

The sexual side of castration narratives: Fiction written by and for eunuchs and eunuch “wannabes”

Ariel B. Handy,¹ Richard J. Wassersug,² James T. J. Ketter,³ and Thomas W. Johnson⁴

¹ Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC

² Department of Medical Neuroscience, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS, and the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

³ Independent Scholar, Victoria, BC

⁴ Department of Anthropology (Emeritus), California State University at Chico, CA

The *Eunuch Archive* is an online community of individuals with exceptional interest in castration and penectomy. Here we examine themes related to genital ablation in a sample of fictional stories posted by members of the Eunuch Archive. Similarities between the contents of these stories and members' demographic information were found, suggesting that these stories may reflect some of the members' life experiences or personal fears. Common themes in both stories and personal histories of voluntarily castrated men were homosexuality, childhood abuse, and threats of castration. We found that 83% of stories were explicitly sexual, which was defined as containing physical or mental sexual arousal; sexual acts such as masturbation, oral sex, or penetrative sex; or attainment of orgasm. Fifty-one percent of stories described forced castrations, 34% involved minors, and 24% described orgasms related to genital ablation. Writing these stories may be therapeutic for the authors, as some members have claimed that writing them has allowed them to work through their extreme castration ideations without acting on them. Clinicians should be aware that there are men who express profound interest in genital ablation and their interests and/or concerns should be taken seriously.

KEY WORDS: Castration, eunuch, Eunuch Archive, fiction, sexual

INTRODUCTION

The term *eunuch* refers to a man who has been castrated, either chemically or surgically. Cooper (1986) suggests that thoughts of castration are a part of many men's lives, whether through fear or fascination. The *Eunuch Archive* (EA, see <http://www.eunuch.org>) is an online community for individuals with an explicitly strong interest in castration, penectomy, and nullification (an EA term referring to the removal/destruction of both the penis and testicles). Castration is the destruction of the testicles or their complete removal (medically referred to as an orchiectomy), while penectomy refers to total or partial surgical removal of the penis. The EA contains four sections: a Chat room, Personals, Discussion Board and the Fiction Archive. The last holds stories written and posted by the members of the EA community. As of February 2015, there were 8,726 stories available on the Fiction Archive (8,101 stories in English and 625 stories in 9 other languages). Some stories date back to the site's creation in 1998. Despite the large size and long history of the EA, there has never been a thematic analysis of the posted stories or any effort to

correlate the content of these stories with the demographics of the membership of the EA.

There have been several studies though on the members of the EA community. While some members of the EA have, in fact, been voluntarily castrated or penectomized, the majority of people who post there have not, yet they nevertheless have an extreme interest in the topic (Roberts et al., 2008). There are, for example, regular announcements by EA members that they have finally achieved a desired castration. Although a few castrated individuals in the community may have Male-to-Female Gender Dysphoria, most sought emasculation without the desire to present as female (Vale et al., 2010).

Johnson, Brett, Roberts and Wassersug (2007) investigated the prevalence of Gender Dysphoria and Body Integrity Identity Disorder in individuals who frequent the Discussion Board. Through a survey hosted on the EA with nearly 3000 respondents, they found that, although not formally diagnosed, over a third of members met criteria for one of these disorders. In addition, Vale, Siemens, Johnson and Wassersug (2013) identified several risk factors for following through with extreme castration ideations. Some of these risk factors include

Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to Thomas W. Johnson, PhD, Department of Anthropology (Emeritus), California State University, Chico, P.O. Box 50, Fulton, CA 95439-0050, USA. E-mail: twj@sonic.net

strong parental religiosity, having experienced childhood abuse, and having participated in animal castration as a child (see also Jackowich, Vale, Vale, Wassersug, & Johnson, 2014). Based on these studies, it is clear that many members of the EA have an unusual set of personal characteristics. Here we investigate the similarities between the demographic profiles of EA members as found in these prior studies and themes within a subset of their fictional narratives. We hypothesize that there are similarities between the themes of the fictional stories and the unusual personal histories common to EA members.

