

# 1

## Political Corruption as Sexual Deviance

### A Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to situate the corruption narrative within a broader rhetoric of modern statehood and to link this rhetoric to discussions of the erotic. In particular, I want to examine the moments at which nineteenth- and twentieth-century anticorruption literature has appropriated, reimagined, and often rendered peculiarly concrete two major early modern metaphors of political belonging: the state as nuclear family and the state as biological body.<sup>1</sup> Each of these metaphors has been central to contemporary notions of effective state–citizen interaction, and—by linking state, family, and physical body—each has also produced a set of political, legal, sexual, and biological boundaries within which the contemporary citizen or institution is expected to act. Each has thus in turn reinforced the idea that operating beyond these boundaries is not only politically and legally, but also sexually and biologically, inappropriate, or—in a word—corrupt. The basic premise of this chapter’s literature review is therefore that corruption involves, in one form or another, acting outside of these overlapping legal, sexual, and biological spaces.

More important, I would also like to suggest in this chapter that these political metaphors have produced a rhetoric of corruption that is explicitly erotic or pornographic—a rhetoric that erases and obliterates any line that may have existed between political or bureaucratic misbehavior on the one hand and sexual or biological misbehavior on the other. The linkage between state and family or state and body, in other words,

has set the foundation for a narrative of political corruption that has gradually come to ignore the diseased, disordered, dying, or deviant state and come to focus instead on the diseased, disordered, dying, or deviant family or body that originally served only as the state's poetic substitute.

Before entering into this argument in detail, I would like to turn to a few anecdotal eighteenth-century examples of each of these metaphors in action. The first is the 1793 trial of the French queen Marie Antoinette. In more traditional literature, this trial is seen as the moment at which modern, liberal, protodemocratic ideologies triumphed over early modern, patrimonial, personal state structures—at which the, granted somewhat radical or extreme, notion of egalitarian citizenship displaced the newly “corrupt” despotic relationship. More recent scholarship has also noted the strangely pornographic nature of the case brought against Marie Antoinette. Nymphomania, pedophilia, and incest became flashpoints in the revolutionary narrative of illegitimate political rule produced in the trial, leading one historian to argue that it in fact demonstrated widespread “anxiety over the menace of ‘feminization’ of the new republic.”<sup>2</sup>

I would also suggest that the trial—with its conflation of inappropriate governance and inappropriate familial or sexual behavior—likewise indicates the extent to which the state-as-family metaphor had already become concrete, the extent to which political corruption was not just *like* sexual deviance, but actually *was* so. Indeed, at one point in the trial, the public prosecutor of the Paris Commune noted that the imprisoned dauphin's guard had “often caught the child in the most indecent acts [masturbation] which the child says he learned from his mother and aunt, who often put him to bed between them; it appears, from this child's statements, that he was frequently both witness to and actor within the most scandalous, the most libertine of scenes.”<sup>3</sup>

With the freedom of a show trial, the duty to produce a political spectacle, and complete narrative power in his hands, in other words, the public prosecutor chose deliberately to frame the corruption and illegitimacy of prerevolutionary French governance within a vocabulary of incest, masturbation, and infantile sexuality. By 1793 already, that is, the rational, progressive, liberal state was demanding an irrational, disordered, and erotic narrative of corruption to support it.

It will be one function of this chapter's literature review to demonstrate that nineteenth- and twentieth-century versions of this narrative were a direct legacy of the revolutionary moment previously described. By the end of the nineteenth century, and then into the twentieth, I will argue, echoes of Marie Antoinette as corrupt “bad mother”<sup>4</sup> repeatedly recurred in the discourse of the corrupt state, evoking an eroticized, rather than bureaucratized, disorder and decay. Descriptions of the corrupt state or corrupt space

likewise became overtly sexual—the infantile sexuality of the long dead royal heir to French political power infiltrating in unexpected ways analyses of weak and tainted “developing” systems. Moreover, this coming together of corrupt governance and corrupt sexual or familial relationships had a direct bearing on liberal and neoliberal colonial expansion. Indeed, it set a foundation for discussions of the sort analyzed by Inderpal Grewal, in which the immediate “solution to despotism” was “a transparent society of representative government and its counterpart in home and marriage,” and in which “colonization be[came] a way to render transparent that which [wa]s [both politically and domestically] threatening.”<sup>5</sup>

The second key metaphor of modern political belonging—the state-as-body, the healthy state as healthy body, and the unhealthy state as diseased body—picks up on similar themes. In this case, however, rather than discussing the various means by which sexual or biological vocabulary infiltrated political rhetoric, I would like to look instead at the almost immediate transformation of eighteenth-century sexual and biological narratives into nineteenth- and twentieth-century political realities. I will begin once again with the Enlightenment—but this time I will focus on the ways in which it manifested itself in medicine rather than the ways in which it played out in revolution.

Samuel-August Tissot, author of the famous 1760 medical treatise, *L'Onanisme, ou Dissertation physique sur les maladies produites par la masturbation*, was born in Switzerland in 1728.<sup>6</sup> Although he was already a celebrated physician when *L'Onanisme* appeared, it was this work that catapulted him into the realm of the renowned thinkers of his day, leading the tutor of one aristocrat, for example, “to prepare himself for his pedagogical task [by] studying ‘physics, morals, and teaching,’” and by drawing “‘from the reading of Tissot, Rousseau, and Locke.’”<sup>7</sup> Leaving aside Tissot’s status alongside such prominent political philosophers for the moment, I want to look more closely at the nature of his medical writing, in particular his 1757 description of “death by masturbation”:

