A CULTURAL HISTORY OF TWIN BEDS

HILARY HINDS

A Cultural History
of Twin Beds

HOME

Series Editors: Victor Buchli and Rosie Cox

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A Cultural History of Twin Beds

HILARY HINDS

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In memory of my parents
Diana (1924–2017)
and
Ralph (1925–1998)

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Series preface: Why home?

Rosie Cox and Victor Buchli

The home is where people are made and undone. As life is increasingly seen as precarious, fluid, mobile and globalized, there is a growing interest in the home: what it is, what it means to various groups of people, how it constitutes them and how it relates to other spheres of life both in the present and in the past. Home is both physical and metaphorical, local and national, a place of belonging and exclusion. It is at the heart of the most seemingly mundane spaces and experiences – the site of quotidian activities such as eating, washing, raising children and loving. Yet it is precisely the purportedly banal nature of the home that masks its deep importance for the underlying assumptions that structure social and political life. Home reveals the importance of routine activities, such as consumption, to highly significant and urgent wide-ranging issues and processes such as the maintenance of and challenges to global capitalism and our relationship to the natural environment.

Among academic writers home is increasingly problematized, interrogated and reconsidered. Long understood as an axis of gender inequality, home is also seen as a site; a space of negotiation and resistance as well as oppression and a place where such relationships are undone as well as made. As a topic of study, it is the natural analytical unit for a number of disciplines, with relevance to a wide range of cultural and historical settings. The home is probably one of the few truly universal categories upon which an interdisciplinary programme of research can be conducted and which over recent years has resulted in a distinctive analytical category across disciplines, times and cultures.

This book series offers a space to foster these debates and to move forward our thinking about the home. The books in the series range across the social and historical sciences, drawing out the cross-cutting themes and interrelationships within writings on home and providing us with new perspectives on this intimate space. While our understanding of ‘home’ is expansive, and open to interrogation, it is not unbounded. In honing our understandings of what ‘home’ is, this series aims to disturb and it goes beyond the domestic, including sites and states of dispossession and homelessness and experiences of the ‘unhomely’.

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An early version of some of the ideas developed in this book were published as ‘Together and Apart: Twin Beds, Domestic Hygiene and Modern Marriage’, *Journal of Design History* 23.3 (2010): 275–304.

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Introduction

At home with twin beds

In 1913, the American writer Edward Salisbury Field published a short comic novel called *Twin Beds*. Today, it reads as a rather predictable farce, dependent on a set of all-too-familiar props: a married couple, their bedroom, an intruder, mistaken identities, a disapproving mother, hasty escapes via a fire escape and concealment in a large laundry basket. The twin beds that give the novel its title are purchased by the naïve young wife, Blanche, because the shop assistant had said 'twin beds were stylish and everybody was using them' (Field 1913: 7). Much of the comic business then plays out in and around them. Twin beds may indeed have been stylish at the time, but the novel that bears their name now seems a rather creaky period piece which has, not unjustly, largely disappeared from view.

Its disappearance, however, was by no means swift. On the contrary, the book had a long and vigorous afterlife, spawning several successful adaptations over the course of the next three decades. The year after its publication, the novel was adapted for the stage, running on Broadway for 411 performances in 1914–1915 (Field and Mayo 1914; Slide 2002: 193).[1] At the end of the First World War it opened in Britain under the name of *Be Careful, Baby* after the censor rejected the original title (*Daily Mirror*, 20 March 1918: 6). The play was then adapted for the screen – and not just once. The first film version of *Twin Beds* (1920; dir. Lloyd Ingraham) was silent; the second, nine years later, had sound (1929; dir. Alfred Santell); the third was made for a British audience, under the name of *The Life of the Party* (1934; dir. Ralph Dawson); and the final version, again called *Twin Beds* (dir. Tim Whelan), appeared in 1942. All were released in Britain as well as in the United States. The durability of a farce headlining this way of sleeping and plotted around the imaginative spaces in between the beds and their married occupants suggests that it touched a cultural nerve that remained susceptible to the stimulus of twin beds and their comic potential for many years.

This is in many ways no more than an episode of ephemeral cultural history. Nonetheless, it indicates many of the distinctive features of the twentieth-century status of twin beds more generally. First, it shows them to have been a transatlantic phenomenon. The novel and its many adaptations were published, staged and screened in both the United States and Britain. A title referring to twin beds could be relied on – repeatedly – to appeal to audiences in both nations. Second, it indicates the longevity of this mode of sleeping for couples. Today, twin beds usually conjure images from interwar and immediate post-war culture: Hollywood films constrained by the restrictive Hays Code censorship, or early American television shows such as *I Love Lucy*; but the *Twin Beds* phenomenon shows that these beds were in vogue even before the First World War. Thirdly, on the evidence of this cluster of texts, twin beds not only figured in the bedrooms of married people for several decades but did so with a striking consistency of aura. Such beds were named as a 'stylish' way for married people to sleep in Salisbury Field's 1913 novel, and it is clear from the 1942 film – where three couples move to a block of fashionable new apartments, all of them equipped with twin beds – that they still had this reputation. Their cultural status and field of associations had not radically altered across the years.

Finally, and perhaps for twenty-first-century readers and viewers most strikingly, these texts suggest that in their heyday twin beds were subject to none of their current opprobrious associations. Today, they often serve as a rather unsubtle sign of a sexually dysfunctional marriage, but in 1918 their reputation was racy enough for the stage play to have to be renamed to satisfy the British censor. The theatre critic Herbert Farjeon conveyed the frisson occasioned by twin beds when he wrote of the play's 'heart-fluttering' set and asked, 'are not those twin beds an earnest of all those farcical complications which any confirmed farce-goer has a right to expect?' (Williams 2003: 162). Later in the century, twin beds were insisted on for bedroom scenes by film censors squeamish about showing even married couples in a double bed, but in these early years, the very same objects were themselves subject to censorship.

Their initial aura of sexual indelicacy did not endure, of course, and as they became more popular, so they became more ordinary. Twin beds enjoyed an interim period during which they became unremarkable, with no hint that they indicated anything untoward about the sexual relationship, or its absence, of the couple occupying them. Twin beds could be chic, but they could also be commonplace. Their comedy results not from what they reveal about the marriage of the couple, but from the relative nocturnal autonomy they confer on fellow sleepers. In uncoupling the couple, twin beds can be trusted (in the context of farce, at least) to unloose the requisite 'bedlam in a bedroom'.[2]

This book investigates these characteristics of twin beds: their transatlantic currency, their persistent presence in twentieth-century bedrooms, their capacity to convey both their own ordinariness but also the stylishness of the couples who choose them. It charts their century-long history, examining their origins in the late nineteenth century, their place in twentieth-century design cultures, their significance in debates about just what secured a happy marriage and their gradual fall from grace between the 1950s and 1970s. The book is driven by a curiosity about household objects to which I had hitherto barely given a second thought, beyond taking for granted their lamentable or laughable associations: surely these beds, now so obviously old-fashioned and ridiculous, could never have been objects of glamour or allure? Surely, I thought, they must always have borne witness to the compromised state of the marital sexual relationship, an unmistakable sign of retreat or defeat? Quickly, however, I found that such assumptions were wrong. I spent more time in their company, tracing their history in the catalogues of furniture stores, in domestic advice books and marriage manuals, in magazines and newspapers, in novels and films, and found that my initial curiosity was only increased, rather than sated, by addressing a series of questions about this way of sleeping: why did some married couples start to sleep in separate but proximate beds? What was the rationale for such a choice in the late nineteenth century, and how had it changed by the 1920s, or the 1950s? How did twin beds speak to ideas about health, hygiene, sexuality, marriage and gender? What fears, hopes or desires might be discerned in the choice, and in what ways did twin beds address them? When and why did twin beds lose their popularity as a sleeping arrangement for married couples?

This project takes its place alongside other recent ‘single-object’ histories such as (among others) Anna Pavord’s *The Tulip* (1999), Mark Kurlansky’s *Cod* (1997) and *Salt* (2002), and Anne Massey’s *Chair* (2011). These books have been widely praised: *The Tulip* for the way it takes an unconsidered object of everyday life, traces its history and thereby recasts our understanding of a particular cultural phenomenon; *Cod* and *Salt* for their revelation of the pivotal importance to human history of two cheap and plentiful commodities; and *Chair* for its defamiliarization of a taken-for-granted household item so that, after finishing the book, ‘any old chair seems plain weird’ (*Guardian* 30 April 2011: 7). Twin beds differ somewhat from these examples. Their history is much shorter than that of the tulip, their importance to human history more localized than that of cod or salt and, unlike chairs, they were never to be found in all households, even in their prime. A book that chooses to focus on twin beds therefore risks seeming rather arcane or recherché: must not the history of twin beds be a specialist interest, a short-lived adventure in the history of domestic furnishing, engaging to a few design historians but unlikely to hold the attention of anyone else? These were my concerns as the project began to expand and take shape.

However, the characteristics of twin beds' history that were initially sources of anxiety proved to be the basis of an understanding of what drove their rapid rise and gradual fall. It is precisely the temporariness of twin beds' tenure in British homes, their anomalousness in the history of British sleeping habits and the fact that they never entirely ousted the double as a preference for the marital bedroom that sit at the heart of their history. It was not a matter of chance that twin beds arrived or departed when they did. They were fundamentally of their time, and indicative of many of its attitudes and aspirations. Twin beds, it transpires, are an extraordinarily apposite indicator of the cultural and sexual mores of a century-long cultural moment.

The story of the sojourn of twin beds in the bedrooms of the British middle classes – the rationale behind their introduction and their long persistence as objects of consumer desire – opens a route through ordinary middle-class domestic life in Britain over the course of roughly a century. Their history reveals much about the material organization of the household, showing how twin beds jostled for position with the double bed in the marital bedroom from the 1880s onwards. But a focus on twin beds also offers insight into the emotional economy of the household; we see not only when they began to make their mark, but also why. In so doing, a vivid sense of the hopes and fears underlying the furnishing of the bedroom is uncovered. Twin beds circumvented the perceived dangers of the double bed: not only the criss-crossing of disease between fellow sleepers, but also the loss of vital energy from one to the other. But twin beds spoke of more than just health; they promised more than the avoidance of illness or depletion. They also presented their occupants as aware, fashion-conscious consumers and as forward-thinking spouses in a modern marriage based on the mutuality of shared interests. They could indicate a commitment to the pleasures of the bedroom just as clearly as could the time-honoured double bed.

Those pleasures included sleep, and the history of twin beds intersects with a growing interest in the study of sleep itself. This universal and apparently ahistorical biological necessity has been shown to be as subject to cultural and historical variants as any other human-related phenomenon, in terms of not only the kinds of bed in which it takes place, but also normative sleep patterns. A. Roger Ekirch's historical study *At Day's Close: Night in Times Past* (2005) has become an indispensable reference point for almost all sleep-related work, especially his conclusion that current Western expectations or ambitions of 'consolidated sleep' – an unbroken eight-hour period of nocturnal sleep – are recent. Before the industrial revolution, he argues, 'segmented sleep' was the norm: a first period of sleep ended around midnight, after which people had an hour or two of activity (reading, praying, talking, having sex, thieving) before their second sleep (2005: 300–11).[3] Many other sleep studies from a range of disciplinary perspectives have followed, examining (*inter alia*) sleep's poetics, economics and politics, its literature and history, its neurophysiology and biology, and differences between international sleep cultures.[4] Sleep is proving as rich an entrée into the specifics of cultural variation and change as any other single-object focus.

While studies of different sleep cultures consider the part played by various forms of bed, few see it as anything more complicated than a platform on which sleep is invited to perform. Only in the handful of books comprising 'the history of the bed' does it move centre stage, but just what kind of history has been enormously variable. Some are interested in beds' design histories in different cultures and periods, while others examine the place of beds in artistic and cultural life.[5] Some construct their histories around the importance of the bed for different life stages or by taking the long view of the development of the bed from Neolithic times through to the space age.[6] While twin beds make guest appearances in many of these – sometimes to wild applause, sometimes with a shrug of indifference or *moue* of distaste – none lingers long on them or considers how such a singular form of couple sleep, where fellow sleepers hover somewhere between being together and being apart, took hold.

More numerous and expansive than these histories of the bed are studies of the home environment in which those beds are found. Some domestic histories trace the evolving idea of 'home' in the changing architecture of the house or analyse its meanings at a particular historical juncture, while others explore the history of the home room by room.[7] Historians of design and of business, sociologists of gender and of sexuality, and literary critics interested in interwar fiction: all have found common cause in the home as an expository and interrogative site, a site in which – as the editors of the series in which this book appears – 'people are made and undone' (see page xi above).[8] As the anthropologist Daniel Miller has argued, it is not simply the case that people shape their homes but also that the home itself has agency (2001a: 4). 'The material culture of the home has consequences' for those who dwell within it, he argues, and offers us 'a vicarious route to the intimacy of relations' (2001b: 112; 2001a: 16; see too Miller 2008). As an instance of material culture, twin beds offer a condensed and privileged site for scrutinizing the complexities and nuances of the circulation of relationship between objects and those who use – and are perhaps used by – them.

Twin beds were more than just a sleeping arrangement. They were a way to stay healthy, a chance to mark out their occupants as thoroughly modern and a means to stake a claim to a particular understanding of contemporary marriage. Uncovering their cultural history required engaging closely with the three distinct domains – hygiene, modernity and marriage – in which twin beds were recommended and chosen, and it is these which govern the book's structure and between which its narrative lines are plotted. Twin beds sit at the centre of this triangulated field, upheld by the many correspondences between these three points. They were generated and sustained by a complex series of intersections between, for example, the ways that ideas about hygiene helped define modernity, but also by how the new century's commitment to modernity brought with it a desire to reform marriage. Conversely, social and political pressure on nineteenth-century ideals of marriage themselves helped to define just what it meant to be 'modern'.

The discourses of hygiene, modernity and marriage, therefore, do not have a clearly progressive or chronological relation to each other, but overlap and inform each other throughout the twin-bedded century, looking forward and backward to each other. This means that while the book follows a broadly chronological structure, beginning with the origin of twin beds in discourses of hygiene, proceeding through the design cultures of the new century and ending with an examination of the seeds of their demise in changing ideas of marriage, it is not ultimately bound by chronology. The intersections between the three discourses make it necessary to track back and forth in time to follow the connections, echoes and foreshadowings characterizing the relationship between them. There is no simple time-bound story to be recounted, no incremental decade-on-decade evolution of the design or deployment of twin beds. Indeed, one of the book's contentions is that the consistency of twin beds' cultural associations across the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth is more striking than any fluctuations in their reputation. Twin beds' staying power was considerable, their moment a long and relatively stable one.

Preparing the ground for the thematic organization of the three main sections of the book is an initial freestanding chapter. There, the broad arc of their history from the last third of the nineteenth century to the last third of the twentieth is sketched out. Some persistent questions about twin beds are addressed: when were twin beds most popular? Did they ever have a numerical advantage over doubles? With this short chronology in place, the book pursues its main tripartite thesis: namely, that twin beds were born of concerns about health and hygiene, nursed by a commitment to being modern, and ultimately despatched by changing ideas about just what constituted a properly intimate and companionable marriage.

Part One, 'Hygiene', finds the origins of twin-bedded sleep in nineteenth-century anxieties about health. It begins with an examination of then-current ideas about the origins of disease and its transmission and shows how twin beds were linked to the recommendation that domestic hygiene be in the vanguard against the insidious menaces posed by the household environment. Twin beds were introduced as one element in a rigorous regime of hygienic vigilance. Next, the discussion considers the place of popular 'fringe' medical ideas in the adoption of twin beds. While members of the medical establishment recommended twin beds as a weapon in the war against infectious disease, practitioners of what would now be called 'alternative' health practices understood the body's life-sustaining energies to be threatened by regularly sharing a bed with a spouse. Consequently, they recommended twin beds as a way to preserve the sanctity of the couple while safeguarding the vitality of each. Part One concludes with a coda preparing the ground for the next section, examining the continuing popularity of twin beds in the new century. While the establishment of germ theory as orthodoxy by the fin de siècle was instrumental in ending the 'sanitary craze', it did not strike the death knell of twin beds. Instead, their associations with the new and the modern guaranteed that they continued to flourish in the homes of forward-thinking people of the new century.

Part Two, 'Modernity', considers the ways in which twin beds became standard-bearers of the 'modern', a condition to be achieved by a thoroughgoing repudiation of what had gone before: the 'Victorian'. In the bedroom, this meant a turn away from the characteristic contours of the massive Victorian four-poster double bed in favour of the disaggregated form of twin bedsteads. The reach of this avowedly modern way of sleeping was extensive, found in cheap popular models through to the high modernism of international avant-garde design. Part Two again concludes with a coda, suggesting how the formal qualities of twin beds embodied a set of ideas about just what characterized a modern marriage.

Part Three focuses on the subject which may have been expected to dominate the book overall: the ways in which twin beds were mobilized – or sometimes repudiated – in the service of changing ideas about marriage in the new century. 'Marriage' opens with the indomitable Marie Stopes, the twentieth-century birth-control campaigner who also wrote many best-selling marital advice books. Stopes declared herself a vehement opponent of twin beds, calling them 'one of the enemies of true marriage' (1935: 57), a state premised on the natural (and of course heterosexual) complementarity of the pair. While Stopes presented her outspoken ideas about how couples should sleep as groundbreaking, they actually had much in common with late nineteenth-century marital advice. Nevertheless, despite their common ground, earlier advisers had very different views on twin beds from Stopes: where she condemned them, they had advocated them as a material aid to the regulation of the sexual relationship in marriage. Continence and its allied state, abstinence, continued to have an enduring presence in twentieth-century marriage, in part as a means of birth control, even after the moment when reliable barrier contraceptives might have rendered them obsolete. Such practices engendered their own marital cultures, at once affective and material, and in these twin beds played their part. Finally, to gauge the tenor and texture of such cultures, the book considers the literary verdict on twin beds: how does writing from the high-water mark of twin-bedded sleep – the interwar and immediate post-war period – portray them? What constraints, opportunities and permissions did they bring to the literary marriages whose bedrooms they furnished?

In choosing twin beds, married couples were, wittingly or unwittingly, engaging in debates about health and hygiene, about what it meant to be modern and fashionable, and about how married people should relate to each other in these new times. Twin beds – identical, side by side – announced the pair who slept in them as a couple, but also suggested that a degree of separation between them was necessary, beneficial or desirable. This book explores what kinds of anxieties and aspirations might have led to the introduction of this physical space between fellow sleepers, but it also examines what possibilities and problems were, in turn, produced by it. *A Cultural History of Twin Beds* asks why, for the best part of a hundred years, so many couples chose a sleeping arrangement that both brought them together *and* kept them apart.

Readers of this book are, for the most part, unlikely to be at home with twin beds in the sense that they share their houses and bedrooms with them. Nevertheless, they may remain 'at home' with them by assuming that their current connotations of prudishness, sexual dysfunction and marital malaise have always pertained. *A Cultural History of Twin Beds* invites such readers to rethink these assumptions and to allow these maligned and misunderstood objects their century-long moment of adventurous and forward-thinking stylishness. To be at home with the history of twin beds might not spark a desire to rethink our own sleeping arrangements. It may, however, return to them a complexity and dignity otherwise lost, and in so doing remind us of the capacity of the most mundane of household objects to speak in unexpected ways of the lives of earlier generations.

1

Double or twin?

In 1892, the *Yorkshire Herald* announced, 'The twin-bed seems to have come to stay, and will no doubt in time succeed the double bed in all rooms occupied by two persons' (5 November 1892: 4). The *Herald* was ahead of the game, for this way of sleeping and the name 'twin beds' itself were new enough still to be making news in both Britain and the United States. As it turned out, the *Herald* was over-confident in its anticipation of the imminent triumph of the twin bed. It never completely ousted the double, but vied for position in the marital bedroom with its more traditional rival for the next half-century or so. Nevertheless, the unequivocal welcome given to the twin bedstead in the *Herald*'s article, together with the circumstantial evidence of its take-up in the last decade of the nineteenth century, prompts the question as to just what proportion of married couples stayed loyal to the traditional double bed, and how many opted for the newly fashionable twins. 'Double or twin?' was a question – variously inflected – that was raised and answered by sleep experts, social commentators and married couples for many years to come.

This question shadows the interests at the heart of this book. To investigate twin beds as a significant cultural phenomenon starts from the premise that this distinctive way of sleeping achieved a substantial degree of acceptance and adoption. The available evidence, drawn from a multitude of sources, from novels and films to advice books, advertising materials and the press, testifies unequivocally to the spread of this sleeping arrangement in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, definitive answers to the questions which follow – how many couples chose twin beds? When were they at their most fashionable? Were they as popular with working-class as with middle-class people? – remain frustratingly elusive, for there are no substantial, statistically reliable surveys to which to turn. This notwithstanding, partial answers can be glimpsed and broad trends in British couples' sleeping preferences charted. These can be deduced in particular from newspapers and household advice books, which frequently comment on the popularity of twin beds, but literature and film also help us to gauge their evolving popularity and reputation. These materials suggest a century-long rise and fall for twin beds, between approximately 1870 and 1970: a steady and continuing increase in their popularity with married couples from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century; a period of equivocation and ambivalence as their cultural reputation and status changed; and a slow fall from grace, as they ceased to be seen as a desirable way for couples to sleep. This trajectory positioned twin bedsteads first as evidence of forward-thinking and rational householders, then as commonplace domestic objects and finally as risible signs of a failed marriage.

The late nineteenth-century press certainly took note of the advent of twin beds. They appeared frequently in its advertising copy: Messrs Watts and Co., for example, repeatedly advertised 'The New Twin Bedsteads' as part of their 'immense stock' of iron and brass beds in the *Liverpool Mercury* (21 March 1894: 1), but feature writers also showed an interest. In 1894, two years after the *Yorkshire Herald* announced the arrival of the twin bedstead, another regional newspaper, the *Western Mail*, confirmed its growing popularity: 'Fashion has given its sanction to the use of the single bed; and large numbers of so-called "twin bedsteads" are now in the market, many of them made of costly woods, rich with carving' (25 August 1894: 2). Not only were these bedsteads fashionable, they were also expensive. Buying new beds made a statement about your disposable income as well as the stylishness of this way of sleeping. By the 1920s, the manual *The Complete Household Adviser* was able to report that twin beds had become the norm: '"Single" *beds* (3 feet wide) are now the rule in most houses' (n.d.: 21; original emphasis).[1] While it is impossible to gauge the accuracy of such a proclamation, the statement is unlikely to have been wildly inaccurate: such publications are, after all, dependent on conveying a reliable sense of current taste and fashion. Some thirty years after their arrival on the scene, however, it is striking that these beds' status as 'single' still needs to be identified as new or unusual by quotation marks. Perhaps they were becoming the norm, but they were not yet so ordinary as to need no introduction. If these beds were 'the rule', they were a rule about which *The Complete Household Adviser* deemed its readers still to need information and guidance.