The guidelines for posting a story to the EA include that the story must be related to genital injury and/or ablation [i.e., “Genital mutilation is the story theme”]. Also, authors must not plagiarize other members’ stories nor add text within ongoing series without permission from the original author. However, there are few other restrictions on content.

Since common themes in the EA narratives showed up as risk factors for castration ideation in previous studies of the demographic information of EA members (e.g., Vale et al., 2013), we speculate that these stories may have clinical relevance. In particular, such narratives may help clinicians in both diagnosing and developing treatment protocols for individuals with extreme castration ideations that are disrupting their lives. In addition, the Fiction Archive suggests strategies for helping individuals with extreme castration ideations through expressive writing. We believe that healthcare professionals should be aware that individuals with extreme castration ideations exist and be able to provide adequate care should those individuals seek medical attention.

METHODS

All stories posted on the EA are assigned an identification number (referred to as Story ID) in the chronological order by which they are posted. The Story IDs are generated automatically through HTML coding and do not appear within the post itself.

Similar to Story IDs, stories posted on the EA have “tags” associated with them to classify their content. Authors are supplied with a list of tags to choose from. They can choose any or all tags that apply to their submitted story:

- Gay: Stories focused upon homosexual content.
- Bi: Stories focused upon bisexual content.
- Straight: Stories focused upon heterosexual content.
- TG: Stories focused upon transgender content.
- Testicles: Stories in which the testicles are removed or damaged.
- Penectomy: Stories in which the penis is removed or damaged.
- Nullification: Stories in which the entire genitals are removed.
- General Warning: Stories in which the content could be considered extreme, or violent.
- Minor: Stories in which the main or significant characters are minor children.

Authors can add up to four additional custom tags to best describe their stories, should the provided tags not fully describe their submission.

These tags are selected by the author to help readers find stories of similar interest and tags are sometimes added by the EA’s fiction editor in addition to the tags selected by the author to better represent the story’s content. Authors commonly use just two tags: one describing what form of genital ablation is in the story (“testicles,” “nullification,” or “penectomy”) and the second describing the sexual orientation of the characters in the story (“gay,” “straight,” “TG” (transgender), or “bi”). This was the primary distinction for sexual orientation used for analysis of the stories. Stories involving minors (tagged as “minor”) as well as custom tags such as “historical” (e.g., when writing about the Italian castrati) were also used for further analysis of the stories’ content and focus.

We define the “main characters” in the stories in three ways, depending on the point of view (first, second, or third person) of the characters in the stories. For stories told in the first person, the narrator was considered the main character. For stories told in the third person, the main character was the person for whom readers received the most information. Among those analyzed, there was only one story told in the second person and, in that situation, the main character was the person who was addressed as “you.”

Finally, we use the terms “recipient” and “inflictor” throughout this paper. The “recipient” refers to the character in the story who received the genital injury or ablation, and the “inflictor” refers to the character who performed the genital injury or ablation.

By using a random number generator, 134 out of a total 7,968 available narratives as of February 2014 were selected for inclusion in this study. Of those, four were excluded for being written in a language other than English (two were written in French, one in Spanish, and one in German), and 10 were used exclusively in a preliminary analysis. The 120 remaining stories were read and analyzed incrementally by the first author, who had no prior exposure to the stories before beginning the analysis. All were read by the third author as well and no discrepancies in the textual analysis emerged.

The stories were analyzed for the following themes: 1) specific ways by which genital ablation was achieved; 2) recipient and/or inflictor sexual arousal; 3) whether either the recipient and/or inflictor achieved orgasm; 4) recipient and/or inflictor age (minor or adult); 5) consent for genital ablation by the recipient; and 6) recipient and/or inflictor sex (male, female, or male-to-female). None of the sampled stories contained female-to-male transsexuals.

The major thematic categories were developed through a preliminary analysis of 10 stories, which were then excluded from the final analysis. After 50 more stories were analyzed, the thematic categories were expanded (e.g., breaking the category ‘recipient and/or inflictor sexual arousal’ into ‘arousal due to sex’ and ‘arousal due to genital injury’). A second set of 50 stories was read and analyzed, and neither common

Table 1. Frequencies of described instances of genital ablation based on when they were performed within the context of each story (past, present, and future, $n = 112$) and form (castration, penectomy, and nullification, $n = 94$) within the analyzed fictional narratives ($n = 110$).

