to convince the police to 'retain him in custody.'[59]

Moor’s legibility as a ‘crank’ or a ‘deviant’ was obscured by his heterosexual marriage that stood in for a healthy, heterosexual desire. But this case of a Jack the Hugger, unusually specific in revealing often unspoken assumptions about men who could demonstrate heterosexual lines of desire, identified how important new orientations of sexual desire were in instances of violence at an individual and interpersonal level, and how intertwined with these categories of sexual offenders these orientations were at a structural and cultural level. As the police drew attention to the importance of lines of (heterosexual) desire as a way of making sense of this Jack the Hugger, they illuminated the centrality of orientations of even physical touch, let alone a hair cutting, in the circulation of these news stories.

Jacks the Clipper, then, were ultimately vehicles through which competing constellations of sexuality were represented and conflicted. On the one hand, clippers represented an abnormal and outrageous assault; one designed to realign pathways of desire by pathologising aberrant locations of desire such as the ‘hair.’ In this, clippers structured the spatial and directional configuration of ‘normal’ sexual desire. However, in recognising the aberrant object choice, on the other hand, clippers revealed a world in which non-aligned, too broad, sexual desires still needed to be brought under control.

In understanding how fetishes were deployed in order to trace and correct lines of desire, we get a better sense of the implications of understanding clippings to be sexual in nature that extend far beyond (though do not diminish the importance of)

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[59] 'Call Him a "Hugger": Eight Women Accuse Alex Moor of Embracing Them on Street,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (25 April 1904), p. 1.

interpersonal violence. If clippers were both expressing and constituting these new sexological categories in popular culture across the United States, the significance of why they clipped helps us to better understand the radical reshaping of desire which took place at the end of the nineteenth century and provided the conditions under which the proto-identities of the homosexual and the heterosexual could flourish.

More than merely reproductive unions, heterosexuality represented a narrowing of the lines of desire that had otherwise governed sexuality and gender. Very specific body parts were understood to be appropriately sexually attractive and the degenerating, insane, and deeply unhappy fetishistic clippers were examples of what would happen if you strayed from this path. Whether Jorgenson howling with guilt and remorse or Hammond's young man with a shoe fetish which was thought to exacerbate his epilepsy, the moral and scientific relationship was clear. Understanding how and why clippers were thought to clip, in other words, is essential not only for understanding the behaviour but what the clipper was doing as a cultural symbol: defining the contours of an emerging script of sexualty at the turn of the century.

Conclusion

Clippers undoubtedly clipped for a number of reasons, many that will remain mysterious to us in perpetuity. But an analysis of clippings and their alleged motives reveal to us the reorientations in sexual desire taking place in the United States at the turn of the century that were expressions of a burgeoning (hetero)sexual infrastructure. Where arguments about the importance of the financial value of hair fell by the wayside,

concerns about the sexual nature of these clippings drew upon and contributed to medical and psychological concepts, newly forming in the decades beforehand, to paint a unique picture not only of an in-formation heterosexual body but a recontoured or reoriented heterosexual desire. Fetishes were not merely a vocabulary for identifying sexual interest, then, but vehicles through which to identify and discipline new forms of socio-sexual spatial arrangements that were, albeit slowly and imprecisely, constituting new forms of sexual identity. Fetishes attested to and, with hindsight, highlighted new subjects and directions of sexual desire not only associated with antipathic, pathological, homosexual, or (to use a more contemporary term) queer identities but with heterosexual or straight identities, themselves still a little queer for all their newness.

What Krafft-Ebing captured in his *in*ability to resolve the issue of the fetish and that clippers played out in the changing social and cultural landscape of the United States was not only the remapping of sexual desire that was demanded by new sexual identities but the mechanism of realignment that allowed this. As Krafft-Ebing and Savoia point out, the fetish blurred an easy dichotomy between heterosexual and homosexual: heterosexual desire required fetishised ways of knowing the world. The fetish reinforced emerging structures of sex by placing emphasis on heterosexual desire as not just an ideal but as an achievable position, a line to be followed. In so doing, the fetish indicated how heterosexuality was (and continues to be) *in formation* as a queer sexual orientation itself in need of alignment and aligning. Not only did fetishes pathologise non-reproductive loci of sexual desire, but they illuminated the lines of

desire that, like invisible cobwebs, tied and retied the social and sexual spatial order together.

Clippers illustrate the lines of desire that both produce and are produced by a developing infrastructure of heterosexuality that not only delimited appropriate sexual objects and desire but indicated and accommodated the various and sometimes competing rules that defined acceptable sexual attraction. For Sara Ahmed, these lines are not just directions that attract or repel people, but are practices that become habits of sexuality. The manias, fetishes, and perversions of clippers become a means through which contemporaries were able to name and influence these lines of desire, calling out objects of attraction and creating space for the wayward or aberrant forms of desire to be redeemed through alignment.

Historians have extensively noted and engaged with the creation of new sexual identities formed as a result of changes in the social, political, and scientific landscape of the late nineteenth century. By unpacking the processes through which desire itself was reoriented, however, we can begin to understand how new experiences of sexual identity were shaped, in their historical moment, and how new objects of sexual desire came into being. Not merely the products of new sexual identities, new lines of desire were products of a radical realigning of the spatial relations of sexualty. As we will see in the following chapters, this spatial realignment implicated a wide array of social and cultural and bureaucratic forces that together produced an infrastructure of (hetero)desire that helped define modern American sexuality.

CHAPTER THREE

WHITE CLIPPERS, BLACK VIOLENCE: ALIGNING HETEROSEXUAL AND WHITE DESIRE IN THE DISCOURSES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Introduction: The Fiction of the 'Black Jack'

Despite little hesitation in reporting on the alleged violent, criminal, or merely distasteful activities of African Americans in the white press and the growing influence of the perceived threat of Black male sexuality to white women that spurred violent mob retribution against Black communities, virtually no Black men or women were ever identified as clippers in popular white newspapers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On occasions where they did, they were quickly embraced as fictions by a sceptical white press. It is not my intention here to assess or diminish the veracity of the claims made by individual victims as they circulated, mostly second-hand, in popular, white media, but rather to ask how Blackness entered into the discourse of clippings and what this might tell us about the sexualised and racialised acts of Jack the Clipper.

In early spring 1909, Alberta K. Damery, a 4-year-old girl from Cambridge, Massachusetts, was sent to return a toy shovel by her mother a 'short distance' from their house in the middle of the day. When she arrived home, seemingly unperturbed by the errand, her mother noticed something different about her appearance: Damery was missing about four inches of her hair, leaving a 'very ragged' cut where the locks had

been hastily shorn. Asked what had happened, Damery said she had been attacked by a ‘colored man.’ ‘Standing on Putnam av,’ a man 'drew her cap from her head... [and] produced a pair of scissors from under his coat.' Damery 'ran from the sidewalk' back to the home to which she had returned the shovel but was cornered in the yard. Damery's hair was 'snipped... in the back' and the man turned and fled in the opposite direction from which he had come.[1]

Hearing her story, Damery’s mother took her to the police station to make a report. Perhaps because her uncle was a Somerville police inspector or because her mother was immovable on the issue, two officers were sent out to investigate immediately.[2]

The following morning the *Boston Daily Globe* printed a follow up to this snipper attack titled “Child Was Romancing” that proclaimed the story a lie. Perhaps under pressure from her family and the police, concerned by the escalation of the investigation, or simply unable, as a four year old, to navigate the lie in a convincing manner, Damery confessed that she had concocted the story: ‘A barber had cut her hair.’ Police officer Hezlett interviewed the barber in question to confirm this new account and he confirmed that Damery had come to see him that morning. Damery confidently announced that she had been sent by her mother and her father for a haircut and, having cut her hair unsupervised before, the barber acquiesced ‘without question.’[3]

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[1] 'Little Girl Loses Locks: Hair Clipped Off by "Jack the Snipper,"' *Boston Daily Globe* (24 March 1909), p. 1.

[2] 'Little Girl Loses Locks,"' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1.

[3] 'Child Was Romancing: Little Cambridge Girl Admits That Barber Cut Her Hair and Not a "Jack the Snipper,"' *Boston Daily Globe* (25 March 1909), p. 2.

While there are a small handful of notable exceptions, Black clippers were not only rare but, perhaps more perplexingly, often revealed to be obvious fabrications used to obscure white assailants (who were occasionally the victims themselves), as in the case of young Alberta Damery.[4] Of over three hundred stories that I have uncovered across the United States, only ten articles described or alluded to a Black man or woman as the perpetrator of these acts. Black clippers either simply faded into the background of the news reports or were depicted as easy scapegoats who, ultimately, could not be reconciled with the broader tropes of a Jack the Clipper.

Regardless of the ‘truth’ of the situation--which is to say, regardless of whether Damery or other young women were indeed attacked by a clipper, and regardless of

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[4] There were instances in which Black men featured in clipper narratives but these were notable because they represented the few instances in which clippers were explicitly figured as Black in the popular white press. In October 1903 Gertrude Quinlan, a thirteen-year-old girl, was attacked by a Black clipper, a ‘Black Jack’ as he was called in the press, while 'returning to her home' in the early evening. Around 5:30pm, Quinlan 'saw the negro following her' and 'quickened her pace' to outrun him. The man, however, 'pursued more rapidly,' catching her 'as she reached the sidewalk in front of her home.' The man 'grasped' her and 'with a pair of shears... seered one braid of the child's hair.' Having gained what he apparently desired, the man took his prize and fled.

Quinlan's cries brought her neighbours out of their homes and onto the streets. 'Before the negro had ran one block' residents had poured onto Carroll avenue to defend the girl, firing 'dozen[s]' of shots at the Black clipper. Two Detectives, Kilcrane and Riley, heard the shooting and 'joined in the chase' for the clipper, ‘swerv[ing]’ and zigzagging to ‘escape’ the hail of bullets being fired past them. Residents ‘emptied their weapons' and quickly 'reloaded and resumed firing,' sending more bullets 'dangerously close' to the detectives who continued in pursuit of the man. The chaos of the scene slowed the detectives, providing the clipper with the time he needed to reach the 'Ashland avenue viaduct' where he leapt 'over the low railing[and] disappeared among the empty freight cars.' With the clipper gone, attention returned to Quinlan who was 'carried to her home,' one assumes by her neighbours, in a 'serious condition from nervous shock.'

In September 1899--a few years prior to Quinlan’s attack and the same year that John Jorgenson was arrested for clipping in Chicago--Minnie Holmes was attacked by a Black man while on her way to school. The twelve-year old from Chicago’s South Side was ‘thrown to the ground’ while the man ‘snapped off a braid fourteen inches in length’ at ‘sixty-sixth street and Harvard avenue.’ An ‘alarm was given’ and a ‘good description’ of the man provided to the police, though there exists no evidence to indicate that he was ever caught.

See: 'Black Jack Hair Clipper Finds a Girl Victim,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (27 October 1903), p. 1; 'Clipper Finds New Victim. Negro Steals Tresses of Minnie Holmes, a Schoolgirl, at Harvard Avenue and Sixty-sixth Street,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (21 September 1899), p. 1.

whether he was or was not Black--clippers figured into the American imagination as overwhelmingly, almost absolutely, white. It was not inevitable or ‘natural’ that clippers would come to be associated with whiteness. Instead, clipper attacks reveal an in-formation white subject and the broader social and intellectual influences that aligned whiteness, heterosexuality, and the sexual desire exhibited by clippers by leveraging the associations between queerness, Blackness, and sexual violence.

Nineteenth-century racial and sexual sciences--inseparable, as Siobhan Somerville has argued[5]--worked in tandem to produce subjects identified as white through their sexual dimorphism and gender proclivities, and as appropriate, reproductive, and heterosexual through their white bodies and physiology. Clippers relied upon the same circular logics to become associated intrinsically with whiteness in the mind of white, American newsreaders, leveraging not just the language of sexology as we saw in chapter two but the conceptual frameworks of race science. Clippers were white because their sexual aberrance was only possible if they were recognised as white first and foremost. In other words, clippers were remarkable because they diverged from social, sexual, and physiological norms of whiteness as white icons; the behaviours of clippers, were they Black, would have been far more easily explained by scientists who argued forcefully that Black people existed in a less perfect physiological and psychological state. A sexual mania for Black people, for example, was much more akin to the norm than a notable exception to the rule.

[5] Siobhan B. Somerville, *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 3-5.

Recognising that clippers were characterised as white reveals the deep interconnections between the reformulation of sexual and racial ideology at the turn of the century that further cemented the increasingly inextricable connection between whiteness and normative heterosexuality. Clipper attacks were racialised and sexualised in ways that differed from the how Black men and women were coded, their bodies allegedly revealing the homosexual physiology of the human species and their sensibilities revealing the hypersexuality resulting from a lack of civilisational uplift. White heterosexuality was defined in part through a self-referential logic that presumed non-Blackness but that addressed faults and failures in white superiority. Whiteness and heterosexuality, then, were not formed only in opposition to Blackness--in a simply binary of black or white, or heterosexual or homosexual--but rather in a constantly shifting landscape in which clippers acted as reorienting focal points that allowed for layers of movement and accretion of cultural capital between competing and overlapping categories of analysis.

Frederick Starr, an anthropologist widely-known in and beyond Chicago at the turn of the century, demonstrated and assisted in the manufacture of the connective scientific tissue that linked the sexual desires embodied by clippers and reformulated categories of whiteness. An expert and loud proponent of theories of racial degeneration in the United States and abroad, Starr's presence as a consultant for the prosecution in John W. Jorgenson's trial raises provocative questions about the importance of racial theory in determining how clippers were received, understood, and ultimately whether they were to be punished. Drawing from other successful cultural

critics--such as Max Nordau, whose immensely popular work on degeneration fused physical degeneration with cultural decay--Starr's involvement in Jorgenson's prosecution reveals the importance of 'degeneration' as a cause of a clipper's compulsion. Degenerating whites, Starr argued, were 'reverting' to 'lesser' racial types as a result of being raised on the American continent. With this devolution came the kinds of aberrant behaviours that were, in reality, only consequential in white peoples.

Compared with the Black bodies described by scientists and intellectuals, as much by internationally renowned scientific authorities such as Havelock Ellis as local physicians in the United States at various conferences and in periodicals and proceedings, clippers were notable because they fixed the spectrum of 'normality' by indicating how whiteness could go awry. In providing explanations for clippings that relied upon a sense of degenerating whiteness, something that could be reclaimed and retrained, Starr and others argued that clippers were intrinsically white and provided a rationalisation for clipping, for aberrant behaviour, that would never be availed to Black men.

The effects of such a racial discourse and categorisation extended well into popular culture. By the end of the nineteenth century Black men were increasingly characterised as aggressive, sexual threats, largely to white American women, and their emergence alongside Jack the Clipper secured this cultural space of Black violence while preserving the myth of white superiority and supremacy. As a cultural figure, historians have pointed with almost uncharacteristic precision to the emergence of the myth of the Black rapist in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and Joel

Williamson argues for its rise to prominence in 1889, immediately coterminous with the rise of Jack the Clipper.[6] Whether 1889 exactly or within a few years, construction of the discourse of Jack the Clipper at the same moment as the Black Rapist in the landscape of American media consumption further tethers clippers to the production of a particular form of American whiteness, white supremacy, and (hetero)sexual desire.

White Americans would come to see the spectre of the Black Rapist looming large over almost any chance encounter between a Black man and a white woman. As Ida B. Wells noted, Black men were always understood through the rhetoric of rape even if or when their transgressions were plainly economic or political.[7] But the speed with which Americans became committed to the myth of Black sexual violence meant that work was still required in the late 1880s and 1890s to ensure that white violence was minimised and deflected, understood as a less serious aberration from a norm rather than an innate inability to adhere to any notion of civilisation, to prevent challenges to the cultural space occupied by imaginings of Black violence. Putting clippers into conversation with the Black Rapist--with scientific and cultural ideas that

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[6] Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 111; Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: a Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 46.

See also, Andrew B. Leiter, *In the Shadow of the Black Beast: African American Masculinity in the Harlem and Southern Renaissances (*Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), p. 3.

[7] Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*, Alfreda M. Duster ed., second edn, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), pp. 55-56; Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, pp. 53-4; Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 205.

Dowd Hall also confirms that ‘less than a quarter of lynch victims were even accused or rape or attempted rape’ as ‘the myth of the black rapist was never founded on objective reality.’ See: Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, '"The Mind That Burns in Each Body": Women, Rape, and Racial Violence,' in Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds, *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), p. 334.

underpinned white supremacy--allows us to understand clippers as a companion fiction to the Black Rapist that worked to obscure the realities of white sexual violence and bolster the myth and rhetoric of unbridled Black sexuality. As we saw in chapter one, the language that surrounded clippers did not evoke the same sexual undertones as in cases of interracial sex or rape: young girls and women were not ravished and they were not robbed of their innocence. White clippers, then, functioned to allow Americans to perpetuate the cultural imaginary of the Black Rapist, where rape was a problem innate to Black people, and separate this from what they saw as more nusiance forms of harassment understood to be the domain of white men.

Alongside the Black Rapist arose the urban masher, a native-born, white American who lurked in American cities, ogling, catcalling, and approaching unfamiliar women on the streets. As white women began advocating for social and sexual freedoms in the last decades of the nineteenth century and campaigned for reforms to rape laws it is no coincidence that mashers also came to national prominence. Close kin of Jacks the Clipper, mashers resembled the kind of everyday street harassment that was understood mostly as white because the perceived social threat was not one of sexual violation or racial dilution easily explicable and condemnable as a result of crossing an increasingly entrenched colour line. Through their closer allegiance to mashers, nuisances rather than sexual or, worse, interracial sexual threats, clippers were also coded as culturally white further obscuring serious white sexual violence.

The absence of Blackness from clipper narratives assisted in constituting and reinforcing clippings as specific forms of sexual violence that did not transgress the

colour line: white clippers were *not* rapists and did *not* contradict the racialisation of Black men as sexual fiends. Recognising that clippers, and other social ‘nuisances’ like the American-born masher, emerged at the same moment as the Black Rapist provides us opportunities to examine the socio-sexual nexus in which whiteness, what we now call heterosexuality, and specific forms of bodily violence, were negotiated and intractably fused together to obscure the dangers white men posed to American society by excaerbating the danger Black men posed.

A Starr Witness: Jack the Clipper, Degeneration, and the Intertwining of Race and Sex

When John Jorgenson was arrested in February 1899 he 'declared that he was a victim of a mania for despoiling girls of their tresses, which possessed him so strongly at times he was unable to resist the temptation.' He dreamt of haircutting, desired it, yielded to it; it was an urge he could 'resist[... no more] than the appetite of an opium eater.' At the police station he ‘begged the police to kill him.’[8]

Washington, D.C.’s, *Evening Star* recounted similarly that Jorgenson's 'strange mania took hold of him four months [earlier], after an illness of several months.'[9] And in his confession, standing in 'Captain Colleran's office at the Central Police Station,’ Jorgenson explicitly invoked his condition as distinctly medicalised: 'I have often thought

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[8] 'Jack the Clipper Taken,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (16 February 1899), p. 3.

[9] 'Jack the Hair Clipper: Caught in Chicago in the Act of Shearing a Braid,' [Washington, D.C.] *Evening Star* (16 February 1899), p. 1.

of seeing a physician about what seemed to me a mania that was unconquerable, but of course my affliction was not known to me till after I had committed my first crime, and then I was afraid that if I had confided in a doctor I would be turned over to the officers.'[10]

At the commencement of Jorgenson's trial in May, three months after his apprehension, the prosecution was brief, likely assuming that the overwhelming evidence against the defendant--including a confession--would be enough to secure a conviction. The defence, however, attempted to prove that Jorgenson was insane and thus not responsible for his actions, calling an expert witness to testify for them: Dr. H. M. Moyer. When Jorgenson did finally get to see a physician, a Dr. E. C. Fortner, he too agreed that Jorgenson was likely suffering from some mental disturbance. Apparently not one to mince words, Fortner declared that 'the young man undoubtedly was insane,' citing the examination of an x-ray of Jorgenson's brain that revealed an 'abnormal condition near the top of the head.' After his death, Jorgenson's brain was to be examined again to ensure complete confidence in the diagnosis.[11]

Recognising the role that the insanity defence would play and perhaps the very real need for expertise in a case which was enmeshed with the emerging and overlapping worlds of criminology, race science, and sexology, the Assistant State's Attorney enlisted an expert: Frederick Starr, Professor of Anthropology and Chair of the Anthropology Department at the recently opened University of Chicago. The *Chicago*

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[10] 'Caught A Hair-Clipper. Success After Years of Hunting -- Story of a Strange Mania Told by the Prisoner,' *Buffalo Express* (20 February 1899).

[11] 'Hair Clipper's Life Ended: John W. Jorgenson, Who Shot Himself Last Tuesday, Dies at His Wife's Father's Home,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (19 May 1899), p. 7.

Daily Tribune wrote that Starr was essential in ‘coach[ing]’ the prosecution in his cross-examination of the witness.[12]

Although no longer a household name (unlike his occasional rival, Franz Boas), Frederick Starr was one of America’s great, late-nineteenth-century anthropologists. Poached by the University of Chicago in 1892, Starr was a popular lecturer and recognisable member of the university community. An article published in the *Inter-Ocean* as a new university term was getting underway in August of 1900 described Starr as 'rather heavy' with a 'face [as] round as a full moon.' Wandering around the Hyde Park campus, followed by adoring and intrigued students who had read of his adventures, he 'w[ore] a dusty, faded coat, hunched up in the back,... with' his arms poking out of the sleeves which were inexplicably 'six inches [too] short. His trousers' were 'non-descript' and 'his stockings' sagged 'around his ankles.' Completing his professorial look was 'a little soft, felt hat [draped] over one ear.'[13] But it was not only his sense of style that garnered attention; Starr quickly became recognisable to students and faculty in large part because of his taste for controversy.[14]

A popular teacher and speaker, Starr’s ideas and opinions travelled widely, disseminated in print and in person on the lecture circuit and in his classrooms. As a speaker, Starr had an incredible stage presence and delivered lectures on archaeology, geology, geography, and anthropology regularly and to crowded auditoriums that, more

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[12] 'Jack the Clipper on Trial: John W. Jorgenson Faces Three Girls Who Say He Cut Off Their Braids,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (6 May 1899), p. 6.

[13] *Frederick Starr Papers*, University of Chicago, Box 50, Folder 3, Scrapbook 6.

[14] Donald McVicker, *Frederick Starr: Popularizer of Anthropology, Public Intellectual, and Genuine Eccentric* (Lanham, Md.: AltaMira Press, 2012), p. 20.

often than not, provided the funding he needed to continue his travels.[15] Starr's classrooms also proved to be sites of transmission reaching far beyond the small audience of University of Chicago students, regularly augmented with the prying eyes of reporters and journalistic plants who were eager to report upon his sensational and strongly held opinions.[16]

One of Starr's more controversial positions by the end of the nineteenth century was that racial characteristics, written on and expressed through the body, were tied to regional and continental climates. As a result of this, Starr firmly believed that white people were degenerating: that white Americans were literally turning into so-called savages and that the North American continent was responsible for such a decline. For Starr, humans were 'not created all at once,' but rather developed at different rates in different locations only 'gradually bec[oming] men...' The very 'destiny as to shape, size, and color' of these regional inhabitants were 'marked out in advance.'[17] While the environment of Africa, the Americas, Europe, or Asia determined the path through which different branches of humanity would evolve, they also prevented racial and social mobility. For Starr, your location continued to act upon your body: 'He who lives in Africa,' he noted, 'must know that in time his descendents will be black, though he be as driven snow.' 'The white man who goes to Africa,' Starr reiterated, 'must in time become

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[15] McVicker, *Frederick Starr*, pp. 46-7.

[16] McVicker, *Frederick Starr*, pp. 39.

[17] *Frederick Starr Papers*, University of Chicago, Box 50, Folder 3, Scrapbook 6.

black, with the projecting jaw, the coarse hair, and backward heel of the native African races.'"[18]

In a bid to prove his hypothesis Starr went to Pennsylvania. The Southeastern part of Pennsylvania, traditionally home to the Pennsylvania Dutch, became the site of one of Starr's experiments in racial transformation. There he allegedly studied the skulls of over five thousand children of 'Pennsylvania Dutch parentage.' With measurements that indicated 'a lengthening of the face and broadening of the cheek bones' Starr determined that these children were gradually moving away from the general physical profile of the white race and towards that of Indigenous peoples. It would only be a matter of a 'few generations,' he argued, before real physical and cultural transmogrification would take place leaving America unrecognisable.[19]

It is worth quoting in full a short passage collected in one of the many scrapbooks documenting his life and work:

> "All who come to America," said Professor Starr, "must converge toward the Indian type. Some may resist the influence longer than others, but the result will be sure to follow in time. As the features change the temperament will change also. Mind is correlated with body, and it is to be expected that those who come here must become as those who came centuries ago and became Indians.[20]

Outsiders, Starr continued on to say, were especially aware of this racial transformation taking place: 'The people of France recognize the Indian characteristics in the faces of Americans who visit Paris, and they readily distinguish between Americans and

[18] *Frederick Starr Papers*, University of Chicago, Box 50, Folder 3, Scrapbook 6.

[19] *Frederick Starr Papers*, University of Chicago, Box 50, Folder 3, Scrapbook 6.

[20] *Frederick Starr Papers*, University of Chicago, Box 50, Folder 3, Scrapbook 6.

English.'[21] The transition to a new racial identity was not merely one of skin colour, but of custom and desire itself.

As Starr's most recent biographer argues, we should presume that many of these statements were exaggerated for the sake of class discussion. The media circus that surrounded his University of Chicago classes suggest a real incentive for Starr to continue to escalate his claims and for newspapers and their reporters to note the most outrageous and lurid aspects of these lectures, likely with limited context, to their readers.[22] But for Starr, the racial-continental nexus absolutely determined, and in no short amount of time, the racial profile and the racial traits of its inhabitants and it locked the racial hierarchy in place: to be white was to be at the top of the racial hierarchy, and to find yourself with other customs in other places would necessarily lead to a decline in your racial status, even if this took a generation or two.