The popularity of twins showed little sign of abating through the interwar period. A 1928 article in the *Manchester Guardian* entitled 'Modern Furniture: The New Bedsteads' reported, 'According to a well-known furnisher, the demand for twin beds in walnut has increased by fifty per cent during the last twelve months. This shows clearly their increasing popularity' (28 June 1928: 8). The newspaper's readership was principally middle class, and twin beds in walnut, while not as costly as mahogany, would certainly not have been within the purchasing power of those on a restricted budget. Throughout the 1920s, the London furniture store Heal's advertised their Queen-Anne-style walnut twin beds at £26 each (Figure 1). To spend £52 on a pair of bedsteads, not to mention the mattresses and the new bedding needed to go with them, represented a considerable expense, equivalent to about £2,500 today.[2] This was not a purchase to undertake lightly. The following year, the *Manchester Guardian* followed up with 'Beds and Bedding, Ancient and Modern', reporting that 'the big bed has gone quite out of favour, and single beds are popular everywhere. … furniture-makers everywhere are concentrating upon the production of neat and attractive single bedsteads' (31 October 1929: 8). Thirty-five years after their introduction, the growing popularity of these bedsteads, and their impact on manufacturers' production processes, continued to be newsworthy.

Testimony to the ubiquity of twin bedsteads was still to be found in the next decade. In 1934, the household advice book *The Home of To-Day* declared, 'Single beds are now almost universally the custom' ([1934?]: 114), and in 1936 the *Manchester Guardian* again noted 'the tendency to replace double beds by twin single ones' (4 January 1936: 8). There are indications here, however, of the broadening of the appeal of twins beyond the wealthier middle classes. *The Home of To-Day* was published by *Daily Express* newspapers, a title appealing to lower-middle-class readers, and the *Manchester Guardian* article

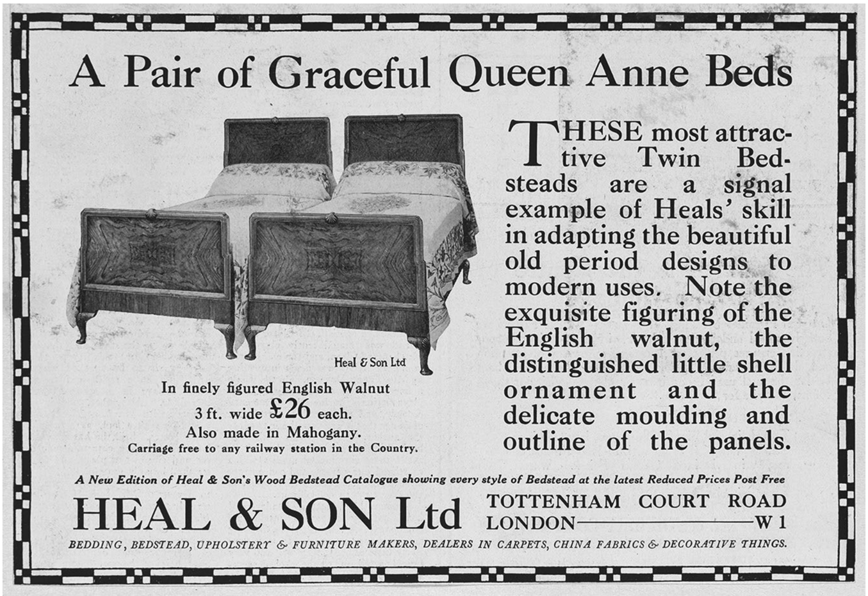
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FIGURE 1 *Advertisement for Heal's Queen-Anne-style twin beds in walnut.*

noted not only the continuing market for twins, but also that they were being bought for use in 'the small bedrooms of modern houses'. This strikes a very different note from the *Manchester Guardian*'s 1928 article about the twin beds in walnut. Here, instead, the twin bedsteads inhabit the small bedroom of the modern house, and their aura is not one of extravagance or opulence but of parsimony, focusing not on the purchase of new bedsteads but on the costs associated with such a change – namely, the need for smaller sheets. The advice is to alter old double sheets to fit the new twins: 'Owing to the tendency to replace double beds by twin single ones … stocks of large sheets have to be adapted to the new requirements' (4 January 1936: 8). Sheets from the old double should be cut down to single size, and the remnants used to make pillow cases, covers for ironing boards and glass cloths. The shift to twin-bedded sleep might be continuing, but it was doing so in circumstances that, in the hard-pressed 1930s, necessitated the exercise of careful and creative housewifery.

The economic depression of the 1930s required even the middle classes to tighten their belts and to make do and mend, but nevertheless twin beds continued to be discussed as desirable and fashionable objects making inroads into old ways of sleeping, and began to be chosen for the smaller bedrooms of new houses. When new beds were bought, perhaps with the purchase of one of the newly built houses that proliferated in the interwar period, twins were still popular. No longer associated only with those who had both the money and the space to switch to them (commentators frequently note that twins take up more space than a double), they were also finding a place in the bedrooms of those of more modest means.

There was, in these years, a growing association between twin beds and the new urban and suburban way of life. John Gloag's *Modern Home Furnishing*, for example, published in a cheap paperback series, concerned 'the furnishing of small and moderately-sized houses and flats' (1929: 9). His advice explicitly contrasted with what had been possible in 'those spacious Victorian times' (ibid.: 9–10). Now there was a boom in speculative house-building, when much of the furnishing of the new small houses was achieved with the help of 'hire purchase' (HP) or credit schemes, enabling the spread of payments for costlier items over an extended period (Edwards 2005: 190–96; Scott 2009: 811). Such schemes had started in the nineteenth century, and certain companies, such as the Hackney Furniture Company, were closely identified with them. Their advertisements in the mass-market *Penny Illustrated Paper* in 1913 show that twin beds, costing £10 10 shillings, were among many items that could be purchased by the 'system of Gradual Payments, originated by us' (3 May 1913: 2).[3] The expansion of such schemes between the wars put the purchase of new furniture increasingly within the reach of less well-off consumers. This transformed the furniture market, so that by 1938 the nonagricultural working class and the lower middle class accounted for 86 per cent of mass-market furniture purchases (Scott 2009: 811).

With this expansion into mass markets, twin beds lost any sense of being the preserve of the wealthier middle classes. Indeed, tarnished by new lower-middle-class associations, they became the target of scornful class-conscious comment. Gordon Comstock, the impecunious protagonist of George Orwell's *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), 'belonged to the most dismal of all classes, the middle-middle class, the landless gentry' ([1936] 1962: 42). Gordon has literary aspirations. He has published one small volume of poems and is currently writing a verse satire about the suburban clerks he sees at the Tube station every morning, 'swarms of little ant-like men', each with 'the fear of the sack like a maggot in his heart' (ibid.: 70).[4] As he works on his poem, he asks himself, 'What do they think? Money, money!' (ibid.: 71), and the thought allows him to write another stanza:

> They think of rent, rates, season tickets,
> Insurance, coal, the skivvy's wages,
> Boots, school bills, and the next instalment
> Upon the two twin beds from Drage's. (ibid.)

Gordon derides not just the clerks' anxiety about money, but also their social aspirations. As well as paying for necessities such as the rent, coal and boots, they also worry about paying school bills and the next instalment on the 'two twin beds from Drage's'. Their lives are impoverished on all levels – materially, spiritually and emotionally – owing to their desire for social betterment. Gordon's contempt for them is merciless, his anxiety fuelled by his own impoverished and insecure social position.

The clerks purchased their twin beds from Drage's, one of the largest furniture companies of the time, its success the result of HP sales. At its peak, it had only three stores, but the company's dominance was secured through extensive advertising campaigns emphasizing the inclusiveness of their appeal: everyone was welcome. 'All Classes Furnish at Drage's. Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor – shopkeepers, clergymen, and railway men – solicitors and business women – professional men and artisans. All receive the same cordial welcome' (Scott 2009: 815, 2017: 53–8). However, on the evidence of Gordon Comstock's verse satire, by the 1930s Drage's represented the budget end of the market, their ranges tarnished by their affordability. 'The Drage Way' – the store's advertising line from the 1920s – was not a way with which the more established middle classes wished to be associated.

Drage's again serves as a touchstone of lower-middle-class taste and aspiration in the work of the best-known poetic registrar of the nuances and fine hierarchies of interwar class taste, John Betjeman. In his first collection, *Mount Zion: or, In Touch with the Infinite* (1931), Betjeman mocks the tasteless domestic accoutrements and emotionally impoverished lives of those marooned in suburbia:

> … wifie knits through hubbie's gloom
> Safe in the Drage-way drawing-room.
> Oh how expectant for the bed
> All 'Jacobethan' overhead! (Betjeman 1931: 44)

The couple are nameless, identified only by the déclassé generic diminutives 'wifie' and 'hubbie'. Like a tricoteuse of the French Revolution, the insouciant 'wifie' knits to pass the time, as a defence against the horrors around her. Her 'Drage-way' furnishings protect her, though from what is not specified – perhaps 'hubbie's gloom', or maybe some horror beyond the house. She is marking time until she can retire to her bed, looking forward, the context suggests, to oblivion rather than passion, though whether she will experience it in a double or a twin bed is left unspoken. All we know is that it is 'Jacobethan', Betjeman's contemptuous coinage indicative of inauthentic hybrid style and bastard identity.[5] The word serves as the culmination of the poem's delineation of the impoverishment of life in the cultural and emotional equivalent of Outer Mongolia: the 'outer suburbs'.

Betjeman's 'Drage-way' sneer at suburban taste confirms the associations of Gordon Comstock's contempt to indicate that by the mid-1930s twin beds had become the objects of lower-middle-class desire, and further devalued by having come within the reach of such consumers by HP schemes. As their appeal spread further down the social hierarchy, what did this mean for the answer given to the 'double or twin?' question by couples choosing their bedroom furniture? The decade concluded with press reference to a survey of sleeping habits, but one undertaken in the United States, not Britain. Despite the American context, or perhaps because of it, the study was reported in the *Daily Mirror* with interest. 'Wives 3 to 1 for Double Beds' ran the headline, referring to a survey of 500 New York married couples. Twins, the survey suggested, were favoured more for pragmatic reasons, doubles for emotional or familial. New York couples were clearly more persuaded by the latter, as 75 per cent of the respondents still favoured the double, and only 25 per cent twins (*Daily Mirror* 8 March 1939: 16). Another survey, again American and this time of a small sample of 131 'typical' families, was reported in *Time* magazine in 1944, and – although its results tell us nothing about British preferences – the study adds some nuance to these statistics and serves as a useful caveat about what precisely such figures might convey. *Time* reported that '87% of husbands and wives sleep in a double bed, but 42% of the wives think twin beds would be preferable' (*Time* 43.16, 17 April 1944: 25).

An enquiry into the kind of bed in which couples currently sleep produces one set of results, but when the question changes, probing readers' wishes rather than their current arrangement, the picture is markedly different, for nearly half of all double-bedded wives would opt for twins. This discrepancy may indicate financial constraints, or a difference of opinion between the spouses. It serves, either way, as a reminder that even if such figures were available for Britain, their focus on the actual rather than the wished-for would give only a partial picture of the cultural status of twin beds.

At last, in 1950, explicit press comment on British predilections began to appear. The *Daily Mirror*, again prompted by American comment, reported that a Chicago bedding manufacturer had blamed the rising divorce rate on double beds, and recommended that people choose twins instead: 'They would get more rest and be better able to meet the strain of modern life, he says' (12 January 1950: 1). He claimed that preferences had changed since the pre-war years. Now, he says, '68 per cent of American couples buy single beds, compared with 25 per cent before the war. "They just don't go in for that cold-feet-in-the-back any more."' The *Mirror* draws a contrast with the situation in Britain, where 'double beds are heavily favoured', according to a furniture makers' spokesman: '"Three double beds are sold to every two single ones," he said'. This, once again, offers a partial picture, telling only about sales of new beds and not about the beds already in place in the nation's bedrooms, and it tells us about them at a time of continuing austerity and severe limitation of consumer choice in the period following the Second World War. Nonetheless, it offers some indication of post-war preferences, suggesting a three-to-one ratio among British couples buying beds in favour of the double, a figure that coincides precisely with the ratio given in the 1939 American survey.[6] It is unclear, however, whether this is given as indicative of the status quo, or of a new shift away from the twins which had, in previous decades, been so frequently claimed to be steadily rising in popularity and becoming 'the rule in most houses'.

Having reported the opinions of the American salesman and British furniture makers, the *Mirror* turns to someone outside the industry for comment on the relative merits of doubles and twins. Juanita Frances, from the Married Women's Association, gave her opinion that '"twin beds are much better for comfort and appearance. After all, if you want a double bed, you can always move them up to each other"' (*Daily Mirror*, 12 January 1950: 1). Frances was 'one of the outstanding feminist campaigners of her day' (*Guardian* 2 December 1992: 7), and had founded the Association in 1938 to campaign for equal legal and financial rights for housewives and mothers; her organization was a liberal campaigning group, not a socially or politically conservative one.[7] The solicitation of the views of a prominent feminist on the question of double versus twins, together with the story's front-page position, confirms that the

Mirror was treating the matter seriously. For Juanita Frances to contribute her thoughts suggests that she did not judge the question to be trivial, below her dignity or irrelevant to the Association's agenda, but found it commensurate with her promotion of the rights and interests of married women. Even as late as 1950, therefore, twin beds were being advocated not by a conservative public figure but by one associated with the new post-war feminism with its 'emphasis on equality in difference'.[8] The question of 'double or twin?' remained front-page news in 1950, where it was also shown to be a feminist issue.

At around the same time, another voice with a radical pedigree was speaking out in favour of twins rather than double. Reginal Reynolds, a satirical poet, Quaker, left-wing commentator, critic of British imperialism (resident in Gandhi's ashram in the 1930s) and conscientious objector in the Second World War, published *Beds: With Many Noteworthy Instances of Lying On, Under or About Them* (1952), a book of wide-ranging, sometimes erudite, sometimes whimsical musings on beds and sleep.[9] One chapter, entitled 'Out of Zebulon, or Fruits of Solitude', reflects on the demerits of bed-sharing and touches on the current 'fashion of using twin beds', which he characterizes as 'a typical Anglo-American compromise' (Reynolds 1952: 138) and as somewhat controversial, particularly in the United States. He cites research undertaken in 1950 by the Universities of Chicago and Colgate (the same research alluded to in the *Mirror* two years earlier) suggesting that in the United States 'double beds were being abandoned in favour of twin beds. The percentage of twin beds purchased in pre-war days had been only 25 per cent and it had risen to 68 per cent' (ibid.: 138–9). He also notes the furore, for and against, generated by this news, including what he calls the 'extraordinary line of reasoning' of Dr Paul Popenoe, Director of the (American) Family Relations Institute, who had claimed that 'the change from a double bed to twin beds is often the prelude to a divorce' (ibid.: 139).[10] Reynolds is unconvinced: 'If people go on living like lunatics, trying to ameliorate a drab, stupid and precarious existence by drugging themselves with sensations in celluloid, I don't suppose it will make much difference whether they sleep in twin bunks or in a bed the size of Coldingham Common' (ibid.: 140). For him, solitude is the key to a good night's sleep: a bed is where 'a normal person normally prefers to be alone. Here he is relaxed, he is his effortless self, his mind wanders without attempt to recall it to order, until at last it wanders into sleep' (ibid.: 145). He continues (and it is hard not to conclude that he is talking about himself): 'To those who find even a loving spouse an unwelcome partner in the serious business of sleeping, it must be a source of wonder that for centuries people were packed like sardines between the blankets' (ibid.: 148). His discussion, ranging from the 'Esquimaux' to Pepys, and from Dr Macnish (a nineteenth-century physician and author of

The Philosophy of Sleep (1830)) to Montaigne and Kant, concludes with a diatribe against bed-sharing:

> But no system, not even that of Kant, can settle a problem so essentially personal if a second person or (Heaven forbid) a whole trinity or a multiplicity of bed-fellows should be tugging, heaving, rolling, pushing, squeezing and making sudden, impulsive movements – especially, as we know, when these movements are made in sleep. Can anything place a greater strain upon human nature than the outrageous selfishness of a partner who – without even having the decency to wake up – rolls to the off side with the entire complement of bedding? (ibid.: 157)

While the jury might be out for some commentators, for Reynolds it is an open-and-shut case. The practice of bed-sharing – no matter how loving the spouse – is to be deplored.

The 1950s proved to be a decade much preoccupied by the question of 'double or twin?' but there continued to be little consensus about the answer. Indeed, press discussion comprises a series of contradictory statements about these beds' popularity. The 1950 *Mirror* article (12 January 1950: 1) reported that British couples favoured double beds by a ratio of three to one, and implied that the American predilection for twins, reportedly accounting for 68 per cent of bed sales for couples, was far removed from the traditional tastes of the British. Five years later, the *Mirror* flatly contradicts itself, retrospectively evaluating the tastes of 1950 very differently: 'Only five years ago twin beds were the rage. The double was discredited' (11 October 1955: 9). These words come from a nearly full-page article declaring that 'twin beds are on the retreat in British bedrooms. *The double bed is back in favour*' (ibid.; original emphasis). Twin beds are now associated not with the tastes of a particular class, but with a coldly scientific approach to the business of choosing a bed. Scientists were credited with having hastened the downfall of the double by showing how often people move in the night, and how hard it is to do this comfortably in a standard four-foot-six-inch double bed (ibid.). But other qualities are also attributed to those choosing twins. The romantic novelist Barbara Cartland's newly published marriage manual is quoted: 'I strongly suspect the woman who says that she has chosen twin beds for reasons of decorative effect, sleeping comfort or hygiene. She is, in fact, excusing the coldness that exists in her marriage. … The twin bed is a modern invention … inimical to success in marriage' (ibid.). This is followed by the words of a judge, blaming twin beds for the rising divorce rate. The article admits of only one valid criterion in the choice of double or twin: its capacity to affect the success or failure of its occupants' marriage. Earlier rationales, such as hygiene, practicality, style and sleep quality, are now dismissed as at best matters of secondary importance. Instead, the idea that the double bed is an agent working on behalf of marriage is treated as common sense. 'It may be difficult to clean under', the article declares. 'It may start rows over blanket-snatching, or one partner's cold feet .... *But one thing must be admitted. It's so darned friendly*' (ibid.; original emphasis). The only legitimate way to judge the bed is in terms of its impact on the emotional (and implicitly the sexual) relationship of its married occupants – and in that regard, the message is loud and clear: 'togetherness' has triumphed, and marriages can only thrive in double beds. This is a striking departure from the tone of discussions in the press and beyond in the 1920s and 1930s. Then, twin beds had signified hygiene, comfort and good sense, on the one hand, and certain kinds of middle-class taste, on the other. This article sweeps away such considerations, making marital intimacy the only relevant issue.

The rekindled enthusiasm for the double expressed in this *Mirror* article might be expected to mark the end of that newspaper's equivocation over the 'double or twin?' question, and to serve as a convenient marker of the pendulum's swing back towards a double-bedded norm. As always, however, the picture is not as straightforward as this. The evidence from the pages of the *Mirror* and other newspapers is that twin beds remained objects of desire for some married people. In 1957, the *Mirror* ran a contest promising to make the dreams of some of their readers come true. The winners were picked by the *Mirror*'s longstanding advice columnist Marjorie Proops. 'Listen to the cry of Mrs Alice Batten ... married to twelve-stone Richard', wrote Proops. 'For twenty-three years of marriage they have shared a double bed. And Mrs. B. (9 stone) sent me this poem':

> '*I turn, he twists to snore in my ear*
> *And I wish, how I wish, twin beds would appear ...* '
>
> Stand by, Battens, for a pair of beautiful comfortable twin beds. (*Daily Mirror* 10 December 1957: 13; original emphasis)

The article was accompanied by a picture of a smiling Mr and Mrs Batten. For them, the discomforts of bed-sharing, relegated to a position of secondary importance in the 1955 article, are not so easily dismissed. There is clearly no shame for the Battens in their desire for twin beds, no sense that they are confessing to a marriage gone cold, as Barbara Cartland would have it. Likewise, Proops has no difficulty in finding twin beds to be objects worthy of a wife's dreams.

Other readers were as keen to make the change to twins as was Mrs Batten. In 1959, a woman wrote in to the *Mirror*'s letters page to seek advice from other readers. Fed up with 'balancing on six inches of the bed every night', she has suggested buying twins to her husband, but he 'just looks hurt'. She wanted to know what other wives do: 'Go out and buy twin beds or just put up with the discomfort?' The *Mirror* invited readers to comment: 'If any wife has succeeded in swapping a double for twin beds lately and got away with it without hurting her old man's feelings, we'll be glad to hear how she did it!' (2 December 1959: 23). The supposition is that it will be wives who want the twins, and that the realization of this wish will require marital sleight of hand or subterfuge. A week later, the letters column reports that readers had 'piled in with advice'. One reader set out the 'tactics' she had deployed to get her husband not just to agree to twin beds, but actually to suggest them; another enumerates the annoyances she still experiences in the marital double, but concludes 'as for me – with all his faults, I love him still'; and a third tells of a period of illness that forced them to sleep separately, after which she unilaterally ordered twin beds. Her husband, she reports triumphantly, 'admitted it was the best idea ever' (*Daily Mirror* 8 December 1959: 22). All three letters confirm the premise of the original letter: first, that sharing the marital double bed long term is hard work and involves a range of discomforts; and secondly, that women are more likely than men to seek the change to twins.

And so it continued, through the 1960s and into early 1970s: feature articles, letters and advice columns appeared in the press, offering contradictory opinions on the merits and meanings of twin beds. National preferences continued to be asserted, but not with any consistency. The new London Hilton hotel opened in 1963, where 'the French bedrooms were so called because they had a double bed and the English bedrooms were called English because they had twin beds' (*Times* 11 April 1963: 6). In 1954, the *Mirror* had reported that in the United States, 'Seven out of eight couples still prefer the old-fashioned double bed' (17 March 1954: 2), but in 1979, the same newspaper suggested that 'in America they still prefer twin beds', while in Britain 'couples prefer to sleep in double beds, at least at the start of married life' (28 September 1979: 9). Some judges in divorce cases gave their opinion that twin beds did not spell the end of a marriage, but features and reports increasingly suggested that there was a case against twins to be answered – even if the verdict remained, in the end, an open one.[11] In 1961, the *Observer* reported on a survey of 3,680 women undertaken for the Bedding Guild, which found unequivocally against twins: respondents thought that 'single beds are for those couples with cultural interests in common, but are not acceptable "where the bed is the focus of the marriage"' (10 September 1961: 27). A feature article aiming to help readers decide whether they are a 'touching person' or not offers a checklist: you're 'not the touching type if you … would prefer twin beds when you're married'. The tone of the article makes clear that this does not augur well for marital happiness: 'Not to touch would be not to live' (*Daily Mirror* 15 July 1971: 19). Some articles continue to acknowledge that a double is not, long term, always a source of pleasure: Eirlys Roberts (co-founder of the consumer magazine *Which?*) suggests, 'Most of us, I think, would really like a double bed which, at the press of a switch, would split into twin beds' (*Observer* 4 March 1962: 34). Others continue to detect a longing among married people for twins, but acknowledge that this desire is now experienced as shameful and needs to be kept hidden: 'Lots of married couples would admit, if they were honest, that they would like to swap their double bed for two singles – simply for a more comfortable sleep. One of the reasons they don't is that they're afraid their friends may take twin beds to be a sign their sexual relationship has ended' (*Daily Mirror* 8 August 1968: 16). To wish for twins is now something that is either pragmatically acknowledged or else shamefacedly admitted. A 1964 *Observer* reader's letter celebrating twin beds' capacity to prompt 'a come-hither look, and a frank invitation' was one of the last comments in the press to come down in favour of twins on romantic and sexual grounds (*Observer* 14 June 1964: 31). From then on, any recommendation of twin beds tends to be made on practical grounds only. Twins become a somewhat resigned, even sheepish, but always pragmatic solution to a problem – usually concerning sleep quality – presented by the double.

