

Published in final edited form as:

J Womens Hist. 2014 ; 26(1): 45–67. doi:10.1353/jowh.2014.0008.

The Gendered Nose and its Lack: “Medieval” Nose-Cutting and its Modern Manifestations

Patricia Skinner

Abstract

Time magazine’s cover photograph in August 2010 of a noseless Afghan woman beside the emotive strap line, “What happens if we leave Afghanistan,” fuelled debate about the “medieval” practices of the Taliban, whose local commander had instructed her husband to take her nose and ears. Press reports attributed the violence to the Pashtun tradition that a dishonored husband “lost his nose.” This equation of nose-cutting with tradition begs questions not only about the Orientalist lens of the western press when viewing Afghanistan, but also about the assumption that the word “medieval” can function as a label for such practices. A study of medieval nose-cutting suggests that its identification as an “eastern” practice should be challenged. Rather clearer is its connection with patriarchal values of authority and honor: the victims of such punishment have not always been women, but this is nevertheless a gendered punishment of the powerless by the powerful.

Beginnings: 2010

In August 2010, *Time* magazine published on its cover the image of a young Afghan woman, Aisha Bibi, whose nose and ears had been cut off by her husband after she had fled from his violent family’s house in a region controlled by the Taliban. Left to die and bleeding heavily, she eventually found shelter in a women’s refuge in Kabul, where her story and plight were revealed to a wider audience, including Jodi Bieber, a South African photographer. The photograph Bieber took of Aisha, praised because it “addressed violence against women with a dignified image,” won World Press Photo of the Year in 2010.² Aisha, meanwhile, was flown to the United States, where a philanthropic body, the Grossman Burn Foundation, agreed to fund the reconstructive surgery necessary to restore her facial features. *Time* ran the cover photo beside the emotive strapline, “What happens if we leave Afghanistan.”

As a medieval historian, I was already familiar with the phenomenon of nose-cutting, but the manipulative use of Aisha’s photograph profoundly disturbed me, bringing to mind the feminist theorist Madeline Caviness’s piercing analysis of medieval images of mutilated women as sado-pornographic.³ Despite reassurances from her media handlers that she was a strong woman who wanted her story told, it was hard not to feel some sense that Aisha, a victim of extreme domestic violence, was being doubly objectified by the intrusive lens, as had been the undoubted beauty of her compatriots who earlier formed the basis for a photo report on the country itself and its need for protection (by the West).⁴ As some commentators pointed out long before Aisha’s case came to prominence, the safeguarding of women from violence in Afghanistan had barely registered on the consciousness of the West

prior to the U.S. invasion of 2001, after which it became a central plank in justifying the war.⁵

But in situating Aisha's mutilation as the specific manifestation of Afghanistan's "medieval" culture when it came to women's rights, critics confused her husband's *illegitimate* act—condemned within and outside Afghanistan, as we shall see—with the undoubted structural oppression faced by women in that region.⁶ This highlights the complexity of competing norms: modernity and the emancipation of women are often considered to go hand-in-hand, but this process in part relies upon a third factor, the secularization of the state concerned.⁷ The modern Afghan state—where the Islamic subjection of women to men was restated by the Ulema Council of clerics as recently as March 2012—has no problem with acts of retributive violence justified by Sharia law, but categorized Aisha's injuries as falling outside even that frame of reference.⁸ Thus when Aisha's father-in-law was arrested in December 2010 for his participation in the affair, the provincial police chief was quoted as saying that the treatment of Aisha was "against Afghan-ism, against Afghan and Sharia laws, against every principle in the world, against humanity, so that's why we wanted to bring him to justice."⁹ The police chief's quote was designed to convince the skeptical West that Afghanistan was indeed a modern state where the justice system could and did operate over and above local and familial customs.¹⁰

As the wider debate about women's status in Afghanistan gained momentum, the actual nature of and reasons for the mutilation became something of a footnote. Western media reports attributed the violence to the Pashtun tradition that a dishonored husband was said to have "lost his nose," and thus Aisha's "punishment" was a just (in Pashtun eyes) retribution for her dishonorable flight from his family.¹¹ This article seeks to interrogate the background of the equation of noses with honor—and its loss—by exploring some examples drawn from medieval texts. The loss of nose (often, but not always, along with ears) is extensively documented in historical texts: what did such mutilation symbolize? Was its meaning stable over time, and how was it gendered, if at all? Whilst not claiming that the following amounts to a universal history of nose-cutting, juxtaposing cases from medieval Europe with modern instances such as the mutilation of Aisha shows that beyond the specificities of time and place, there are some recurrent themes. The key to explaining nose-cutting lies in the patriarchal values of honor and authority that have persisted across centuries and rely upon recognizable signifiers. Most visible of these, and the most permanent, is the damaged face.

Medieval Violence—Modern Violence: Re-Crossing the Great Divide¹²

It may seem implausible to suggest that different cultures, separated by time and geography, could share the same outlook on this form of bodily mutilation. The influence of postmodernism has led scholars to question over arching structural analysis in favor of specificities of time and place. It does not, however, seem to have removed an ingrained assumption amongst many modern historians (including those studying women) that the medieval period—already a derogatory term when it was invented, and one which has lost none of its negative purchase in some quarters—has nothing to contribute to their teleological study of post-Enlightenment states and societies. The medieval era—by

definition the period between the civilization of antiquity and the rational humanism of the Renaissance—is strongly associated with uncontrolled, emotional violence both within and outside the judicial systems in place at the time. The core thesis of the theorist Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*—contrasting the corporal and savage penalties of the medieval period with more “rational” forms of punishment such as imprisonment in the modern era—whilst disputed by subsequent research is still highly influential in shaping perceptions.¹³ It also gave rise to something of an industry in studying medieval violence *per se*, which whilst not always accepting Foucault's viewpoint does little radically to shift the paradigm.¹⁴

Some medievalists have reinforced the apparent divide by emphasizing the alterity of the period.¹⁵ A recent publication attributed this sense of “radical distance” not to inherent differences within the societies studied, but to the sources that medievalists use and the perception that these require specialist *training* to use them effectively, shutting out non-specialists.¹⁶ The volume went on to demonstrate, with varying success, the value of exploring medieval precursors to modern social injustices. It was notably silent, however, on violence against women. Outside the historical discipline, there seems to be less resistance to comparison across time. A volume on “medieval” film-making, for example, not only challenged the periodization inherent in the description medieval, but showed how films in this genre often collapse temporal divides to find an “over-arching humanity [allowing] characters to learn from one another across the temporal gap.”¹⁷

To compare episodes of a similar phenomenon centuries apart, therefore, seems a legitimate and useful exercise. Given its long history, does nose-cutting in fact still represent a meaningful, *corporal* punishment that modernity has not erased?

Crime or Punishment?

The first issue to confront is whether nose-cutting should be viewed primarily as a crime or as a punishment, since conflicting interpretations of the act played a large part in the rhetoric surrounding Aisha's case: although her husband and his family apparently thought that taking her nose and ears was just, the action was characterized by the authorities as illegal and—crucially in this Muslim state—un-Islamic. The disjuncture between what the family thought of as appropriate retaliation and how the state viewed such retribution echoes the situation in the early medieval state, where rulers similarly claimed sole rights to restorative justice and punished those who took the law into their own hands, further disturbing the king's peace.