I learned of his state, I went to his home; what I found was less a living being than a cadaver lying on straw, thin, pale, exuding a loathsome stench, almost incapable of movement. A pale and watery blood often dripped from his nose, he drooled continually; subject to attacks of diarrhea, he defecated in his bed without noticing it; there was a constant flow of semen; his eyes, sticky, blurry, dull, had lost all power of movement; his pulse was extremely weak and racing. . . . [t]hus sunk below the level of the beast, a spectacle of unimaginable horror, it was difficult to believe that he had once belonged to the human race.<sup>8</sup>

This passage is a purely medical one, with no overt connection to the rhetoric of liberalism and citizenship that was being produced simultaneously by Enlightenment-era ideologues. At the same time, however, the ease with which Tissot moves from the medical, sexual, and biological to the civilizational, to questions about who does or does not belong to the human race, also leaves open the possibility, at least, for a political reinterpretation of this vocabulary—a reinterpretation, indeed, that Rousseau effects a few decades later. In his *Confessions*, published in 1770, Rousseau notes that he was taught to masturbate by “a Moorish bandit he met in Turin,” a “dangerous supplement” that has “deprived men of their health, their vigor, and sometimes even their lives,”<sup>9</sup> He thus takes Tissot’s medical analysis to its logical conclusion, directly and explicitly reinforcing the dichotomy between uncivilized, non-European, criminal onanists and civilized Europeans who keep their bodies pure—between healthy bodies/healthy citizens on the one hand and the diseased bodies/diseased citizens on the other. He helps to transform Tissot, that is, from a physician into a philosopher—and the diseased, corrupt, sexually deviant body into a diseased, corrupt, sexually deviant body politic.

In this way, he and Tissot together set one foundation for the late twentieth-century work of corruption analysts—of scholars like Robert Payne, who in 1975, for example, argued that the individual investigating a corrupt state

will find himself in the position of a doctor dissecting a plague ridden corpse. . . . [T]he dead body remains active, but it is in a state of passive activity. Things are happening within it, but they are not things over which the body has any control. It suffers these things to happen to it, it has become finally a creature of necessity, at the mercy of forces incomparably stronger than itself. . . . [L]eft alone to rot, the physical body assumes savage colors, purple, red, and green, with strange yellows and liquescent blacks. Just as ugly, and ultimately just as incomprehensible are the corruptions of the mind and the corruptions of society . . . like a decaying corpse, a corrupt society festers and poisons the atmosphere.<sup>10</sup>

*This* passage is a purely political one. At the same time, however, the rhetorical debt that it owes to Tissot’s writing from two hundred years before is obvious. In both passages, the doctor or analyst plays the role of the interrogator, while the confessant—the diseased body or body politic—offers up, physically, violently, biologically, the secrets of its interiority. In both passages the illness, sexual or biological in the first case

and political in the second, cannot be hidden, and indeed, the doctor's role in each scenario is not so much to heal as to watch and to record—to look on in horror. In the same way that the corrupt physical body has no choice but to confess to Tissot, the corrupt body politic likewise cannot hide its secrets from Payne. Willingly or not, the sexual or political disease—the existence of the private—will manifest itself and will out.

At the same time, the act of confession in both passages is an erotic and pornographic one. To the extent that the attraction of pornography lies in its ability to create a spectacle of difference, to debase that difference, to cut it into tiny pieces even, all in the service of a dominant discourse,<sup>11</sup> these passages fall squarely into the genre. Simultaneously titillating and consumable, each first of all produces a spectacle of difference within the familiar—death, the plague ridden corpse, not even “part of the human race” anymore (although it once, intriguingly, was)—and second, debases this difference and regulates it, highlighting its exposure, its inability to move, its lack of agency and control, and, most important, its complete degradation in the face of the doctor/analyst.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the process occurs in the service of an ideology, reinforcing in the end the implied consent to the rule of, on the one hand, bourgeois sexual morality, and on the other liberal political structures. By giving up their secrets, by exposing their obvious, physical shame, by (implicitly) regretting the activities that led them to this debased state, the corrupt body and the corrupt body politic are quite basically admitting and confessing that those already in control—the doctor and the analyst—ought to remain so.

Both the metaphor of the state-as-family and the metaphor of the state-as-body thus create a context in which modern narratives of political corruption are able to become erotic and eventually pornographic. To a certain extent, anticorruption rhetoric can in fact be seen as one bridge between the discourses of deviant politics and the discourses of deviant sexuality that have been addressed by so many scholars of the modern period. By rendering the legal and political boundaries within which proper citizens must act simultaneously sexual and biological, these eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century notions of political belonging indeed set a rhetorical foundation for understanding corrupt political behavior as nothing more nor less than corrupt biological and above all sexual behavior.

The rest of this chapter will examine the ways in which this relationship among the political, the legal, the sexual, and the biological plays out in nineteenth- and twentieth-century anticorruption literature. In the first section I will discuss in more detail the development of the body politic as a political metaphor. In the next, I will make use of this metaphor to suggest a connection between the fear of infantile sexuality and the fear of the “developing state.” The third section will analyze the behavior of nineteenth- and twentieth-century consumers of the striptease and pornographic confession

on the one hand, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century advocates for political transparency and political confession on the other. Finally, I will examine the overlapping tropes of the monstrous and the diseased in modern pornography and modern anticorruption literature, with a particular emphasis on the role of the political and/or biological “constitution” in warding off the threat posed by each.