This chapter has pieced together the century-long narrative concerning the rise and fall of twin beds in Britain's marital bedrooms. It begins with their celebration, and ends either with their rejection as a sign of a marriage gone cold or else with their acceptance as a sensible, needs-must, mid-marriage measure necessitated by adverse conditions in the marital double. It leaves largely unanswered, however, the question as to how many couples opted for twin beds and how many stayed with the double. The only attempt to put a figure to this comes from the 1950 furniture salesman who suggested that three doubles sold for every set of twins – and this in the year which the *Mirror* later designated as the moment when twin beds were 'all the rage'. If the three-to-one ratio in favour of doubles is correct, this provides a fascinating counterpoint to the sense given in the press and advice literature in the first half of the twentieth century that twin beds were on a steady upward curve of popularity and purchase, suggesting that, on the contrary, the double held its place in the nation's affections throughout the century, with twin beds gaining a place in only a minority of marital bedrooms. There is certainly no evidence that they ever became 'the rule in most households', as had been claimed in the 1920s.

This suggests a discrepancy between the actual take-up of twin beds and the amount of interest they attracted. Twin beds, it seems, punched well above their weight. While there seems never to have been a majority of twin-bedded marriages, nor even an equal split between double and twins, the phenomenon of twin beds achieved an extraordinarily high degree of visibility in the press, in household advice books and in marriage manuals, as well as in novels and films. They were much discussed concerning matters of health and hygiene; they figured large in the worlds of style, fashion and design; and they were a factor in discussions on the rights and wrongs of modern marriage. The importance of twin beds was, in the end, neither numerical nor social, although doubtless they played their part in the material economy of the household and in the balance sheets of manufacturers and furniture stores. How important they were as contributors to the sexual ethos of the marriage, and in what ways, is also (as subsequent chapters will show) ambiguous.

Twin beds' real sphere of importance was, instead, cultural. They promised to answer questions across a range of different domains. To some, they offered an assurance of health, hygiene and individuated security. To others, they embodied the end of the cumbersome Victorian four-poster and a new, simpler and more authentic twentieth-century style. And for those concerned with the new ideals of modern marriage, twin beds suggested a particular vision of the relative positions of husband and wife. For a hundred years or so, they were players in the dramas that took place in these different discursive arenas, their position secured by their patina of the new, the different, the modern. Twin beds may not have persuaded the majority of the bed-buying public to give up their double beds, but the phenomenon of two single beds placed side by side nonetheless spoke loud and clear to the imaginations of all who encountered them. They had their vociferous champions and their equally vehement opponents. Twin beds had an extraordinary capacity to signify contradictory truths. To some, they represented an intrusion, to others, a welcome innovation. Twin beds not only separated fellow sleepers; they also divided opinion. The rest of this book traces the sources of these divisions to the overlapping territories of hygiene, modernity and marriage.

PART ONE

Hygiene

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2

Air in the bedroom

Between 1880 and 1881, Dr Benjamin Ward Richardson wrote a series of eight articles under the title 'Health at Home'. Published in the popular periodical *Good Words*, they offered advice on how to ensure that the design, construction, decoration and furnishing of the home were in line with the latest scientific and medical knowledge.[1] The articles were clearly expected to find a keen audience: as well as being published in *Good Words*, they also appeared in three American periodicals in the same years, in the British *Sanitary Record* the following year, and, slightly revised, were collected together as a book six years later under the title *Household Health*.[2] Richardson's pronouncements were also picked up by others: they were reviewed and summarized when they first appeared, and the Scottish author and journalist Alexander Hay Japp quoted approvingly and at length from these articles in his own book, *Industrial Curiosities* (1885). Richardson's advice was clearly deemed significant enough, and timely enough, to bear frequent reiteration.

Dealing in turn with each room of the house, Richardson began his discussion with the bedroom, although he recognized that this would elicit some objections. 'Why, in speaking of a home and fireside topics, should you begin with bedrooms?', he anticipated some readers asking:

> There is the drawing room, surely, first to be thought of; that room in which the company gathers … There is also the dining-room, or sitting-room, or breakfast-room, or study. Again, there is the kitchen – of all rooms, surely, the most important in every sanitary point of view? (Richardson 1880: 1.67)

These other rooms, as places of concourse or food preparation, were more obviously implicated in matters of health. Nonetheless, the bedroom was the place to begin 'because, after all, it is really the most important room in the house, by far and far again' (ibid.), for here we spend a third of our lives. Moreover, concluding his case with a rhetorical flourish, he asks, 'In what other room in the house is so much of the life passed without change?' (ibid.: 1.68). Bedrooms are occupied 'without change', their occupants unconscious, with none of the bustle characteristic of the household's waking hours, and this causes him concern. His mission was a corrective one: to direct readers' attention towards the still, quiet centre of the household. Health at home began with a healthy bedroom.

For Richardson, the bedroom was singularly in need of professional intervention not only because of the amount of time spent there or the vulnerability of unwitting sleepers, but also because it was a room unduly – and perilously – neglected by householders. It might be located at the front or back of the house; it may or may not have a fireplace; the windows might be of any size, and may or may not open; it may double as a lumber room, with all kinds of things stored under the bed; it is not infrequently damp. His aim is to offer some rules for the rectification of such egregious errors.

He first addresses the bedroom's situation with regard to the rest of the house, offering advice on its ventilation, temperature, flooring and furniture. Then, turning to beds and bedding, he asserts the basic premise of a healthy nocturnal environment: 'I cannot do better than commence what I have to say concerning beds and bedding by protesting against the double bed. The system of having beds in which two persons can sleep is always, to some extent, unhealthy' (ibid.: 3.285). Sharing a bed, whether with a spouse, another family member, a visiting friend or fellow servant, had long been the European norm, and 'even in middle-class households, bedfellows were thought a blessing' (Ekirch 2005: 280) for reasons of security, warmth and intimacy.[3] So what moved Richardson to insist so strongly on the undesirability of the double bed? On the basis of what evidence had he concluded that this longstanding practice was unhealthy? And to what extent was his view endorsed by his contemporaries as they reflected on the best ways of settling their bodies for sleep?

Richardson's views were not those of a medical maverick. On the contrary, he was at the heart of the British medical establishment, which was increasingly seen as the guarantor of scientifically informed medical orthodoxy. His standing led to him being made a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, President of the Medical Society of London and a Fellow of the Royal Society, and his contribution to medicine was marked by a knighthood in 1893. He was at first best known as an innovator in the emerging field of anaesthetics, where his research was subsidized from 1863 to 1871 by the British Association for the Advancement of Science. But Richardson was also a committed and prominent campaigner in another key area of Victorian innovation: sanitary reform. He was a friend and follower of the greatest nineteenth-century public health reformer, Edwin Chadwick, and editor of Chadwick's principal works; he was founder and editor of the *Journal of Public*

Health and Sanitary Review in 1855; and he was a tireless lecturer, author and campaigner for improved sanitation.

Richardson has not entered the hall of fame of nineteenth-century British sanitary reform alongside the likes of Chadwick, John Snow, Joseph Bazalgette, Florence Nightingale or Joseph Lister – the scientists, doctors, engineers and nurses credited with making the discoveries, instituting the reforms and developing the organizations and practices that instituted recognizably modern systems of disease control, public health infrastructure and medical hygiene in Britain. He was, however, as one historian has memorably termed him, 'the patron saint of domestic sanitarians' (Tomes 1990: 528), at the heart of a movement at its most influential in the final thirty years of the century, advocating the application of new understandings of the preventive and therapeutic powers of hygiene in the design and equipping of the home. Richardson was part of a general realignment of understandings of health with evaluations of cleanliness, to the point that the two came to be seen by many as coterminous. As the Harley Street physician Dr Alfred T. Schofield tersely put it, 'Cleanliness all round is an essential law of health' ([1890?]: 22). Long allied to godliness and 'imbued with a moral and religious force', cleanliness was expanding its operative sphere 'from the domain of cosmetics to that of health, and … the appeal to health became an ever more powerful motive for action' (Temkin 1977: 468).[4] 'Hygiene' – those practices where cleanliness and health meet – was pursued with increasing zeal in the nineteenth century, initially in public health measures and later in the domestic sanitation movement. In the final three decades of the century, domestic hygiene was accorded as much importance as public health in the campaign against communicable disease. Indeed, as the historian Alison Bashford argues, '"Public" health was secured largely in "private", that is in domestic spaces' (1998: 1).[5] This is certainly how Richardson saw it: 'The river of national health', he wrote, 'must rise from the homes of the people and from every home' (1886: 7).

In discourses of public health and domestic sanitation, the hygiene or 'regimen of health' (Smith 2007: 3) at issue was to some extent personal (addressing the cleansing of bodies and clothing), but principally environmental and material. Driving the programmes for improvements in hygiene was a desire to control diseases which flourished in, and were spread by, filth. Prior to the acceptance of the germ theory of disease in the early twentieth century, 'miasma' theory, adhered to by such influential figures as Edwin Chadwick and Florence Nightingale, had long predominated as the explanation of the spread of infection.[6] 'All smell is disease', wrote Chadwick (Bashford 1998: 6): for miasmatists, disease was generated in and communicated by foul air, the infectious agents, or miasms, consisting '"almost entirely of decayed or diseased organized substances, and of animal emanations or secretions" … usually supposed to enter the system through the lungs' (Temkin 1977: 463, 464).[7] Fuelling the public health innovations of the mid-nineteenth century such as Chadwick's sewer-building programme and Nightingale's hospital reforms, miasma theory underpinned the focus on the provision of pure air and the control of foul odours as a means of disease prevention. Water, as well as air, was also implicated in this theory of disease; indeed, as Nancy Tomes notes, 'all the evidence compiled by the clinical, pathological, and epidemiological investigations of the day seemed to verify the same focal points of infection: corrupted air and impure water' (1990: 517). Doctors variously named such diseases as zymotic (where the agent, often called a 'ferment', was the catalyst for disease in corrupted air or impure water) or pythogenic (where disease was generated by decomposing or decaying organic matter) as well as miasmatic, but the most striking umbrella term for them was the bluntly colloquial 'filth diseases'.[8] In 'Filth Diseases and Their Prevention' ([1858] 1874), by the Chief Medical Officer John Simon, typhus fever is considered the Ur-filth disease, but other publications make clear just how broad the category was. The most terrifying were those that struck periodically as epidemics – cholera, typhus and scarlet fever – but the catalogue of filth diseases was still more wide-ranging. George Wilson, in his influential *Handbook of Hygiene and Sanitary Science*, wrote that 'the class of diseases which are associated with faulty house sanitation are essentially filth diseases, whether they originate *de novo* or are conveyed by befouled air or water' ([1873] 1883: 249). He enumerates these at length, including

> diphtheria, ulcerated sore throat, follicular tonsillitis, follicular stomatitis, croup, enteric and ill-defined forms of fever, diarrhoea and dysentery, erysipelas, carbuncle, abscess, pyaemia, hospital gangrene, and puerperal fever. … Pneumonia is frequently engendered by impure air, and it is now generally admitted that this filth-pneumonia, as it may be called, is infectious, and occasionally becomes epidemic. (ibid.)

Richardson's own list of filth diseases is similarly comprehensive. Under the heading of 'Communicable Diseases from Construction of Habitation' he discusses typhus fever, relapsing fever, scarlet fever, small pox, whooping cough, measles, sewer-air fever, typhoid or enteric fever, pulmonary consumption, as well as neuralgic and malarious diseases, colds, chills and irritations, and general malaise and physical feebleness (Richardson 1883: 5–22). Almost anything, from languor and headache through to consumption, pneumonia and typhoid, was attributable to the filth harboured in unhealthy houses. Eliminating filth, therefore, promised to be a panacea.

Contemporary understandings of disease transmission and of people's vulnerability to the dangers of the domestic environment were increasingly used to reshape the homes of the middle classes. Ironically, however, many of the new domestic fitments intended to improve domestic hygiene came to be seen as actually having rendered these environments more dangerous.[9] In the surgeon and sanitarian Thomas Pridgin Teale's popular handbook *Dangers to Health: A Pictorial Guide to Sanitary Defects* (1878), pictures of cross-sections of houses lay bare the multiple commonplace defects in domestic design and plumbing, showing how piped water, plumbed-in sinks and flush toilets, far from safeguarding the health, actually endanger it.[10] Such fitments might empty into porous, leaky or untrapped sewers and drains, and thence into water courses that were also sources of drinking water; or they may allow toxic gas to seep silently from the sewer network back into the dwelling. The outcome was damp cellars, foetid air, polluted soil and contaminated water supplies. This, as Teale starkly put it, is 'How people drink sewage' (ibid.: XXX and XXXI). Such problems were endemic – indeed, George Wilson concluded that 'it is no exaggeration to say that in the vast majority of houses, and *especially good-class houses*, sanitary defects may be found which at any time may lead to the gravest consequences' ([1873] 1883: 249; my emphasis). If the houses are unhealthy – which most are – it is only a matter of time before their inhabitants also fall ill; in such conditions, when disease breaks out, 'the wonder often is that the inmates should have escaped so long' (ibid.). The more devices, appliances and systems for the removal of filth were installed, the more vulnerable the household was made. Concern about the domestic hygiene of the working classes had for some decades been the object of philanthropic middle-class concern, but now it became a matter of urgent and anxious self-reflection among the middle classes themselves.

It was just such a middle-class audience addressed by Richardson in *Good Words* and elsewhere. Advice on domestic sanitation featured widely in popular periodicals and handbooks in the 1870s and 1880s, and particularly following the Prince of Wales's typhoid fever of 1871, commonly thought to have been caused by sewer gas (Allen 2008: 50, 184–5). Publications directed at a concerned lay readership include those by Richardson, Wilson and Teale, but also indicative is a compendious volume entitled *Our Homes, and How to Make Them Healthy* (1883). Edited by the eminent physician, sanitarian and epidemiologist Sir Shirley Forster Murphy, the book comprises nearly a thousand pages of advice written by leading sanitarian architects, doctors and designers, the whole enterprise endorsed by a substantial introduction by Richardson, and covering everything from the optimal site for a house and the best means of ventilating it to the evils of flat-topped wardrobes and the healthiest colours for bedroom walls. Every aspect of the domestic environment was risky, every danger anticipated and addressed.

The domestic sanitarian platform was not limited to popular publications and lectures. In 1884, the International Health Exhibition, held in London and attracting some 4 million visitors, included a major exhibit entitled 'Sanitary and Insanitary Dwellings'. In two purpose-built constructions, it demonstrated some of the common pitfalls in contemporary domestic design and how to avoid them (Adams 1996: 26–9).[11] The number of visitors attending the exhibition, together with the sheer quantity of publications on these matters, suggests the extent of public interest in the hidden structural and infrastructural defects threatening the home.

Some commentators thought the domestic sanitarians overstated their case, sceptical of their relentless cataloguing of domestic dangers. Commenting on Richardson's 'Health at Home' series, the *Saturday Review* suggests rather wryly that following an initial 'thrill of alarm' when learning of such dangers, the reader 'will be surprised that he is not a helpless invalid' as a result of all that he has overlooked (19 June 1880: 784). But despite the arch tone, even this reviewer does not dismiss the importance of 'Dr Richardson's dogma', but engages closely with it, suggesting that 'those who wish to sleep in healthy rooms should certainly consult his pages' (ibid.: 784, 785). Scepticism about the excessive zeal of the domestic sanitarian does not equate with dismissing his scientifically endorsed regimen altogether.

From a domestic sanitarian perspective, the middle-class home was far from being a simple haven of safety and calm in which to retreat, relax and recover. Instead, it was a place of actual and potential danger. Some of the threats were from toxins in domestic consumables, such as arsenic in wallpaper and paint, or fumes from burning coal or gas. But more unsettling was the pollution initiated by human beings themselves, as the emanations from their bodies and the effluvia of sanitation rendered the home toxic. Waste water from sinks and baths, air made foul by human excreta, exhaled breath laden with carbonic acid, skin shed from the body: human detritus lingered, haunting its progenitors as dust on top of cupboards, in contamination of the water supply, or as infiltration by sewage gas seeping back into the house. Silently and stealthily, these hazards threatened unprepared home-dwellers, compelling them to recognize the dangers posed by their own homes.

Such dangers were unsettling on several counts. First, their presence testified to the inadequacy of paying attention to sanitary detail in one's own property if the neighbours were not equally assiduous, as others' effluvia might taint one's own environment. Teale recounts the case of Mr Hewetson, who, despite correcting every fault in his house, could not eliminate the smell of drains. It transpired that foul gases from his neighbour's drains were drawn into the hall via a common chamber lying beneath the front steps. Gallingly, 'the neighbours had not suffered in health', while Mr Hewetson had suffered from 'drain illness'. Teale concludes rather wearily that 'it is difficult enough to manage one's own drains, almost Utopian to hope to rectify the drains of one's neighbour' (1878: XLV). Concern about the penetration of one's own property by the filth of others was a significant dimension of the objections made to the establishment of a complex system of underground sewers. Michelle Allen has shown that the anxiety about sewer gas was not only to do with its dangers to health, but also with the way that sewers took the control of a household's effluence away from its inhabitants and invested it instead in an invisible system overseen by a metropolitan authority (Allen 2008: 25). London's new city-wide sewer system took the place of reliance on local and private cesspools, and made possible the admittance of an external threat: the sewage of one's neighbours might, as for Mr Hewetson, taint the air of one's own house. Allen cites a pamphlet by G. R. Booth, warning against 'monster sewers, impregnated with the feculent matter of each locality' because of their capacity to carry 'the seeds of disease … from house to house, from street to street, from unhealthy parts to salubrious districts' (2008: 43). By this account, sewers are little better than a sanitary Trojan horse, apparently beneficent but in fact effortlessly, insidiously introducing a mortal enemy into the heart of the domestic citadel.

Sewer gas was not only a subtle and dangerous domestic infiltrator, a threat from the exterior, it was also an internal threat, originating with the house's own inhabitants and at risk of returning to haunt them. Many such dangers were quite literally of home-dwellers' own making: 'emanations from the human body, and the expirations from the lungs', wrote William Whitty Hall, have the most rapid deteriorating effect on air quality (Hall 1861: 18). 'We ourselves render the air around us impure', wrote Dr Andrew Wilson, in *Home Notes*. 'From our lungs and skin, we are perpetually giving forth waste products to the air, these products being the result of our bodily work. *We are, therefore, a constant source of danger to ourselves and others*' (Wilson 1894: 263; my emphasis).

This sense of a closed circle of domestic danger, arising from and threatening the safety of the self, informs much domestic sanitarian work, and prompts Richardson to urge readers to 'take care that every impurity formed in the house is removed as it is formed' (1886: 191), for when impurities linger, they accumulate and decay, setting in train the process of miasmatic disease. Household dirt is to a large degree of householders' own making: their own waste, inadequately banished, is always in danger of returning. The perspective afforded by such a position was alarming. Phillis Browne, in a chapter on house-cleaning in the compendious *Our Homes*, emphasized the importance of daily cleaning by reference to the 'melancholy fact that we all communicate impurity to material objects by our touch, and even by our presence'. She elaborates: 'If we could put the contents of the housemaid's dust-pan under a powerful microscope, we should find that a considerable portion of the dust collected there was made up of organic particles – hair, scurf, little pieces of skin, nail-clippings, &c. &c. – the result of the presence of the inhabitants of the house' (Browne 1883: 871).[12] However distasteful this might have been, the microscopic bodily detritus Browne describes is at least safely contained in the housemaid's dustpan.[13] In Dr Schofield's account of this phenomenon, however, dust is nowhere near as docile, and he evinces a rather vengeful relish at the thought of fastidious people unwittingly inhaling what he calls an 'aërial sewage' of their own making:

> The breathed air of a room is filled with swarms of bacteria, with thousands of dead dried-up body-cells from the skin, and much decaying animal matter that altogether may fitly be called aërial sewage; so that it is a fact that the most fastidious people whose person, linen, and food must be scrupulously clean, are content to breathe air so foul that it can only be compared to the Thames at Blackwall; simply because the dirt is not easily seen. ([1889?]: 149)

Schofield graphically conveys a sense that the threat of filth within the house was as great as that without. The genteel living room was as disturbingly and filthily unhealthy as the Thames east of the city, the ultimate destination of London's sewage.[14]

With its reference to bacteria, Schofield's model of disease relies on germ theory, which was gradually but steadily gaining scientific credence. Richardson, in contrast, lived and died a confirmed miasmatist, quite unpersuaded of the merits of germ theory – or 'hypothesis' (1897: 449), as he dismissively terms it – even though by the end of his life it was gaining universal scientific acceptance. Nonetheless, however revolutionary this theory ultimately proved to be for the conceptualization and treatment of disease, it made strikingly little difference to the sanitarian advice delivered by its adherents or detractors. Schofield and Richardson disagreed profoundly on the nature of disease transmission, but were as one in their analysis of the dangers of household dirt. Human beings constantly foul their own nests by shedding bodily waste; these residues take the form of dust; and that dust, however ordinary, is a hazard. 'Whenever a room is dusty, it is unhealthy. When a room is packed with furniture that is capable of holding and retaining ordinary dust, it is unhealthy', wrote Richardson (1883: 26), and Schofield observes grimly the 'injurious' effects of his 'aërial sewage' ([1889?]: 149).[15]

While general acceptance of germ theory at the turn of the century did not immediately initiate a revision of the dangers of household dirt, the identification of the bacterium did nonetheless allow an even more precise and terrifying picture of invisible domestic filth to emerge. In a 1906 article on flock beds (the cheapest form of mattress, usually made from old rags), Peter Fyfe, Glasgow's chief sanitary inspector, reported that experiments had shown that 'one gramme of Glasgow crude sewage contains an average 197,500 bacteria, but … in the selected gramme of the Glasgow bed the vast number of 22,100,000 were found' (1906: 720). Previously, people had grappled with 'their natural enemies under the simple long-familiar names of "dust" and "dirt"', but now, with the discovery of the many varieties of bacteria, the threat posed by dirt was not only nameable, but also countable (Cutler 1907: 78). If a sewer contains fewer pathogens than a mattress, then the home has surely sunk as low as it can get on the scale of purity and security. Thomas Pridgin Teale had told his readers in 1884 that 'very few houses were safe to live in' (1884: 3); Fyfe's analysis puts alarming statistical flesh on the bones of this contention.

