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Let Not a Red Come in Thy Bed: Construction of Hair in 17th Century England

Abstract

This paper analyzes three seventeenth century English ballads in order to understand the complex factors that contributed to the views and understandings surrounding hair. It was around this time that the view of men and women's bodies as inversions of each other was beginning to change. The construction of hair in the examined ballads supports the presence of this change.

Introduction

I began this project with a very vague curiosity. Why were fairies, witches, and Judas all connected to red hair? It was an odd pattern that revealed itself while taking Aspects of Irish Folklore and Religion and Magic in Reformation Europe: Witches, Demons, Jews, and Heretics at University College Cork in Cork, Ireland. I had long heard the odd myth that redheads had no souls, but had written it off as an inexplicable belief. However, it was after hearing the description of red hair in connection to perceived evil or danger in these courses that I wanted to explore it further. I quickly discovered that exploring the origins of this connection would be well beyond the scope of this project. I thus began to search through primary sources online that mentioned redheads or red hair. I discovered that I had access to an interesting array of ballads and medical texts from England during the late seventeenth century.

The more I researched ballads and medical beliefs at the time, the more I learned the passage of information, views of the body, beliefs about social relations between the genders, family relationships, and political scandals of the time. And the more I learned about all of these spheres of society, the more I realized that while I had come into this project with the notion that they would be separate, they were, in fact, closely related. Not only are they closely related, but they all interacted with each other and influenced one another in order to create understandings and conceptions of larger ideas like the body, but also anomalies like red hair. More importantly, I discovered that I would see these interactions presented in late seventeenth century English ballads.

In this paper I will examine three English ballads from the 1670. While I recognize that this is a small sample, any ballad from the time is a valid historical document to examine even if it is not representative as they can help build a fuller and more complex view of literature and beliefs of the time. Furthermore, I wanted to examine each ballad closely, and if I had attempted to utilize more than three I did not believe that I could achieve a close enough examination of each. Each ballad was chosen because hair played a central role in the ballad and because all three ballads relate to choosing spouses which helps highlight the issues regarding the family and gender relations. After examining and analyzing the three ballads on their own, I will compare and contrast them with each other in order to construct a more complex understanding.

I will show that the views of hair presented in these ballads will demonstrate how humoral theory affected people's beliefs of others and how far humoral theory extended, including its limits. This, in turn, shows what qualities were deemed desirable and undesirable in men and women such as fidelity and balance. Additionally, the differences and similarities in how men and women's hair, and the qualities it suggested, was understood show the

understanding of gender and bodies. Furthermore, female hair and male hair were not constructed as inverses, like much of the rest of their bodies were. This shows a possible transition away from the belief of women as the inversions of men. Thus, these ballads also demonstrate the complex factors that went into constructing the meaning and understanding of hair and the body in England during the seventeenth century.

Historiography

In order to examine how depictions of redheads and red hair in the ballads and medical texts of late seventeenth century England demonstrate how music, medicine, gender relations, family relations, and politics all intersected with one another, it is important that I examine a variety of scholarship regarding the time and place. Beginning with the history of the body, at least since Thomas Laqueur published *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, historians have engaged with the question of the relationship between culture and natural philosophy.

Laqueur argues that it was at this time in Europe that the general belief was that women were, in many senses, the physical inverse of men. Female genitalia, for example, were considered an inversion of male genitalia¹. However, Laqueur argues that around the turn of the eighteenth century there was a marked change in this belief and that male and female genitalia began to be conceived of as separate from each other as opposed to inverses². Laura Gowing supports that there was the inversion understanding of male and female bodies and emphasizes that it was the male body that was viewed as perfect and, because their bodies were seen as inverses, that women were viewed as imperfect³. Additionally, Gowing discusses how Genesis

¹ Laqueur, Thomas Walter. *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990) 4.

² Laqueur 5.

³ Gowing, Laura. *Gender Relations in Early Modern England* (London: Pearson, 2012) 8.

taught that women, and their bodies, were made for men⁴. Gowing also demonstrates that it was humoral theory that was believed to be central to this difference as whatever set of humours was dominant at the time of conception determined a child's sex; hot and dry made a male child and cold and wet made a female child⁵.

Humoral theory was a very important belief for people living in England in the seventeenth century. It was believed that each human had a balance of four fluids in their body: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile⁶. All diseases were believed to stem from an imbalance of the humours⁷. Each of the four fluids was believed to make a person hot or cold and wet or dry⁸. Men were believed to be hotter and dryer overall while women were believed to be colder and wetter⁹, once again demonstrating the belief that women's bodies were the physical inverses of men's. Furthermore, which humour was dominant within one person was believed to indicate a great deal about that person's character; for instance, if phlegm was a person's dominant humour, that person should be fat, dull, and sleepy¹⁰. Which humour was dominant was believed to be evident in, among other ways, the color and quality of a person's hair¹¹.

Humoral theory was clearly a belief that had strong medical elements, but it also spread beyond the medical field into everyday life and beliefs. Irma Taavitsainen argues that linguistic choices regarding humoral theory displayed in lay texts demonstrate that humoral theory was

⁴ Gowing 7.

⁵ Gowing 7.

⁶ Hitchcock, Tim. *English Sexualities 1700-1800* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) 42.

⁷ Henry, John. "Doctors and Healers: Popular Culture and the Medical Profession." *Science, Culture and Popular Belief in Renaissance Europe*, ed. Stephen Pumfrey, Paolo L. Rossi, and Maurice Slawinski (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991) 199.

⁸ Hitchcock 42.

⁹ Hitchcock 43.

¹⁰ Henry 200.

¹¹ Johnston, Mark Albert. *Beard Fetish in Early Modern England: Sex, Gender, and Registers of Value* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2011) 80.

very well spread, as should be expected since the topic of health would have been of general interest¹². However, Taavitsainen also notes that while the medical texts and lay texts have similar understandings of humoral theory, the lay texts are more abstracted and appear to demonstrate a belief in more psychological or characteristic rather than physical repercussions of humours¹³. Thus, humoral theory clearly demonstrates an interaction between culture and science.