## The Body Politic

Although his work is removed chronologically and to some extent geographically from my own, I would like to contextualize this literature review within a discussion of Ernst Kantorowicz’s *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. Kantorowicz’s intention in this study is to trace the doctrine of the of the physical (rather than spiritual) duality of the monarch throughout the medieval period and into the Renaissance, especially in England,<sup>13</sup> and especially vis-à-vis Christian politics and ideology.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, as Agamben has pointed out, the book has been of enormous value to historians of modern political theory as well<sup>15</sup>—in particular to the extent that it addresses questions of sovereignty and power more broadly. For my purposes, therefore, Kantorowicz’s work will serve as an excellent starting point for examining the metaphor of the body politic in the nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first centuries—and thus for addressing the various concrete manifestations of this metaphor that we see in the corruption narrative.

Whereas it is true, in other words, that Kantorowicz situates the “secular” body politic squarely within a religious context,<sup>16</sup> and whereas it is true that he cautions against associating the king or the Crown of medieval England too closely with the “state” of continental Europe,<sup>17</sup> I think that a number of the points that he raises as he examines the gradual articulation of this body politic are relevant to my discussion now. What I would like to do over the next few pages is first to highlight a few major themes that emerge in Kantorowicz’s work, second, to discuss the relationship between these themes and similar issues that arise in Agamben’s and Carl Schmitt’s analyses of the state of exception (and its biopolitical potential), and, third, to explain how these themes will influence the direction of this literature review.

With that in mind, I should begin by noting that whereas I highlighted both the state-as-body *and* the state-as-family in the introduction to this chapter, I am focusing solely on the former in this subsection. I do this not because the metaphor of the state-as-family is of less importance than, or secondary to, the metaphor of the body politic, but rather, as we will see, because the two are not as distinct as they might at first appear.

As Kantorowicz argues, “especially when discussing the inalienability of fiscal property”—that issue fundamental to contemporary anticorruption advocates—jurists “fell to the metaphor of the ruler’s marriage to his realm. . . . [U]nder the impact of juristic analogies and corporational doctrines, the image of the Prince’s marriage to his *corpus mysticum*—that is, to the *corpus mysticum* of his state—appeared constitutionally meaningful.”<sup>18</sup> In late medieval and early modern France in particular, he continues, “both the *corpus mysticum* analogy and the metaphor of the king’s marriage to his realm were linked with the fundamental laws of the Kingdom.”<sup>19</sup> According to Kantorowicz, in other words, one of the most basic implications of the body politic metaphor is that it assumes an eventual nuclear family metaphor—as soon as sovereign power becomes embodied, it takes on the characteristics of every other body.

At the same time, however, as Kantorowicz is at pains to emphasize, the body politic, or sovereignty embodied, remains a contradictory and ambiguous thing. On the one hand, for example, it is “‘more ample and large’ than the body natural,” and contains within it “mysterious forces which reduce, or even remove, the imperfections of the fragile human nature.”<sup>20</sup> It is something that “never dies, is never under age, never senile, never sick, and is without sex.”<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, the Crown “as a composite body,” possessing a “corporate character,” is explicitly understood to be “a perpetual minor [i.e., underage] . . . with the King as its guardian.”<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the relationship between the king—as both guardian/husband and representative of this body politic—and “the Law” writ large is also inconsistent. The king is first of all “above the Law”—a situation “perfectly ‘legal’ and guaranteed by Law”<sup>23</sup>—but also simultaneously “below the Law.” Nonetheless, as Kantorowicz concludes, whereas “the seemingly self-contradictory concept of a kingship at once above and below the Law has been criticized as ‘scholastic and unworkable’ . . . [t]o the political thinkers and legal philosophers of the late Middle Ages, these contradictions did not appear unworkable at all.”<sup>24</sup>

In general, therefore, Kantorowicz presents the body politic as a chaotic, but nonetheless highly regulated, metaphor. It is physically and biologically perfect—unblemished, sexually pure—if nonetheless subject to a certain gigantism. It is simultaneously displaced onto the sovereign, married to the sovereign, and under the guardianship of the sovereign—both never underage and a perpetual minor. Finally, it is at the same time too great for the law and too despicable for the law to touch—legally defined as legally indefinable. The body politic, in other words, has the explicit potential to live up to Tissot’s, Rousseau’s, and Payne’s wildest fantasies of the healthy, pure, untouched, clean organism and the equally explicit potential to live up to the Paris prosecutor’s fantasy of a sexually inert, open, hygienic family. At precisely the same time, however, the body politic is just as capable of fulfilling

the unmentionable aspects of these fantasies—of becoming the precociously sexual minor, the incestuous child/spouse, or the monstrous, absorbing organism too contemptible for the law to consider. It is this second aspect of the body politic that will interest me in this literature review—the body politic given up to its monstrous, erotic, despicable, and, above all, corrupt, potential.

Indeed, I am particularly interested in two specific aspects of this body politic out of control. The first is suggested by Agamben in *Homo Sacer*, when he notes that one logical conclusion to Kantorowicz's study is that the "political body of the king seem[s] to approximate—and even to become indistinguishable from—the body of *homo sacer*, which can be killed but not sacrificed."<sup>25</sup> Agamben continues by arguing that what matters in this situation is not that in the case of the king, homicide is more than homicide, whereas in the case of *homo sacer*, homicide is less than homicide. Rather, what is important is that in the case of neither is killing actually homicide.<sup>26</sup> Kantorowicz's work, in other words, suggests and even insists on the pervasively, rather than narrowly, biopolitical nature of the body politic. It is not just the king whose body is simultaneously constrained and expelled by the law; it is each and every future citizen and future *homo sacer*. It is not just the king who occupies indistinct, biopolitical space; it is the body politic as a whole that exists in this indistinct space. What Kantorowicz is describing, therefore, is both a particular metaphor of sovereignty *and* the reality of the exceptional space assumed by this metaphor.