Domestic danger was generated by waste from the house-dwellers' own bodies, exacerbated by the very sanitary appliances designed to eliminate it, and conceived in the matrices of air and water, two of the elemental and indispensable foundations of human life. This account results in a strange and unsettling conceptual commingling not only of the body and its dwelling – Chadwick proposed an 'arterio-venous system of water supply and sewage disposal' (Bynum 2008: 82), Richardson refers to the body as 'the living house' (1887: 188), and Robert Edis wrote of 'furnishing a house with ready-made clothing' (1883: 350) – but also of the pure and the impure, that which sustains life and that which destroys it.[16] In some ways, there was nothing new about this. Neither water nor air had ever been available simply as a symbol of purity: water had for centuries been considered dangerous to drink, hence the reliance on small beer as a thirst-quencher; and miasmatic theory, the standard explanation of disease transmission since the time of the Greeks, relied on a theory of invisible air-borne infection (Bynum 2008: 75–8; Smith 2007: 98; Worboys 2000: 38–42). But the ever-closer convergence of health and domestic hygiene promised by the sanitarians, the belief that rigorous systems of cleansing the home would deliver improved health, and the consequent outpouring of sanitarian advice, with its intense scrutiny of every element of household equipment, suggest that the optimism of the domestic sanitarians – their ambition to design disease out of the environment – was at least accompanied by, if not founded in, raised levels of anxiety about where exactly safety ended and danger began. Domestic sanitarian advice was premised on the understanding that the boundary between cleanliness and dirt, safety and danger, was not tidily or permanently located at the front door. Rather, the threshold between the two was inside the home, and needed to be repeatedly reinscribed and ceaselessly policed. Phillis Browne made clear the Sisyphean character of the task: 'The moment which finds a room perfectly clean is the moment in which it begins to get dirty again. … The fight must be waged without intermission, and the moment of rest is the moment of defeat' (Browne 1883: 869). More was at stake in this struggle than simple good health: 'Where dirt has been driven out', she continued, 'purity and enlightenment have found a congenial home; and it has always been found that to become clean is to take the first step in becoming good, wise, and great' (ibid.). The elimination of dirt is a route not only to health, but to a morally virtuous, even quietly heroic, self – but, of course, also a self whose status was precarious because it was in need of constant reconstruction, as the elimination of dirt could never be definitively achieved.

In response to threats within the home, domestic sanitarians recommended their elimination via the dual application of vigilance and science. Through the work of Richardson and others, the bourgeois dwelling became increasingly subject to the critical gaze of the expert, and women were the main addressees of their advice, in part because of their traditional responsibility for health in the home, and in part because they were already managers of the domestic environment. Schofield's habitually abrasive tone governs his approach to the matter, as he seeks to shame women into undertaking their sanitary responsibilities more diligently:

> The present state of ignorance amongst women – to whose lot most of the domestic hygienic work of the world must necessarily fall – is appalling, and nothing less than an anachronism. … we see amongst the vast majority an apathy and an ignorance worthy of mediaeval times, that are difficult to rouse or to reach, and that make the present effort to establish the teaching of hygiene to women on a systematic basis partake of the character of a forlorn hope. ([1890?]: 7)[17]

For Schofield, domestic hygiene is a marker of modernity, and ignorance of it a sign of a 'medieval' lack of enlightenment. Where Schofield scorns and cajoles women, Richardson flatters their special fitness for the task, their expertise gained through intimate familiarity with their domestic environment, rallying them to join forces with the domestic sanitarians:

> The men of the house come and go; know little of the ins and outs of anything domestic; are guided by what they are told, and are practically of no assistance whatever. The women are conversant with every nook of the dwelling, from basement to roof, and on their knowledge, wisdom, patience, and skill, the physician rests his hopes. (*Sanitary Record* 7, 13 July 1877: 25)

Phillis Browne preferred a straightforward military metaphor: 'Women – mistresses of households, domestic servants – are the soldiers who are deputed by society to engage in this war against dirt' (1883: 869). Whether shamed, flattered or recruited into action, women's domestic responsibilities were twofold: to detect and correct the errors made by architects, builders and plumbers, and to equip the house in accordance with the experts' recommendations.[18] Gendered notions of expertise and responsibility, a line of command running from the scientifically informed professional to his female lieutenant in the home, were at the heart of the convergence of discourses of health and domestic responsibility, as the male experts recruited women to enact their recommendations and patrol the domestic frontiers.

It was from this position that Richardson, Murphy, Edis and others turned their attention to the home, and began the work of making it healthy. Like all sanitarians, Richardson's main focus was on natural light, clean water and pure air as the basic requisites of the healthy home. Each of these was given due importance. The health benefits conferred by water ranged from a recommendation that more people might consider adopting an innovatory practice currently found in 'very cleanly families' – hand-washing after using the water-closet, 'a really excellent custom' (Richardson 1886: 64) – to proposing that seawater be piped from the coast to the capital so that all might enjoy the benefits of ozone:

> *If sea-water were brought in quantity to London it might, by a most simple method, be diffused at pleasure as fine spray in all houses and in close courts and alleys, so as to impart a cool sea air throughout the whole of the metropolis, an influence which would be as agreeable as it would be salubrious.* (Richardson 1880: 5.570; original italics)

The scale and ambition of such a proposal might seem to belong to the world of domestic sanitarian utopian fantasy – and, indeed, Richardson had published just such a book: *Hygeia: A City of Health* (1876) became one of his best-known publications. This recommendation, however, was actually published as part of the 'Health at Home' series, alongside recommendations for household deodorizing fluids. The domestic sanitarian agenda was not always as modest or localized as the recommendation of hand-washing or the avoidance of dust traps.

In the bedroom, water played its part in the maintenance of a hygienic environment. Carpets, heavy drapes or blinds at the windows, curtains round the bed, flat-topped cupboards: all harboured dust and dirt, and the curtains also hindered ventilation, so all had to go.[19] Equipping the bedroom was only half the battle, however. Its constant scrutiny and rigorous cleaning was equally important. Walls and floors must be frequently washed, and all woodwork painted or varnished for easy cleaning. The bedstead itself 'should be constructed of metal, of iron or brass, or a combination of these metals. Wooden bedsteads are altogether out of date in healthy houses. They are not cleanly, they harbour the unclean, and they are not cleansable like a metal framework' (Richardson 1880: 3.286). Vermin (bedbugs, lice or fleas) lodged in wood's cracks and crevices, and these bedsteads could not be satisfactorily washed and disinfected.[20] It was as one of many such hygienic considerations that Richardson made his intervention against the double bed.

It was to air, however, that sanitarians gave the most attention. Capable of bestowing health and vigour, air could also deliver disease and infirmity, and so was the object of hundreds of thousands of words of domestic sanitarian advice. All agreed that good ventilation was the *sine qua non* of the healthy bedroom, and a few were content to leave this to an open window. In his book *Sleeplessness* ([1879?]), the doctor and homeopath F. G. Stanley-Wilde thought it 'a happy and healthful practice to become accustomed to sleep with the window open the whole year round' ([1879?]: 17), and social and health campaigner Ada Ballin made a similar case: 'Bedroom windows should be thrown wide open every day, and even at night, except in the severest weather, the windows should be kept slightly open' (*Home Notes* 7 April 1894: 356). But open windows could create as many problems as they solved. As well as fresh air, they were likely to admit draughts and damp air; both risked inducing disease (Richardson 1883: 17, 14). Richardson therefore preferred that air be admitted 'from the outside of the house, through a conduit, to a chamber at the back of the fire-stove; and warmed there to 60° to 65° Fahr., it should pass by a separate conduit towards the upper part of the room, to be admitted through the wall into the room' (1883: 30). The home required mediated access to the purer outside air in order to avoid the worst excesses of inhaling impurities.

To vanquish draughts and ensure the circulation of fresh air, scores of patent devices, including stoves, valves, vents, shafts, flaps, pipes and perforated bricks, were manufactured, their various merits and demerits debated and critiqued.[21] Some were simple, involving no more than the adaptation of a sash window with a block of wood (the Hinckes Bird system). Others involved the installation of vents and pipes, such as the popular Tobin tube and the Sherringham, Watson or McKinnell ventilators.[22] For the drawing room, Richardson, Teale and Edis all mention Mrs Priestley's 'simple and elegant method of ventilation' (Richardson 1883: 31), which introduced fragrance as well as fresh air: the window space was fitted with 'two light folding glass doors. Between these doors and the sash of the window flowers are placed, and when the lower sash of the window is raised a little distance, the air passing up through the flowers ventilates over the half window-doors into the room' (ibid.).[23] This 'Floral Art Ventilator', which also featured at the 1884 International Health Exhibition, had the advantage not only of being 'pretty and decorative' and of introducing fresh air, but also of using plants and flowers to filter the air, thereby removing the 'ammoniacal and carboniferous impurities' (Edis 1883: 362; see too *Health Exhibition Literature* 1884: 246). Many of the anxieties about foul air contrasted the filth of the city air with that of the countryside, so Mrs Priestley's system had the further advantage of combating the evils of the former with the natural powers of the latter.[24]

As important as the admission of fresh air to a room was the matter of how best to remove it once it had become impure. Such air was usually referred to as 'vitiated' or, by Richardson, as devitalized. Vitiation – corruption or spoiling – might result from infiltration by sewer gas or from fumes given off by gas lights, but in the bedroom it was simply the result of breathing: 'The atmosphere of any ordinary chamber occupied by more than one sleeper, is speedily vitiated, and … in this vitiated condition, it is breathed over and over again'; this 'impairs the general health and undermines the constitution' (Hall 1861: 19). In air vitiated by respiration, Wilson reports in his *Handbook of Hygiene*, 'the effete matters thrown off … are carbonic acid, watery vapour, and certain undefined organic substances' ([1873] 1883: 66).[25] For Wilson it is not just that air itself becomes vitiated but that the very gases it comprises are designated 'effete' – exhausted, depleted, worn out.[26] Richardson's theory relies similarly on a language of depletion. In devitalized air, he writes, 'the supporter of animal life, the oxygen itself, is under a physical change of condition, by which it is losing its special sustaining faculty, and is becoming, by negation, a poisonous agent' (1883: 19). The dangers of breathing such air, Wilson writes, 'have not yet been determined with sufficient accuracy', but he reminds readers that 'even a small excess of carbonic acid interferes with healthy physiological action' ([1873] 1883: 68-9). And, he warned, the invisibility of such poisonous matter does not reduce its insidious danger:

> It does not follow that, because pain or discomfort is not always experienced in a vitiated atmosphere, no harm has been done. The effects may be slowly and imperceptibly cumulative, but they are none the less injurious, and they are now recognised as being amongst the most potent and wide-spread of all the 'pre-disposing causes' of disease. (ibid.: 69; see too Schofield [1889?]: 149–50)

Those breathing vitiated air might not suffer from any definite form of disease but from persistent 'malaise without being laid up, … pale, easily wearied, dull in spirit'; worse still, 'houses which are charged with impure atmospheres are the places in which the septic diseases are most likely to be intensified' (Richardson 1883: 20, 21). Douglas Galton, writing about 'Warming and Ventilation' in *Our Homes*, agreed, suggesting that 'there are still thousands of private houses … so deficient in a proper quantity and quality of air and light, as to render them breeding-nests of consumption, rheumatism, and other forms of disease' (1883: 485). Air is the matrix of health and of disease, the invisible, unstable but potent interface between the domestic environment and its vulnerable but toxic inhabitants.

Vitiation, devitalization, effeteness: the vocabulary of advice about ventilation is one of exhaustion and diminution as much as of corruption, toxicity and degeneration. It is driven by two different conceptions of the danger: first, the imminent depletion of air's health-giving properties and, second, their replacement by the invisible toxic waste of exhaled breath. Bankruptcy and corruption are the twin evils of foul air, always imminent, always proceeding together, an enemy generated from deep within the human subject and whose stealthy return from banishment has the power to undo him or her.

Since air is always in the process of being rendered impure, there must be a system for its ceaseless removal and replenishment. Its elimination should be the environmental continuation of the act of exhalation – the indispensable sequel to the last inhalation and the precondition of the next. How, though, might this best be achieved? Most thought that an open chimney flue was the readiest means: *The Housewife's Reason Why* reminded readers that 'the chimney acts to the room as the wind-pipe does to the human body; when, therefore, the chimney place is stopped up, the room is, as it were, *incapable of breathing*, or of passing off the vitiated air which has been generated' (Philp 1857: 275; original italics). To close a flue was tantamount to suffocating both house and home-dweller. Lady Barker, writing at the high point of domestic sanitarianism, felt able to 'take it for granted that every one understands the enormous importance of having a fireplace in each sleeping-room in an English house, for the sake of ventilation afforded by the chimney' (1878: 2), although this was often put in jeopardy by the 'cussedness' of housemaids who insisted on shutting the flap of the register stove – hence the need for ceaseless vigilance by the lady of the house.[27]

Just as there were fittings and appliances manufactured to aid the influx of fresh air, so too there were for its removal once vitiated. As well as grates, tubes and vents for individual rooms, there were also elaborate whole-house ventilation systems promising continuous air flow, with minimum draught and damp. Two Liverpool doctors, Drysdale and Hayward, designed and built houses to demonstrate their ventilation systems. Air, heated in a chamber on the ground floor, filtered up through the house; once vitiated, it was drawn into a foul air chamber in the attic, and emptied via a connection back to the smoke flue from the kitchen fire (Drysdale and Hayward 1890). Robert Renton Gibbs, also from Liverpool, proposed a system combining heating and ventilation: air from the outside was admitted to rooms via vertical ventilation tubes, and filtered, warmed air was introduced into the central hall which then rose and ventilated every room, the used air again collecting in a foul air chamber under the roof (Galton 1883: 603). If for Richardson the body was a 'living house', here the house is an organism whose health, inseparable from that of its inhabitants, is guaranteed by a constant intake of fresh air and expulsion of foul.

Fixtures and furnishings also contributed to the processes of ventilation. Robert Edis recommended a ventilating letter-box (1883: 361), and Renton Gibbs's house plan shows that cabinets in the hall concealed coils to heat the circulating air, as did the billiard table (Galton 1883: 603–4). But bedsteads too attracted the attention of the ventilation engineer. If bedrooms were particularly liable to become repositories of foul air, beds too were in danger of trapping injurious bodily emanations. Phillis Browne quotes the words of Florence Nightingale to make her case for the airing of beds:

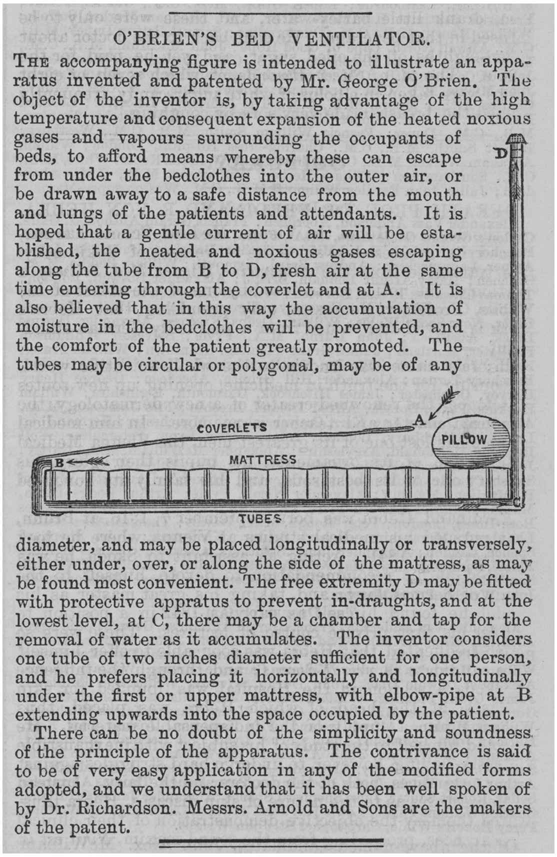
> If you consider that a grown-up man in health exhales by the lungs and skin in the twenty-four hours three pints at least of moisture loaded with matter ready to putrefy …, just ask yourself next where does all this moisture go to? Chiefly into the bedding, because it cannot go anywhere else. And it stays there. (1883: 873)

Air was necessary to the bed as well as the bedroom.

The ingenious solutions to the vitiation of household air offered by the Tobin tube, the Hinckes Bird ventilator or Mrs Priestley's Floral Art Ventilator were matched by a device specific to the bedroom called the O'Brien's Bed Ventilator (Figure 2). The intention was to remove the risk of heavy bedclothes wrapping the sleeper up 'in his own cutaneous exhalations' by ventilating the bed while he slept. Richardson described the ventilator with enthusiasm:

> A tube of two inches diameter at the foot of the bed opens just under the bed-clothes; it passes beneath the frame of the bed to the bed's head, and runs up at the bed's head until it nearly reaches the ceiling, or when convenient passes into a flue. Through this tube a current of air, entering the bed at the upper part and passing over the sleeper, is made to circulate out of the bed by the ventilating tube, carrying with it the watery matter that is exhaled by the skin, and keeping up, in fact, a perfectly ventilated space …. I consider the O'Brien tube to be a marked hygienic improvement in the construction of bedsteads and bedding. It ought to be fitted to every bedstead. (1880: 4.383)

By making the bed itself an integral part of the technology, the O'Brien tube came as close as it could to plumbing the sleeper directly into the ventilation system already at work in the room. The tube transforms the warm, perspiring body of the sleeper into the engine driving the apparatus: 'By taking advantage of the high temperature and consequent expansion of the heated noxious gases and vapours surrounding the occupants of beds … these can escape from under the bedclothes into the outer air' (*Medical Times and Gazette* vol. 2, 28 August 1880: 253). The 'gases and vapours' emitted by sleeper's body



O'BRIEN'S BED VENTILATOR.

The accompanying figure is intended to illustrate an apparatus invented and patented by Mr. George O'Brien. The object of the inventor is, by taking advantage of the high temperature and consequent expansion of the heated noxious gases and vapours surrounding the occupants of beds, to afford means whereby these can escape from under the bedclothes into the outer air, or be drawn away to a safe distance from the mouth and lungs of the patients and attendants. It is hoped that a gentle current of air will be established, the heated and noxious gases escaping along the tube from B to D, fresh air at the same time entering through the coverlet and at A. It is also believed that in this way the accumulation of moisture in the bedclothes will be prevented, and the comfort of the patient greatly promoted. The tubes may be circular or polygonal, may be of any diameter, and may be placed longitudinally or transversely, either under, over, or along the side of the mattress, as may be found most convenient. The free extremity D may be fitted with protective appratus to prevent in-draughts, and at the lowest level, at C, there may be a chamber and tap for the removal of water as it accumulates. The inventor considers one tube of two inches diameter sufficient for one person, and he prefers placing it horizontally and longitudinally under the first or upper mattress, with elbow-pipe at B extending upwards into the space occupied by the patient.

There can be no doubt of the simplicity and soundness of the principle of the apparatus. The contrivance is said to be of very easy application in any of the modified forms adopted, and we understand that it has been well spoken of by Dr. Richardson. Messrs. Arnold and Sons are the makers of the patent.

FIGURE 2 *O'Brien's Bed Ventilator.*

are warm and so are drawn along the tube and discharged at a safe distance from the vulnerable sleeper. Ingeniously, the sleeping body is both the source of the problem and its solution; it produces impurities, and it generates the power to drive the technology that removes them. Together, body and machine fulfil in the most immediate manner imaginable Richardson's counsel that the bedroom be 'a sanctuary of cleanliness and order, in which no injurious exhalation can remain for a moment, and no trace of uncleanliness offend a single sense' (1880: 3.287).[28]

Intended by its inventor for use in hospitals, Richardson considered O'Brien's Bed Ventilator equally appropriate for home use: 'It ought to be fitted to every bedstead' (1880: 4.383). Phillis Browne, offering advice on the airing of beds, quotes the words of the hospital reformer Florence Nightingale on the emanations of patients. Correspondence between the domains of home and hospital was, as Alison Bashford notes, increasingly common, with sanitarian discourse eroding the conceptual distinction between the two: she quotes John Simon, the Chief Medical Officer, who in 1863 wrote that 'that which makes the healthiest house makes the healthiest hospital, – the same fastidious and universal cleanliness, the same never-ceasing vigilance against the thousand forms in which dirt may disguise itself' (Bashford 1998: xi). Both home and hospital were places in which disease was constantly threatening, dirt the enemy, hygiene the means to combat it and health the reward. Science and technology were strategic aids to be deployed in the service of a health-bestowing cleanliness. The sanitarian vision relied on deploying complexity in the service of simplicity. Its utopian ambition was of perfected human health resulting from the mobilization of a scientific knowledge and technological ingenuity that would allow the simple and elemental forces of sunlight, pure air and fresh water to cleanse, protect and preserve humanity from the dangers they posed to themselves.

O'Brien's Bed Ventilator brought the sanitarians' ideal of the scientific bed one step closer. However, the device seems to have been a short-lived enthusiasm for Richardson, for by the time 'Health at Home' was revised and republished six years later as *Household Health*, all mention of it had gone. What survived the revision, however, was another more enduring technology of bedroom aeration: namely, twin beds. Richardson announced his advocacy of what he called 'the single-bed system' as a safeguard for vulnerable co-sleepers' health, each at risk from the vitiated air exhaled by the other:

> At some time or other the breath of one of the sleepers must, in some degree, affect the other; the breath is heavy, disagreeable, it may be so intolerable that in waking hours, when the senses are alive to it, it would be sickening, soon after a short exposure to it. Here in bed with the senses locked up, the disagreeable odour may not be realised, but assuredly because it is not detected it is not less injurious. (1880: 3.286)

O'Brien's Bed Ventilator was designed to remove moist air from collecting around the sleeper; twin beds were designed to distance fellow sleepers from the impurities of another's breath. A double bed exposed a sleeper to the exhaled breath, the vitiated air, of his or her bedfellow, their proximity combining with their unconscious state to render them vulnerable to the toxins expelled in malodorous breath – a phenomenon both disagreeable and injurious. If the house was a potential death trap, for Richardson the bed was doubly so, for active vigilance was necessarily suspended when the senses were 'locked up' in sleep. Unconsciousness brought with it unwariness and vulnerability. It was safer to be alone in the arms of Morpheus than to double up with one's spouse. Single beds, with a channel of untainted air running between them, structured reassurance and safety into the dangerous territory occupied by proximate co-sleepers. Moreover, by designating this 'the single-bed system', Richardson endowed his choice with the gravitas of systematicity, with its implicit promise of the scientifically informed elimination of the chance eruption of disease.

Richardson's advocacy of twin beds did not go unnoticed. A reviewer of 'Health at Home' in the *Ragged School Union Quarterly Record* included in its summary of key points that 'it was of the greatest importance in a healthy home to let every person have a separate bed'. The advice was underlined by offering evidence of the beneficial consequences: 'The important results arising from each having a separate bed had been shown at the Industrial Schools at Anerley, where each scholar had his or her own bed. The mortality had been reduced to three in 1,000 annually' (*Ragged School Union Quarterly Record* July 1880: 107).[29] Other writers picked up on Richardson's work. The Scottish journalist, author and publisher Alexander Hay Japp reiterated both Richardson's unease and his solution: 'Such a thing even as a double Bed, should not exist … the single Bed must once more have the preference'. Quoting Richardson at length, Japp argued that the advantage of single beds was that sleepers did 'not inhale each other's "breathed breath"' (1885: 87–8).[30] The dictates of hygiene in the service of disease control led these commentators to find bed-sharing a source not of intimacy and comfort, but of pollution and danger, in the face of which the health of the individual could best be assured by demarcating his or her individuality more clearly through physical separation.

