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**“Thy Righteousness is but a menstrual clout”:
Sanitary Practices and Prejudice in
Early Modern England**

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Growing interest in the historiography of the female body has resulted in a number of studies of the ways that menstruation was represented in early modern England.¹ These studies concur that, within the prevailing humoral system of bodily economy, regular menstruation was seen as a physiological function, essential to a woman's overall health. However, examining early modern manuals on women's health reveals a key paradox: although normal menstruation was considered a disease, a monthly sickness or illness, failure to menstruate regularly was also considered a disease, which physicians went to great lengths to cure.² Such was the prevalence of the belief that the key to a woman's health was sited in her uterus that Lazare Rivière stated in the section of his anatomy guide devoted to women's health in the mid-seventeenth century that the womb was the source of “six hundred miseries and innumerable calamities.”³ Like humoral theory itself, most ideas about the cause and effects of menstruation were based on the ancient ideas of Hippocrates and Galen, which explained that, because of a woman's more sedentary lifestyle, her body was less efficient than a man's at utilizing the blood that she produced. The resultant build-up of blood and other waste in the female body (described as a “plethora”) must be eliminated through menstruation for the sake of her health. In the mid-seventeenth century, a rival theory was proposed: menstruation was caused by a chemical ferment in the female body, which reached critical mass once a month and broke forth from the uterus, the naturally weak

point in female physiology.⁴ Also in this period, some accounts of the nature of menstrual blood transmitted from Pliny via Isidore of Seville in Latin to the thirteenth-century pseudo-Albert's *Women's Secrets*,⁵ still represented myths postulated by Pliny in the first century BCE, which claimed that menstrual blood was poisonous and could perform alarming magical feats, such as causing wine to sour, trees and crops to die, mirrors to cloud, swords to blunt, and dogs to go mad should they chance to taste it. A new English translation of Pliny in 1601 by the physician Philemon Holland disseminated these well-known ideas even further.⁶

As well as the physical threat that menstrual blood could pose, it might also pose a psychological one: according to an extreme example, a man's seeing of a woman's menstrual blood could be enough to cure him of love sickness or infatuation. The classical story of Hypatia taps into this ancient myth of menstrual blood as a cure for love sickness.⁷ According to the story, Hypatia cures a would-be lover of his infatuation for her by showing him her used menstrual rags. This gesture apparently repulses the lover by bringing him face-to-face with the realities of the female body. In his chapter on the prevention of love sickness or "erotique melancholy," physician Jacques Ferrand relates this story:

It so fortun'd, that a scholler of hers was so surpriz'd with the beauty both of her body, & mind, that he grew almost mad for love. But at one day this young *Inamorato* was very earnest in his suit to this faire Damosell, & importuning her to cure him of his disease by satisfying his desires: she (being, as it seemes, not ignorant of the Precepts of Physicke in this case,) *Panno menstruos indidem prolato; ecce, inquit, adolescentule quod tantopere adamas, ubi nil nisi Immundicies habetur.* Which the young man had no sooner seen, but his heat was presently allayed, and himselfe cured of his Love-Melancholy.⁸

As Mary Frances Wack has noted, the preferred cure for lovesickness in a man was intercourse,⁹ and it is only when Hypatia refuses to comply with the young man's desire for sex that she is described as extinguishing his unwanted interest with the sight of her used sanitary protection. In this story, in what Wack calls "Neoplatonic strain," the constant search for perfection in beauty is undermined by the realities of female physiology.

This tendency is seen in Gideon Harvey's account of this incident when he claims that the cure worked by demonstrating "*Quod est superius, est sicut inferius*. That is, whatever is above is like to what is below."¹⁰ The story reinforces the notion that menstrual blood is noxious, psychologically damaging, and highly indecorous. The story of Hypatia may have been disseminated for salacious or misogynistic reasons, rather than for its curative value; Ferrand, at least, is skeptical of its effectiveness, commenting that he will look for more sound remedies for lovesickness in the "three Fountaines of Physicke, namely: Dieticall, Chirurgicall, and Pharmaceuticall."¹¹

The story of Hypatia draws attention to the paucity of research within early modern studies on one aspect of menstruation: how the early modern woman managed her menstrual flow on a practical, daily basis. This essay addresses that issue. Part of the reason that there is little extant evidence is located in the dual nature of sanitary protection. This subject is both taboo and mundane, leading to an apparent lack of contemporary early modern sources. Menstruation is a commonplace experience for women the world over, yet it is often considered a subject to be left unspoken. Just as, when writing in English, medics would often use Latin to discuss things which might appear sexual, so too we see the use of Latin to discuss sanitary protection in the previous quotations, reinforcing the idea of menstrual blood as an unfit subject for open discourse. In the early modern period, cultural and social taboos, prejudices, and religious doctrinal taboos all contributed to this lack of explicit discussion. One phrase which is repeated often in anti-Catholic and other proselytizing texts is the instruction to cast out sin like one would a "menstrual rag." Similarly, the insufficiency of mere human righteousness is figured by comparing it to a bloodied rag in the sight of God. In the light of these contrasting characteristics of taboo and everydayness, this article will examine early modern texts to analyze how women might have used sanitary protection, and how the Biblical imputations linking sin to cloths which were "defiled" with menstrual blood might have contributed to a culture of silence on this subject.

For the purposes of this article, I refer to anything which is used specifically to absorb the menstrual flow as "sanitary protection" because this is the normal modern terminology. I do, however, think that this usage indicates deeply problematic assumptions about the nature of these

objects: does the term “sanitary” imply that failure to use these objects is “unsanitary”? And, what does the term “protection” imply? Edward Shorter prefaces a question about the nature of early modern sanitary protection with the claim that “women’s premodern sense of cleanliness shows itself most vividly in the area of menstrual hygiene.”¹² This is a key facet of the early modern context: early modern understandings of cleanliness are not the same as modern ones. This is not to say that early modern women were not clean; it is just that cleanliness is culturally determined and, at different points in history and location, different norms apply.¹³ It is therefore important to try to recover this aspect of women’s lives in the early modern era without imposing twenty-first century ideas about cleanliness upon a society for which modern ideas had no equivalence or relevance.