	Total
When the Genital Ablation occurs/occurred	
Past	17
Present	84
Future	11
Total ¹	110
Form of Genital Ablation	
Castration only	58
Penectomy only	12
Nullification	24
Total ²	94

¹Some stories ($n = 2$) contained multiple castrations and/or penectomies at different times; therefore, the total number ($n = 112$) is greater than the total number of selected stories ($n = 110$)

²Some stories ($n = 28$) did not provide a description as to how genital ablation occurred.

themes nor the results varied. A final 20 stories were read and the frequency of themes still did not change, so no further data collection was undertaken.

RESULTS

Authors and Word Count

The stories analyzed were posted under 89 different pseudonyms, 75 of which were associated with only one story. The remaining 14 pseudonyms were associated with multiple stories. The average number of stories per pseudonym was 1.35, with a range of 1 to 7. The average story analyzed was $4,260 \pm 379$ words long with a range of 137–17,866 and a median length of 2,649 words (roughly the same length as the Book of Job in the King James Bible). There are much longer (unanalyzed) stories that are roughly 50,000 words.

Castration, Penectomy, and Nullification

Of the 120 stories, 10 contained themes other than genital removal or destruction (e.g., “cock and ball torture” that did not end in castration/penectomy/nullification [in its early years the website accepted almost any story that was submitted]) and 11 contained plans for future genital ablations. The majority of stories (70%) contained at least one scene of genital ablation written in the present tense and 14% referred back to one or more past genital ablations. Castration was the dominant form of genital ablation, and was described in 68% of the stories (Table 1).

Table 2. Frequencies of described physical ($n = 118$) and chemical ($n = 9$) processes for castration and penectomy within the analyzed fictional narratives ($n = 94$).

	Total ¹	Castration	Penectomy
Physical Processes			
Cut	72	49	23
Strangulation (with elastrator)	6	5	1
Crushed	12	11	1
Eaten/Bitten	7	4	3
Sexual Reassignment Surgery	6	3	3
Other ²	15	11	4
Chemical Processes			
Injection	7	7	0
Hormone Therapy	1	1	0
Other ²	1	0	1

¹Some stories ($n = 33$) contained multiple castrations and/or penectomies, therefore the total number of physical and chemical processes ($n = 127$) is greater than the total number of selected stories ($n = 94$)

²“Other” represents physical and/or chemical processes that were only described once in all of the selected stories.

Process of Genital Ablation

All but 26 stories provided a description of the process of the genital ablation ($n = 94$). The detail that authors included pertaining to the injuries varied widely, with some stories showing a solid understanding of testicular anatomy and wound care [#13451, RC: “He made an incision 1 ½” long on the left side of Aaron’s scrotum... nudged that testicle out and severed its cord, quickly tying off the end he returned [it] to the scrotum. He sutured the incision closed... Twice each day, Tony cleaned and re-banded the wounds after applying an antibiotic”]. Some stories, on the other hand, gave much less detail on what was happening and were unrealistic or anatomically impossible (e.g., a penis being able to reach orgasm and ejaculate after complete ablation).

Physical castration and/or penectomy was the most commonly depicted process for genital ablation within the stories (physical: 93%, chemical: 7%), and the most common physical way for genital removal was a complete surgical dissection of the testicles or penis (castration: 49 stories, penectomy: 23 stories; Table 2). The process of genital injury is often described in great detail and the pain is often explicit [#4588, Pueros: “... As breath was expelled in an excruciating manner from the 12 year-old’s beautiful body, before sufficient air was retrieved for a loud anguished scream to be emitted.”].