Richardson was not the first to recommend twin beds as an aid to health. A century earlier, the celebrated entrepreneur and quack physician James Graham – best known for his 'Celestial Bed', which was enlivened with an electrical charge and rented out at £50 a night to couples eager to reap the procreative and pleasurable rewards he promised them – had inveighed against couples '*pigging* together' night after night, and advised that better health as well as improved marital regard would result from 'two beds in the same large room' (1783: 11).[31] But while Graham's had been a lone voice, Richardson was just one among a growing body of physicians and commentators convinced of the health benefits of twin-bedded sleep. In the same year that the 'Health at Home' series was published, the phrenologist and 'hygienic practitioner' (he practised the popular 'water cure') R. B. D. Wells reached similar conclusions to Richardson: 'Air once breathed is unfit to be breathed again until purified', he wrote, and this was one reason why 'as a rule two persons should not sleep together in the same bed' ([1880?]: 61, 378).[32] In America, William A. Alcott had, in 1866, recommended separate beds for couples when the woman was pregnant: 'Are we doing our duty when we suffer her to sleep in a narrow, unventilated bed-room, especially during the later months of her seclusion?', he asked, 'and does it add to the purity of the air she is to breathe to have others occupying the same bed, and using up one half or more of the natural supply of oxygen which God, in his Providence, has designed for her?' ([1866] 1972: 176). Another American, the physician, minister and health campaigner William Whitty Hall, published *Sleep: Or the Hygiene of the Night* simultaneously in New York and London in 1861, announcing in his Preface that the aim of the book was

> to show that as a means of high health, good blood, and a strong mind to old and young, sick or well, each one should have a single bed in a large, clean, light room, so as to pass all the hours of sleep in a pure fresh air, and that those who fail in this, will in the end fail in health and strength of limb and brain, and will die while yet their days are not all told. (Hall 1861: n.p.)[33]

'Sleeping together as a habit', he argued, exposes co-sleepers to the toxic perils of vitiated air night after night, and 'is a sufficient cause for a gradual diminution of bodily vigor, a gradual undermining of the constitution, and an inevitable cause of premature decline and death to multitudes' (ibid.: 51). Consequently, sleeping separately was an 'absolute necessity to health' to avoid the accumulation of 'destructive human emanations' in the bedroom, towards which end 'the two first steps … [are] large rooms and separate beds' (ibid.: 108).

For Richardson, Japp, Wells and Hall, twin beds were part of a broader, scientifically underwritten health regime of which hygiene was the rationale, the cornerstone and the method. As the air swam with invisible particles of toxic dust, as the sleeping body emitted its invisible but deleterious vapours, as the concentration of carbonic acid stealthily increased through the course of the night, further vitiating the already compromised air of the bedroom, their unanimous advice was to seek security in solitude, buffered against the depredations of one's fellow sleeper. The forces of health and hygiene, combined in a ceaseless daily struggle against disease, took their nocturnal rest separately, in twin beds.

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Vital force

The inhalation of impure air was not the only threat to the occupants of a double bed. For many commentators, bed-sharing introduced a subtler but no less real danger: namely, enfeeblement through the loss to one's bedfellow of vital energy. This was not just a sense of well-being or thriving, but the life force itself. Sharing a bed allowed the constitutionally weaker sleeper to leach the vitality of the stronger, and while the former benefited from this exchange, the latter suffered.

Nonetheless, however complex the threat to health in the bedroom may be, the solution was straightforward. The dangers of both impure air and this more general enfeeblement could be addressed by introducing a simple barrier to cross-contamination: the safe distance between sleepers ensured by separate beds. 'It is best', remarked Dr Benjamin Ward Richardson, 'for persons of every age to have to themselves the shelter within which they pass one-third of their whole lives' (1880: 3.286). In the bedroom, health could best be secured by the autonomy of every sleeper, each in the air-moated fastness of their own bed. The dangerous traffic between bedfellows was therefore twofold: health was risked both by inhaling the breath of one's companion and by the possibility of losing one's own vital force to them. The bedroom was a potential site of both environmental and constitutional enervation. Where the previous chapter examined twin beds in the context of late nineteenth-century anxiety about disease transmission by foul air, this one addresses the overlapping concern that vital energy might also be drained by bed-sharing.

Dr Ward Richardson was writing at a time when the 'vitalist' controversy was still unresolved. This scientific debate about exactly what life comprised, what distinguished organic from inorganic matter, the animate from the inanimate, had reached a peak of intensity at the end of the eighteenth century, becoming 'one of the most intensely argued and notorious subjects in science' (Ruston 2005: 2), and the question continued in contention through the next century. Was there an absolute difference between living forms (animal and plant) and inert substances such as rocks or other minerals? Was there a common principle of life, present in all living forms? By what process did living entities become dead ones? For over a century, 'the theoretical demarcation line in the study of living processes resided in the debate between physicalism and vitalism':

> The advocates of physicalism claimed there was no fundamental difference between living organisms and inanimate matter. Living phenomena could therefore be studied and explained with the methods and laws of physics. This approach was strongly opposed by vitalists who postulated that living organisms had properties that could not be reduced to physics or chemistry and, therefore, biological phenomena could not be analysed with the concepts or methods of those sciences. Instead, vitalists claimed, to explain the nature of living phenomena one needed to apply such concepts as 'vital force' and 'vital fluids' to the analysis. (Puustinen, Leiman and Viljanen 2003: 77)[1]

Paradoxically, the physicalist position was criticized both as reductive of life to nothing more than the operation of a series of physical and chemical reactions, and conversely as locating the animating principle beyond the body, with the soul. For their part, vitalists were open to the criticism of adhering to a paradigm nominally physiological but for which there was no scientific evidence. To posit a 'vital force', the element animating all living forms, was to beg the question, locating the solution to the problem in an unverifiable entity which was then taken to endorse the vitalist principle.

By the time Richardson was writing, the vitalist position was on the wane, but its influence was not yet negligible. Questions of vital force – what it comprised, its place in sustaining human life, how to nurture it, what threatened it, its place in health and disease – continued to exercise the scientific, medical and popular press. In 1870, for example, the *British Medical Journal* published a lecture by physiologist David Ferrier entitled 'Life and Vital Energy Considered in Relation to Physiology and Medicine'. He traces the history of vitalism and considers its contemporary status, confirming it as a still valid subject of enquiry in physiology and as a concept of relevance to trainee physicians (Ferrier 1870: 429). Ferrier is a physicalist: like 'almost all of the advanced physiologists of the present day' he sees 'vital energy [as] merely a form of physical energy' (ibid.: 430). Nonetheless, he engages with those leading contemporary vitalists who 'deny that vital energy can be explained by chemistry or physics; and hold that vital energy, though associated with matter, is independent of it' (ibid.). In so doing, he shows respect for vitalism as an attempt to account for that which science has not yet sufficiently explained: 'We know so little', he writes, 'of the ultimate nature of energy that it would be presumptuous to dogmatise on the subject' (ibid.: 431). Vitality, he concludes, remains a useful concept for scientists:

> Inasmuch as it manifests in modes peculiar to itself, and different from any of the other modes of energy with which we are acquainted, we may yet use the terms vital energy, vitality, vital force, to signify this special mode of manifestation, so long as we do not use the term in the sense in which it is used by the vitalists. (ibid.)

Even Ferrier, a physiologist and physicalist, finds the notion of vital force useful, permitting him to consider a distinct energy which 'manifests in modes peculiar to itself'. The physiological approach to vital energy thus does not deny its capacity to signify something of the mysteries peculiar to living entities. Indeed, Ferrier begins by suggesting that 'life and the nature of vital energy form the common ground on which metaphysicians and physiologists meet' (ibid.: 429). For him, vital force remains a valuable concept through which the relationship between the material and the immaterial, as well as the organic and the inorganic, can be addressed.

Questions of vital force also informed more popular explanations of life, health and disease. In 'Growth', an article on the science of growth in the didactic weekly *The Quiver*, for example, the topic is addressed through reference to vital force: 'The presence or absence of these powers of life and growth is one grand distinguishing characteristic of all organised and unorganised bodies; as a tree grows through the mysterious action of an inward vital force, while a stone can be increased only by the addition of matter from without' (1865: 104).[2] *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts* published an article on 'Vitality versus Disease' where again the concept of vital force allows the constitution of a field that is at once scientific and metaphysical, comprehending the insights of physics and the wonders of the animating principle (1862: 102–4). Vital force is 'nearly allied to the so-called physical forces, light, heat, electricity, &c., and appears different to them only on account of its peculiar relations to matter' but also 'of all the forces observed in nature, it is perhaps the most wonderful' (ibid.: 102). The concept serves here to develop a eugenicist argument, tracing the consequences of the fact that 'hypothetically, vital force may be regarded as intended to be equally powerful in all the individuals of a species', but is 'misdirected, enfeebled, or lost' through the intervention of 'antagonistic agencies' in the environment: 'Impure air, improper food, intemperate habits, scanty clothing, and overhard work, enfeeble the health and undermine the constitution. In other words, they depress the vital force, and render it liable to extinction' (ibid.). Such factors are referred to as 'vitiating conditions'. Strikingly, impure air is itself not only 'vitiated' but also vitiating. The discussion starts with environmental degradation and ends in a vitiated population, 'a feeble and degenerate race' (ibid.: 104). What begins with a concern for public health concludes with a eugenicist desire for a socially engineered populace, bred from only the soundest stock.[3]

Eugenics was an increasingly powerful discourse in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, and the positing of a link between environmental and bodily vitiation was not the preserve of the *Chambers's Journal* article alone. In his book *Sleep*, Walter Whitty Hall sketched the same trajectory: the evils arising from over-indulgence 'extend beyond those who practice them, and are carried into the ages yet to come'. Excesses 'beget debility of the organs connected with them'; these organs then 'prepare a vitiated, imperfect material, diseased and monstrous', resulting in a 'multitude of weakly, sickly, puny persons', blighted morally as well as physically into subsequent generations (Hall 1861: 127). Vitiation breeds vitiation. It flows from environment to person, and then within and across the generations it passes from person to person by physical contact and heredity. Vitiation is not a stable attribute but an active pollutant, insidiously debilitating the nation's stock.

If vitiation of vital force was addressed as a threat to national well-being, it was also discussed at the level of the family. One issue of longstanding concern was the common practice of putting children to sleep with elderly relatives. Repeatedly, it was emphasized that the elderly and the very young should never share a bed as the old person would sap the vitality of the infant. Richardson, as always, had a view on the matter. Driving home the advantages of his single-bed system, he pointed out that thereby:

> it is rendered impossible to place very old and very young persons to sleep together. To the young this is a positive blessing, for there is no practice more deleterious to them than to sleep with the aged. The vital warmth that is so essential for their growth and development is robbed from them by the aged, and they are enfeebled at a time when they are least able to bear the enfeeblement. (Richardson 1880: 3.286)

For Richardson, this is a lesson that needs to be enforced, suggesting that the habit is neither uncommon nor its risks properly understood. Just as his sanitarian advice insisted that householders look to the hidden material dangers of common domestic practices – the eruption of disease in vitiated air and contaminated water – so here it extends to the more nebulous dangers occasioned by harmful sleeping arrangements. If a 'single bed for every sleeper' (ibid.) is the rule, then how much more important is it when the loss of vital warmth from the infant to the aged person compounds the danger?

Richardson's warning draws on a set of longstanding understandings of the physiology of aging. At the heart of his plea were, again, the vitalist debates about what constituted life, what demarcated it from death and what characterized the journey from one to the other. According to Steven Shapin and Christopher Martyn, 'Historically, ageing theories fell into two related categories':

> Firstly, ageing was the progressive loss of body heat. Getting old was getting cold. It's obvious that living things are warmer than non-living things – the warmer you are, the more full of vitality you are. What kept you going was an innate vital heat, a flameless flame. As you aged, so that heat diminished; the life course took you from the warmth of youth to the cold of the grave. Secondly, ageing was the gradual loss of bodily moisture. Dying was drying. … Virtually every theory about ageing from the ancient Greeks to the 19th century was a version of cooling or drying or a combination of the two. (Shapin and Martyn 2000: 1580)

This understanding of the life course as passing from heat to cold, from moisture to dryness, could on occasion be tapped to therapeutic advantage. A medical intervention advocated by the seventeenth-century physician Thomas Sydenham, which he described as 'a singular expedient' for cases of fever in aged persons who had not responded to other treatments, involved 'the application of the heat of [a] strong and healthy young man: nor will it be found surprizing, that by this uncommon means the patient should be considerably strengthened … a considerable quantity of sound and wholesome *effluvia* will thus pass from a robust, healthy body into the exhausted body of the patient' (1742: 33–4). The treatment may have been unusual but it was not new: many observe that in the Bible the elderly and chilly King David is provided with a young virgin to lie beside him, so 'that the lord my king may get heat' (1 Kings 1:2; see too Shapin and Martin 2000: 1581; Shapin 2009). The practice is premised on a young person's vital warmth being a transferable resource, with one body permeable to the energies of the other. But it is also noteworthy that it is an 'expedient', an exceptional intervention to be used only when other treatments had failed. It should not be an element within a regimen of general health, let alone a habitual sleeping arrangement.

By the mid-nineteenth century, Sydenham's prescription was no longer being properly observed. By then, the critical attention afforded the transfer of vital warmth from young to old was not to recommend it as an exceptional therapy but to condemn it as a dangerous and all-too-common familial practice. In his *Dictionary of Practical Medicine*, Dr James Copland names it as a cause of debility, defined as 'a diminution of … vital energies' (Copland 1858: 1.473). Debility is not a side-effect of particular illnesses but a malaise in its own right, with a number of possible origins; and one 'not uncommon cause of depressed vital power', he writes, 'is *the young sleeping with the aged*. This fact, however explained, has been long remarked … But it has been most unaccountably overlooked in medicine' (Copland 1858: 1.475; original italics). It had not, of course, been overlooked as an exceptional medical intervention, as recommended by Sydenham, still in print in Copland's time. Perhaps he meant its power had not been properly respected or effectively prohibited.

To demonstrate the usual presentation of the problem, Copland includes a case history:

> I was, a few years since, consulted about a pale, sickly, and thin boy of about five or six years of age. He appeared to have no specific ailment; but there was a slow and remarkable decline of flesh and strength, and of the energy of all the functions – what his mother very aptly termed a gradual blight. After enquiry into the history of the case, it came out that he had been a very robust and plethoric child up to his third year, when his grandmother, a very aged person, took him to sleep with her; that he soon afterwards lost his good looks; and that he had continued to decline progressively ever since, notwithstanding medical treatment. I directed him to sleep apart from his aged parent; and prescribed gentle tonics, change of air, &c. The recovery was rapid. But it is not in children only that debility is induced by this mode of abstracting vital power. Young females married to very old men suffer in a similar manner, although seldom to so great an extent … These facts are often well known to the aged themselves, who consider the indulgence favourable to longevity, and thereby often illustrate the selfishness which, in some persons, increases with their years. (1858: 1.475)

The scenario is a familiar one. Victorian and Edwardian popular medical advice is full of accounts of previously robust and carefree young people unaccountably losing their looks and vigour, becoming listless and enfeebled, and wasting away even to the point of death. Sometimes domestic sanitarian writing includes such anecdotes to demonstrate the insidious effects of toxic wallpapers or sewer gas, but more commonly such accounts are part of an extensive anti-masturbation literature. William Whitty Hall, for example, writes of parents' anxious concern as they witness 'the pallid faces of once ruddy children, the trembling fingers, the averted eye, the thinned flesh, and the melancholy features … the malady may have run on to a condition irremediable, and the victim passes to the mad-house or to the grave' (1861: 142–3), all owing to habitual masturbation.[4] In Copland's account, however, the source of the decline is the grandparent who, like an elderly succubus, selfishly restores their own vitality by abstracting the youthful energy of the infant. The transfer of vital force is no longer a single altruistic donation made by robust youth to sickly age. It is seen instead, as it would later be by Richardson, as an act of embezzlement, the tapping of a vital warmth to which the recipient has no right. Vitality is siphoned off, not lost but stolen, 'robbed from them by the aged' (Richardson 1880: 286), such that the life of the older party is parasitically sustained. The decline is registered in the body and vitality of the individual child, but it is comprehensible only as part of a network of energetic exchange, whereby the proper order of thriving and decline, life and death, is reversed.

Copland and Richardson's warnings against intergenerational bed-sharing are widely held and frequently rehearsed. Indeed, Copland's words quickly became an authoritative source and were cited – usually, but not always approvingly – in many British and American periodicals in subsequent years.[5] Others make the same case in their own words. The popular American medical adviser Edward B. Foote warns that 'a habit which is considerably prevalent in almost every family, of allowing children to sleep with elder persons has ruined the nervous vivacity and physical energy of many a promising child. … [E]very parent who loves his child … must see to it, that his nervous vitality is not absorbed by some diseased or aged relative'. Failing to do so would, as Copland had warned, mean that 'they soon pine, grow pale, languid, and dull, while their bed companions feel a corresponding invigoration' (Foote 1896: 136). As late as 1919, Edwin Bowers was lamenting the practice, though less for its mortal consequences and more as evidence of the perversity of foreign cultures:

> For children to sleep with the aged … is a crime against the child. … Only thirty years ago certain institutions, founded upon these same principles, existed in France. Young girls and boys were supplied to old women and old men as bed-fellows … The evil effects of this strange sale of life-force were so marked that the institutions were finally closed by police order. ([1919] 1920: 123–4)

These criticisms rehearse the danger of this as a habitual practice, a criminal injustice done to the child, and the iniquity of the older person who uses the child to increase their own longevity. Bed-sharing in this scenario produces a perversely anti-Darwinian scene, where the weaker thrives and the stronger is diminished. The warmth of youth is hijacked by the elderly, inverting the natural order in which age, physiologically at least, defers to youth.

The loss of vital force was a danger not only in the case of the old sleeping with the young, where there was a manifest inequality between the bedfellows in terms of age, health and vigour. A short article in the weekly

Penny Illustrated Paper in 1872 found similar cause for concern with regard to all bed-sharing:

> SLEEPING TOGETHER. – The 'Laws of Life' says: – 'More quarrels occur between brothers, between sisters, between hired girls, between school-girls, between clerks in stores, between apprentices, between hired men, between husbands and wives, owing to electrical changes, through which their nervous systems go, by lodging together night after night, under the same bedclothes, than by almost any other disturbing cause. There is nothing that will derange the nervous system of a person who is eliminate in nervous force like lying all night in bed with another person who is almost absorbent in nervous force. The absorber will go to sleep and rest, while the eliminator will be tossing and tumbling, restless and nervous, and wake up in the morning fretful, peevish, and discouraged. No two persons, no matter who they are, should habitually sleep together. One will thrive and one will lose. This is the law, and in married life it is defied almost universally.' (*The Penny Illustrated Paper* 30 March 1872: 203)

Despite the ostensible parity of these bedfellows – brothers share with brothers, hired girls with each other, and so on – a hierarchy is exposed through the operation of an innate but hidden physiological inequality: one of each pair will be an 'absorber' of energy, the other an 'eliminator'. In the unhealthily commingled world of the double bed, the absorber will thrive, leaching, via electrical exchange, the vital force of the eliminator, who will wake depleted and diminished. The result extends beyond the physiological. Not only will the eliminator suffer from nervous derangement, but there will also be discord between them. The whole sorry process results, it might be inferred, in an inefficient workforce: it is striking that of co-sleepers enumerated here, more are fellow employees than relatives. The pernicious influence of double beds extends from the individual and hygienic to the social and economic: bed-sharing can damage not only the health but also an employer's balance sheet and the smooth running of a household. It can precipitate the infection of the body by means of foul air, and debilitate a sleeper's mood, vitality, disposition and productivity through electrical exchange.

This article may have been brief and buried on an inside page of the *Penny Illustrated*, but its frequent republication suggests that its ideas were expected to meet a receptive readership. The opening attribution to the 'Laws of Life' sources it to a popular American medical periodical of this name published monthly by 'Our Home on the Hillside', a water-cure clinic in Dansville, New York, run by the health reformer James Caleb Jackson since 1858.[6] The original article probably appeared there in the late 1860s, since the republications began in 1869 and continued in American publications through the 1870s and 1880s.[7] The article seems to have first appeared in Britain in the *Penny Illustrated* in 1872; it was published again in 1877 in Dickens's periodical *All the Year Round* (glossed as an 'odd idea indeed') and also in the *Manchester Times*, the *Aberdeen Journal* in 1879 and in the English press in India in the late 1880s.[8] Overall, the piece appeared in newspapers, periodicals and medical advice books at least a dozen times between 1869 and 1902.

The article's provenance in a periodical published by a hydropathic clinic in the United States points to two significant aspects of British health cultures in the late nineteenth century. First, it indicates the extent and influence of heterodox or 'fringe' (what we might now call 'alternative') medicine; and second, it suggests the currency in Britain of materials originating in the United States. Ideas about health, including healthy domestic practices, were generated not only locally but also internationally, not only by orthodox physicians but by practitioners working with a range of different medical paradigms. For readers seeking guidance on staying healthy, there was a bewildering (or perhaps invigorating) array of approaches, promulgated by an international pantheon of practitioners.

Alongside the increasing influence of scientific medicine and its establishment as an orthodoxy by the turn of the twentieth century, there continued a thriving diversity of competing understandings of the body, health and disease throughout the nineteenth century. Practices such as mesmerism, homeopathy, acupuncture, medical herbalism and hydropathy, alongside and in combination with phrenology and spiritualism, vegetarianism and temperance, dietary reform and exercise regimes (this list is not exhaustive) formed an evolving constellation of approaches to health and disease, hygiene and medicine, body and spirit, vital force and physiology. These were in no simple sense seen as straightforward 'alternatives' to more orthodox medicine – a category that was itself, in any case, still under construction. The historian of alternative medicine Roger Cooter demonstrates the difficulty of trying to distinguish between 'orthodox' and 'fringe' in the nineteenth century:

> The medical status of practitioners can be no criterion for demarcation, since many of those within these ['fringe'] practices were medically qualified. Neither on grounds of curative competency and efficacy, nor on grounds of economic gain, is it possible (then as now) to make any hard and fast distinctions; the incompetencies of orthodoxy were as renowned as the fortunes of certain homoeopaths, hydropaths and medical mesmerists. … Imposed distinctions between scientific empiricists and 'others' likewise do not stand, for always there were those well within the medical establishment who held to outlooks or to pet practices scarcely distinguishable from those on the 'fringe'. Several eminent physicians

> and surgeons in the nineteenth century simultaneously held important positions on both sides of the arbitrary historical fence. (Cooter 1988a: xiv)

This last point can be confirmed by reference to the domestic sanitarians encountered in the previous chapter. Drysdale and Hayward, authors of *Health and Comfort in House Building* (1890) and designers of houses with integrated ventilation systems, were both orthodox physicians and practising homeopaths.[9] The surgeon Thomas Pridgin Teale, author of *Dangers to Health: A Pictorial Guide to Sanitary Defects*, was not only an early convert to antiseptic surgery, but also one of three generations of Pridgin Teales to use acupuncture in their medical work (Bivins 2007: 127–8; Teale 1871: 567–8). And Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson, at the heart of the British medical establishment, never accepted germ theory, even though at the time of his death in 1896 it was on the cusp of attaining orthodoxy (Richardson 1897: 449–53). His less mainstream credentials also include arguing for the health benefits of vegetarianism; his familiarity with the work of Gall and Spurzheim, the originators of phrenology, as well of its key British proponents, Andrew and George Combe, whom he called 'great men' (Richardson 1887: 119); and his unswerving belief in the existence of something akin to vital force:

> We living men and women make in our own corporeal structures a refined atmosphere, which I have called a nervous atmosphere, or ether: an atmosphere which, present in due tension, distinguishes life: which absorbed or condensed distinguishes death: an atmosphere through which the external world vibrates and pierces us to the soul … A physical atmosphere lying intermediate to the physical and metaphysical life. (ibid.: 193)

The eminently practical man of science and advocate of sanitarianism was also a lifelong vitalist.