Yet written laws, whether religious or secular, are rarely unambiguous, and often internally inconsistent. The Qu'ran, which upholds the right of a husband to beat a disobedient wife in one *sura*, might also have inspired acts of mutilation, if we read *sura* 68:10-16: “... Nor yield to the wretch of many oaths, the mischief-making slanderer, the opponent of good, the wicked transgressor, the bully of doubtful birth to boot. Though such a man be blessed with wealth and children, when Our revelations are recited to him he says, ‘They are but fables of the ancients!’ *On the nose We will brand him.*”¹⁸ The refusal of the unbeliever to submit to God was to be punished with a physical sign, marking him out for dishonor. By extension,

any act of disobedience or failure to submit to God's will (including not obeying one's husband) might then attract corporal punishment. Taken together, the Qu'ranic texts do not legitimize the action of Aisha's husband, but they certainly offer a context within which to understand it. The Qu'ran is of course a medieval text, even if dating its contents is notoriously difficult, and its statements have been subject to generations of interpretation by (and disagreements between) even trained scholars and lawyers.¹⁹ Thus its texts are by no means unmediated, but the rhetorical threat against the unbeliever in *sura* 68, as one *disloyal* to God, locating the nose as the site of punishment, may provide a broader frame within which to see nasal mutilation.²⁰

The right to inflict such a visible and horrific punishment in modern Afghanistan was contested in Aisha's case, and this argument has strong parallels with conflicting views of nose-cutting in medieval Europe. Early Frankish law from the fifth and sixth centuries, for example, was clear that facial injuries inflicted on another person, including the amputation of the nose, were punishable with heavy fines; Charlemagne repeated these provisions wholesale in the eighth-century revision of the laws.²¹ Yet detailed lists of injury tariffs are common to many early medieval law codes and have been interpreted by one historian as a distinctive mnemonic device to reinforce the identity of the peoples for whom they were drawn up.²² The implication of this is that the horrendous injuries they detail were rarely, if ever, inflicted—except by the king. Writing at the end of the sixth century, the Frankish Bishop Gregory of Tours noted actual cases of facial disfigurement used as a punishment for perceived disloyalty: Gailen, the servant of King Chilperic's estranged son Merovech, killed his master at Merovech's own request but was then executed by Chilperic's forces after they removed his hands, feet, ears, and nose.²³ Here, Gailen was unjustly treated for his faithful last act for his lord, simply because it deprived Chilperic (for whom Gregory does not have a good word) of the opportunity to capture (and possibly mutilate in a similar way) his son. Similar punishment was meted out to the would-be assassins of King Childebert II. The victims were then crucially "let out as a subject of ridicule."²⁴ Facial injury, therefore, had a purpose, to warn others against such treachery—but it was only legitimate if the state, or in this case the king, was the perpetrator. Already we see the tension between acts of violence perpetrated by individuals, and punishable with fines, and the very same acts of violence inflicted by the king to assert authority. But mutilation, for Gregory, was only legitimate if justified by the seriousness of the crime it punished: elsewhere in his text he criticizes King Chilperic for his excessive punishment of transgressors.²⁵

Gregory's examples make clear the connection between betrayal or treason and mutilation of men, but his text also includes an episode involving women. Reporting the punishment of errant nuns after a revolt in St Radegund's nunnery, he says: "Some they roped to posts and then gave them a good beating. Some had their hair cut off, others their hands, some *even* their ears and noses."²⁶ His language suggests he thought the latter punishment extreme. Was this because the victims were female, or because they were nuns? Gregory's horror of the violence within his society has been marked out as unrepresentative of contemporary views, but his clerical background may have shaped his understanding of mutilation.²⁷ A key Biblical passage, contained in the Book of Ezekiel, Chapter 23, is relevant here. Dealing the fate of the Egyptian prostitute Oholibah, who had persisted in her "lustful ways" despite

the killing of her sister for the same behavior, the passage includes God's threat to "direct my jealous anger towards you, and they [her many lovers] will deal with you in fury. They will cut off your noses and your ears, and those of you who are left will be consumed by fire" [Ezekiel 23:25].²⁸ The plural of nose used in the language here implies that the biblical punishment of Oholibah would be meted out to any other woman who persisted in lewdness and prostitution. Gregory would surely have known the passage: the mutilation of the nuns, therefore, represented for him not only a punishment for their disloyalty to their abbess, but also marked them out to his similarly-educated readers as sexually unchaste (and he makes this explicit in his comment that after the revolt several of the nuns were pregnant). Nose-cutting in this context was highly gendered, punishing not only the women's disloyalty to their abbess, but also indicating their sexual misconduct. By extension, the threat of such mutilation, if understood in the same way elsewhere, could function as an effective tool of oppression against women.

Gregory's was not the only early medieval account of the removal of a woman's nose and ears. In his *Getica*, the sixth-century author Jordanes reports that the first wife of Huneric the Vandal was sent home to her father, Theoderic the Goth, with her nose and ears cut off, "because of the mere suspicion" that she was plotting to poison her father-in-law, King Gaiseric.²⁹ Here, though, there is a tension *between* kings, played out on a woman's body, and the two sides differed in their view of the legitimacy of the mutilation. We shall return to this case.

Noses, Politics, and Masculinity

What, though, was the purpose of targeting the *nose* in these acts? In his study of aesthetic surgery, the historian Sander Gilman is clear on this point: "the face, in terms of a psychology of perception, is not a face without a nose."³⁰ The historian Valentin Groebner, focusing on later medieval violence against the body, agrees that the person so deformed (amongst a whole community of the mutilated) was no longer viewed as a human being, but had become hideously unrecognizable—*Ungestalt*. So cutting the nose, these authors suggest, rendered the victim a non-person, no longer a full part of the society she or he inhabited, whose appearance would provoke revulsion in those who witnessed it. But the undoubted use of mutilation as a motif for cruelty in western texts makes it all the more surprising that the almost contemporary, eastern historian Procopius deploys no examples at all of such practices in his devastating critique of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I and his wife Theodora, the *Secret History*.³¹ Was mutilation in the eastern empire so commonplace that it would have had little rhetorical purchase? Or had it not yet taken hold in the East? A survey of late Roman historians from across the Mediterranean certainly suggests that the best-known cluster of medieval rhinotomies, from seventh-century Byzantium, may have represented a departure in political behavior here.³² The Emperor Justinian II's loss of his nose at the hands of his political opponents in 695 (and triumphant return, sporting a gold prosthetic ten years later) was just the latest in a series of four known nose-cuttings in the high-level political struggles of that era.³³ The practice would thereafter continue in the eighth and ninth centuries: a cluster of hagiographical texts depict the mutilation of saints who had opposed the two waves of iconoclasm, and thus set themselves on collision courses with the emperors of the time.³⁴

