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"Manlius to Peter Pindar": Satire, Patriotism, and Masculinity in the 1790s

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1. In the summer of 2004, spokesmen for the Bush administration did not refer to Michael Moore as "a bloated mass, a gross, blood-bolter'd clod" who "sponge[d] on dirty whores for dirty bread" (Gifford lines 67, 124). They did not exactly call him a "scourge of society . . . polluted with vanity, cowardice, and avarice" (Albion 12), nor did they mask their ad hominem attacks behind patriotic pseudonyms such as "Manlius" or "Albion." Moore's detractors in the White House concealed neither their identities nor their actual ignorance of his work, including the new film that provoked them, *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Patriotic pseudonyms did play a significant role in conservative attacks on Moore's Georgian predecessor John Wolcot, alias Peter Pindar (1738-1819), but his detractors nonetheless tended to ground their charges on a thorough knowledge of his popular satires. From at least 1787 until well after 1800, these numerous polemicists, sometimes employed directly by the government, attacked Wolcot's patriotism by questioning his manhood. Like Moore's work in some ways, Wolcot's anti-monarchical satire brought more outrageous and yet more accurate criticism of the

government before a larger public than any comparable work. His critics' retaliation could be compared to such recent works as *Michael Moore Hates America* and *Michael Moore is a Big, Fat, Stupid White Man*. As their epithets attest, Wolcot's opponents similarly emphasized his corpulent body and his deviant masculinity, made more dangerous by its challenge to a militarized culture and the exalted masculinity of a wartime leader. Moore's claim to be a patriot is especially offensive to the right, and Wolcot too presented himself as a member of the loyal opposition; but the term "patriotism" (or "unpatriotic") is more rarely applied to Wolcot because its sense has shifted along with the composition of the body politic.^[1] What we might call unpatriotic in Wolcot's satire appeared instead as libel, sedition, and blasphemy, especially when he targeted the royal body of George III.

2. Wolcot, as Pindar, politicized the King's corporeal masculinity and thereby invited attack on his own. Clearly relishing the verbal combat, Wolcot set forth a grossly embodied masculinity as a condition of the genuine political agency he opposed to the bloodless, moralistic loyalism inculcated under the government of William Pitt. The difference between these two opposing forms of masculine patriotism, I will argue, corresponds to the rift between the king's two bodies exploited by Wolcot's satires. At the same time, Wolcot's poetry promoted a conflict that allowed both sides to taste the libidinal pleasures of patriotic struggle: he became the focal point of scatological and sodomitic fantasies as well as attempts to politicize sexual morality. Wolcot's many satirical antagonists used his own ribald persona more or less skillfully against him to unman or infantilize the robust social critic implied as the author of his satires. William Gifford of the *Anti-Jacobin Review* dismissed the "filthy drivel of this impotent dotard" (11) as sexual wish-fulfillment, adding more than twenty years to Wolcot's real age in an elaborate attack in verse. "Manlius," in the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, took Wolcot to task as "foremost among the enemies of Royalty" and

condemned the unmanly sentiments of a poet who could lampoon a monarch recently recovered from madness (1044). Ironically, however, Wolcot himself continually upbraided George for failures of manly sentiment: sometimes selling thousands of copies a day, Wolcot's lampoons gleefully ridiculed the King's stutter, his vulgar social and natural curiosity, his taste for castrati, his failings as a father, and his politically obnoxious avarice.[2] In a similar vein, Wolcot dismissed the natural history of George's favorite Sir Joseph Banks as "well suited to the idle hour of some old maid," not fit for "men who labour . . . with a Titan mind" for the benefit of humanity (*Works* 235).

3. The political satire of Wolcot and his critics dramatizes the political charge of sexual deviance. Today's Georgians, like the *Anti-Jacobin*, seem to have claimed "the manlier virtues, such as nerv'd / Our fathers' breasts" for themselves (Canning 326). In this view, the satirist's vitiated manhood is the unmistakable symptom of his treasonous intent. At the same time, the success of Wolcot's sharp attacks on the King and the Pitt government depended in no small part on his own ability to construct highly politicized definitions of masculinity. For both sides, then, sexual deviance is political deviance. Though currently the right seems to control this equation, the right-wing bloggers' obscene conflation of Moore's personal and political manhood, his body and his work, betray a complex and unstable ideological foundation informed by the politics of the 1790s. I won't begin to speculate about the bloggers' frequent recourse to homophobic epithets and images in their attacks on Moore, but the charge of sodomy also curiously frames Wolcot's career in the prose and verse of his detractors. In March 1789 the *Times* reported, in brief, oblique installments, that a scullion from the royal kitchens had been caught in flagrante delicto with Peter Pindar in the Birdcage Walk. This charge—probably because it was spurious—lay dormant for eleven years until Gifford introduced it in the prose apparatus to his Epistle to Peter Pindar. Gifford's attack is also the most vehement and elaborate of the dozens I

have read, and for some readers it sank Wolcot's reputation for good. Previous critics had tended to concentrate on other vices—Peter's obesity, his promiscuity and/or impotence, drunkenness, irreverence, and propensity to libel and falsehood. Gifford's willingness to air eleven-year-old dirty laundry may reflect a new level of investment in professional literary authority of the kind that Michael Gamer describes in his recent reading of Gifford's *Baviad*: "For Gifford . . . [the publisher John] Bell's attempts to repackaging Della Cruscan verse into high cultural artifacts amounted to multiple usurpations of literary authority" (48). Wolcot's commercial success in the arena of political satire may well have been similarly threatening. In its virulence Gifford's attack on Wolcot also consolidates a decade's worth of increasing intolerance, of ever tighter strictures on patriotism and masculinity.

4. Wolcot began his career with a confident control of masculinity enabled by his robust opposition patriotism, a mode the 1790s did much to circumscribe. From 1782-87 he produced much of his best-known work: four sets of annual odes to the Royal Academicians, two satires on Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, and his first satires on George III, including the first two cantos of his mock-epic, *The Lousiad*.^[3] Wolcot's masculinity in these works is prominent, yet hard to classify. Persistent attempts to dismiss him as a hireling of the Foxite Whigs were confounded by his openly declared Toryism and eventually by his rebukes to Thomas Paine and occasional anti-Gallic fervor. Neither the patriarchal model of chivalric manhood as retailed to the middle classes by Edmund Burke, nor the fraternal, unstable identity derived from the man of feeling—two possibilities outlined by Tim Fulford—seem to fit Wolcot, though at times he seems close to the virile populism of William Cobbett, identified by Fulford as the source of the anxiety that drove Coleridge back to Burke in later years (ch. 5). In his *Epistle to James Boswell*, Wolcot skewers Boswell for retailing biographical trivialities, a sign of puerile hero-worship as well as the cognitive myopia that Wolcot is quick

to condemn in many of his victims, including the king and Joseph Banks. In the more carnivalesque *Bozzy and Piozzi, a Town Eclogue*, Boswell is simply a drunk and a puppy, and Wolcot identifies more explicitly with the impatient paternal authority of Johnson himself. The same manly Johnsonian independence enables him, as an art critic, to puncture the stylistic mannerisms of each year's Royal Academy pictures, yet this attitude is fractured by his own puppyish admiration of Joshua Reynolds, who is always exempted from these criticisms. In his political poetry Wolcot's eccentric masculinity takes on the important connotation of non-partisanship: "Know, I've not caught the itch of party sin. / To Fox, or Pitt, I never did belong" (*Works* 278), he instructs Thomas Warton in *Ode upon Ode* (1787).