Just as medically trained doctors incorporated less orthodox practices into their work, so practitioners of 'fringe' treatments such as mesmerism, phrenology and hydropathy often sought legitimation through reference to 'positivist science and medicine' (Cooter 1988a: xi), and had complex relationships with more mainstream medicine. Kelvin Rees has shown how hydropathic practitioners saw themselves as offering a radical alternative to regular medicine, arguing that the use of drugs, vaccination and surgery were dangerous. Instead, they advocated the water cure: the use of water both internally and externally, fresh air, exercise and a simple diet as the route to health. Yet they shared with orthodox physicians their taxonomies of disease and understanding of physiology, and with domestic sanitarians their belief in the fundamental importance to health of clean air and pure water (Rees 1988: 30).

Despite their criticisms of scientific-medical approaches, heterodox practices shared with them an overlapping language and conceptual framework. The discourse of vitalism was of particular importance, bringing together the academic science of the Royal Society and the popular treatments of fringe practitioners. Vitalism accommodated both the findings of experimental and theoretical physics and chemistry, where scientists tried to identify the nature of vital energy as an electrical or magnetic force, and the discourses of the mesmerists, phrenologists and hydropaths, who promised better and safer ways of understanding the healthy and diseased body than those of the medical profession. Mesmerism, for example, was squarely vitalist, its defining substance, 'animal magnetism', understood as an invisible energy or fluid common to all organic life and whose free flowing was a necessity for health: 'If for any reason an individual's supply of animal magnetism were to be thrown out of equilibrium, one or more bodily organs would consequently be deprived of sufficient amounts of this vital force and would begin to falter' (Fuller 1982: 2–3). Health would return with the restoration of equilibrium to this fluid through the ministrations of a mesmeric practitioner.

The enthusiasm for animal magnetism was at its height in Britain in the 1840s, but thereafter, as Alison Winter demonstrates, 'mesmerism was absorbed into a variety of different disciplines and projects. In the process mesmerism itself was divided and became historically invisible' (1998: 348). One place it survived was in the work of phrenologists such as the Americans Orson and Lorenzo Fowler. But it also informs the work of the prolific writer of popular medical advice books, Edward B. Foote. When he writes of the activity of electricity or magnetism in the body, he says that 'I refer simply to that invisible element which gives activity to all its organs, and makes it radiant with life, and attractive or repulsive to other bodies coming within its influence' (Foote 1896: 623). The free circulation of this 'invisible element' is one of the foundations of good health: 'Disease of every character … originates in a derangement of the circulation of vital electricity, disturbance of the mind, or an abnormal condition of the blood' (ibid.: 26). Foote's books were revised and republished into the early twentieth century, their vitalist conceptions of health and disease continuing to find a readership even as vitalism itself was largely discredited.

Hydropaths, like mesmerists, characterized vital force as electrical or magnetic. For them, disease 'was related directly to the concept of the nerves as a self-regulating system of physiological functions driven by fine sources of electrical energy in the cerebrum' (Rees 1988: 36). John Smedley, owner of the Matlock 'hydro' (a water-cure establishment), wrote of 'the supposed battery (the cerebrum) where the nervous energy, or electricity, is concentrated for the mind to apply or use as it is wanted: just in the same manner as the battery is kept charged for use at the electrical telegraph station' (quoted in Rees

1988: 35). R. B. D. Wells, phrenologist and hydropath, author of popular advice manuals and proprietor of a water-cure clinic in Scarborough, also delineated the workings of health and illness with reference to electrical energy. Debility, he wrote, would rob 'the cheeks of their bloom, the eyes of their electrical brightness, and the step of its elasticity' (Wells [1878] [1910?]: 65).[10] But as well as speaking the hydropathic language of electrical energy, he also drew on scientific medicine, particularly the sanitarian commitment to pure air in the bedroom, making his case in precisely the terms that Richardson, Wilson and Galton had, through the invocation of oxygen and carbonic acid, and with calculations of the quantity of toxins emitted by a sleeping person (Wells [1880?]: 61).[11] Wells was careful to position his work as respectable both by aligning himself with orthodox doctors and by distancing himself from disreputable practitioners. Patients should seek 'an honest and skilful medical man or hygienic practitioner', he wrote, and beware of 'quacks' who 'seem to take pleasure in torturing the minds and frightening those who consult them by making their disorders appear worse than they really are, in order to extort as much as possible from their unfortunate victims' ([1878] [1910?]: 65). The complex heterodox medical terrain inhabited by practitioners like Wells, therefore, is perhaps best characterized as not simply or only defining itself in opposition to the 'orthodox', but, as Cooter suggests, 'as differently weighted fusions of both alternative and emerging-as-conventional outlooks' (1988b: 75).[12]

As well as occupying conceptual territory still indistinct from that of medical orthodoxy, heterodox practitioners were also part of, or at least formed by, a thoroughly international medical culture. Animal magnetism, phrenology, homoeopathy, medical herbalism and hydropathy all took root, in various forms and at different moments, in the Anglophone cultures of Britain and America as well as in Europe. Proponents and practitioners crossed the Atlantic in both directions, sometimes repeatedly, and even when they did not travel, their publications did. Most of the works written by Americans and Canadians referred to in this chapter – those by Hall, Foote, Hutchinson, Bowers – were published simultaneously or within a year in both North America and Britain, and American publications – Hall's *Sleep* is a particularly clear example – drew as much on British examples and studies as on American. The reverse, however, does not seem to have been the case: for example, R. B. D. Wells's *Vital Force* was published, the title page records, in 'London, Manchester, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Liverpool, India, Scarborough' ([1878] [1910?]), but not New York, Philadelphia or Toronto. Wells nonetheless acknowledges his debt to his American colleagues, referring to Thomas Low Nichols, the American hydropath who, with his wife Mary Gove Nichols (also a health reformer), lived in Britain after 1861, as 'a blessing to many thousands' (cited by Brown 1988: 182). Despite the increasingly secure authority of orthodox scientific medicine, heterodox medicine was still popular in the late nineteenth century, and part of a vigorous transatlantic health culture.

This was the context of the 'Laws of Life' article, where, in the vitalist vocabulary of mesmerism and hydropathy, when the vital force of one sleeper was at risk of being tapped by the other, the advice was to sleep in separate beds. Other heterodox advisers shared this view of the dangers of bed-sharing. Edward B. Foote, in his lengthy disquisition on 'Sleeping Apart', even quoted the 'Laws of Life' piece verbatim to warn that 'five to eight hours bodily contact in every twenty-four with one person' will result in the deleterious 'interchange of individual electricities, and the absorption of each other's exhalations' (1896: 867). Quoting from a newspaper, Foote urges his readers to emulate the practice of 'the plain people of Germany':

> 'The married people, of plain life, sleep in two single beds, each being a "sweet little isle" of its own, while the two are affectionately contiguous. The connubial neighbours can respectfully shake hands, and wish good-night and good-morning. But the territory of each is distinct; the cloths are cut separate; each bed is complete, and there is no continuousness of bolster or implied community of pillow.' The adoption of this custom would be a step in the right direction. (ibid.: 868)

The advantage of this arrangement over separate rooms is that it allows the couple to continue with the 'social luxury of spending their nights together' (ibid.). Twin beds preserve the sociability of the shared space while securing to each spouse an autonomous 'territory' unthreatened by any 'implied community of pillow'. Contact can be made between these two 'affectionately contiguous' domains, the spouses' mutual goodwill, their *entente cordiale*, ratified by a respectful handshake.[13]

Each sleeper's occupation of an independent sovereign territory preserves bedfellows' neighbourliness but accommodates too the conceptualization of vital force as electrical or magnetic. Quite which it is, Foote avers, is not of prime importance: 'Animal magnetism, electro-magnetism, galvanism, and electricity, all differ a little from each other, and in employing the term *electricity*, chiefly, in speaking of the nervous forces, I do so because it is a term better understood by the masses' (ibid.: 28; original emphasis). Understanding vital force as electrical, however, has implications for how it is understood to function. In his discussion of the physics of vital transfer between young and old, Foote explains:

> Children, compared with adults, are electrically in a positive condition. The rapid changes which are going on in their little bodies abundantly generate, and as extensively work up, vital nervo-electric forces. But when, by contact

> for long nights with elder and negative persons, the vitalizing electricity of their tender organization is given off, they soon pine, grow pale languid, and dull. (ibid.: 136)

The body of the child is generator and battery, producing and storing a plentiful supply of 'vital nervo-electric forces'. In a virtuous circle of youth, health and vigorous vitality, the child's body engenders this force but is also fuelled by it. Health depends on the proper circulation of 'animo-vital electricity' (ibid.: 29), which derives from food and air, is delivered to the brain by the nerves and blood, which then distribute it throughout the body just as the heart distributes blood. Vital electricity is circulated by the nerves, the body's 'telegraphic system'; any problems with this system were to be addressed by the electricity of the physician, who 'must be a *battery in himself*' (ibid.: 298; original emphasis). Domestic sanitarians likened the body as a house, but for Foote and his ilk it is analogous to the modern nation-state: its well-being is reliant on its complex internal circuits of instant and free-flowing communication, powered by electricity, and therefore also vulnerable to system breakdown resulting from depletion of the power supply. In such cases, the body needs the therapeutic input of power from the 'battery' of the practitioner's own body. Better, however, to guard against such depletion by taking to the well-insulated territory of the single bed.

Foote's identification of vital force as electrical was not the preserve of heterodox practitioners alone: indeed, as the century progressed, 'physicians increasingly described the body in electro-mechanical terms' (Peña 2003: 98). In her study of the place of electricity in American health cultures, Carolyn Thomas de la Peña notes:

> By 1871, Albert Steele, a doctor with an established New York practice, declared that his extensive research with electricity on the body led him 'irresistibly to conclude that man is but an electrical Machine, and that disease is simply a disturbance or diminution of the electrical forces in the system.' Many of the best medical theorists of the day offered some version of 'man the electrical machine'. (ibid.)

Despite the currency of this view, it was nonetheless heterodox rather than orthodox practitioners who made it a basis for their advocacy of separated sleep. William Whitty Hall, for example, in *Sleep*, concurs with Foote's arguments, even quoting his words with approbation, though unattributed (1861: 210–11). He opens his case for separate beds with the familiar domestic sanitarian argument: it is an 'absolute necessity to health … that these destructive, human emanations shall not accumulate … the two first steps being large rooms and separate beds' (ibid.: 108). But this is then combined with a 'conjectural reason … against two persons sleeping near each other':

> Each individual has an amount of electrical influence, which in its normal proportion, is health to him. Electricity, like air and water, tends constantly to an equilibrium, and when two bodies come near each other, having different quantities, that which has the greater imparts to that which has the less, until both are equal. … if a human body, with its healthful share of electricity or other influence, gives part of it to another which has less, it gives away just that much of its life, and must die, unless it is recovered in some way; … sleeping together in the same bed, is a certain injury. (ibid.: 108–9, 110)

The demonstrable facts of physics give Hall the basis of his argument. Air, water and electricity all tend towards an equilibrium; for Hall, therefore, vital force – also an electricity – shares this tendency. Two bodies with differing quantities of vital electricity will, like two clouds of different electrical states, undergo a natural process of equalization (ibid.: 110). Bowers cited the same argument approvingly in 1919: 'It is better for people not to sleep together, because if one has a weakness … that weakness seeks to be satisfied. If the sleeper's companion can satisfy that weakness, it is going to be taken, because the law of nature is toward establishing equilibrium' ([1919] 1920: 128). For such commentators, conceptualizing vital energy as electrical produced a view of the body as animated by a fully physical force which endowed it with vitality but rendered it vulnerable to harm through the operation of 'an unchangeable physical law' (Hall 1861: 110) resulting from the proximity of another, differently charged, body. The threat was all the greater because vital energy was understood as a finite resource whose depletion resulted in a shortening of the lifespan. This 'closed system view of human energy' was widely held: 'The body had a limited amount of force or energy that travelled through the nerves and produced productive force' (Peña 2003: 26). Once lost, vital energy was not easily recuperated.

Bed-sharing was risky, therefore, because it placed differently charged bodies in close proximity repeatedly and for long periods. Foote elaborates the point: 'Two persons of different sex and temperament sustain the electrical conditions of positive and negative to each other, and that contact, if of sufficient duration, produces an equilibrium, unless the one possessing the greater amount, restrains it by the action of the will' (1896: 624). In the context of the marital bed, equalization of electrical forces is harmful. Dissimilarity needs to be preserved. Difference in electrical energies, both in kind (positive and negative) and in quantity, is understood as both inevitable (in the first instance) and desirable, particularly with regard to conjugal and sexual relations.[14] Equilibrium is to be avoided, although close contact will tend towards this. Healthy relations are sustained only through interrupting that tendency and maintaining the positive or negative condition of each. For Foote, this exercise of will is the responsibility of the stronger party: the one with a greater store of vital energy must step in to halt the raid on their resources by the weaker.

Not all Foote's compatriot commentators shared his conclusions, but were divided on the risks of bed-sharing. While the views of the health reformer William A. Alcott, writing in the mid-century, had been broadly similar to Foote's – 'In general, only one person should occupy a bed', and, in particular, the elderly should never share a bed with the young – he continued: 'They who sleep together – if sleeping together we must have – as an occasional exception to the general rule, should be in good and perfect health, and of the same or nearly the same age' (Alcott 1857: 83). Sylvanus Stall, at the end of the century, also urged caution, advising young husbands that 'where there is a disparity of physical condition, or a considerable difference of age, or either person is suffering from the effects of any disease which contaminates the atmosphere, separate beds, and oftentimes separate apartments, are essential' ([1897?]: 100). For Alcott and Stall, differences in age or health should preclude bed-sharing, while physiological and temperamental equality rendered it if not safe, at least safer. Andrew Stone, in *The New Gospel of Health* (1875), went further, advocating a therapeutic approach to bed-sharing close to that prescribed by Sydenham: 'No two persons should ever sleep together in the same bed, unless it be for curative purposes, where the magnetic relations are fully understood, and it is directed by the intelligent physician to that purpose'; to do otherwise risked both physical and mental disease, as 'it is a law of mental dynamics and electric affinities that, when two opposite bodies come together, they NEGATIVE [*sic*] and repel with *precisely* the same degree of force' (Stone 1875: 249, 250; original emphasis). A process this powerful is not something to undertake casually on a nightly basis. The author of *Vital Magnetic Cure* reminded readers that an understanding of the power of nocturnal magnetic emanations brought with it responsibility: 'He cannot thereafter disregard its teachings without laying himself open to condemnation' (*Vital Magnetic Cure* 1881: 38). Such understanding is, however, a rich resource, allowing for the ready resolution of marital difficulties through the interruption of the equalization of energies, since 'we believe the cause of unhappiness to depend simply upon a chemical change taking place in the condition of the life forces of the parties in antagonism' (ibid.: 40). Marital strife is relocated from the social or interpersonal to the physiological and biochemical, thereby obviating all blame for the difficulties and promising a ready resolution.

The phrenologist Orson Fowler, in contrast, had a more robustly optimistic assessment of bodily electrical exchange than Foote, Stall, Stone and company. Fowler, a successful American popularizer of phrenology, applauded the effects of the transfer of electrical energy between husband and wife: 'Where two really love each other, both *get and give* strength. Even the stronger is improved more by what he gets, than injured by what he imparts. It benefits all who love each other. … It interchanges their magnetisms; which marvellously vivifies both' ([1875?]: 550; original emphasis). Dr W. T. Parker, writing in the American journal the *Medical Brief*, made much the same case: 'The contact of healthful, normal people, in the relation of married life increases strength …. Vital force and power, warmth and strength, pass from one to the other during the sleeping moments and without loss; each has increased vital resources' (Parker 1900: 205). Such practitioners, far from producing an alternative orthodoxy on bed-sharing, drew conclusions about its desirability or otherwise that were as diverse as their therapies.

Many of these American titles reached a British audience through their publication in the two countries. Whether this can be interpreted as equating with international success, or even respectability, is harder to ascertain. Foote and Hall, for instance, published their books simultaneously, or nearly so, in Britain and the United States, though to what kind of British reception is difficult to gauge. Hall's later book, *How to Live Long* (1875), was widely advertised in British periodicals on publication, and received a long and largely favourable review in *All the Year Round* (1876: 224–9); another of his books had been reviewed, in a generally positive if patronizing tone, in *The Saturday Review* (28 October 1871: 572–74).[15] This suggests that he was not readily dismissed as a quack, even if his zeal made him vulnerable to a moderating critical disdain. However, Richardson was subject to a similar condescension for his advocacy of domestic hygiene, so such a tone was not reserved only for heterodox practitioners.

The reception of Edward B. Foote's work is still more elusive. The British social reformer Annie Besant quotes from his *Health Monthly* in her column (Besant 1883: 232), although perhaps she had heard of him because of their common interest in birth control.[16] Despite his prolific publication record, his work does not seem to have been much advertised in Britain. The popular magazine *Judy* carried a quarter-page illustrated advertisement for his *Home Cyclopedia*, alongside small ads for a treatise on impotence, rubber appliances, and an urgent appeal by the Royal London Ophthalmic Hospital for donations (*Judy* 3 February 1904: 3). The resulting sense that his publications occupied a hinterland between the respectable and the risqué is reinforced by an advertisement in the same year in *The Academy and Literature*, in which a Birmingham bookseller is selling, alongside Foote's *Plain Home Talk*, an eclectic mix of titles: 'Boccaccio's Decameron, 2 vols and portfolio of suppressed plates'; 'Bewick's Birds, 2 vols., calf, nice set'; 'Hazlitt's The Book-Collector'; 'Wild Flowers worth Notice'; and 'Phallic Worship, Annotations on the Sacred Writings of the Hindus by Sellon, with plates, scarce' (26 November 1904: 495).

It seems that Foote's explicit anatomical and sexual content, albeit in a medical and advisory context, as well perhaps as his reputation as a pioneer of birth control, ensured him a mixed reception. By some readers, he was clearly treated as a source of serious scientific and medical knowledge. A lieutenant on HMS Penelope, for example, writing to the marital adviser Marie Stopes in 1920, reports owning a copy of Foote's *Plain Home Talk*. He calls it 'a really splendid volume of formidable dimensions', but from which he and his wife have gleaned worrying information about 'the *devastating* effects upon girls of the "secret vice"' (Hall [1978] 1981: 150; original emphasis). In *The Academy and Literature*, however, Foote's work was relegated to the mixed company of volumes clearly signalled as titillating, even if dignified by a patina of scholarly seriousness, alongside the more obviously respectable. Edwin F. Bowers, who made substantially the same case as Foote regarding the need for 'separate beds for health' but without the sexual content, suffered a less ignominious fate: his British publisher was the popular but respectable George Routledge and Sons, and his book, *Sleeping for Health*, was given a brief but positive review in *The Athenaeum* (12 March 1920: 352). While the reception history of these titles remains largely elusive, it seems clear that international publication cannot in itself be taken as indicative of any kind of uniform acceptance.

Whatever discrepancies there may have been in the British reputations of Foote, Hall and Bowers, the home-grown hydropath R. B. D. Wells was, like them, alert to the particular pitfalls and pressures of bed-sharing. For him, as for Orson Fowler, the transfer of magnetic power between the positive and negative partners was – with certain caveats – to be welcomed:

> Two healthy persons may sleep together without injury when they are of nearly equal age, but it is not well for young and old to sleep together. Married couples, between whom there is a natural affinity, and when one sex is of a positive and the other of a negative nature, will be benefited by the magnetism reciprocally imparted; but, unhappily, such cases of connubial compatibility are not common. (Wells [1880?]: 65)

Equality is the basis on which healthy co-sleeping is permitted. For young and old, this can never be the case, as inequality inheres in the age difference and the physiological distinctions that characterize this. Married couples present a different case. Those 'between whom there is a natural affinity' and whose 'natures' are positive and negative, Wells suggests, can share a bed and thrive, benefiting from the interflow of magnetism. Positive and negative magnetic complementarity is a sign of and reinforcement to compatibility. So where Foote finds that the positively and negatively charged co-sleepers need to prevent magnetic interchange by using twin beds, Wells welcomes such an exchange within a relationship underwritten by a 'natural affinity'. However, he notes rather dryly that such instances of complementarity between married people are 'not common'. Consequently, for the most part bed-sharing is to be eschewed.

In Wells's formulation, a healthy body is continuous with a healthy marriage; in turn, 'connubial compatibility' is enhanced by magnetic exchange. The health (or its lack) of a spouse, grounded in the complementary action of reciprocal magnetism between the two parties, becomes an index of the health of the marriage. Conversely, lack of connubial compatibility endangered not just the well-being of the marriage but also the physical health of the individual married person. Sadly, however, this gauge of compatibility is only available after marriage, when it is too late to retreat. By then, more often than not, the necessary complementarity will be found to be absent, and consequently bed-sharing is generally unwise. Far from a co-sleeper being an ally and comfort through the dark reaches of the night, he or she is more likely to be undermining one's own health, strength and happiness.

The physical threat to bedfellows was, therefore, twofold. If a fellow sleeper's exhaled breath didn't make you ill, then their impoverished vital forces might sap your own, leaving you, in the words of the 'Laws of Life' article, 'fretful, peevish, and discouraged' (*The Penny Illustrated Paper* 30 March 1872: 203). From neither perspective is the shared bedroom a place of quiet retreat, intimacy or repose. Nor, indeed, should it be a place of invigoration or excitement, let alone conflict. Rather, the bedroom, 'the room for the third of this mortal life, and that third the most helpless' (Richardson 1880: 3.287), condenses the dangers of the wider domestic environment, both because of the length of time spent there, and because sleep suspends the waking state of constant vigilance. Night after night, year after year, unless care is taken, those sharing a bed unwittingly put themselves at risk from the other's exhalations and from electrical exchange. The advice to sleep in twin beds was founded in anxiety about the mysterious and deleterious unseen forces at work in the atmosphere and energy fields surrounding and binding co-sleepers. Unconsciousness together with regular proximity constituted a long-term health risk for bedfellows.

In short, the bedroom environment was devitalized by the sleeping body; the impure air further endangered that body; and the possibility of a loss of vital force to a co-sleeper added a further dimension to the network of unhealthy intercorporeal exchanges. In this account, the human body, variously conceived, was a powerful but delicate instrument. It generated dangerously enfeebling waste products requiring systematic removal. It was sustained by a mysterious and wonderful vital force, akin to the power generated by an electro-magnetic battery. But this sensitive instrument was vulnerable to breakdown, its energy supply finite and in danger of being squandered, sapped by the unconscious physiological needs of the other. Consequently, the body and its energies needed careful monitoring, preservation and recharging. Having plenty of sleep 'is not idleness', wrote Richardson, but 'an actual saving, a storing up of invigorated existence for the future' (1880: 1.66). As well as guarding against environmental and constitutional vitiation, the health-conscious reader needed to adopt a regime that would safeguard the precious, vulnerable and finite reserves of vital energy.