Sexual Arousal and Orgasm

Of the 120 stories analyzed, 100 (83%) contained explicitly sexual themes involving emotional or physical sexual arousal [#6058, Shortie: “I was literally out of my head with lust”;

#3664, Michael: “My penis becomes rock hard”), sexual activities [#7951, Astromancer: “I kissed Nye full on the mouth”), or attainment of orgasm [#2190, Ian: “I was cumming and cumming into the sink”). Sixty-five stories (54%) contained emotional or physical arousal that was directly associated with a sexual act or thought and 44 stories (37%) contained emotional or physical arousal that was directly associated with an act or thought of genital injury [#3186, Takarta: “as soon as I saw that hammer I became rock hard]. Seventy-three stories (61%) contained orgasm(s) that were directly related to a sexual thought or activity, and 29 stories (24%) contained orgasm(s) that were directly related to an act or thought of genital injury [#12243, Zipper: “The boy turned the knife over a few times, looking at it, and finally reached out and gently grasped my scrotum, then tightened his grip and began pulling. I clenched my teeth against the inevitable pain and closed my eyes. And ejaculated. It was one of the most powerful and intense orgasms I’d ever experienced...”].

Cumulatively, 49 stories (41%) contained vaginal or anal sex, 45 stories (38%) contained oral sex, 23 (19%) contained solo masturbation (masturbating oneself either alone or in the presence of someone else), and 14 (12%) contained mutual masturbation (masturbating someone else with or without reciprocal masturbation).

Adult-Minor Incidences

Although the selected stories predominantly featured adults (and the EA is an “over 18” restricted site), 41 out of the 120 total selected stories (34%) included characters described by the authors as “minors.” In 65 stories (54%), both the inflictor(s) and recipient(s) were adults. In eight of the 41 stories involving minors, an adult injures a minor, in seven stories a minor injures a minor, and in five stories a minor injures an adult (19%, 17%, and 12% of stories involving minors, respectively). Eleven stories did not specify the age of either the recipient or inflictor.

In 67% of the stories containing sexual content, adults were the only ones involved in sexual activities or genital ablation, and in 33% of the sexual stories, at least one of the main characters was a minor. Eighteen percent of the sexual stories contained themes of adult-minor sex, which equates to nearly half of all minor-focused stories (44%). The remainder of the stories that included minors either focused on partnered sex between two minors or one minor engaging in solo masturbation.

Sexual Orientation

For stories that did not include author-identified sexual orientation, this information was based on described partnered sexual activities or sexual thoughts about another partner. Stories in which the main character(s) sexual thoughts or activities were directed only toward other men were classified as homosexual, only toward women were classified as heterosexual, and toward both men and women were classified as bisexual. Fifty-nine percent of all stories were heterosexual,

29% were homosexual, and 10% were bisexual. Two stories were unclassifiable, as one solely contained animals with no given sex, and the other was a non-sexual story with no orientation defined by the author.

Consent for Genital Ablation

Although many men on the EA express an interest in obtaining voluntary castration (Wassersug & Johnson, 2007), themes of forced castration were most prevalent in the fiction. The majority of all stories (52%) contained forced genital ablation (castration, penectomy or nullification against the character’s will) [#4742, Nathan: “don’t do this! Oh DON’T!!!! OH PLEASE.”... Henry was shaking with fear, and with a voice that literally cracked he said “OH GOD...OH PLEASE... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?”]. Only 17% of stories depicted a consensual ablation and in 13% of stories the character was coerced into having his genitals ablated. Twenty-three stories did not describe a level of consent for genital ablation.

Inflictor’s Sex

In 22 stories there was no identification of the sex of the inflictor or there were multiple inflictors of different sexes. Females were inflictors in 80% of heterosexual stories and males were inflictors in 94% of homosexual stories. In heterosexual stories, 51% contained forced genital injury by a female inflictor (Table 3). Sometimes the female inflictor was described as a “dominatrix” [#644, David: “She was dressed in her dominatrix outfit and grinning.”]. Similarly, homosexual stories tended to contain forced genital injury by a male inflictor (39%).

DISCUSSION

Data set Authenticity

Through the Fiction Archive, we have a massive database of fictional stories created by people with an extreme interest in genital injury. But, how do we know that they are the work of many independent authors and not simply the product of one or a few authors using multiple usernames? We can safely assume that these stories are the work of a larger population from the sheer volume of stories (i.e., over 8,000) currently posted on the EA. This amounts to nearly one and a half new stories posted per day, some of them of book length, over the 16-year history of the EA. Stories range from Chinese and Russian to Portuguese and German. While some authors may use more than one pseudonym, there are clearly multiple authors involved. Had the collection been, for example, the product of just 100 authors, each of those authors would have to have posted one new story every two months for the past 16 years. In addition, one of the authors (Johnson) has interviewed several members of the EA, including some whose fiction was randomly selected for this

Table 3. Frequencies of recipient consent for genital ablation (be it forced, consensual, or coerced) in heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual stories by inflictor's sex (female or male) within the analyzed fictional narratives ($n = 83$)¹.