Previous studies that have discussed the issue of sanitary protection in historical accounts usually claim that women used linen pads or cloths to absorb their menstrual flow. Such claims are often based on practices that were used until the twentieth century, extrapolated back into the early modern era, usually with no early modern sources to back these assumptions. The important 1970s study of the cultural history of menstruation, *The Curse*, comments that “[t]hrough the ages, women have used either tampons, or bandages as sanitary protection.”¹⁴ Patricia Crawford’s seminal article, “Attitudes to Menstruation in Seventeenth-Century England,” takes it for granted that women wore “cloth pads.”¹⁵ Of the later seventeenth century, Liza Picard writes, “sanitary towels were made of linen that had reached the end of the line; they were washed and reused, as they were well into the twentieth century.”¹⁶ Of course, these claims are not implausible and probably are the ways that some women managed their menstrual flow. Similarly, in “Civil Cleanliness,” her chapter about personal hygiene in the eighteenth century, Virginia Smith comments, “The normal method of dealing with the menstrual flow was to cut out and sew a pad of rag, which was then pinned onto the underpetticoat and washed daily, a method which persisted well into the early twentieth century.”¹⁷ Conversely, Edward Shorter poses and answers his own question: “What did peasant women use when they menstruated? The answer seems to be basically that women from the popular classes menstruated onto their clothes.”¹⁸

Since there is a plethora of early modern medical books which discuss the importance of managing menstruation, and a similar number of conduct books explaining how to keep clean and tidy, yet neither seems to refer to sanitary protection, should one assume with Shorter that, in fact, women did not feel the need to wear or use any form of protection? It is interesting that Shorter makes his comments with regard to women “of the popular” classes, but does not say why he perceives a class division. Class, as we know it, of course, had no currency in the period under consideration, in which a person’s rank in society was the acknowledged distinction; however, this sort of rank distinction does appear pertinent to this enquiry. For example, Alexandra Lord has found evidence from the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary suggesting that during the eighteenth century, poorly nourished, lower ranking Scottish women “not only missed their menses during the winter months when food resources were stretched tight, but also that these women *expected* to miss their menses during this season.”¹⁹ So, clearly, women of different lifestyles would have different experiences of menstruation, and perhaps different menstrual practices as well.

The evidence I have recovered suggests that an early modern English woman who used folded cloths to absorb her menstrual flow would have known them as “clouts” or “rags.” Pieces of cloth used in a variety of household ways were generally referred to as clouts. These clouts were usually made from old cloth, often linen, cut down to size, sometimes hemmed, and then given a variety of uses around the home (dishcloths, bandages, sanitary uses such as wiping after using the toilet).²⁰ The early modern term of “clout” and its variants means, according to the OED, “a piece of cloth, esp. one put to squalid uses.”²¹ It is possible that the choice of linen as the material for medical and sanitary uses resulted from the belief that clean linen could draw off moisture from the body.²² In 1682, A. Marsh drolly commented regarding childbirth practices that a midwife might offer “warmed beds and other Clouts, the number and names where of are without end.”²³ These cloths could also be used to absorb menstrual blood, but there is no contemporary evidence that I have been able to recover that they were sewn into pads at all, although the cloth was undoubtedly folded over to make it more absorbent. It is possible that clouts were pinned or tucked into the girdle, which was a belt-like garment that sat just below the waist, worn by both men and women.

Lady Anne Clifford records in her diary that on December 13, 1619, "My Lord gave me three shirts to make Clouts of."²⁴ Even though Lady Anne was a wealthy aristocrat, it would appear that one of her housewifely duties was to run the house as frugally as possible, and it is interesting that this exchange was considered noteworthy in her diary as the only entry for that date. This diary entry confirms that household economy led to second-hand linen being made into cloths. However, at some level, it also reinforces the seventeenth-century stereotype that higher-ranking women spent their days sitting and sewing. This stereotype appears in an account of why women are considered colder and moister than men, and is ultimately thought to be the reason women menstruate; Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia* cites Hippocratic authority:

*Men doe live a more laborious life, and eat more solide meates then women, that they may gather heate and become dryer, woemens foode is more moyste; and beside, they liue an idle and sedentarie life, pricking for the most part uppon a clout.*²⁵

There is a caveat, though, explicated in a 1705 translation of Bernardino Ramazzini's *The Diseases of Tradesmen*, which suggests that, while a man's old shirt could be put to any use, because of the supposedly venomous nature of menstrual blood mentioned earlier, many "celebrated Surgeons" believed that "Lint" for dressing wounds should not be made from "Women's Linnen or Shifts, notwithstanding they are frequently wash'd; and that by reason of the Virulency of the menstrual Blood."²⁶

Other primary evidence further suggests that only women of a certain rank would take the precaution of wearing clouts to absorb their menstrual flow. A seventeenth-century joke attributed to Nicholas Le Strange describes how a "mad knave" at a masque fails to recognize "a certain thing . . . which monstrous [i.e. menstrous] women used to wear," which has fallen on the floor. He waves it around asking where this "surcingle" comes from.²⁷ A "surcingle" is a girdle placed around a horse's girth when it is being trained, and so further supports the idea that a woman of higher rank might tuck or pin a clout onto a belt while menstruating. Not only are the dangers of wearing folds of linen in a pre-underwear era all too apparent, but this also corroborates the idea that it was women of a

certain rank—those who might dance at a masked ball—who wore sanitary protection. Given the common belief that exertion such as dancing could make the menstrual flow heavier or, as John Freind suggests, break out unexpectedly, it could be the case that women chose to wear sanitary protection on special occasions, such as a ball.²⁸

Mary Carleton's disputed autobiography also shows her to have been living in the rank of women who would use clouts as sanitary protection. Carleton's account of her marriage and its breakdown tacitly implies that she was menstruating at the time that her goods were seized by her marital family, which happened after they had found evidence that she was not the German princess she had claimed to be. Carleton writes that a gang of women, at her marital family's request, came into her rooms and took away all her clothing. Perhaps salaciously rather than factually, this account lists that "my jewels and my money, my very bodice and a pair of silk stockings being also pulled from me," but, when she reiterates this scene later, she adds details designed to demonstrate both the intruders' mercilessness, and the shocking intrusion of the raid: "In fine, they left me not a rag, rinsing every wet cloth out of the water, and carrying them away."²⁹ To have her property taken to the extent that even her soaking undergarments and, possibly, even her menstrual rags were removed might also suggest that such bits of linen had a commodity value, and as such might be beyond the financial reach of some.³⁰