The Byzantine examples, however, differ from those discussed so far in one crucial respect: they all feature men. Groebner has suggested that “the nose points downwards,” that is, for nose-cutting, read genitals and, more specifically, the penis.³⁵ He is somewhat vague about how he comes to that view, given the wide “semantic field associated with noses,” but his range of evidence, predominantly from late medieval Germany, is in fact too narrow to allow him to see the connections between earlier cases and the later material that he focuses on.³⁶ By expanding the chronological and geographical sample, the link between nose-cutting and patriarchal values goes beyond simply removing an ersatz penis.³⁷ (In fact it was the removal of the *ears* that was thought to render the offender sterile in early medical culture.³⁸)

The Byzantine cases, then, are not castrations-by-proxy. Rather, they represent two strands of meaning. The rebellious iconodule monks fit with the pattern seen earlier in the West—by resisting the emperor’s decree, they were in effect rejecting his authority and could be treated as traitors (the thorny issue of the hagiographic nature of the evidence will be addressed below). In the case of the imperial candidates and deposed emperor, nose-cutting seems to relate to the Old Testament prohibition in Leviticus 21:18 on imperfect men serving as priests—the Byzantine emperor was not a priest, it is true, but his role as head of the state carried with it ritual significance that the loss of facial features fatally compromised.³⁹ The term used in the biblical text, *charum*, also had—or came to have, in medieval rabbinical scholarship—a more specific meaning of “flat-nosed.”⁴⁰ The removal of Justinian II’s nose was therefore intended to render him unfit to rule, since physical imperfection disbarred an imperial candidate, and this mutilation would, of course, be highly visible. Yet removal or blinding of the eyes was far more commonly used as a means of disqualifying imperial candidates, and would also feature in numerous episodes of political struggle in the early medieval West, where it is seen as an imported, Eastern practice.⁴¹ Why remove Justinian’s nose? Why not, as in many later examples, simply blind him? Perhaps the perpetrators did indeed intend to signal some underlying act of symbolic castration. After all, the Byzantine administration had long included eunuchs, whose own physical imperfection guaranteed that even if they harbored ambitions to take the imperial throne, they were unlikely to succeed.⁴² Justinian’s use of imperishable *gold* for his replacement part might therefore have had additional semantic value for its viewers. If rhinotomy did indeed function as a sign of emasculation, it was arguably more effective as a visible sign—provided it was read that way by contemporaries—than *actual* castration or complete emasculation (which were, at almost the same time, included in the lists of prohibited mutilations in the Frankish laws, with much higher penalties than for facial damage).⁴³

The specific association of the nose with sexuality in Byzantine culture was only made explicit, however, in the laws or *Ecloga* of the Emperors Leo III and Constantine V, issued in 726.⁴⁴ As well as targeting adulterers, the laws contain a series of clauses punishing incest and underage sex with nose-cutting and other mutilations. Significantly, the penalties are targeted at both men and women, distinguishing these clauses from later, Western prescriptions, but the moralizing tone of the laws surely again owed something to Old Testament models of punishment. Leo had, however, begun his political career under

Justinian II, and perhaps he, or his advisors, therefore had a heightened sense of the significance of such severe mutilation, and when it was—and was not—justified.⁴⁵

Reading Rhinectomy: Ambivalent Meanings

For a sign to work it needs to be read. Gregory of Tours *expected* the failed assassins with cut noses to convey a message, their mutilated faces a permanent testimony to their disloyalty. In Byzantium, too, two out of four examples from the seventh century were of men who had tried to overthrow emperor Heraclius; and the mutilated bodies of iconodule monks, too, were exhibited before their martyrdom (although traumatic, nose-cutting on its own was rarely fatal). Common to all the early medieval cases is the theme of perceived betrayal: the “usurpers” to the Byzantine throne, the challengers to Childebert, the monks resistant to the destruction of icons, and the rebellious nuns of St Radegund’s were all in their own ways challenging authority and transgressing the boundaries of fidelity, and their punishment was brutal and visible, designed to discourage others. Yet the sources preserving these cases are at best ambivalent about the severity of the punishment: Gregory is uneasy about the mutilation of the nuns, and hagiographers stress the *injustice* of mutilating the iconodule monks. That Justinian II was able to return to power, complete with a prosthetic nose made of gold, suggests that ultimately this humiliation of a ruling emperor was a step too far even in the tumultuous politics of the seventh century.⁴⁶ Returning to Jordanes’s account of the mutilation of the Gothic princess, it too is clearly written up as a sign of excessive cruelty and injustice. Jordanes’s account, of course, was written for a Gothic audience: the absence of mutilation in their own king’s laws simply highlighted the contrast between Goth and Vandal—Theoderic’s Gothic laws used execution, rather than mutilation, to punish wrongdoing.

Thus later lives of the saints martyred under iconoclasm made a *virtue* of the injuries they had received, emphasizing the immense suffering they had undergone in defense of their higher obedience to God over the secular ruler’s will, and this theme recurs in later hagiographic writing. The only evidence of nose-cutting (specifically, the “carving-open of the nostrils”) in English law before the eleventh century, significantly, is preserved not in a legal text but another hagiographic source, Lantfred’s *Life of St Swithun* (the saint healing an innocent victim of this new punishment, apparently introduced by King Edgar, r. 959-975).⁴⁷ And after the failure of the so-called Pataria movement, an attempt to reform the local church and break its links with secular interests in eleventh-century Milan, its protagonist, Arioald, was seized and very publicly mutilated, including removal of his nose, before his execution. Arioald’s end, too, was written up in the manner of a saint’s life: he had failed as a revolutionary, but his injuries only served to enhance his martyrdom.⁴⁸

Again, however, most of the victims in hagiographic texts are male. In eleventh-century England, nose-cutting was extended from being part of a series of mutilations for theft under King Edgar, as reported in Lantfred, to a punishment inflicted on women for adultery, as Cnut’s (r. 1016-1035) law explicitly states: “A woman who commits adultery with another man whilst her husband is still alive, and is found out, shall suffer public disgrace, and her husband will have all her property, and she will lose her nose and ears. If she denies it and fails to purge herself, let a bishop take control and punish her severely.”⁴⁹ Wormald has

demonstrated that this law had no precedent in English material, and was an addition by Archbishop Wulfstan of York (fl.1002–1023), who was responsible for the “massively ecclesiastical” content of English laws at the turn of the millennium.⁵⁰ The punishment of adulterous women in this way had precedents further East as we have seen, but within English law, the clause represented an innovation: none of the Anglo-Saxon law codes had imposed such a penalty for adultery.⁵¹ The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* seems to associate nose-cutting particularly with Cnut, since the only occurrence of the practice in this source is in 1014 (i.e. before he became king) when he mutilated hostages given by the English to his father Swein.⁵² This instance, however, was designed to show the future king in a bad light—again, nose-cutting becomes a sign of cruelty and harshness.

The fluctuating meanings of nose-cutting in medieval culture, and particularly its perception in some cases as an *unjust* punishment, are useful in providing a means to analyze not only the [il]legitimacy of Aisha Bibi’s mutilation, but the differing responses to it. Although sometimes justified as a punishment for acts of criminality or perceived betrayal, even medieval authors recognized that it was an extreme response, requiring ample justification. Aisha’s case is already encompassed within the category of “betrayal”: her “crime” was to leave her husband’s family house without his permission, and this in itself was sufficient to condemn her in his eyes.⁵³ But his response, and that of his family, went beyond the boundaries of Shari’a law. So how did this Afghan family settle on cutting nose and ears as an appropriate punishment for an errant wife?