		Described Sexual Orientation of Story Characters		
Recipient Desire for Genital Ablation	Total	Heterosexual	Homosexual	Bisexual
Female Inflictor				
Forced	28	23	2	3
Desired	10	9	0	1
Coerced	9	7	1	1
Total	47	39	3	5
Male Inflictor				
Forced	26	9	13	4
Desired	5	4	1	0
Coerced	5	1	3	1
Total	36	14	17	5

¹This is less than 120 stories because 22 stories did not provide sex of the inflictor, 23 stories did not report recipient's level of consent for genital ablation, and 2 stories did not provide sexual orientation.

analysis. This helped to verify the authenticity of the multitude of authors that have contributed to the EA story collection.

In addition, we can assume these stories are fictional for two reasons. If these were all or even largely non-fictional narratives, healthcare professionals would be much more aware of voluntary (and involuntary) castrations (and, in turn, eunuchs) in the Western world (see discussions in Johnson & Wassersug, 2010; Wassersug, 2010). Second, the sheer brutality and unsafe acts in the stories also suggest that the stories are works of fiction. Although some stories reflect authors' detailed understanding of surgical castration, many describe procedures that would likely lead to death from blood loss. If these activities were non-fiction, it would be very difficult to keep them hidden from society. Although there have been only about 100 published cases of male genital self-mutilation brought to the attention of medical professionals since 1901 (Greilsheimer & Groves, 1979; Romilly & Isaac, 1996; Stunell, Power, Floyd, & Quinlan, 2006). Wassersug and Johnson (2007) have argued that voluntary castrations outside the medical system are often performed safely and are more common than the medical reports indicate. In contrast, if performed by the methods used in the stories, these men would be presenting in emergency departments (and morgues), and healthcare professionals, including coroners, would have identified many more individuals with genital injuries. The acts described in these stories often reached such brutality that professional medical attention would be imperative for real live subjects to survive.

Although fictional, can the stories posted on the EA tell us anything about the members of the EA site? Our data suggest that the stories may reflect the members' lives, desires, and fears. We found many similarities between aspects of the stories and members' demographic information from previous studies. This leads us to believe that these stories are relevant to understanding the clinical needs in a largely uninvestigated population at risk of genital injury.

Castration, Penectomy, and Nullification

In a study conducted by Johnson et al. (2007), it was found that, of 140 men who had voluntarily received genital ablation, 118 (84%) were castrated, 5 (4%) were penectomized, and 17 (12%) were nullified. In the current study, we found that 63% of the “recipients” in the stories were castrated, 12% were penectomized, and 25% were nullified. The relatively high percentages of genital ablations in both their fictional stories and the personal history of members of the EA community supports the hypothesis that the content of the fictional narratives reflect to some extent the personal histories and/or ideations of the authors.

Process of Genital Ablation

Johnson et al. (2007) found that, of the castrated group in their survey, 68% received physical castrations and 32% received chemical castrations. In the current study, 64% of all stories featured someone who received physical castrations and 7% featured someone who received chemical castrations. For contemporary voluntary eunuchs, and for characters in these fictional stories, the most common form of chemical castration is the injection of toxins into the testicles to induce necrosis (Johnson & Irwig, 2014). Johnson and Irwig also found that the only significant difference between the physically and chemically castrated groups was that the physical group was more likely to have a reported “fantasy/curiosity/cyberplay” interest before castration, which could be why we see more physical castrations appearing in the fantasy/fictional stories.

We also found that many of the genital injuries that were acquired in these stories were described as extremely painful. This could suggest a sadistic and/or masochistic aspect to these men's obsessions, but it could also reflect that, because the desire for voluntary castration is socially unacceptable, it must be both forcible and painful.

