In a previous blog on vampirism as a sexual paraphilia, I briefly mentioned the related behaviour of odaxelagnia. Both Dr. Anil Aggrawal’s Forensic and Medico-legal Aspects of Sexual Crimes and Unusual Sexual Practices and Dr. Brenda Love’s Encyclopedia of Unusual Sex Practices define odaxelagnia as a sexual paraphilia concerning individuals who derive sexual pleasure and arousal through biting or being bitten. Obviously, odaxelagnia is sometimes associated with sexual vampirism but it would appear that most forms of sexual biting do not involve bloodletting.

In her Encyclopedia of Unusual Sex Practices, Dr. Brenda Love included a relatively lengthy entry on sexual biting and reported that “biting is used by some to sexually excite their partner. It is done on the neck, ears, lips, nipples, back, buttocks, genitals, inner thighs, etc. The pressure used depends on their partner’s pain tolerance”. She also notes that sexual biting is one of the “easiest and most accepted methods” in sexual sadism and sexual masochism. She also claims that sexual biting produces an “increased sensation [and] brings some individuals who are emotionally stressed out of their physical numbness, back into touch with their bodies”. In the 2007 book, Miscellany of Sex, Frances Twinn reported that on the islands of Trobriand (off the east coast of New Guinea), the biting off of a woman’s eyelashes is viewed by the people who live there as a passionate activity!

Three separate books (Dr. Anil Aggrawal’s Forensic and Medico-legal Aspects of Sexual Crimes and Unusual Sexual Practices, Dr. Brenda Love’s Encyclopedia of Unusual Sex Practices, and Arlene Russo’s Vampire Nation) all make reference to the fact that sexual biting has it’s own separate section in the Kama Sutra (written by the Indian philosopher Mallanaga Vatsyayana in the 4th century). As Aggrawal notes:

“The Kama Sutra goes so far as to name all the different kinds of [sexual] bites and scratches, including those focused on the breasts and nipples. Eight kinds of bites are described in the chapter “On Biting, and the Means to be Employed with Regard to Women of Different Countries’. These are (i) the hidden bite, (ii) the swollen bite, (iii) the point, (iv) the line of points, (v) the coral and the jewel, (vi) the line of jewels, (vii) the broken cloud, and (viii) the biting of the boar”.

The earliest published empirical research concerning sexual biting was arguably reported by the US sexologist Alfred Kinsey. He and his colleagues reported that about half of all the thousands people they surveyed said they had been sexually aroused from being bitten during sex. However, earlier academic references to sexual biting were made by [British psychologist and sexologist] Havelock Ellis in his 1905 book Studies in the Psychology of Sex. He wrote that:

“The impulse to bite is also a part of the tactile element which lies at the origin of kissing. As Stanley Hall notes, children are fond of biting, though by no means always as a method of affection. There is, however, in biting a distinctly sexual origin to invoke, for among many animals the teeth (and among birds the bill) are used by the male to grasp the female more firmly during intercourse. This point has been discussed in the previous volume of these Studies in reference to ‘Love and Pain’...The heroine of Kleist’s Penthesilea remarks: ‘Kissing (Küsse) rhymes with biting (Bisse), and one who loves with the whole heart may easily confound the two’.”

In Forensic and Medico-legal Aspects of Sexual Crimes and Unusual Sexual Practices, Dr.
Aggrawal made a number of references to sexual biting in relation to both sadism and necrophilia. In the former, he noted that oral sadists manifest “fantasies of chewing, biting, or otherwise using the mouth, lips, or teeth aggressively or destructively”. In the latter, he noted that one particular type of necrophiliac (so-called ‘role-playing necrophiles’) sometimes have vampire fantasies where “the lover simulates a killing by biting the neck”. Aggrawal reported the case of a woman who imagined she was a vampire. “She would ask her husband to pretend he was dead and then stimulate his organ with her mouth. She would then pretend that the resulting erection was rigor mortis, and this would give her erotic pleasure”.

Dr. Charles Moser and Dr. Eugene Levitt surveyed 225 sadomasochists (176 men and 47 women recruited via an advert in a sadomasochistic magazine) about their sexual behaviour and published their findings in the *Journal of Sex Research*. Among their sample, the most common sadomasochistic activities were bondage and flagellation and bondage (50% to 80% of the sample). Painful activities (biting, use of ice or hot wax, and face slapping) were less common (37% to 41% of the sample). The most painful activities engaged in (piercing, branding, burning, tattooing, insertion of pins) were the least common (7% to 18% of the sample). These results suggest that biting (among the S&M community at least) is relatively commonplace.