An Oriental Practice?

Useful here is the distinction made by historians of the modern nation state between the codification of state law and the social reality on the ground: the first sets out the values by which the state claims to govern its citizens, and their reciprocal duties toward the state, the second is a rather broader and looser category, encompassing the traditions, means of socialization, and practices (religious, cultural or otherwise) of communities and groups within the state.⁵⁴ Aisha’s case starkly illustrates the tension between the two: faced with the incompatibility of her mutilation with any known codes of law, commentators ascribed her husband’s action to “tradition,” and left it at that. Yet the Old Testament story of the Egyptian prostitutes highlighted earlier may have given textual expression to an existing practice (or given rise to one) targeted specifically at women suspected of deceiving their husbands or transgressing sexually. It is hazardous to speculate how knowledge of the practice and its meanings was transmitted: it appears not only in laws in both west and east (the eighth-century *Eclogia* in Byzantium, Cnut’s law in England in the eleventh century, and later in Frederick II’s laws in the Kingdom of Sicily in the thirteenth) but also manifested itself in other genres, such as popular folktales.⁵⁵ The latter, informal transmission, arguably, had a greater impact in the “traditional” world inhabited by Aisha and her relatives.

It is epitomized by the literary fable of the barber, the shoemaker, and their wives in the *Khalila wa-Dimnah* stories, which had reached the West in Arabic translation by the eighth century, but whose origins lay in fourth- and fifth-century Indian collections and might therefore have circulated widely in the regions of Afghanistan and modern Pakistan.⁵⁶ In

this story, a barber's wife acts as the go-between for a shoemaker's wife and her lover. The shoemaker, however, catches the couple *in flagrante*, ties his wife to a post and then collapses in a drunken stupor. The go-between releases the shoemaker's wife to enable her to keep her tryst and takes her place, only for the shoemaker to wake up (still in the dark) and cut off her nose in his rage. Returning, the shoemaker's wife finds the now noseless go-between, releases her, ties herself back to the post and cries to Allah to restore her nose as a sign of her innocence. Her performance convinces the shoemaker, whilst the barber's wife feigns an accident to explain her own missing nose. A happy ending would ensue but for the fact that a monk has witnessed the whole affair and stands up in court to tell the tale, enabling the inherently misogynist motif of deceitful women to receive its full airing.

It would be easy to attribute an oriental origin to nose-cutting from such a tale, and indeed one modern writer has done so in print. The clinician Giorgio Sperati, writing on nasal amputation as recently as 2009, explicitly links the practice to "Eastern" societies, citing the male-orientated nature of both societies as reasons for its use: in fact, of course, *all* medieval societies were male-orientated, and the threat of violence against women a common way of reinforcing the patriarchal order.⁵⁷ Literary nose-cutting, however, like the legal clauses, was also present in the West and manifested in the tale *Bisclavret* by the twelfth-century Breton author Marie de France. In this story, a faithless wife has her nose bitten off by her husband, whom she has condemned to the life of a werewolf by stealing his clothes and taking another man as her lover, when he transformed into the beast.⁵⁸ The wife dishonored her husband by condemning him to beasthood after he had confided in her, now his response was direct and reciprocal. Groebner terms this biting-off a "distinct speech of male patriarchal violence," without problematizing its symbolism (nose here cannot equal penis) when inflicted on a woman.⁵⁹

Given the likelihood of other tales of deceitful wives circulating in the West, did the story connect with an audience aware of the physical penalties of infidelity, or was a werewolf removing his wife's nose a fantasy, a way of distancing the tale from its hearers? Certainly there were many contemporary, high-profile cases of mutilation that Marie could have drawn on, such as those recounted by the English monastic chronicler Orderic Vitalis (d.c. 1142), yet none of these were targeted toward women (nor did any feature noses).⁶⁰ The substitution of mutilation for many capital offenses around this time as a "merciful" option might well have increased the visibility of maimed persons, or the awareness of their existence, but arguably it was the heightened sense of male honor visible in the emerging chivalric culture of medieval Europe that inspired Marie's tale.⁶¹

These literary tales, both using the motif of a woman's nose as the sign of her sexual betrayal and linking that explicitly to the honor of her husband, are also morality tales. Hearers were expected to learn from the example of these bad women.⁶² The practice also appears in a rabbinic judgment from thirteenth-century Spain: a case recorded at Coca stated that the cutting of an adulteress's face would deprive her of "the beauty of the face which she adorned for her adulterous wooer."⁶³ Underlying all these cases, however, was a clear justification: women who transgressed deserved a permanent and disfiguring sign on their faces, and it seems that this sign transcended geographical and temporal boundaries.

Nose-Cutting—What “Others” Do?

Whilst the association of nose-cutting with women seems to have gathered momentum in the central middle ages, this is not a linear story: its earlier purpose of marking out political treachery or betrayal continues to be reported, not least in Cnut’s laws themselves, as well as in contemporary Byzantine sources.⁶⁴ The eleventh-century chronicler Michael Psellos reports with relish that the rightful claimant to the Bulgarian throne blinded and cut off the nose of his rival “using a cook’s knife for both operations.”⁶⁵ There is, however, a sense that nose-cutting had become much rarer within Byzantium itself: blinding of opponents is much more prevalent in Psellos’s text, and the twelfth-century author Anna Komnena, who describes nineteen separate cases of political blinding in often gruesome detail (including one unfortunate case with a candelabrum), does not mention rhinotomy at all.⁶⁶

The point of Psellos’s tale might actually be to demonstrate the Otherness of Bulgar culture, where primitive punishments such as nose-cutting were still being practiced, in contrast to the much less bloody business of blinding, which could be achieved without removing the eyes. Arguably, the chronicler was highlighting the irrational cruelty of the Bulgars (hence the detail of the cook’s knife, suggesting rash spontaneity rather than cool pre-judgment). At the same time, the punishment was still linked with disloyalty. The apparently increasing preference in Byzantium for blinding and monastic seclusion of political enemies, rather than their horrific mutilation and display, might have been understood as a more “civilized” punishment, perhaps in reaction to the atrocities of war seen on the empire’s doorstep either in the Bulgar kingdom or, latterly, in the crusader states.⁶⁷

The theme of noses and Otherness recurs in a report by the Franciscan missionary and traveler, William of Rubruck. When he encountered the wife of a Mongol general in the mid-thirteenth century, he comments, “It seemed to me that her whole nose had been cut off, for she was so snub-nosed that she seemed to have no nose at all” and added that “she who has the least nose is held the most beautiful.”⁶⁸ Whilst William’s observations do not suggest that actual nose-cutting was taking place, his comparison takes on a particular resonance when set against his Western background: to his Western readers, the Mongol aesthetic of flat-nosed women was an entirely negative trait and emphasized the *difference* in Mongol culture, again reinforcing the strangeness William felt as he entered their “different world.”⁶⁹