One surprising source of contemporary evidence for the possible practice of sanitary protection comes from the 1680 collection of poems which claims to be a posthumous publication of the notorious libertine, John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester. Before his death, Rochester's poetry was disseminated in manuscript form to aristocratic and like-minded friends. It is deeply problematic as a source for the history of women's bodies since most poetry in the anthology focuses on the female body as used for male sexual gratification. The first poem of interest here is "Song" ("Against the Charmes our *ballocks* have"), written in the style of a literary ballad, cross-rhyming ABAB and in tetrameter/trimeter quatrains, which demonstrates an easy accomplishment at prosody, itself perhaps designed to make the irregularity of the subject more shocking. This ballad tells the story of a man who claims to be disgusted by a prostitute while he cannot resist being in her thrall. The

speaking voice in this ballad invites the reader to share his position. The subject of this relationship is apparently so distasteful that the speaker suggests that he will “write upon a double *Clout*, / And dip my *Pen* in *Flowr’s*” (7–8).³¹ “Flowers” is a very old name for menstruation in this era, from a horticultural metaphor explained by Jane Sharp, the seventeenth-century midwife, as being used because “Fruit follows” flowers, which is to say that it was believed that without menstruation, conception was impossible.³² So this speaker will write his salutary warning in the prostitute’s menstrual blood upon her sanitary protection, which is a play on the practice of writing love letters in one’s own blood for added dramatic effect. The speaker is thus using deliberately shocking imagery, linking menstruation to the prostitute’s enthralling body and behavior as characteristically unsavory aspects of female sexuality. This imagery further alludes to the magical and malicious properties that this blood was often believed to have, while never questioning the male voyeur who is using a female physiological event to publicize his feelings of entrapment by female sexuality.

In a similar vein, another ballad published in the same collection goes even further on the topic of sanitary protection. “*Song*” (“By all *Loves* soft, yet mighty *Pow’rs*”) deals with the subject of sexual intercourse during menstruation, warning men of the dangers of “fuck[ing] in time of flowers.” This practice was prohibited by both the Bible³³ and cultural taboos, which threatened results ranging from the excoriation of the penile skin due to the vitiated nature of menstrual blood, to the conception of monstrous progeny.³⁴ Predictably, Rochester is not interested in reinforcing normative cultural or Biblical prohibitions, but is perhaps using a taboo to increase the shock value of his already sensational topics. The poem suggests that a lack of personal hygiene is the norm for the woman he is having sexual relations with, despite her use of clouts. He says that if she were to always use paper when she uses the toilet, and a sponge to absorb her menstrual flow, then he would have more pleasure in coitus:

Fair nasty *Nymph*, be clean and kind,
And all my joys restore;
By using Paper still behind,
And Spunges for before.³⁵

The speaker does not fear the assumed dire consequences of sexual intercourse during menstrual periods, but he would prefer to leave the fray without his “prick” suffering a “bloody nose” (11–12).³⁶ This, he assures the reader, is a turn-off of such proportions that only a naïve, inexperienced lover would be able to achieve an erection: “None but fresh *Lovers Pricks* can rise / At *Fillis* in foul linnen” (15–16). The speaker implies that, to solve this problem, he would prefer the sponge to be used tampon-like to remain in place during intercourse. This poem shows the way in which the prostitute, if she modified her behavior according to the speaker’s concerns and managed her periods according to the codes that he outlines, would then seem even more sexually desirable, indeed irresistible.

The exchange of this manuscript material before its publication suggests that the use by some prostitutes of a sponge to enable them to continue working during their menstrual period was common knowledge. The use of a “pessary” in medical contexts was also a familiar practice, and there is some evidence of the use of absorbent pessaries in the case of post-partum bleeding from ancient times; however, most often a pessary was used for supporting the uterus, or to deliver medicines to the uterus, rather than to absorb blood. The anonymous best-seller, *Aristotele’s Masterpiece*, for instance, describes using linen internally to help with a prolapsed uterus following a birth. “Aristotle” suggests that the midwife should anoint the abdomen with oil of St. John’s Wort and then swaddle her belly to keep it warm, and that the midwife should “raise up the Matrix with a linnen Cloath many times folded.”³⁷ Similarly, William Sermon’s *The Ladies Companion* describes how one could manufacture a pessary to support a prolapsed womb, a very common condition in women who have had multiple births.³⁸ One of his ingredients is breast milk, possibly because of the assumed connection between breast milk and the blood of the womb. Breast milk was believed to be menstrual blood which had gone through a further stage of concoction in the body to transform it into milk, and was therefore a substance that would not irritate the womb. Sermon molded pessaries out of cork covered in wax, but crucially insisted that a hole left in the center would facilitate the egress of menstrual blood. Patricia Crawford comments that “there was no unwillingness to advise married women to insert objects into the vagina,” and that, therefore, “it is pos-

sible that women might have used pessaries as well as cloth pads to cope with the practical problems of menstruation.³⁹ However, contemporary texts about menstruation suggest that anything which stopped the menstrual blood from freely flowing could have severe health implications for a woman. It is possible, therefore, that use of sponges to retain the blood within the body was only practiced among prostitutes, and would have been considered dangerous in the wider population.

Besides evidence for doubts about the use of pessaries for sanitary protection, there is some contemporary evidence that only women who bled heavily felt obliged to use protection to soak up the flow. A 1719 translation of Pierre Dionis's midwifery guide seems to corroborate this idea explicitly:

The Quantity of Blood to be evacuated can't be determined; some women lose very little, others are forc'd to use Linen-Cloths, otherwise they might be trac'd and exposed by the print of the *menstrual* Blood.⁴⁰

Dionis's explanation distances him somewhat from the often-rehearsed Hippocratic dictum that an average menstrual period yields between one and two pints of blood.⁴¹ John Freind conducted experiments which appeared to corroborate the Hippocratics' findings:

The quantity of the evacuated Blood is different according to the variety of Constitutions, Diet, Age, or the Like; yet in healthy and adult Persons it commonly amounts to twenty Ounces, which agrees with the measure assigned by *Hippocrates*, namely two *Hemina's*.⁴²

Lesley Ann Dean-Jones explains how the Hippocratics arrived at this measure: "The Hippocratic doctors . . . estimated the amount of blood a healthy woman should lose by the amount of fluid they thought the average non-pregnant womb could hold."⁴³ Perhaps the reason for the widespread acceptance of this quantitative measure was that blood spreads alarmingly. As Dean-Jones comments, "it only takes a small amount of liquid to produce a large stain," so estimating blood loss based on soiled cloths or garments could lead to a higher assumed blood loss.⁴⁴

As part of his discursive comments on the cause of menstruation, which he believes to be a localized ferment in the gall bladder, James Drake, in 1707, offers the reason that he, unlike John Freind, does not support the idea of a Galenic/Hippocratic plethoric buildup to be the cause of menstrual bleedings: such a buildup, he argues, would produce symptoms, such as a generalized feeling of heaviness, alerting a woman to her impending period. He explains that many women who

have *them* regularly and easily, have no warning, nor other Rule to prevent an indecent Surprize, than the Measure of Time; in which some that have slipt, tho' otherwise modest and careful Women, have been put to such Confusions and Shifts, as would not consist with the Notice that a *Plethoric* Body would give.⁴⁵