5. Wolcot's propensity to "lose the monarch in the man," as one poetical adversary put it ("The Two Pindars"), began with *The Lousiad*, in which the King declares war on his entire kitchen staff, ordering their heads shaved in his presence after he finds a louse on his plate. Wolcot brilliantly politicizes the model he inherits from Alexander Pope by framing the epic battle in a way that underscores the king's human needs: the resentful cooks, in a colloquy that recalls Milton's *Pandemonium* as much as *The Rape of the Lock*, declare: "Yes; let him know with all his wondrous state / His teeth, his stomach on our wills shall wait" (*Works* 30). The angry cooks invoke John Wilkes and America to politicize the King's human nature, but for the narrator George's masculinity is equally problematic. His uncontrollable anger over finding the louse exacerbates his stutter, the "broken language" in which he responds to the crisis (36), but also illustrates the narrow vision of a king "delighted with the world of little" (34). Even when engaging scientifically with the natural world, George's inspiration is like that of "vain Sapphos, who fancy all Parnassus in their brain" (34)—and yet his unwillingness to read dispatches except in the presence of "buxom Nanny" (29) suggests a certain virility as well. (This charge of lechery, incidentally, is one of several soon reversed upon the satirist.)

"All eye, all ear, all mouth, all nose" (44), the king's unstable, imperfectly gendered body produces the unregulated appetites and the vulgar curiosity that fuel the political vices of avarice and favoritism emphasized more strongly in the topical odes of 1787-88.

6. The terms of the conflict over Wolcot's poetry were set before the French Revolution, yet the conflict was also intensified by the rise of English Anti-Jacobin sentiment in the 1790s. Two bodies of thought are thus needed to theorize the development of Wolcot's satire and the critical response: the traditional politico-theology of monarchy, on the one hand, and the representation of revolutionary change, on the other, particularly in terms of gender and aesthetics. Concerted attacks on Peter Pindar in periodical prose and pamphlet verse began soon after the *Lousiad*, informed politically by prerevolutionary, metaphysical loyalties and historically by the events of the first Regency crisis, among others. "Manlius," troubled by Wolcot's failure to respect the vulnerability of a king verily unmanned by madness, alleges that Wolcot's erstwhile pupil John Opie has fittingly depicted him in a historical painting as one of the murderers in *The Assassination of James I* (1044).^[4] This insinuation was not nearly as incendiary in 1788 as it would have been four years later, after the arrest of Louis XVI, but nonetheless draws on a long tradition of imagining violence against the royal body. Louis Marin argues that "the body of the King is really present in the form of his portrait" (190), and the intensity of reaction against Wolcot suggests a strong analogy between his verbal "portraits" and the representations theorized by Marin. Developing the psychoanalytic implications of Ernst Kantorowicz's thesis in *The King's Two Bodies*, Marin reads the portrait as "the theologico-political theory of the royal body" (201), according to which the king must be "seduced by his own image" (210). Marin locates the converse of this fetishistic masochism in "the sadism of the subject who is fascinated by the body of the King," exemplified as much in Wolcot as in the caricature that Marin goes on to

analyze. The caricature (a drawing by William Makepeace Thackeray) separates the king's two bodies: "it tries to make us believe that the natural body . . . is the truth of the body of signs" (211-12). The pleasure of the caricature is therefore like that of "a voyeur witnessing a sexual aggression against the King's body," which becomes feminized and "mortified by an encroaching senility" (216-17). Marin thus helps to clarify Wolcot's strategy and the reaction to it: the king's "broken language" aligns him with the material, the feminine, and the human against the spiritual, masculine, and divine. Ronald Paulson's summary of one stage of the French Revolution captures one of the reasons why it intensified the need to reclaim a divinely authorized masculinity, a need already apparent in the strictures of Manlius and others like him: "These are horrible, ugly, violent, aggressive *women* . . . of the Parisian mob who march to the royal palace and bring back the king and queen—women who in effect *are* the Revolution" (81).

7. Historical and personal factors also contributed to Wolcot's refusal to fall into line, which unsettled the increasingly polarized, militarized landscape of the 1790s. Wolcot was past fifty in 1789, and his avoidance of partisanship, even in these difficult conditions, harks back to the politics of an earlier period. His phrase "the itch of party sin" suggests a disease transmitted by the too-close proximity of politicians to power and seems to allude to the clubbish elitism of Parliament first brought into focus by John Wilkes, Wolcot's slightly older contemporary, in the 1760s. Wolcot's own Tory affiliation seems to have been wholly ingenuous: he campaigned for the Tories in a local election in 1790 and gave the name *True Blue* to his pleasure boat (Girtin 134). But while maintaining the prescribed constitutional role of the King and Lords Wolcot also subjects a range of exploitative state institutions and private industries to a stringent critique rightly identified as socialist by Grzegorz Sinko.^[5] Wolcot's non-partisan Toryism, egalitarian and fiercely secular, thus informs his separation of the king's two bodies. The

incompetence of the royal physical body, as in *The Lousiad*, becomes a legitimate political issue, while the king's divine body (or "great name") provides the poet with cultural capital, as Peter observes in *Brother Peter to Brother Tom*: "The world may call me liar; but sincerely / I love him—for a partner, love him *dearly*; / Whilst his great name is on the *ferme*, I'm sure / My credit with the public is secure" (*Works* 78). At the same time, Wolcot foregrounds the appetitive body of the patriot, rejecting patriotic idealism: "Yes, beef shall grace my spit, and ale shall flow, / As long as it continues George and Co." The poet's corpulent body serves as a kind of populist credential, which can be illustrated with reference to Cobbett or Michael Moore or even William Hone, the defiant radical publisher who, though not corpulent himself, became a reverent student of carnival and popular tradition in his antiquarian work on Bartholomew Fair. Wolcot's stylized Epicureanism also links him to the carnivalesque "comic / picturesque" aesthetics that Ronald Paulson associates with Thomas Rowlandson and the political tradition of Wilkes and the Foxite Whigs.