The tendency to misinterpret or misrepresent alien cultures is not just a medieval phenomenon. Psellos’s report of and apparent reaction to the Bulgar rhinotomy has much in common with later Western responses to the practice. In seventeenth-century Mysore, colonial reports of the Mysoreans cutting off the noses and lips of enemies were intended to reinforce the image of “the primitiveness of [the Mysoreans] and their [the reporters’] own moral superiority.”⁷⁰ The nineteenth-century British missionary to India, T. L. Pennell, cited the nose-cutting of women as a sign of Indian “barbarism,” even as he marveled at the achievements of reconstructive surgery to correct the injuries caused.⁷¹ Such responses demonstrate that the theorist Edward Said had a point about the western gaze contemplating less “civilized” societies.⁷² Yet this is not simply a West-East issue: the historian John Gillingham highlights nineteenth-century accounts of medieval Ireland, where the mutilation

of political enemies—including blinding and biting off noses—was cited as a good reason for English intervention.⁷³ In all these cases, violent mutilation is seen as extreme, Other, and ultimately the marker of primitive society.⁷⁴ Certainly the tale of the barber's wife, so gruesome in the original, underwent a “civilizing” change—substituting cut hair for cut nose—when it reappeared in Boccaccio's *Decameron*.⁷⁵

Connecting the Dots: from Anglo-Saxon England to Modern Afghanistan and Pakistan

What is clear is that nose-cutting did not simply travel from east to west: a common, Old Testament motif *may* have lain at its heart, but its subsequent use took multiple directions. Across Europe and the Middle East it was a polyvalent symbol, read in different ways according to the time and the situational context. It was targeted at both men and women, but in different circumstances. The two thematic strands that have emerged from the evidence for nose-cutting—political betrayals, adulterous relationships—could be treated separately along gendered lines⁷⁶ To distinguish between them, however, would risk missing the fact that at the heart of both strands was male honor, based on both political acts and personal relationships.

Whilst nose-cutting as a political act may have receded in favor of less visible (but no less drastic) facial mutilation, such as blinding, its life as an indicator of moral depravity seems to have continued. Increasingly in later medieval scholastic thought, a person's moral disposition was linked to the facial features, as the science of physiognomy was “rediscovered.”⁷⁷ Deliberate disfigurement, in this context, was a logical punishment for moral failure, and thirteenth-century writers equated Beauty (of body and soul) with integrity: a body and face had to be whole to be beautiful.⁷⁸ The thirteenth-century laws of Emperor Frederick II of Sicily include nose-slitting of women for various sexual misdemeanors: such measures may reflect the influence of the intellectuals at his court. The scholar and polymath Michael Scotus, for example, wrote the *Physiognomia* specifically for his imperial patron.⁷⁹ But in order for the message of the cut-off nose to succeed it needed an audience, a set of viewers to read the transgression inscribed upon the face. Perhaps this explains why urban councils in later medieval Europe, in particular, saw such punishment as an effective deterrent.⁸⁰ It was, ironically, the spread of syphilis in western Europe during the sixteenth century that finally “fixed” the missing or damaged nose (on men *and* women) as a sign of sexual stigma, as symptoms included infection of the bone and collapsed cartilage which could lead to total loss. This period, consequently, saw a sharp rise in accounts of reconstructive surgery in the West.⁸¹

The horrific results of nose-cutting, however, seem to be tempered when viewed at a distance of a thousand years: it is possible to read about ugly deeds and yet not be emotionally affected by them.⁸² Modern commentators can take refuge from the violence by emphasizing the alterity of medieval culture (as Renaissance writers already did) and coolly analyze the evidence in front of them.⁸³ They can see how the practice of nose-cutting developed over time, and suggest an apparent increase in the mutilation of women by the later Middle Ages, without ever considering too closely the effects of the mutilation.⁸⁴ It might even be possible to highlight advances in medical science as a positive outcome of the

practice: the use of nose-cutting as a punishment in ancient India, for example, is cited as the reason that surgeons there developed a precocious form of plastic surgery.⁸⁵

This distancing, however, risks normalizing the practice of nose-cutting which, on the evidence cited above, does not appear to have been at all “normal” in any medieval society, but an exceptional punishment for exceptionally-shocking (by medieval standards) behaviors. In law, it was an extreme rhetorical measure, designed to deter; in other sources, it was often a means of discrediting those who used it as a weapon, or employed as a deadly-serious instructional motif. The frequent mention of the practice—whether legitimate or not—in legal sources cannot, however, be matched in quantity by evidence in chronicles of such mutilation taking place.

Thus Aisha’s mutilation by her husband *does* fit into a medieval pattern, but one that drew the line at excessive cruelty. The shock of seeing her photograph reminds historians of the *reality*, in terms of physical and mental pain, of ostracism within one’s own society and permanent scarring (with or without reconstructive surgery) that mutilation could bring. Modern cases, therefore, can sharpen awareness—even empathy- and act as a corrective to treating extreme violence in the Middle Ages as just another interesting topic. But how does studying the medieval period assist in understanding the violence today, given that it is continuing (the latest case, reported in December 2011, of a teenage Pakistani bride, bibi Salma, whose husband removed her nose and lips)?⁸⁶ Examining the medieval cases in fact highlights how *exceptional* this extreme violence was and is, conditioning responses to it; even medieval contemporaries viewed it, in many cases, as excessive (unless it was being substituted for execution, when it was instead presented as a merciful option).⁸⁷ The facial mutilation of women, moreover, could only be considered within a very specific set of circumstances surrounding their sexual behavior, but whether the strictures against adulteresses published in secular law codes were ever actually put into effect remains open to question. Either way, the extremity of such cases in the medieval period guaranteed that they were recorded in language designed to convey exactly how the reader was expected to respond. Violence then, as now, was used as an index of acceptable behavior, and written up accordingly—learning to read through these reports of supposedly barbaric medieval violence, and realizing that violent episodes were as much a discourse of authority as a mirror on reality, may enable a more critical reading of modern press accounts with their own agendas. Medieval authors, too, condemned excessive brutality. Offering a context and historical background to such episodes exposes the illegitimacy of hiding behind the “traditional” label.

Arguably, the Western media outrage, generated by cases such as Aisha and Salma, is still circumscribed by a sense of security that “it couldn’t happen here,” that this is a practice confined to “traditional” societies, or that such brutality was a distinguishing feature of premodern societies before the civilizing process curbed such excess.⁸⁸ This complacency ignores statistics that show that between a fifth and a quarter of women in the United Kingdom and United States are likely to suffer domestic violence during their lifetime, and that this, too, can be extreme.⁸⁹ It may seem that the gulf between “medieval,” “traditional,” and “modern” is too wide to bridge, but the rhetoric of patriarchal control implied and

expressed in extreme violence targeted at women's faces, whether threatened in laws of the past or carried out in practice in the present, has an all-too-depressing continuity.