"To shift" in this period can mean to change one's clothing. This comment speaks volumes about the contemporary ideas of proper female behavior and is reinforced later in the eighteenth century when the physician Malcolm Flemyng also comments that some women have no symptoms to alert them to the start of a period, so that they "they scarce have warning enough to provide for decency."⁴⁶

Despite Drake's and Flemyng's comments, it would seem that for women who bled within the normal range by today's assumptions (approximately 2 to 3 ounces), or had no access to spare linen, allowing menstrual blood to seep onto the shift was probably deemed perfectly normal. As Dionis makes clear, only "some women" who bleed more heavily than the norm are "forc'd to use linnen-cloths."⁴⁷ This is corroborated in a comment by John Freind, who notes that sometimes women who think their period is over are surprised when the bleeding returns immediately, but he says that this is caused by women putting on their shifts when the material is "damper than usual."⁴⁸ The shift was a universal under-dress made from simple material, worn next to the body, underneath the stays (bodice or corset) with a petticoat over it, followed by an outer-dress. This statement seems to reply that Freind had developed a theory about this recurrent bleeding; perhaps his observations of female practices and the notion that clean linen was thought to draw moisture to the body led him to suggest that women bleed into their shifts and have to wash them out more

frequently than normal and that the shifts do not thoroughly dry before they must be worn again. It is worth noting that this does not necessarily suggest that no clouts were used. Clouts might leak, and so a woman using clouts would probably still find that her shift needed washing regularly, too.

In what might prove to be the only account of her menstrual practices by a woman in this period, the normality of bleeding into one's shift is corroborated. In a notorious case in 1733, Sarah Malcolm was arrested for the murders of three women, one of whom had her neck slashed, the others having been strangled. Malcolm's employer, John Kerrel, confronted her about the murders and testified:

The next Thing I took Notice of was a Bundle lying on the Ground; I asked her what it was, she said it was her Gown. And what's in it? says I. Why Linen, says she, that is not proper for Men to see; and so I did not offer to open it.⁴⁹

A search of Kerrel's house revealed that the handle of the "Close-stool" door was covered in blood, and the room itself contained some dirty linen and a silver tankard. Malcolm claimed that the tankard was her own, inherited from her mother, and that it and the door handle had blood on them because she had cut her finger "and as for the Linen, she said, it was not Blood upon it, but a Disorder."

That this blood was menstrual was borne out by the testimony of a fellow prisoner, Roger Johnson, who claimed to have had orders to search Malcolm. He says that Malcolm asked him not to examine her: "she desir'd me to forbear searching under her Coats, because she was not in a Condition," and, to prove that she was menstruating, Malcolm "shew'd me her Shift, upon which I desisted."⁵⁰

In an extremely important and unusual account of menstruation through a woman's voice, Malcolm argues in her own defence:

Modesty might compel a Woman to conceal her own Secrets if Necessity did not oblige her to the contrary; and 'tis Necessity that obliges me to say, that what has been taken for the Blood of the murdered Person is nothing but the free Gift of Nature.

This was all that appeared on my Shift, and it was the same on my Apron, for I wore the Apron under me next to my Shift. . . . [A]nd Mr. Johnson who searched me in *Newgate* has sworn that he found my Linen in the like Condition.

If it is supposed that I kill'd her with my Cloaths on, my Apron indeed might be bloody, but how should the Blood come upon my Shift? If I did it in my Shift, how should my Apron be bloody, or the back part of my Shift? And whether I did it dress'd or undress'd, why was not the Neck and Sleeves of my Shift bloody as well as the lower Parts?

The language Malcolm uses is interesting because it implies that, despite the heavy use of circumlocutions like "Disorder" and "Gift of Nature" and the idea of menstruation as "women's secrets," she assumed that the watching audience would know just what she meant.⁵¹ Malcolm's use of the phrase "free Gift of Nature" is interesting because it differs from the common language of the medical world, and is perhaps a reflection on the idea, which Mary E. Fissell identifies, that the womb was seen as analogous to a good housewife in that it always keeps a store, ready to receive a guest, and this "free Gift" would have been used to nourish a baby had a conception occurred.⁵² Malcolm also suggests that another inventive solution to the issue of menstrual blood discharge may have been employed, when she describes turning her apron around to cover the lower half of the back of her body to add another absorbent layer to her dress, in order to protect the bedclothes from staining.

As I have argued earlier, menstruation in this era occupied a peculiar position in that it was both public and private, and it occupied a further contradictory status in being both mundane and taboo. These taboos are presented in the Bible in various books and settings, and, I would argue, are the key factors in the development of women's silence on the subject of menstruation, except under exceptional circumstances, such as Sarah Malcolm in the dock, or women's health writers like Jane Sharp, who saw that by breaking cultural codes of femininity and publishing a midwifery guide, she might save many lives.

The role of the Bible as the main cultural referent in the early modern period cannot be overstated, and one of the activities that the new

Protestant religion encouraged was self-examination of one's religious health. This reflection led several women to write journals detailing their devotion and religious contemplations and presenting overcoming illness and childbirth as pious activities.⁵³ In these journals, most women mention their menstrual cycle only obliquely, if at all, and yet many of them discuss other aspects of daily life at length. This omission could result not only from concern for decorum but also from Biblical comparisons of filthy or unworthy items to a cloth or clothing covered in menstrual blood.

The main English Bible of choice in the earlier part of the period was the Geneva Bible, which included marginal notes explaining some of the biblical ideas to the reader. Isaiah 30:22 in the 1560 Geneva Bible reads: "And ye shall pollute covering of the images of silver, and the riche ornament of thine images of golde, & cast them away as a menstruous cloth, and thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence." The marginal annotations explain that:

Ye shall cast away your idols, which you have made of golde and silver with all that belongeth unto them, as the moste filthy thing and polluted [.] Shewing that there can be no true repentance except both in the heart and dede we shewe ourselves enemies to idolatrie.