This was the man who was approached by and agreed to coach the prosecution. Starr was deeply racist, but his area of expertise, his life-long commitment to the science and question of degeneration, linked these racialised concepts to the sexual and violent world of Jack the Clipper. Starr's connection to these clipper cases provides a bridge between the kinds of sexual insanity that Jorgenson claimed and the very real concerns of 'race suicide' and racial degeneration that occupied a central place in late-nineteenth century American thought. To examine clippers without attention to race

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[21] *Frederick Starr Papers*, University of Chicago, Box 50, Folder 3, Scrapbook 6.

[22] McVicker, *Frederick Starr*, pp. 39, 43.

is to miss the connections that late-Victorian Americans were not merely making but that were crucial to their articulation and defence of these acts of haircutting.[23]

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[23] Records neither confirm nor deny Starr's participation in Jorgenson's trial. Trial transcripts are rare at the best of times and none exist for the Jorgenson case. Historians often rely on loose transcripts published in the popular press, but there are no other substantial mentions in the major popular and white newspapers of the time of Starr's participation. For Starr to be mentioned specifically and in such a matter of fact way, however, inclines me to believe he was, if not key to the prosecution's case then, certainly someone who was imagined to represent an important line of attack. While there is little direct evidence to indicate that Starr was ever involved, there is also little evidence to indicate any reason for a newspaper to lie about this.

Unfortunately, while very revealing of his character, Starr's personal papers speak little of 1899 or his participation in Jorgenson's trial either. None of Starr's journals exist for the early part of the year in which Jorgenson would have been on trial, despite many existing in the surrounding years, and his notes yield little in the way of relevant material. Despite this it seems an unusual detail to add in on a whim. Starr was an expert in the right city and famous for his lectures on exactly the kind of conditions from which Jorgenson was understood to have been suffering. Starr would not only have been an important advisor but a knowledgeable one.

There is one small clue, hidden away among Starr's personal papers, that indicates, if absolutely nothing else, his awareness of and interest in the Jack phenomenon in Chicago at the turn of the century. A small article, but a few lines in length, was pasted into one of Starr's scrapbooks with the headline "Hammond to Plead Insanity."

Harry H. Hammond shot John T. Shayne in March 1899, perhaps a month before Starr served as coach for the prosecution's case against John W. Jorgenson. Hammond was a tailor in Chicago and Shayne a well-connected furrier who would eventually come to be known as one of the early adopters of mail order catalogues in the United States. Hammond shot Shayne, the prosecution argued, to ensure that Shayne could not steal his wife with whom he had been taking trips to the races, midnight carriage rides, and visits to 'Hot Springs and South Haven.'

It was this suggestion that Shayne had begun wooing and courting Martha Hammond that had landed him with the derogatory label of a 'Jack': '"He was a Jack the Kisser in public but a Jack the Hugger behind the door!"' At stake was not merely whether Hammond was responsible for the shooting but, as reports were at pains to express, the sacredness of the home. Not once but twice did the prosecution proclaim that the trial was about the 'sanctity' of the home. It was under this guise that Shayne was referred to as a 'kisser' and a 'hugger.' John T. Shayne became John 'Tablecloth' Shayne; sneaking in under the tablecloth. Shayne was a kisser 'behind closed doors,' clearly marking private and personal boundaries away from the public.

Of course, the lawyers, journalists, and readers knew that the home that was at stake here was a white home and the concern over the intrusion was one of respectability and appropriateness. Jacks were representative of the degradation of whiteness that modernity had caused threatening the sanctity of white reproduction within a heterosexual and marital unit. White people were succumbing to decadence, a destruction of the family, of family values, and, ultimately, of the ability to raise white children themselves capable of balancing modernity against its decaying effect.

Jacks the Hugger and Jacks the Kisser were, to be sure, very different from clippers in the ways they operated. Clippers were anxiety-inducing because they represented aberrant sexual norms, whereas kissers and huggers were Jacks that represented a threat to homes and to the respectability of women. Kissers and huggers approached women without cause or reason, violating important if changing social norms and assaulting them in ways recognisable by the standards of new heterosexual forms of desire. And yet, Starr's attention to such Jacks, in however small a capacity, recognises the importance of this trope in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, it indicates that Starr was aware of such cultural fictions and suggests that his broader interests were perhaps piqued, and it reinforces the relationships that Jacks had with whiteness and white anxieties. Jacks did, in fact,

Knowing Starr's intellectual commitments allows us to better understand what was being brought to bear upon clipper cases like Jorgenson's, even if for purely pragmatic purposes, when his expertise was sought. Starr's focus on the physical body, on degeneration and criminality, and his insistence on understanding entrenched racial differences provides us with a window into the knowledge leveraged to consciously and publicly fuse concerns over heterosexuality and whiteness. Starr's connection to the Jorgenson case, in other words, helps us to recognise the centrality of whiteness in making a legible claim to sexual insanity and thus the implicit relationship between whiteness and heterosexuality at one moment in which it was still under construction.

As figures regularly decried as the victims of a mania or perversion of one kind or another, unable to control their actions, unable to stop themselves from continuing to commit these heinous acts against young women, Jacks the Clipper fit into the mould of racial 'degenerates.' John Jorgenson was no exception to this, and his arrest dramatises the ways in which insanity constituted a foundational defence of certain

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bridge concerns regarding the longevity, reproduction, and hardiness of the race by physically representing an internal threat that would be hard to contain.

Perhaps one final and telling indicator that Starr participated in Jorgenson's case and took an active interest in these Jacks sweeping the United States was merely in the collection of the article itself. A small article, it sits in the top right-hand corner of one of Starr's scrapbooks; it does not mention Starr or even allude to his work or research. Whether opining about waist-shirts or propounding the limits of colonial expansion, Starr is *the* central figure in his scrapbooks. He undoubtedly adored the attention and the praise that was lavished upon him and, seemingly, relished the controversies that surrounded his opinions. And yet, this article sits aside from the rest, without mention of Starr or his work at all. How, then, did Starr see himself in the importance of the Hammond case if not having taken an active interest in what these Jacks meant in cities across the United States?

See: *Frederick Starr Papers*, University of Chicago, Box 50, Folder 3, Scrapbook 6; 'Train Guns on Shayne: Hammond's Lawyers Analyze the Furrier and His Conduct,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (10 November 1899), p. 12; Kerry Segbrave, *Beware the Masher: Sexual Harassment in American Public Places, 1880-1930* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2014), pp. 3, 8-9; Wendy L. Rouse, *Her Own Hero: The Origins of the Women's Self-Defense Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), pp. 78-86**;** McVicker, *Frederick Starr*, p. 172.

clippers, and how it was intimately connected to the construction of 'normal' constellations of race and sexuality (white heterosexuality). Clippers like Jorgenson were surely afforded additional considerations because they were white but, more than this, it was the degradation of their whiteness itself that produced these sexual insanities and manias. Whiteness was not just the reason for special treatment--though this is not something to be overlooked--it was the foundation for the very defence of insanity itself.

Although Starr's concept of 'degeneration' was rather muddied, roaming freely across modernity and climate and environment as primary causes of white devolution, the broader framing of degeneration was central to the socio-racial hierarchy proposed and endorsed by white Americans and Europeans. In making a claim on degeneration white people declared themselves the pinnacle of all social and cultural orders but they also were required to explain any aberrance from such a position. White people who were not robust, intellectually and spiritually capable, and sexually responsible demanded a response. Clippers were one such category of social deviant who illuminated the fallacy of white superiority and white supremacy but who were held up as exceptions that proved the rule, creating greater and more forceful defenses of white people as superior heterosexuals and heterosexual people as superior whites.

Degeneration had enormous cultural traction in the United States that Starr both fuelled and exploited in asserting clippers to be white in no small part thanks to the cultural and literary critic Max Nordau. Nordau, a Hungarian by birth but long-term

resident of Paris, was one of the many voices who strongly believed in the cultural roots of degeneration: overcivilisation, the influence of the urban, and the decadence of modernity. Nordau has flown somewhat under the radar of U.S. intellectual and cultural history but his influence on and intermingling with race science in the United States should not be understated and almost certainly exceeds that of Starr's.[24] Although Nordau himself perhaps did not intend to speak directly to or fuel the anxieties around decaying whiteness in the United States, he did just this.

Nordau's *Degeneration* was a diatribe against the effeminate, decadent, and decaying arts of the *fin-de-siecle*.[25] He was primarily concerned with Europe and European art, culture, and the newly emerging social and socially-inclined sciences (like psychology), but there were stray mentions to American authors and cultural producers as well.[26] Fundamentally, Nordau followed the likes of Cesare Lombroso in merging the physiological with cultural, social, and political defects.[27] The body, for Nordau, did not just represent the problems that were made manifest in society but its slow dissolution was causing it. Modern culture, modern art, he argued, was *literally*, not metaphorically, sick.[28]

Nordau's 1895 publication was an incredible success in the United States. *Degeneration* had multiple print runs ('at least seven within the first year'), sold over half

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[24] Johannes Hendrikus Burgers, 'Max Nordau, Madison Grant, and Racialized Theories of Ideology,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 72, no. 1 (January 2011), p. 120.

[25] Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

[26] Linda L. Maik, 'Nordau's Degeneration: The American Controversy,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50, no. 4 (October - December 1989), pp. 616-7.

[27] Burgers, 'Max Nordau, Madison Grant, and Racialized Theories of Ideology,' pp. 125-7.

[28] Burgers, 'Max Nordau, Madison Grant, and Racialized Theories of Ideology,' p. 124.

a million copies (estimates run to approximately 625,000), and was a bestseller (ranking at least 'eighth on Alice Payne Hackett's bestseller list in 1895').[29] John Higham noted the 'feverish discussion provoked by Max Nordau's book' that 'aroused [more] comment in the American press' than any other 'European book… published during the entire decade.'[30] Linda Maik also argues that Nordau's *Degeneration* was perhaps '*the most* controversial international best-seller of the 1890s.'[31] In her analysis of Nordau's reception in the United States, Maik argues that reviews of his book were more negative than positive, but the broader reception of his work and the intellectual trajectories and cross-pollination that historians are increasingly uncovering suggest his enduring influence, even if his brash style was not to the taste of American reviewers.[32]

Johannes Burgers connects the American white supremacist Madison Grant and Max Nordau to indicate the continuities between *Degeneration*, race-neutral through it may have been intended, and the intellectual trajectory of whiteness in the United States. Burgers notes the ease with which Nordau's work was incorporated into the eugenic movement embodied by Grant's 1916 publication, *The Passing of the Great Race*, indicating that he was certainly understood through the lens of white supremacy in the United States.[33] Indeed, it is not a stretch to see how a system in which personal,

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[29] Burgers, 'Max Nordau, Madison Grant, and Racialized Theories of Ideology,' p. 129.

[30] John Higham, *Writing American History: Essays on Modern Scholarship* (Bloomington; London: Indiana University Press, 1970), p. 92.

[31] Maik, 'Nordau's Degeneration,' p. 607; my emphasis.

[32] Maik, 'Nordau's Degeneration,' pp. 607-8, 610-11. See also, Burgers, 'Max Nordau, Madison Grant, and Racialized Theories of Ideology,' p. 130.

[33] Burgers, 'Max Nordau, Madison Grant, and Racialized Theories of Ideology,' p. 140. Interestingly, Gail Bederman also connects Nordau and Grant in passing in *Manliness and Civilization*. Burgers doesn't reference her in his article, but the connections between these two individuals are clearly being made in different fields. See, Bederman, *Manliness and Civilizatio*n, p. 88.

cultural, and political flaws were associated with an individual's biology would be enticing to white Americans who either suspected as much already or sought out a scientific justification for the continued oppression of people of colour and the exploitation of the poorer and working classes.

Clippers were shot through with references to degeneration. Where their alleged ‘defects’ could be attributed to the ‘backsliding’ of the white race, the object of their attention was also deeply implicated in anxieties about the health and virility of white people. Although only one battleground, hair nonetheless illustrates how white Americans felt besieged by these threats of modernity to their race and further entrenches the important connections between race, virility, and reproduction of which Jack the Clipper was emblematic. In 1903, the *Chicago Tribune* ran an article articulating the concern that wig-wearing among Americans might be indicative of a larger problem of race extinction. 'One of the dreary prophecies of this scientific age,’ according to the article, ‘is to the effect that the coming race is to be toothless and hairless, and because of this awful prospect many lovers of longevity become reconciled to an existence terminating in this age.'[34]

Although ultimately determining, conveniently for American women, that this was a more pressing concern for white Britons across the pond than for Americans, the *Tribune* nonetheless argued that if 'one may believe John Strange Winter, who is reported to have made the statement that 99 out of [e]very 100 women wear wigs' the

[34] 'Do So Many Wear Wigs?' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (15 November 1903), p. 16.

threat of race extinction loomed large. Clippers were considered to be a part of this metric, making a robust case for the anxiety around the demand for hair (evidence of degeneration that the article feared) and suggesting that American women were so well endowed with hair that there could be individuals stealing hair for sale.[35]

Articles extolling concerns about baldness among men and women were not subtle in illuminating the people, and the race, most at risk of succumbing to modernising and degenerating forces: they, just like Jacks the Clipper, were always white. In 1894, for example, the *Chicago Tribune* published an article on hair and hair loss. Interviewing a barber, the 'hair professor,' the article discussed the causes of baldness. While on the one hand the barber acknowledged medical causes of hair loss, incurable alopecia primarily, he also discussed the 'nutritional' causes that predominantly affected white men which read suspiciously as civilisational causes. 'It comes from overheating the head; from wearing hot caps. Policemen, firemen, engineers, and bakers form a majority of the baldheads caused from this lack of nutrition.'[36]

This form of baldness the barber was confident he could treat, but it was nonetheless heavily racialised. Nutritional hair loss most affected white men, was tied to specific professional identities, and was explicitly contrasted with Indigenous Americans for whom hair loss was said to be far less of an endemic concern. The barber had 'never heard of a bald-headed Indian.' According to him, 'Indians wear no headwear

[35] 'Do So Many Wear Wigs?' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 16.

[36] 'Why Are You Bald? Some Remarks on Skull Coverings by the Educated Barber,' *Chicago Daily* (25 November 1894), p. 46.

except as they become civilized. In my opinion nature intended us to be bareheaded.' Launching into an historical analysis of 'light [head] wraps' and Christ's total lack of headwear, the barber indicated an important and general cultural belief about hair loss: its connection explicitly to stages of racial and cultural development. White men were especially prone to hair loss not merely because of their occupations, but because civilisation demanded these separate accoutrements unknown to those races who were otherwise robust and hardy.[37]

These discussions at the local and popular level, in which barbers debated the merits and significance of hair loss for white people, mirror the discourse taking place within Starr's own lecture tours and were drawn directly from Nordau's exceptionally popular tome. The idea that the very reproduction of the race was tied to both physical and cultural degeneration, degradation, and modernisation pervaded the discourse, linking haircutting to integral components of racial and sexual identity.

Together, then, Nordau's influential work on degeneration and Frederick Starr's research on the degenerating white race in the United States offer us a window into the various and competing scientific threads that make a compelling case for the realignment of heterosexuality and whiteness taking place in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Clippers were products of the intersection of these discourses, characterised as almost exclusively white and broadly representative of the impact that modernity could have on white people in large part because white people were the only ones who could viably experience any serious degeneration in the eyes of Western

[37] 'Why Are You Bald?' *Chicago Daily*, p. 46.

science and culture. Whites regressed into so-called savagery in their manners and behaviours as much as, potentially, in the colour of their skin or their capability of successfully living under an emerging regime of modernity, and clippers became one means of expressing and advertising the dangers of white decay.

To degenerate was not merely a statement about biology or about skin colour; it was deeply social and involved cultural customs and desire. As we will see, however, the degeneration of whiteness was not the only metric through which clippers were understood to be white or heterosexual. If degeneration was only concerning to and about white people, the sexual realities of what was considered the normal state of savagery for Black people were not ignored either. Both scientifically and socially, Black sexuality was central in creating a space which further exacerbated, through demonstration, the threat of white degeneration while minimising the visibility of white sexual violence.

The Myth of the Black Rapist: Black Sexuality and the Occlusion of White Violence

Whiteness and degeneration were also conceived of within the context of Black sexuality and sexual desire. White people were understood to have attained a higher degree of evolution not merely because they were allegedly smarter and more industrious but because they had achieved near-perfect sexual dimorphism, evident in their bodies and their gender proclivities. White men and women had their separate

spheres of authority, their distinct moral, spiritual, and intellectual responsibilities, and clear delineation of their sex characteristics. Black people, however, were understood to be less evolved by these same metrics: less divergent in their sex, gender roles, and social authority. Black women and men were often depicted as hypersexual, and Black men, in particular, as perversely and disproportionately lustful of white women.

As Siobhan Somerville argues, the 'racial question' was integral to the formation of new sexual categories. Race was at the forefront of the question of sexuality, how it was expressed, and how it could be contained. It was not mere coincidence, Somerville writes, that Havelock Ellis, 'perhaps the most widely influential and authoritative source in American discourses on sexuality,' conjoined the racial question with the sex question in the opening lines of his *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*.[38] The emergence of a firmer bifurcation between homosexuality and heterosexuality, as sexual identities removed from sexual practice, relied heavily on the logics of racial stratification that were well established within the academy.[39] This knowledge, ostensibly produced by a small handful of white men carried significant power to 'organize and pathologize those marked as sexually deviant or racially "other."' While Somerville notes that perhaps 'most of the population may not have had direct knowledge of the texts produced by sexologists and the earlier "experts" of scientific racism (comparative anatomists), their theories and conclusions increasingly assumed enormous cultural power.'[40]

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[38] Somerville, *Queering the Color Line*, p. 18.

[39] Somerville, *Queering the Color Line*, pp. 3-4.

[40] Somerville, *Queering the Color Line*, pp. 9-10, 15.

Scientists like Frederick, Starr who believed that the body could indicate ones character and ones level of evolutionary development, held onto the 'deeply held cultural fiction in the United States' 'That the physical body offers transparent evidence of its history, identity, and behavior,' essential in enabling connections between racial and sexual identity.[41] This conceptual overlap made it possible, then, for the bodies of Black people to simultaneously form the foundation for aberrant and non-heterosexual bodies and to be excluded entirely from these spectrums of 'normality.' By relegating Black bodies to those aberrant and lustful forms of sexuality that were distinctly non-white, scientists like Starr laid the foundation for a 'normal' state of heterosexual desire correlated with whiteness that was constructed in opposition to while also refusing space for a queer Blackness to exist as anything other than a violence against whiteness, as an abstract, and white women, in the concrete.

Science that organised ideas around race relied on implied understandings and experiences of whiteness as well as the overt studies and examinations of Blackness through Black bodies and behaviour. However, these different formulations had complicated arrangements and interactions within and among themselves. Whiteness and heterosexuality defined each other through their insular relationships even as they were defined against understandings of Blackness and Black sexuality. And Blackness was understood both to contribute to this binary discourse while also existing outside of it or beyond its scope.

[41] Somerville, *Queering the Color Line*, pp. 9-10.

Even as clippers overwhelmingly were reported as attacking and violating the bodily autonomy of white women, the narratives that were constructed around them reinforced the whiteness and heterosexuality of the attackers, the individual nature of these acts, and the different threat that Black and white men, in particular, posed to American society. The 'natural' state of Black people rendered them unable to be claimed within or under the banner of heterosexuality, meaning the logic of whiteness was as much self-referential as it was constructed in opposition to the space of untrammelled Black sexuality.

Black women's bodies became one prominent stage for discussions of aberrant sexual desire and homosexuality as they were, according to Havelock Ellis, easier to read. By this Ellis meant that the bodies of 'inverted' women were physically more pronounced in their difference from 'normal' women than inverted men's bodies were different from non-inverts. "'As regards the sexual organs it seems possible," Ellis wrote, "so far as my observations go, to speak more definitely of inverted women than of inverted men."'[42] Where a difference in penis size among men did not equate directly to the heterosexual impulse, the size of a woman's clitoris was a much more reliable marker of a perverted sexual instinct. Unifying 'the anatomy of both African American women and lesbians was the myth of the unusually large clitoris' which relied upon 'not only the methodologies of the comparative anatomy of races but also its iconography.'[43]

Where women's bodies were easy to read for signs of what we would come to know as homosexuality, men's bodies held indicators of a sort of pan-sexuality; an

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[42] Somerville, *Queering the Color Line*, p. 28.

[43] Somerville, *Queering the Color Line*, p. 27.

intense and disorienting hypersexuality that disrupted the ease with which bodies could discern normal from abnormal. Although an examination of Black male bodies revealed a sexuality which offered the potential to resist a simple demarcation of homo/heterosexuality, the innate hypersexuality they reflected bled into cultural understandings and interpretations of their threat to white women and thus the (heterosexual) reproduction of the white race. In 1903, William Lee Howard, a physician residing in Baltimore, wrote against the potential for the educational uplift of Black Americans as he weighed in on the 'Negro Question.' It was not, for Howard, merely that Black men were unable to be educated or cultured, but that the very bases for contemporary understandings of uplift were undermined by simple physiology and psychology. If one looked to Science, with a capital S, Howard argued, then it was easy to see that white Americans and Black Americans simply did not have a future of equal co-existence.[44]

Howard relied upon a study of the genitals of African American men which confirmed for him the oversized nature of Black penises. 'The size of the penis... among many hundred negroes was found to be six inches, quiescent,' wrote Howard. Noting not only that this was exceptionally large but that this, 'accord[ed] with] the general law' that the 'organs of the male are in proper proportion, as regards size, to the dimensions of the female organs.' For Howard, Black men’s bodies spoke volumes about their carnal sexuality.[45]

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[44] William Lee Howard, 'The Negro as a Distinct Ethnic Factor in Civilization,' *Medicine: A Monthly Record of the World's Progress in Medicine and Surgery*, 9 (1903), pp. 423-6.

[45] Howard, 'The Negro as a Distinct Ethnic Factor in Civilization,' p. 425.

Black men’s brains also told this story of irrepressible sexuality. The 'sexual instinct--as emotion, idea, and impulse' was understood as 'a function of the cerebral cortex,' and this area of the brain would light up in response to physical stimuli. 'Now as the organs in the African are enormously developed, as his whole life is devoted to matters appertaining to the worship of Priapus, it is to be expected that the sexual centers in the cortex are correspondingly enlarged.' If education could ‘reduce the large size of the Negro's penis as well as bring about the sensitiveness of the terminal fibers which exist in the caucasian,' wrote Howard incredulously, then, and only then, 'will it be able to prevent the African's birthright to sexual madness and excess....' Like their external bodies, Black brains betrayed what was regularly portrayed as a biological fact: after puberty, Black men were simply increasingly and *uncontrollably* sexual.[46] Rather than a constrained or appropriately-oriented sexuality, Black men experienced and were defined by exactly the kind of sexuality that sexologists were offering explanations and excuses for when white men were afflicted.

Ultimately, this spectre of Black male sexuality loomed large over white womanhood, and individuals like Howard were not shy about their concerns for the safety of white women in their communities. 'In the increase of rape of white women,' wrote Howard, 'we see the explosion of a long train of antecedent preparation. The attacks on defenseless white women are evidences of racial instincts that are about as amenable to ethical culture as is the inherent odor of the race.' In a graphic depiction of Howard’s equivalence of Black people to animals that explicitly advocated for

[46] Howard, 'The Negro as a Distinct Ethnic Factor in Civilization,' pp. 424-5.

re-enslavement, Howard went further: 'Individuals should understand that the sexual instinct of the African approaches the animal. It appears to intensify at certain periods; it is then we have the raping of white girls. Freedom from control of a superior race, thirty years of attempted education, has resulted in the increase of sexual crimes and a decided reversion to savage lust.'[47]

In the same year, W. T. English reiterated to the South Carolina State Medical Society the importance of Black male physiology in understanding not only the sexual impulses of the African American man but the direction in which this desire would inevitably be directed. Citing a 'sex diathesis,' a sex condition or problem, that education would be unable to combat, English argued that Black men were ultimately beholden to their sexual instincts that stretched, most worryingly, across racial lines. '"A perversion from which most races are exempt prompts the negro's inclinations towards the white woman, whereas other races incline toward the females of their own."[48] Using the medical language of perversion to naturalize and legitimate the dominant cultural myth of the Black rapist, this account characterized interracial desire as a type of congenital and abnormal sexual object choice. In the writer's terms, the desire of African American men for white women (though not the desire of white men for African American women) could be understood and pathologized by drawing on emergent models of sexual orientation.'[49]

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[47] Howard, 'The Negro as a Distinct Ethnic Factor in Civilization,' p. 425.

[48] W. T. English, 'Selections and Abstracts. The Negro Problem from the Physician's Point of View,' *Atlanta Journal - Record of Medicine*, 5, no. 7 (1 October 1903), pp. 466, 471, 468.

[49] Somerville, *Queering the Color Line*, pp. 36-7.

Howard and English were both fixated upon the fiction of the Black Rapist which had come to dominate the American cultural imagination in the late 1880s and 1890s.[50] As they argued, the Black Rapist was defective--an underdeveloped brain, an oversized penis, an inability to reason or to grasp basic morality--and thus offered justification for the continued oppression of Black people. The Black man, then, became not only synonymous with an uncontrolled libido but, unlike the Black woman whose reproductive capabilities were controlled and whose bodies seemed to testify to their aberrance more clearly, became a figure of interracial anxiety embodied most explicitly in the Black Rapist. Black men, in other words, moved between medical and cultural discourses of sexual aberrance.

Writing about the Black Rapist, Frederick Douglass noted the suddenness of the emergence this new trope arguing that the social reality of Black experience did not and could not gel with the new cultural reality of the Black Rapist: to suggest a sudden and absolute shift in the character of African American men 'implies an improbable change, if not an impossible change in the mental and moral character and composition of the Negro. It implies a radical change wholly inconsistent with the well-known facts of human nature.'[51] As Gail Bederman paraphrased Douglass, Black men did not ‘become congenital rapists overnight.’[52]

Following African American intellectuals and activists like Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells, scholars have noted that this move to an identity category (Black

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[50] Williamson, *The Crucible of Race*, p. 111; Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, p. 46.

[51] Frederick Douglass, *Why is the Negro Lynched?* (Bridgewater: John Whitby and Sons, Limited, 1895), p. 10.