NOTES

1. This paper arises from the Wellcome Trust-sponsored project (grant number 097469) "Losing Face? Living with Disfigurement in the Middle Ages." An earlier version was read at the 2012 meeting of the Gender and Medieval Studies conference, Manchester University, UK. I thank the participants, and subsequent readers of this paper, for their suggestions for refinement.
2. "Dignified" was the opinion of juror Ruth Eichhorn, quoted in the article "South African Photographer Jodi Bieber Wins Premier Award," on the World Press Photo website, accessed February 20, 2012, <http://www.worldpressphoto.org/content/south-african-photographer-jodi-bieber-wins-premier-award>.
3. Madeline Caviness, *Visualizing Women in the Middle Ages: Sight, Spectacle and Scopic Economy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 86-7.
4. Kelly Anderson, *Cover Story: the Rhetorical Construction of Afghan Women in a Time Feature* (M.A. diss, University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill, 2006), elegantly dissects the earlier coverage: accessed February 13, 2012, <https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/>
5. Useful here are Carol Stabile and Deepa Kumar, "Unveiling imperialism: media, gender and the war on Afghanistan," *Media, Culture and Society* 27, no. 5 (2005):765-82 and Anila Daulatzai, "The discursive occupation of Afghanistan," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 35 (2008):419-35
6. This characterization is still found in the western press, e.g. the Christian Science Monitor's citation of the Taliban's "medieval treatment of girls": Christian Monitor's Editorial Board, "Ending the Afghanistan war with women's rights in place," *The Christian Science Monitor* June 15, 2011: <http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/the-monitors-view/2011/0615/Ending-the-Afghanistan-war-with-women-s-rights-in-place>, or Emily Dyer's account of the Taliban's "brutal, medieval restrictions:Emily Dyer, "The war on women being waged in Afghanistan," *The Telegraph* June 20, 2012: accessed August 30, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/9356291/The-war-on-women-being-waged-in-Afghanistan.html>; Lael Mohib, "Afghan solutions for Afghan women," posted online in January 2012, questioned whether Aisha's plight had distorted understanding of the ongoing challenges faced by the majority of Afghan women: accessed February 20, 2012, http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/01/13/afghan_solutionsJor_afghan_women
7. Symbolized, for example, by the de-veiling of women in Turkey's 1917 revolution. See: Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997), 98.
8. The declaration by the Ulema Council that "teasing, harassment and beating of women without a sharia-compliant reason, as set forth clearly in the Glorious Qu'ran, is prohibited," reported in western media, makes this distinction explicit: Emma Graham-Harrison, "Afghan clerics' guidelines' a green light for Talibanisation," *The Guardian* March 5, 2012: accessed March 7, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/mar/05/afghanistan-women?newsfeed=true>
9. Rod Nordland and Taimoor Shah, "Arrest made in Afghan disfigurement case," *New York Times* December 7, 2010, accessed February 20, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/08/world/asia/08afghan.html>. The article reported the detention of Sulaiman, Aisha's father-in-law.
10. The release of Sulaiman without charge six months later was, however, reported with resignation. Alissa Rubin, "Suspect in mutilation of an Afghan woman is freed," *New York Times* July 11, 2011, accessed February 20, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/12/world/asia/12afghanistan.html?_r=0. The theme of perceived defiance and dishonour recurs in the case of two Pakistani men who committed a similar act of violence on bibi Fazeelat, reported in December 2009. In this case, however, the court ordered them to suffer the same punishment under the Islamic principle of "an eye for an eye" before being imprisoned (it is unclear whether the punishment was carried out): "Pakistan court orders ears and noses to be cut off," *BBC News* December 22, 2009, accessed February 28, 2012, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8425820.stm>
11. Mark A. Drumbl, "Rights, culture and crime: the role of rule of law for the women of Afghanistan," *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law* 42 (2004): 349-390, discusses the fluid relationship between Pashtun custom and Islamic law.

12. The section heading echoes Judith Bennett's "Medieval women, modern women: across the great divide," in *Culture and History, 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities* ed. D. Aers (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992): 147-175. Her insistent call for cross-period work to include the premodern era, more recently articulated in her *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenges of Feminism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), has influenced the approach of the present article.
13. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (London: Allen Lane, 1977), 47-48 describes medieval punishment a ritual display of the sovereign's "vengeance" on the criminal. Foucault's work to some extent drew upon earlier pessimistic views, such as Johan Huizinga's *Waning of the Middle Ages* (originally published in 1924) and Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978). The latter work remains an influential framing tool, directly addressed by the essays in Barbara H. Rosenwein, ed., *Anger's Past: the Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). It is not hard to find examples of extreme bodily punishment in the later middle ages that shaped this discourse: Nathalie Gonthier *Leâchdtiment du crime au moyen âge: xii-xiv siècles* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1998); and Valentin Groebner, *Defaced: the Visual Culture of Violence in the Late Middle Ages* (New York: Zone, 2004), pp. 15-28. E. g. Helen Carrel, "The ideology of punishment in late medieval English towns," *Social History* 34 (2009), 301-320 at 307-8, disputes the supposed prevalence of mutilation.
14. E.g. Guy Halsall, ed., *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1998). Halsall's introduction claims "Violent relationships can often be seen as a discourse structured around shared norms." The essays in Richard W. Kaeuper, ed., *Violence in Medieval Society*, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000) vary in their view of whether the period was any more violent than modern times. There also appears to be an associated taste for sensationalist titles for such volumes. See, for example, Mitchell Merback, *The Thief the Cross and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999); Neil Christie and Maya Yazigi, eds., *Noble Ideals and Bloody Realities: Warfare in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2006). Sean McGlynn, *By Sword and Fire: Cruelty and Atrocity in Medieval Warfare* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2008), terms Foucault "misleading" but prefaces his work with the statement "we should not let the stories of brutality in this study be blunted by the wearing-down of the centuries."
15. See, for example Madeline Caviness, "Feminism, gender studies and medieval studies," *Diogenes* 225 (2010), 30-45.
16. Celia Chazelle, Simon Doubleday, Felice Lifschitz and Amy Remensnyder, eds., *Why the Middle Ages Matter: Medieval Light on Modern Injustice* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 5
17. Bettina Bildhauer and Anke Bernau, "Introduction: the a-chronology of medieval film," in *Medieval Film* eds., Bettina Bildhauer and Anke Bernau (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 1-19, 13.
18. Sura 4.34: "Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior to the other, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them. Good women are obedient ... As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them. Then if they obey you, take no further action against them." *The Koran*, tr. N. J. Dawood (5th rev. ed., London, Penguin, 1990), 402. Emphasis added by the author.
19. Peter von Sivers, "The Islamic origins debate goes public," *History Compass* 1 (2003), 1-16, accessed February 21, 2012, http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/pdf/compass/hico_058.pdf is a useful overview of the scholarly arguments surrounding both the origins of Islam and its texts. Sura 68 seems to be one of the earliest to be written down in the seventh century, responding to opposition to the new religion. Comment on extensively by medieval chroniclers, e.g., the numerous references to variant legal traditions in the scholarly obituaries at the end of each year in *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from al-Kamil fi'l Ta'rikh Part 3: the Years 589-629/1193-1231* tr. D. S. Richards (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008).
20. Note that here the gendering of the unbeliever is securely male.
21. K. Eckhardt, ed., *MGH, LL Nat. Germ. IV.1: Pactus Legis Salicae* (Hannover: Hahn, 1962), Section 17: De vulneribus, and XXIX: De debilitatibus. XXIX.1. Later provisions separate out injuries into individual chapters: XXIX, cc. 12, 13 and 14 deal with eyes, nose and ears

respectively, with fines of 2500, 1800 and 600 *denarii*. The *capitula* added to these laws reiterate the penalties under the list of fines.