8. But in the main Wolcot belongs with the grotesque rather than the picturesque, to borrow Paulson's vocabulary further. Paulson's account of the grotesque helps to contextualize Wolcot in the postrevolutionary setting in terms of gender as well as aesthetics—whether or not one wishes to agree categorically that "the grotesque is all in all the dominant aesthetic mode of the period" and that hence "the cartoonist Gillray's George III, John Bull, and Louis XVI all merge into the same figure" (7). Paulson makes a distinction between the "weak revolutionary imagery" of Rowlandson, Charles James Fox, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and the Prince of Wales (115) and the stronger images of James Gillray, a distinction that also helps to underscore Wolcot's distance (despite public misperceptions) from that camp. In fact, although Wolcot is not cited, Paulson's reading of Gillray brings out the poet's influence on the younger satirist. Gillray acknowledges Wolcot most forcefully in *Ancient Music* (1787), an

early satire on the King's vulgar taste for Handel and flattery—a favorite topic of Wolcot's—that draws its images and quotes a passage from *Ode upon Ode*. [6] Paulson points out that the grotesque had long been "associated with both political and artistic freedom and creativity" (175) and gives a number of reasons for its rise to prominence, culminating in the revolutionary confusion of high and low, English and French, human and animal. Paulson argues that a "physical resemblance between the French and English kings began to emerge" in Gillray's prints in the 1790s (193), a resemblance with harsh implications for the corporeality of king and commoner alike. This grotesque elision of difference (as I will suggest later) helps to account for the scatological and sodomitic references in the criticism of Wolcot. The grotesque also conflates the king's two bodies in such a way as to shift the discussion from theological to political ground. Alluding to a whole series of Gillray images, Paulson surveys the indiscriminate corporeality that makes the grotesque a revolutionary aesthetic par excellence:

Whether eating is excessive or the opposite, the figures on both sides of the channel share the lowest common denominator of regression to orality and anality. Orality extends from cannibalism to the peculiar diet of the royal family, to both England and France devouring the globe, to the Jacobins firing the bread of liberty into the mouths of other European nations and being devoured themselves by hungry crocodiles. The scatology that distinguished the imagery of Burke's anti-Jacobin tracts becomes in Gillray's cartoons the extraordinary emphasis on both food and feces, both eating and excreting. Scatological references extend from Pitt as a toadstool on a royal dunghill to John Bull's guts-ache and George III sitting on the royal closestool or defecating ships onto the royal mainland, to the Napoleon who . . . tries to pass himself, in fact a horse turd, off as a golden pippin.

(200)

If it is true that for Gillray "kings and subjects [become] equally alike cannibals or tyrants," the same degree of regression would not be possible in Wolcot for a number of reasons.

9. Moreover, according to other readings of Gillray, honest John Bull is distinguished much more sharply, and in fact defined against, a feminized French other. The absence of such dichotomies in Wolcot may explain why his own popular, politically ambivalent, grossly embodied image of George III did not survive as well through the 1790s. Paulson's observation that "in consistently applied caricature there are no 'heroes'" (203) applies more clearly to Wolcot than to Gillray, and helps to explain why Wolcot—to judge from the volume of printed discussion—was the more controversial figure. The revolution features consistently in Gillray's images, however disturbing, and there is a sense in which the virility of his regressive figures stands against the "women who *are* the Revolution," as feared by Burke. But for Wolcot—partly, I think, because of his age—the revolution is a much smaller piece of the English "pie" (Paulson 37), and by insisting on domestic political issues in his poems of the mid-to-late 1790s (the tax burden, restrictions on civil liberties, civil unrest) he appeared to his critics to be evading the challenge posed by the enemy. There are no heroes, then, in Wolcot, and no resolute men to stand up to the mob of women. To make matters worse, his pseudonym, Peter Pindar, deliberately courts comparison with the most robustly masculinist and hero-worshipping bard produced by the ancient world. The revolution helped to focus the anxiety already attached to the royal body as a result of George's madness in 1788. The intensified reaction to Wolcot suggests that once the king is no longer unequivocally the body of the nation, there is increased pressure on the body and the masculinity of the individual subject. The exercise of vilifying "Peter Pindar" (the pseudonym itself served his critics' rhetorical purposes) allowed

anti-Jacobin commentators to superimpose the paradigm of two bodies on the body politic as a whole: the "two Pindars" allegorize a division between disciplined and vulnerable bodies, true and false patriotism, manly and unmanly sentiment. The recurring topos of Wolcot's prostituted Muse also maintains the connection between unmanly sentiment and abjected femininity. Wolcot's mode of opposition patriotism was also circumscribed, finally, by the infringement of civil liberties that he addressed in poems such as *Liberty's Last Squeak* (1795) and 1796. Yet Wolcot was never prosecuted for libel, as Gillray was, or charged with any of the other forms of sedition so freely imputed to dissidents in the mid-1790s.^[7] It may have helped that Wolcot was prepared: he anticipated being silenced by the state in various satires as early as 1787. The conceit of *Peter's Pension*, published in 1788, briefly became an uncomfortable reality in 1795 when he accepted an advance on a pension from the Treasury (Girtin 172-78); but Wolcot had second thoughts and returned the money before writing anything for the government—thus bearing out the assertion of the poem: "No, Sir, I cannot be your humble hack; / I fear your majesty would break my back" (*Works* 266).

10. At this pre-revolutionary stage even Wolcot's respectable readers remonstrated fairly gently. In 1787 the *Gentleman's Magazine*, thus far an eager, if somewhat ironic supporter of Wolcot's poetry, earnestly took issue with insinuations detrimental to George's fatherly affection in *The Progress of Curiosity, or A Royal Visit to Whitbread's Brewery*. Having lampooned the king's "minute curiosity" and "profound questions" concerning the art of brewing with characteristic verve, Wolcot goes on to suggest that George showed too little sensibility at the illness of his son: "Sing how a monarch, when his son was dying, / His gracious eyes and ears was edifying, / By abbey company and kettle drum" (*Works* 18). (This is one of several satires in which Wolcot develops the theme taken up by Gillray in *Ancient Music*.) Responding to this passage, the *Gentleman's* reviewer