[52] Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, p. 46.

Rapist) rather than behavioural category (Black rapist) is not to suggest that Black sexuality and Black violence were of little concern across the nineteenth century, but rather that the *singular* focus of the Black Rapist as a danger to white womanhood was a relatively late development.[53] Douglass's statement has prompted numerous scholars to examine what the Black Rapist actually represented and what work it performed in late nineteenth century America. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Nell Painter, and Angela Davis have all argued that the Black Rapist represented attempts to subjugate Black men while valorising white women, justify forms racial violence and control, and preserve the social order not only of the South but of the United States in its entirety.[54]

Certainly, the Black Rapist worked towards these and a number of other goals: the Black Rapist did allow men to reclaim honour, it did provide opportunities for the further subjugation of Black people in the wake of concrete gains made during Reconstruction that would leave the racial hierarchy intact until the middling decades of the twentieth century.[55] But, to take Douglass's question and rephrase it slightly: if Black men did not become congenital rapists overnight nor did white men become incapable of rape. Where did white sexual violence 'go' if the Black Rapist became the container

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[53] Leiter, *In the Shadow of the Black Beast*, p. 35; Hodes, *White Women, Black Men*, p. 2.

[54] Nell Irvin Painter, '"Social Equality," Miscegenation, Labor, and Power,' in Numan V. Bartley, ed, *The Evolution of Southern Culture* (Athens; London: University of Georgia Press, 1988), esp. pp. 49, 62; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, 'The Mind that Burns in Each Body,' p. 328; Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, p. 47; Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, & Class* (New York: Random House, 1981), pp. 172-201.

[55] Leiter, *In the Shadow of the Black Beast*, p. 4.

for popularly imagined sexual violations of white women? How was it controlled and channelled such that white violence could be recognised and contained?[56]

If the Black Rapist became a container for understanding sexual violence--its direction or orientation--as well as justifying extra-judicial violence that resulted in the gruesome murders of mostly African American men, then white violence was similarly contained in and through the cultural figure of the Jack. The Black Rapist offered one cultural narrative in which sexual violence against white women could be understood, especially within the context of the South. However, Northerners did not repudiate the myth of the Black Rapist even as there were far fewer Black men and women in Northern towns and cities. Clippers, along with other Jacks, thus became companion narratives for the Black Rapist that bolstered the success of the Black Rapist myth by shielding it from counter-constructions of sexual violence committed by white men, Southern or Northern. As Estelle Freedman argues, 'As one form of control, southern whites deepened the association of rape as an act committed by a black (not a white) man against a white (not a black) woman.'[57]

Jack the Clipper, then, worked to diminish the available cultural categories for articulating white sexual violence, especially in the North. By cutting off additional avenues for circulating narratives of serious white sexual violence, whether rape or

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[56] Part of the problem with sexual violence, especially though perhaps not limited to the 1890s, is that few seemed actually interested in the crimes themselves. See: Painter, '"Social Equality," Miscegenation, Labor, and Power,' in Bartley, *The Evolution of Southern Culture*, p. 51.

According to Hall, another concern with regards to visibility and the making of a rape narrative is that 'rape is overwhelmingly intraracial, and the victims are more often black than white.' See, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, 'The Mind that Burns in Each Body,' p. 334.

[57] Estelle B. Freedman, *Redefining Rape: Sexual Violence in the Era of Suffrage and Segregation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 74.

other forms of sexual assault, Jack the Clipper perpetuated the monolithic Black Rapist myth and allowed for Northerners to engage in their own equally nefarious forms of 'Radical Racism,' as Joel Williamson has termed it in the South.[58]

Few Americans, and even fewer reform-minded women, would have argued at the turn of the century that white violence and white sexual violence were absent from their society or their homes. Yet white men were never coded as rapists as were Black men; shielded by their whiteness, leveraging their political and economic power to protect their status quo, and protected by white women allies who themselves bought into myths of Black hypersexuality and worried about the loss of social and cultural capital that racial equality presented. Although the discourse and meaning of rape and the presumptions about rape victims and their rapists changed from the colonial period through to the end of the Victorian era, white men were consistently considered outside or beyond categorisation as 'rapists.' By this I do not mean that white men did not commit rape or were immune from prosecution as rapists, but rather that white men as an identifiable racial collective, even poor-white men, were never stigmatised by the label as were Black men. There were certainly rapists who were white, but there were never White Rapists.[59]

Race and class were both important determinants of how likely it was that a white man was understood to be a 'rapist' and the severity of any punishments levelled against him for the crime. Although the colour line was less entrenched than it would be

[58] Williamson, *Crucible of Race*, p. 111.

[59] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 16.

in the aftermath of the Civil War, colonial Americans nonetheless weighed both factors in their determinations of cases of sexual violence. In all of the American colonies ‘prosecutors dropped charges much more frequently if the defendant was white,’ argues Estelle Freedman. ‘No white men were convicted of rape in seventeenth-century Virginia,’ and ‘none of the fourteen white men charged with rape’ in North Carolina ‘were found guilty, whereas all twelve of the accused black men were executed.’[60] Wealthy, white men, in particular, were free, even entitled, to ‘sexual access to women of any class,’ and was ‘rarely considered a criminal.’[61]

Nineteenth-century, white American men found themselves with even greater legal and cultural protections from the label of ‘rapist.’ ‘Nineteenth-century courts protected white men accused of rape…’ resulting in lesser convictions and ‘relatively short prison sentences’ when convicted at all.[62] But this would only apply in situations in which rape or a similar offence was understood to have taken place at all. Before the abolition of slavery, white Southern men could, and did, rape enslaved Black women with impunity.[63] Although there were avenues for disciplining the man for the improper treatment of an enslaved person, they were nonetheless property meaning that white men, even if violent abusers, were not ‘rapists.’ To make matters worse, white men (and women) ‘did not necessarily define their sexual relationships with slaves as rape’: Black women were imagined to be ‘sexually lascivious’ and thus ‘always consent[ing],’ offering

[60] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 14.

[61] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 5.

[62] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 32.

[63] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 27.

a means through which white men could exercise their sexual control that saved white women from their violence.[64]

In the American South in the late nineteenth century, 'the racialization of the rapist that accompanied the institutionalisation of slave labor escalated after emancipation.' Poor whites--'white tramps and strangers'--'dominated much of the discourse on sexual assault' until the end of the nineteenth century, but even then 'nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commentators on rape rarely… look[ed] far beyond African American men as racialized sexual threats.'[65] By the time that immigration from eastern and southern Europe peaked in the early twentieth century, the image of the black rapist had become so solidified that, with a few exceptions, it monopolized the cultural landscape.'[66]

Some white women challenged the sexual aggression, ownership, and control that white men possessed over their bodies, organising across the nineteenth century on the back of their perceived moral and religious superiority. Feminists, suffragettes, and club women aimed to, and quite often did, institute protections for white women and children against interpersonal violence and seduction by raising age of consent laws, increasing penalties for sexual crimes, and starting legal funds for women. However, these efforts rarely aimed to rewrite narratives of white male sexuality and provided white men with access to lesser and less racialised designations of sexual violence that were outside the category of 'rapist.' White men were seducers, ruiners, and

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[64] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 28.

[65] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 5.

[66] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 10.

scoundrels, they could be violent, aggressive, and forceful, but abandonment or seduction 'differentiated between the civil offense of seduction, when a woman had consented to have sex, and rape, defined as a criminal act committed by force and against a woman's will.'[67] White women 'confronted the sexual privileges that allowed white men to rape with impunity,' but were unable to overcome the white supremacy that characterised their own and a broader American politics.[68]

Even progressive reformers such as Frances Willard--the president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, long-time campaigner to end violence against women, and tepid opposer of the practice of lynching--endorsed the logic of the Black Rapist myth by encouraging listeners to understand the problem of violence as endemic to the Black 'race' while violence among whites--both organised in the lynchings themselves and against women--was imagined, and diminished, as individual aberration.[69] In Willard's argumentative back and forth with Ida B. Wells, one of the most successful Black reformers of the late nineteenth century, and in her discussion of the violence of white men against white women the discourse around white violence even by progressives dimished and minimised white sexual violence by fixating on individual action rather than systemic acculturation. On the one hand, Willard expressed her sympathies with the idea of the Black Rapist, leaning into the 'natural' proclivities of Black men later outlined by English and Howard, while on the other, she recognised the continuing spectre of white violence but relegated this threat to white woman as more

[67] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 38.

[68] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 72.

[69] See: Rouse, Her Own Hero, p. 151. Rouse argues that the 'real threats of violence were often closer to home. This fact further shattered the illusion of the natural protector.'

abstract and of a different order. While Black men were mostly good, the argument went, their propensity was for rape should they be incited, whereas white men, who were also mostly good, had the bulwark of civilisation (of whiteness) to hold them back.

In an 1890 'interview about the Southern race problem, Willard had expressed solidarity with the supposed sexual vulnerability of the "delightful" white women who had so warmly received her in her travels south….' Willard argued that white women were endangered and embattled as a result of easy access to alcohol which turned men, white and Black, into vicious and violent rapists. While Wells could concede the role of alcohol in the upheaval and violence that women, both white and Black, experienced at the hands of their male relatives and associates, fundamentally Willard and Wells split over the importance of race in the creation and perpetuation of the Black rapist myth. Wells blamed white women for luring Black men into compromising situations and then 'betraying' them, while Willard believed firmly in, and had centred her reform efforts around the claim, that white women were intrinsically moral and 'pure.' For Wells, whiteness was the problem on both fronts: white women were alluring sirens doubly dangerous for being immune from any examination of their motives or intentions as saviours of the white race, even if in practice this could sometimes be more contentious, [70] and whiteness more abstractly as an obstacle in Willard's analysis of the issue, willing as she was to concede the importance of alcohol across the colour line without recognising the specific situation or vulnerabilities of the Black community. As Gail Bederman argues, Willard could not move beyond her deep belief that Black men were

[70] Diane Sommerville, *Rape & Race in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

rapists and threats to white women, even if, perhaps, only while under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicating substances.[71] The colour-blind line that Willard obstinately pursued was that lynching was a punishment for rape and a consequence of drinking that Black men brought upon themselves.

In another 1890 publication, 'A White Life for Two,' Willard again argued for the exceptionalism of white men through her depiction of white violence against white women and Indigenous communities. Willard noted atrocities in Alaska, Wisconsin, Michigan, and, especially notable for our investigation of his American namesake, London, the site of the vicious murders of Jack the Ripper.[72] These acts of violence, directed primarily, though not exclusively, against white women by white men and causing uproar entirely for this reason were condemned widely by Willard and others, however, they ultimately failed to challenge any white solidarity to which white men and white women might cling. For Willard, these examples were outliers; not only was this not the case for Black men, who by nature had different proclivities and interests, but the Black Rapist was a generalisable type juxtaposed with specific instances and actions. Willard did not compare apples and apples, but general cultural tropes (the Black Rapist) against individual cases of white violence (Jack the Ripper, a lumber prostitution ring). The ways in which white mens' transgressions were imagined here were merely, and ironically, as examples of how white men could and should be brought into line with white women. That white men committed these heinous deeds was a call

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[71] Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, pp. 65-6.

[72] Frances E. Willard, *A White Life for Two* (Chicago: Women's Temperance Pub. Association, 1890), esp. p. 10.

for them to be improved; harsher penalties for men would provide them with the final impetus to raise themselves up to meet women and exist in perfect Christian union with them, socially and personally.

Willard's ultimate commitment was to structures and expressions of whiteness that were accessed, managed, and represented through white women. At the core of her work, her organising, and her lectures was the protection of white women, whatever the cost. Her commitment to white womanhood allowed her to understand and see both white and Black men as problematic and dangerous, though in important and different ways. As Gail Bederman and others have noted--and indeed as Willard made very clear at the time--Willard endorsed the myth of the Black rapist. She qualified it, and occasionally demurred Southern lynchings ('denounced' would be too strong a word), but fundamentally she believed in the sanctity of goodness of white people unless tarnished with alcohol.[73]

Rape was depicted as a Black phenomenon by white Americans by the turn of the century. This white commitment to Black hypsersexuality and Black violence, even among progressive advocates well-aware of the issue of violence against white and Black women, allowed white Americans to continue to exert social, sexual, and political control over Black people and their bodies even after the abolition of formal slavery by obscuring the violent acts of white men.

As Estelle Freedman argues, it is absolutely 'not a coincidence that a political discourse on rape emerged at the height of these controversies over restrictions on the

[73] Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, p. 66.

rights of women and African Americans.' While rape accusations and myths of violent sexual proclivities worked to disenfranchise Black men and white women, the inverse is true as well: to represent white men as rapists culturally, as opposed to individually, was to undermine a collective effort to oppress freed Black populations and, to a lesser extent, white women.'[74] And much as it was no coincidence that the rise of the Black Rapist was coupled with political upheaval which threatened white racial superiority, it was also no coincidence that another category of sexual offender emerged to claim the rhetorical and representational place of white sexual violence. Jack the Clipper emerged at the precise moment the mythic Black Rapist did but, alongside the masher, was understood as a nuisance or annoyance that, while not insignificant, did not represent the same evolutionary or interracial threat as did the Black Rapist and did very little to upset the social and political order that was enforced through rape and sexual violence.[75] Associating Black men with rape as definitively as in the late 1880s made it near impossible for white sexual violence to be understood as not only a serious threat but as a cornerstone of white American social, political, and economic power.

The Rise of the Masher: Construing White Sexual Violence as 'Nuisance'

With white offenders shielded from the label of aggressive or sexually violent attackers, Jacks the Clipper did not fit the discourse of sexual violence propounded by the Black Rapist. Clippers could, however, be read with much greater ease alongside urban

[74] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, pp. 8-9.

[75] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 74.

nuisances like the white 'masher.' Emerging in the post-Civil War period as Americans increasingly moved into urban areas, street harassers or sexual offenders became more common threats to American women.[76] These new spectres of the urban environment were known as 'Masher[s],' 'slang… used to describe a man who made unwelcome sexual advances towards women,' approaching, accosting, or harassing women who were occupying, or even perhaps merely passing through, public spaces. Mashers targeted the many 'unescorted women who ventured into the cities themselves' whether for leisure or, increasingly, as wage-earning members of the workforce.[77] Although Jacks the Clipper represented a distinct threat, one tied to changing norms, expectations, and orientations of sexual desire as a result of and alongside the reorganisation of economic, political, and spatial life in America, Jacks and mashers articulate the cultural space of white, often native-born, sexual offenders in urban areas that were distinct from other cultural scripts of sexual violence. Mashers, in other words, allow us to recognise how Jacks the Clipper leveraged whiteness as a means of diminishing narratives of white, male sexual assaults against white women.

Mashers were understood to be distinctly and discretely white amidst the social and sexual threats posed by the sexual harassers in late-Victorian urban centres. 'White men predominated as mashers,' writes Freedman. 'Given the racialized image of the rapist, an African American man who merely looked a white woman directly in the eye on a southern street could be construed as a sexual assailant,' allegedly nonviolent mashers were immediately juxtaposed against the figure of the Black Rapist and coded

[76] Segrave, *Beware the Masher*, p. 3.

[77] Rouse, *Her Own Hero*, p. 78.

as white.[78] Wendy Rouse's investigation of mashers similarly indicates the general whiteness of mashers: the absence of racial identifiers in newspaper accounts of mashing, Rouse argues, 'overwhelmingly implicate native-born white men as mashers and white women as their victims.' The 'typical' masher was, through the invisibility of his race, 'white, native-born… impeccably and loudly dressed, with gloves, cane, and hat.'[79]

As in the case of Jacks the Clipper, mashers and their victims were also rarely identified as Black in either the white or Black popular press. 'In contrast to the racialized representations of rapists and sodomites, only rarely did the white press refer to the masher as an immigrant or an African American man.'[80] Moreover, even though Black women were certainly not spared even the most modest of sexual advances from white men, 'Black women were [also] rarely mentioned in the newspapers as victims of mashers' in either the white or Black press of the time.[81] The reasons for this likely vary but, on the one hand, Black women were almost certainly overlooked as victims in the white press as unnoteworthy and unnewsworthy and understood to be deserving of any attention they received, absolving white men of any responsibility who presumed ownership of Black women's bodies. White women deserved to be safe in public in a way that Black women absolutely did not, and any offence to a white woman could be interpreted as an offence to her status as belonging to another (white) man. Black

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[78] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 192.

[79] Rouse, *Her Own Hero*, pp. 78, 80.

[80] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, pp. 196, 205-6.

[81] Rouse, *Her Own Hero*, p. 83.

newspapers, on the other hand, were perhaps concerned about the myth of Black hypsersexuality and hesitant about reporting on acts of sexual harassment or assault that worked to reinforce the stereotypes about their communities.[82] Recognising a world of incredible oppression and violence against Black men and women, Black community members were likely forced to exist with competing understandings and demands upon women's bodies. In the end, the masher and its victims lived on in the cultural imagination of Americans as white.

The press's reporting on mashers and clippers refused the mould established by Black attackers, both creating and signifying the thoroughly segmented nature of the cultural narration around violence against women. As Rouse argues, 'The sinister threats that awaited' women in cities were clearly delineated, coming 'in the stereotyped forms of the flirtatious masher, the foreign white slaver, and the black rapist....'[83] To this list, I would add Jack the Clipper who, in representing very specific forms of sexual violence, avoiding interracial encounters of almost any kind, and deploying the tropes of degeneration, became central not only in creating the narrative space that allowed the Black Rapist to exist unchallenged as sexually dangerous and indominatable, but in so doing fused heterosexulity and whiteness. Although I argue that mashers and Jacks represented clear threats and often instances of sexual assault, it is nonetheless true that mashers and Jacks were often imagined to be less violent and less foreboding than the mythic Black Rapist.[84]

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[82] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 208.

[83] Rouse, *Her Own Hero*, p. 6.

[84] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, pp. 191-2.

That the masher represented so-called white-on-white crime is important because it indicates the emphasis that cultural categories such as these had on whiteness. While sexual violence was capacious enough to accommodate a vast array of offenders, crimes, and non-criminal violent actions, it was constructed variously and consciously to adapt to anxieties about social and racial status. Blackness did not represent the only sexual threat, it was contained by cultural categories that enabled and protected white violators and violations simultaneously. Mashers and Jacks, were a means of organising acts of violence against women that entailed property, honour, or class violations but did not represent a threat to the purity of the race and thus could be ignored in these discussions of various outrages. While the threat, as Rouse phrases it, posed by the masher spoke to 'white men who were concerned with protecting the sexual purity of white women,' they did not speak to a concern to protect the purity of the white race, like a Black man, let alone the Black Rapist, might.[85]

Mashers, too, then were a source of decadence and decay that inhibited the reproduction of the race. They were socially problematic but not sexually disastrous in the same way as the Black Rapist. Although Rouse notes that the whiteness of mashers as a category or stereotype acted as a 'fissure in white racial solidarity,' when viewed across the spectrum of sexual threats the masher more likely provided a safety valve that allowed for the expression of sexual violence against white women without impeding the ability of white Americans to continue to scapegoat Black men for, often much less substantial, social violations. Rather than a fissure in white racial solidarity,

[85] Rouse, *Her Own Hero*, p. 83.

mashers and clippers provided a means for white Americans to reconcile white violence against white women, the most revered victims.[86] Indeed, as 'rape accusations became central to the political strategy of disenfranchisement' in the South after Emancipation,' identifying 'white men as rapists' constituted a real potential fissure in white racial solidarity 'that defined American social and cultural politics.[87] Ultimately, white male sexual offenders remained either singular attackers, and thus exceptions to white racial superiority, or nuisance attackers, whose behaviours could be considered trivial or part of a new and revitalised white masculinity.

Conclusion: The Absolute Whiteness of Jack the Clipper

Answering the question of why clippers were white and not Black is difficult, but the absence of Black clippers does not mean that clippers were not engaged with the constructions of Blackness or whiteness at the turn of the twentieth century. On the contrary, the absence of Blackness in clipper narratives suggests how race and sexuality were fashioned together to produce discourses which bolstered white supremacy by minimising and excusing white sexual violence and protecting the cultural space that, with lethal consequences, labelled Black men as the ultimate, insatiable, and intrinsic sexual predators.

Recognising clippers as white does two things. Firstly, it allows us to understand how sexual violence was understood and partitioned. Here, clippers acted as a

[86] Rouse, *Her Own Hero*, p. 6.

[87] Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 8.

companion narrative to other cultural figures of the late nineteenth century to contain and quell anxieties about white sexual violence. But the whiteness of clippers also worked to further fuse whiteness and heterosexuality, cementing these dual identities as the basis for 'normal' Americanness. Racial and sexual sciences were mutually reinforcing, noting that white people were superior because of their greater sexual dimorphism, while also noting that non-heterosexual orientations or identities were problematic only in white populations wherein these deviations were individual rather than biological problems.

As we saw in chapter 2, clippers represented a form of fetishistic desire that directed popular and scientific attention to the question of reproductive heterosexuality: what was 'normal' desire and how could one be encouraged to ensure that such desire manifested itself in an appropriate way, even if this meant imagining your wife as a shoe. But fetishes were also a problem of whiteness. While chapter two argued for the creation of new lines of heterosexual desire, this chapter builds upon this argument to illustrate how heterosexual desire was merged with whiteness; how *white* heterosexuality became a norm which underpinned the formation of structures of modern American sexuality. White, heterosexual desire was not merely formed in opposition to Blackness, to homosexuality, or to the supposed aberrant bodies or experiences of the subjects of racial and sexual sciences, rather, this alliance of whiteness and heterosexuality was one cultural constellation that was oriented and triangulated by clippers and clipper attacks who refracted tensions between changing social and sexual norms.

The science of degeneration--offered up through the anthropologist, Frederick Starr, and cultural and literary critic, Max Nordau--was fundamental in the construction of Jack the Clipper as a white cultural icon. Degeneration was a problem of race, and an anxiety-inducing problem for white Americans who understood themselves to be under siege not only socially, in the aftermath of Emancipation, but biologically and environmentally, impacted by modernity. In articulating whiteness as consistently under threat, theories of degeneration both implicitly and explicitly enshrined white people as the pinnacle of human development. Individuals who found themselves unable to resist violent, criminal, or sexually inappropriate urges were depicted as outside of the expected reality of the white race, and in need of assistance to restore them to their proper place in the racial and social order. Black men and women, however, were not afforded these same understandings. If degeneration posited white people as near-perfect and aberrations from this exceptional, Black people were neither perfect nor were they likely to be provided with any rationale for individual indiscretions committed by people of that race. Black people were, rather, generalisably deviant.

Where John Jorgenson could not control his impulses--likening himself to an opium addict--he was saved by virtue of his skin colour and the faith of his peers in white supremacy. Black men were afforded no such benefit of the doubt, nor believed to be defective or ill if they acted similarly. Black men and women existed both outside of a spectrum of appropriate sexuality as well as at the bottom of a hierarchy of appropriate behaviour and impulse control. Black women were identified as lesbians, as non-normative, by their physical features; as opposed to straight, white women. Black

men were identified as insatiable by their underdeveloped brains and overdeveloped penises, not only eschewing any sort of impulse control that had been cultivated by white Americans but unable to direct their impulses, unpredictable, random, and non-discerning, except when directed at white women.

Frederick Starr's input on these matters reiterates how these concerns about degenerating whites became concretised, moving from abstract scientific circulation to their absorption in new cities and other urban spaces. Well versed in the unusual, and an eccentric though apparently beloved teacher at the University of Chicago, Starr's research, attached a local authority and celebrity to broader intellectual and popular tropes that fused race, sex, and degeneration. Starr's presence in these cases allows us to understand not only why the readers of these news stories would understand Jorgenson and other clippers to be white, but how they were provided with explanations of his behaviour that apologised for whiteness, made excuses for white sexual violence, and diminshed the threat presented by white sexual violence.

These scientific concepts reverberated throughout the culture of the United States shaping responses to and fanning the very production of social stereotypes of sexual offenders. The Black Rapist, Jack the Clipper, and the masher, were all representations of narratives of racial and sexual degeneration that provided a means of reasserting and maintaining a social order. Clippers were legible as white not merely because they represented aberrant sexual procilivites but because they were reminiscent of, and served a similar purpose to, other existing cultural categories. Mashers, in particular, were understood as white and became the closest analogues to

newly minted clippers. Recognised as white men harassing white women, mashers were American-born, often well dressed, and entitled to the attention and, at times, the bodies of white women moving through urban spaces. Mashers were not, however, capable of depicting white men as congential social or sexual threats in the way that Black men would be intractably associated with rape.

The narratives of responsibility for mashers, clippers, and the Black Rapist also fell across similar lines as those articulated through theories of racial degeneration. In much the same way that scientific narratives vilified Black people as a race while offering exceptions for individual whites who transgressed social and legal norms, cultural narratives leveraged these same logics and racial bifurcations to provide an outlet for white sexual violence that minimised its importance and prominence in white society. When Frances Willard--a white, Northern woman far more measured than some of her Southern counterparts--spoke of white violence, she enlisted the rhetorical strategies that enabled white readers and listeners to evade a direct confrontation with white violence. Where Blackness was concerned, violence and criminality were intrinsic to the race despite the good intentions of the few or even the many. Where whiteness was concerned, however, individual incidents stood in for the violence that was perpetrated by white men allowing for greater containment of the social threat and, not a little counterintuitively, providing an incentive to encourage uplift in white men.