22. Patrick Wormald, *The Making of English Law I* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 44.
23. B. Krusch and W. Levison, eds. *Gregorii Episcopi Turoniensis Libri Historiarum X in MGH SS Rer Merov. I* (Hanover: Hahn, 1951) [hereafter *GT*], Bk V, 18.
24. *GT*, Bk VIII, 29 (c.585 CE) and X.18: “ad ridiculum laxaverunt.”
25. *GT*, Bk VI, 46.
26. *GT*, Bk X, 15: “ad monasterium extraverunt, ac ad stipites extensos, gravissime caesos, alissis caesariem, aliis minibus, nonnullis auribus naribusque decessis, seditio depraessa quievit.” The translation is from Gregory of Tours *History of the Franks* tr. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin Books, 1974), 570. Emphasis added by the author.
27. Editor's introduction to *Why the Middle Ages Matter*, citing essays in *The World of Gregory of Tours* ed. Kathleen Mitchell and Ian N. Wood (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 9.
28. New International Version accessed September 5, 2012, www.biblegateway.com
29. Jordanes, *Getica*, tr. Charles C. Mierow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1915) (BK XXXVI, 184): accessed September 17, 2012, <http://people.ucalgary.ca/~vandersp/Courses/texts/jordgeti.html>. On Jordanes as an author, see Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 20-111 and A. H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 100-169.
30. Sander Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful: a Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), xx.
31. Procopius, *The Secret History* tr. Geoffrey A. Williamson (London: Penguin Books, 1966).
32. Ammianus Marcellinus's *Roman History* vol. 3: Books 27–31, trans. John C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Loeb Classical Library, 1939) contains numerous executions and mutilations including blinding (Bk 27.XII.3), cutting off ears (Bk 30.VIII.4, where emperor Valentinian's practice of doing so is compared unfavourably with the Persians) and scalping (Bk 31.II.22) *Nepos*, but no nose-cutting. There is nothing in Eutropius, *Breviarium in Justin, Cornelius, Eutropius* trans. John Sleby Watson (London: George Bell and Sons, 1886), 401-505; Zosimus, *New History* (London: Green and Chaplin, 1814); or Eunapius, *Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists* trans. Wilmer Cave Wright (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Loeb Classical Library, 1921), all accessed at The Tertullian Project: www.tertullian.org.
33. The others were John Athalaricos and Theodorus, who both lost their hands and noses for their plot against John's father, Heraclius in 637, and Heraklonas, overthrown and nose removed in 641 by the supporters of Constans II.
34. For example, St George Limnaiotes (nose slit, c. 730) and Paul of Kaioumas (nose cut off, c. 750): Dumbarton Oaks Hagiography Database directed by Alexander Kazhdan and Alice-Mary Talbot, accessed January 15, 2012, <http://www.doaks.org/document/hagointro.pdf>; the life of St Stephen the Younger (c. 715–767) also highlights widespread mutilations including nose-cutting among contemporary supporters of icons: Marie-France Auzepy, ed., *La vie d'Etienne le jeune par Etienne de diacre* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1997), 157 and 161. I am grateful to Dr Stavroula Constantinou for bringing these references to my attention.
35. Groebner, *Defaced* 12-13 and 73.
36. Groebner, *Defaced* 75.
37. The association is made visible, however, in a Roman urn in the form of a face found in Cologne and dating to the first and second century CE, where the deviant nose points to the left and touches the tip of a circumcised penis: Wolfgang Pirsig, “Ear-nose-throat Disease in the Visual Arts,” in *Ear, Nose, and Throat in Culture* ed. Wolfgang Pirsig and Jacques Willemot (Amsterdam: Wayenborgh, 2001), 13-103.
38. Wolfgang Pirsig cites the Hippocratic belief that the veins behind the ear connected the head to the genitalia and allowed the passage of semen to the latter, 27 See Pirsig, “Ear-nose-throat diseases” 45.
39. The fourth-century Emperor Valentinian, the historian Ammianus Marcellinus notes, had a cast in one eye, but the blemish “was not visible at a distance.” (*Roman Histories*, Bk 31.XIV.7) This

suggests that physical imperfection was indeed a live issue, and Ammianus may even have been deploying his report of this blemish as part of his negative portrayal of the emperor.

40. Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful* 52 quoting Rashi's interpretation of the term.
41. See also the ninth-century western European examples in *The Annals of St-Bertin* trans. Janet Nelson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), s.a. 830, 22; 868, 49; 873, 180–1 and note 5 and 874, 186; and in *The Annals of Fulda* trans. Timothy Reuter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), s.a. 866, 54; 870, 64; 871, 65; 882, 91–3; 885, 98; 893, 125 and 896, 135. Reuter comments that “A blind man was politically dead,” 64n. Blinding also features in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, s.a. 1006: the late date suggests that the practice was slow to reach England: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* trans. G. N. Garmonsway (London: Everyman, 1953), ms E, 136. Thereafter, however, the practice was used both to disqualify rightful heirs to the throne such as Alfred in 1036 (*ibid.*, 158 and 160) and, increasingly, to punish offenders under the Normans: *ibid.*, s.a. 1086, 1095 and 1124.
42. On eunuchs in Byzantine culture, see Shaun Tougher, *The Eunuch in Byzantine History and Society* (London: Routledge, 2008).
43. *Pactus Legis Salicae* XXIX.17–18.
44. *A Manual of Roman Law: the Ecloga published by the Emperors Leo III and Constantine V of Isauria at Constantinople in 726* trans. E. H. Freshfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924), cc. 17.2, 17.5, 17.23–28, 17.30–34, 106–111.
45. For the iconoclasts Leo and Constantine, of course, one justification for nose-cutting was resistance to their iconoclasm decree: above, note 34.
46. John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, rev. ed. 1997), 41–91 outlines the “politics of survival” of the entire period. Ultimately, of course, both Justinian II and his son were killed in a later coup.
47. Wormald, *Making of English Law* 125–126.
48. *Andrea da Strumi, Arioaldo: passione del santo matire milanese* trans. Marco Navoni (Milan: Jaca Book, 1994).
49. II Cnut: Secular Laws, 53 and 53.1, trans. Dorothy Whitelock, *English Historical Documents I: 500–1042* (rev. ed., London: Routledge, 1979), 463.
50. Wormald, *Making of English Law* 361, quote on 341. Stephanie Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church: Sharing a Common Fate* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1992), 65n., offers an alternative explanation, attributing the introduction of the law to Scandinavian influence. This would seem to be negated by the recognition of Wulfstan's huge intervention in Anglo-Saxon lawmaking in this period, although Wormald, p. 456, draws parallels between Wulfstan's activities and those of continental scholars with whom he was in contact.
51. See Theodore J. Rivers, “Adultery in early Anglo-Saxon society,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 20 (1991): 19–26.
52. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* trans. Garmonsway, mss C, D and E, s.a. 1014, 145. Two of the accounts include removal of the hostages' ears as well.
53. “Pakistan court orders ears and noses to be cut off,” accessed February 28, 2012, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8425820.stm>.
54. Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* 61.
55. Byzantium: above, note 44. Sicily: *Liber Augustalis or Constitutions of Melfi* tr. James M. Powell (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971), 74 on adulteresses (nose-cutting prescribed rather than handing her over to her husband to be killed); 84 on procuresses and 85 on mothers who prostitute their daughters.
56. Luis M. Girón-Negrón, “How the go-between cut her nose: two Thero-medieval translations of a *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* story,” in *Under the Influence: Questioning the Comparative in Medieval Castile* eds. Cynthia Robinson and Leyla Rouhi (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 231–260. On the origins of the *Khalila wa-Dimna* see F. Suleman, “Kalila wa Dimna,” in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: an Encyclopaedia* ed. J. W. Meri, 2 vols (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), II, 432–3.
57. Giorgio Sperati, “Amputation of the nose through history,” *Acta Otorhino-laryngologica Italica* 29 no. 1, (2009): 44–50. The article typifies the continuing gulf in medical history between authors with medical or historical training.