admonishes him: "Put thyself in the Stead of any Parent . . . and correct thy severities" (57.620).[8] In a similar case the magazine passes "severe censure . . . [on] Peter's unfeeling heart," turning the tables on his charge of inadequate sensibility (58.440). At the same time, John Nichols and his reviewers dismissed the attacks in verse that were beginning to appear in 1787, suggesting that "poetry is not the most proper vehicle for exposing" Peter Pindar, and perhaps reserving the right of censure for themselves (57.20). Yet such poems began appearing in the magazine as well: "The Two Pindars," which faults Wolcot for "los[ing] the monarch in the man," inaugurates an unfavorable comparison that Wolcot's chosen pseudonym seems to court and that becomes a staple in attacks on him. The contribution of "Manlius"—a pseudonym alluding to the severely upright Roman father whose patriotism was made exemplary by Livy and anthologized in turn by William Enfield's *The Speaker* among other schoolbooks—blames Wolcot, as I mentioned, for failing to spare the king's madness and introduces two further anti-Wolcot tropes, the prostituted muse and the supposed resentment of Wolcot's former protégé, the painter John Opie. Manlius's discussion of Wolcot as assassin in Opie's *Assassination of James I* (as well as another painting) highlights Wolcot's designs on the royal body that would become even more contentious after the revolution. Paulson maintains that this revolutionary contention is always "about England; the French Revolution was only one foreign ingredient in a pie of their own making" (37). Wolcot, with his refusal to focus on the revolution, well illustrates this continuity; so too the discourse about him, from the beginning, takes the "oedipal" and "oral-anal" forms assigned by Paulson to revolutionary conflict itself (8), though certainly the discourse becomes more violent in the 1790s.

11. After the revolution, regressive violence increasingly prevailed and even the issue of classical education—initially a common idiom, even if used for satirical combat—became more volatile. Wolcot may have chosen Pindar as a namesake because of the

ancient Theban's reputation for "belong[ing] . . . to no faction," or being above politics (Lattimore vii)—a more acceptable stance before the war. Later T. J. Mathias and others challenged Wolcot's pretensions to classical learning and implicitly dismissed the whole tradition of satire as patriotic opposition. Yet Mathias feels compelled to footnote both his allusions to the Theban Pindar to make clear that he means Pindar and "not that detestable writer, calling himself Peter Pindar" (*Pursuits of Literature*, pt. 3, p. 7n.). The anonymous "To the Soi-disant Peter Pindar" elaborates the comparison over several stanzas, concluding:

*He, true to merit, eterniz'd the names
Of god-like heroes, in immortal strains:
Your doggerel muse the brightest worth
defames,
And fouls the purest snow with Envy's stains!
The bright effusions of his muse sublime,
While Taste, and Genius live, shall ne'er
expire:
Thy spurts of envy, thy malignant rhyme
With infamy shall die before their Sire!
(472-73)*

The concluding image of this 1799 poem, suggesting premature ejaculation, aptly illustrates the sharply increased hostility and sexualized combat characteristic of the postrevolutionary satiric idiom.

12. Wolcot himself may have helped to set the tone of sexual aggression, not only by exposing the king's natural body, but also by turning his attention to the increasingly powerful Prime Minister, William Pitt. In the first of many satires addressed to Pitt, "Epistle to a Falling Minister," Wolcot first of all renders him a prude or worse: "A Joseph thou, against the sex to strive— / Dead to those charms that keep the world alive" (92). But most of his satire follows the more sinister line of presenting Pitt as a

fiend from hell, comparing him to Oliver Cromwell and to Cain among other arch-demons, and accurately predicting (in a 1789 poem) Pitt's terrible assault on civil liberties. "It cannot be long an object of consideration with us whether to pity or detest the writer and publisher who can submit to the disgraceful labour of circulating such indecent reflections on the brightest character . . . the idol of the people of England," intoned the *Gentleman's Magazine* (59.250-51). This reviewer also impugned Wolcot's anger as unmanly and ungenue. Other criticisms of Wolcot in this era preceding the *Anti-Jacobin*, though increasing in number, also tended toward paternalistic correction or toward the burlesque rather than violent aggression. "Birch for Peter Pindar" (1788), by the prolific Pindaromastix, constructs a bizarre scenario in which the Privy Council puts Peter Pindar on trial for conspiring to kill the king through constipation, by quite literally "keep[ing] the key to his behind" (17).^[9] This poem also works through several stock criticisms, depicting Wolcot as impotent and his muse as being "of easy virtue and unblushing face" (51), but it lacks the deadly earnestness of later satires such as Gifford's. Remarkably, Pindaromastix is content to let the blasphemous suggestion of Peter Pindar sodomizing the king pass without comment. Given that rumors were already circulating about Peter's disloyal association with the lowliest members of the royal household, assigning him a royal bedfellow testifies to a sexual fantasy thoroughly at odds with Pindaromastix's professed politics. When in 1800 Gifford revived the report of Wolcot's involvement with a palace scullion, he put it—by contrast—in the most strident moral terms, causing a crisis in Wolcot's career.

13. 1789's *Brother Tom to Brother Peter* (by "A Moonraker") takes the scatological approach to more outrageous lengths. According to this allegory, Wolcot's technique originated as a project proposed to the king for catching the farts of the great, a technology that predictably backfires on Wolcot when his first subject—Benjamin West, the royal favorite and frequent victim of

Wolcot's Royal Academy satires—"let[s] fly," like the "daubing dog" he is, in the poet's face (25). The devil, who appears in many of these satires (cp. Gillray, *Satan in All His Glory*), then brokers a contract between Wolcot and the Prince that allows him to get his revenge on the king as a paid mouthpiece of the Foxite Whigs. Though undeniably hostile, these verses also owe much to Wolcot's own imagery and technique. The first Regency crisis at this moment helps to explain their partisan spirit (equally present in versified defenses of Peter Pindar) and the insistent comparisons between Peter and Falstaff that arise at this time and persist into the nineteenth century. This analogy is developed in a prose tract addressed to the Prince by "Albion," warning him against Wolcot and other low companions (12; cp. Gifford 39). Paulson's oedipal and regressive (oral-anal) models of contention are both already in place in these works of 1788-89, and *Brother Tom to Brother Peter* in particular suggests a political lineage for the scatological extremes that Paulson traces to Burke. If it is true that, for Gillray at least, "figures on both sides of the channel share the lowest common denominator of regression to orality and anality" (200), then the discourse around Wolcot could have provided the idiom adopted for these revolutionary representations. Richard Godfrey provides several visual analogues to Gillray's scatological approach in *The French Invasion; —or—John Bull, bombarding the Bum-Boats* (1793), also analyzed by Paulson. Godfrey suggests that Gillray must have influenced two French cartoons of 1794, one of which depicts George III's face, spewing bayonets, as the posterior of a grotesque figure. Richard Newton's "extremely daring" *Treason* (1798) shows John Bull farting in the king's face (Godfrey 112), and it is telling that Newton dedicated another of his prints to "Peter Pindar, Prince of Satyrists," all the more because Wolcot himself was never quite so extreme. The early satires against him, however, already cultivate the grotesque elision of difference and the sexual violence later intensified by revolutionary conflict. The image of Peter "keep[ing] the key to [the King's] behind," in particular, encapsulates what is

remarkable in these early attacks on Wolcot, conflating as it does satire and sexual aggression, sodomy and scatology, and the two bodies of king and scullion.