Despite its metaphysical dimensions, and despite its affiliation with heterodox medical practices, the discourse of vital energy inhabits a world co-extensive with the more prosaic domestic sanitarian one. It is a place where invisible forces, whether corrupted air, impure water or the parasitic misappropriation of the forces of life itself by a co-sleeper, can wreak havoc with a person's health. Bodies are disconcertingly permeable to each other and to their domestic environments. Nothing is necessarily what it might seem to be – neither the air in the bedroom, nor the wallpaper, nor a loving spouse or doting grandparent. Risk lurks in the most unexpected of places, and, most unsettlingly, in the places and people usually thought of as sources of protection and purification. Plumbing should enhance cleanliness and thereby health, but instead might as easily return sewer gas to the heart of the home. A spouse should be a helpmeet, a source of comfort and nurturance, but instead may bring toxic exhaled breath to the marital bed. Grandparents should be wise protectors of their infant kin, but instead become thieves of their vital force. Only when the invisible threat is made visible in the bodies of the unwary can its presence be retrospectively identified. Many measures were advocated as protection against such dangers. Among them, in the bedroom, was the splendid and protective isolation offered by a single bed.

The perils threatening this vulnerable human instrument were not conceived as *only* intercorporeal. The purity of the air was of endless concern, its quality affected by outside pollutants and by one's own exhalations as well as by those of one's bedfellow, and these threatened lone as well as co-sleepers. Nonetheless, the relational dimension of the threat, the intensification of the risks in a shared bed, demanded special measures, leading many to agree that nocturnal health, safety and comfort could best be assured in the singular. An article called 'On Going to Bed' (1872) by the sketch writer Matthew Browne makes explicit this sense of the ideal sleeping circumstances:

> My notion of a *perfect* Bed would be to go to sleep swimming, or rocked on the top of a tree – that would unite perfect elasticity with the perfect independence of the body. But in a feather-bed, you feel as if you were

> going to become part of the apparatus, and to quote the great American pantheist again, though in a very different connection – you lose your individuality in a 'mush of concession'. (1872: 184; original emphasis)[17]

For Browne, the perfect bed would be an apparatus premised on the preservation of the independence and individuality of the sleeper against all threats to reduce it to a 'mush of concession'. The phrase is taken from an essay by Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American transcendentalist advocate of individualism, and used by Browne to repudiate an undifferentiated state of compromise, negotiation, connection, or other form of subservient relationality.[18] In Browne's fantasy, the perfect bed produces conditions akin to a state of asociality, the sleeper removed from all earthly nets and snares, suspended in total, natural and elemental isolation, cast away on the ocean or perched on a tree top.

Separate sleeping was the most secure way for all, including married couples, to guard against incursions by the other. For Foote, 'the reasons why married people should sleep apart are peculiarly striking and important' (1896: 868), and for Stall, 'oftentimes separate apartments, are essential' for them ([1897?]: 100). However, for those unwilling to give up the sociable pleasures of the shared bedroom, twin beds offered a satisfactory 'partial reform' (Foote 1896: 868), introducing a *cordon sanitaire* between bedfellows which promised a prophylactic hygiene based in the separation and autonomy they introduced. This regimen sought to exclude not only potential disease and malaise, but also the unseen currents running between co-sleepers, thereby delivering the couple to the rational and sensible choices of the waking world, where they might safely greet each other, as Foote had recommended, with a respectful handshake.

While intense scrutiny was afforded the circumstances of sleep – the bedroom, the mattress, the bedclothes – surprisingly little attention was given to the sleep to which these gave rise. The quality of sleep, its restfulness or capacity to restore, was important to these writers, but not principally as a source of health. Instead, sleep was significant because of its capacity to expose the powerful but invisible forces at work in the bedroom – air and vital electricity – which might injure the sleeper. A hygienic bedroom was not important for the restful sleep it might confer. Rather, the quality of sleep was an index for evaluating the bedroom environment. For domestic sanitarians and heterodox practitioners, the sleeping body was an instrument for the detection of environmental danger. Loss of vital electricity would leave one feeling 'fretful, peevish, and discouraged' (*The Penny Illustrated Paper* 30 March 1872: 203), the presence of those feelings exposing the loss of vital energy. Similarly, an unhealthy environment could be extrapolated from unwholesome and unsatisfying sleep. Sleep is of interest as it can unveil the truth about the environment, rather than the environment being of interest because of its capacity to affect sleep, whether for good or ill.

As so often is the case, Richardson serves to exemplify this process. Recounting a visit to a seaside resort he notes that, over several nights, he awoke in the morning feeling cold, nauseous and with an oppressive headache. Opening the window more widely made no difference. He questioned whether he might be getting ill, or had eaten something that disagreed with him, but the answer to each question was negative. Still perplexed, on the third night he had a dream:

> I was a boy again, and I was reading the story, so I dreamt, of Philip Quarles, who, like Robinson Crusoe, was lost on a desolate island, and who could not sleep on a pillow stuffed with the feathers of certain birds which he had killed, and the feathers of which he had used for a pillow. The dream led me to examine the pillow on which my own head reclined. … It turned out that the pillow and bolster had been recently made up with imperfectly dried feathers, and some of these were undergoing decomposition. (Richardson 1880: 4.382)

In this briskly practical pre-Freudian interpretation, Richardson's dream saves him from the dangers of sleep, and the failure of his domestic sanitarian detective work is redeemed by the very state of oblivion which made him so vulnerable.[19] Philip Quarles (more properly Quarll), the hero of a popular Crusoe-esque narrative *The Hermit* (1727), is the perfect analogical figurehead for the domestic sanitarian quest to become omniscient master of a solitary territory, and Richardson's dream leads him to diagnose correctly the source of his malaise. His sleeping body, it transpires, is alert to the 'sulphur-ammoniacal odour' of the pillow as his waking mind is not, and his dream provides a bridge between the two. The quality of his sleep allows him to gauge the safety or toxicity of his environment; his dream allows him to diagnose the problem. Not only does a wholesome environment produce wholesome sleep, so, conversely, restful sleep is itself a reassuring sign of a healthy environment.

Sleep is an important index of health, but few sleepers will be gifted a diagnostic dream such as Richardson's. More commonly, sleep deserves attention because unconsciousness is a state during which the guard is down and the sleeper unable to exercise reason and caution. Therefore, the physical circumstances of sleep – the position of the bedchamber, its ventilation, the filling of the mattress, the proximity of a co-sleeper – warrant discussion insofar as they can ensure the purity of the environment, determine the quality of sleep and safeguard the sleeper. Sleep is a time of particular vulnerability, and is of interest if it enables it to be designed out of the environment.

There is no sense in the work of these writers, therefore, of sleep as a complex phenomenon whose quality is determined by a range of factors, only some of which are environmental and within the sleeper's control. Even a book promising a more sustained investigation of the phenomenon, Walter Whitty Hall's *Sleep*, turns out to be much more interested in all the material co-ordinates of a generally healthy regimen – air, moderation of the appetites, cleanliness, sunlight and so on – than in sleep itself, which remains a curiously marginal player in the dramas of moral and social improvement with which the book is more concerned. For Hall, the health advantages of twin beds result from the interruption of magnetic exchange, from their facilitation of a regular sleep regime, and from their capacity to refine the circumstances of sleep in line with individual preferences in a way that is impossible when sharing a bed:

> It is a well-known fact that some persons require more bed-clothing than others; one feels so much oppressed as not to be able to sleep with an amount of covering which leaves another in so chilly a condition as to make refreshing sleep an impossibility. A high hard bolster is essential to the comfort of one, while another is incommoded by a slight elevation of the head during sleep. There are cases not a few where one person can not sleep with a window up without especial bodily suffering for some time afterwards; others feel as if they would suffocate, or are in a process of certain poisoning, unless the windows are hoisted to their fullest capacity for the admission of an abundant supply of out-door air. In all these varieties of cases, there does not appear to be a better and an easier remedy than that of separate beds and rooms for all. (1861: 138–9)

The rationale for separate beds extends here to include not only the interruption to the equalization of magnetic forces, but also to allow for more prosaic individual preferences for warmth and fresh air. Foote objected to any 'continuousness of bolster' because of the deleterious interchange of electricities this allowed. For Hall, an additional objection would have been that such a continuousness would be unlikely to suit the preferences of both. The benefits to health of twin beds result not only from the avoidance of the exhaled breath of the other, or of their sapping of one's vital force, but also from the fine-tuning of the environments optimal for each. Health and comfort in bed can best be achieved by greater and greater individuation, and separation from the threats and nuisances introduced by other people.

Domestic sanitarians and fringe practitioners were not the only late nineteenth-century commentators to write about sleep. Nor, indeed, did all such commentators subscribe to twin beds. Dr J. C. Atkinson, for example, took a broadly sanitarian stance, and rehearsed at length the necessity of clean air, natural light and the relative merits of the feather bed and the horsehair mattress, but did not conclude that twin beds needed to be part of the hygienic regime. He noted only that 'it is not conducive to health for more than two to sleep together on a bed', adding rather opaquely that 'in the domestic economy of comparatively barbarous nations, it is a common practice for every individual to have a separate cover' (Atkinson 1867: 43–4) – although whether by this he intended that we should emulate the closer-to-nature practices of the barbarous or eschew them for their unreconstructed primitivism is unclear. In some other guides to sleep, the vexed question of double versus twin is absent; whatever renders sleep more restful, restorative and reliable is not to be decided by sharing a bed or sleeping alone.[20] More concerned with sleep as a route to health than as a diagnostic indicator of other health-related concerns, these books tended to share Atkinson's more direct approach to the subject: 'Sleep is so identified with health that one is the necessary consequence of the other, in fact, it may be said to mean one and the same thing, for we cannot be in good health without being capable of enjoying sound and refreshing sleep, and if we sleep well we cannot be otherwise than in good health' (ibid.: 17). In the accounts of Atkinson and others who shared his view, sleep is not a mediator of other bodily, affective or environmental states, but a good and healthy practice in its own right. How and where this might best be achieved is important, but whether it be in a double or a twin bed irrelevant.

The advocacy of twin-bedded sleep for couples was never universal, even among domestic sanitarians. Nor did twin beds ever entirely oust the double in the bedrooms of married couples, or in the marketing materials of the stores that sold bedsteads and mattresses to them. These two forms of conjugal sleep existed side by side, for some easily, for others as a source of contention and dispute, for much of the twentieth century. What remains striking is just how much ground was gained by twin beds and how long it was held. The end of the nineteenth century brought with it the final demise of miasma theory as an explanation of the disease transmission. Nonetheless, neither the doctors nor the householders who favoured twin beds saw any need to abandon their allegiance. Instead, a new rationale for them was found: the manifest modernity of twin beds.

4

Coda
Modern sleep

In 1909, Woods Hutchinson, a British-born and American-educated doctor, published a book called *Health and Common Sense*. The book's opening words strike a note quite at odds with the dominant tone of the medical advice of the domestic sanitarians and the fringe practitioners of the late nineteenth century. He begins: 'It isn't so very dangerous to be alive. One would really think it was, to hear the preacher moralise upon the shortness and uncertainty of human life and the doctor discourse on the everywhereness of germs' (Hutchinson 1909: 1). Hutchinson takes this robust and optimistic assessment of health into the rest of his book. Despite the ubiquity of germs, despite the manifold impediments to longevity, living, he suggests, is what we humans do, and we really do it quite easily and quite successfully. The human body 'is not a pulpy victim of circumstances, but the toughest, most resisting, most marvellously adaptable and most ferocious organism that the sun shines on' (ibid.: 3).

The world conjured by Dr Hutchinson is a benign place compared with the one scrutinized by Dr Richardson. The fragile and vulnerable human subject beleaguered in a hostile and pernicious environment is superseded by a tough, adaptive creature with a talent for survival. Hutchinson still endorses the key tenets of the domestic sanitarians' credo. Fresh air and sunlight are the main guarantors of a healthy domestic environment; the bedroom should be well ventilated, with all the windows open 'from the top at least one, and better two to three feet, so that a gentle current of air can be felt blowing across the face' (ibid.: 112). The bed and bedding need to be simple and hygienic: 'The modern hair-mattress or its equivalent, single pillow and blankets, or cheese-cloth-covered "comfort," which can be cleaned and aerated by turning the hose on it, can hardly be much improved on' (ibid.: 112–13). But this is all the home-dweller needs to know when contemplating his sleeping arrangements: 'Beyond these there is no virtue whatever in hard beds, flat or no pillows, and cold bedrooms. Just another instance of the deification of the disagreeable' (ibid.: 113). The concision of his recommendations, together with his no-nonsense and sanguine tone – epitomized by his refusal to deify 'the disagreeable' – are in striking contrast to the anxious prolixity of the domestic sanitarians.

Hutchinson's bluff stance articulates a modified version of domestic sanitarianism, but one now tempered by common sense. While the notion of common sense itself suggests that it has no need of definition – its premise is the commonality of the understandings to which the term is applied – nonetheless, Sophia Rosenfeld has usefully characterized it as a body of ideas and opinions prevalent at any given moment that constitute 'the truisms about which all sensible people agree without argument or even discussion … the tacit backdrop to all our more conscious activities and thoughts and supporting us through daily life' (2011: 1).[1] As the title of Hutchinson's book – *Health and Common Sense* – indicates, science was no longer needed to underwrite his litany of hygiene-related recommendations regarding the need for ventilation and sunlight. Instead, his brisk and vigorous prose presents the familiar advice as self-evident rather than innovative, and all the more persuasive for being rooted in good sense rather than science. 'The good, hard common sense of humanity' has solved all the problems of the bedroom by jettisoning the errors of the Victorians: 'The four-poster and its curtains, the night cap and the warming pan' are, he writes, 'relics of a barbarism' that have gone to 'the attic or the ash heap, where they belong' (Hutchinson 1909: 112, 113). Scientific rationale had relied on the revelations of the laboratory, the microscope and the test tube to press for changes in practice. The rationale of common sense relies instead on the anticipation of widespread agreement to argue for the status quo, for what is rather than what ought to be. Sense, wisdom and reason can now be safely assumed to be best guides in the equipping of the home, and to be the preserve of the populace rather than the experts – or, rather expert and public are now taken to speak with one voice. In effect, the case that had had to be made so frequently and at such length by the domestic sanitarians had been won.

Hutchinson could write with the assumption that his readership was already practising what he preached. His expectation of a popular willingness to accept his recommendations testifies to the success of a scientific case whose founding rationale – the miasma theory – had by now lost credence, finally ceding place to a paradigm founded on germ theory, where bacteria, the agents of infection, could be identified, classified, tracked and countered. The exhaled breath of a fellow sleeper had been relegated from its position as the matrix of all manner of disease to become only the intermittent bearer of specific and identifiable germs. Nonetheless, common sense continued to reiterate the terms of a residual science, endorsing a set of sleeping practices that had acquired cultural purchase beyond their hygienist origins. The sleeping public were not yet ready, despite having scientific permission to do so, to relinquish their twin beds.

Common sense, however, comprised more than just the terms and recommendations of a residual science. An additional dimension shapes Hutchinson's approach to health-related domestic advice. While fresh air and sunlight continue to be presented as the foundations of a healthy home, the main stumbling block is no longer ignorance, as it had been for Richardson and Schofield, but a failure to embrace modernity. 'The old-fashioned house is the very mother of infectious disease', he writes: 'Though it has been said scores and hundreds of times, I may be pardoned for again repeating that *the one and only group of conditions under which disease germs can live and retain their malignancy until they can be transferred to another human victim* is that offered by these old-fashioned houses, viz., darkness, dampness, and absence of fresh air' (ibid.: 166; original emphasis). Seeking good health in the houses of yesterday is bound to fail, for disease is lodged in their very fabric and design. Instead, the health-conscious householder needs to look for health in the designs and materials of the new century:

> Now that we have succeeded in getting architects and builders to break away from the mere slavish and brainless imitation of the antique, the classic and the picturesque, and to utilise the superb new control of forms, of openings and of exposures which the toughness and plasticity first of wood and later of steel and concrete have given them, a veritable new world-field of architectural possibilities is opening. (ibid.: 151)

Notably, it is not the architects and builders – the professionals and experts – who have been in the vanguard in the turn to sensible and hygienic modern buildings. This is a grassroots triumph, where 'we' have finally succeeded in persuading them to embrace the structural possibilities brought by the new century, that indeterminate 'we' gesturing towards a coalition of hygiene-conscious doctors and the commonsensical lay public. At last, 'builders are eager to follow the popular taste' (ibid.), and the result is an urban environment attuned to the requirements of healthy living and fit for the twentieth century:

> One of the most striking features of our modern city development is the vast and gratifying improvement in both healthfulness, lightness, and beauty of modern city homes. Even the much-abused flat or tenement, when constructed intelligently and on scientific lines, is not only far more comfortable, but wholesome and healthier in every way than the detached cottage or average farmhouse of fifty years ago. The model tenement is better lighted and ventilated than the brownstone front, while nothing

> as ideal for wholesome human comfort has ever been invented in any previous age as the better or even average class of suburban homes. (ibid.: 151–2)

Domestic hygiene is still the basis of healthy living, but the watchwords in the quest for this ideal are no longer education and vigilance, but structural innovation and modernity of design and material, all founded in scientific insights and moderated by a popularly endorsed good sense. Experts are no longer the heroes in Hutchinson's narrative of the onward march of scientific progress, but co-workers in a loose and varied federation of forward-thinkers.

This embrace of modernity as a guide to domestic arrangements shaped not only the advice of Woods Hutchinson, but also of Dr Edwin Bowers, in his *Sleeping for Health* ([1919] 1920). For Bowers, the healthy modern bedroom in the healthy modern house would, self-evidently, be equipped with twin beds. They figure in his writing not as exceptional or innovative, not as in need of doctors to make the case for them, but as the norm, one of the signs of a commitment to domestic modernity. 'The practice of sleeping in separate beds, adopted in most modern households, is one of the most health-bringing reforms humanity has ever instituted' ([1919] 1920: 121–2), he writes. This is a new century, and the ways of the old now look archaic, clumsy and misguided: 'Sensible people' in 'nice, modern homes' no longer allow themselves to 'sleep in a museum packed full of gimcracks' (ibid.: 117). As for Hutchinson, so too for Bowers, domestic sanitarianism remains a reference point. He writes gratefully of the domestic innovations such as the metal bedstead, initiated in the days when 'sanitation became a science' (ibid.: 116). But now, by the time of writing, the health rationale for twin beds was no longer principally to be found in the disease potential of the breathed breath of the other. While disease prevention is mentioned in passing – twin beds guard against the transmission of infections such as coughs and colds – the gradual acceptance and final embrace of the germ theory of disease over the final two decades or so of the nineteenth century had, for the most part, rendered that argument less compelling. This notwithstanding, while the exhaled breath of the other 'may not actually cause disease', it is still to be avoided, as 'it certainly is most unhygienic and unaesthetic to be obliged to breathe the offensive breath of one who suffers from catarrh, decayed teeth, or stomach disorder' (ibid.: 122). It would be hard to argue with the common sense of this observation.

Rather than focusing on the avoidance of disease, twin-bedded sleeping hygiene is now premised on aesthetics and comfort. Separate beds allow sleepers to turn over at will, to sleep on whichever side they wish, to have the quantity of bedclothes that suit their preferences. In sum, for Bowers 'separate beds for every sleeper are as necessary as are separate dishes for every eater. They promote comfort, cleanliness, and the natural delicacy that exists among human beings. Sleep becomes more relaxing, and therefore more reconstructive – next to consciousness itself, the most wonderful and healthful thing in life' (ibid.: 127–8). Health is still the cornerstone, but its contours are quite different from those giving shape to Richardson's advice. Disease transmission is now a minor player in the drama of the bed. The choice of twin beds depends only in small part on hygiene as a route to disease avoidance. Equally important is their contribution to the quality of sleep, to comfort and to delicacy, all of them directly related to a sleeper's nocturnal autonomy.

The tone and emphasis of Hutchinson's and Bowers's books are indicative of a more general change in advice regarding the best and healthiest way to sleep. With the incremental acceptance of germ theory and the concomitant demise of miasma theory in the late nineteenth century, the rationale for choosing beds shifted focus. By 1897, a marketing leaflet from Heal's, the well-known London furniture store, was pleased to announce that 'the "sanitary" craze' was over. No longer did the wooden bedstead, until recently seen as an 'unclean thing, the abomination of all good and careful housewives', have to be rejected in favour of the iron bedstead which had predominated for twenty or thirty years ('A Consideration of the New Wooden Bedstead', 1897. Heal's archive, AAD/1978/2/271).[2] Recently, the leaflet asserts, beauty had had to be sacrificed to hygiene in the choice of bedsteads. Now, however, Heal's were introducing the 'New Wooden Bedstead', which 'combines all the hygienic advantages of the metal, with the artistic possibilities of the wooden bedstead'. As domestic sanitarians shifted their attention from miasma to bacteria, furnishings were now no longer the focus of so much health-related anxiety, and the choice of bedstead became once again a matter of design or aesthetics rather than only of hygiene. Cleanliness did not cease to figure in discussions of bed types but it was now deemed possible to combine it with artistic merit. As Alison Bashford notes, 'Turn of the century "dirtiness" was slightly different [from that of the mid nineteenth century], in ways which permitted an easier, less confronting contemplation of oneself as a source of infection' (1998: 146).[3] It was not that lessons learnt from the sanitarians could now be ignored but that they could be scaled down, taken for granted and accommodated with less anxiety and rigidity. They had become common sense.

And with this transition, twin beds came increasingly to be discussed as a design choice for married couples rather than only as a health choice, as they had been for recent generations of co-sleepers, whether spouses or siblings, hired girls, clerks and apprentices.[4] Twentieth-century sleepers still welcomed what twin beds offered, but they offered them something rather different from before. By no means reckless of the hygienic advances of the nineteenth century, avowedly *modern* fellow sleepers allowed questions of style to figure more prominently in their sleeping arrangements. The distinctive forms and materials of modernity were, it seems, to be found not only in the cities, streets and houses of the new century, but also in the bedrooms and bedsteads that lay, mostly unobserved, within them.

PART TWO

Modernity

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5

Anti-Victorianism and the modern home

For sanitarians, doctors and other late nineteenth-century health practitioners, hygiene and modernity were co-extensive with each other. Miasmatic theory, germ theory, vitalism, hydropathy, along with eugenics, the nature cure and phrenology: all provided a framework in which a hygienic regimen, whether founded in scientific advance or in a return to the simple purities of natural living, promised an evolving and avowedly modern route to health. The progressive possibilities of the hygienic present stood in contradistinction to the infelicities and errors of the unhygienic past, but were themselves only a staging post on the long march towards an ever-brighter future; and twin beds were annexed to a vision of this cleaner, healthier time to come. But if the progressive credentials of twin beds arose initially from the sanitarian commitment to clean houses and fresh air, what was it that sustained their association with modernity – that endlessly mobile, endlessly alluring if unsettling consciousness of the vertiginous distinctness of 'now' – in the new century, once hygiene ceased to be the chief criterion? How did their proximate-but-separate forms channel, shape, embody and assert a sense of the modern in the new century?

Twin beds came into focus in the first section of this book as technologies of hygiene. Now, they will be reframed as technologies of the modern. However, to claim twin beds as a site in which the forces of cultural modernity might be observed at work itself calls for some elaboration, for the 'modern' is one of the most multivalent concepts in the critical lexicon and one that might seem to have little to say about choices of bedroom furniture: for by some definitions the domestic has, as Rita Felski suggests, been seen as the antithesis of all that is modern. 'The vocabulary of modernity', she suggests, 'is a vocabulary of anti-home', celebrating instead states of 'mobility, exile, boundary crossing'. 'It speaks enthusiastically about movement out into the world, but is silent about the return home. Its preferred location is the city street, the site of random encounters, unexpected events, multiplicity and difference. … Home, by contrast, is the space of familiarity, dullness, stasis' (Felski 2000: 86). The home, by this account, is that against which modernity defines itself.