The origin of this simile likening a false idol to a menstrual cloth is found in the translation of the feminine Hebrew noun "njdh," which is transliterated as a feminine noun "niddah," meaning "impurity," "filthiness," as well as "menstruous" and "set apart."⁵⁴

A devotional poem by John Vicars demonstrates the idea that cloths and clothing were considered to be defiled by contact with menstrual blood:

O, double, treble happy were I, sure,
If once I might put-off *Sins rags* impure,
Those *Menstruous cloathes* wherewith I am disguised,
Whereby thine Image in mee's not agnized:
Whereby in thy pure sight I am but loathed.
O therefore that my *Soule* might once be cloathed
With thy most *royall-Robes* of righteousness,
Thy *Seamelesse*, spotlesse *Coote* of holinesse.⁵⁵

The posthumous sermons of Edmund Calamy and others make the distinction even more explicit when he suggests that human righteousness "is no better than *menstruous Cloaths* and *filthy Rags*."⁵⁶

In the Geneva Bible Isaiah 64:6, the image of a cloth with menstrual blood on it as disgusting is highlighted by the sixteenth-century marginal notes. The verse reads: "Our righteousnes and best vertues are before thee as vile cloutes" and, as previously cited, the marginal comments explain "or, (as some read) like the menstruous clothes of a woman." This example highlights that the translation to "menstruous" from "filthy" was subjective and was clearly influenced by the cultural context of the translation, and was not necessarily the meaning ascribed by the author of the book of Isaiah. This point is demonstrated by a translation which appeared shortly after the Geneva Bible, the King James Bible, in which this passage becomes: "But we are all as an uncleane thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy ragges, and we all doe fade as a leafe, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away." An early Christian dictionary by Thomas Wilson, 1661, examines the passage from Isaiah and says: "*As filthy rags*, Isa. 64. 6. Concerning the notion of the word here used, and not elsewhere read; as also concerning the notation of it, there is great variety of opinions, even among the *Jewish Criticks* themselves." After explaining the translations that this term can produce, such as "rags of old cloth, a patchwork coat, bandages on bloody sores, or cloths used in child birth," Wilson says, it is "a *cloth* or *cloth of separations*, a *menstruous cloth* or *clout*, as coming from a word that signifies both in Hebrew." Wilson says that when this text was translated from Hebrew into Greek, the term became a "sitting woman," but that this does not detract from the meaning of menstruous, because this reference is to Rachel (Genesis 31:35). The author of this dictionary therefore concludes that this usage is in fact what Isaiah intended to be understood: "And to some such Loathsome and nasty stuffe [as menstrual blood] in all likelyhood, doth the Prophet compare the most righteous among the main multitude of his people."⁵⁷

This understanding was challenged by Edward Nicholson in the early part of the following century, and perhaps precipitated the decline in the usage of this simile in printed devotional texts. Nicholson rages against the fact that nonconformist preachers use this image in the pulpit. He says

it is disgusting that Calvinists have substituted the term “menstruous” for “filthy” so that now even young boys recite the passages using this phrase and ask him what the meaning of this term is. He writes:

[We should] not disparage the beauty of those Vertues Christ has bestowed on us, and taught us by his own Example: By giving them such Vile Characters and Names, as if they were not to be touched without a pair of Tongs. *Pannus Menstruatus*, as you would word it, or the comparison of a Menstrous Cloth, the Prophet call'd it not so, but filthy Rags; and that he spoke not with Relation to Righteousness, quatenus [as] Righteousness: But he said, was of their condition that wanted Righteousness, and had none at all among them: Neither is the Word in that place altogether so Odious: Tho I have often heard that very Name you give it, in the Calvinists publick Pulpit Prayers, and some cou'd never pray in the Pulpit without it, to the great offence of many modest People to my knowledge. . . . But this Text the Calvinists assault it from, has not the Word they use, but a modester Word, only *filthy Rags*, and that [is] not spoken of true Righteousness, or good Life, but of the want of it. Yet they have made this monstrous reproachful Name, so unreasonably common upon this Occasion, that even their younger boys have it by heart, and often ask what the meaning of the Word is.⁵⁸

This diatribe speaks volumes about the anxieties that this word, and the simile it evokes, aroused in some parts of early modern society. Nicholson calls menstrual cloths vile and immodest, but does not appear to be disputing the sense of the verses, just the translation and word choice.

These similes occur regularly, although not particularly frequently, in devotional and conduct writings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A sample reading of such texts from 1582 to the eighteenth century suggests that the number of authors who used the term “filthy” instead of “menstruous” were slightly in the majority. However, when authors preferred “filthy” they often added salacious adjectives to it to emphasize their point. For instance Thomas Bentley, in the well-known Elizabethan book of prayers for women, *The Monument of Matrones* (1582), writes in a “Psalm for the remission of sinnes,” “For I am uncleane and filthie: and all my righteousnesse is like a foule bloudie clowt.”⁵⁹ Authors who do not

wish to use menstruation overtly often alluded to it with the common alternatives of stained or polluted rags.⁶⁰ That menstrual blood pollutes is clear from the laws of Leviticus and in references to it, such as in Barnaby Barnes’s play *The Devil*, where the devil says, “Thy soule foule beast is like a menstous cloath, / Polluted with unpardonable sinnes.”⁶¹

The simile of a menstrual cloth seems to be used by Protestants of all sects and affiliations, in all manner of devotional publications, including books of religiously inspired verse like Nicholas Billingsley’s Presbyterian *Treasures of Divine Raptures*; verse 178, “On a Clout,” reads:

Self-right’ousness enwrapping us about,
Is as a rotten ragg, or menstous Clout.⁶²

Phyllis Mack argues that this sort of language is so common because “When [Protestants] spoke of the absolute nullity of human virtue in relation to divine love and judgement, that human nullity or spiritual nakedness was often seen as feminine.”⁶³ And, of course, menstruation is the greatest signifier for femininity, because it was thought to be caused by the cold, moist, inactive nature of the female body.

In addition to its use in decrying human righteousness and in highlighting man’s sinful nature, the term “monstrous clout” is often used in anti-Catholic propaganda. An apparent fear of the growth of Catholicism was seen through the various Stuart reigns in the seventeenth century. For example, in a treatise warning against a supposed rise in “popery,” Anthony Gilby follows Isaiah and challenges the loyal “to cast away the reliques of Idolatrie” like a “menstous clowte,”⁶⁴ here using the imputation in Isaiah as a direct reference to Catholic religious practices.

There is some evidence that, while this phrase was well-known and appeared in print regularly throughout the period, it was also presented orally in sermons by Calvinist and other nonconformist preaching on a regular basis, as Edward Nicholson describes. Patricia Crawford therefore argues that, “People in seventeenth-century England were familiar with the use of the symbol of the menstruating woman to define profanity.”⁶⁵ One printed funeral sermon for a woman, Joice Featly, by the Puritan minister Thomas Gataker, indicates that this simile was used and expanded upon:

"Is there any man so vile, and void of shame, as that he dare presume solemnly to bequeath to some honourable person, some greasie dish-clout, or some durtie shoo-clout, or some filthie, menstrous, materie ragge?"⁶⁶ Here the "menstrous rag" is set within a context of domesticity and other household cloths, presumably because it is being discussed at the funeral of a housewife.