As noted in a previous blog, there has been some clinical research on sexual vampirism (i.e., the rare phenomenon that involves the letting of blood by cutting or biting and accompanied by sexual arousal). In relation to this sort of sexual biting, there has been a lot of psychological theorizing, particularly from a psychodynamic perspective. Dr. P. Jaffe and Dr. F. DiCataldo (1994) published a paper on clinical vampirism and made a number of speculations. Basing some of their thinking on a 1972 paper by Lawrence Kayton in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, they wrote:

“Kayton considers that the vampire myth gives ‘a unique phenomenological view of schizophrenia’ and indeed overt vampiristic delusions have been associated most notably with this disorder. The connection is particularly salient in the more gruesome cases involving cannibalistic and necrosadic behavior that resemble the content of schizophrenic delusional material acted out. These cases generally present massive disorganized oral sadistic regressions, depersonalization, confused sexuality, multiple concurrent delusions, and thought disorder in content and form. Psychodynamic explanations draw attention to Karl Abraham’s biting oral stage during which the infant uses his teeth with a vengeance to Melanie Klein’s description of children’s aggressive fantasies’ and to W.R.D. Fairbairn’s notion of intense oral sadistic libidinal needs formed in response to actual maternal deprivation”.

I can’t say I’m convinced by any of these explanations but as there is a paucity of good data, no better theories have been put forward on this behaviour specifically (although there are alternative behavioural theories involving classical and operant conditioning that help in explaining paraphilic behaviour more generally).

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**Further reading**


In a previous blog I briefly examined formicophilia (i.e., being sexually aroused by insects crawling and/or nibbling on a person’s genitals). According to both the Forensic and Medico-legal Aspects of Sexual Crimes and Unusual Sexual Practices (by Dr. Anil Aggrawal) and the Encyclopedia of Unusual Sex Practices (Dr. Brenda Love), there is a specific sub-type of formicophilia that relates to being sexually aroused by bees (i.e., melissophilia). To date, there has not been a single academic or clinical study examining melissophilia. However, what there has been are many historical, cultural, and/or academic references to the use of bee and wasp stings for sexual purposes (including the books by Dr. Aggrawal and Dr. Love that specifically make passing reference to melissophilia).

The most common reference to the use of bee and wasp stings is their use as a method of penis enlargement. There are many cults that are devoted to the phallus. Furthermore, it is known that many ancient religions (especially those that are polytheistic such as Hinduism and Greek mythology) have gods with gigantic penises. Similarly, there are also some monotheistic religions (e.g., Judaism) that make reference in the Tanakh (i.e., the canon of the Hebrew Bible) to promiscuous females that desire males with very large penises. Consequently, men belonging to these religions in various different countries have used a variety of methods for penis enlargement including penis gourds, stretching methods, and bee stings. Arguably one of the oldest reference to insect stings as a way of enlarging the penis was in the Kama Sutra (the fourth century Hindu love manual). It suggested:

“To increase the size and potential of the penis: Take shuka hairs – the shuka is an insect that lives in trees – mix with oil and rub on the penis for ten nights…When a swelling appears sleep face downwards on a wooden bed, letting one’s sex hang through a hole” (Vatsyayana).

Shuka insects are a form of wasp and the hairs are the shuka’s stingers. The Kama Sutra claims that the “swelling caused by the shuka lasts for life” (although I haven’t seen any evidence that this would actually be the case). In the 2007 book on The Miscellany of Sex, Francesca Twinn also noted that there is an Amazonian wedding ritual that involves covering the penis with bamboo that is filled with bees as an aid to penis enlargement. This very same ritual was allegedly tried by the Rolling Stones lead singer Mick Jagger (after one of his former girlfriends – Janice Dickinson – criticized how small his penis was). The film maker Julien Temple was quoted as saying:

“It involved putting bamboo over the male member and filling it with stinger bees so that the member attained the size of the bamboo. Mick spent months in the jungle in Peru”

The medicinal effects of bee venom and stings have long been known but there are also inherent dangers. A recent 2011 paper on bee stings in the World Journal of Hepatology by Adel Nazmi Alqutub and colleagues summed the situation up concisely when they noted that:

“The use of bee venom as a therapeutic agent for the relief of joint pains dates back to Hippocrates, and references to the treatment can be found in ancient Egyptian and Greek medical writings as well. Also known as apitherapy, the technique is widely used in Eastern Europe, Asia, and South America. The beneficial effects of bee stings can be attributed to melittin, an anti-inflammatory agent, known to be hundred times stronger than cortisone. Unfortunately, certain substances in the bee venom trigger allergic reactions which can be life threatening in a sensitized individual. Multiple stings are known to cause hemolysis, kidney injury, hepatotoxicity and myocardial infarction”.

Despite the possible dangers, there are very few reports in the literature of penile wasp and bee stings. The few that have been reported tend to be on young children stung while playing naked in the summer. (I came across a particularly gruesome case – with photos – of a three-year-old with a penile bee sting in a 2011 issue of the Turkish Archives of Pediatrics that you can check out if you have the stomach for it). However, a few academic medical papers make the point that...
if the penile bee stings are self-inflicted and things go wrong, such people may be just too embarrassed to seek medical help.