While certain elements of society remained consistent throughout the seventeenth century, many did not. During “the late seventeenth century, the questions of legitimacy and resistance were pivotal in national politics, and they continued to have ties to the politics of the family. Whether, and how, a woman was subject to a man; how her subjection could, or should, be compelled; and whether their contractual relationship could ever be dissolved remained matters of great political import.”¹⁴ Certainly, these were all concerns prior to this time, but it was during this time that they become more heavily contested, more important, and farther reaching.

The discussion of the body and the family entered English politics through several important scandals of the seventeenth century. One of the most important ones was known as the Exclusion Crisis, 1679-1681, which was the problem of who would succeed King Charles II as he had no legitimate children, and the Whigs in Parliament did not want his Catholic brother James to take over. King Charles II did, however, have an illegitimate son whom the Whigs wanted to rule¹⁵.

¹² Taavitsainen, Irma. “Dissemination and Appropriation of Medical Knowledge: Humoral Theory in Early Modern English Medical Writing and Lay Texts.” *Medical Writing in Early Modern English* ed. Irma Taavitsainen and Päivi Pahta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 94.

¹³ Taavitsainen 113.

¹⁴ Gowing 81.

¹⁵ Weil, Rachel. *Political Passions: Gender, the Family and Political Argument in England 1680-1714* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) 22-3.

The Exclusion Crisis brought the debate of legitimacy, as well as inheritance, to the forefront of English discussion¹⁶. However, the discussion did not simply focus with men who had children outside of wedlock, but expanded to women who gave birth to the children of their lovers¹⁷. It was believed that if a woman simply pictured her husband at the moment of conception, that her child would look like her husband and not her lover¹⁸. Thus, this discussion of reproduction, and who truly has control in it, as well as in adultery, became prominent during this time.

The Warming Pan Scandal of 1688 was another major political issue. King Charles II's Catholic brother, James II, did manage to succeed him. However, James II's wife was having difficulty in producing an heir. After many miscarriages, she gave birth to a son in 1688. However, many people doubted that this son was actually hers and it was believed by many that another woman's child had been smuggled into the castle in a warming pan and was then passed off as her own son¹⁹. This raised issues of who possessed better medical knowledge regarding birth and pregnancy, women and midwives or men and doctors²⁰, and of who should be present when a woman is giving birth²¹. That discussion, in turn, shows the larger debate of who knew more about a woman's body, men or women²².

Another major set of political events of the late seventeenth century was the Bawdy House Riots. In 1668, large groups of rioters, many of whom were apprentices, attacked brothels, also known as bawdy houses. These riots were not the first riots that attacked brothels,

¹⁶ Weil 23.

¹⁷ Weil 26.

¹⁸ Fissell, Mary E. "Hair Women and Naked Truths: Gender and the Politics of Knowledge in "Aristotle's Masterpiece,"" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60.1 (2003): 61.

¹⁹ Weil 86.

²⁰ Gowing 81.

²¹ Weil 96.

²² Gowing 81.

but these riots were different in that they had political undertones²³. Many of the rioters adopted political slogans such as ‘Down with the Red-Coats.’ Additionally, “there is evidence to suggest that the rioters might not have been attacking all bawdy houses indiscriminately”²⁴.

Furthermore, “the ringleaders were tried for high treason”²⁵ while previous ringleaders of similar, but lacking political slogans, riots were not punished so severely²⁶. This suggests that the government had a vested interest in disposing of these particular trouble makers. Hence, it appears as though the rioters were taking their political frustrations out on brothels instead of a firmly political institution, but that the government certainly took notice. Thus, issues of the body, gender, and sexuality was intertwined with politics at the time.

To return back to the focus of this project: hair. Hair was an interestingly debated topic of the body during this time. Hair was often considered one of the defining characteristics of gender. A beard, for instance, distinguished a man from a woman; additionally it distinguished a man from a boy²⁷. Men were, overall, supposed to be hairier than woman, but, just like with the humoral spectrums, there was overlap²⁸. Men without facial hair were considered more feminine, but this did not work vice versa. Women with facial hair were thought to be monstrous²⁹.

Gender definition was only one social role that hair played; hair was often an indicator of marriage or of readiness for marriage. A man without a beard was considered unfit to be married³⁰. Having uncovered hair was a signal that a woman was an unmarried virgin, although

²³ Harris, Tim. “The Bawdy House Riots of 1668.” *The Historical Journal* 29.3 (1986): 538.

²⁴ Harris 540.

²⁵ Harris 537.

²⁶ Harris 537.

²⁷ Fisher, Will. “The Renaissance Beard: Masculinity in Early Modern England.” *Renaissance Quarterly* 54.1 (2001): 155.

²⁸ Fisher 166.

²⁹ Fisher 170.

³⁰ Fisher 177.

this belief did change sometime during the seventeenth century³¹. Thus, it seems that having visible hair was an indicator of readiness for marriage, but while men were expected to keep their hair, women were, in some ways, expected to lose it.

There was some debate about what hair was; was it a part of the body like an arm is or an excrement of the body like waste is³²? It was often viewed as both a part of the body and as a production of the body. Perhaps this is why it was believed that the “quality and colour of the hair accurately signals the predominant dispositional and humoral complexion of its host.”³³ Thus, it was believed that hair could clearly indicate a lot about a person’s primary characteristics.

This is why examining hair in medical texts and ballads can help demonstrate how the spheres of science, literature, and politics all interact with the history of the body. Hair demonstrates gender and humoral theory, it is used in literature to exemplify characteristics, and it is deeply entrenched in discussions of the body that were reflected in politics. Red hair is particularly interesting. Having red hair is an anomaly; it makes anyone stand out in a crowd. It is thus interesting to examine portrayals of red hair and how they reflect the time as it can show us how far reaching many of these various beliefs and views were because they reached this anomalous group of people. Thus, examining red hair can show how the majority reflected upon a small, but definitely present, minority.

Ballads are one of the most important sources that I will examine in this project. There have been vastly different approaches to the study of English ballads. One of the major questions that scholars address in regards to ballads is the proper amount of context to take into consideration when examining the ballads. There are scholars like Francis James Child who

³¹ Gowing 12.

³² Fisher 168.