Patricia Crawford noted in 1996 that evidence of women using "menstrual metaphors with such aversion has yet to be located,"⁶⁷ and my research seems to partly support this finding, for women do not use the simile in the overt way that men do, despite attempts to ascribe this simile to a female voice, as in the Apocrypha of Esther published in the Geneva Bible, for example.⁶⁸ Lady Elizabeth Delaval uses this metaphor in a decorous way in her meditations, writing that "In thy sight (even) our vertu's are so full of imperfections that they can scarce deserve the name of rags, much less of garments to clothe us in, fit in the least measure to appear before thee."⁶⁹

The poet An Collins, however, does use the simile of a "Monstrous clout" in her verse. Collins's single published volume of poetry encompasses all that is known about her life, and her verse has been argued to be "nakedly" autobiographical. Collins's identification in her verses as a Calvinist would mean that she was familiar with the simile of the menstruous rag in her religious worship.⁷⁰ Much of Collins's verse details not just her sense of faith but also her bodily ill-health, and in "Another Song" ("The Winter of my infancy being over-past"), she makes oblique references to her lack of menstruation.

In the poem "Another Song" ("Excessive worldly Grief"), Collins alludes to the fact that she has suffered from some unpleasant bullying, "taunting," perhaps by other women, about her physical state. But possibly some of the hurt is self-inflicted, because she describes her own difficulty in overcoming the sin of envy of other women, in "Though Envy wait to blast the Blossoms green" (7). Sarah Skwire describes how in this poem Collins uses an extended simile to suggest that "to condemn a godly person, soul and all, because of an obvious physical defect is as senseless as preferring a perfect weed to a damaged rose."⁷¹ The simile is extended to:

Or else as if a Monstrous Clout should be
Prefer'd before the purest Lawn to see,
Because the Lawn hath spots and this the Clout
Is equally polluted throughout.⁷²

In dealing with her complicated feelings about her amenorrhea, Collins taps into the familiar biblical image linking menstrual blood with pollution and filth. Her dress (metaphorically, her conscience and soul) may have a few marks on it, because man's fallen state means no one can be without sin, but this is in no way as bad as the pollution on a menstrual cloth. It is an indication of the contemporary cultural prejudice against menstrual blood that Collins chooses to defend herself in a way most usually heard in masculinist voices. This is perhaps an insight into the way that Collins deals with this affliction. We know from the earlier poem that she is in mourning for her lack of menstruation, so perhaps by elevating herself above the filth of this blood, and by extension, the lot of other women, Collins can take some comfort.

What this study has shown is that, except in extreme situations, like that of Sarah Malcolm, the early modern woman was largely silent on the subject of how she managed her menstrual blood loss. The evidence that is available is almost universally from men, and, therefore, must be treated with some caution because the practices they describe, in medical texts, verse, and jests, are not their own. As I have said earlier, conduct guides and housewifery manuals tell a woman how to manage her personal hygiene to the extent of cleaning out her ears and nose, but remain silent on the topic of sanitary protection. Perhaps this is not surprising, given the implicit cultural link between menstrual blood and disease, the social taboos of decency and shame, and the biblical comparison of menstrual rags and spiritual corruption. If the mere sight of a used menstrual cloth was supposed, apocryphally, to cure lovesickness in men, what might have been the effect of defying the taboos and writing about sanitary protection in guides for young women? It might be the case, though, that in the course of everyday life, using a method for absorbing menstrual flow was not considered necessary by many women because bleeding into layers of clothing was perfectly normal. However, just as the claims of Pliny about

the poisonous nature of menstrual blood have not entirely left us today, so, too there is an inheritance from the early modern woman in the assumption that sanitary protection is still somewhat taboo and embarrassing.

Notes

1. For two useful examples of writing on menstruation in early modern Britain, see Patricia Crawford, "Attitudes to Menstruation in Seventeenth-Century England," *Past and Present* 91 (1981): 47–73; and Alexandra Lord, "'The Great Arcana of the Deity': Menstruation and Menstrual Disorders in Eighteenth-Century British Medical Thought," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 73 (1999): 38–63. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the British Arts and Humanities Research Council in funding my research. I would also like to thank the staff and my fellow research students in the department of English and Drama at Loughborough University, who provide a vibrant and supportive research environment. I am especially grateful to Elaine Hobby for reading earlier drafts of this essay, and for her generous advice and encouragement.

2. Such was the interest in regulating menstruation that Etienne van de Walle's study of the use of herbal cures as emmenagogues has identified that, of the 325 plants mentioned in Nicholas Culpeper's *Complete Herbal* (1655), eighty plants "were said specifically to provoke women's courses and 51 to stay them"; see "Flowers and Fruits: Two Thousand Years of Menstrual Regulation," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23, no. 2 (autumn 1997): 192.

3. *The Fifteenth Book of the Practice of Physick: Of Womens Diseases*, trans. Nicholas Culpeper, Abdiah Cole, and William Rowland (London, 1655), 400.

4. See Janice Delaney et al., *The Curse: A Cultural History of Menstruation* (New York: New American Library, 1977), 41; Crawford, "Attitudes," 50; Helen King, *The Disease of Virgins: Green Sickness, Chlorosis and The Problems of Puberty* (London: Routledge, 2003), 72.

5. Pseudo-Albertus, *Women's Secrets*, trans. and ed. Helen Rodnite Lemay (Albany: State University of New York, 1992). The first English translation of *Women's Secrets* was by John Quincy (London: E. Curll, 1725).

6. Pliny the Elder, *The Historie of the World: Commonly called the Naturall History of Plinius Secundus*, trans. Philemon Holland (London: by Adam Islip, 1601), 308. For some typical examples of this type of ideological assumption, see Anon., *Aristoteles Masterpiece: Or, The Secrets of Generation Display'd in all the Parts Thereof* (London: Printed for J. How, 1684), 49; or James Drake, *Anthropologia Nova* (London: printed for Sam. Smith and Benj. Walford, 1707). Lesley Ann Dean-Jones suggests that Pliny's extreme views, taken from oral folk traditions, may have been a response to the extreme anxiety some men felt about the greater freedoms in society that Roman women enjoyed compared to their more subjugated Greek counterparts. This invective is not found in the same way in Greek medicine, she says. Indeed, Dean-Jones maintains that the evidence shows that the claim

in Aristotle's *On Dreams* (350 BCE) that the look of a menstruating woman could cloud a mirror, were not in the original text but added in the form of marginal notes at a later date; see *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 248.