A second scholar whose work is intimately linked to Kantorowicz's, in fact, is Carl Schmitt—perhaps one of the most influential theorists of the state of exception. Whereas it is true, as Agamben notes, that Kantorowicz's study of "medieval political theology" is a "demystification" of the concept, whereas Schmitt's work on "political theology" in the modern period is emphatically not,<sup>27</sup> the fact remains that Kantorowicz and Schmitt were working within the same intellectual tradition and—more important for my purposes—were in many ways describing similar phenomena (i.e., states of exception). I would therefore like to highlight one point of intersection between the work of Schmitt and the work of Kantorowicz that will be useful for contextualizing this literature review.

In his *Political Theology*, Schmitt outlines a number of corollaries that follow from assuming that juridical systems are less about objective, rational, abstract norms than they are about sovereignty and sovereign decision—that follow, to use Kantorowicz's terminology, from the sovereign existing both above and below the law. One of the most basic of these is that, as he argues, "the exception in jurisprudence [becomes] analogous to the miracle in theology."<sup>28</sup> The exception, in other words—the sovereign violation of the sovereign's law—performs the same nonlegal but nonetheless legitimizing role in jurisprudence that the miracle, the



divine violation of the (divine) laws of nature, does in theology. Each shatters a system of norms and each blurs the boundaries between the rational and the irrational; but each in doing so demonstrates the foundational power of law/politics or law/divinity. It is, in other words, not just that the exception, the construction of a lawfully lawless space, lends meaning to contemporary sovereign relations. It is that it lends a particularly *miraculous* meaning to contemporary sovereign relations, predicated on an irrational, nonverbal acceptance of political power. Sovereign legitimacy, that is, rests on a miraculous absence of legality.<sup>29</sup>

Like Agamben and Kantorowicz, therefore, Schmitt likewise implies a body politic that insists on exceptional or biopolitical space. In his work, too, there is the same blurring of borders and boundaries, the same reliance on the nonverbal aspects of sovereignty, and the same consequent if paradoxical reinforcement of sovereign power. All three describe the effective functioning of the body politic as something that leads inevitably to an aggressively disordered, if nonetheless well-regulated, conclusion. All three identify the potential for exceptionalism that occurs when the political is simultaneously and emphatically displaced onto, first, territory, second, space, third, the sovereign, fourth, the subject, and finally the body.

When I discuss the erotic themes that occur and recur in the corruption literature, therefore, I am not interested solely in their sexual meaning. Rather, I am situating them precisely and explicitly within these theories of law, politics, biopolitics, and exceptionalism that I addressed earlier. It is not just that narratives of the “developing state” messily collide with narratives of infantile sexuality, in other words—in turn suggesting the perpetually minor and perpetually precocious “Crown” of Kantorowicz’s study. Nor is it simply that the rhetoric of incest and monstrous gigantism on which the corruption literature relies likewise invokes the body politic’s unavoidable multiplicity and self-obsession. Rather, again, it is that these themes work together to create exceptional space and biopolitical sovereign/subjects; they work together to delimit this miraculous space of legitimacy characterized by the absence of legality.

## The Developing State and Its Infantile Transgression

In his *History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault discusses a transition in modern political and legal rhetoric from a focus on what he calls “a symbolics of blood” to a focus on “an analytics of sexuality.”<sup>30</sup> Over the course of this argument, he draws upon a number of examples and case studies, emphasizing in particular the extension of surveillance networks into the supposedly private realm of children’s sexual behavior. It is not my intent in this section to revisit Foucault’s theses of sexuality or biopolitics in detail. Instead, I would

like to highlight two aspects of his discussion of infantile sexuality that become relevant when the literature of the corrupt developing state begins to intersect with the literature of the sexually active child.

First, Foucault notes that the nineteenth-century efforts to eradicate infantile sexuality—especially masturbation—were not about eradication per se, but instead about a never-ending process of producing and then monitoring the “secret” that was children’s sexual behavior. Even as it was uncovered, evidence of infantile sexuality suggested the existence of more that was hidden, more that cried out for additional discovery, and more that demanded the further extension of surveillance networks.<sup>31</sup> Second, Foucault examines the role of the modern expert in extracting confessions from misbehaving children or deviants. The production, policing, and exposing of the secret, he argues, created a context in which the expert would help to provide the child/deviant with an appropriate self-narrative, and in which the child/deviant might thus take on a recognizable social, sexual, and political role.<sup>32</sup> The modern obsession with infantile sexuality therefore, first, allowed for an ongoing process of discovery and exposure, and, second, created a context for an equally continuous process of subject formation.

I would like to turn now to a second discussion of the relationship between children’s sexual behavior and modern political identity, this time, however, focusing on the twentieth-century United States. In his analysis of Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita*, Frederick Whiting argues the following:

Humbert the pedophile threatened the home, innermost bastion of privacy and the last redoubt guarding liberal democratic freedoms. His victim, children, were the very embodiment of that privacy, incarnations of innocence possessing no public existence whatsoever save their cameo appearances in the protective statutes designed to reinscribe them, even more safely, in the domestic sphere.

He continues that,

on the one hand, the discussions [of *Lolita*] depended on what Donald Peese has described as the distinction, traditional to liberal democracies, of the private and public realms; on the other, they are informed by what Richard Rorty has identified as a liberal democratic desire—the legacy of the Greek Philosophers and Christian theology—to fuse the public and the private.<sup>33</sup>

Discussions of *Lolita* in the twentieth-century United States were, in other words, one arena in which the fear of infantile sexuality collided with fantasies of the public/private distinction as a foundation for the func-

tional liberal state. Whereas Foucault described a process in which the invention of children's (deviant) sexual behavior led to the extension of power networks into supposedly private space, Whiting is describing a process in which it is precisely the overlap of public and private that is responsible for the deviance. It is the inappropriate intermingling of the two spheres that allows for sexual abuse, that turns Lolita from a protected innocent into a victim and perpetrator of deviant behavior. In both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that is, discussions of infantile sexuality evoked both the horror of and desire for "corruption"—for the irrational and obscene intersection of the public and the private.