In a 2005 book chapter by Dr Brenda Love (in Russ Kick’s Everything You Know About Sex is Wrong) examined some of the strangest sexual behaviours from around the world. She wrote that bee stings have been used by men to extend the duration of orgasm, enhance sensations of the penis, and increase its circumference. She also recounted this anecdote related to a man who got his sexual kicks from bee stings:

“Bee stings were once used as a folk remedy for arthritis sufferers. The insects were captured and held on the affected joint until they stung. The poison and the swelling it caused alleviated much of the pain in their joints. One male, having observed his grandparents use bees for this purpose, and later having a female friend throw a bee on his genitals as a joke, discovered that the sting on his penis extended the duration and intensity of his orgasm. Realizing that the bee sting was almost painless, he developed his own procedure, which consisted of catching two bees in a jar, and shaking it to make the bees dizzy to prevent their flying away. They were then grabbed by both wings so that they were unable to twist around and sting. Each bee was placed each side of the glans and pushed to encourage it to sting. (Stings to the glans do not produce the desired swelling and the venom sac tends to penetrate the skin too deeply, causing difficulty in removing them)…Stings on the penis, unlike other areas, resemble the bite of a mosquito…The circumference of the man’s penis increased from 6.5 inches to 9.5 inches. Swelling is greatest on the second day”

This account is by no means an isolated incident as I have come across a number of similar stories online. For instance, in response to a man’s question about whether bee stings have a demonstrable effect on virility and sexual performance, one person responded:

“My boyfriend would [use bee stings] all the time and it would turn me on so much. You squeeze the abdomen of the bee to trigger it into combat mode, so it will sting and get the stinger out. You put the stinger in the urethra and keep on pinching the bee until it releases the venom and stings the penis. The reasons this works is because the venom from the bee makes your penis swell, and well, that just seems to make it harder and larger”

The next account is just an excerpt from the full account and I want to stress that I personally do not advocate trying this – I’m merely reporting this account to demonstrate that the practice appears to exist.

“After reading the text for the Kama Sutra [I] have come up with a plan to increase girth using the common paper wasp…To catch and manipulate the wasps I use a type of lab tweezers…Once I find the nest I select a worker that is alone and catch it by the wing with the tweezers. Then I place it in a small jar with small holes in the lid…After I have three wasps then I can rotate them out in a sting session. [With] a partial erection [I] use a pen to mark 1/2” circles every 1” around the base and a second ring of circles 1” apart. These are your targets. Put the jars in your fridge for a minute or two. NO LONGER! You want to slow them down not kill them. Select your first wasp and grab her wing near the middle with your tweezers…Manipulate your wasp/tweezer combo to target the circle. Once you have a single sting move on to the next circle target…When you finish you WILL jump around for awhile, but the reward is worth the five minutes of discomfort…You will need to [rub your penis with] olive oil for a few minutes just after the sting treatment…After ten nights do another treatment…Do not use hornets or yellow jackets in place of paper wasps they hurt a lot more but don’t produce any better results. Do not use anything containing caffeine or aspirin during this treatment as they can retard the swelling that you want”

I should also point out there are also variations on a theme as some online accounts that I came across involved other types of insect sting being used to increase penis size and girth such as those who used the stinging properties of fire ants. In fact, I did come across some interesting academic papers from South America (by Jose Marques and Eraldo Costa-Neto, Universidade Estadual de Feim de Santana, Brazil) by examining the use of insects and animals for “medicinal purposes” and there was an example of the sting of great ants (Dinoponera) being used for “strengthening a flaccid penis”. There are also other sexual practices that use stinging insects (mainly ants and wasps) but these used in the case of sexual sadism and sexual masochism (such as those practices outlined on sites like the Slave Farm).

I’ll leave you with this final snippet. The most remarkable sexual bee sting story I have come across is that of Chloe Prince, a transgender woman from Jackson, Ohio (US) who was born male. As a male (called Ted) he married his wife, had two children, and then claimed in the national press and broadcast media that as a result of a severe reaction to a bee sting, his testosterone level dropped significantly. Prince claimed that after she had been stung, her male body developed a more womanly shape, and eventually underwent gender reassignment surgery. (However, I no of no evidence that bee stings can cause changes in testosterone levels, and
Prince was diagnosed with Klinefelter’s Syndrome – a genetic condition in which human males have an extra X chromosome and that can result in the development of female sexual characteristics such as increased breast tissue [i.e., gynecomastia].

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Further reading


Abraham, T. (2012). My husband became my wife: Transgender woman reveals how a bee sting led to her sex change... and how the woman she had married stood by her. Daily Mail, February 9. Located at: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2098442/My-husband-wife-Couple-reveal-extraordinary-story-started-bee-sting.html#ixzz1xba6y0eA