³³ Johnston 80.

advocate studying ballads without regard to their context and consider them ageless pieces³⁴.

However, considering that many scholars, such as Leslie Shepard claim that ballads often reflect myths and superstitions³⁵, historical events, political opinions, and interests and activities of the day in which they were written³⁶, there seems to be greater weight to the paradigm of deeply examining and analyzing the context of ballads in order to more fully understand them and utilize them as a source.

However, one reason that scholars give for the difficulty of studying a ballad's context is the lack of knowledge about the author. Shepard points out that ballads were written by a great variety of people, only some of which could have been professionals³⁷. David C. Fowler argues that the decline of professional minstrels opened up this opportunity for non-professionals and that, by 1700, ballads were being sung and heard by people in every rank of English society³⁸. Thus, the challenge of taking into account the author's point of view remains difficult and is thus not considered throughout this project. However, the anonymity relates back to the idea that ballads were an art form created and enjoyed by the general public, which makes them an invaluable source for examining the beliefs of the past. If the year that the ballad was written is known, however, it is possible to infer how events and beliefs of that year present themselves in the ballad.

The English Fortune-Teller

The English Fortune-Teller: Being a Brief Direction How to Shun All Strife, a Brief Instruction How to Chuse a Wife; Whereby a Man May Lead a Happy Life: It Shews Difference in Womens Qualities, by Colour of Their Hair, Both Face and Eyes, the Tune Is, Ragged and

³⁴ Fowler, David C. *A Literary History of the Popular Ballad* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1968) 3.

³⁵ Shepard, Leslie. *The Broadside Ballad: A Study in Origins and Meaning* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1962) 6.

³⁶ Shepard 54.

³⁷ Shepard 56.

³⁸ Fowler 15.

Torn. &c, hereby referred to as *The English Fortune Teller*, was printed in London in 1670 for W. Thackerary, T. Passenger, and W. Whitwood. However, the original author of this ballad remains anonymous. The fact that the author is anonymous is not uncommon, as discussed previously. For ease of writing, the pronouns he, him, and his will be used in this paper to refer to the author.

This ballad is organized as though it is meant to convey advice to young men who are looking for brides by describing desirable and undesirable traits of potential brides. While the first set of qualities is described as being easily discernible, the second set of qualities are described as being discernible by examining a woman's appearance, particularly her hair. The author says that by knowing a woman's hair color, you can know many of her qualities and that her hair color can especially indicate if she will be faithful. The ballad ends with the author apologizing if any women listening to it took offense, as the author only meant to convey the truth in order to help men make such an important decision. The tone appears to be overall comedic and thus the author likely did not mean for listeners to take it literally, but rather he intended to poke fun and give people a good laugh. However, simply because the ballad is comedic does not mean that it does not relate truths about the time.

One of the major elements throughout the first half of this ballad is arguably balance. The author cautions that a man should find a wife whose status is "not too high nor too low," who is "not too young nor too old," who is not "too fat nor too lean," and who is "not too proud, nor one that's a dirty foul slut."³⁹ This emphasis on a desirable wife being someone who is

³⁹ *The English Fortune-Teller: Being a Brief Direction How to Shun All Strife, a Brief Instruction How to Chuse a Wife; Whereby a Man May Lead a Happy Life: It Shews Difference in Womens Qualities, by Colour of Their Hair, Both Face and Eyes, the Tune Is, Ragged and Torn. &c* (London: Printed for W. Thackerary [sic], T. Passenger, and W. Whitwood, 1670).

balanced not only in status, but in age, physicality, and character suggests that balance was a highly valued quality at the time and that extreme qualities should be avoided.

As mentioned before, the author additionally emphasizes, particularly when examining the second set of qualities, how his skill in physiognomy will provide men with the tools for how to choose their wives. Physiognomy was a scientific field that related to humoral theory. As discussed previously, a person's appearance, especially their hair, would be an indicator of the type of humoral balance that they had within themselves⁴⁰. The fact that the author uses such a term and theme indicates that he expected people to be able to understand it, which in turn indicates that he expected many people to have a certain level of medical understanding. This is supported by the fact that, at the time, the phrase "Every man is a fool or a physician"⁴¹ was common⁴².

This theme demonstrates how the literary world reflected or was influenced by medical beliefs. Literature being affected by medical theories is not unique to this ballad, it is clear by looking at many plays, poems, and other such creations of the time that the creators of them made good use of medical theory⁴³. As discussed previously, humoral theory held that both mental and physical health was achieved through the balance of the four humours. Thus, this ballad was likely influenced by this notion of balance achieving health. However, it goes even further to suggest that in order to have a healthy marriage, and thus likely family, there must also be balance, which indicates that balance was quite possibly one of the greatest values of this society as it included both physical and social health.

However, this theme of balance is not universal. If it was, it would stand to reason that

⁴⁰ Johnston 80.

⁴¹ Henry 200.

⁴² Henry 200.

⁴³ Henry 198.

the most desirable hair color would be one that seems more balanced, more common, namely, brown hair. The author though, clearly states that a woman with black hair is the best choice for a spouse. While it is impossible to know the exact statistics of hair color within Europe, it seems very likely that brown hair was the most common. Brown, from a purely color point of view, is also the least extreme of the four hair colors. However, while brown hair does not appear to be the least desirable option, it is also not the best option. Thus, balance was held as an important value, but it was not universal.

While the author comments on blondes and brunettes as well, by contrasting the views about blondes and black haired women, one can see that there was an emphasis in his ballad on having a faithful wife. A woman with blonde hair was described as undesirable as “[i]f she meet with some pretty fellow, her husband may chance to be [c]uckold,”⁴⁴ while a woman with black hair is the best seemingly only because “she will be true to her vow”⁴⁵ and the author notes that it is a shame there are not more women like those with black hair⁴⁶. This emphasis in *The English Fortune-Teller* on faithfulness could suggest that there was a societal emphasis on it and that fidelity was one of the, if not the, most desired qualities in a spouse. Thus fidelity, shapes how this ballad constructs hair color.