The final aspect of infantile sexuality that I would like to discuss in this overview is its role in the colonial relationship. As a number of scholars have noted, the conflation of the child with the savage, and the infantilization of colonized populations, is an integral element of imperial and neo-imperial power structures. In her *Race and the Education of Desire*, Ann Stoler draws on Foucault and takes this point to its logical conclusion, bringing together the savage, the child, and the sexuality of both—arguing indeed that children

enter on *both* sides of that equation, for theirs is both an endangered and dangerous sexuality. They must be protected against exposure to the dangerous sexuality of the racial and class Other, not because their sexuality is so different, but because it is "savage," unrestrained, and very much the same. This discursive connection between the "savage as child" and "child as savage" is not one that Foucault makes, but it will be crucial to us. Both representations were constructs of a civilizing, custodial mission and a theory of degeneracy whose bourgeois prescriptions would turn on the contrast and equation between the two.<sup>34</sup>

Here, in other words, we have a final variation on the theme of the threat of infantile sexuality. In the colonial context, what was only suggested before becomes overt: infantile sexuality is both attractive and repellent, worthy of protection and itself a danger, representative of the need for a civilizing mission and also indicative of the degeneracy to which all civilization might eventually succumb. The trope of childlike innocence, bound up as it is with the trope of childlike deviance,<sup>35</sup> thus *explicitly* develops in the imperial context alongside nineteenth-century notions of political progress and duty. By the late twentieth century, it had become an ineradicable metaphor for the hope and despair embodied in the continuing liberal civilizing project.

Over the remainder of this section, I will situate the corruption narrative within this rhetorical framework. In particular I will argue that

discussions of both the corrupt “developing” state and its corrupted citizens were and are firmly anchored in nineteenth- and twentieth-century notions of the innocently savage and savagely innocent infant victim/perpetrator of unmentionable acts. This is something of a departure from more anthropological approaches to the relationship, which focus primarily on the construction of cultural or civilizational others. Indeed, although it is related, my interest here will be emphatically political and legal. I want to address in particular the *institutionally* corrupt state–citizen relationship—a relationship, I will argue, in which the corrupt state takes on the double role of both abusive father and deviant, malformed child, while the corrupted citizen acts as the simultaneously savage and innocent victim/perpetrator of the state’s obscene desire.

One of the most striking aspects of the victims of political corruption in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for example, is the extent to which they were without exception always innocent and always childlike in their inability to protect themselves from improper behavior. Whether the protagonists of these narratives were infants and infantilized woman suffering at the hands of the “neo-patrimonial,” “paternalistic” state or the confused, underdeveloped state itself, it was the threat to their innocent and unaware condition that became the centerpiece of the spectacles surrounding them. Likewise, it was the slippage between inappropriate political desire and inappropriate biological or sexual desire that made these stories harrowing, and that demanded the extension of networks of surveillance.

Three late nineteenth-century examples of the American corruption narrative—the first two focusing on the threat posed by idiot/foreign-child-savages to the purity of political processes “at home,” and the last addressing the source of such deviant behavior in the colonized “abroad” (in this case, China)—indeed set an excellent foundation for a further exploration of this overlap. Each begins with an invocation—the first spatially, the second economically, and the third politically—of the public/private divide that Whiting argued was so central to liberal rhetoric. Each also, however, quickly moves from this starting point to a conclusion resonant more of *Lolita* than Locke. In the first, for instance, an 1894 article in *The Arena* entitled “Political Corruption: How Best Oppose,” there is a discussion of vote buying in the United States, and of the people victimized by the practice. In one anecdotal story cited in the article, “a man kept a half-idiot who was working for him shut up in his cellar for some days before an election to prevent the opposing party from capturing and voting him. Then, on election morning, with a man on each side to guard him, he was marched to the polls with a prepared ticket in his hands, and voted.”<sup>36</sup>

The second article, from 1892, and entitled “Responsibility for Political Corruption,” makes the connection between the political and the infantile, between the inappropriate state–citizen relationship and the inap-

propriate adult-child relationship more apparent. In an attempt to absolve the infantilized “foreigner” of sole responsibility for the corrupt state of U.S. politics, the anonymous author plays with the trope of the simultaneously victimized and criminal “foreign” child/savage. The author writes,

instead of being the source of our political corruption, the ignorant voter is the victim of it. If he be foreign-born, almost the first lesson he receives in American politics is that elections are controlled by corrupt men for corrupt purposes, and that the rich and respectable members of American society supply money for this work of debauchery. Instead of educating him to a high and just conception of his duties and privileges as a citizen, we are teaching him the lowest one possible. The dangerous consequences of such teaching need not be pointed out.<sup>37</sup>

The message in both of these anecdotal pieces is clear: the victims of political corruption are, first and foremost, the marginalized, the weak, the innocent, and the childlike. Whether it is the half-idiot worker incapable of deviance on his own or the half-educated foreigner who, like the curious child, might be tempted into such behavior, it is the neglected duty of the functional state to civilize both of them via compassion or correction. But when the state itself becomes corrupt, loses sight of its fatherly mission, the result is a slide into “debauchery,” of which the “dangerous consequences . . . need not be pointed out.” The defining characteristic of the corrupt political situation in these two passages is thus one in which the childlike citizen is abused by the patrimonial state, leaving the citizen with no choice but to take on a debauched identity himself.