14. None of these attacks denied Wolcot's innate literary ability, as later critics would. *The Gentleman's Magazine*, even as it became more hostile, preserved an atmosphere of serious literary discussion and was the first to welcome him back to the fold in 1791 when he came out against Paine and Revolutionary France. "On the Abuse of Satire," a piece of Isaac D'Israeli's *A Defence of Poetry* first published in the magazine, exhorts the laureate (Warton) to punish Wolcot with satire, since he continues to find ingenious ways of avoiding legal prosecution for libel and sedition. Wolcot himself, though, was surely pleased to note that his abuse of satire had "waken[ed] all the fires" of D'Israeli, who claims that his "patriot zeal inspires / [his] honest verse" (59.648).^[10] D'Israeli, like many of Wolcot's opponents, is forced to adopt his tactics of character assassination, calling Peter the pander to a muse who "prostitutes [her] charms—for half a crown." D'Israeli reassures Warton somewhat comically that since Peter "has made art a trade," his libelous effusions will quickly be forgotten while Warton's own encomia will "make all the King, the Husband, Father, shine!" into eternity. This last description also reinforces the increasing political sensitivity of the king's domestic masculinity. Soon enough, Wolcot took devastating aim at John Nichols and his magazine in three publications, including one of his trademark epistles, a pretended reply fathered semi-convincingly on Nichols himself, and a set of manuscript lyrics collected and indignantly introduced by this pseudo-Nichols to the ostensible shame of the bard.^[11] Alongside its class snobbery and scurrilous hilarity this poem also argues that truth cannot reside in a periodical publication: "Truth," Peter declaims, "Lifts her fair head, and looks with brow sublime / On all the fading pageantries of time" (*Works* 271) and especially on a magazine full of puffery, interest, and sham learning. Here is an echo of the professionally motivated

argument against periodical verse that Michael Gamer attributes to Wolcot's rival Gifford. Nichols (or his reviewer Gough) nonetheless reverses D'Israeli's charge back on Wolcot in reviewing this poem: "True satire, from Juvenal to Churchill, has had Truth for its object" (60.439). But by the time of Wolcot's anti-Paine and anti-French poems of 1791, he is content to observe that "Peter is a clever fellow, and now got on our side" (61.930), reprinting two poems in the magazine to demonstrate Peter's "improvement."[\[12\]](#)

15. Other critics were less conciliatory. Wolcot continued his attacks on Pitt, even as he noted with increasing bitterness and resignation the curbs on freedom of speech that inhibited his work. This persistence earned him a particularly influential enemy in 1794 in the person of T. J. Mathias. Mathias not only feels compelled to clarify his allusions to Pindar by distinguishing Peter's "depravity and malignity" from the patriotic lyricism of his ancient namesake, as I mentioned earlier; he also delivers a substantial analysis of Peter's political apostasy, though pointedly confined to a note: "he has perpetually reviled and held up to scorn every master principle by which government and society are maintained. I will not waste a verse on such a character" (pt. 1, p. 50n.). Gary Dyer notes that Mathias was widely praised for his "unequaled manliness of sentiment" (25), adding that "people recognized in Gifford and Mathias a pose of orthodoxy" (30) that eventually trumped Wolcot's anti-establishment masculinity (37).[\[13\]](#) At the same time, a radical publication of 1796, *The Volunteer Laureate: or Fall of Peter Pindar*, though it owes much of its superbly pointed anti-monarchical satire to Wolcot, condemns him for not being political *enough*. The liberal media, however, in sources duly referenced by Mathias and Gifford, continued to try to shelter Wolcot from the worst abuse. (The concept of "liberal media" itself is a current distortion with roots in the period, carefully tended, if not originally planted, by the *Anti-Jacobin* in 1797.) Wolcot, of course, retaliated, but seems to have played into the enemy's hands in a particularly

ill-advised and weakly argued satire of 1799, *Nil admirari, or a Smile at a Bishop*. The epigraph, taken, as often, from the poem itself, sets the tone by skewering "that miserable imp Mathias." In exposing what he takes to be the Bishop of London's obscenely extravagant praise for Hannah More, Wolcot insists that good morals don't make good art, suggesting also that the Bishop's "high-toned morality" makes him an unmanly critic: "I own Miss Hannah's life is very good, / But then her verse and prose are very bad" (lines 43-44). Wolcot's honorable motive, the decline of criticism into flattery and partisanship in this time of intense ideological conflict, is compromised by spurious charges of plagiarism and infantilizing, quasi-pornographic ridicule of bluestockings—"an indecent and scurrilous attack," as the *Anti-Jacobin* Review was quick to point out, "on two of the most amiable, and exemplary, characters of the age!" ("To the Soi-Disant Peter Pindar" 472).

16. As often, Wolcot published the eponymous main piece in a slim quarto followed by a number of more strictly humorous afterpieces (to borrow an analogy from the theater), among which "An Ode to the Blue-Stocking-Club" and "An Ode to Some Robin Red-Breasts in a Country Cathedral" (an attack on church music) drew particularly angry replies. These shorter poems allowed some critics to take on Wolcot's sexual license and religious irreverence without addressing the more serious context provided by the longer poem: the sophisticated anticlerical satire of the latter, for example, gives way to a facetious comparison in the "Ode to Some Robin-Redbreasts" between the choir of robins and the venal pomp of "Bishop, Dean, and bawling Boys" (*Nil admirari* p. 56). *Nil admirari* itself takes its title from the sixth epistle of the first book of Horace, adapted by Wolcot to implicate Bishop Porteus' admiration of More (lines 105-06). Howard Weinbrot notes that Wolcot adapts Horace by "turn[ing] away from the modest disclaimer of the world's attractions and towards his own more vigorous attack" (199), and thus compounding (for some readers) the literary offense. This