White clippers, alongside white mashers, then, bolstered the space that allowed the figure of the Black Rapist to go largely unchallenged by white Americans. These siloed cultural tropes of the 1890s and early 1900s were not mere coincidence but were

deeply enmeshed with a rapidly changing social, political, and scientific world, moving along racial axes to signify and instantiate different kinds of bodies, and to protect and produce different kinds of sexual desires. By recognising that clippers came into existence at the almost exact moment as the Black Rapist we can see the process that allowed for white violence to become increasingly less visible at the same time that Black sexual violence became absolute and hypervisible, not because white sexual violence was less prevalent but because cultural scaffolding was erected to obscure the misdeeds of white men and fabricate those committed by Black men. Echoing Estelle Freedman, 'Although the racial coding of mashers exposed white male offenders, it also deflected attention from more violent sexual assaults by white men, leaving intact the image of the black man as rapist.'[88]

In this sense, then, Jack the Clipper was not merely a cultural fiction, one among many circulating in the contemporary press, Jack the Clipper acted as an important companion narrative to the Black Rapist that bolstered new and more violent instantiations of white supremacy. Jack the Clipper did not offer a reubuttal to the Black Rapist, but rather provided it the cultural and intellectual space to blossom absorbing real concerns about white sexual violence otherwise directed against white women with surprisingly similar foundational explanations. Clippers provided a foil through which to produce and enact the alignments and orientations that would come to be a hallmark of a Victorian and post-Victorian world. Not merely Black as opposed to white, or normal as opposed to abnormal, but rather constellations of Blackness and queerness,

[88] Freedman, *Redefing Rape*, p. 209.

whiteness and reproductive heterosexuality that offered explanations and excuses for different forms of sexual violence.

That clippers were white raises incredibly important questions about the intersection of race, sexuality, violence, and criminality in the early twentieth century. Clippers become important foils for cultural and scientific categories of Blackness and Black violence not only because they exist along a Black/white axis, but because they enmesh Blackness, whiteness, queer and hetero-desire, and violence in a web of seemingly, and deceptively, simple racial and sexual dichotomies. This isn't only a question, then, of why clippers were rarely Black, but what it meant for whiteness that clippers were identified as such, and what it meant for the fusing of heterosexuality and whiteness.

CHAPTER FOUR

‘THERE IS NO LAW ON THE BOOKS’: PROGRESSIVE REFORM, COMMUNITY POLICING, AND THE ENFORCEMENT OF HETEROSEXUAL DESIRE

The legal life of a clipping is hard to follow archivally. While I have uncovered the names of hundreds of victims of various Jacks across the United States, only a handful of clippers were ever named. Some disappeared into the city or fled to the suburbs, eluding capture by the police or the local community, some likely gave false names and were discharged and erased from public and historical record, some were undoubtedly middle- or upper-class men who had the money or power to ensure that their names were never associated with this new figure. More clippers still were likely to have been ignored or overlooked by family members, friends, and investigators, depicting clippings as either actions young girls and women brought upon themselves or as trivial forms of violence which, as I argued in chapter three, minimised the perceived threat of white sexual violence while bolstering the myth of Black sexual violence. But those few clippers who do emerge from the archives and who were followed by the press reveal the uneasy manner in which clippers, their actions, and the non-normative sexuality they represented fit into the legal system.

Where agents of the legal infrastructure of the state--the police, courts, and legislators--were given ample opportunity to determine how clippers and how indecent assaults involving hair could be charged and prosecuted, police, in particular, remarked, often quite openly, on their complete bewilderment as to how to proceed. Although

unwanted haircuttings were transgressive, it was not always immediately clear in what ways they were criminal, if at all. Chicago's infamous John W. Jorgenson was one such clipper who caused significant consternation as to the kinds of criminal liabilities clippers might have. After his sensational arrest he was brought before a grand jury to determine exactly how he could be punished and on what grounds. Only a few years later, a Boston hair clipper, Frank Gallo, would similarly find himself at the whim of a state and legal system not entirely sure how to handle him. What crimes were applicable? What could be proven? And what was an appropriate charge and punishment for the violent act?

Ultimately, both Jorgenson and Gallo were charged with an array of offences, from mischief through to assault, but their stories reveal the transitionary moment in which a regime of heterosexual infrastructure was under construction. The late 1880s and the 1890s saw the regulation of vice in cities, crackdowns on the dissemination of sexual knowledge, vilification of forms of allegedly 'perverted' sexual expression, nation-wide debates over anti-flirting and anti-mashing bills, and the passing of new age of consent laws, so the silence on clippings seems especially deafening. The very absence of materials related to clippers indicates this disinterest. The enduring silence of the state, despite numerous other initiatives designed to corral and enforce certain kinds of white, reproductive sexual desire, suggests another intervention in this critical transitionary period: one in which the actions of clippers were being deemed irrelevant legally and judicially to increasingly eugenic state-building processes. By ignoring clippings, middle-class reformers used the American state to direct or orient new forms

of heterosexual desire, proscribing mechanisms of enforcement for those deemed valid while limiting the possibilities for recognising those forms of desire that were of lesser interest.

The importance of clippings as violations of a young woman's social and sexual autonomy is clear, but communities were also insistent on punishing clippers in the absence of state intervention. In part, this impulse represented an older understanding of the function of policing, one which emphasised decentralised police and state control, but it also indicated that clippings were not overlooked within the lay community. This chapter builds upon the findings of historians who have shown how working-class Americans resisted intrusion into their bodily autonomy and social and sexual authority at the turn of the century by both making use of and bypassing legal infrastructures. Drawing on a long legacy of violent protest, communities took matters into their own hands to protect their sexual norms, organizing vigilante mobs to beat and lynch clippers. In so doing, they revealed not only the neglect of these institutions by the state but the contours of competing systems of lay sexual desire through which this opposition was mounted. By examining the public response to these actions we get a fuller picture not only of the sexual values that communities held deep into the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but of the mechanisms that were used to enforce or coerce changes to these values.

In many ways, this chapter is not really about John Jorgenson or his compatriots who were apprehended and tried, it is not necessarily even about the documents that I have uncovered revealing the realities of these violent actions. Rather, it seeks to

consider what we can learn from the un-coordinated response of the state, seen through community action, to these acts of violence. From the lynch mobs we again see that the sexual body was defined differently by the state and by the people living under its purview, we see the different ways in which state-based and state-oriented forms of sexuality and sexual desire were coming into being, slowly and subtly being shaped by a variety of new institutions and legal categories. Revealing what was in need of protection as much as a clash of different kinds of social and sexual authority, clippers were representative of one means through which communities and the state variously intertwined or pulled apart to produce new structures governing acceptable norms of sexual desire and expression.

Finally, in articulating the conflict between communities, victims, and the state, this chapter presents a moment of uncertainty in which a different path, a different understanding of sexual violence or of crimes against women, was revealed to Americans. While many of the fundamentals remained the same, there was nonetheless an opportunity for reimagining what sexual violence might look like and how it might be understood. By listening to the voices of women and the very explicit questions that were posed by authorities and community members alike, the boundaries of sexual violence might have looked very different going into the twentieth century. The contention of this chapter is not that this change was ever likely--far from it--but rather that there was a window of possibility in this moment of broad disorientation that may have allowed Americans to imagine a different and more just world. A future in which sexual violence was not pinned to the reproductive needs of the state or to the

subservient status of white women, but rather to an acknowledgement of social and bodily wrongs.

Charging clippers for crimes was a difficult thing, puzzling for authorities in much the same way that attacks on hair were puzzling to newspaper readers. Yet, in seeing the friction between competing understandings of the body and emerging regimes of the legal and carceral state, we can witness the decisions, conscious or otherwise, which laid the foundation for a century of near fixation on the genitals as markers of sexual violence through the sexual exclusion of other bodily markers of sexuality.

When John Jorgenson was arrested in February 1899, he was apprehended in the midst of stealing a braid from Erna Fransky. Having been captured red-handed made a compelling case against him. He was carrying the necessary tools to complete the job--down to a pair of spring-loaded scissors to ensure a quick and precise cut--and upon his capture broke down and confessed to hundreds of crimes across almost four years. The case, it would seem, was to be open and shut.[1]

And yet, after a reign of terror over the city of Chicago which Jorgenson indicated could involve upwards of three hundred young women, numerous victims prepared to come forward, and an outright confession, one question remained: how would

[1] On the spring-loaded shears used by Jorgenson: 'The scissors which "Jack the Clipper" has made use of are about three inches long, and ground to exceedingly sharp edges. The handles are held apart by a spring, so that he was able to hold them inside of his hand unobserved, even when working.'

See: 'Jack the Clipper Taken: Caught While Cutting Tresses from Erna Fransky's Head,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (16 February 1899), p. 3.

Jorgenson be charged?[2] The *Chicago Daily Tribune* wrote that the police were at a loss as to how best proceed against Jorgenson, or even whether his actions constituted a crime. Written shortly after his arrest, the article noted that: 'The police will present Jorgenson's case to the grand jury and let that body determine whether he has committed a crime. The criminal code makes no provision for punishing a hair-clipper, so far as the police have been able to learn.'[3]

By 1899, clippers had been circulating within the city of Chicago and the broader cultural landscape of the United States for close to a decade.[4] Jorgenson's apprehension was not the first instance of a clipping in Chicago, though it was perhaps the first high-profile case in which an offender had been arrested and a conviction was at hand. The Chicago police force and broader instruments of legislating and lawmaking had been posed this question of what to charge an offender before. With each victim, community members demanded answers and the state seemed reluctant, even actively refused, to participate.

Almost exactly a year prior to Jorgenson's arrest and the commencement of his trial, for example, Ruby Waters became a 'fourth victim of the "mysterious Jack the Hair Clipper,"' attacked as she was returning home after school on a Thursday afternoon.

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[2] 'Jack the Hair Clipper: Caught in Chicago in Act of Shearing a Braid,' [Washington, D.C.] *Evening Star* (16 February 1899), p. 1.

[3] '"Jack the Clipper" No. 2.: Emulator of John W. Jorgenson Tries to Steal Hulda Miana's Long Braids of Hair,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (17 February 1899), p. 5.

[4] For examples of early reports of clipper activity see the following.

In New York City, though reported in a Chicago-based newspaper: 'Doings of Jack the Clipper,' *Chicago Tribune* (30 October 1889), p. 1.

In Detroit, Michigan: 'His Clip was Cut Short: Hair Fiend Meet His Match in the Person of a Plucky Miss,' *Pittsburgh Dispatch* (22 October 1890), p. 6.

In Chicago: 'Gets Her Golden Hair: Aimee Clements the Victim of a Burly Man with a Knife,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (28 November 1895), p. 1.

According to Waters, 'a young man neatly dressed ran up to her and caught at her hair.' Waters 'screamed and... tried to run' but the man held firm, his fingers 'twisted' in her hair. The man threw Waters 'to the ground' and 'pinn[ed] her down with his knee' as he 'tore three long, glossy strands from her head...' leaving a 'painful wound on her scalp.'[5]

Waters' school was the centre of a spate of clippings that January with all four victims being students at the Marquette School. The principal of the school called on Waters one afternoon after the attack, presumably to offer his condolences for her violent encounter with a clipper. In so doing, however, the press reported on a salient piece of information more interesting than his apologies, which merely reiterated that he 'did not know what could be done to prevent outrages in the future.' The principal 'had been told that, even if the perpetrator could be found, under the present laws of Illinois nothing could be done to punish him, as there was at present no statute covering that precise offense.' Even the police were allegedly helpless to act in any significant capacity.[6]

Whether Waters was also attacked by Jorgenson or not we will likely never know, but her case augments our understanding both of the anxieties around what one could charge a clipper with and who felt these anxieties, for despite repeated encounters and multiple victims, little was done to address the issue of clipping directly. Lost between these expressions of concern as to how to proceed with clipper charges or indeed the discussions and debates that surrounded a grand jury deliberation is the conversation

[5] 'Ruby a Fourth Victim: Three Lose Hair Before Little Miss Waters is Assailed,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (29 January 1898), p. 6.

[6] 'Ruby a Fourth Victim,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 6.

that brought prosecutors to the specific charges levelled at Jorgenson. But nonetheless, these public attempts to grapple with what these acts of violence looked like, and whether they were ‘crimes,’ reveals the murkiness of crime as a lens of analysis for us looking back upon the late nineteenth century.

Both newspaper articles and court records reveal the final outcome in the Jorgenson case. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that the grand jury returned ‘indictments on six charges against John W. Jorgenson’ for attacks on Charlotte Bauer, Mildred Chamberlain, and Erna Fransky. 'In three' instances, Jorgenson 'was accused of assault with intent to rob and in three of malicious mischief.' These 'indictments set forth [that] Jorgenson feloniously and maliciously cut the complainant's braid of hair.'[7]

The returned true bills are still in existence today, some of the few records that testify to Jorgenson’s actions and reinforce the significance of haircutting within the social and cultural imaginary of turn-of-the-century Chicagoans even as it seemingly escaped their legal frameworks. Housed at the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County, the remaining grand jury dockets confirm that Jorgenson was ultimately charged both with ‘assault to rob’ and ‘malicious mischief,’ and includes additional witnesses who testified at the trial, including: Officer Elliott, likely the individual who arrested Jorgenson, and Officer Mason, as well as Erna Fransky, Mildred Chamberlain,

[7] 'Declines to Hear Berz Case: Grand Jury Refuses to Take Up Indictment for Latimer Killing--"True Bills" for Jorgenson,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (28 February 1899), p. 12.

Charlotte Bauer, and Laura Freeman.[8] Finally, these records also indicate the steep bail required for Jorgenson in the amount of $12,000, posted by an ex-state's attorney.[9]

Where Jorgenson was Chicago’s great clipper of the late 1890s, Frank Gallo was Boston’s equivalent in the first decade of the new twentieth century. A nineteen-year-old Sicilian immigrant living in South Boston, Gallo experienced the tumult of being labelled a clipper and the ambiguity that came with being charged with an offence that straddled property violation and physical assault.[10] Jorgenson’s case was riddled with anxieties about the nature of the clippings, the mental capacity of the offender, and the realisation upon his arrest that these attacks were not being perpetrated by a single individual. But the controversy over the charges themselves was overshadowed by the concerns about who this clipper was and how he had snipped for four consecutive years unchecked. Clippers were certainly circulating in cities across the United States but Jorgenson was one of the first major figures to be tried. If we are generous, the argument that the law and society was unprepared to address clippers may carry us some way in 1899, however, by 1906 this argument about unpreparedness became more problematic.

Between 1896 and 1906 there was no shortage of clipper attacks in major American urban centres. On average, there was one new victim reported in Chicago

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[8] 'The People of the State of Illinois vs. John W. Jorgenson,' Term 3245, no. 54207 (February 1899), Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County Archives, Criminal Division, Chicago, IL.

[9] ‘Application of Jacob J. Kern to Become Surety for John W. Jorgenson,' Terms 3244-9, no. 54206 (February 1899), Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County Archives, Criminal Division, Chicago, IL.

[10] 'Hair Snipper Caught After Big Commotion: Cut Off Girl's Locks on Tremont Row And Was Chased by Angry Throng,' *Boston Daily Globe* (2 January 1907), p. 1.

alone in the major American newspapers almost every six weeks for the decade.[11] Averages distort the rhythms of these attacks, neatening an otherwise unpredictable throughline, but whether in fits and starts, through sprees of attacks, or lesser-known or less widely reported upon instances of isolated violence, clippers were regular features of the white news media. Arrested almost eight years after Jorgenson, Gallo's case demonstrated that the decisions about what to charge clippers with, and indeed whether clippings were even crimes at all, were not a result of an unfamiliar cultural or criminal trope but fraught with schisms over different understandings of what were appropriate and enforceable norms of sexual desire and expression that aligned with the, sometimes different, priorities of communities and the burgeoning state.

Gallo was also caught red-handed, snipping the braid from a fifteen-year old named Margaret Quinlan from Charlestown. Quinlan and a friend of hers, Mary Murphy, 'were about to enter an amusement place on Tremont row when Gallo... used his little pair of scissors on one of her braids.' Quinlan wasn't aware of what happened at first. Rather, it was Mrs. Edward E. Charles and Miss Lione Blake who were recorded as having witnessed the clipping first hand. The women 'started after' Gallo, running down the street 'screaming for someone to catch him.' Gallo fled on foot but the 'sight of the fleeing man and a few shouts of "Stop him"' got the attention of a crowd of men and women and a patrolman, who eventually apprehended Gallo and kept him safe from the crowd.[12]

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[11] These statistics come from my own research into victims of Jack the Clipper. I have identified eighty-five within the stated period in Chicago alone.

[12] 'Hair Snipper Caught After Big Commotion,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1.

Taken to police headquarters, 'Gallo vigorously denied that he had anything to do with cutting off any hair.' However, 'one by one the five braids were taken from his pockets, and finally the small pair of scissors was brought from one of his overcoat pockets.' 'In addition to the five braids and the pair of scissors that the officers took from Gallo's pockets, they found also a piece of flat steel about five inches long, thin, and beveled at one edge,' which the police 'believe[d]... he used as a sort of comb to lift the hair so as to clip with the scissors beneath it, as a barber cuts.' Neither Quinlan nor her friend had witnessed or even felt Gallo take the braid, but they 'recognized him as the man who had been following' them for 'some distance,' and who had stood 'quite close to her' while they had been 'waiting [for] admission to the place of amusement.'[13]

With Gallo immediately apprehended, Quinlan was asked to identify her own braid, if possible, among the five that had been found on his person. Quinlan 'looked over the braids and quickly picked the one that matched her hair. She was wearing two braids, and it was plainly evident that she picked from those found on Gallo one of hers.' The day prior, Minnie Lowry, a 'young girl' from East Boston, reported to police that someone 'had cut off part of her hair' in almost the exact same location where Quinlan was attacked: 'She didn't know just when it was cut off, but knew it was somewhere along Tremont row near the amusement place.' Lowry was also called upon to see if she could identify her hair from among those braids found on Gallo's person. She arrived at the station while Gallo was still being detained, 'was shown the five braids, and quickly picked out one as her own. It matched her hair.'[14]

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[13] 'Hair Snipper Caught After Big Commotion,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1.

[14] 'Hair Snipper Caught After Big Commotion,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1.

While Lowry was identifying her braid, the officers at the police station organised a lineup to see if it was possible for her to identify Gallo as the perpetrator. Lowry was 'given a seat out of sight in the guard room, and when Gallo was brought back from headquarters he was stood in line with several others where the girl could see him.' Lowry did identify 'Gallo as the man she had seen,' but she was less confident that she had specifically seen him in the vicinity of Tremont row when her hair was clipped.[15] With two positive identifications of braids, alongside one lukewarm confirmation of recognition of the clipper, the police expected to hear from three more young women who had reported their hair stolen within the last day or so.[16]

With eyewitnesses to the clipping of Quinlan, discovery of the braids on Gallo's person, and the possibility of three more positive matches between young women and their braids in the near future, the case against Gallo seemed particularly strong. Yet police were puzzled by the question of how to charge him. There was, it was said, no precedent for crimes of this nature: 'No similar case can be recalled by the oldest men in the service and the outcome is being watched with great interest from a legal point of view.'[17]

This was something of a strange statement to make amidst not merely a host of clippings across the United States over the course of the previous decade and beyond, but because less than a year prior Boston had encountered one of the most prolific serial snippers on record. In the earliest months of 1906, the *Boston Daily Globe*

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[15] 'Hair Snipper Caught After Big Commotion,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1.

[16] 'Hair Snipper Caught After Big Commotion,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1.

[17] 'Hair Snipper Caught After Big Commotion,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1.

published a front-page news story documenting the *twenty-seven* victims of the snipper over the previous two weeks. Replete with a map of the city documenting where these attacks took place and the details, where they were available, of all twenty-seven victims, this was a significant story in the same vein as Frank Gallo's.[18]

Likely, the slew of attacks in 1906 did not result in any arrests leaving the police with logistical issues of surveillance that would enable the clipper's capture rather than legal questions about how to charge someone with a clipping. The lack of foresight across these cases, the total inability to consider these to be acts of violence worth wrangling with in any serious capacity before the fact, however, was telling of the significance with which these clipper attacks were viewed. And indeed, foreshadowed their eventual dismissal entirely as cultural touchstones of the kind they were in the 1890s and early 1900s.

Without any comparable cases to rely on, then, the police had to weigh the intention behind the act against the potential penalty with which a crime could be designated and punished:

> The question as to what charge to lodge against Gallo is an interesting one. Some have suggested the extreme allegation of mayhem, but this is considered as impossible under the law. In the opinion of others Gallo's offence comes easily under the charge of assault and battery. But this isn't severe enough to suit the police. Accordingly they are wondering if the charge of larceny or robbery can't be placed against the prisoner.[19]

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[18] 'Man With Hair Mania: Showing the Wide Range of the Hair Snipper's Operations,' *Boston Daily Globe* (9 February 1906), pp. 1, 5.

[19] 'Hair-Snipper Caught After Big Commotion,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1.

The tension between what Gallo could be charged with and what was appropriate for him to be charged with was central to these discussions; what was feasible was paramount, but ensuring that this was paired with an offence that was appropriate for the act required some creative thinking.

Defined as the act of ‘wilful and permanent crippling, mutilation, or disfigurement of any part of another's body,’ ‘mayhem’ was not dismissed because it was too harsh but because the police could not make that case on legal grounds.[20] Unable to charge Gallo with mayhem, the police were left with the options of assault and battery, burglary, or larceny. Assault and battery appeared to make sense in terms of the type of crime that had been committed. These women had been assaulted, at the very least. The problem police faced, however, was that they were looking to impose as severe a sentence upon the clipper as possible. Assault and battery apparently carried a lesser penalty than either burglary or larceny, as property offences. These latter two options, the crimes of theft, were considered the least appropriate based upon the acts presented, but the most suitable considering the severity of the punishment which could be meted out. The police were in a quandary.[21]

The lack of clarity as to what the legal system could or would do to protect young women from clippers or to punish those clippers who were captured likely pushed communities to action and justified their decisions to act. The confusion as to how to

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[20] ‘Mayhem,’ *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary of Law* <http://www.credoreference.com.prozy.uchicago.edu/entry/mwdlaw/mayhem>, last accessed 4 May 2012.

[21] ‘Hair-Snipper Caught After Big Commotion,’ *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1.

charge clippers was a product a broad disinterest in particular forms of social regulation in the United States at the turn of the century--with the state increasingly regulating sexuality, procreative sex, and heterosexual relationships at the expense of non-reproductive offenses--and legacies of communities themselves taking the lead on offering policing and police-like services. In this moment of transition, communities worked with, alongside, and against police forces who turned up to help or aggravate a situation and, in so doing, revealed the competing social and sexual value systems that defined their everyday experiences.

While young girls were the targets of these acts, clippers often provoked wider communities to action. In the late nineteenth and early-twentieth century such mobilisation could take the form of violent mobs whose purpose was to rid their towns, suburbs, villages, or neighbourhoods of these intruding clippers. Although we often find these groups described at their greatest and most potent, yet long after their dissolution, we can still see how knowledge of the clipper was widespread enough to cast a shadow across the city and its peoples and how female sexual honour was linked to, and could be threatened by, an unwanted loss of a braid.

Frank Gallo, whose attacks on young girls in the city so baffled police, was saved only by 'timely police interference... from lynching at the hands of an angry mob to-day.' [22] After Margaret Quinlan's braids had been cut, unknown to her, the two witnesses to the attack took to the streets: both Mrs Edward E. Charles and Miss Lione Blake 'started after' Gallo, 'screaming for some one to catch him.' With Charles and Baker yelling

[22] 'Saved from Mob by Police: Boston Man Accused of Cutting off Little Girls' Braids Threatened,' *Washington Post* (2 January 1907), p. 3.

'"Stop him"' on the streets, 'hundreds of men and women poured... into Brattle st[to join] in the chase.'[23] The crowd, an 'angry throng,' chanted "''Jack the Snipper"' as they set out after Gallo.[24]

A patrolman 'heard the uproar'[25] catching Gallo 'before Brattle sq was reached,'[26] after a 'hard fight in the mud and slush…'[27] 'The moment the officer got his hands on Gallo they were both hemmed in by the crowd and there were many indications that violence might be done to the prisoner';[28] 'the crowd fighting to get at the prisoner and beat him.'[29] Members of the crowd were yelling at the officer and Gallo, '"There's the snipper," and many tried to jam their way to the front and get a hold of the prisoner.' The officer managed to move Gallo to a police station, but they were both followed by the large crowd who 'jammed' Court square and waited for a full hour 'until they got another glimpse of the prisoner when he was taken to headquarters.'[30]

Gallo was far from the only clipper threatened with violence. The attack on twelve-year-old Gladys Henderson in the summer of 1903 illustrates the relationship between the defence of sexual honour and haircutting explicitly as community members threatened to lynch the clipper in their midst. Henderson had 'stepped outside for a moment' only to come face to face with a figure she would later describe as 'a well

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[23] 'Hair-Snipper Caught After Big Commotion,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1.

[24] 'Saved from Mob by Police,' *Washington Post* (2 January 1907), p. 3.

[25] 'Saved from Mob by Police,' *Washington Post* (2 January 1907), p. 3.

[26] 'Hair-Snipper Caught After Big Commotion,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1.

[27] 'Saved from Mob by Police,' *Washington Post* (2 January 1907), p. 3.

[28] 'Hair-Snipper Caught After Big Commotion,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1.

[29] 'Saved from Mob by Police,' *Washington Post* (2 January 1907), p. 3.

[30] 'Hair-Snipper Caught After Big Commotion,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1.

dressed man.' The man, playing the part of a gentleman, 'spoke to her, saying: "Hello, little girl, what pretty hair you have."' Unsettled by the attention this stranger was paying to her hair, and presumably keenly aware of other clipper attacks in the city, 'Gladys ran into her father's laundry' to speak to him. Henderson told her father about the encounter with this stranger and that 'she feared the man.' Unfortunately, her father 'made light of the circumstance' and sent her back to the house.[31]

Henderson 'returned home' but only 'a few minutes later' heard someone knocking. Opening the door she found herself 'confronted by the man who had admired her hair.' 'The stranger' overpowered her and 'forced his way into the house.' According to Henderson, the clipper moved toward her saying: '"I've come for that hair… and I'm going to have it."' 'As he spoke he drew a long pair of scissors and a cord from his pocket,' and said: '"I want you to keep perfectly still, and if you as much as say a word I'll run these scissors into your heart."'[32]

If not knocked out by the stranger, Henderson was certainly disoriented by her encounter. The man had tied her hands and taken a chunk of her hair with the bow still attached. Between the man's advances and Henderson finding herself in her house, alone, tied up, and without her hair, no recollection of events is offered but, regaining her composure, she began to walk back toward the laundry.[33]

It is not clear whether Henderson's father, irate at seeing her 'stagger[...] into the laundry' still 'with her hands tied behind her back,' enlisted his neighbours to track down

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[31] 'Takes a Girl's Hair: Bold Clipper Invades House and Attacks a Child,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (26 July 1903), p. 1.