Again, however, like so many other aspects of modern, Euro-American political rhetoric, the logical conclusion to the corruption narrative is reached only in the colonial context.<sup>38</sup> It is only in colonized space that the politically corrupt, the infantile, and the sexual all come together to produce the story in its full form. I would like to turn now, therefore, to one case study “abroad,” in China, rather than “at home,” in the United States. One of a number of articles published during the 1900 Boxer Rebellion,<sup>39</sup> this piece, written by John Foord, Secretary of the American Asiatic Society, discusses the movement’s possible motivations and attempts to assign to the disturbance a palatable meaning. Like that of most of his colleagues, Foord’s solution to the dilemma is above all to associate what was seen as patently illegitimate political violence with patently illegitimate politics in general—it involved, that is, forging the first of a number of indissoluble links between anticolonial activity in China on the one hand and Chinese political corruption on the other. Anticolonial activity in turn became something not just frightening politically, but frightening sexually—child-savages

involving themselves in adult political behavior as repellant as children involving themselves in adult sexual behavior. As Foord noted, “like tigers who have tasted human blood, these men will not return to peaceful callings. They have become trained in the school of crime. The lawless life of the past will cause them to long for a life in which money can be gained without the sweat and toil of months at the spade or wheelbarrow.” He continues, however:

These companies of bandits were children of the government’s own raising, and it became evident that, in the absence of any honest desire to suppress them, a reign of terror was imminent. . . . [T]he Chinese terror has been raised not by missionaries, merchants or railroad builders, but by the ignorance, incapacity and corruption, and chiefly the corruption, of the rulers of China.<sup>40</sup>

These rebels, then, these infant/savages—simultaneously “tigers who have tasted human blood” and “children of the government’s own raising”—were both victimized by and perpetrators of Chinese political corruption. The illegitimate Chinese government created them, raised them, neglected them, and in the process it victimized them—leading them away from an honest path. At the same time, however, the rebels were also guilty themselves, lost by virtue of being tempted, irredeemable because they could not respect the value of money gained through honest (non-corrupt, politically neutral) toil.

But the Chinese state itself also played both infant victim and infant perpetrator within this narrative. Foord concludes:

The appetite of the palace for tribute has been that of the two daughters of the horse-leech continually crying, “give, give” and government has been one vast system of bribes, “squeezes,” and wholesale robbery. Offices, great and small, have been a matter of purchase, and the purchaser has been mainly intent on making the most of his bargain. Official speculation is the curse of China, and the root of all the evils from which it is suffering. Let that be cured or abated, and the people who starve while the Palace favorites grow rich can be made to see that the foreigner may be the instrument of their well being—“the advance agent of prosperity.” Of all the punishments that Western civilization can contrive, as a penalty for the misdeeds of the Empress Dowager and her clique of obscurantist advisers, none would be so exquisitely painful or so productive of results in the highest degree beneficial to the world, as to deliver the Government of China into the hands of honest Chinamen.<sup>41</sup>

The state, that is, embodied and feminized in the person of the Empress Dowager, is first and foremost a selfish and irrational infant, compared to the “daughters of the horse-leech” who cry for more and more without regard for anything beyond immediate, physical desire. Official functionaries also, however, both give and take, bribe and are bribed, coerce and are coerced themselves. The solution to the situation, therefore—a situation both threatening and pitiable—is a combination of the medical, the sexual, and the punitive. The Chinese state and in particular the Empress Dowager has to undergo a punishment above all “exquisitely painful.” But this punishment must also be productive of results, “beneficial” to the world and implicitly (but, interestingly, not explicitly) to “honest Chinamen.” In this narrative—and in particular in the fantasy of pain and reform with which it concludes—the infantilized Chinese population and state are thus both innocent and criminal, in need, like their sexually deviant child counterparts, of both compassion and coercive control.

These three examples of the corruption narrative are all anchored squarely in place and time—produced in the late nineteenth-century United States and discussing issues both politically inside and politically outside. It is worth noting as well, however, that one characteristic of later, twentieth- and twenty-first-century anticorruption literature is that more often than not it operates in virtual or postmodern space. By the 1990s in particular, anticorruption agencies and scholarly communities existed for the most part on the internet, and their messages were necessarily divorced from both the concrete “reality” of the nation-state and any sort of linear, modern timeframe. The narratives that these agencies produced were situated in the abstract universe of “development” and addressed to and from unnamed “developing states,” or at best continent-wide constructions like “Africa.” The rhetoric in turn became broad and diffuse, with corruption itself taking on a personality more than a definition, and the corrupt state/citizen relationship acquiring a poetic meaning more than a political one. The incestuous, patrimonial corrupt political relationship, the growth that was inhibited by corruption, and the savagely innocent nature of the corrupt state and corrupted citizen were therefore all transformed as corruption became a late twentieth-century issue of global, and then virtual, concern.

It is perhaps unfortunate, for instance, that these twentieth-century discussions of corruption rely so heavily on the nineteenth-century dichotomy between “rational” states and “patrimonial” ones.<sup>42</sup> By evoking images of fatherhood and, given the implicit moral connotations of patrimonialism, inappropriate or ineffective fatherhood, the temptation to designate the equally abstract citizens of such states as victimized children seems to have been too much for many to stand. As Elizabeth Barnes has noted with regard to the family–state metaphor broadly defined, “the liberal

construction of familial sympathy as the foundation for social and political unity” creates a situation such that “the conflation of familial and social ties results in an eroticization of familial feeling in which incest is the ‘natural’ result. What this suggests is the cultural cost of setting up the family as a model for politics.”<sup>43</sup> When the family becomes the model for *dysfunctional* politics, the downward spiral is inevitable.<sup>44</sup> In the corruption narratives of the twentieth century, therefore, the fragility, powerlessness, innocence, confusion, and hence desirability of the victimized child are applied with great enthusiasm to the corrupt(ed) individual, the corrupt(ed) state institution, and the corrupt(ed) state itself.