elaborate 300-line adaptation, addressed to the Bishop, argues convincingly in places that posterity will revalue many of the literary judgments of the day as obscured by "clouds of prejudice" and the "varnish" of flattery, but undercuts the argument with images as frivolous as any in the shorter poems: "And lo, this varnish with thy daubing brush / Smear'd o'er Miss Hannah must by time be roasted, / The nymph in all her nakedness will blush, / And courtly Porteus, for a flatterer posted" (125-28). By imagining Hannah More naked Wolcot advances a largely distinct line of satirical attack on the partisan criticism of the age (his ideological view of which, though applied unfairly to More, still holds true as a whole): his own heterosexually charged masculinity rides triumphant (as he imagines) over the flattering prudes who control the reviews. More again unfairly bears the brunt of this indictment of male critics of Jacobinism and sexual morality, as Peter, in the words of his own Miltonesque "argument," "severely reprimandeth her uncharitableness toward the frail ones of her own sex" (see lines 153-68). His reprimand not only eroticizes the relation between More and Porteus but uses allegory to inject a charge of plagiarism: "Some years ago I saw a female race; / The prize a shift—a Holland shift, I ween: / Ten damsels, nearly all in naked grace, / Rush'd for the precious prize along the green" (193-96). The winner of this race, notes Peter, cheated the others by accepting help from her lover, who carried her part of the way on a mule, just as Porteus supposedly supplied his prose to More: "Did no kind swain his hand to Hannah yield— / No bishop's hand to help a heavy rear, / And bear the nymph triumphant o'er the field?" (210-12). To complete the outrage, Wolcot then adapts images familiar in the 1790s from representations of the September Massacres to a caustic declaration of his "love for bishops" (253). Porteus and his kind are, at any rate, more loveable than their medieval counterparts who persecuted heretics and nonbelievers: "Grill'd, roasted, carbonaded, fricaseed, / Men, women, children, for the slightest things; / Burnt, strangled, glorying in the horrid deed; / Nay, starv'd and

flogg'd God's great vicegerents, Kings!" (265-68). The volume concludes with a parody of a disinterested review of the preceding verse, but Wolcot points the moral to be sure we don't miss it: the reviewers of this acrimonious time are his real targets in this satire, "despicable Pimps, hired to debauch the Public Taste" (p. 64).

17. At this point even William Cobbett took up the cry against Wolcot, and many less unlikely defenders also came to the aid of Religion and Virtue as personified by Bishop Porteus and More. Cobbett, then in the United States, collected and reprinted the anti-Wolcot verses and numerous diatribes in prose from the *Anti-Jacobin Review* as an appendix to Richard Polwhele's *The Unsex'd Females*, a poem that makes no mention of Wolcot but must have seemed to Cobbett to make a marketable combination.^[14] Certainly *Nil admirari* is no less misogynistic than *The Unsex'd Females*, but Wolcot's eroticism unmasks the damsel in distress as a sex object, an ideological move that accounts for much of the outcry against him. This reaction seems to support Tim Fulford's contention that "chivalric manhood did not die; it was relocated to the middle classes" (9). Fulford's study traces Coleridge's long struggle to revise Burke's view of "chivalry, beauty, and sublimity" (11), and his anxiety over his lack of public influence. Ironically in this context, Coleridge's most widely quoted remark on Wolcot excoriates him for publishing scurrilous remarks on Mary Robinson in a 1783 poem. Writing to Robinson's daughter in 1801, Coleridge admonishes her to omit the mention of Robinson's long friendship with Wolcot in the preface to a posthumous volume of her poems: "my flesh creeps at his name!" (qtd. in Girtin 221). Wolcot himself reprimanded Gifford for insulting Robinson, to which Gifford replied, ostensibly addressing Robinson, that she would do better to rely for protection on a "broken reed" (qtd. in Clark 107). William Hazlitt, not to be outdone, reiterated the defense of Robinson against Gifford: "His attacks on Mrs. Robinson were unmanly" (125). Wolcot's treatment of More provoked

commensurably greater outrage, and the critics of *Nil admirari* coded their chivalry in more strictly Burkean, and political, terms: "Yet Wolcot becks the dire banditti on, / And smiles complacent o'er his country's tomb" (*Peter Not Infallible* 25).

18. William Gifford proved to be the greatest knight of them all in his chastisement of the dragon Peter Pindar. He not only exposed Wolcot's inmost vices and defended his victims but defeated him in hand-to-hand combat. It was so much the worse for the now 62-year-old Wolcot that he was the aggressor, attempting to chastise Gifford for the brutal slanders of his *Epistle to Peter Pindar* and particularly for his allusion to the 1788-89 Birdcage Walk affair in a postscript to the second edition. Wolcot thus gave him the opportunity to make good his claim in the poem that he was "Prepared each threat to baffle or to spurn, / Each blow with ten-fold vigour to return," a vindication Gifford noted eagerly for his readers in his third edition (37) (in which he also quoted the full text of the 1789 *Times* account for good measure). Their combat was itself the subject of much dispute and of numerous verse satires, including Alexander Geddes's *Bardomachia*, but the most widely credited account suggests that Gifford beat Wolcot bloody with his own stick. This success flattered Gifford's literary ambitions, and the third edition of his epistle, published soon after the combat, swelled to forty pages of prose superadded to the 172-line poem. Gifford's prose apparatus conveniently quotes at length or paraphrases all the recent invective against Wolcot in the *Anti-Jacobin Review* and elsewhere, consolidating the improbable catalogue of vices imputed to Wolcot and rehearsing the more meager criticisms of his verse. These criticisms take Wolcot's satirical tactic of "comparing great things with small" in deadly and ludicrous earnest as threatening to the state: "we allude to his observation, in one of his libellous productions, (we forget which) that Kings, like candles, are better for snuffing, i.e. taking off their heads" (Cobbett 64; cp. Gifford 51n.). Gifford gleefully summarizes more seditious passages and all the charges of

vulgarity, sodomy, drunkenness, whoring, impotence, cowardice, bribe-taking, cruelty, and blasphemy, all supported by improbable "authentic" anecdotes from the poet's "friends" and presented with "manly confidence" (42): "I have rescued Dignity, and Worth, and Talents, and Virtue, and Religion, from the malignant attacks of their bitterest foe" (53). The volume and tone of Gifford's compendium attest to a level of hysteria now associated with orthodox masculinity that exceeds even the intensity of conflict during the first Regency crisis—one possible explanation for his digging up the *Times* account of Wolcot's intercourse with a royal scullion in the Birdcage Walk.