In fact, the author of *The English Fortune-Teller* seems to be inspired by one of the primary concerns for women and men in England in the late seventeenth century. If a woman was accused of cheating on her husband, and it should be kept in mind that “women bore the

⁴⁴ *The English Fortune-Teller: Being a Brief Direction How to Shun All Strife, a Brief Instruction How to Chuse a Wife; Whereby a Man May Lead a Happy Life: It Shews Difference in Womens Qualities, by Colour of Their Hair, Both Face and Eyes, the Tune Is, Ragged and Torn. &c.*

⁴⁵ *The English Fortune-Teller: Being a Brief Direction How to Shun All Strife, a Brief Instruction How to Chuse a Wife; Whereby a Man May Lead a Happy Life: It Shews Difference in Womens Qualities, by Colour of Their Hair, Both Face and Eyes, the Tune Is, Ragged and Torn. &c.*

⁴⁶ *The English Fortune-Teller: Being a Brief Direction How to Shun All Strife, a Brief Instruction How to Chuse a Wife; Whereby a Man May Lead a Happy Life: It Shews Difference in Womens Qualities, by Colour of Their Hair, Both Face and Eyes, the Tune Is, Ragged and Torn. &c.*

main responsibility for sexual sin,”⁴⁷ it was an attack on her entire moral character⁴⁸. While this might suggest that a cuckolded man would be sympathized with, he was not, instead he was ridiculed. Accusations such as these had great impacts on not only the marriage, but the social standing of the family⁴⁹. An “insinuation of sexual trespass [...] was related [...] to the wasting of money, spreading of disease and corrupting other women or young men, as well as other marital households.”⁵⁰ Thus, infidelity risked an entire family’s reputation clearly making fidelity a greatly important quality in a spouse. This could easily have contributed to the author’s emphasis on fidelity in *The English Fortune-Teller*.

Furthermore, infidelity, by a woman, also created the risk of women giving birth to children who were not their husband’s. “[T]he sad plight of men whose wives became pregnant while committing adultery was a prominent theme in the literature of the period: these husbands lost not only masculine authority [...] but also the right to pass their estate on to the children of their own loins.”⁵¹ As mentioned before, it was believed possible for a woman to conceal the fact that the child’s father was a different man than husbands if they simply pictured her husband’s face when she conceived⁵². Thus, it was incredibly important for a man to choose a faithful wife if he wished to maintain masculine authority and pass on his estate to his children. Again, the author of *The English Fortune-Teller*’s emphasis on fidelity could have been influenced by this prominent fear that men had about potentially marrying a woman who was not faithful.

⁴⁷ Gowing 62.

⁴⁸ Gowing 62.

⁴⁹ Gowing 63.

⁵⁰ Gowing 62.

⁵¹ Weil 26.

⁵² Fissell 61.

This fear might even have extended to fears about political issues. Interestingly, the language used to refer to cuckolds was also used to refer to political victims⁵³. This is only one of the direct connections shown between family problems and political ones. It was believed that the government structure reflected the household with the king as the father⁵⁴ and the country as the wife⁵⁵. Thus, as cheating could upset a family's reputation and inheritance, revolution and inability to have a perfect line of succession could upset the government's reputation and inheritance of rule. This is clearly reflected in the previously discussed Exclusion Crisis and Warming Pan Scandal. Hence, the author of *The English Fortune-Teller* in his emphasis of the importance of fidelity could have been influenced by this political metaphor which would have contributed to the anxieties built around infidelity.

The events mentioned above took place after the creation of this ballad, but this does not mean that these issues regarding the body, family, and gender relations were not still present at the time. It is important to remember that while the Exclusion Crisis and the Warming Pan Scandal took place after this ballad was written, the Bawdy House Riots took place only two years before the ballad was written. Attacking brothels for political motivations clearly demonstrates an intertwining of issues regarding sexuality, the family, and politics at the time that *The English Fortune-Teller* was written while the other scandals show that this was not a temporary condition.

Thus, the political connection between the family, the body, and gender relations was present at this time, it is known for certain that the government-family metaphor was⁵⁶, and I believe it is intentionally incorporated into this ballad. This could be shown through the choice

⁵³ Gowing 63.

⁵⁴ Gowing 29.

⁵⁵ Gowing 67.

⁵⁶ Gowing 67.

of the author of *The English Fortune-Teller* to include the word strife, which often has political connotations, both in the full title and in the beginning of the ballad⁵⁷ as it could suggest that he acknowledged the connection between family and government. And thus through his discussion of the desirable trait of fidelity, he was emphasizing the desirable trait of a government to maintain peace and a clear line of succession which shows that perhaps *The English Fortune-Teller* should be open to a more allegorical reading regarding politics of the time in addition to the more literal one of how to select a wife.

Thus the author of *The English Fortune-Teller* appears to depict hair as an indicator of qualities for several reasons. He indicates that hair reveals a woman's qualities, which is definitely situated in ideas regarding humoral theory and ideas that stem from it such as physiognomy. Additionally, the author argues that a healthy marriage, like a healthy body, is predicated upon balance. However, while balance was clearly a greatly valued quality, it was not universal. A particular quality that hair demonstrated in a woman was fidelity, or lack thereof, according to the author. Fidelity, although not as broadly discussed in the ballad as is balance, is clearly one of the best qualities a woman could possess, which fits with the social and political context of this piece.

Hence, *The English Fortune-Teller* demonstrates that hair was constructed through the convergence of numerous factors including balance and humoral theory, marriage and fidelity, family relations, and government. This convergence is particularly shown through the anomalous red hair. Not only was the literary world informing how society views hair, but medical and moral beliefs clearly influence the creation of such ballads showing an interplay of different fields of society.

⁵⁷ *The English Fortune-Teller: Being a Brief Direction How to Shun All Strife, a Brief Instruction How to Chuse a Wife; Whereby a Man May Lead a Happy Life: It Shews Difference in Womens Qualities, by Colour of Their Hair, Both Face and Eyes, the Tune Is, Ragged and Torn. &c.*

The True Lovers Admonition

The True Lovers Admonition: Of All the Colours in the World, the Black Hair Is the Best, Though Fair & Brown May Be Well Curl'd yet Black Exceeds the Rest: That Is the Colour I Do Prize, and Love Beyond All Measure, She That Hath Black Hair and Black Eyes, Esteem Her As a Treasure. the Tune Is, so Sweet Is the Lass That Loves Me shall be referred to as *The True Lovers Admonition* from now on. It was printed in London in 1670 and written by an anonymous author.