Sexual Arousal and Orgasm

The strong sexual associations that are made with genital injury in these stories are indicative of a castration paraphilia. The primary inclusion criterion for posting a story on the EA is that it must be related to genital injury. However, 83% of these stories also had explicit sexual themes. In 61% of stories, either the recipient or inflictor reached orgasm, and in 24% of stories these orgasms resulted directly from genital injury. In Discussion Board forums, some members of the EA have explicitly stated that they find these stories sexually arousing [02–10–2005, Slammr: “When I first stumbled upon the Archive, I read the stories because they turned me on.”].

Some members of the EA suffer from xenomelia (Johnson & Irwig, 2014), a neurological disorder that typically first expresses itself during childhood. Xenomelia is referred to as Body Integrity Identity Disorder in the psychiatric literature and is often coupled with erotic attraction to the amputation of an unrecognized limb. Those who suffer from xenomelia do not recognize certain body parts as being their own and, sometimes, attempt self-amputation of the limb in question (McGeoch, et al. 2011; Hilti, et al. 2013). It is thought that the erotic attraction is due to the “damaged wiring” of the sensory cortex of the right parietal lobe and is not considered a paraphilia (Hilti et al., 2013). There is currently no formally recognized paraphilia that relates directly to castration or genital injury. Money (1988) proposed the Skoptic Syndrome as a paraphilia related to castration for religious purposes. However, it has been removed from the DSM (previously in version IV section 302.6: *Gender Identity Disorder Not Otherwise Specified*) and is thus no longer formally recognized. The most similar paraphilia is apotemnophilia, which is the eroticization of being an amputee (Money, Jobaris, & Furth, 1977). Apotemnophilia is generally reported to occur most commonly in arms and legs, however it can also include digits, genitals, and other body parts (Khalil & Richa, 2012). A survey by Swindell and St. Lawrence (2009) of all the reports of Body Integrity Identity Disorder that they could find in the medical literature revealed that 32% involved male genitals. However, no themes of Body Integrity Identity Disorder (e.g., not recognizing a body part) were present in the 17% of stories that lacked sexually explicit content.

Adult-Minor Incidences

In addition to the aforementioned paraphilias, several stories also contain pedophilic themes. As these stories are fictional, we did not feel a duty to report the stories that depicted sexual abuse to authorities. In *Ashcroft v. Free Speech Coalition* (2002), the US Supreme Court (as the EA is hosted in the United States) ruled that adult material depicting minors, but that was not made through the use of any actual minor, is protected free speech. In addition, Section 6-a of the Canadian Law defining child pornography (163.1 of the criminal code) provides for a legitimate use of such fiction for the medical treatment of people with castration and pedophilic ideations, as long as the use and distribution of such materials

does not put persons under the age of 18 at risk. The front page of the EA warns that “if this type of material is not legal in your jurisdiction do not enter.”

We found that 18% of stories containing castration and/or penectomy contained scenes of adult-minor sexual interactions. Similarly, in a study conducted by Vale et al. (2013), it was found that 20.5% of men, who had been physically castrated or penectomized, reported a history of having been sexually abused in childhood and 16.2% had been threatened with genital mutilation as children. While it is possible that a relationship exists between these current and previous findings, some members of the EA have acknowledged that there also may be pedophilic intention for some authors. Still, many EA members argue that reading and writing is better than acting [01–26–2005, Paolo: “For anyone getting a ‘turn on’ from the reading, he [Bboy, the EA creator] rationalized that said person wasn’t hurting anyone if he was sitting in his living room or wherever reading and writing.”]. In addition, a survey conducted by Jackowich and colleagues (2014) asked EA respondents the question “What kind of sexually inappropriate act are you concerned you might commit?” While few of the survey respondents answered the question, 29% of all respondents who answered and 48% of men who had been physically castrated and/or nullified (14 out of 29 who answered the question) stated that they were concerned with committing pedophilic acts. Pedophilia is often comorbid with other paraphilias including sadism (Raymond, Coleman, Ohlerking, Christenson, & Miner, 1999), which was also depicted in the 21% of stories that describe an adult castrating a minor. However, it does not follow that either authors of, or the readers of, these stories would act out the events in the story. Indeed it has been found in studies across several countries that “as pornography became available sex crimes decreased rather than increased” (Diamond, 2009; Diamond, Jozifkova, & Weiss, 2011; Diamond & Uchiyama, 1999).