19. The old sodomy charge performs a labor of sexual aggression that is difficult to accommodate in Gifford's own poetic idiom. Gifford's satire contains nothing comparable even to the mild innuendo quoted earlier from "To the Soi-Disant Peter Pindar": "Thy spurts of envy, thy malignant rhyme, / With infamy shall die before their Sire" (473). Gifford's scorn, like his use of the cane, carries its libidinal content as a subtext, in a manner that the paradox "hysterical masculinity" may help to elucidate. His intense emotion refuses embodiment, subsisting on a plane of moral outrage that Wolcot himself associates with prudery and repression. Put another way, Gifford's punishing masculinity rises above the ribald homosocial combat of earlier times, leaving behind the natural body to inhabit the beleaguered divine body of royalty and of the kingdom. He sublimates his own sadistic pleasure by means of a threefold strategy. First, Gifford's impoverished stock of metaphors keeps his victim anchored firmly in the sphere of the savage and subhuman (dog, snake, toad, Mohawk, sot, profligate, dotard), in a grotesque conflation of human and animal bodies. Second, he keeps the focus on his victim's grotesquely debased desires, admitting none of his own, but also observes a certain decorum: Peter Pindar is "a prodigy of drunkenness and lust" (line 98) with an added measure of sacrilege, deviating in recognizable ways from recognizable norms. [15] Finally, Gifford hints at and then introduces the

Times articles as supporting evidence, as neutral facts that on the one hand prove his superior objectivity but on the other hand cannot implicate his own imagination because derived from an external source—in fact, the charge is more obscene than anything fancied in the verse. The journalistic record (if taken as fact) answers Wolcot's grotesque and blasphemous conflation of the king's two bodies by exposing the truth of his desire, his own corrupted masculinity.

20. Gifford's "documentation" of his charges is complicated by the legal status of sodomy allegations, on the one hand, and by the currency of sodomy in political rhetoric, on the other. These are large issues, and here I hope only to sketch in the immediate context of the *Times* articles that would have made even sympathetic readers of Gifford aware of the rhetorical nature of these charges, before moving briefly to an analogous image by Gillray, *The Hopes of the Party* (1791), as an illustration of the continued currency of sodomy as an image of sedition.^[16] Given the absence of any corroborating evidence in the biographical record, it makes sense to classify the insinuations of the *Times* with other spurious charges of sodomy. David Garrick successfully rebuffed the charge of William Kenrick's satirical verses, *Love in the Suds* (1772), that he had engaged in illicit relations with the playwright Isaac Bickerstaffe, who had fled the country on the basis of a newspaper report on his relations with a soldier (McCormick 162). Samuel Foote won his case in court against his former coachman who had him indicted for assault "with Intent to Commit Buggery" in 1776 (qtd. in Goldsmith 99). Netta Goldsmith points out that in Foote's case *The Public Ledger*, whose editor Foote had mocked, originally published this charge and continued to maintain it even after his legal victory, contributing in her view to Foote's death by a stroke in 1777 (104). Goldsmith cites Jeremy Bentham's manuscript essay on "Paederasty" (c. 1785) for evidence that sodomy allegations, given the legal status of the crime, were very difficult to refute and therefore an easy avenue for blackmail (97). It may be true

that Bentham would have been exiled if he had published this essay (21), but a similar argument was made in print by one of Wolcot's staunchest defenders in 1800. In March 1789, following a number of sarcastic references to Wolcot's disloyalty in the preceding months, the *Times* announced that "there is now a Kitchen Rat at Buckingham-House, that was caught about twelve months since, in a trap with Peter Pindar, in the Bird-Cage Walk," threatening serious consequences "if this same Rat and Peter Pindar continue their disloyal and ***** intercourse" (3/19/89, 2d). Two more allusions to this affair continue to develop a larger account of how Wolcot obtained his information about the royal family and who paid him (a "fallen print," perhaps the *Morning Chronicle*) to write it up. [17] In his *Admonitory Epistle to William Gifford*, Thomas Dutton took Gifford severely to task for reviving these allegations against Wolcot. As editor of the *Dramatic Censor*, Dutton would have remembered the spurious charges against Garrick and Foote. Even more important, Dutton remembered and was willing to remind the public that in its earliest years the *Times* routinely engaged in this sort of political blackmail against perceived enemies of the state: "What shall we say to the man, who brings forward such an accusation, knowing it to be false! knowing, that the very newspaper, on which he rests his charge, has been prosecuted for dealing in this very species of libel! knowing, as he must, that the fabricator of the report (now dead, the late Mr. Finney, a name notorious for profligacy . . .) was in the habit of making this charge an engine of extortion," further cases of which Dutton goes on to specify ("Manners and Morals" 99).

21. These accusations, then, at least in the prerevolutionary context, would have appeared no more serious than Kenrick's *Love in the Suds*. Even Kenrick invokes a satirical tradition more respectable than periodical prose by alluding to Charles Churchill's *The Rosciad* in one of his subtitles, "Being the Lamentation of Roscius for the Loss of his Nyky." As Howard Weinbrot demonstrates, the charge of sodomy incorporated into homosocial satirical combat

has its roots in a political tradition epitomized in Pope's *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*. By depicting John, Baron Hervey as "Sporus, the male whore of Nero" (190), Pope charges that "protection of the satirist is replaced" in the court of George II "by hostility to the satirist, especially if he opposes the sexual deviance that is an emblem of political deviance. The poem . . . becomes an effort to stop the sodomizing of Britain" (190). By a "devolution of satiric kinds" the charge of sodomy becomes a vehicle of merely personal satire in Garrick's *Fribbleriad* (1761) and of grotesquely overblown Juvenalian indignation in Churchill's *The Times* (1764), Weinbrot argues (195). Wolcot, by contrast, remains more fully in touch with social reality, but he abandons the Horatian aspirations still present in Pope: sodomy drops out of the picture in Wolcot because "he is most at home strutting and raging among ruins" (202), resigned to a political climate in which there is no longer any point in attacking vice at all. Weinbrot does not discuss Wolcot's reception, but his argument about Churchill helps to illuminate the merely personal, politically non-substantive charges (including sodomy) leveled by his critics. In fact, Churchill is cited in at least two attacks on Wolcot: the *Gentleman's Magazine* review quoted above and the anonymous *Poetical Epistle to John Wolcot* (1790), which takes its epigraph from Churchill's *Epistle to William Hogarth*.