Over and over again, “world leaders” like Mary Robinson and “global analysts” like John Githongo tell “us,” the international community, that “at the end of the day it is the poor and the weak who face the true brunt of corruption,”<sup>45</sup> that “the losers are likely to be exceptionally poor, female, and marginalized, whilst the winners are already wealthy and part of an inefficient, swollen state,”<sup>46</sup> that corruption “affects women<sup>47</sup> in particular. . . . [T]hey are the primary victims, including through prostitution and pornography. Corruption . . . exposes them to pollution and dangerous environments.”<sup>48</sup> Those threatened by corruption, in the abstract, outside of a national or chronological framework, are thus the weak and the innocent, people in danger of subjugation to an inappropriate sexuality—people likely to be polluted. It is not entirely clear, for example, what the exact link between political corruption and pornography is—although the story of the child-woman sold into sexual slavery or prostitution is a recurrent trope in the literature.<sup>49</sup> But the emotional connection is obvious. It is endangered, helpless, and therefore attractive innocence, women and children at risk of taking on unnatural sexual roles, that are at the center of the virtual twentieth- and twenty-first-century anticorruption movement.

At the same time, however, again, this innocence is not without its underside. Just as the victims of infantile sexuality are also perpetrators, are also threats to abstract notions of social and political probity, the victims of political corruption are likewise irrevocably tainted by it. Robinson continues her speech, for example, by noting that bribery requires both a “giver” and a “taker,” with all that this sort of relationship implies.<sup>50</sup> The question thus becomes to what extent force, desire, and vulnerability play a role. Indeed, the twin responses of the victimized citizen to a corrupt and corrupting patrimonial state are, familiarly, first, a descent into inappropriate sexualized behavior, and, second, a growing mistrust of the security and capability of state structures. Like the victim of infantile sexuality, the victim of political corruption sinks into promiscuity, pursues unhealthy relationships, and thus ceases to be the trusting child, secure in a blissful familial bond. As Robinson notes, “corruption destroys a crucial social good, trust, in society



and in government. This . . . inhibits growth. It also . . . may foster the belief that democracy is not capable of providing needed security.”<sup>51</sup>

The lack of trust that corruption fosters thus not only prevents healthy political development, it also undermines the ideal of the secure, healthy (innocent) state–citizen relationship, a relationship indeed explicitly tied back to an idealized, fetishized domesticity a bit later in the speech. After invoking Eleanor Roosevelt and her focus on “small places, close to home,” Robinson concludes with the horrific story of Juma Ali, Fatma Ali, and their daughter—a family that undergoes so much oppression in one day (they are unable to pay for water, heat, or their daughter’s school bus, their daughter cannot enroll in school, Juma must bribe his employer to continue working, the whole family is evicted from their house, the house is then demolished, and finally the family cannot pay for transportation to a new development)<sup>52</sup> that less sensitive listeners might find themselves inadvertently entertained by the story’s heart-wrenching melodrama. Whatever the case, however, the lesson to be learned from the narrative is summed up in one question: “how is Juna (sic) and Fatma’s sense of self worth affected by the bribes they have to pay . . . how do they see themselves in the eyes of their daughter, Amina?”<sup>53</sup> At issue therefore is not necessarily any notion of civic function, but the “self-worth,” and by extension the moral authority of the “small,” “close to home,” little nuclear family. The narrative of corruption in this speech concentrates above all on the weak, powerless, infantilized innocents’ progressive disordering and lack of self worth—a disordering that in its spectacularization, immediately becomes the possession of the public at large.

But the weak, infantilized citizen was not the only victim of political corruption. In the “developmental” context, the abusive patrimonial state was also at risk of both losing its innocence, disordering its identity, and endangering its future health. It, too, was “vulnerable”;<sup>54</sup> it too was subject to “debilitation”;<sup>55</sup> and, above all, it, too, was “young and fragile.”<sup>56</sup> The judicial system in particular became a subject of scrutiny—necessary to protecting society, but “unreliable because the rule of law is often fragile, and therefore can be captured by corrupt interests.”<sup>57</sup> Indeed, as one corruption analyst, Peter Langseth, noted in the 1990s,

emerging democracies in particular brave considerable political risks if corruption is not contained, as the corrupt can greatly weaken the authority and capacity of the fledgling state . . . [it has been argued that] “cowboy capitalism” is just a transition state that must be endured on the way to a more mature market economy. The danger, however, is that corruption can become so widespread that it can undermine and destroy the transition stage itself.<sup>58</sup>

As Herbert Welsh, Langseth's counterpart in the 1890s, noted:

the political diseases [corruption] which afflict our young and vigorous Nation are sufficiently serious; but in view of the youth and vitality of the patient they furnish no ground for despair of a complete recovery. On the other hand, let us beware lest we fall into a fatuous neglect of them and a failure to seek with promptitude sound medical advice, to apply obvious remedies, and to secure good hygienic conditions for their removal.<sup>59</sup>

In both scenarios, that is, the capacity of the young, fragile (or vigorous) state was under threat, in need of both surveillance and properly hygienic (read as "clean" in the twentieth century) conditions. Even while potentially dangerous or abusive, the young state was first and foremost cast in the role of child patient. Development, in other words—in the basic, pediatric sense of the word—was both at risk and necessary for the future health of the infant nation. The disease might have been difficult to detect and difficult to define, but its damaging effects were many and varied, and the first line of defense was proper surveillance combined with compassion and control.