Despite this, many EA members declare that they have no pedophilic desires and state that the involvement of minors reflects their own personal experiences [02–10–2005, Pyxiii: “Because as a kid I always felt I should have been able to stop the things that happened to me, and that in some way, I’d invited the things that happened. Because by the time I hit puberty, I’d already started wanting to inflict pain to my own genitals, and it’s only since discovering this archive a few months ago, that I’ve finally started to realize that this was in response to guilt and humiliation I felt about the events of my life.”]. Others, on the other hand, are bothered by the involvement of minors in the stories and express concern over this genre. It is noteworthy that several discussion board members of the EA, who have already been castrated, report that they sought castration to reduce their libidos and their pedophilic desires.

Sexual Orientation

We found that 27% of the stories written on the EA were either tagged by the author as homosexual or depicted sexual

acts only between males. Interestingly, past research has also found that, out of a sample of 135 voluntarily castrated men, 32% of the physically castrated or penectomized men and 19% of the chemically castrated self-identified as homosexual (Johnson et al., 2007). Another study has found that 21.9% of castrated/penectomized men self-identified as homosexual (Vale et al., 2013).

Bisexuality was found in 8% of the stories, which is over four times greater than rates reported in the general population (Gates, 2011). Stief, Rieger, and Savin-Williams (2014) found that bisexuality in men was associated with higher levels of sexual sensation seeking and sexual curiosity. This is of interest because, if these stories accurately represent the fantasies and/or ideations of men who wrote them, then the desire for genital injury could be a very real aspect of some men's sexual curiosity and thrill-seeking.

Consent for Genital Ablation

The use of forced genital injury in these stories is similar to descriptions of forced feminization in early writings of male-to-female transsexuals. In stories that date back to the late 19th century, a male is made by others (typically one or more women) to dress or act as a female. These situations can be short-lived, such as for a school play, or can last for the rest of the character's life (Davis & Kleinmaier, 2002a, 2002b). During the late 19th century, transsexualism was not as socially acceptable as it is currently. Within these stories, it is clear that it is not the boy's choice, nor was it in his control, much like what was found within the EA stories. For instance, Davis and Kleinmaier (2002a) describe how in early transsexual literature a young male's feminization was brought on against his will, which could reflect the fear early transsexual writers had about exposing their true desires, and disguising them through the forceful wishes of others.

This fear of publically expressing one's true desire for genital ablation is a common theme on the Discussion Board. There are many posts about the great difficulty of finding a counselor to work with or a qualified surgeon. Many programs designed to help individuals with gender dysphoria work within an assumed binary and do not normal treat individuals who desire emasculation, but not feminization (cf. Ahmad et al., 2013). As one result, most of those in the EA community, who have been voluntarily castrated, have resorted to self-surgery or surgery by unlicensed “back-alley cutters” (Jackowich et al., 2014; Johnson & Irwig, 2014). Despite this, most express a desire for safe surgery by a professional.

Inflictor's Sex

The sex of the inflictor is another area that strongly supports the sexualization of genital injury. In 80% of the heterosexual stories the inflictor was a female, and in 51% the inflictor was a female who was forcing the genital injury upon the recipient. In 94% of the homosexual stories, the inflictor was a male and in 39%, the inflictor was a male who was forcing

the genital injury upon the recipient. This continues to suggest that these authors may have a castration paraphilia, as the inflictor is more likely to be a member of the sexually desired sex.

Clinical Implications

The clinical implications are clear: these men exist, and their thoughts of genital ablation need to be taken seriously. Whether men desire emasculation because of Gender Dysphoria or Xenomelia, or if the desire for (or obsession with) castration arises for other reasons, such as the desire to reduce libido or for fantasy/cyberplay (Johnson et al., 2007; Wassersug, Zelenietz, & Squire, 2004), their situations must be recognized and handled properly if they come to the attention of healthcare professionals. If their obsessive interests are not taken seriously, they may not receive adequate care. Reluctance to share castration desires with the medical community keeps this topic taboo (Jackowich et al., 2014; Johnson & Wassersug, 2010; Wassersug, 2010) and keeps these men from obtaining appropriate professional care.