22. Some of Wolcot's critics, however, did see themselves as setting out to "stop the sodomizing of Britain," and in the context of the Revolution the charge of sodomy—of sodomizing the king especially—takes on a kind of political weight unaccounted for by Weinbrot's model. Even the frivolous charge of Finney in the *Times* (if Dutton is right about his authorship) insinuates violence against the king by a fairly transparent substitution of a servant's body (the "Kitchen Rat") for the sovereign's natural body. In the postrevolutionary context the image haunts the public imagination, attested by the renewed currency of this charge prompted by Gifford and also in graphic satire. Thomas Dermody ("Mauritius Moonshine") is one partisan who takes up Gifford's

case, alluding darkly in *The Battle of the Bards* to "such odious hints as his [Wolcot's] own manhood stain" (qtd. in Clark 110). Newton's *Treason* and the French cartoons cited earlier, which bring the king and the anus into dangerous proximity, are also relevant here. But the most striking visual image of this kind is Gillray's *The Hopes of the Party*, prior to July 14th (1791; Fig. 1), which has no apparent connection to Wolcot. Gillray puts John Horne Tooke in the position of royal sodomizer. Godfrey is the only commentator I have found who addresses this rather obvious representation directly: "The position of Tooke, who spreads the King's legs and thrusts his own body between them, is outrageously suggestive" (93). The image projects the execution of George III, organized by Tooke, Fox, Joseph Priestley, Sheridan, and Sir Cecil Wray. Tooke stands at left; Fox, at center, holds the axe over George's hapless neck; and the other three cluster at right offering consolation to the king as Sheridan holds his head in place on the block.^[18] Pitt and Queen Charlotte dangle suggestively from the lamps above the Crown & Anchor sign. As Godfrey points out, "it is an extraordinary and gross satire, which would not have been possible to publish after the guillotining of Louis XVI in 1793." For Paulson, however, this image is part of an unfolding grotesque narrative, and he argues that later images of Louis XVI, including "even Gillray's print of the execution of Louis XVI in 1793, should be compared with the earlier mock execution he projects of George III" (193). The king too has a speech bubble reading "What! What! What! what's the matter now?" Godfrey suggests that George's "bewildered innocence" takes "some of the sting . . . out of the design," but it seems likely that Gillray's audience would have remembered Wolcot's persistent mockery of the king's explosive speech and other idiosyncrasies dating from 1785 up to the present. They might well have taken Gillray's image as continuing Wolcot's grotesque narrative, a narrative that forcibly separated the king's two bodies for dubious political ends. Gillray's admirers—those not shocked or outraged by the image—would surely have identified with the tradition of grossly embodied masculine

patriotism developed by Wolcot and maintained against mounting criticism through and beyond the contentious moment of *The Hopes of the Party*. Loyalist readers of the print, on the other hand, were probably more than willing to associate the veteran dissident Tooke (born 1736) with another grizzled profligate known for his designs on the backside of the divine national body: Peter Pindar.

23. Wolcot himself recovered sufficiently from the assaults of Gifford, Dermody, and others to answer much of their abuse in *Out at Last* (1801), in which he was supported by a convenient accident of history: the fall of Pitt. His subtitle, "The Fallen Minister," triumphantly echoes his "Epistle to a Falling Minister" of eleven years before. Wolcot's patriotism gains new force from his renewed ability to ventriloquize "Old England's genius," which thus addresses Pitt in the poem: "Harpoon'd at last, thou flound'ring porpoise— / Thou who hast swallowed all my rights, / Gobbling the mightiest just like the mites— / Devouring like a sprat my habeas corpus. / Thou, who didst bind my sons in chains, / . . . For fear their wrath might kindle riot" (lines 73-84). Only after celebrating the nation's liberty does Wolcot turn to his more narrowly literary concerns, condemning Pitt's gagging of the Muse, exposing Gifford and Mathias as the prime minister's hirelings (204n.), and reserving for Gifford the particular fate of being hanged in a note—taking his cue archly from Mathias's attack on him (127n.). Wolcot's account of Gifford as a hypocrite, parvenu, sycophant, seducer, and pander to his aristocratic patron is no more truthful than Gifford's attacks on him, but it includes some substantive criticism of Gifford's verse and above all it is playful and ironic. Wolcot's note brilliantly parodies all the earnest strategies of character assassination practiced by Gifford and the *Anti-Jacobin Review*. The poem then concludes with a procession of the people taking their revenge on their erstwhile oppressor: authors, printers, shoemakers led by Thomas Hardy, washerwomen, politicians, even cats and dogs are finally free to speak their minds. At this point, alluding

again to Pitt's apparently asexual nature, Wolcot enlists the women of England in the cause of his own unrepentant, libertine, eccentric masculinity:

And, see! the girls around thee throng
 "Art thou the wight, thus stretch'd along,
 An enemy well known to wives and misses?
 Art thou the man who dost not care
 For oglings, squeezes of the fair;
 Nay, makest up wry mouths at woman's
 kisses?"
 Then shall the nymphs apply their birchen
 rods,
 And baste thee worse than Peter Pindar's
 Odes.

24. Apart from occasional references to this apparently deviant sexuality and to Pitt's drunkenness, Wolcot does not expose the Prime Minister's natural body as avidly as the king's. The commoner Pitt lacks the "body of signs," the divine body that gives Wolcot's satires on the king their semiotic energy. But on some level Marin's definition of caricature—an image presenting "the natural body" as "the truth of the body of signs"—extends to all caricature and especially visual caricature. Thus Gillray seizes on Pitt's rail-thin figure to create some of his most memorable political satires, such as *Sin, Death, and the Devil* (1792) and *Presages of the Millennium* (1795). By way of contrast, *A Sphere Projecting against a Plane* (1793), which features Pitt "projecting" against the rotund Mrs. Hobart, illustrates the comparatively depoliticized humor of the corpulent body in Gillray. Although Gifford calls Wolcot "a bloated mass," Wolcot's corpulence in and of itself pales as a political vice next to his insistent embodiment both of the king and of his own national sentiment. Pat Rogers (182) and Denise Gigante (ch. 8) have both suggested, in very different contexts, that fat becomes politicized, and takes on a peculiar moral stigma, only with the

advent of the Regency and the growing waistline of "great George" IV. If the royal body is no longer sacred, caricatures like Thackeray's (in his sketch of Louis XIV and his verbal sketch of George IV as Jos Sedley in *Vanity Fair*) become permissible as liberal discourse. Wolcot's earlier satires contributed to this revolutionary process. Yet the grotesque, libidinal, broadly transgressive masculine contest between Wolcot and his antagonists carried older forms of patriotism forward into the polarized debate over the French Revolution. Wolcot's insistence on the appetitive natural body as the seat of political agency has deep roots in English popular tradition. The subject's desiring body, as James I recognized in *A Counterblast to Tobacco* (1616), is at odds with the divine body of the sovereign, or with his divinely authorized demand for laboring and fighting subjects. By the time of George III, even the king's defenders were presenting him in a role that seems to compromise the doctrine of the king's two bodies, namely as a paragon of domestic masculinity. Wolcot's critics, then, were not championing the king's divine body so much as domestic masculinity and war culture. Among Michael Moore's critics, too, the profanely embodied masculinity that is supposedly repressed in political discourse returns as a fascination with the transgression that has shadowed patriotism as a word and a practice since at least the eighteenth century.

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