This author, like the one of *The English Fortune-Teller*, is providing humorous advice on how men should pick a bride. The author cautions, however, that men should be sure to not break their vows once they are made. He begins by saying that a good bride is “fair and wise”⁵⁸ and doesn’t have a wondering eye⁵⁹. He then begins to describe how you can tell undesirable traits in women by their physical appearance. He cautions that “[t]he [c]arrot pate be sure you hate, for she[‘ll] be true to no man”⁶⁰. However, overall, the author seems to conclude that most women will cheat on men or, at least, will have sex with many people, although the author does not appear to believe this is necessarily bad for unmarried men. It was only the women who had black hair who would remain faithful to their husbands⁶¹.

⁵⁸ *The True Lovers Admonition: Of All the Colours in the World, the Black Hair Is the Best, Though Fair & Brown May Be Well Curl'd yet Black Exceeds the Rest: That Is the Colour I Do Prize, and Love Beyond All Measure, She That Hath Black Hair and Black Eyes, Esteem Her As a Treasure. the Tune Is, so Sweet Is the Lass That Loves Me* (London: Printed for P. Brooksby at the Golden Ball in Pye-corner, 1670).

⁵⁹ *The True Lovers Admonition: Of All the Colours in the World, the Black Hair Is the Best, Though Fair & Brown May Be Well Curl'd yet Black Exceeds the Rest: That Is the Colour I Do Prize, and Love Beyond All Measure, She That Hath Black Hair and Black Eyes, Esteem Her As a Treasure. the Tune Is, so Sweet Is the Lass That Loves Me.*

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The most apparent theme throughout *The True Lovers Admonition* is that women are openly sexual. The author describes all of the variety of women who “willingly will take it”⁶². In fact, the author indicates that it is only the women with black hair who will not sleep with men before marriage. The general notion that women were more sexual than men would have been common at the time. Because of the humoral balance, it was believed that sex was good for women because during the act of sex, women gained some of a man’s heat⁶³ and heat was associated with perfection⁶⁴. Thus, sex was believed to be good for women and bad for men. This is not to say that this was necessarily a biological truth of the time, but that it was perceived to be the biological truth of the time.

Thus, it is clear that, once again, fidelity was an important theme. The author discusses how many women might sleep with men prior to marriage, but it is the redheaded women who are identified as the only ones who are incapable of keeping their vows. The author is harsh in his views about redheaded women. He does not simply advise that men avoid redheads, he says that men should hate them as demonstrated from the line “[t]he [c]arrot pate be sure you hate, for she[‘ll] be true to no man”⁶⁵. He likely did not mean this literally, but rather wanted to provide a strong caution against men marrying redheaded women. Since this ballad was written at the same time as *The English Fortune-Teller*, all of the previously discussed reasons as to why infidelity would be detrimental to a marriage and to a family remain the same.

⁶² *The True Lovers Admonition: Of All the Colours in the World, the Black Hair Is the Best, Though Fair & Brown May Be Well Curl'd yet Black Exceeds the Rest: That Is the Colour I Do Prize, and Love Beyond All Measure, She That Hath Black Hair and Black Eyes, Esteem Her As a Treasure. the Tune Is, so Sweet Is the Lass That Loves Me.*

⁶³ Hitchcock 44.

⁶⁴ Hitchcock 47.

⁶⁵ *The True Lovers Admonition: Of All the Colours in the World, the Black Hair Is the Best, Though Fair & Brown May Be Well Curl'd yet Black Exceeds the Rest: That Is the Colour I Do Prize, and Love Beyond All Measure, She That Hath Black Hair and Black Eyes, Esteem Her As a Treasure. the Tune Is, so Sweet Is the Lass That Loves Me.*

However, because the author clearly identifies redheaded women as being the most extreme in infidelity, more must be discussed. If a child was “conceived during a woman’s menses [it] would result in a child having either a birth mark or, at the least, red hair”⁶⁶. This is an important factor for several reasons. Firstly, it was believed that sex during menstruation would “produce a [...] loathsome generation”⁶⁷. This indicates that redheads were considered loathsome.

Menstruation signified sexual receptivity⁶⁸ and heat. It was believed that the reason that women menstruated instead of men was because men were hotter. Blood was associated with heat and since women need to be colder than men, they need to release any built up heat that they had in their system; this was done either through menstruation or by growing long hair. Since men were hotter, they did not have this need to release extra heat, thus they did not menstruate nor did they have long hair⁶⁹.

Redheaded women were considered to be hotter than other women. Numerous medical texts of the time described redheaded women as being undesirable wet nurses. The reasons given are numerous. However, the most common one is that “very frequently the milk of a [wet] nurse, that is red-haired [...] may by its heat and acrimony cause small ulcers in an infants mouth”⁷⁰. In fact, some of these ulcers were thought be able to “soon kill little Infants, who are too weak to undergo the remedies fit for their cure”⁷¹.

⁶⁶ Hitchcock 44.

⁶⁷ Crawford 89.

⁶⁸ Laqueur 107.

⁶⁹ Fissell 54.

⁷⁰ Mauriceau, François. *The Diseases of Women with Child, and in Child-Bed: As Also, the Best Means of Helping Them in Natural and Unnatural Labours. ... to Which Is Prefix'd, an Exact Description of the Parts of Generation in Women. ... the Eighth Edition Corrected, and Augmented with Several New Figures ... Written in French by Francis Mauriceau, and Translated by Hugh Chamberlen, M.d* (London: Printed for T. Cox, and J. Clarke, 1752).

