

A Very Important Subject (Preview)

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Male Fantasies

By Klaus Theweleit (translated by Stephen Conway)

Polity Press 518pp £8.95

In the beginning, presumably, there was good old vaginal intercourse. And this begat anal sex, oral sex, choral sex (wherein the active partner hums), and even, if Orton is to be believed, aural sex. There is intercrural frottage, manufriktion, intermammary and axillary (underarm) excitation. The exotic Emperor Heliogabalus boasted he could accommodate five partners simultaneously. A celebrated Parisian courtesan would, for a special client, obligingly remove her glass eye, for which practice we might borrow Nabokov's adjective 'supralebral'. Fantasies touching on the human body are nothing if not ingenious.

But there is little of any such stuff in this depressingly serious book, which prefers to address apparently more crucial issues, like 'Is there a true *boundary* separating 'fascist' from 'nonfascist' men?' It is the first volume of a study that seeks to analyse the cultural and sociological influences that shaped the collective psyche of a very specific group of men: the volunteer 'soldier males' of the proto-fascist *Freikorps* which was instrumental in stamping out nationalism and communism in Germany after the Great War.

Much of it does not really seem to deal with male fantasies at all, let alone the type one might be eagerly anticipating. The first part, 'Men and Women', is a jumbled examination of the memoirs, letters and fiction generated by these generally sad individuals, and what we learn is

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