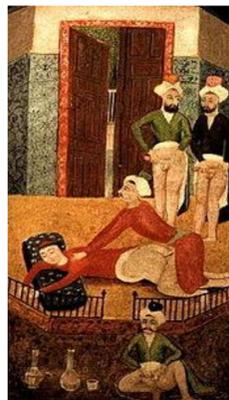


Management of the Medieval Arabic Sexual Body through Aphrodisiacs, Contraceptives, and Abortifacients

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Introduction: Why the Sexy Stuff?



Why focus on aphrodisiacs, contraceptives, and abortifacients found in Medieval Arabic literature? The discussion and images of the sexual body in extant 9th-15th century Arabic documents, including medical texts, erotic manuals, and discourses in Islam, is fascinating and too prominent to ignore.

Looking at what organic materials were used, and how they were used as aphrodisiacs, contraceptives, and abortifacients, sheds considerable light on the treatment of sex and sexuality in the time period.

Pictured (Left): Men lining up to use a boy for anal sex, a practice known as "sodomy" within the medieval context. Anal sex and homosexual interactions were condemned by the Qur'an but were sometimes lauded in imaginative literature and erotic manuals.

Aphrodisiacs:

An aphrodisiac is any substance that is used for improving sexual desire. The word aphrodisiac comes from the name of the Greek Goddess of sexual love, Aphrodite.



Honey – known as the nectar of Aphrodite. In ancient times, it was traditional to present newlyweds with honey to help them enjoy their first sexual encounters and aid in the procreation of a child! The use of honey as an aphrodisiac is also mentioned in the *Kama Sutra* and *The Perfumed Garden*, which say that honey spiced with nutmeg heightens the intensity of an orgasm.



Saffron – saffron derives from the flower of *Crocus sativus* and is commonly used in cooking as a seasoning and coloring agent. Recent studies provide evidence of the efficacy of crocin's properties as an aphrodisiac.

Erotic Manuals & Medical Texts:

List of Works Explored:

Al-Jazzar's *On Sexual Diseases and Their Treatment* (10th century)

Ibn Hazm's *The Ring of the Dove* (11th century)

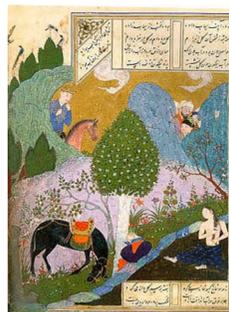
Al-Katib's *Encyclopedia of Pleasure* (12th century?)

Al-Tifashi's *The Delight of Hearts or What You Will Not Find in Any Book* (12th century)

Ibn Muhammad's *An Intelligent Man's Guide to the Art of Coition* (14th century)

Al-Nafzawi's *The Perfumed Garden of Sensual Delights* (15th century)

Objective:



The ultimate goal of this interdisciplinary collaborative research project is to explain the multimodal interplay between the medieval East and West in their respective quests to manage the sexual body.

To begin this expansive project, we have focused primarily on Medieval Arabic erotic and medical literature. Discussion of the sexual body in Arabic works tends to be more prolific and more tolerant of the use of contraceptives, aphrodisiacs, and abortifacients than its European counterparts.

Questions to consider:

What sexual practices were prescribed and condoned by the Islamic faith?

Which ones were condemned and suppressed?

Contraceptives:



Juice of Rue – strongly stimulating and antispasmodic, so often employed in form of a warm infusion called an emmenagogue. In excessive doses, it is an acronarcotic poison. It also is a mild stomachic used against coughs, colic, flatulence, hysterical and croupy affections. The oil may be given on sugar, or in hot water. Externally, rue is an active irritant. The juice of rue can be mixed with other contraceptive ingredients and used as a pessary.



Tar/Pitch – Tar or pine pitch can be used as a contraceptive for both men and women. It is utilized to prevent the semen from entering the women's body. This done by forming a suppository using the pitch, the

Future Plans:

The next step of this project is to examine Christian European courtly love literature, medical, and religious commentary to compare and contrast the sexual body gets managed in the West from



Much of European imaginative literature and medical knowledge was either influenced by or worked in concert with respective Arabic traditions. Identifying both similarities and differences is crucial to establishing a clear understanding of the concerns and fears Medieval European and Arabic

Research Methods & References:

Work for this project has taken place primarily in the library and entails combing through the library catalogue, WorldCat, and online databases such as MLA Bibliography, ITER, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and MEDLINE/PubMed for primary and secondary literature.

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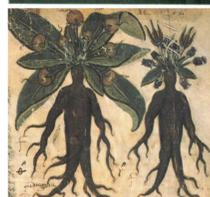
http://princessa.hubpages.com/hub/Honey_as_an_Aphrodisiac.

"Medieval Bestiary : Mandrake." *Medieval Bestiary : Mandrake*. Web. 14 July

Abortifacients:



Colocynthis – also known as *bitter apple* or *hanzal* in Arabic. Plant is found in Mediterranean Europe, Cyprus, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Afghanistan, India, North Africa, etc. It has a wide variety of uses, but the fruit is used also as an abortifacient. The abortive properties are brought about by drinking water in which the fruit is macerated overnight.



Mandrake Root – believed to grow in a human's form to let out a ear piercing shriek whenever pulled out of the ground. The person who pulls the root from the ground either goes mad or dies. Common practice was to tie a

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