⁷¹ Pechey, John. *The Store-House of Physical Practice: Being a General Treatise of the Causes and*

Hence, it is arguable that redheaded women would be more associated with menstruation and thus heat and sex. From the first connotation discussed, this connection to menstruation would indicate that they were sexually available. It could also be perceived that they had so much heat, which could only really be obtained by women through sex with men, that it was literally flowing out of their heads and their breasts, which, additionally, suggests that hair was viewed as more of an excrement than a body part. It is important to note, however, that because women had longer hair than men, there would be partly this connotation with all women which supports the notion of women being more sexual than men discussed previously. However, because of redheaded women's direct connection with blood, the connotation would be more extreme. Thus, humoral theory and other beliefs of the time can be combined to support the idea that redheaded women were believed to have had greater sexual appetites and, since they were part of a loathsome generation, would direct their sexual appetites away from committed relationships just as the author of *The True Lovers Admonition* suggests when he claims that redheaded women will "be true to no man"⁷².

Thus, this author, like the author of *The English Fortune-Teller*, constructed a view of hair through the combination of literature, medical beliefs, and moral beliefs. Additionally, the author of *The True Lovers Admonition* has demonstrated the complex interplay between humoral theory and moral beliefs in the suggestion that redheaded women are inherently the most promiscuous type of women. However, while this one extreme in hair color is undesirable, the author suggests that another extreme in color of hair, black, is the most desirable.

Signs of All Diseases Afflicting Human Bodies : Together with the Shortest, Plainest and Safest Way of Curing Them, by Method, Medicine and Diet : to Which Is Added, for the Benefit of Young Practicers, Several Choice Forms of Medicines Used by the London Physicians (London: Printed for Henry Bonwicke, 1695).

⁷² *The True Lovers Admonition: Of All the Colours in the World, the Black Hair Is the Best, Though Fair & Brown May Be Well Curl'd yet Black Exceeds the Rest: That Is the Colour I Do Prize, and Love Beyond All Measure, She That Hath Black Hair and Black Eyes, Esteem Her As a Treasure. the Tune Is, so Sweet Is the Lass That Loves Me.*

To Her Brown Beard

To her brown beard. For i'le warrant the girl he'l love the [sic]. This counsel doth advise all maidens, kind, to have a care lest Cupid make them blind, whereby to dote on young mens fickle love, which their actions will unconstant prove: husbands enough, and plenty may be had, some very good, and some exceeding bad; then come fair maids, pray pick and chuse thebest [sic], and let Old Nick make use of all the rest, tune of Sweet is the lass, or My maidenhead will not o're load me is the last ballad that will be examined. From here on out it shall be referred to as *To Her Brown Beard*. It was, much like the other ballads, printed in London in 1670 and has no known author.

To Her Brown Beard, again, much like the previous two ballads, is passing on advice about how to choose a spouse in a humorous manner. However, *To Her Brown Beard* is directing women on how to choose a husband. The author starts out by cautioning women against picking a husband merely on how they feel about him. He first encourages women to observe men and see if he is “fair and honest”⁷³.

After describing to women how certain negative traits in a husband can lead to problems, the author moves on to describe how hair color can indicate other problems. He uses several words referring to red hair: “Carrot heard [sic],”⁷⁴ “red Hair’d,”⁷⁵ and “sandy-Hair”⁷⁶. While

⁷³ *To Her Brown Beard: For I'le Warrant the Girl He'l Love the [sic]. This Counsel Doth Advise All Maidens, Kind, to Have a Care Lest Cupid Make Them Blind, Whereby to Dote on Young Mens Fickle Love, Which Their Actions Will Unconstant Prove: Husbands Enough, and Plenty May Be Had, Some Very Good, and Some Exceeding Bad; Then Come Fair Maids, Pray Pick and Chuse Thebest [sic], and Let Old Nick Make Use of All the Rest, Tune of Sweet Is the Lass, or My Maidenhead Will Not O're Load Me* (London: Printed for P[hilip]. Brooksby at the golden ball in Pye-Corner, 1670).

⁷⁴ *To Her Brown Beard: For I'le Warrant the Girl He'l Love the [sic]. This Counsel Doth Advise All Maidens, Kind, to Have a Care Lest Cupid Make Them Blind, Whereby to Dote on Young Mens Fickle Love, Which Their Actions Will Unconstant Prove: Husbands Enough, and Plenty May Be Had, Some Very Good, and Some Exceeding Bad; Then Come Fair Maids, Pray Pick and Chuse Thebest [sic], and Let Old Nick Make Use of All the Rest, Tune of Sweet Is the Lass, or My Maidenhead Will Not O're Load Me.*

⁷⁵ *To Her Brown Beard: For I'le Warrant the Girl He'l Love the [sic]. This Counsel Doth Advise All Maidens, Kind, to Have a Care Lest Cupid Make Them Blind, Whereby to Dote on Young Mens Fickle Love, Which Their Actions Will Unconstant Prove: Husbands Enough, and Plenty May Be Had, Some Very Good, and*

these could be referring to more than one color of hair, based on entries in an English dictionary published in 1699⁷⁷ and information in the Oxford English Dictionary⁷⁸, I believe that all of these terms refer to red hair. The author describes redheads as “good when they be sodden,”⁷⁹ somewhat suggesting that redheads are not pleasant when they are sober, drunks, jealous, and as only being able to provide weak genetic contributions. Blonde men are quite likely to cheat. Men with black hair are described as being good kissers and brunette men as being the ones who will love women and as being “true and kind”⁸⁰. The author concludes by saying he hopes that women listen to him⁸¹.

One of the most interesting features of *To Her Brown Beard* is the use by the author of the word beard. While there is certainly discussion within the ballad about the color of hair, the term beard does not seem to be used to refer to facial hair, it appears to be used as a term for a man. For instance, the author cautions “[b]ut if he has a [g]irl with [c]hild, [o]h that's an action

Some Exceeding Bad; Then Come Fair Maids, Pray Pick and Chuse Thebest [sic], and Let Old Nick Make Use of All the Rest, Tune of Sweet Is the Lass, or My Maidenhead Will Not O're Load Me.