[32] 'Takes a Girl's Hair,' *Chicago Daily* Tribune, p. 1.

[33] 'Takes a Girl's Hair,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 1.

the man who had committed this violation against his daughter, or whether a neighbour saw Henderson struggling, distressed, and bound, and spread the word amongst those locals immediately adjacent, but a group estimated at '200 persons' was formed with vengeance in mind. The Chicago *Daily Tribune*, in a perhaps understated report, claimed that 'it was an excited neighborhood.'[34]

Although the crowd searched for this mysterious intruder—a man who had violated not only a little girl in her own home but had infiltrated their neighbourhood—they did not find him. They did, however, make it perfectly clear what they would do if they came across him, chanting: '"Lynch the wretch!"'[35]

Louis Chivalet was only narrowly rescued from a horde of 'infuriated persons' in what is now West Town, near Chicago Avenue and Armour Street, on 14 October 1897. 'Policeman Dan Ryan … noticed a man running down the street pursued by a crowd of 300 men and boys. They struck at [Chivalet] and were dragging him along the street when Ryan rescued the prisoner.' The article does not provide any explanation as to how this crowd initially became fixated on Chivalet as a clipper, but does suggest that when Ryan found Chivalet someone had called out that 'he was "Jack the Clipper."' Chivalet was only saved by being 'lock[ed] up in a patrol box until the arrival of the patrol wagon.' Although he was detained overnight, and it is possible that this was as much for his own safety as for the purposes of confirming or denying the accusations against him, the police would find 'no evidence' to suggest that Chivalet was a clipper.[36]

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[34] 'Takes a Girl's Hair,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 1.

[35] 'Takes a Girl's Hair,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 1.

[36] 'Mob Thinks Him a "Clipper": Louis Chivalet, Attacked by Excited Throng and Accused of Snipping Hair, Is Rescued by Police,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (15 October 1897), p. 2.

Another crowd materialised when an offhand remark was made regarding the conduct of a sailor named Thomas Murphy. It was a Wednesday night, 16 February 1898, and Murphy, sitting in Henry Walter's saloon just west of the Chicago River on West Madison Street, had been refused a drink.

> The sailor, it is said, [then] drew his scissors and [began] flourishing them threateningly. The saloon loungers facetiously remarked that he was the hair clipper and in less than a moment all the men in the saloon attacked the tar.[37]

Murphy 'shouted for help' and was rescued by a nearby police officer. Murphy's night, however, would continue to worsen:

> the word was passed that the clipper of hair was in custody, and when the wagon drew up it was surrounded by a crowd of shouting men, women, and children. Scores of youngsters followed the police wagon to the station and surrounded the place for an hour after Murphy was lodged in a cell.[38]

Having foolishly brandished his scissors, Murphy inadvertently set off a chain of events which led to an unfortunate evening for himself. Yet such an aggressive public reaction to a clipper further indicates both the intensity of the reaction to Jack the Clipper's fascination with hair and widespread dispersion of the knowledge pertaining to him as well as a willingness to punish these clippers for their sexual infractions. One derogatory remark incited an entire saloon to attack a man whose only recourse was to seek the aid of a nearby police officer to avoid the masses who were threatening him with a thrashing.

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[37] 'Taken for "Hair Clipper": Thomas Murphy Draws His Sailors' Scissors and Is Beaten by a Crowd,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (17 February 1898), p. 10.

[38] 'Taken for "Hair Clipper,"' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 10.

The mass public movements generated by an accusation of being a clipper suggest the stakes of these acts. That crowds of hundreds of people could gather to apprehend a perpetrator, and potentially administer mob justice, recognised both a different world of judicial, legal, and social punishment and the disconnection between these worlds as American transitioned to, at least nominally, a more centralised legal system that regulated appropriate sexual desire. Crowds invoking lynching were often explicitly channelling fears of sexual transgression and were seemingly dissatisfied with, or deeply sceptical of, the opportunities for justice or retribution afforded by the state.[39] These riots and rallying cries signified the charged atmosphere of the city, the relationship between hair and sexuality that traded in familiar tropes of chivalry and defence of female sexual honour, and the importance of community members' in policing for themselves the behaviours of those in their midst.

That communities took up these actions speaks to the very different sense of obligation and of governance felt by many nineteenth-century Americans and the recognition that 'criminal' law was not designed to protect, perhaps especially, working-class and immigrant Americans. Christopher Capozzola argues that before World War I, political obligations, ties to the state felt by those who were citizens, were not Americans' primary relationship to one another. Instead, 'voluntary associations… organized much of American public life.' These voluntary community associations 'provided social services, regulated the economy, policed crime, and managed

[39] Estelle Freedman, *Redefining Rape: Sexual Violence in the Era of Suffrage and Segregation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 97; Randall M. Miller, 'Lynching in America: Some Context and a Few Comments,' *Pennsylvania History*, 72, no. 3 (Summer, 2005), p. 278.

community norms.' Indeed, Capozzola goes so far as to suggest that these voluntary associations in their own ways 'sometimes acted as the state.'[40] Citing World War I as a 'moment of crisis,' this disjuncture between obligations to peers and obligations to the state itself would change. Obligations to various, formerly private institutions—'employers, families, schools, and churches'—were out of necessity embroiled in the American war effort, in America's ability to be prepared for war, and thus in the structure of the state itself.[41]

This negotiation, then, was the point at which Americans transitioned, not easily or seamlessly and certainly not peacefully, from a system in which they policed their own (and others') 'ideas and behaviors, their labor and leisure,' to a system in which their policing was subsumed and directed by the state.[42] World War I enabled citizens to engage various appendages of the state bureaucracy to change their everyday lives.[43] Capozzola charts the changing manner in which Americans experienced violence and the state, but by emphasising the violence of community organisation before the First World War Capozzola captures the importance of the different political and social worlds in which Americans operated and the resistance they could, often quite violently, mount at the sight of intrusions into these protected spaces. The state could not and would not act with the justice expected by communities or in accord with the norms they sought to protect.

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[40] Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 7.

[41] Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, p. 8.

[42] Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, p. 11.

[43] Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, p. 16.

Although, or because, many of the clippers were ‘saved’ by police officers--scenes in which the state was seen by some to be actively shielding offenders from justice and further entrenching the need for community action--such police officers, as representatives of the American state, fit into clipper narratives often as either additional or parallel mechanisms for enforcement. Police and the resources of the police could be exploited, but they were not the sole means through which communities engaged with clippers or sought to apprehend them. Much as Mary Odem has argued, working-class people used the legal system as was necessary and useful but also felt free to take matters into their own hands.[44] Clippers indicated the blurring between the role of the state in protecting citizens deemed worthy of protection and communities as the arbiters of local or localised social and sexual norms.

Jorgenson, Gallo, and others who found themselves in the crosshairs of their communities, were not targeted because working-class Americans were unable to leverage the legal system. Rather, the police and broader legal system constituted but one mechanism through which to enforce social norms, and not always the most effective mechanism having their own interests and alignments that often better aligned with the sexual and social norms of white, middle-class, and reform-minded Americans. As Odem argues, ‘*middle-class* reformers and social experts’ demanded that the state intervene in the goal of protecting young women from the dangers of city life. The result was an ‘elaborate network of legal codes and institutions designed to control the sexuality of young women and girls’ from ‘age-of-consent laws’ to new institutions such

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[44] Mary E. Odem, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

as juvenile courts, reformatories, and special police [who] monitored and punished young females for sexual misconduct.' Seemingly overwhelmed by the scale of possibilities for individual autonomy, on the behalf of both young women and those who might attempt to take advantage of them, middle-class reformers forced the American state to intrude into the social and sexual lives of young women in ways that mirrored middle-class norms and commitments. Working-class families were not merely swept up in these reform efforts but actively participated in and took advantage of these reforms to control the objects of sexual anxieties and norms, their daughters.[45]

On the 17th February 1899, for example, fifteen-year-old Catherine Bignal was attacked by a clipper walking home in the evening. The man, described as having a 'sandy mustache,' being around '5 feet 6 inches in height,' and wearing a 'black overcoat, brown trousers, and a plush cap,' jumped out at Bignal as she walked past her school. 'The hair clipper seized the two braids of her hair, which hung on her shoulders, and clipped them off. He then pocketed the scissors… and ran east on Lake street to Forty-third street, where he turned South.' Running home, Bignal found her mother who took her to the police station nearby. Having only just apprehended John Jorgenson, clipper attacks were still very much in the minds of Chicago's girls and young women. The article noted explicitly that this was the 'second hairclipping since Jorgenson's famous capture' and that he was currently out on bail.[46]

[45] Mary E. Odem, *Delinquent Daughters*, pp. 1-2.

[46] 'Another Girl's Hair Clipped: Man Attacks Cathering Bignal in Front of Tilton School and Cuts off Two Braids,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (18 February 1899), p. 1.

This attack caused 'intense excitement' among Bignals' neighbours. The extent to which this broad local participation hinged on communal concerns about safety and sexual access to 'their' women was likely only heightened by Bignal's household, which contained six children who were being cared for solely by their mother. Bignal's father was 'a blacksmith' stationed 'at present... near Manila' on 'the cruiser Buffalo,' presumably serving in the Spanish-American War which had become the Philippine-American War. Bignal's mother worked at the Tilton school to support her children, outside of which Catherine was attacked.[47]

Neighbours turned out not necessarily in opposition to or hostile towards the police presence, but perhaps indifferent or sceptical of its utility. While Bignal and her mother had spoken to Sergeant Patrick Findlay, who had 'immediately summoned several officers' to find the hair clipper, and then were taken into the patrol wagon 'for the purpose of identifying the fugitive,' 'indignant citizens' also 'devoted themselves to searching for the girl's assailant.' Neither the police nor the local community appeared to find the man, despite a search for 'severa[l] hours.'[48]

In Fultonville, New York, a 'night prowler' known as '"Jack the Clipper"' terrorised women by cutting their hair. The man appeared in late November, 1902, attacking a woman named Nellie Goudry outside her home. The man 'clipped off one of her long braids of hair' seemingly as she was about to walk through her front door. Since Goudry he had attacked Mrs. Floyd Wormuth, 'gagging her, look[ing] her in the face, and, exclaiming "You are not the one!"' Women were 'thrown into a state of panic, and

[47] 'Another Girl's Hair Clipped,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 1.

[48] 'Another Girl's Hair Clipped,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 1.

'refuse[d] to venture out at night unescorted.' As a result, the 'men of the town... organiz[ed] patrol parties in the hope of capturing the man.'[49]

The year after, in the summer of 1903, a young Chicago girl named Elsie Wehling was attacked by a Jack the Clipper. Only thirteen, Wehling was, in her words, '"standing in the alley when I suddenly felt some one grab me from behind..."' Wehling '"then... heard the click of a pair of shears"' and the footsteps of a man running away from her. The clipping itself appears to have been quick, but in his haste the clipper left Wehling bleeding: her braid was 'severed so close to the neck that blood flowed from the wounds made by the scissors points.' Frozen with fear, and perhaps with pain, Wehling did not move or cry, she '"just stood still and watched the man as he turned around the corner. I saw him open the basket and put the braid of hair which he had clipped from my head under the cover."'[50]

Yet again, one of the central features of the story is not merely the attack but the apparent cooperation between community members of the Roseland neighbourhood and police officers investigating the assault. Twice in the article is the participation of the local 'citizens' noted. Having 'caused terror among the little girls of Roseland' an 'organized hunt' was made in search of the perpetrator by a 'crowd of citizens.' After Wehling's mother contacted the police a number of young men further 'volunteered to pursue the assailant and aided the police.' Unfortunately, though a ‘thorough search

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[49] 'In Terror of "Jack the Clipper.": His Mania is Cutting of Log Briads Of Hair--Men Organize to Catch Him,' *New York Tribune* (26 November 1902), p. 4.

[50] 'Hair Clipper Causes Panic Among Girls at Roseland,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (4 June 1903), p. 3.

was made for the man,' like so many other Jacks and clippers he too disappeared into the urban environment virtually without a trace.[51]

What the confusion over how to charge clippers with and the resistance evidenced by community members reveal, then, are the competing modes not only of the policing of everyday life in the United States before World War I but the different sets of norms that underlined these contests. Capozzola argues that although the American state was a powerful and growing entity, ‘the state *did not* hold a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force.’ This pre-WWI America, for Capozzola, was characterised by a ‘political culture locked in battle with an autocratic enemy.’[52] This does not necessarily suggest equivalence in authority or power between these vigilante or community groups and the state, or the effectiveness of the different tools at the disposal of various institutions, but it does speak to questions about the ways in which the state wielded power and to what effect, and to the areas in which denizens of the United States would welcome intrusion if and when it assisted them in achieving their own ends. Understanding the different punishments that were (or were not) meted out to clippers augments our understandings of how the state leveraged violence and criminality in the construction of a sexual order that excluded the concerns of working-class members of the community and particular, often non-reproductive, orientations of desire. When it came to clippers very few state-based institutions offered up much in the way of help for communities seeking punishment or justice for violent acts that registered as complicated forms of heterosexual interpersonal violence.

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[51] 'Hair Clipper Causes Panic Among Girls at Roseland,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 3.

[52] Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, p. 13.

Ultimately, Gallo was charged, convicted, and deported for his haircutting. But the confusion surrounding his actions--how was he to be charged? Were these acts criminal at all?--testifies to the divide that existed between community expectations of unacceptable sexual behaviours and the growing state bureaucracy responsible for enforcing them. Arrested on New Year's Day 1907, it took less than ten days for Gallo to be convicted in the municipal court. Gallo had testified 'in [*sic*] his own behalf.' By day he worked in a 'machine shop on C st.' but in the evenings he was employed as a 'barber... in a shop on Dorchester st, South Boston...' The braids that were found on his person, Gallo claimed, were merely hair 'stuff[ed]' into 'his pocket' as he 'cut [hair] from the heads of patrons.' The presiding judge, Judge Bennett, 'compared the braids taken from Gallo's pocket and the hair of the three little girls' and 'found [them],' to Gallo's detriment, to be similar.'[53]

Shortly after Gallo's guilt was determined he 'was sentenced to nine months imprisonment in the house of correction.' Gallo appealed, as 'there was considerable question about [his] sanity,'[54] but his attempts to overturn the conviction in the superior criminal court appear to have failed.[55] Gallo's hopes for acquittal were squashed by a jury who again found Gallo guilty 'of assaulting four girls by cutting off their hair.'[56] It is

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[53] 'Gallo Guilty: Hair-Snipper Convicted in Municipal Court,' *Boston Daily Globe* (10 January 1907), p. 9.

[54] 'Verdict is for $18,000 (Hair-Snipper Gets Nine Months; Appeals),' *Boston Daily Globe* (11 January 1907), p. 2.

[55] Case records for Gallo exist only for the appeal of his sentence, see: Suffolk County Supreme Judicial Court, Record Books, 1686-1949, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Archives, p. 595.

[56] 'Hair Snipper Guilty: Frank Gallo of South Boston Convicted by a Jury in the Superior Criminal Court,' *Boston Daily Globe* (15 February 1907), p. 11.

unclear exactly how long Gallo spent on Deer Island, Boston's recently converted house of corrections, as articles put the sentence at anywhere from two months through to the original nine months.[57] However, it appears as though part of Gallo's sentence included a reprieve from time spent in the house of corrections if he agreed to voluntarily return to his home country at the end of a two-month term.

In April, having served his two months, Gallo reappeared before a 'probationary sitting of the superior criminal court' in violation of the agreement he had made to return to Italy. 'Money,' Gallo indicated, 'prevented him from keeping the promise he had made.' Gallo was 'held until April 22, by which time it is expected that some arrangements will be made for deporting him to Italy.'[58]

The last mention of Gallo as a haircutter was that 'friends have made arrangements for deporting him,' and he would be returning to his country of birth on Saturday, 27 April 1907.[59]

The question of prosecuting and punishing clippers--both judicially and extra-judicially--is indicative of the tensions that existed between communities and the burgeoning US state over changing norms of sexual desire and expression. But these tensions were not merely struggles over whether clippers could be included in the

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[57] **9 months:** 'Verdict is for $18,000,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 2.
4 months: 'Brown Held in $500.: Alleged Hair Snipper Pleads Not Guilty When Arraigned Before Judge Wentworth,' *Boston Daily Globe* (2 April 1907), p. 3.
2 months: 'Gallo Given Time: Alleged Hair-Snipper Renews His Promise to Leave Country as Soon as He is Able,' *Boston Daily Globe* (19 April 1907), p. 12; 'Wiles is Given Life Sentence,' *Boston Daily Globe* (23 April 1907), p. 16.

[58] 'Gallo Given Time,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 12.

[59] 'Wiles is Given Life Sentence,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 16.

criminal justice system, but in what capacity they were to be incorporated. The concern and consternation over how clippers might fit into understandings of sexual or interpersonal violence gesture towards a window of possibility in which Americans had an opportunity to remake their understandings of sexual violence and re-centre the experiences of those who had been victimised. Close attention to the discourse of clipping, which worked hard to fuse heterosexuality and whiteness and obscure the transgressive nature of clippings, reveal the radical potential that a serious reckoning with Jack the Clipper posed to new systems of white heterosexuality embodied in the legal system.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century was characterised by a slew of new pieces of legislation that responded to the conditions of urban modernity. Legislators 'experimented' with new forms of justice and retribution. As Diane Miller Sommerville argues, much of this experimentation, especially in the South, was taken up by Americans who wished to enforce a status quo developed under slavery, maintaining an unequal system of justice and retribution by tinkering with penalties and sentences for sexual offenders to ensure the maximum sentence for Black offenders and a minimal sentence for white offenders. In the post-emancipation South, Americans sought to balance their commitment to disproportionately criminalising the sexual violence, imagined or real, of Black men with the leniency demanded for white offenders. As rape statutes that were originally race specific became race neutral and as the myth of the Black Rapist emerged fuelling the fires of white rage, white legislators attempted to find

a balance which allowed them to prosecute sexual violence while maintaining room for manuevrability for white men.[60]

Americans entertained radically different categories of age and youth and reconsidered the nature of consent. Mary Odem's work on age of consent laws argues, alongside the later work of Stephen Robertson, that the very category of modern 'childhood' was, in part, born through the legal system and assertions of consent and ability with regards to sexual violence and trauma that were developed in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Agitation from reformers across the United States, both North and South, increasingly demanded that the age of consent be raised to protect young children, and young girls especially. In 1885, the age of consent in Delaware was seven and for most other states sat at ten or twelve leaving considerable room for sexual offenders to argue, with success, that ten- or eleven-year-old girls were willing participants in sexual activity with adult men. With the exception of Georgia, who maintained an age of consent of 14, by 1920 all states and the District of Columbia had raised their ages of consent to at least 16.[61] Though it had been Southern states who dragged their feet most considerably they too met this challenge.[62]

As women moved into the public realm and urban spaces, anti-mashing, anti-flirting, and anti-street harassment ordinances or legislation were passed or presented throughout a number of American states. According to Kerry Sebrave,

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[60] Diane Miller Sommerville, *Rape & Race in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 159; Estelle Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 92.

[61] Mary E. Odem, *Delinquent Daughters*, pp. 14-15; Stephen Robertson, *Crimes against Children: Sexual Violence and Legal Culture in New York City, 1880-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), p. 2.

[62] Estelle Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 139.

discussions or introductions of bills to prevent mashing took place in Arizona, Illinois, Kansas, Ohio, Oklahoma, Massachusetts, New York, Texas, Virginia, Washington, D.C., and Wisconsin.[63] In 1900, the future president of the United States but then governor of New York, Theodore Roosevelt, 'argue[ed] for a law to punish pimps and not just prostitutes….' In response, 'an unnamed public official who commented added that in connection with this matter it would be good if the reporter would call the attention of the public and Governor Roosevelt "to the shameful fact that there is no law in the state under which a masher can be arrested and punished…."' [64]

Other states and cities were more proactive in either proposing or passing bills designed to stem the tide of sexual assaults in the urban environment. 'A report in April 1893 noted that Ohio Governor McKinley had not yet signed the "masher" bill, which provided a fine of $100 or $300 or imprisonment for a term from six months to two years as the penalty upon conviction of any married man who represents himself to be unmarried and repeatedly calls upon a female in that capacity.'[65] In Toledo, Ohio, an 'ordinance was introduced by request of the Board of Public Safety "to protect women from the masher nuisance," and was drafted by the City Solicitor and approved by the County Committee on the night of September 30,' 1903. 'As of September 1905, the making of "goo-goo eyes" was a misdemeanor in Houston, Texas.' Similarly, the 'LeRoy, Kansas, City Council began' work on 'an ordinance making it a misdemeanor for traveling men to make goo-goo eyes or carry on flirtations with young women.' By the

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[63] Kerry Segbrave, *Beware the Masher: Sexual Harassment in American Public Places, 1880-1930* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Company, 2014), pp. 111-8.

[64] Kerry Segbrave, *Beware the Masher*, p. 114.

[65] Kerry Segbrave, *Beware the Masher*, p. 111.

end of 1905, '"any man who smiles at a woman passing him on the public streets, or who makes grimaces of a flirting or insulting nature such as to incur the displeasure of the woman in question" was subject to arrest and a fine not exceeding $25.' [66]

While it is unclear how many of these pieces of proposed legislation were organised by women, women activists were also, in places like Chicago, key to the development and advocacy of new laws designed to protect women's bodies and sexuality. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, mostly middle- and upper-class white women gained access to communities of professionals that enabled them to wield a degree of political and social power. Although this was in no way absolute, and indeed white men worked equally hard to keep women in their disciplines at bay, white, wealthy women became lawyers and used their qualifications to advocate for new measures. The Chicago Protective Agency for Women and Children, for example, 'drafted a criminal seduction statute' that, in 1899, 'after a decade of work' passed through the Illinois state legislature. [67]

While anti-vice crusaders targeted sin in the city, progressive women reformers advocated for significant modifications to the cultural, legal, and political institutions of the United States to address sexual violence. As Estelle B. Freedman argues, white American women tied sexual violence both within and outside of marriage to women's exclusion from civic participation. Although not the primary target of most mainstream reformers' aims, 'national and regional suffrage groups did address the physical and sexual abuse that women suffered at the hands of men.' Fundamentally, these suffrage

[66] Kerry Segbrave, *Beware the Masher*, p. 115.

[67] Estelle Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 62.

groups indicated, the problem of sexual violence stemmed from the exclusion of women from 'legislatures, juries, and the judiciary.' 'Only full citizenship,' they argued, 'would end these injustices.'[68]

Voting would allow women to exert themselves as a political force, one that would be able to 'hold elected officials accountable for the ways the state responded to rape,' or, indeed, the ways that it did not. Even in instances in which the outcome of a rape trial was 'favourable,' women did not want to be forced to rely on the 'goodwill of officials' with limited understanding of their circumstances.[69] White women reformers were also committed to jury participation, from which they were excluded until well into the twentieth century in at least one Southern state. 'Postbellum suffragists often complained that women had a fundamental right to trial by a jury of their peers,' and that only by empanelling women would 'lenience towards rapists be tempered, and justice for women more frequently achieved…'[70]

Americans were not shy about making sweeping changes to laws and ordinances at the turn of the century as they pertained to norms around sex, gender, and sexuality. Amidst this instability, as white Americans grappled with the social and material realities of the new world they were creating, was contained the potential for real alterations to the ways in which white women and white women victims were understood and even centred in discussions of sexual violence. As women fought for their voices to be heard in legislatures, in court rooms, and in workplaces, as Americans

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[68] Estelle Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 53.

[69] Estelle Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 57.

[70] Estelle Freedman, *Redefining Rape*, p. 58.

recognised the new category of childhood and debated ages of consent, and as sexual assault laws themselves were reworked, albeit most often to enshrine anti-Black racism, there was a spirit of experimentalism that, channelled in a different direction, offered a small moment in which radical changes to the definitions of the body understood and acted upon by communities could have been incorporated into legislation to deal with clippers.

The point here is not that working-class communities or white middle-class reformers represented bastions of progress or even held particularly inclusive ideas about sex or decorum; this was a battle waged over and about sexuality that was decidedly conservative and ignored the voices of women who experienced clipper violence firsthand. Rather, the question of whether and how clippers were charged is one which speaks to firm commitments on the behalf of middle-class reformers, white American and European scientists and intellectuals, and home-grown bureaurcrats, administrators, and politicans; commitments to building an infrastructure of heterosexuality within the state apparatus, that denied the kind of justice, or even the recognition of a criminally violating act, that women and their communities demanded.

Americans were firm on many issues, especially around the definition of rape itself. Despite this immense instability and suite of legislative changes designed largely to incorporate heterosexual reproduction into the US state in an official capacity, one can overstate the amount of change that took place to the imaginings of rape and sexual violence across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The broad definition of what constituted a rape remained tethered both to sex and to gender. Rape would

continue to require the carnal knowledge of a woman, specifically, excluding men, queer people, and non-vaginal penetration from the category. Penetration was often necessary for a conviction alongside seminal emissions and clear signs of distress and resistance. Even into the twenty-first century, politicians would contend what medical scientists had once, long ago, propounded, that only women who consented to sexual intercourse could become pregnant.[71] Evidence of a child, therefore, directly contradicted an accusation of rape.

My suggestion, then, is not that it was ever likely, or even realistic, that women would be able to effect radical changes to existing sexual assault and rape laws to be more inclusive of different bodies, experiences, or orientations. If nothing else, many white women would almost certainly have opposed any reform that included them alongside Black women. If there exists little evidence that violence against white women could have been understood expansively by the state, there exists even less evidence that a more just definition of sexual violence would have encompassed Black women as well. Rather, the concerns here are about the potential futures that Americans could have chosen to engage, directing them towards greater equality and the political choices that exist in our everyday lives. In identifying and actively contesting the boundaries of sexual violence, recognising the suffering inflicted upon women, their families, and their communities, and likely acknowledging the detrimental impact such attacks had on the broader society at large, Americans looked at an opportunity to

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[71] John Eligon and Michael Schwirtz, 'Senate Candidate Provokes Ire With "Legitimate Rape" Comment,' *New York Times* (19 August 2012), <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/20/us/politics/todd-akin-provokes-ire-with-legitimate-rape-comment.html>, last accessed 9 March 2022.

reimagine the ways in which they valued the bodies and lives of women and instead chose to concentrate on solidifying racism, classism, and sexism into the infrastructure of their legal and administrative systems.