The Fiction Archive was originally created with therapeutic intent. Members of the site have claimed that writing about their fears and/or fantasies has helped them manage their obsessions without acting them out in real life [02–10–2005, Paolo: “I myself banished a recurring nightmare I'd had since almost childhood, with the story “For Your Own Good.” Since writing it, I've not had the nightmare since.”]. Writing such stories could potentially act as an outlet, whether it is to mentally fulfill a castration desire or to rework traumatic events [04–12–2008, Slammr: “Writing is therapeutic. It's a way to resolve childhood issues.”], however this has not been rigorously investigated. In addition, many members claim there to be a strong sense of community on the Fiction Archive, and readers are encouraged to give the authors feedback on their work. In that regard many authors state that they write not only for their own therapeutic benefit, but also for the benefit of others. From a clinical perspective, it may be helpful to refer clients with castration ideations to this website. However the direct impact that the site has on visitors has not been studied.

The sense of support and community though that is present on the EA could potentially help patients understand that they are not the only ones with these desires. Expressive writing has been used as a form of therapy and has been found to increase self-regulation and decrease psychological distress, negative mood, and depressive symptoms (Gortner, Rude, & Pennebaker, 2006; Langens & Schüler, 2005; Wong & Rochlen, 2009).

Alternatively, the writing and reading of these stories could potentially perpetuate negative or bothersome thoughts for some individuals. It is possible that, for some, their castration desires realize through the reading and/or writing of the Fiction Archive [04–17–2005, Timothy: “I almost ALMOST asked his dad, “Have you given any thought to castration?” That's a question that would be unthinkable to any normal person but I almost let it slip out. That's why I stopped

writing [sic]. It's time to get my mind on other things.”]. Timothy had earlier written about his minor-centred stories (6/23/2004) “Castration is the LAST thing I want. I would NEVER agree to be ‘nuttled...’ Some people write about Vampires and Ghosts and monsters because that is what scares them. I write about my nightmares not about my happy dreams.”

It would be premature to conclude that writing EA stories is “curative” for these men; however it may be therapeutic in helping some rework traumatic events from their childhood [08–14–2014, Peter47-NL: “It (the Fiction Archive) opened safely the door to my repressed subconsciousness.”]. by providing a safe way for the authors and readers to indulge their fantasies. Such hypotheses have yet to be explored.

All told, writing such stories is not likely to be sufficient therapy for those who suffer from severe Gender Dysphoria. Johnson et al. (2007) showed that a quarter (24%) of castrated EA members self-identify as a “Third/Other/Neither” gender, rather than strictly male or female. There is evidence that pre-surgical reassignment, transsexuals suffer from decreased mental health and poorer quality of life compared to the general population (Ainsworth & Spiegel, 2010; Mustanski, Garofalo, & Emerson, 2010; Newfield, Hart, Dibble, & Kohler, 2006). If written expression is the only form of therapy that these men receive, and, if “eunuch” continues to not be formally recognized as a valid gender identity (i.e., neither male nor females, but emasculated)¹ (Vale et al., 2010; cf. Wassersug, McKenna, & Lieberman, 2012), then we may continue to see such men seek dangerous genital ablations outside the healthcare system.

Limitations

An unfortunate drawback to this study is that we cannot link personal histories of most of the authors with their stories. We do not know, for example, if the extent to which the stories pertaining to adult-child sexual interactions were written specifically by men who experienced childhood sexual abuse.

Another limitation to our research is that, with any online study, we have a population biased toward people with access to the Internet and are literate. The stories we analyzed are solely the product of authors who are comfortable enough to register to a site pertaining to castration and to post relevant stories online. This population of writers may not reflect the full breadth of men with extreme castration ideations.

NOTE

- 1 We note that a valid 3rd gender identity exists in several countries including Australia, Germany, India, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Samoa and Thailand.

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