Again, though, once infantilized, both the corrupt state and the corrupt citizen were also subject to a certain demonization. Like the children whose sexuality—by virtue of being infantile—marked them as simultaneously victim and perpetrator, ill and vicious, the underdeveloped nature of politics in the corrupt state—by virtue of being underdeveloped—marked it and its citizens as similarly so. In both late twentieth- and late nineteenth-century anticorruption literature, there was a constant invocation, for example, of the child perpetrator as the child victim. Githongo, writing of corruption in twentieth-century "Africa," for instance, notes:

a falling regard for the profession of teaching among the youth. . . . [T]oday because it is the corrupt who seem to succeed most in terms of acquiring material wealth, the product a teacher sells—education—simply does not seem to have as high a value as it once did. Short cuts to wealth seem more effective. Many youths opt to wait for that single big deal that can bring sudden wealth by virtue of what are euphemistically described as "connections."<sup>60</sup>

Although it was the youth in particular who were victimized by corruption, in other words, they were also responsible for its growing hold on society. Rather than respecting appropriate authority, they were seduced

by the lure of corrupt wealth. Via “connections”—relationships made illicit by the quotation marks around them—they became perpetrators of the system, both victimized in their inability to distinguish genuine success from the deviant version, and threatening in their emulation of “the corrupt who seem to succeed.”

But it was, again, not just individuals within the corrupt state who embodied the victim/perpetrator role, it was also the state itself and its institutions. Since corruption was above all about an inappropriate, often sexualized relationship, at issue in discussions of it were notions of coercive and voluntary intimacy. The victims of corruption were without a doubt victims—the intimacy of the corrupt relationship was unhealthy, damaging, and inappropriate for them. But to the extent that they engaged in this relationship willingly, or without an overt fight, they were also tainted by it. Robinson follows Githongo, for instance, arguing that “in relation to education: Corruption is demanded and given during registration,”<sup>61</sup> that “business is often as much the perpetrator of corrupt practices, as it is the victim,” but that “many firms bribe under duress.”<sup>62</sup> All of which creates in the end what Githongo refers to as “an incestuous relationship between business, politics and the bureaucracy.”<sup>63</sup>

The relationship among the state, its institutions, and its citizens, then, became a relationship in which both the threat and the draw of an innocently deviant intimacy were foregrounded. It is not obvious what exactly is meant by “corruption demanded and given,” but the rhetorical value is clear. Corruption is something evil, it is something that—without being demanded—would not be given. But on being demanded, it creates a simultaneously coercive and voluntary intimacy between the taker and the giver, a relationship both appealing and repulsive. Similarly, businesses were both victims and perpetrators of corruption—explicitly so in this instance.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, however, many became so “under duress”—resisting, disliking, not wanting the relationship, but unable to withstand it nonetheless. In both situations, therefore, the victim/perpetrators of corruption writ large reenacted the roles of the victim/perpetrators of infantile sexuality: unwilling innocents who were nonetheless drawn into, and eventually became responsible for, an unhealthy and immoral intimacy.

They thus tread a fine moral line in the popular and political imagination. Infantile and manipulative, attractive in their repulsiveness, they embodied all of the fascinating aspects of the deviant relationship. The only way to deal properly with them was via a combination of medicine and punishment, reform through pain. More important, however, this process of reform had to involve the destruction (and spectacularization) of the inappropriate relationship and its replacement with an appropriate one. Indeed, as Michael Wiehen, a corruption specialist of the late twentieth

century, suggested: “developing countries should be able to offer limited preferences to their infant industries, provided these incentives and preferences are fully transparent, strictly regulated and are announced openly.”<sup>65</sup> Provided the relationship between the patrimonial state and its infant industry was a healthy and appropriate one, emphatically not “incestuous,” and one that conformed to the narrative of proper development, everything would be fine. If not, however, the punishment and correction implied in “strict regulation” would presumably be employed.

### Striptease: Political Transparency and Self-Regarding Behavior

I would like to spend some time now recontextualizing the corruption narrative within a second major erotic trope of the modern period—the pornographic confession. In his work on sexuality and subjectivity, Jeremy Tambling suggests a direct connection between the circulation of pornographic tales sold as confessions and the creation of the bourgeois subject in the nineteenth century.<sup>66</sup> Post-eighteenth-century sex, he argues, could not “be thought of outside a discourse of secrecy,” and thus sexual behavior became a matter for confession, and confession in turn an erotic act.<sup>67</sup> I will argue throughout this section that post-eighteenth-century narratives (or confessions) of political corruption occupied the same rhetorical space. My particular interest will be the relationship between the late nineteenth-century invention of the striptease and the simultaneous invention of the caught, contrite, and exhibited corrupt state or citizen. After first discussing two theoretical approaches to the striptease, I will move on to a twentieth-century case study of corruption-as-burlesque in Italy, and then finally an analysis of more abstract anti-corruption rhetoric, especially as it is embodied on websites advocating “transparency” and decrying “self-regarding behavior.”

Between 1890 and 1920, the striptease became a culturally significant phenomenon in Europe and North America.<sup>68</sup> Over this period, the spectacle of a fully or partially clothed woman gradually exposing herself—often impersonating a “belly dancer” or “harem girl”—became something worth watching and something worth paying for. The erotic juxtaposition of the attainable and the inaccessible, the exotic and the familiar, reached a new intensity with the striptease, and the burlesque show that surrounded it became one of the most marketable products available to a newly consumerist public. As Jon Stratton notes, two questions follow from this phenomenon: “first, why [did men] want to look at the naked female body? And second, why d[id] they want to see its gradual revelation?”<sup>69</sup>