Fundamentally, the struggle over how to include clippers, if at all, in the criminal justice system, a demand made implicitly by communities, indicated the ways in which sexual violence was enforced as a matter of heterosexual reproduction. By examining the choices made we can see the small window of opportunity for the proverbial road not taken but, perhaps more importantly, we can identify where creative energy was expended and how American reformers decided to invest their time and energy more clearly, what commitments they had and to whom they had them. Haircutting was simply not legible as a form of sexual offence because it failed to meet the criteria of an offense that endangered reproductive heterosexuality, and because an engagement with this kind of violent encounter held within it the potential to reshape the ways in which the US state would acknowledge the competing and conflicting views of its denizens on issues of sexual desire and orientations. Even amidst the upheaval of sexual norms and the emergence of a new figure representative of widespread sexual violence in American cities and towns, the American state, broadly understood, invested in an infrastructure of reproductive heterosexuality that tapped into and addressed the concerns of the white race's degeneration rather than the individual wellbeing or welfare of the women who, over the course of a generation, were violated by these clippers.

Despite the number of attacks documented in the contemporary press, very few clippers were ever caught or identified. Many evaded capture, disappearing into the urban environment, taking advantage of new mass transit systems in major cities; others simply gave false names or had powerful patrons to help them avoid any legal trouble; others again are perhaps merely lost to history. But when clippers were caught the confusion about what to charge them with, intermingled with inconsistencies between what was 'appropriate' to charge them with as opposed to what was possible or available, make stark the complicated nature of these acts of violence within an overlapping cultural and legal framework of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Where individuals and communities recognised the kinds of transgressions that clippers represented--namely very different understandings of and priorities around the protection of the sexual body and of expressions of sexual desire--the state remained ambivalent about interceding in these cases. Indeed, despite almost thirty victims the year prior to his arrest, Gallo's case continued to baffle detectives who, allegedly, had zero institutional or personal memory of such an event.

The confusion in these cases was undoubtedly a result of unstable categories coming into and out of being; challenged and erased as bodies were rewritten, urban space reformed, and desire reoriented. Some of this confusion likely compelled communities to act out, against or with police, in their bid to apprehend clippers, hoping that something would be done. Some of this confusion compelled communities to form lynch mobs of their own, chasing down clippers, and sometimes other Jacks, in their midsts. Overall, however, it reveals a lay system of desire that was actively excluded

from a legal system primarily interested in the protection of property and the enforcement of reproductive sexual norms. By refusing to acknowledge the different ways in which violence and non-heterosexual, non-reproductive sexual desire could be linked, middle-class reformers who pushed a new vision of the bureaucratic state worked to institutionalise forms of 'appropriate' sexual desire.

These conflicts were made manifest in the myriad of active social changes undertaken in the Progressive Era, a period not defined by stasis in either the legal or cultural sense. As Americans adjusted to the changing nature of their surroundings, reconsidering women's roles outside of the home, reimagining rape statutes, and raising age of consent laws, they demonstrated their willingness to experiment with new ways of being in the world that broke from, in striking ways, with the world that had existed in the United States even a few decades prior. These experiments, however, often relied upon racialised considerations, leveraging the creative energy and imagination of American thinkers and lawmakers to enshrine anti-Black racism and protect and valorise white womanhood rather than offering up new paths towards a broader form of liberation.

Assault, mischief, or theft likely captured the essence of these attacks within the framework of what was provable but without capturing the significance or anxiety caused by these transgressions. This clash, then, was not merely representative of a disagreement between two systems of sexuality and of sexual value, but productive of a window of opportunity that had the possibility of ushering in a different future, one in which women's bodies were not merely subject to property law and anxieties over white

reproduction. Analysing cases of clipper interactions with the legal system indicate that Americans chose not to take up or engage with the issues represented by this very particular kind of violence, unsettling as it was for some fundamental concerns about the direction of American culture.

Amidst this series of experiments, then, I argue that clippers offered an opportunity for (and threat of) radical reform in the ways in which Americans understood the nature and rights of (white) women. This was never a likely outcome, but its very existence speaks to the possibiities that come from an unfettered imaginary in times of transition and, perhaps more importantly, to the stakes of heterosexuality in the burgeoning bureaucracy of the United States. In this, I certainly do not want to valorise lay communities as bastions of inclusive politics but I also do not want us to foreclose the possibility of a future in which Americans of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries were more adept at and open to creating mechanisms that valued expansive notions of sexual desire, bodily harm, and their intersection. While there was a possibility for radical reform that recognised women as people and took seriously not just scientific knowledge of the nineteenth century but community concerns and beliefs about sexuality and gender, the state was preoccupied with heterosexual reproduction and these doors were quickly closed. Indeed, so quickly, that very few Americans would even recognise haircutting as a serious form of violence by the middle of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER FIVE

MOVING JACKS: THE CIRCULATION OF CLIPPERS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

Newspapers in the turn-of-the-century United States were intimately connected to burgeoning infrastructures of mass transit, the fast-developing webbing that connected Americans across the continent and allowed for the movement of people and goods in a rapidly industrialising society. Newspapers and trains fed off each other: two distinct but interrelated infrastructures that worked alone and in tandem to shape and reshape systems of circulation and mobility that minimised the feeling of distance and the limits of physical space while amplifying and shaping both the physical and cultural spaces of an urbanising United States. As trains, trams, and even streetcars created a population of daily commuters, so were consumers of newly reworked and sensationalised newspapers born, eagerly awaiting the fresh morning edition or afternoon breaking news. And as newspapers captured and organised the chaos of fast-paced and unfamiliar city life, spruiking the various amenities of city life, they propelled the use and uptake of urban mass transit systems. Together, newspapers and trains (mass media and mass transit) structured the everyday experiences of Americans and underpinned the cultural worlds which they inhabited.

As technologies of mobility and circulation, trains had a unique relationship to mass media at the turn of the century, and to newspapers specifically, creating new 'habits' of urban life. For historian Peter Fritzsche, the new combination of turn-of-the-century Berliners 't[aking] streetcars as a matter of routine and read[ing] a

newspaper every day,' fused these two new expressions of modernity together and 'represented a startling change in metropolitan habits, which had been far less cosmopolitan and regular just one generation earlier.'[1] Longer train journeys were also filled with newspapers and other new and punchy literary forms that were designed to accommodate the rail experience: 'many potential readers in that age of iron and steam found time to pick up books and browse through newspapers during railway journeys,' fuelling the 'popularity of the cheap fiction that the English quickly labeled "railway reading."' In an apt display of the importance of rail to media and media to rail, railroads were also responsible for access to these materials that filled passenger voyages, 'transport[ing] unprecedented numbers of books and newspapers, filling small-town mailboxes, [and] stocking small-town kiosks….'[2] While passengers were reading a newspaper in a commuter service, freight services were transporting these same goods for dispersal along their route and at their destination.

In the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century United States, newspapers and trains were no less intimately interconnected. Newspapers were central in producing and disseminating the advocacy that propelled the very construction of railroads. Aware of the importance of the newspaper not merely for advertising services and providing information necessary to participate in rail travel (routes, schedule times, ticket protocols) but for generating support for the enterprise, railroad companies were active disseminators of physical copies of various newspapers. 'Newspapers needed more complete railroad systems to facilitate distribution of the paper,' and, in exchange,

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[1] Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 18.

[2] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, p. 57.

'railroads were among the most prominent lenders for struggling businesses such as newspapers and would provide loans on condition that their interests not be attacked or compromised in the pages of the newspaper.'[3] Rural newspapers especially demanded the services of rail companies to overcome the geographic distances that were eclipsed in the minds of newsreaders who would receive 'copies of [newspapers]... on the day it was printed.' The operators of Iowa's *Des Moines Register*, for example, 'studied train schedules to find out when editions serving different parts of the state had to be printed, and then reorganized the press schedule around that of the trains.'[4]

Jack the Clipper benefitted from from the media and transit infrastructure that increasingly characterised late-nineteenth-century American urban spaces. Clippers, alongside other characters representative of urban danger and criminality, were products of new transit systems that offered denizens of cities as much as those charged with policing such spaces unparalleled, if disorienting, possibilities for movement by increasing the speed with which one could move between city neighbourhoods and expanding the distances of movement that could be tolerated. New urban transit infrastructure allowed clippers to appear as if out of nowhere, enacting their violence against young women and then disappearing, sometimes seamlessly, into the crowd and then, perhaps, onto a train or tram. Trains, streetcars, and trams were not only features of these newspaper stories, constituting the backdrop of technological development peddled by journalists eager to boost their cities and likely impressed by

[3] Aurora Wallace, *Newspapers and the Making of Modern America: A History* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005), p. 32.

[4] Wallace, *Newspapers and the Making of Modern America*, pp. 32-3.

these technological feats in their own right, but were integral aspects of the clipper experience that enabled them to move as they did, evading capture by communities and authorities.

That clippers could appear out of nowhere and then melt back into the urban landscape contributed to the air of anxiety, fear, and disorientation that characterised city life in itself while also being fodder for news reporting, embroiled as it was in a general sense of the sensational. The fear that settled over women in the city was heightened not only by the fact of a clipper attack on the street, at a train station, or on their doorstep, but by the dissolving geographic boundaries of the city articulated by the newspaper which otherwise provided a sense of safety, perhaps elusive but nonetheless important. Jack the Clipper caused anxiety by disrupting and disorienting the social and physical markers that provided a sense of safety in a fast-changing environment.

The stakes of clippers and their interactions with city spaces moved beyond the materiality of transport infrastructure, however, as newspapers published and dispersed these narratives and exaggerated and extended the anxieties over personal and physical safety clippers represented. Newspapers were certainly not solely responsible for the reproduction of clipper narratives but they contributed significantly to the establishment of clipper narratives as viable, almost living, cultural products. The continued circulation of clipper narratives prevented the stories from finding a sense of completion--there was always another victim, another attack, another development in a trial--and produced an expected type of narrative. This contradiction, noted by Peter

Fritzsche as the development of a city spectator that imbibed the city, allowed for readers and consumers of clipper narratives to come to expect or anticipate the tropes of a clipper and project them upon other people or behaviours.[5] Copy-cat attacks were both likely, considering the widespread nature of clipper violence, and speculated upon by journalists and community members who were concerned with the corruption of a whole generation of individuals, not merely in their understandings of sexuality and sexual experience but in their ability to integrate into a new and modern society.

While trains were central to the movement of clippers through space and newspapers allowed for the clipper narratives to transition from individual violent encounters to cultural phenomena. And together these tools that structured modern urban life knitted clippers into the fabric of the city and inserted the very specific violent traumas of clipper attacks and their attendant implications as to acceptable forms of (hetero)sexual desire into the material and imaginary everyday lives of Americans. Even when a clipper like John Jorgenson was arrested not only did more clippers surface but the neat explanations for clippings were shattered by new evidence or speculation as new victims emerged. The endless news cycle precluded clipper cases from ever being closed and instead fuelled reproduction through the cultural infrastructure of the city.

As clippers came to be anticipated, as they came to be known and understood, these infrastructures of mass media and mass transit provided mechanisms for the spread and replication of the orientations embodied and endorsed through the discourse of the clipper. Perhaps more important than the mere circulation of these

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[5] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, pp. 128-34.

ideas, trains and newspapers assisted in smuggling new sexual values into the space of the city itself, constructing the urban environment as one defined by heterosexual engagement. Heterosexual orientations--not only reproductive relations, which were necessarily less visible on the streets--constituted the conditions under which safety could be more likely guaranteed, understanding could be extended to victims, and through which chastisement or even legal action could be taken against clippers.

If we can accept that clippers worked to embody conflicts and contradictions that were inherent in a shift to a new system of sexual desire--one that was gendered and racialised in ways particular to the turn of the century United States--then thinking about how clippers circulated is key to understanding their contribution to the reorientation of sexual desire that underpinned new sexual identity categories. Trains and newspapers moved clippers, literally in the case of transit infrastructure and metaphorically in the case of news media, through space, but in making clippers central aspects of the imagined lives and experiences of the urban environment also provided a mechanism through which clippers could effect a restructuring of desire.

Jack the Clipper, in other words, was not significant merely because he became a part of the city space--many cultural icons managed just this by being a part of newspaper reportage--but because his broad circulation and movements represented one key means through which 1) heterosexual desire itself transitioned from something expressed or experienced interpersonally to an infrastructure of orientation in its own right that was incorporated into the urban form of the city itself. Clippers reveal to us, 2) how one specific form of sexual desire came not only to operate within or move through

the space of the city but to be the city; incorporated into the very spatial form of urban life at the very moment in which American cities themselves were literally and metaphorically under construction.

Peter Fritzsche argues that ‘The newspaper was inseparable from the modern city and served as a perfect metonym for the city itself.’[6] While the city as a physical place, a location of commerce and pleasure and danger and violence, is real and tangible, if we take Fritzche’s argument to be true, we might also consider the city to be a place made possible and made coherent only by the overlapping and interconnected infrastructures of circulation and desire in which each relied upon the other to create the urban form. In this sense, the newspaper is not a metonym for the city but is the city. Trains did not merely pass through, enable, or plague a city; they were the city. And a specific form of Progressive Era, reproductive heterosexual desire was not within or outside of the city, but rather the city became an expression of heterosexual desire.

Trains and the Physical Circulation of Clippers

Between 1880 and 1920, America began its transformation into a predominantly urban nation.[7] Cities like New York and Chicago--by far the two largest in the United States--but also Philadelphia, Detroit, Boston, and St. Louis grew immensely over the course of the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth, forcing their residents to

[6] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, p. 24.

[7] James Connolly, 'Bringing the City Back In: Space and Place in the Urban History of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era,' *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 1, no. 3 (July 2002), pp. 260-1.

adapt to radically new ways of life. In 1830, for example, Chicago was but a small town and trading outpost consisting of only a handful of families, and New York and Boston, although economic and cultural hubs, remained rather provincial compared to their European counterparts, like London and Paris. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, Chicago had become the second largest city in America, easily the fastest growing, and quite legitimately a threat to New York as the largest urban centre in the United States; New York took its place as a global city threatening to eclipse even the seat of the British Empire itself; and other, smaller American cities like Boston or St. Louis continued to grow at a rapid pace.[8]

Trains and railroads were key to the growth of these cities and to the reimagining of America and its technological and geographic limits. Indeed, it is hard to overestimate the impact of trains on the lives of Americans as they challenged fundamental ways of knowing and engaging the world and each other. Railroads, writes William Cronon, 'changed the ways people experienced the seasons of the year' and 'their relationship with the hours of the day.' Moving across the landscape at speeds faster than had been

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[8] Using census data, economist Edward Glaeser has determined that between 1860 and 1920 'America's urban population… grew by 772%.' Moreover, the percentage of Americans who lived in the ten largest cities also increased, in absolute terms, by over ten million people: 'In 1870, the ten largest cities in the US had a total of 3.7 million inhabitants or 9.5% of the total US population. By 1920, the ten largest cities had 15.4 million residents or 14.4% of the overall US population.'

The rates of growth for individual cities varied between 1860 and 1920, however the magnitude of growth is impressive even among the most 'sluggish': New York grew by 590%, Baltimore by 245%, Boston by 320%, St. Louis by 380%, Buffalo by 525%, and Chicago by an incredible, though not unexpected, 2,308%. See: Edward L. Glaeser, 'Reinventing Boston: 1630-2003," *Journal of Economic Geography*, 5, no. 2 (2005), pp. 133-4.

The growth of any city by almost two and a half thousand percent over the course of a single person's life span is also an indication of the deep disorientation that I argue accompanied this period. Chicago is an extreme example but that kind of exponential growth is almost impossible to fathom in the present. The concreteness of it is deceptive--the growth is quantifiable; you can see the figures rise--but the number is simply too great to handle intellectually and, I suggest, was likely equally unsettling at the time.

conventionally possible, especially for large numbers of people in a single trip, ‘fundamentally altered people’s expectations of how long it took to travel between two distant points on the continent,’ shrinking the world of the United States as much as it shrunk the regions surrounding major railroad hubs. A trip to New York before 1852--‘In prerailroad days’--’took well over two weeks; shortly thereafter, it took less than two days.’ The ‘whole perceptual universe of North America’ ‘shrank’ [9]

It was the network of railroads crossing the United States that gave rise to the possibility of Chicago eclipsing New York to become not the second but the first city. It was the centrality of the rail networks, more than the lake or the river, argues Cronon, that placed Chicago in a position that enabled and cultivated its exponential growth. Existing at the crossroads of the rail lines working their way eastward and westward, Chicago was a necessary stopover and transit point for almost all goods and services that were moving cross-country.[10]

Like Chicago, New York’s growth and development at the turn of the century was also intimately connected to trains. New York City experienced a less intense period of growth and expansion in the late nineteenth century than its midwestern counterpart but this remained a problem of scale rather than of sluggishness. New York was simply unable to match Chicago’s exponential rate of growth as a larger city in absolute terms at the beginning of the nineteenth century. By 1900, however, New York had amalgamated its five boroughs, boasted almost 3.5 million residents, and ‘became the

[9] William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), p. 76. See also: Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1986), p. 10.

[10] Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, p. 91.

most populous city in the world after London.'[11] New York's population was double that of Chicago, with just under 1.7 million, and followed by Philadelphia (1.29 million), St. Louis (575,000), and Boston (560,000).[12]

As Clifton Hood argues, the 'extraordinary population growth and arduous geography' of New York made 'urban transport a high priority.' 'By 1890,' Hood argues, New York had an unrivalled mass transit system 'with 94 miles of elevated railways, 265 miles of horse railway, and 137 miles of horse omnibus lines,' New York City had, in yet another comparison to its European counterpart, 'more total mileage than London,' despite having only a third of the population. And yet, it still needed more.[13]

Birthed in this new urban world, clippers--alongside pickpockets, mashers, and even white slavers--fit seamlessly into the landscape of movement, using the advantages offered by the urban form and the technologies that were responsible for its creation to attack young girls and women. While trains, trams, and streetcars represented opportunities, often for middle-class Americans, to move about their cities, to participate in work or leisure activities, and to separate themselves from the pockets of industry

[11] David Ward and Olivier Zunz, 'Between Rationalism and Pluralism: Creating the Modern City,' in David Ward and Olivier Zunz, eds, *The Landscape of Modernity: Essays on New York City, 1900-1940* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1992), p. 3.

[12] According to the U.S. Census Data, in 1900 the population of Chicago, IL was 1,698,575; Boston, MA: 560,892; St. Louis, MO: 575,238; New York, NY: 3,437,202; Philadelphia, PA: 1,293,697.

See: Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, 'Historical Census Statistics On Population Totals By Race, 1790 to 1990, and By Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, For Large Cities And Other Urban Places In The United States,' U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Division, Working Paper No. 76 (2005), <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2005/demo/POP-twps0076.pdf>, last accessed 23 March 2022.

[13] Clifton Hood, 'Subways, Transit Politics, and Metropolitan Spatial Expansion,' in Zunz and Ward, *The Landscape of Modernity*, p. 192.

that still otherwise dominated blocks of city space, they were also taken advantage of by clippers to commit acts of violence, fraud, or subterfuge. Depositing themselves in different locales quickly and efficiently, disappearing from urban areas with ease, and offering up a spectre of urban violence, clippers were not only found on trains and trams but haunted these technological marvels in much the same way that these new technologies became regular and taken-for-granted aspects of the newspaper narratives that circulated across a reading public. Clippers were not always found on trains or used trains as a means of escape, but they were nonetheless intimately connected to the possibilities of movement and circulation afforded by new modes of and commitments to mass transit in urban America.

Trains, trams, and streetcars all appeared in the background of clipper stories, either as sites of attacks or as means of escape. Erna Franksy, for example, was attacked while on her way to Chicago's 'L' having spent the day shopping with her mother at the downtown department stores.[14] In October 1903 Gertrude Quinlan was attacked by a clipper who leapt 'over [a] low railing' at the 'Ashland avenue viaduct' and 'disappeared among the empty freight cars.'[15] Doris Irene Whitten, a thirteen-year-old girl in Arlington, Massachusetts, just outside Boston, appeared to have had her hair snipped as she was waiting at the train depot. Whitten had spent the day 'around the center of town looking into the show windows at the valentines.' At the depot she 'saw a strange man running down the railroad track toward Cambridge' who she would later

[14] 'Jack the Clipper Taken: Caught While Cutting Tresses from Erna Fransky's Head,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (16 February 1899), p. 3.

[15] 'Black Jack Hair Clipper Finds a Girl Victim,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (27 October 1903), p. 1.

assume was the man who had cut her braid, which measured about a 'foot long.'[16] As late as 1913, a Brooklyn man 'who gave his name as Edward F. Jones.. tried to shear off the auburn hair of Miss Celia Elting... on a car of the crosstown line going to the Williamsburg Bridge.' Elting, a nineteen-year-old woman, felt 'a tug at her hair' and, turning around, 'seized a pair of scissors in the hands of Jones.' The assailant was 'beaten by the passengers before he was arrested,' and would later argue that he had 'simply wielded the scissors in a spirit of fun.'[17]

Trains were not only a vital part of these stories as a backdrop to an act of violence but constituted the tissue that enabled these encounters. As clippers proliferated, trains complicated stories about and imaginings of clipper attacks by offering up mass transit as a means by which clippers resisted containment or control at the hands of local communities and city police forces. Between the 20th of January and the 6th of February 1906--in less than a three-week period--residents of Boston were alarmed to find that twenty-seven young women and girls were victims of a new Jack the Snipper. Mollie Singer, Ida Suffman, Louise Brandini, Bertha Smith, Elsie Derby, Mary Brogna, Rose Finkerlstein, Ella McRae, Lillian Goodman, Elizabeth McGowan, Lucy Brown, Rose Benovitz, Sadie Mack, Mrs D. Sullivan, Rose E. Burns, Theoda Cheney, Alice Smith, Susie I. Trainor, Annie McCauley, Edith R. Foster, Alice Finn, Agnes Snow, Florence McNamara, Ella Broussard, Alice Markley, Eleanor Barker, and two additional unnamed girls were all attacked by a man referred to in the newspapers

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[16] 'Snipper At It in Arlington: Doris Irene Whitten Loses Her Braid,' *Boston Daily Globe* (15 February 1906), pp. 1, 3.

[17] 'Held as "Jack the Clipper": E. F. Jones Accused in Car by Girl of Trying to Cut Off Her Hair,' *The Sun* [New York] (2 June 1913), p. 2.

as a ‘snipper.’[18] Central to the story and the sheer volume of clipper victims was Boston’s mass transit system which the snipper necessarily possessed a knowledge of and used to evade physical capture and social containment.

The police were baffled as to how to handle the case. Part of the problem was that these women gave conflicting descriptions of their assailants. Some of the women described their attacker as a ‘young man,’ perhaps up to or around thirty years of age. He was between ‘5 feet 3 inches’ and ‘5 feet 6 inches’ in height and ‘weighs from 130 to 140 pounds.’ Most of these women agreed that ‘his hair, eyes and complexion are very dark,’ and that he was most likely ‘an Italian or foreigner’ dressed in ‘dark clothes’ with either a ‘derby or a soft hat.’ However, women disagreed as to whether he was clean shaven or sported a moustache. Alice Markley alone indicated that the man who attacked her had a prominent scar on his eye.[19]

Other victims of the 1906 Boston snipper were confident that they were attacked by another woman. Mrs Elizabeth McGowan, Mrs D. Sullivan, and Miss Annie McCauley all 'insist[ed]' that their attacker was female. McGowan, a Scranton, Pennsylvania, woman, visiting her sister in Boston, said 'that the only person with whom she came in contact on the street during the afternoon of Feb 2, just prior to the discovery of the loss of her hair, was a woman.' Sullivan 'lost her hair about 6.40pm' the following day and was 'positive' that her hair was cut by a 'stout woman... who came near her during the walk.' This was the only 'opportunity to deprive her of her

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[18] 'Man With Hair Mania: Showing the Wide Range of the Hair Snipper's Operations,' *Boston Daily Globe* (9 February 1906), pp. 1, 5.

[19] 'Man With Hair Mania,' *Boston Daily Globe*, pp. 1, 5.

adornment' that Sullivan could conjure. McCauley 'lost her hair while she was on the way to a laundry late in the afternoon' and she too was confident that she had been assaulted by a woman. McCauley 'remember[ed] being jostled by a woman' and 'recall[ed] no one else who brushed against her in the street.'[20]

Mrs Ella Broussard remained an outlier not only because she could not identify her attacker but because the incident was so much more violent than any other reported attacks, suggesting the possibility of a third assailant. Where the other women were jostled or suspected someone of following too closely behind them, Broussard was attacked on the doorstep of her home in East Boston.[21] Broussard had 'put a silk cape over her head' a little before 6pm before she headed out to buy some milk from a bakery nearby. Going no more than '100 feet from her home,' Broussard's trip was quick: she 'was at the store a minute or so, and immediately' returned home. To get back into her apartment, Broussard had to climb twelve stairs to a small landing. It was here, hidden in the shadows, that the snipper 'had secreted himself.'[22]

When Broussard returned home and climbed those twelve steps she did not see the man until he had lunged at her. 'The man grabbed her by her right arm, severely wrenching it,' then 'pulled the cape from her head, and like a flash clipped about 15 inches of her hair, which was done up in a loop.' Broussard 'screamed and fell outside the door in a faint.' The snipper caught her and, the door now slightly ajar, 'threw' Broussard 'in the doorway to the foot of the main stairway, and tossed the hair he had

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[20] 'Man With Hair Mania,' *Boston Daily Globe*, pp. 1, 5.

[21] 'Man With Hair Mania,' *Boston Daily Globe*, pp. 1, 5.