⁷⁶ *To Her Brown Beard: For I'le Warrant the Girl He'l Love the [sic]. This Counsel Doth Advise All Maidens, Kind, to Have a Care Lest Cupid Make Them Blind, Whereby to Dote on Young Mens Fickle Love, Which Their Actions Will Unconstant Prove: Husbands Enough, and Plenty May Be Had, Some Very Good, and Some Exceeding Bad; Then Come Fair Maids, Pray Pick and Chuse Thebest [sic], and Let Old Nick Make Use of All the Rest, Tune of Sweet Is the Lass, or My Maidenhead Will Not O're Load Me.*

⁷⁷ Gent, B E. *A New Dictionary of the Terms Ancient and Modern of the Canting Crew in Its Several Tribes of Gypsies, Beggars, Thieves, Cheats Etc* (London, n.d.).

⁷⁸ “the external world > the living world > body > hair > colour of hair > [adjective] > red > sandy (1734).” *Oxford English Dictionary Historical Thesaurus* (2013).

⁷⁹ *To Her Brown Beard: For I'le Warrant the Girl He'l Love the [sic]. This Counsel Doth Advise All Maidens, Kind, to Have a Care Lest Cupid Make Them Blind, Whereby to Dote on Young Mens Fickle Love, Which Their Actions Will Unconstant Prove: Husbands Enough, and Plenty May Be Had, Some Very Good, and Some Exceeding Bad; Then Come Fair Maids, Pray Pick and Chuse Thebest [sic], and Let Old Nick Make Use of All the Rest, Tune of Sweet Is the Lass, or My Maidenhead Will Not O're Load Me.*

⁸⁰ *To Her Brown Beard: For I'le Warrant the Girl He'l Love the [sic]. This Counsel Doth Advise All Maidens, Kind, to Have a Care Lest Cupid Make Them Blind, Whereby to Dote on Young Mens Fickle Love, Which Their Actions Will Unconstant Prove: Husbands Enough, and Plenty May Be Had, Some Very Good, and Some Exceeding Bad; Then Come Fair Maids, Pray Pick and Chuse Thebest [sic], and Let Old Nick Make Use of All the Rest, Tune of Sweet Is the Lass, or My Maidenhead Will Not O're Load Me.*

⁸¹ *To Her Brown Beard: For I'le Warrant the Girl He'l Love the [sic]. This Counsel Doth Advise All Maidens, Kind, to Have a Care Lest Cupid Make Them Blind, Whereby to Dote on Young Mens Fickle Love, Which Their Actions Will Unconstant Prove: Husbands Enough, and Plenty May Be Had, Some Very Good, and Some Exceeding Bad; Then Come Fair Maids, Pray Pick and Chuse Thebest [sic], and Let Old Nick Make Use of All the Rest, Tune of Sweet Is the Lass, or My Maidenhead Will Not O're Load Me.*

evil, [s]uch a beard do not come near⁸². This suggests that the word beard is a synonym for the word man.

The author's use of beard is supported by the apparent connection in the late seventeenth century between facial hair and manhood. As discussed previously, facial hair was a marker of being of male gender⁸³ and being ready to marry⁸⁴. Thus, the author's use of beard as a synonym for man is not surprising, but using it as such a complete synonym once again hints at the idea of the importance physiognomy as it suggests that a man and his beard are equivalent; hence, what a beard demonstrates, the man will demonstrate.

This ballad once again reflects the notion of physiognomy. The ideal man, according to the author, is a brunette while men with black hair seem fair choice, and redheads and blondes the worst choice. This seems to relate to the humoral notion of balance as brown hair is arguably the most balanced in terms of color.

However, while one of the key traits that this author identifies as being negative for a husband is similar to one noted for wives in the previous ballads, the other is different. Many of the author's warnings, especially about redheaded men, are related to alcohol. The author discusses how redheaded men, as well as a few others, will waste time and money at alehouses multiple times⁸⁵. Such an emphasis indicates that excessive alcohol use was a very undesirable quality for potential husbands to have.

⁸² *To Her Brown Beard: For I'll Warrant the Girl He'll Love the [sic]. This Counsel Doth Advise All Maidens, Kind, to Have a Care Lest Cupid Make Them Blind, Whereby to Dote on Young Mens Fickle Love, Which Their Actions Will Unconstant Prove: Husbands Enough, and Plenty May Be Had, Some Very Good, and Some Exceeding Bad; Then Come Fair Maids, Pray Pick and Chuse Thebest [sic], and Let Old Nick Make Use of All the Rest, Tune of Sweet Is the Lass, or My Maidenhead Will Not O're Load Me.*

⁸³ Fisher 166.

⁸⁴ Fisher 177.

⁸⁵ *To Her Brown Beard: For I'll Warrant the Girl He'll Love the [sic]. This Counsel Doth Advise All Maidens, Kind, to Have a Care Lest Cupid Make Them Blind, Whereby to Dote on Young Mens Fickle Love, Which Their Actions Will Unconstant Prove: Husbands Enough, and Plenty May Be Had, Some Very Good, and*

The author at the beginning makes a definite declaration that a woman should not marry a man who has impregnated someone. While he is not explicit, the use of the word girl to refer to the one who had the child indicates that the child he refers to was conceived out of wedlock⁸⁶. Thus, it was clearly an indication of a character flaw to have had a child out of wedlock. As discussed in reference to *The English Fortune-Teller*, such a child could not only indicate problems for a new potential family unit, but could reflect problems of inheritance that were not only problematic on personal levels, but on national ones.

The author identifies jealousy as a negative trait. While that in and of itself is not remarkable, it is interesting to examine it in the context of potential female infidelity. As discussed before, if a woman was accused of cheating it could damage not only the woman, but her family. Thus, the author cautions against finding a husband who is jealous quite likely because if a woman married a man who was too quick to suspect infidelity when there was none, or even if there was, it could quickly ruin her reputation and life.

Thus, the author of *To Her Brown Beard* constructs understandings of hair from many sources. He employs the gender association of beards in his wording. He uses moral beliefs related to alcohol and somewhat economic beliefs to indicate how redheaded men would make poor husbands. Interestingly, brown hair is described as the most desirable for a husband which would seem to indicate a value placed upon balance. Finally, the notion of infidelity, or sexual acts outside of marriage, have an emphasis placed on them, suggesting that it was a primary concern of the society of the time.

Some Exceeding Bad; Then Come Fair Maids, Pray Pick and Chuse Thebest [sic], and Let Old Nick Make Use of All the Rest, Tune of Sweet Is the Lass, or My Maidenhead Will Not O're Load Me.