58. *The Lais of Marie de France* trans. Glyn Burgess (London: Penguin, 1986), 68-72.
59. Groebner, *Defaced* 75. His is not the only commentary on the *lai*, which has formed the subject of substantial discussion centred around its protagonist's shape-shifting and its undoubted misogyny.
60. *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis* ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969-1980), especially vol. II, 14-15, 212-213; IV, 160-161, 284-5, 298-299; V, 122-126, 210-213, 352-6.
61. Attributed to William I the Conqueror in England: Wormald, *Making of English Law* 404; *Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis* vol. 4, 285n; See on this development J. Gillingham, "1066 and the introduction of chivalry into England," in *Law and Government in Medieval England and Normandy* eds. G. Garnett and J. Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 31-55.
62. Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* IV (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1957), K1522,399.
63. Cited in Abraham Neuman, *The Jews in Spain* I (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1942), 140.
64. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents* 456 (Cnut II, 30.5). Repeat offenders lost their hands or feet or eyes, nose, lips, ears or scalp: "thus one can punish and at the same time preserve the soul." Cnut's list of fines for *inflicting* head injuries does not include the nose, despite mentioning scalp, ears, eye, jaws and tongue.
65. Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, IV.49, translated by E. R. A. Sewter as *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers* (London: Penguin, 1966), 115.
66. Anna Komnena, *Alexiad* I.2, 3, 4, 6, 9,11,16; 11.4 (twice); V.5; V1.9; VII.2; IX.9 (twice), 10; X.4; XII.8 (twice); XV.6.
67. See Piers D. Mitchell, "The torture of military captives in the crusades to the medieval Middle East," in *Noble Ideals and Bloody Realities* eds. Niall Christie and Maya Yazigi, 97-118. Early medieval Francia, too, seems to have moved from display of mutilated political opponents in the world of Gregory of Tours, to a similar model of monastic seclusion by the ninth century.
68. William Rubruck, *Journey of Friar William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-1255* trans. W. Rockhill (London: 1900), 87 and 74 respectively.
69. *Ibid.*, 83.
70. Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful* 76.
71. Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful* 82.
72. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978).
73. John Gillingham, "Killing and mutilating political enemies in the British Isles from the late twelfth to the early fourteenth century: a comparative study," in *Britain and Ireland 900-1300: Insular Responses to Medieval European Change* ed. Brendan Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 114-134, at 115.
74. I borrow here William Ian Miller's wider point about historians relegating violence "to the Other, to the happily Overcome, or to the justly Outmoded": W. I. Miller, *Humiliation and other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort and Violence* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 53.
75. Day VII, story 8: Girón-Negrón, "How the go-between," 231.
76. Mitchell, "Torture," 99, comments that nose-cutting "would cause disfigurement, impair later marriage prospects, and would have been interpreted by many as a sign that the victim had broken the law." His comments are as applicable to male as female victims.
77. Groebner, *Defaced*, 72 and Irina Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: thinking about physical impairment during the high Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2006), 54.
78. For example, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, 39.8, quoted in Umberto Eco, *On Beauty* trans. A. McEwen (London: Secker and Warburg, 2004), 88.
79. Joseph Ziegler, "The beginning of medieval physiognomy: the case of Michael Scottus," in *Kulturtransfer und Hofgesellschaft im Mittelalter: Wissenskultur am sizilianschen und kastilischen Hof im 13 Jahrhundert* ed. G. Grebner and J. Fried (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008), 299-319.

80. Valentin Groebner, "Losing face, saving face: noses and honour in the late medieval town," *History Workshop Journal* 40 (1995), 1-15.
81. Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful* 10.
82. Cf. the contrast highlighted by Umberto Eco between the disinterested response to beauty and the almost visceral, emotional response to ugliness: U. Eco, *On Ugliness* (London: Harvill Secker, 2007), 16.
83. Groebner's assessment of medieval violence as "fundamentally alien and distant" and the period as a whole as "an archive of alterity": *Defaced*, 21 and 28; I disagree with both statements.
84. My new project, *Losing Face? Living with Disfigurement in Medieval Europe*, will, however, be confronting just these issues.
85. Stephanie Pain, "A nose by any other name," *New Scientist* 191 (2006): 50-51. See also Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful* 75-82. In a striking echo of the rhetoric of the Aghan police chief, Gilman quotes the view of the Indian writer T. Motichand Shah (1850-1904) that the role of the aesthetic surgeon in repairing noses was a sign of Indian modernity, and that the practice of mutilation was "criminal, unsanctioned by the state." See Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful*, 81.
86. "He tied me up, chopped off my nose and lips," December 19, 2011: accessed March 2, 2012, <http://www.emirates247.com/news/world/he-tied-me-up-chopped-off-my-nose-and-lips-2011-12-19-1.433527>.
87. *The Annals of Fulda* express both ends of this spectrum: in 866 some of the perpetrators of an uprising at Mainz were "even blinded [my emphasis]," echoing Gregory of Tours' language cited above, note 26. The same annal reports the condemning to death of the Moravian leader Rastiz in 870, but adds "the king only ordered his eyes to be put out."
88. For example, the case reported of a woman in Surinam whose husband, suspecting her of adultery, cut off her nose with scissors: Egbert H. Huizing, "Nose and society," *Rhinology supplement* 7 (1988): 9-38; Elias, *Civilising Process*; and Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.
89. Figures from UK Women's Aid website: http://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic_violence_topic.asp?section=0001000100220036§ionTitle=Statistics and the National Coalition against Domestic Violence factsheet, [http://www.ncadv.org/files/DomesticViolenceFactSheet\(National\).pdf](http://www.ncadv.org/files/DomesticViolenceFactSheet(National).pdf). Both accessed March 7, 2012. The case of Tina Nash in Cornwall, England, whose partner gouged out her eyes, was not, it must be noted, described as "medieval" at all, underlining that context affects reception: Sam Jones, "Man admits gouging eyes of partner," *The Guardian* April 13, 2012: accessed April 24, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/apr/13/man-admits-gouging-eyes-partner/print>. In her interview, however, the victim does highlight the fact he blamed her for the assault happening, thus aligning this case with those in other countries where the woman's behavior was deemed to have "caused" the violence.