[22] 'Woman is Brutally Beaten by "Snipper": Mrs Brausard of East Boston Was at Door of Her Home,' *Boston Daily Globe* (8 Feb 1906), pp. 1, 3.

clipped in upon her.' Broussard's husband heard his wife's screams and 'rushed' to the front door only to find her 'lying at the foot of the stairway.' He checked on his wife who explained that she'd been attacked and he ran out into the street hoping to find a trace of the man without success.[23]

The *Boston Daily Globe* reported that police had dismissed the inconsistent reports of the victims: Superintendent 'Pierce and Chief Inspector Watts [took] the meagre descriptions furnished and have decided that the "snipper" is a young man.' The majority of women did argue that their attacker was a man, so the police were not without grounds for investigating the prospect. However, their relinquishment of any investigation into the potential women snippers revealed both how clippers were imagined to conform to particular stereotypes--that were decidedly male--and the convenience of such stereotypes for streamlining investigations.[24]

Investigators (and reporters) determined that the snipper was most likely a man based upon their previous experiences with criminals who displayed similar fetishistic tendencies. They believed this clipper to be ‘deranged,’ possessed by a 'some peculiar dementia or else a degenerate whose abnormal passion is gratified by robbing women of their hair and making a collection.' Not a few years prior, the police 'spent weeks trying to apprehend a man whose extraordinary passion [for] the collection of women's chemises' led him to 'steal and commit assault and battery.' Understanding this to be a targeted attack against women and based upon their own experiences of such

[23] 'Woman is Brutally Beaten by "Snipper,"' *Boston Daily Globe*, pp. 1, 3.

[24] 'Man With Hair Mania,' *Boston Daily Globe*, pp. 1, 5.

‘deranged’ offenders, officers involved felt comfortable determining that the attacker was a man.[25]

Hoping, despite the conflicting witness descriptions and mode of attack, that this was the work of one ‘degenerate’ or ‘crank’ who savoured the hair of these women--much as one might a shoe, a chamise, or a pair of silk undergarments--police moved forward with the assumption of a single perpetrator; the likelihood of there being multiple of these ‘deranged’ men or women was neither palatable nor expedient for the investigation. The article plainly stated that investigators were ‘inclined to charge all the assaults to one demented young man.’ Despite the evidence presented to them that a singular offender was unlikely, by committing to this fiction they were seeking to simplify the logistics of apprehending this man.[26]

Where multiple offenders might have been preying on their neighbours and members of their local communities, the fixation on a single offender moving about the city emphasised the importance of Boston’s transit system for effectively carrying out these clippings. For women to have been attacked all over the city, sometimes within hours of each other, the assailant (as he was imagined) needed to be moving around Boston and its surrounding areas with ease and efficiency. The most recent attacks clearly ‘showed the range of the movements of the miscreant, for he found victims in East Boston, the South End and Roxbury, in addition to making a futile attempt to clip the hair from the head of a young girl, one of a part of skaters on the public garden.' Where this snipper had, at least according to the theory, started small and perhaps

[25] 'Man With Hair Mania,' *Boston Daily Globe*, pp. 1, 5.

[26] 'Man With Hair Mania,' *Boston Daily Globe*, pp. 1, 5.

locally he increasingly moved outwards geographically. The article attributed this expansion to his ‘success[es]... gratif[ying] his passion’ which had similarly spurred ‘his vanity… increas[ing] the number of victims per day and has correspondingly extended his field of operations.'[27]

To expand this ‘field of operations,’ the presumed snipper was almost certainly relying on public transit: 'Only a very active man using the transportation lines could have made the rounds quickly enough to have participated in the assaults of Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday evening.’ To help track his movements, readers were provided a rough map of where these incidents occurred illustrating the widespread nature of these attacks and indicating how crucial the map of the city, real and imagined, was to how these attacks were communicated to the public and understood by investigators.[28]

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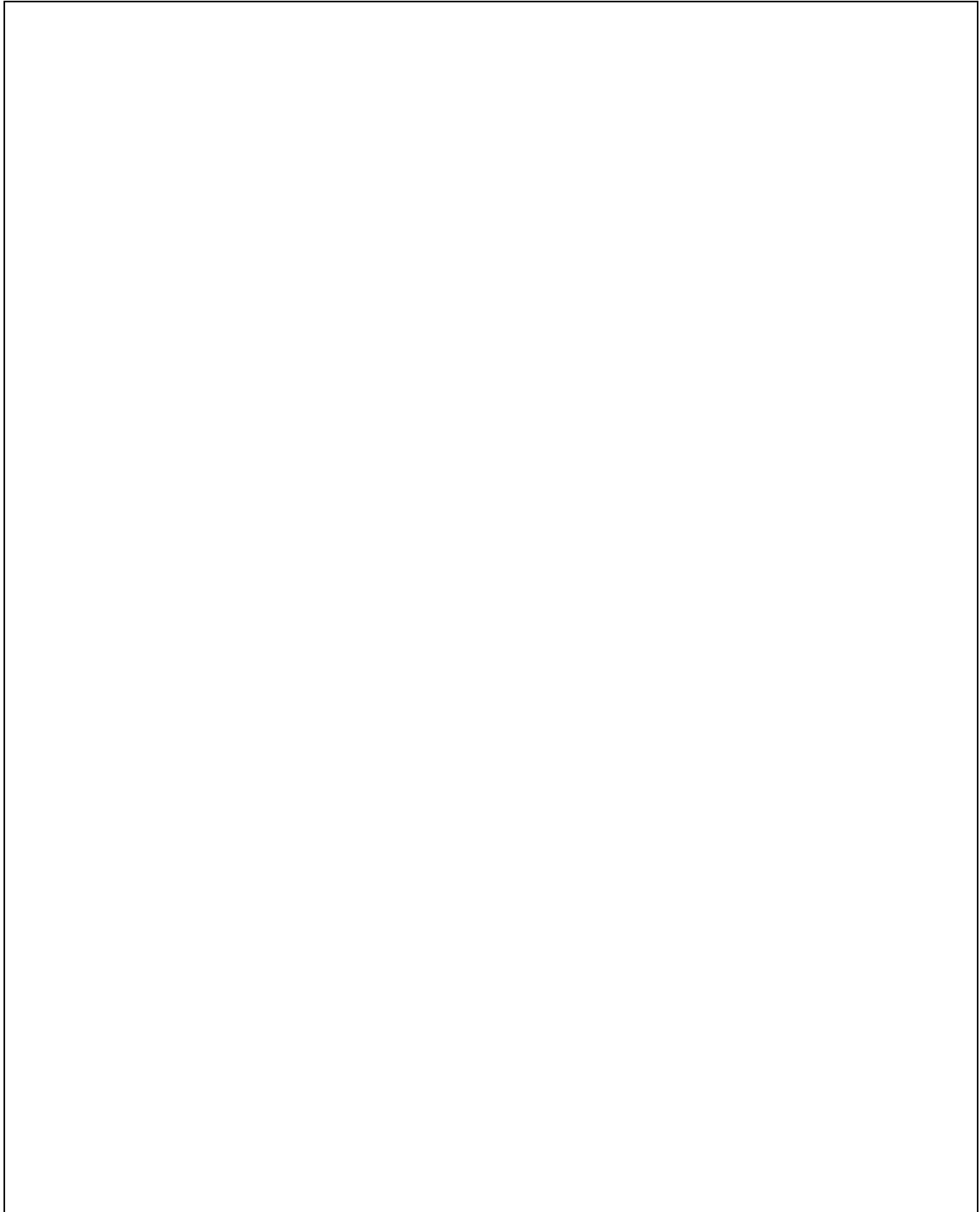
[27] 'Man With Hair Mania,' *Boston Daily Globe*, pp. 1, 5.

[28] 'Man With Hair Mania,' *Boston Daily Globe*, pp. 1, 5.



` 1: Map of Boston clipper attacks in January and February 1906.
Source: 'Man With Hair Mania: Showing the Wide Range of the Hair Snipper's Operations,' *Boston Daily Globe* (9 February 1906), pp. 1, 5.

Were this snipper confined to even one neighbourhood, the police claimed, they would have a good chance of catching him out, but with his access to an *entire* network of transport infrastructure he could appear and then disappear from whole regions of the city with ease and speed:

> "He is a very difficult person to catch, for he does not confine himself to one section. If he held to the North End, for example, we could cover the district with policemen and inspectors and get him; but he seems to have skipped all over the city and suburbs."[29]

Part of this was perhaps a problem of organisation: where would one deploy a concentration of officers and patrolmen to ensure the safety of young women in the city? But these challenges also speak to how these new urban environments were locations of temporal and spatial disorientation, subject to entirely different rules of movement and speed courtesy of these technologies of mobility and circulation.

Patrick Ford was suspected of being the Boston snipper having ‘accidentally brushed’ the shoulder of one young girl. Innocent or otherwise, the man was unprepared for the response as this young girl, with the aid of a male friend or acquaintance, drummed up support from members of the local community. Although ‘saved’ by a police officer, notable was the indication that this man, recognising that he was increasingly ‘unwelcome,’ departed immediately by taking the train to the surrounding suburbs. Not only was this man a stranger, but his ability to act as such or to be identified as ‘a stranger’ was contingent on these very same modes of transportation that made the new snipper so dangerous.[30]

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[29] 'Man With Hair Mania,' *Boston Daily Globe*, pp. 1, 5.

[30] 'Man With Hair Mania,' *Boston Daily Globe*, pp. 1, 5. See also, Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, pp. 204-5.

Trains, trams, and other forms of urban and inter-urban transportation, acted as great connectors across the United States, especially in nineteenth-century cities like Chicago, New York, and Boston, but they also acted to disperse individuals throughout the urban environment with ease and anonymity, disrupting the common-sense understanding of how, where, and at what speeds people could move. Individual travellers might be disoriented as they moved into or through unfamiliar environments, clippers might themselves cause disorientation by striking and disappearing on trains or trams, and the act of disappearing made real and observable the disorientations that existed in these new places which simply could not be managed or surveilled in ways that were hoped for by at least some community members.

Clippers were entangled with and relied upon modernity and technologies of mobility unique to American cities of the last decades of the nineteenth century. The fear and anxiety that the figure of the clipper induced was certainly a result of the individual danger posed in these new environments but the mobility that these new forms of transportation afforded created another spectre of danger in the urban landscape. It was not merely that a clipper might be on your tram or streetcar, or waiting for you at the train station, but that trains and trams meant that clippers could feasibly be anywhere: they could terrorise an entire city and then disappear without a trace.

Newspapers and the Incorporation of Clippers into the Urban Imaginary

Where there were networks that enabled clippers, and clipper suspects like Patrick Ford, to physically move between, within, and around urban spaces, media networks allowed narratives of clippers to circulate in a different capacity, providing community members and neighbours with the information required to identify Ford (and others) as potential clippers in their midst and perpetuating a general sense of anxiety about the dangers of moving through the city. If trains, trams, and streetcars allowed for clippers to physically move about cities and between cities and their surrounding suburbs and towns, it was newspapers that sustained clippers as cultural icons, retransmitting the building blocks of the clipper narratives and operating as a means through which clippers could live and reproduce. Not only were clippers physical threats, then, their presence in the city all the more palpable because of their unpredictability, but they were cultural touchstones around which information could be organised into stories and communicate information pertaining to changing sex and gender norms and their associated tendencies of desire.

Recognising newspapers as another kind of infrastructure, one deeply entwined with physical transit infrastructure, that assisted in organising the space of the city allows us to extend our understandings of 'circulation' and 'mobility' beyond the physical movements of clippers within geographic boundaries and examine the integration of clippers themselves into urban environments across the United States. Clippers become not merely stories that were representational but also organising principles with the potential to influence deep and enduring structural change. If, as we have seen, clippers represented competing, conflicting, and burgeoning understandings of sexual

desire, racial imaginaries, and gender roles, integrating clippers into the cultural landscape of the United States meant incorporating these ideas and anxieties into the vocabulary and experiences of English-speaking Americans. Through clippers, new forms of (hetero)sexual desire were distributed to a reading public, ultimately establishing an infrastructure of heterosexual desire that was as much a part of the formation of cities as were trains and newspapers.

Like trains, newspapers contained within themselves the ability to destroy and rebuild the sense of time and space (and thus sociality) experienced by urban denizens; 'the newspaper,' according to historian Peter Fritzsche, 'appeared to contract time to the instant and to erase everything else.'[31] The manufacture and distribution of a newspaper itself spoke to the vast changes in industry and technology that changed the pace at which information moved, informing habits and behaviours of modern urban life. Speaking of the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, for example, Fritzsche argues that:

> No account of… Berlin has been complete without a description of the gigantic linotype machines that set big-city editions, the fast-pedaling cyclists who distributed the bundled papers, the colorful vendors who sold them on busy streets, or the hurrying commuters who scanned headlines in streetcars and subways.'[32]

As people rushed around the city, grabbing newspapers, they participated not only in a show of the speed and force of urban modernity itself but generated the conditions

[31] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, p. 181

[32] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, p. 23.

under which this velocity was made manifest; fuelling the machines and cyclists and, importantly, new narratives.

Production and consumption of news, not just newspapers, also reflected the new speed of modern life. 'In the half-century between 1856 and 1906,' for example, 'the proportion of articles' in Berlin newspapers 'that reported on events that had occurred within the previous twenty-four hours increased from 11 to 95 percent.'[33] In the American context, newspapers were produced at speeds faster than they could possibly be consumed. Even if someone were to read 'two or three different titles in one day' this would be insufficient to stay current on all of the different news publications coming out of large American cities. More newspapers were 'produced… than any… [single person] could read.'[34]

Contained within these newspapers were general interest stories, sensational reports of crime and violence, advertisements, political and economic news, and opinion columns, all of which grappled with and contributed to the vitality and chaos of city life. Newspapers with different political affiliations and ideological inflections dispersed competing articulations and constellations of city spaces and their consumer products that news readers then used to assemble a temporarily coherent map of their city to navigate social, sexual, economic, and political opportunities and dangers. Newspapers were a product of the inability to capture a static map of the city and, in turn, helped,

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[33] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, p. 181.

[34] Wallace, *Newspapers and the Making of Modern America*, p. 3.

even momentarily, to sort this information into something usable for a host of wildly different city dwellers.[35]

Fritzsche terms the production of this urban environment through news media the ‘word city.’ As cities swelled, one’s ability to ‘construct adequate city maps on a foundation of personal experience’ was shattered. No longer was it possible to orient yourself merely through recognition of the people who you worked and lived alongside and the spaces that they occupied as when neighbourhoods and communities were smaller:[36]

> At the most basic level, the urban sprawl that altered regional maps around 1900 could not be used without instructions and labels. With the daily influx of hundreds of newcomers, the breakdown of other neighborhoods and turnover of residents in newer ones, and the widening physical separation of home and workplace, a great crowd traversed the city more frequently and for longer distances than ever before. These strangers found in newspapers indispensable guides to unfamiliar urban territory.[37]

The newspaper became a guide, literally and figuratively, to navigating a newly created urban environment.

The ‘accumulation of small bits and rich streams of text that saturated the twentieth-century city, guided and misguided its inhabitants, and, in large measure, fashioned the nature of metropolitan experience,’ the ‘word city’ described both the deluge of new information that constituted the urban environment, the flux too much for even permanent residents to manage let alone new arrivals, as well as the means

[35] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, pp. 15-6.

[36] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, p. 18.

[37] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, p. 8.

through which city dwellers navigated this new and disorienting environment.[38] 'Recasting location (the newspaper in the metropolis) into function (the newspaper for the metropolis),' popular newspapers such as the *New York Sun* 'pioneered' an approach to 'urban reportage' that was soon taken up in urban centres across the United States and Europe. It was this transition from location to function that made 'the city… retrievable [through] the newspaper.' 'Not to read the newspaper was to *risk losing orientation*.'[39]

Capturing the significance of this cultural landscape of narrative and the opportunity it afforded for the alteration of world views requires us to acknowledge the role of news media in 'choreograph[ing]' urban 'encounters'[40] The choreography here, reminiscent of Michel de Certeau's accounts of resistance to urban design and planning, engages readers, reporters, and the newspapers as active participants in the structuring of stories, such as those of the clipper, that, as we will see below, afforded opportunities for interaction with and alteration of social and cultural norms.[41] Newspapers became a means of cultural reproduction not only within cities but across the United States, homogenising urban populations around urban spectacle even while producing incommensurate and almost innumerable versions of the city experience.[42] Clippers became a part of this spectacle and so were inculcated in the very urban

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[38] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, p. 1.

[39] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, p. 20; my emphasis.

[40] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, p. 1.

[41] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Steven Rendall, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 30, 40.

[42] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, p. 28.

environment itself; copied, repeated, and spread throughout the city as evidenced by the fear felt by young women who thought themselves potential victims and by the copycat attacks which, regardless of their actual relationship to clippings, were representations of the spread of this urban blight.

With the New York penny press as the model for the popular and sensational newspapers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century across the United States and Europe, Americans quickly adopted a model of news production and consumption that produced a contained multiplicity of experience and form. The New York City of the 1920s 'emerg[ing] out of' New York's newspapers--the '*Daily News*, *Daily Mirror*, and *Evening Graphic*'--was 'one of endless possibility, unpredictability and opportunity.' According to Wallace, 'In the tabloid, the newspaper and the city show their common cause: they both seek to contain and display the endless variety of people, culture, and business. They arrange chaos into meaningful sections and help the resident navigate it more easily.'[43] Karen Roggenkamp argues alongside literary contemporaries that American newspapers were unique vis-a-vis other media in their ability to capture, represent, and shape the world about which they wrote: 'John W. De Forest asked whether "a society which is changing so rapidly" could "be painted except in the daily newspaper,"'[44] and Jules Verne, famous author of *Around the World in Eighty Days*, argued that the newspaper was '"the only satisfactory means [for] an author to deal with

[43] Wallace, *Newspapers and the Making of Modern America*, p. 4.

[44] Karen Roggenkamp, *Narrating the News: New Journalism and Literary Genre in Late Nineteenth-Century American Newspapers and Fiction* (Kent; London: Kent State University Press, 2005), pp. xiv-xv.

the kaleidoscope progress of modern events," a modernity necessary for crafting relevant fiction.'[45]

At the heart of these understandings of news was the new urban form in need of containment to make it legible and usable. Fritzsche looked to Berlin specifically because of its relatively amorphous identity among European capitals. Unlike London, Paris, and Vienna, Berlin was a shape-shifting city that could not and did not valorise its 'Roman origins or their medieval prosperity' and instead came to identify with its industrial present. 'No century was more strongly marked by, or had become more aware of, the experience of transience than the one hundred years up to 1914. And no major city in Europe underwent quite so dramatic a transformation as Berlin.' The city quintupled in population over the half century 'between 1848 and 1905,' with 'another 1.5 million' people finding homes in 'huge suburbs ringing the city.' 'By 1920 Greater Berlin had become the world's third largest city,' behind London and New York.[46]

Where London, Paris, and Vienna experienced significant growth in the last decade of the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth centuries, just like Berlin, these older and better established sites of authority and power were not defined by this period of upheaval. Yet while Berlin was exceptional in many ways, representing the epitome of the word city marked by incredible and sudden growth and unburdened by the legacy of its past that provided a different kind of cultural anchor for other great European capitals, these transformations of news culture and the creation of word cities occurred in United States as well. If there was no major city in Europe that underwent a

[45] Roggenkamp, *Narrating the News*, p. 4.

[46] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, p. 7.

transformation as dramatic as Berlin's, there was no city in the United States that underwent a transformation as dramatic as Chicago's.

By the 1890s Chicago was the second largest city in the United States, easily the fastest growing and, to many, a new centre for culture, industry, fashion, and fortunes. The dizzying rate with which Chicago emerged as a major and bustling metropolis, and here I use 'dizzying' with intention, created a collective sense of awe. According to Carl Smith, 'the city as it is known today [simply] did not exist before the early 1830s.' By the time the 'World's Columbian Exposition opened in 1893, there were over 20,000 Chicagoans who were older than the town they inhabited.'[47] In 1830 Chicago had 'some fifty settlers.' Just seven years later 'there were over four thousand' inhabitants of the growing township. By 1871, when the Great Chicago Fire ravaged the city a mere three decades later, Chicago had grown to '300,000 people,' 'their numbers having increased tenfold since 1850.' By 1890, Chicago had grown yet again, with 'over a million' residents, a number that would double again 'by 1910, making Chicago second in population only to New York.'[48]

Chicago's extreme population growth was fuelled largely by migration, both domestic and international, which made it particularly ripe for a news industry not as large as New York's but equally important for managing the chaos. By '1890[,] about forty percent of the city's citizens had been born abroad, while almost twice that many were, if not immigrants themselves, children of foreign-born parents.' These

[47] Carl S. Smith, *Chicago and the American Literary Imagination 1880-1920* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. ix.

[48] Smith, *Chicago and the American Literary Imagination*, p. x.

international migrants lived alongside Americans born on the continent who moved from 'the farms, towns, and smaller cities of the Middle West, the Middle Atlantic States, and New England.'[49] As William Cronon described it, 'No other city in America had ever… so rapidly overwhelmed the countryside around it to create so urban a world.'[50] Populated by strangers and with growth unmatched in the history of the United States, Chicago loomed large as a character in its own right, far greater than any individual, that required organising to make it at all intelligible as a place of commerce and business, leisure, or life.

Much like Berlin was the epitome of news culture but hardly exceptional in the analytic possibilities afforded by the word city, the developed news industries of New York, Chicago, Boston, and Washington, D.C., allowed for the spread of the trope of Jack the Clipper. New York, as the largest city in the United States, was the news print capital, experiencing its own kind of exponential media growth:

> In 1830, only sixty-five daily newspapers existed in America, with a total daily circulation of about 78,000. Just ten years later, 138 dailies reached a total circulation of about 300,000. That number had exploded to 574 dailies by 1870 and 2,600 by 1900, with circulation rising to an astounding 22 million by the end of the century.[51]

In 1903, 'one critic noted' that newspapers were so voluminous that 'just in a single year… newspapers "would make a library" of close to four billion volumes.'[52]

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[49] Smith, *Chicago and the American Literary Imagination*, p. x.

[50] Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, p. 9.

[51] Roggenkamp, *Narrating the News*, p. xiv.

[52] Roggenkamp, *Narrating the News*, p. xiv.

Marked by exponential growth, an increasing identification with industry, a freedom from even the old-world culture of the East Coast, and home to a burgeoning news industry, America's various 'word cities' allowed for the rapid spread of cultural tropes such as Jack the Clipper. If trains made clippers mobile, newspapers enabled clippers to circulate and reproduce. Both incorporated the clippers into the fabric of the urban form.

News media were central not only to the replication of the actions of the clippers--producing copycat attackers--but of the values and conflicts that clippers represented. Like a virus entering a system, clippers spread and with them came their ability to disrupt or bolster social and cultural norms of desire and insert them into the urban form of the city. Trains and newspapers worked hand in hand to feed the cultural anxiety around clippers, and while trains too offered a means by which clippers found themselves integrated into city space, especially as an immediate and physical threat, it was newspapers that offered clippers a means to become a part of the city; a living, breathing, cultural icon that moved and replicated.

Young girls and women, for example, across the city responded to the perceived threat posed by clippers by changing their hairstyles. In response to the spree of unsolved clippings in Boston, the *Boston Daily Globe* noted that 'Little girls have begun to guard against the hair "snipper." On the way to and from school these days,' the article continued, 'maidens do not wear their hair down their backs anymore. The man who cuts off unsuspecting little girls' hair is responsible for the new fashion on the street.'[53] While cataloguing the general means by which little girls could hide their hair,

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[53] 'With Shears Up Sleeve: J. S. Carey is Caught Following Women,' *Boston Daily Globe* (13 February 1906), p. 1; my emphasis.

by tying it up instead of wearing it exposed or tucking it into collars and behind other items of clothing, the report also provided statistics from a particular cohort of girls:

> An example of the precautions which are now being taken is the acknowledgement of 22 little girls of a class of 40 in a South End school that they never venture upon the street without tucking their braids beneath their coats or rolling their hair under their tam o'shanters.[54]

The clipper, in other words, was considered a serious enough threat that at least half of the girls at one South End school took it upon themselves to attempt to fend off future assaults. Taking their cue from these young women, the authors of the article claimed that this was a phenomenon increasingly prevalent in the community: 'within a few days this fashion of wearing the hair concealed on the street,' the piece concluded, 'has so spread that the great proportion of the pupils of every girls' public school has adopted it.'[55]

This concern over the means by which one could protect their hair also prevailed among Chicago's young girls and women. 'Schoolgirls,' one article read, 'are wearing their hair high up on their heads and the long braids that were once their pride are now a source of terror. It is all because of Jack the Clipper.' Like the Boston girls, young Chicagoans were 'discard[ing] hats' while adopting 'the less fashionable hood and Tam O'Shanter because of its added adaptability for concealing their hair.' Not only were they wearing these new clothes to protect themselves but the weight of the threat presented by the clippers in news media was becoming increasingly oppressive:

> Jack the Clipper's escapades have filled the girls of the city with terror, until they deemed it dangerous to display the long braids of hair, which was once a chief

[54] 'With Shears Up Sleeve,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1.

[55] 'With Shears Up Sleeve,' *Boston Daily Globe*, p. 1.

> feature of their attractiveness, even in daylight…. Now they tuck up their hair under their caps and hoods until they seem like nuns marching solemnly in and out of a convent chapel as they go to and from school. Instead of the gay and laughing little girls they once were, with their hair flying free as they ran and no care or worry of danger to rob them of the pleasures of their life.[56]

These girls had responded to their knowledge of the clipper--knowledge which they had acquired through the papers, their parents, and their teachers--hiding their braids to protect their bodies from a violation.

Other young girls and women made preparations to defend themselves from clippers and other urban assailants in case they were attacked. In a bid to defend herself 'from "Jack the Hair Clipper" as she made her way to choir practice at her local church, one young Detroit woman concealed 'a section of a broomstick' 'under her ulster' to ward off any would-be attackers. Strapped to her body, she was free to carry a 'revolver' 'in one hand... and in the other a paper of cayenne pepper.' Possessed of 'golden hair of peculiar beauty and unusual length,' she believed herself especially vulnerable to a clipper and remained 'prepared to defend herself.'[57]

Another Detroit woman, Tillie Kuhn, was warned that she 'was to be the next victim' of a '"Jack the Hair-Cutter."' The clipper waited for Kuhn, a milliner, in an alley and jumped out at her in a bid to shear her locks. But Kuhn was prepared. The letter had 'frightened her [so] that she did her hair up as tightly as possible and armed herself with an umbrella.' When the clipper 'leaped' at her, she screamed and beat him with the

[56] 'Will Save Their Hair: Schoolgirls Are Now Jealously Guarding Their Braids,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1 February 1898), p. 8. See also: 'Doings of Jack the Clipper,' *Chicago* (30 October 1899), p. 1.