⁸⁶ *To Her Brown Beard: For I'le Warrant the Girl He'l Love the [sic]. This Counsel Doth Advise All Maidens, Kind, to Have a Care Lest Cupid Make Them Blind, Whereby to Dote on Young Mens Fickle Love, Which Their Actions Will Unconstant Prove: Husbands Enough, and Plenty May Be Had, Some Very Good, and Some Exceeding Bad; Then Come Fair Maids, Pray Pick and Chuse Thebest [sic], and Let Old Nick Make Use of All the Rest, Tune of Sweet Is the Lass, or My Maidenhead Will Not O're Load Me.*

Comparing The English Fortune-Teller, The True Lovers Admonition, and To Her Brown Beard

While I have only examined a small sample of ballads, I believe it is possible to draw some conclusions by comparing the three ballads. They appear to reveal the extent and limits of humoral theory. Additionally, they reveal interesting similarities and differences between the construction of men and women at the time.

Certainly all three ballads reveal that people had a knowledge of physiognomy. While only *The English Fortune-Teller* refers to it in that way, the notion of being able to learn of a person's character by examining their physical characteristics. How seriously these beliefs were taken is debatable as these ballads appear to have a comedic style. However, the strong presence of physiognomy in all of the ballads does suggest that it was somewhat commonly used.

Since physiognomy stems from humoral theory, there is clearly a presence of humoral theory in all three ballads. Additionally, some of the negative beliefs about redheads in the ballads appear to stem from humoral theory as well. This suggests, because humoral theory branched not only into literature, but into literature about anomalies, that humoral theory had great influence upon the culture and understandings of the English people in the seventeenth century. This is not surprising as many scholars have pointed out how creators of literature, drama, and other similar mediums were influenced by more scientific notions at the time. Additionally, the ballads themselves revealed how different spheres of society, the body, gender, politics, science, literature, all interacted.

What is interesting, however, is how humoral theory appears limited in these ballads. *The English Fortune-Teller* does seem to stress this notion of balance bringing a healthy and happy marriage and yet it and *The True Lovers Admonition* suggest that the ideal bride is a woman with black hair. If balance was truly the ideal, meaning that humoral theory was,

essentially, ubiquitous, then it would seem reasonable that the ideal hair for a spouse would be brown hair as it appears the most balanced.

Furthermore, *To Her Brown Beard* suggests that the ideal hair color for a husband was brown. If balance was a ubiquitous value, it should suggest that either the hair colors of spouses should be the same or on opposite ends of the color spectrum. I do recognize that these pieces were most likely created by different authors, but the difference in ideal hair color for a man and for a woman even in this small sample demonstrates how humoral theory was not ubiquitous. Or, perhaps, in examining this divergence with the otherwise consistent use of humoral theory, it could demonstrate the beginnings of a shift away from humoral theory, but this would require more textual examination. However, it would be around this time that such a shift would have started to occur.

The difference in ideal hair for the genders is not the only difference in these ballads. While there are certainly similarities between the genders, such as the desire for a faithful spouse, which could be divined from the color of their hair, and the fact that physiognomy was applied to both genders, the differences demonstrated between the genders are more interesting to examine. Men and women's hair color was used to reveal different traits in their characters. In women, brown hair could demonstrate wit that would not help her husband. In men, red hair could demonstrate alcoholism. Women were constructed as being mostly lustful, except those with black hair, while a man with black hair was described as being the best kisser.

Thus, it does not seem that women's hair was constructed as an inverse of men's hair nor was it constructed in the same way as men's hair. Hair from either gender did seem to indicate if someone was suitable for marriage, which ties in with the social construction of hair signaling marriageability, and the color could suggest if someone would be unfaithful. However, the ideal

and negative traits for wives and husbands were neither the same nor were they inverses. Presumably, being an alcoholic would be a poor quality in either a man or a woman, but in these three ballads it is only a man's hair that can signal this trait. It is not even a potential trait discussed for women, this could be due to social practices around alcohol at the time, but it is still an important difference. Wit appears to be a somewhat negative quality for a woman, yet it is not described as either an undesirable or a desirable quality for a man.

There are some cases where the meaning behind a woman's hair is the inverse of a man's. For instance, a woman with black hair is identified as the least lustful type of woman while a man with black hair appears to be more lustful than the average man. There are also cases where hair color can indicate something that is undesirable for either gender. Finally there are cases where the meaning behind the hairs of men and women are neither the same nor are they the opposite. In other words, while the meaning behind hair in these ballads does appear to be derived from physiognomy and influenced by social beliefs of hair, what meaning is derived is, simply put, different.

This shows that this notion of women's bodies being the inverse of men's was not universal at the time it these ballads were constructed. Laqueur, as mentioned before, argues that the change from viewing the sexes as inverses to viewing them as different had begun to occur at this time⁸⁷. These ballads certainly support Laqueur's argument as they demonstrate how female hair was not constructed and understood as the inverse of male hair. Thus, ballads regarding hair should be examined by Laqueur, or others in his field, over a greater span of time in order to see how the construction of gender changes over time.

These ballads thus seem to demonstrate what a time of change seventeenth century England was. Humoral theory was clearly still very present, even stretching to an anomaly of

⁸⁷ Laqueur 5.

red hair, but it was also clearly limited. Women and men's bodies were certainly still seen as inverses in some aspects, but they were also seen as similar in other aspects and simply different in others.

Conclusion

While a sample of three ballads is unquestionably small, each historical document provides insight into the past. These ballads show many aspects about seventeenth century England. They demonstrate how areas of society, gender, the body, science, literature, popular culture, and politics, that I thought would have very distinct boundaries all interact at constructing the understanding of hair.

The ballads' constructions of hair show how great of a concern infidelity was at the time and how that connected to political issues that were unfolding. The ballads examined also demonstrate how prevalent humoral theory, stretching from physiognomy to marital balance and even to the statistical anomaly of red hair, was in the society while at the same time showing how it was not ubiquitous or, perhaps changing. Furthermore, they show that men and women's bodies were, at least in regards to hair, not being constructed as pure opposites nor as purely the same.

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