7. See Lesel Dawson, "Menstruation, Misogyny, and the Cure for Love," *Women's Studies* 34, no. 6 (September 2005): 461–84, for a discussion of the history and early modern presentation of the so-called "menstrual cure."

8. James Ferrand [sic], *Erotomania or A Treatise Discoursing of the Essence, Causes, Symptomes, Prognosticks, and Cure of Love, or Erotique Melancholy*, trans. Edmund Chilmead (Oxford: Printed by L. Lichfield, for Edward Forrester, 1640), 235–6. "She brought out of the place in question a monstrous cloth; 'Take a look, young man,' she said, 'at what you so much desire, in which is contained nothing apart from filth.'"

9. Mary Frances Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The Viaticum and its Commentaries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 39.

10. Gideon Harvey, *Morbus anglicus: or, The anatomy of consumptions* (London: printed for Nathaniel Brook at the Angel in Cornhill, 1666), 54–6.

11. Ferrand, *Erotomania*, 237.

12. Edward Shorter, *Women's Bodies: A Social History of Women's Encounter with Health, Ill-Health, and Medicine* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1991), 261.

13. See Virginia Smith, *Clean: A History of Personal Hygiene and Purity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), for a history of the changing ideals in personal hygiene throughout history.

14. Delaney et al., *The Curse*, 14.

15. Crawford, "Attitudes," 55.

16. Liza Picard, *Restoration London* (London: Phoenix Press, 1997), 113. "Towel" is a modern term in this context, and not one used in the early modern period.

17. Smith, *Clean*, 232. Any evidence on the washing of rags used for bodily functions does not support a daily washing theory. Rags were gathered in a bucket or tub and soaked, and presumably, when there was a sufficient quantity to justify the activity, they would be washed together.

18. Shorter, *Women's Bodies*, 261. Shorter cites a source text, albeit late medieval, and recounts an incident in which a woman who died in 1457 was discovered, upon intimate examination, to have been menstruating at her death; there were then some complaints that the inspectors would have been able to tell that she was menstruating by the state of her clothing, so there was no need to disrobe her.

19. Lord, "Arcana," 43.

20. Hence the seventeenth-century proverb, "Money is welcome, though it come in a shitten clout."

21. *The Shorter OED*, 432. The updated online *OED* has modified this slightly to remove the pejorative qualifier "squalid" and now says a "piece of cloth (esp. a small or worthless piece, a 'rag'); a cloth (esp. one put to mean uses, e.g. a dish-clout)." Although the early modern period is notorious for idiosyncratic spellings, it does appear that this spelling, "clout," or "cloute" was used specifically for these cloth rags that were put to many

household uses. Other linen items such as tablecloths, for example, were usually spelled "cloath."

22. Crawford, "Attitudes," n55.

23. A. Marsh, *The Ten Pleasures of Marriage Relating all the Delights and Contentments that are Mask'd under the Bands of Matrimony* (London, 1682), 128.

24. *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*, ed. D. J. H. Clifford (Stroud, England: Alan Sutton, 1992), 81.

25. Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (London: printed by William Jaggard, 1615), 274. The colder female body is unable, according to this ancient system, to transform blood in the same way as the male body can to create seed, sweat, and extra hair; therefore female bodies create a surplus which needs to be eliminated from the body on a periodic basis.

26. Bernardino Ramazzini, *A Treatise of the Diseases of Tradèsmen*, trans. anon. (London: for Andrew Bell and others, 1705), 103–4.

27. Quoted in Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 42 (from "Merry Passages and Jeasts": *A Manuscript Jestbook of Sir Nicholas Le Strange [1603–1655]* [Salzburg, 1974], 59–62). "Monstrous" as a pun on "menstruous" was so well-known that Jane Sharp directly refutes this in *The Midwives Book, or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered* (1671), ed. Elaine Hobby (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 215.

28. John Freind, *Emmenologia*, 1703, trans. Thomas Dale (London: for T. Cox, 1729), 71.

29. Mary Carleton, *The Case of Madam Mary Carleton* (London: for Sam Speed and Henry Marsh, 1663), 72.

30. Carleton's husband wrote his own account of this story, which refutes the idea that Carleton is the author of her narrative; cited in *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writing By Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen*, ed. Elspeth Graham et al. (London: Routledge, [1989] 2002), 134.

31. Right honourable the E[arl] of R[ochester], *Poems on Several Occasions* (Antwerp, 1680), 73, lines 7–8.

32. Sharp, *Midwives Book*, 215. The OED 2b glosses the term "flowers" as the menstrual discharge, the menses, after the French term fleurs, which is regarded by French scholars as a corruption of flueurs, or flow. However, Monica H. Green's careful research in *The Trotula* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 21, shows that "flowers" as a term for the menses had been in common vernacular use across Europe for hundreds of years, deriving from the horticultural term, long before science tried to reclaim the term as a derivative of the Latin "fluor" (or French "fleur").

33. Leviticus 18:19 "And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness; he hath discovered her fountain, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people."

34. For some typical examples of this type of ideological assumption, see Drake,

Anthropologia Nova, 322; or Anon., *Aristoteles Masterpiece*, 49.

35. Rochester, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 72, lines 5–8.

36. Among many early modern gynecological texts on this point, see, for example, Drake, *Anthropologia Nova*, 322, which states that the "Malignity of [menstrual blood] is so great, that they Excoriate [pull the skin off] the Parts of Men by the Meer contact."

37. Anon., *Aristoteles Masterpiece*, 157. On pessaries, see Moses Charras, *The Royal pharmacopoeia, galenical and chymical according to the practice of the most eminent and learned physitians of France and publish'd with their several approbations*, trans anon. (London: Printed for John Starkey, and Moses Pitt, 1678), 61: "Under the name of Pessaries, are comprehended all Medicines not liquid, which are put up into the Secret-parts of Women. But by the word *Pessary*, strictly tak'n is to be understood a sort of solid Medicine, about a fingers length, sometimes somewhat bigger, which is put up into the Secret-parts with a Riband fasten'd to one end."

38. William Sermon, *The Ladies Companion: or, The English Midwife* (London: For Edward Thomas, 1671), 180. See François Mauriceau's *The Diseases of Women with Child, and in Child-bed* (London: by John Darby, 1672), 306, for some illustrations of pessaries.

39. Crawford, "Attitudes," 55. Interestingly, Crawford says in the notes to this assertion that, during the nineteenth century, some women did not use any pessaries or pads, for they "feared that any cloth might prevent the menses from flowing." The evidence from Sermon and others demonstrates that the view that nothing should impede the course of the menses was indeed a seventeenth-century commonplace, too.