[57] 'Matters in Michigan,' *Telegram Herald* [Grand Rapids, Michigan], (Monday Evening, 27 October 1890), p. 5.

umbrella. The clipper ran and Kuhn sought shelter in a nearby store, leaving her umbrella covered in blood.[58]

As word of these clippers forced young white girls and women to change their hair, to arm themselves, and to take additional care when moving around their cities at night, the power and reach of clipper narratives grew. A copycat attack by a young man named Harry Brown provides insight into how widely dispersed the story of Jack the Clipper was and how newspapers contributed not just to the spread of the narratives but the reproduction of the phenomenon. In early February 1896, Harry was thirteen years old and a student of the Emerson School on the north side of Chicago. According to the *Chicago Daily Tribune*:

> The police at the West Lake Police Station were excited yesterday at noon when a telephone message reached the station to the effect that "Jack the Hair Clipper" was held a prisoner in the Emerson School yard in North Paulina street.[59]

Thinking they were about to land themselves a clipper, 'policemen Marpool and Brown' were dispatched to the school. When they arrived, however, the police officers only 'found a crowd of boys and girls standing around Harry Brown … and Alice Atwood of No 7 Walnut street. The girl was crying and held a curl of her hair in her hand. Harry was also crying.'[60]

Harry Brown had cut the hair of a young classmate in what seemed the style of a Jack the Clipper. While there are obvious similarities between Harry's incident and a

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[58] 'Michigan Happenings,' *The True Northerner* [Paw Paw, Michigan] (29 October 1890).

[59] 'Wants to Be "Jack the Clipper": West Side Small Boy Cuts a Curl from a Small Girl's Head,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1 February 1896), p. 1

[60] 'Wants to Be "Jack the Clipper,"' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 1.

clipper attack, we would only have been able to speculate about what contemporaries made of this had not the report continued:

> He [Harry] had read considerable about the man who was terrorizing schoolgirls by cutting off their hair, and yesterday morning, before leaving home, he took his mother's scissors and, when school was dismissed at noon, attacked… Alice Atwood and cut one of her curls from her head.[61]

These were not the games of a schoolboy trying to impress his friends or a girl he may have been interested in, this was an imitation of the behaviours of a clipper. Officers Marpool and Brown arrested Harry but released him in the afternoon, ostensibly with the consent of the parents of both parties.

Harry Brown, at just thirteen, was an aspiring Jack the Clipper. While the article implies this objective when mentioning the deliberate process by which the assault occurred–Harry had read about the clipper and took his mother's scissors–even the title of the article confirms the suspicion that he was consciously mimicking this criminal: 'Wants to be "Jack the Clipper."'[62] That he was arrested and taken to gaol suggests that this was a crime which both the police and the parents of these two children took seriously and did not want Harry to repeat; public resources were spent on attempting to curb the blossoming of another potential clipper. For Harry's contemporaries, cutting a girl's hair was neither amusing, nor fun; it may have even been a slippery slope towards becoming a clipper in the real world outside of the playground.

In each of these encounters, in each news story consumed by readers, and in each clipping acted out on the playground of schools or on streets outside homes, and

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[61] 'Wants to Be "Jack the Clipper,"' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 1.

[62] 'Wants to Be "Jack the Clipper,"' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 1.

for each woman and child who moved about the city imagining and defending themselves from a clipper, we can see how Jack the Clipper was incorporated into the word city of turn-of-the-century American urban environments. Their integration was, as Fritzsche argues, more than a matter of circulation, it shaped the way people interacted with the city and with each other, incorporating new social, cultural, and sexual norms into the infrastructure of urban life. Newspapers became a means through which clippers were reproduced as residents came to understand the modus operandi of a clipping and reacted to (embraced, resisted, or ignored) the restructuring of social relations and sexual desire contained within these narratives. And as clippers were incorporated into the cultural landscape of the city and with their immersion was the distinct ability to shape the city environment.

Trains, Newspapers, and the City as a Physical Expression of Hetero-Desire

Fundamentally, the word city was an 'unstable, pliable form, which allowed readers to make sense of the changing inventory of the city and respond to its speculative, playful voices… organiz[ing] detail and difference and thus invariably regulat[ing] ways of seeing and not seeing.'[63] And in this instability, this perpetual state of disorientation, were opportunities for contestations over social and sexual norms as embodied in the discourse of the clipper. Clippers were not merely moved through the (word) city, they acted and were acted upon in a dynamic engagement with readers and writers as

[63] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, p. 3.

residents to both ‘inscribe world views [that] should not be ignored’ and give shape to the tangible expression of city space.[64] That is to say, while the discursive nature of the word city had real and material impact, the word city itself was also made manifest as the physical city.

In their interaction with the word city, clippers occupied a space in which they were both moved through and were generative of what Keller Easterling would call ‘infrastructural space.’ For most people, Easterling argues, infrastructure refers to the brick and mortar technologies that connect our world--bridges, electrical wiring, satellite dishes--but this infrastructure also includes the information, the ‘software,’ that shapes the function and form of these material objects and our uses and interactions with them. ‘More than grids of pipes and wires,’ or even ‘pools of microwaves beaming from satellites and populations of atomized electronic devices that we hold in our hands,’ for Easterling infrastructural space is the product of ‘shared standards and ideas that control everything from technical objects to management styles.’[65] In reclaiming 'infrastructure' as hybrid of materiality and information (or discourse), Easterling collapses the divisions between the two and offers us a means through which to examine how clippers’ bodies and desire might themselves constitute forms of in-formation infrastructure that shaped both the cultural and physical worlds of the nineteenth-century American city.

Although concerned with different time periods, different locations, and different forms of sociality, Fritzsche and Easterling’s analyses of the word city and infrastructural

[64] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin*, p. 6.

[65] Keller Easterling, *Extrastatecraft: the Power of Infrastructure Space* (London: Verso, 2014), p. 11.

space are complementary. The word city of the nineteenth and early twentieth century accounts for how clippers were incorporated into urban space; both their literal and cultural movements followed with speed and accuracy through sometimes multiple editions of newspapers each day. I use Easterling's infrastructural space to build upon Fritzsche's work to explore how clippers were able not merely to cycle through the city as themselves a kind of passenger, riding waves of news stories, but as active participants in creating and effecting change as an informational infrastructure themselves. If clippers were inserting new norms of sexual desire into the lives of American news readers through their representation of new and redirected orientations, they were also constructing new physical and cultural spaces based upon these directionalities. In this sense, then, Easterling's analysis of infrastructural space allows us to track the multiple positions that clippers (and other cultural figures) occupied and chart how the orientations that I have shown they embodied were made manifest in the lives of everyday Americans.

What is for Fritzsche largely an imaginary or discursive space, Easterling's use of 'infrastructural space' allows us to grapple with the material conditions of the space created and lived through the word city. Larry Knopp, a cultural geographer, argues that one of the challenges facing 'social (and spatial) theory' is 'overcoming the materialist-discursive divide' that refuses the 'body, sentiment, emotion and desire as co-equal sources of knowledge.'[66] Through clippers, as an important example of a popular and widespread vehicle communicating and structuring hetero-desire at the turn

[66] Larry Knopp, 'From Lesbian and Gay to Queer Geographies: Pasts, Prospects, and Possibilities,' in Kath Browne, Jason Lim, and Gavin Brown, eds, *Geographies of Sexualities: Theory, Practices, and Politics* (Hampshire; Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 25, 27.

of the century, I argue that we can begin to answer this challenge, recognising clippers as doing both the work of incorporating new forms of sexual expression into the cultural framework of American society as well as structuring the physical space and use of the burgeoning form of the city. Clippers organised the orientations of desire, of movement and circulation, that defined city space and behaviours deemed appropriate within it. Thinking about clippers and their desire not merely as a cultural infrastructure but integral to the orientation of physical urban space puts Fritzsche, Easterling, and Ahmed's queer phenomenology underpinning this dissertation into conversation with one another, revealing the role and importance of bodily desire in structuring the city environment. In other words, to speak of an infrastructure of hetero-desire is also to speak of the infrastructure of the turn-of-the-century American city. Through the figure of Jack the Clipper, we can see how hetero-desire and cities not only emerged simultaneously but built each other in meaningful ways.

Clippers offered up an opportunity to hack the coding, so to speak, of infrastructures of sexual desire through their incorporation into newspapers, the technologies of spatial creation in late-nineteenth-century America. Clippers were both a piece of information conveyed through infrastructures of urban circulation and mobility--something made sense of and incorporated into existing norms and standards of social and cultural engagement--*and* an organising principle 'craft[ing] a multitude of interdependent relationships and sequences' that constituted one of the reorientation mechanisms for a new infrastructure of (hetero)sexual desire in the Progressive Era

United States.[67] To indicate that clippers were aligned with whiteness and forms of sexual violence that were less threatening to the status quo, or that they were demonstrations of forms of fetishisation that reoriented pathways of desire is to argue that the figure of the clipper aligned with and was absorbed into infrastructures of race and sexuality as it moved through the word city. But clippers were also transmitting information into the urban form of the city in a dynamic relationship in which the white (hetero)sexual desire of the clipper became a part of the the social and spatial relations that defined those living within its purview. The forms of desire encapsulated by clipper narratives were not merely moving through the city nor was the city merely the background for displays of aberrant or acceptable desire, rather heterosexual desire became a part of the very orientation of city space itself. It is this complex and overlapping relationship that enables us to see how changes in desire were effected and how important cultural figures and archetypes were in this process.

Conclusion

This chapter has grappled with the circulations and movements of clippers, both as they literally moved around and between cities and towns and as they circulated as cultural products and norms. Trains and newspapers were significant modes of mobility at the turn of the century, connecting and reshaping urban environments across Europe and the United States. New York, Chicago, and Boston, among others, owed their dizzying

[67] Easterling, *Extrastatecraft*, p. 80.

growth to the confluence of both intra- and inter-city train lines and spawned a generation of popular newspapers which engaged an entirely new community of readers. Clippers were integrated into the landscape of major cities and towns across the United States both in person, through their violent acts, and through their repetition as stories that structured engagements with contemporary understandings of gender and sexuality and smuggled into conversation the conflicts which helped to contest and triangulate new understandings of sexuality that differed from those of previous decades.

As clippers rode trains, trams, and streetcars they were literal presences in the landscape of the American city. Women and young girls were fearful for their safety and for their hair and responded in a multitude of ways to defend themselves from the violence of a Jack. Some young women changed their hairstyles to hide their braids, others, usually older women, armed themselves to fend off would-be attackers on street corners and public transportation. This knowledge was a product, certainly, of circulating news stories, but these stories were made possible only by the new urban infrastructure of mass transit that enabled clippers to move freely about city spaces, confounding police and, perhaps more importantly, creating an air of mystery and surprise that lurked over women's public experiences. Trains allowed clippers to haunt city spaces by becoming virtually and culturally omnipresent; able to appear in a crowd and then melt away again, evading containment--physical or cultural--by using these newly formed networks.

These narratives constituted their own form of mobility that was intrinsic to the clipper narrative. Although trains enabled clippers as they committed acts of violence against unsuspecting women, it was newspapers that carried these stories, that spurred anxiety, and that enabled clippers to reproduce themselves through the lingering threat felt and the copycat attackers and attacks. Perhaps more importantly, however, through their integration and circulation in news media, clippers were incorporated into the fabric of the city space itself. By shifting to a recognition of the conflicts that clippers embodied--over race, class, sexuality, and gender--we can come to acknowledge the significance of clippers as sites of contestation and change that moved beyond the interpersonal and into the structural.

Fritzsche and Easterling make a similar argument about the infrastructural webbing that defines social and cultural space. Newspapers were a spatial infrastructure that culturally and physically reworked maps of cities across the Western world at the turn of the twentieth century. For Fritzsche the circulation of the newspaper reflected the fast pace and fluidity of urban modernity incorporating clippers into the cultural fabric of the city itself. Easterling's contributions make clear that clippers as a complex form of information could interrupt--'hack' to follow Easterling or 'reorient' to follow Ahmed--the structures of social life which enable us to understand the work that this circulation was doing.

The significance of this informational manipulation is not that clippers singularly effected a change overnight, that they flipped a switch and rendered older and more generous models of sex and sexuality null and void, but rather that the incorporation of

the contests over sexual desire that they represented into a spatial technology contained within it the potential to radically reshape available infrastructures of sexual desire over time. Small intrusions and edits into popular understandings of sexuality and sexual desire merged with, as we have seen, the state insistence and enforcement of new heterosexual and reproductive forms of sexuality worked in tandem to slowly accrete the cultural capital required to make heterosexuality the defining form of sexual orientation and experience by the early to mid twentieth century.

Including clippers in the modern form of the city at the very time it came into being in the United States, meant that clippers were uniquely positioned not simply to exist or to spread (though this is fundamental) but to reorient or reconstitute an infrastructure of desire that already existed; offering up a new metric for understanding appropriate sexuality and enough slippage in the ever-moving, ever-changing chaos of the 'word city' to account for changes in how desire was embodied, expressed, and understood. It is unlikely that clippers were *singularly* responsible for shifting the orientation of sexual desire or sexual expression at the turn of the twentieth century--history is, for better and for worse, rarely this simple--but they were fundamental components of this transition and, perhaps even more importantly, offer us, as historians, a means to concretise this process of transition. Through clippers we can see how desire was wedded to and shifted with new forms of technological and social relations inherent in modernity and walk away with a new way for the history of sexuality, in other points in time and other places, to assess the production and

circulation of desire with greater removal from the sexual identity categories that we inhabit in the present.

CONCLUSION

THE END OF THE CLIPPER

As 1925 came to a close, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* published its regular reflections column, 'In the Wake of the News.' Contained within it was a very brief correspondence from someone named Evelyn reminiscing about what it had been like to live in Chicago in recent memory. Barely two sentences, the full published note reads:

> 'Do You Remember Way Back When: Women were afraid of having their hair cut off by "Jack the Clipper"?'[1]

Situated among other reflections on Chicago of old--from the 1870s onwards--Evelyn's suggestion revealed two impulses about Jack the Clipper within Chicago and applicable to the United States more broadly. On the one hand, Evelyn confirmed the significance of the clipper as a category of assailant at the turn of the century. Clippers, I have argued, were foundational cultural forms that were both generated by and generative of significant shifts in the social and spatial ordering of the United States across the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. Hundreds of women were attacked and, although few Jacks the Clipper themselves were ever arrested, it is clear that multiple clippers operated independently across major and minor American cities and towns.

It is a rare experience for an historian to be able to write of a character with such geographic and cultural reach across the United States that scholars have not as of yet examined in any significant capacity. This provides an opportunity for me to consider how clippers, and on occasion the broader and related phenomenon of the Jack, fit into the cultural world of Americans: operating alongside medical

[1] 'In the Wake of the News,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (5 December 1925), p. 24.

conceptions of the body that were increasingly foreclosing indeterminacy in sex and gender, sexological notions of ‘appropriate’ desire, racialised and racist characterisations of violence that were designed to return the United States to a racial status quo akin to that which existed before the Civil War, new forms of state-based control and intervention in the lives of American residents, and finally, the new form of the American city.

Approaching these different avenues of Progressive Era history through the lens of Jack the Clipper has meant considering not merely what this character meant, but how the friction embodied in the presentation of clippers in popular news stories reveals reformulations of desire in the contemporary United States. Following Sara Ahmed’s analyses of orientation in her *Queer Phenomenology*, this dissertation has not only approached Jack the Clipper with an eye to how he can reveal those objects that were or were not brought into range of the human body, aligned or not with larger overarching structures, but argues that orientational or spatial analyses of sexual desire might reveal to us new ways to approach the history of sexuality.

Although sexual identity formation has formed a foundation for a generation of important scholarship in the history of sexuality, Jack the Clipper challenges us to think along slightly different lines about what is desired, why it might be desired, and who polices these kinds of desire. Clippers articulate a world in which recognition of multiple forms of desire was commonplace but often through a conflict with a tendency to pathologise or reorient these forms of desire to accord with increasingly reproductive ideals of the American state and its distinctly professionalised and middle-class proponents.

Attention to the lines of desire that existed between Jack the Clipper, his victims, and the target of his attacks affirms the importance of recognising sexed

bodies to have been products of a constellation of sexual characteristics in the nineteenth century rather than through attention to any single bodily location. Jack the Clipper reveals the importance of hair as a social and sexual marker and forces us to expand definitions of sexual violence in a world that imagines the boundaries of personhood and sexuality so differently from our own. In pointing to the significance of hair even to Progressive Era Americans, Jack the Clipper demonstrates the conflict between different orders of sexual desire: one more fully associated with working-class and immigrant culture and the other associated with middle-class values expressed through not only medical and sexological discourse but Progressive Era reform efforts.

In the discussion and popularity of this ‘unusual’ object of desire across the nation, Jack the Clipper shows the narrowing of sexual desire that took place to generate an infrastructure of hetero-desire that provided a foundation upon which new systems of in- and exclusion were developed. Identified by its innate reproductive urge, sexologists, in particular, leveraged the concept of the ‘fetish’ to channel and narrow sexual desire to imaginings of gendered and sexed aspects of the human body that were required for heterosexual reproduction.

This narrowing of sexual desire encompassed a broader engagement with and imagining of race, as well. Spatial analyses of sexuality demonstrate the inextricable connection between whiteness and heterosexuality not merely through association, but by implicating the (racialised) direction in which clippers were oriented. A similarly reformulated and more aggressive form of whiteness and white supremacy increased the accessibility of whiteness as a desired state itself but also rendered it a direction that was vital to the broad success of hetero-desire. Although it seems likely that there were Black women who fell victim to Jacks the Clipper, if

Black clippers or victims existed, they were ignored in the media and popular imagination. In the popular imagination, clippers were white. The merging of the discourse of the clipper with whiteness was not inevitable, but the pull and leverage provided by whiteness in the United States made it likely and fruitful. Hetero-desire received the endorsement of whiteness, even through white violence by amplifying the message of white perfection and perfectabiliy, while also performing the work of bolstering the mythic Black Rapist and preventing Black people from being fully considered a part of the matrix of hetero-desire.

Both administratively or bureaucratically and spatially, the cultural infrastructure of hetero-desire represented by clippers was built into American society. On the one hand, clippers were actively ignored by police, the courts, and middle-class reformers as American sexual norms and the regulations surrounding them were remade, excluding an older understanding of an attack on hair as significant and enforcing recognition of hetero-desire as the only form of desire worth protecting. On the other, clippers were circulated through and into the city, both physically on trains and other forms of mass transit but culturally through the newspaper. Here, hetero-desire and critiques of non-heterosexually-oriented desire were incorporated into what historian Peter Fritzsche has called the 'word city,' that organised the possibilities, or tendencies, or pathways, available to local residents. The interplay of physical and cultural infrastructures of mobility with bodily infrastructures of desire bridges the divide between the discursive and material production of urban spaces, indicating not merely that the hetero-desire of the clipper moved through or was inculcated in the city, but that hetero-desire as a spatial arrangement and specific orientation found expression *as* the city.

In this, my analysis of Jacks the Clipper demonstrates how heterosexual desire came to be encouraged, coerced, and disciplined at the turn of the century, developing a complex and resilient infrastructure of sexuality that engaged both discursive and material forms. My argument here is not that this was the only expression of a new and largely heterosexual discourse that would ultimately come to exist or that it exemplifies the only way of experiencing or making sense of new forms of heterosexual desire. Rather, Jacks the Clipper indicate the processes through which a new heterosexual desire was built, alongside and aligned with whiteness and race, the state, the city, and the body.

The argument presented here begins a conversation in which more nuanced understandings of bodies, sexual desire, race and whiteness, cultures of punishment and rule, and circulation and movement within space are being developed for the Progressive Era United States. But, were I to indulge myself momentarily, my intention (and hope) for this broad approach to incorporating the history of Jack the Clipper into our historical narrative is to make the figure of the clipper central to our discussions and writing of Progressive Era histories.

It will be necessary, I hope, to mention Jack the Clipper in the same breath as the traditional triumvirate of the Black Rapist, the white slaver, and the masher or street harasser, for example. Even as the latter categories have significant overlap with Jack the Clipper, I have demonstrated the importance of Jack the Clipper in bolstering the myth of the Black Rapist before Americans became increasingly concerned with the white slave trade.

Perhaps analyses of street harassment or gendered or sexual violence during this period will be impossible without reference to, if not Jack the Clipper, one of the

many Jacks that we now know were thought to be, and most likely were, roaming the streets of American towns and cities. Whether Jack the Kisser, Jack the Hugger, or one of what I think of as the ‘lesser Jacks,’ it is my hope that these tropes become central to imagining how one does this kind of research, recognising the central role Jacks and Jacks the Clipper played in terrorising American women and policing their behaviour.

Much like silk erotomania or kleptomania are immediate categories of interest to historians of psychology and psychiatry and sexuality, I argue that Jack the Clipper and his monomaniacal fixation on hair is a necessary touchstone for histories of psychiatry, psychology, and sexuality in the United States. Jacks the Clipper offer insight into how it is that desire was experienced and policed or reoriented in the United States, specifically.

I think many of us struggle with the importance and significance of our research--perhaps merely for the sheer length of time we spend with our historical actors and the paradoxical realisation that the more you know about anything the less you know about everything--but I want to argue that Jack the Clipper is more than a funny story or a niche cultural figure, but rather an intrinsic representation of shifting culture(s) in turn-of-the-century America.

Where Evelyn’s contribution speaks, in the first instance, to the importance of the clipper as a cultural figure in the early years of the twentieth century, her comment also speaks to its passing: its closure as a cultural category of significance. By 1925, years had passed since the last slew of consistent or significant cases. The clipper continued to live on in the memory of those who endured the waves of attacks and regular news reporting, but these were memories that belonged to an older

generation now, not to the young. Younger women were growing up in a world free of the clipper threat even as they undoubtedly faced new struggles moving through the urban environment. ‘Remember when,’ Evenlyn asks.

In this passing, Evelyn’s gentle reminder communicates to us the distance that existed between clippers and the younger generation that caused a pivot in the understandings of the joke contained within the trope. Removed from the everyday realities of the city, Evelyn’s call to remember--perhaps meant to be humorous in its own right, making a joke of the foolishness of every being afraid of a hair clipper?--reflects more accurately our own response to these clipper cases: one in which the violence of these attacks increasingly falls away as we struggle to remember and keep open the space for these attacks to have been possible.

From time to time, ‘Jack the Clipper’ would find expression in the popular news media again, but never as a cultural phenomenon as it had been. On occasion, men were caught red-handed cutting the hair from young women’s heads, sometimes while they were sleeping and sometimes in violent hostage situations, but it seems unlikely that these were invocations of a Jack the Clipper of old. Instead, these clippers were curious as they were refracted through the very categories that Jack the Clipper had been essential in creating, producing an almost queer mirror image; a rendering of Jack the Clipper which was ever-so-slightly different.

In 1957, for example, 'an ex-convict' named John Merchut, a thirty-nine year old man who also apparently went by 'John Malley,' was 'arrested... after a 4½ year old girl said she "sold" him her blonde locks for 25 cents.' The young girl, Mary Beth Reddington, alleged that Merchut gave her a quarter on her way home in exchange for cutting her hair. She agreed, losing a five-inch ponytail. Merchut denied cutting

Reddington's ponytail even though he admitted to the police that he 'had sheared off the locks of young girls in the past.'[2]

Beyond the question of whether or not Merchut cut Reddington's hair, the framing of this news article was considerably different than that of earlier iterations in the 1890s and early 1900s. While there was a continued stigma of mental illness--Merchut 'had been an 'inmate in two mental institutions'--the concern surrounding Merchut was about his criminal record and past history of violence. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* made sure to note that Merchut had 'admitted serving an eight year sentence for rape' when he was 17, and that he had been questioned as a person of interest in multiple murders. Merchut was understood through the explicit lens of criminality which gestured not only towards the danger that Reddington potentially faced but the danger for escalating violence against her or other women. Indeed, aside from the fact of the loss, the hair itself disappears relatively quickly within the article.[3]

Jacks the Clipper understood through a fully formed infrastructure of heterosexual desire took on different connotations that emphasised different degrees of social importance and aspects of prominence. What one will note is that while the hair is still critical in these narratives (hence the moniker, of course), it is often understood as a secondary marker, a target of exploration for an advancing sexual interest and subdued or resisted violence. Reddington seems unperturbed by her hair loss, perhaps even pleased by the quarter she had gained and there is no reference to what the hair loss would mean for Reddington socially. The hair is no longer the reason for concern, per se, but the imaginary of physical violence that is

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[2] 'Seize Snipper of Girl's Hair; Ponder Charge,' *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1 July 1957), p. 5.

[3] 'Seize Snipper of Girl's Hair,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 5.

conjured because of the aggression taken out on hair; the escalation contained within the possibility of reoffending if the Jack was not caught.

By attending to the various forms of desire embodied in these clipper attacks, I have argued that recognising sexual desire and heterosexuality in particular as a spatial configuration opens up opportunities for us to re-examine sexual identity categories past and present that are less contingent upon the analytic capabilities of historically-specific experiences such as ‘heterosexual’ or ‘homosexual,’ among others. Jack the Clipper’s attention to a spatial politics of desire allows us to consider the multiple and competing heterosexual*ities* that have existed across the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. And finally, I hope to have shown that heterosexuality was not merely inflected by whiteness or by cities, but that, as American society moved through the twentieth century, we have to ask new questions of what different categories might look not at their point of intersection but as inextricably interconnected. By engaging an orientational framework for desire, historians of sexuality can come to better understand the ways in which sexuality--as a discourse but also as a series of behaviours, actions, and identities--can be tied in more nuanced ways to spatial forms. It's not merely enough to locate sexual desire in a particular location (like the city), but rather we must ask why those particular spatial formations gave rise to specific organisations of sexual desire.

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