40. Pierre Dionis, *A General Treatise of Midwifery*, trans. anon. (London: for A. Bell, 1719), 53.

41. The 1662 edition of Nihcolas Culpeper's *Directory for Midwives: or, a Guide for Women, the Second Part* (London: for Peter Cole) reads, "Hippocrates saith, They should bleed but a pint and a half, or two pints: this is not alike in all, but differs in respect of age and diet" (67). Sharp, in *The Midwives Book*, makes exactly the same comment (216). The quotation from the Hippocratic *On the Diseases of Women* is given by Dean-Jones: "The average amount of menses for any healthy woman is about two Attic Koryls – or a little more, or a little less"; see *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*, 88. Two koryls are approximately one pint. It is unclear where the misinterpretation of a pint and a half to two pints first started, but it is common to see this amount offered in early modern texts.

42. Freind, *Emmenologia*, 1. A hemina is approximate to half an imperial pint measure, so Freind's quotation from the Hippocratic text is more accurate than that normally seen.

43. Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies*, 90.

44. *Ibid.* Dean-Jones also suggests that women have a tendency to over-estimate the amount of blood they have lost.

45. Drake, *Anthropologia nova*, 325.

46. Malcolm Flemyng, *An Introduction to Physiology* (London: printed for J.

Nourse, 1759), 351.

47. Dionis, *A General Treatise on Midwifery*, 53.

48. Freind, *Emmenologia*, 74.

49. See www.oldbaileyonline.org, which offers a facsimile and transcript of the published record of Malcolm's trial (ref: t17330221-521).

50. For an analysis of this case, see Jane Magrath, "(Mis)Reading the Bloody Body: the case of Sarah Malcolm," *Women's Writing* 11, no. 2 (2004): 223–36.

51. Malcolm was reputed to be educated and literate. To her priest, the Rev. Piddington, she apparently wrote an account of her part in the crime, admitting to the thefts, which was published as *A true copy of the paper, delivered the night before her execution, by Sarah Malcom [sic] to the Rev. Mr. Piddington* (London: printed for J. Wilford, 1732) and sold by him to a publisher within days of her death. Perhaps this accounts for the articulation of her plea.

52. Mary E. Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 33. Fissell quotes from Thomas Raynalde, *The Byrth of Mankynde, otherwise named the Womans booke* (London: Tho. Ray, 1545), 35, which states, "Prudent lady nature wisely hath provided that there should be always pres[en]t and ready, a continual course and resort of blud in the vaines of the matrice as a very naturall source, spring, fountaine or wel[l] evermore redy to arouse, water and nourish the feature [foetus] so sone as it shal be conceived." This is an adaptation of the Aristotelian theory that the menstrual blood did not play an active role in conception, but rather that it was there passively to receive the man's vital spirit and nurture it into a baby. Menstrual blood was, therefore, nutritive, because the blood was being stored in readiness for feeding a foetus. Raynalde was atypically pro-woman in his book. For example, as Fissell notes, he refuses to reprint the myths about the poisonous nature of menstrual blood, calling them "dreams and plain dotage." For a modern edition, see Thomas Raynalde, *The Birth of Mankind, Otherwise Named the Women's Book*, ed. Elaine Hobby (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008), xxii, 66.

53. Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England, 1500–1720* (London: Routledge, [1993] 1996), 76.

54. See Kristin De Troyer, "Blood: A Threat to Holiness or toward (Another) Holiness," in *Wholly Woman, Holy Blood: A Feminist Critique of Purity and Impurity*, ed. De Troyer et al. (Harrisburg, London, New York: Trinity, 2003), 60; and *The Parallel Bible*, <http://studylight.org>, which states that this one Hebrew word is translated in the King James Bible as "filthiness, flowers, menstruous, menstruous woman, put apart, removed, removed woman, separation, set apart, unclean, unclean thing, uncleanness."

55. John Vicars, *A Prospective Glasse to Looke into Heaven* (London: Printed by W. Stansby for John Smethwicke, 1618); there are problems with the pagination, in that an extra gathering seems to have been inserted between the E and F gatherings.

56. Edmund Calamy et al., *Saints memorials, or, Words fitly spoken, like apples of gold in pictures of silver being a collection of divine sentences* (London, 1674), 3.

57. Thomas Wilson et al., *A Complete Christian Dictionary* (London: Printed by

E. Cotes, for Thomas Williams, 1661), 514.

58. Edward Nicholson, *The Death-Bed Repentance fully consider'd; proving that no mere death-bed repentance can be effectual to salvation* (Dublin: Printed by A. Rhames for the Author, 1712), 126–7.

59. Thomas Bentley, *The Monument of Matrones Containing Seven Severall Lamps of Virginitie* (London: Printed by H. Denham, 1582), 921.

60. See, for examples, George Downame, *A Godly and Learned Treatise of Prayer* (Cambridge: by Roger Daniel, for Nicolas Bourne, 1640), 363, "polluted clout"; and Andrew Willet, *Hexapla in Danielem* (Cambridge: Printed by Cantrell Legge, 1610), 143, "stained clout."

61. Quoted in Crawford, "Attitudes," 58.

62. Nicholas Billingsley, *Treasures of Divine Raptures* (London: Printed by T. J. for Thomas Parkhurst, 1667), 123

63. Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), 19.

64. Anthony Gilby, *To my Louynge Brethren that is Troubled about the Popishe Aparrell* (Emden: E. van der Erve, 1566), sig. B^v.

65. Crawford, "Attitudes," 57.

66. Thomas Gataker, *Saint Stevens Last Will and Testament A Funeral Sermon on Acts 7. ver 59. Preached at the Enterrement of the Remaines of Mrs Joice Featly* (London: by Elizabeth Purslowe for Nicolas Bourne, 1638), 20–1.

67. Crawford, *Women and Religion*, 17.

68. The Apocrypha includes 14:15–16, comprising a prayer in which Esther offers, "Thou knowest my Necessity: for I abhor the sign of my high Estate in the Days, wherein I shew myself, and that I abhor it as a menstruous Rag, and that I wear it not when I am in private by myself."

69. "The Meditations of Lady Elizabeth Delaval, Written Between 1662 and 1671," ed. Douglas G. Greene (Gateshead: Northumberland Press, 1978), 148.

70. "An Collins" in *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Women*, ed. Elspeth Graham et al. (London: Routledge, 1989), 54–71.

71. Sarah Skwire, "Women, Writers, Sufferers: Anne Conway and An Collins," *Literature and Medicine* 18, no. 1 (spring 1999): 1–23.

72. An Collins, *Divine Songs and Meditations* (London: for R. Bishop, 1653), 62.