However, this repudiation of the domestic is more a feature of the cultural aesthetic and politics of modernism than of modernity itself. As the critics John Carey, Christopher Reed and Judy Giles (among others) have noted, the modernist and masculinist rhetoric of writers, artists and architects such as D. H. Lawrence, Wyndham Lewis and Le Corbusier was in some measure a reaction against, on the one hand, the innovations of democratization and mass culture, and, on the other, the perceived feminine associations of cultural movements such as Aestheticism, the Arts and Crafts movement and the 'domestic modernism' of the Bloomsbury group.[1] Modernism accommodated the repudiation as well as the celebration of that which was modern. It embraced the flux and anonymity of the urban, the rootless meanderings of the flâneur, the hard lines and anti-romantic aesthetic of the machine age, but it rejected the equally modern introduction of the pleasures of consumption to new mass markets, the rationalization and technologization of the home exemplified by the new suburbs, the time-space compression of the daily commute and the seaside holiday. Yet, as critics such as Alison Light, Alan O'Shea and Mica Nava have shown, this latter dimension of modernity is as important, as culturally, socially and politically influential and transformative, as rooted in the expansionist capitalist economics of colonialism and industrialization, as was the former.[2] The home was the object of modern scientific scrutiny, theorization and innovation, first in the sanitarian project of the late nineteenth century and then in attempts to render it a more efficient and rational workplace.[3] It offered new possibilities for consumption, whether of interior décor, household appliances or new styles of furniture, thereby allowing for the production and exhibition of finely calibrated class distinctions and aspirations by its occupants.[4] And it was the place where the modern marriage, increasingly understood as companionate and defined by its provision of sexual pleasure as much as by its generation of offspring, was to be staged. Twin beds were not just modern because of the historical moment of their inception, nor only because of their genesis in the progressivist context of scientific rationalism embodied in domestic sanitarianism, but also because of their appearance in contexts and environments where the aesthetics and agendas of cultural modernity were established and exemplified.

Twin beds were modern in their commitment to hygiene, health and rationality, but also in the ways they embodied that commitment: that is, their modernity was discernible in their refusal to reproduce the materials, the forms and styles and the associations of earlier beds. In the early twentieth century, when twin beds had made considerable inroads into the marital bedrooms of the English middle classes, what this meant above all was that they clearly refused to be Victorian – despite their origins in the final third of the nineteenth century. Ironically, despite twin beds being products of a thoroughly Victorian faith in science and progress, the twentieth-century enthusiasm for this mode of sleeping was, at least in part, expressed as an explicitly anti-Victorian commitment to the modern.

The capacity of the epithet 'Victorian' to signify for the new century all that was to be rejected or ridiculed in the realm of domestic taste is well known. The Victorian house, the familiar story goes, was dark, cluttered, elaborately decorated and oppressive; its furnishings were both ugly and absurd.[5] These were either heavy, ornately carved and richly upholstered, as stiff, ponderous and pompous as those who dwelt among them, or else they were sham, whimsical, gimcrack, ill-proportioned and fussy, full of stylistic tics, redundancies, flourishes and furbelows. The outcome of these failures in taste was such over-specialized furnishing redundancies as the whatnot, the davenport and the teapoy.[6] In short, in the brave new world of the twentieth century, Victorian interior décor came to be seen as 'a hideous wriggling muddle of bastard styles', as John Betjeman caricatured it (1953: 247).[7]

Such judgemental characterizations were quick to take hold, and held sway for much of the ensuing century despite periodic Victorian revivals along the way.[8] In 1901, for example, Charles Holme, editor of the influential journal of design reform *The Studio*, published a book self-consciously marking the importance for domestic design of the demise of the old century and the advent of the new. The nineteenth century, he suggests, was characterized by its 'numerous attempts to revive styles belonging to the past'. Now, however, 'that the new century should generate a style characteristically its own … is the desire of all who have given close attention to the principles that govern truly artistic work' (Holme 1901a: 3). In domestic architecture, this would mean the wholesale sweeping away of the ersatz and the redundant in design: 'We shall accordingly be content no more with sham castles or sham abbeys; sham manor houses or sham cottages; no more with turrets and pinnacles, oriels, orders, pediments, traceries, canopies, Mediaeval glass, Classical statuary, Elizabethan timber-works, Jacobean plaster-work, rustic ingles and cottage nookeries; all dexterously imitated, but irritatingly unreal' (Prior 1901: 12). The old mongrel habit of ornament, clutter, whimsy, pastiche and revivalism was to be abandoned. The new century demanded a new authenticity of design and purity of line expressive of the present, rather than seeking to evoke tradition and value through adherence to 'sham' versions of the artefacts of earlier periods.[9]

It was not only the inauthenticity of Victorian design that offended but also the character of the domestic interiors thereby created. In 1929, the design critic John Gloag published *Modern Home Furnishing*, a modestly priced book in the 'Macmillan's Sixpenny Self-Help Library' series. Here, alongside advice on styles and colours for the new small houses that had been built so plentifully after the First World War, he looks back on the contrasting styles of the previous century, observing that 'the manufacturers of the Victorian Age were obsessed with patterns and styles and the production of heavy stuff that looked rich and respectable', while at the end of the Victorian period, the so-called 'New Art' (Art Nouveau) was 'a riotous outburst of original design', 'a fantastic orgy of violent decoration' (Gloag 1929: 64, 65). A preponderance of pattern and heaviness, on the one hand, and a surfeit of self-consciously artistic, 'individual' and original decoration, on the other, demonstrate what is to be avoided in the modern home.

Gloag's opinions on the infelicities of Victorian style remained largely unchanged through subsequent decades. In 1961, and by now an eminent historian of furniture and design, he published *Victorian Comfort: A Social History of Design 1830–1900*, a book which combines his encyclopaedic knowledge of the field with a tone that at times comes close to a sneer. Indeed, Gloag himself acknowledges that 'this study of Victorian comfort is *not* impartial'. His thesis is that the Victorians' 'love of comfort debilitated the critical faculties', resulting in a civilization that 'combined high moral standards with deplorable taste' ([1961] 1973: xvi, xv, 30). Given his modernist design allegiances (he was a member of the influential MARS group in the 1930s), Gloag's dislike of Victorian style is to be expected, but what is more striking is the endurance of this practice of 'othering' Victorianism through to the 1960s.[10] In matters of domestic style, the Victorian showed remarkable staying power in its capacity to stand for all that had to be rejected in order to confer supremacy on modernity. The modern was predicated on its difference from what had been repudiated. To be modern in the first half of the twentieth century was not only to refuse to be Victorian, but to find Victoriana abject.

Disavowals of Victorianism did not wait for the demise of either the eponymous monarch or the century over which she had presided. The Arts and Crafts style, the basis of English notions of modernity in domestic design in the early twentieth century, was a late Victorian reaction against Victorian methods and standards of mass production as well as of the designs of these products. Similarly, art nouveau – the 'New Art' dismissed by Gloag – was a late Victorian rejection of earlier Victorian style.[11] As Herbert Asquith remarked as early as 1918, the Victorian age 'had ended at least a decade before 1901', the year of Victoria's death (Taylor 2004a: 3). However elastic and compendious the notion of 'the Victorian' may have been, it was also recognized as a potent and evocative shorthand gloss signifying much more than the length of a reign.

Twentieth-century accounts suggest that the rejection of Victorian style was not only an assertion that it was passé, redundant or anathema to a new age, but also implied recognition of the profoundly formative power of that which was being sloughed off. Victorian décor was not only judged ugly and absurd, but its ugliness and absurdity was responsible for having constricted and distorted those who dwelt with it. Virginia Woolf's frequently cited declamation that 'in or about December, 1910, human character changed' ([1924] 1980: 1.320) is arguably less interesting as a register of the impact of Britain's first post-Impressionist exhibition (the occasion of her remark) than for the way that it is premised on the idea that who we are – our 'human character' – is in part a cultural phenomenon. Woolf does not just suggest that the exhibition changed people's modes of perception, but that it transformed their subjectivities as well as their sensibilities. 'Human character' and the sense of self, Woolf's remark suggests, are constituted by style and aesthetics as much as by family, education, gender, history or psychology – and thus by Victorian interiors as much as by the Edwardian or 'modern' ones that succeeded them.[12]

The work of Lytton Strachey, Woolf's friend and fellow member of the Bloomsbury group, not only shares her assumption about the power of aesthetics in the formation of subjectivities but focuses it more particularly on the singular importance of domestic style in this process. Strachey's best-known work, *Eminent Victorians* (1918), had been a waspish and iconoclastic exercise in cutting the Victorians down to size, and in 1922 he took that project closer to home in an essay he read to the Bloomsbury group's Memoir Club.[13] 'Lancaster Gate' – the essay's title refers to the street in Bayswater in which Strachey grew up – combines an account of the shaping power of the domestic environment (in both its material and its recollected forms) in processes of subject formation with an Oedipal shudder at the style and atmosphere of the family home. It proceeds by in turn evoking, analysing and deploring what made this 'grim machine' (Strachey 1971: 27) of a house, as he called it, so eminently Victorian.[14]

The Stracheys' house at 69 Lancaster Gate – a 'portentous place' – is introduced with these words: 'Its physical size was no doubt the most obviously remarkable thing about it; but it was not mere size, it was size gone wrong, size pathological; it was a house afflicted with elephantiasis' (ibid.: 18). Its distorted proportions joined with its extravagant decorative style to trouble and overwhelm the senses. The front door opened on to a dark passage 'with its ochre walls and its tessellated floor of magenta and indigo tiles' (ibid.). Upstairs, one entered the drawing room through 'a gigantic door, with its flowing portière of pale green silk' (ibid.: 20). Once inside, in the presence of a shadowy amalgam of décor, furnishings and the 'countless groups of persons' who inhabited the 'foggy distances' of the ill-lit room, one was confronted, asserts Strachey, with 'the riddle of the Victorian Age' (ibid.). This room, 'the holy of holies', 'the seat of its [the house's] soul', was 'the concentrated product of an epoch' (ibid.). The house and the enigmatic essence of 'the Victorian' are one, materialized in an eclectic decorative mode which culminated in what Strachey calls 'the citadel of the great room' (ibid.: 21). This was the more distant of the room's two mantelpieces, its extraordinary form embodying the epoch. The mantelpiece was a 'bulk of painted wood with its pilasters and corniches, its jars and niches, its marble and its multi-coloured tiles', combining, in a dizzying profusion of stylistic references and 'with an effect of emasculated richness, the inspiration of William Morris, reminiscences of the Renaissance, and a bizarre idiosyncrasy of its own' (ibid.). The drawing room, in Strachey's own assessment, was a composite of Victorian ugliness, redundancy and absurdity.

Strachey's analysis of the room, however, went beyond such judgements, for its capacity always to surprise him suggested that it somehow eluded his intellectual or conscious apprehension:

> Familiar, incredibly familiar as it was to me, who had spent my whole life in it, there was never a time when I was not, in the recesses of my consciousness, a little surprised by it. It was like one of those faces at which one can look for ever without growing accustomed to. Up to my last hour in it, I always felt that the drawing-room was strange. (ibid.)

The unfamiliarity of the familiar, the unhomeliness of the home, recalls Freud's uncanny (1919), in which the familiarity of the everyday environment is momentarily experienced as strange and unsettling, and the inanimate momentarily manifests qualities and an affective force more commonly ascribed to sentient beings. So the drawing room is, Strachey writes, like a face – which, in the estimation of his contemporary, the sociologist and diagnostician of the modern Georg Simmel, is 'the symbol of everything that an individual has brought with him or her as the prerequisite of their life. In it is deposited that which has dropped from his past to the bottom of his life and has become permanent features in the individual' (Simmel [1907] 1997: 112–13).[15] The face, Simmel suggests, condenses its bearer's history. It is deeply familiar and endlessly communicative but also cryptic, irreducibly strange, an index of the ultimate unknowability of the person of whom it is perhaps synecdoche, perhaps metonym. In Strachey's analogy of room and face, environment and inhabitant, past and present, body and psyche co-exist in a queasy continuum of mutual influence.

This sense of a two-directional flow between the domestic and the psyche forms the foundation of Strachey's thesis, articulated at the outset of his essay:

> The influence of houses on their inhabitants might well be the subject of a scientific investigation. Those curious contraptions of stones or bricks, with all their peculiar adjuncts, trimmings, and furniture, their specific, immutable shapes, their intense and inspissated atmosphere, in which our lives are entangled as completely as our souls in our bodies – what powers do they not wield over us, what subtle and pervasive effects upon the whole substance of our existence may not be theirs? (Strachey 1971: 16)

'The influence of houses on their inhabitants' had already, of course, been the subject of detailed scientific investigation in the work of Sir John Simon, Benjamin Ward Richardson, George Wilson and other domestic sanitarians. But while Richardson saw only disease and malaise generated in a house's 'inspissated' – thickened or condensed – atmosphere, Strachey saw it as generating the inhabitants' very selves. Their lives were not only 'entangled' in the fabric of the house and its furnishings but subjected to them: 'What powers do they not wield over us...?', he asks. Those powers, borne by the inspissated air, are still subtle and pervasive, but no longer feared as disease-laden. Instead, they are wondered at, perhaps lamented, but certainly scrutinized and analysed, as psychologically potent. Moreover, it is this conscious conviction of the shaping powers of the domestic interior, Strachey asserts, that separates the modern house-dweller from the Victorian. 'Our fathers', he suggests, 'would have laughed at such a speculation; … the notion that the proportions of a bedroom, for instance, might be significant would have appeared absurd to them' (ibid.: 16). The nonchalant 'for instance' here belies just how significant for Strachey the composition of a bedroom would turn out to be.

The overwhelming impact of the invisible atmospheric powers of Lancaster Gate, 'the subtle unperceived weight of the circumambient air', Strachey wrote, was to restrict and oppress him:

> An incubus sat upon my spirit, like a cat upon a sleeping child. … Submerged by the drawing-room, I inevitably believed that the drawing-room was the world. Or rather, I neither believed nor disbelieved; it *was* the world, so far as I was concerned. Only, all the time, I did dimly notice that there was something wrong with the world – that it was an unpleasant shape. (ibid.: 27; original emphasis)

The atmosphere of the house submerges and impregnates him, threatens his being by presenting its own close contours as if it were a world in itself. Earlier, he had described the house as 'the framework, almost the very essence – so it seemed – of our being' (ibid.: 26). The house – its architecture, gloom, disposition, furnishing and decoration – is the crucible in which the epoch is condensed and its subjects forged. Yet Strachey suggests too that the house contained the seeds of its own dissolution, the material flaw in its own hegemonic fabric. Although the drawing room was to him the world, he notes that he always dimly perceived that world as having 'an unpleasant shape'. His aesthetic sense, his artistic judgement, escapes full determination by the powers of the domestic, but in its recognition and rejection of this unpleasant shape he also reveals how that sense is itself dependent on, because formed by, that which it rejects. The sense of discernment and contradistinction owes its being to that from which it distinguishes itself.

This aesthetic refusal is the first sign of the failure of Lancaster Gate fully to subsume Strachey, but it is not the only one. It is matched by a drive altogether less decorous, unrulier and more powerful than the aesthetic. Furthermore, the event that finally released 'some magic spring within' him, enabling his spirit to leap into a 'freedom and beatitude' (ibid.: 27) unimaginable within the drawing room, was itself both domestic and undomesticated. Coming home late one summer night – so late, indeed, that it was already early morning – Strachey recounts how he climbed staircase after staircase to reach his bedroom at the very top of the house:

> I opened the door and went in, and immediately saw that the second bed – there was invariably a second bed in every bedroom – was occupied. I looked closer: it was Duncan; …. As I was getting into bed I saw that all the clothes had rolled off Duncan – that he was lying, almost naked, in vague pyjamas – his body – the slim body of a youth of nineteen – exposed to the view. I was very happy. (ibid.: 28)[16]

It is sexual desire which releases the magic spring and frees his spirit, undoing the malign spell cast by Lancaster Gate. But it is also the specific configuration of the house – the inevitable second bed, empty and available – that allows this beatific vision of homoerotic loveliness, clad only in 'vague pyjamas', to be spread before his eyes as he enters his room. Lancaster Gate is Strachey's Victorian oppressor but it is also his liberator, delivering, despite itself, the promise of unimagined freedoms.

Strachey's account suggests that both his aesthetic and his sexual sense are generated by the architectural character and domestic appurtenances of the family home. Without the hideous drawing room, without the second bed in his bedroom, these would not have developed as they did. Both senses, though, are also dissident. They turn, in related acts of Oedipal refusal, against the father's house. Strachey's account of his aesthetic repudiation of the house precipitates his narrative of an event which constitutes its sexual repudiation, and together these comprise a psychic disaffiliation. But these repudiations also testify to, and indeed rely on, the generative power of the 'curious contraption' (ibid.: 16) – material, social and affective – that is the family home to form the indwelling selves. Strachey's account suggests that our psychic interiors are fundamentally also domestic interiors.

For Strachey it was Lancaster Gate's drawing room that was the 'holy of holies', but other commentators found the seat of a house's soul to lie elsewhere. For the popular historian Esmé Wingfield-Stratford, who was 'something of an acknowledged expert on the Victorian period' (Taylor 2004b: 81) and published three histories of it in the 1930s, it was the marital bedroom that was awarded that title.[17] In the first of the three, *The Victorian Tragedy* (1930), a book which shares Strachey's distaste for the Victorians without the benefit of his acerbic wit, Wingfield-Stratford suggests that the marital bedroom had been 'the Holy of Holies in the vast temple of middle-class domesticity' (1930: 139). What was sanctified there was not the conjugal relation, he argues, but reproduction: 'To be fruitful and multiply, in spite of the teachings of Mr. Malthus, was a sacred duty. That was what the marriage union was originally for, and that, too, what the Holy of Holies, the marriage chamber, was for' (ibid.: 142). The material concomitant of this reverence for reproduction, Wingfield-Stratford suggests, is the double bed. Citing George Bernard Shaw's description of marriage as 'combining the maximum of temptation with the maximum of opportunity', he continues: 'The double bed, *otherwise so obviously inconvenient*, is a silent witness to its [Shaw's aphorism's] truth. By the strange inversion of propriety that reigned behind closed doors, any suggestion of substituting two beds for one would have been regarded as not very nice. There are old-fashioned people, even to-day, who have not wholly cast off this prejudice' (ibid.; my emphasis). For Wingfield-Stratford, the double bed was a highly ideological choice of household furniture, bearing the weight of his sense of the Victorian investment in marriage, procreation and respectability. In the Victorian age, he suggests, twin beds were seen to lack propriety, perhaps because they interrupted the symbolic unity of the fecund couple. Discernible here too, however, is a glimpse of the reputation of twin beds at the time of writing. Only 'old-fashioned people' would now, in 1930, think of such beds as 'not very nice' for married people; they have acquired the patina of modernity, of a norm. More striking, however, is Wingfield-Stratford's parenthetical comment on the double bed. Its symbolic clout aside, he suggests, it is 'otherwise so obviously inconvenient'. Its inconvenience (for whom? In what way?) is unexplained: it is so obvious, so self-evident and commonsensical, that explanation is redundant. His words suggest not only a popular evaluation of outmoded Victorian domestic and familial mores from the vantage point of 1930, but also lay bare the foundation of his verdict: the taken-for-granted sense that the double bed belongs to a bygone era and the casual assumption that twin beds are now the modern choice.[18]

If the immense Victorian parental double bed was seen in the 1930s to represent Victorian values, twin beds were, formally, a way to cast them off.[19] Even those who disapproved of the new century's turn to twin beds, such as their arch-critic Marie Stopes, recognized them as a riposte to the politics and economy of the double. 'The Victorian double bed from which there was no retreat created problems people thought to solve by the twin bedstead, but in turn the twin bedstead creates graver problems which go unrecognised', she wrote (1935: 58). For Stopes, twin beds might be modern, but they are a sign of just how badly modernity has gone wrong. Not only that, she suggests, but the problems they create 'go unrecognized': they have become sufficiently commonplace and uncontentious that their insidious and deleterious effects go unnoticed.

By the 1930s, this mode of marital co-sleeping had clearly taken hold. Twin beds had by then enough currency to figure unelaborated in Wingfield-Stratford's account and to draw Marie Stopes's fire – there is, after all, no call to protest at something that has no cultural presence or purchase. By what means had these paired objects ceased to be items only of earnest sanitarian or medical recommendation and become, for better or worse, the sleeping arrangement of choice for many English married couples? How did they transform from being objects valued for their hygienic properties to become popular bedroom furnishing choices valued for their style and comfort? How did their form signal their modernity and their anti-Victorianism? And when a couple chose to sleep in twin beds, how did this choice announce them as committed to a thoroughly modern marriage?

6

Modern by design

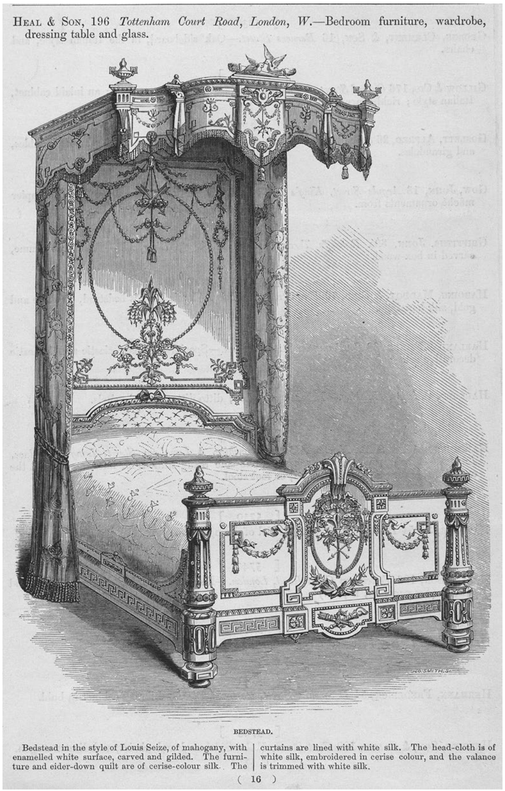
Despite the recommendations of separate sleeping arrangements from many late nineteenth-century health practitioners, twin bedsteads – named and marketed under that name – were a long time coming. Couples wishing to introduce Dr Richardson's 'single bed system' into the marital bedroom could, of course, perfectly well do so by purchasing two single beds. But in so doing, they bought two individual, potentially unrelated objects. They had to improvise the alliance between them for themselves. Moreover, in buying their two single beds, they would have been participating in a health-related activity rather than a consumer event. Only at the point that two identical single beds were sold as a pair and unified under the name of 'twin bedsteads' was this way of sleeping afforded an identity, a status, an aura and a distinct cultural presence of its own. This chapter begins by tracing the coming to market of twin beds, and then tracks the relationship between these new consumer commodities and the idea of 'the modern' that was so fundamental to their early twentieth-century reputation.

The catalogues of the Tottenham Road furniture store Heal's, which until 1880 sold only bedding, bedsteads and bedroom furniture, offer an invaluable perspective on the process whereby twin bedsteads came to the shops. The timing of their introduction in different furniture stores varied, and Heal's was not the first: the rival furniture store Maples, for example, was quicker to appreciate their sales potential (Barty-King 1992: 49, 51). Nevertheless, the wealth of material in the Heal's archive allows for a detailed account of twin beds' gradual move to centre stage. Heal's is not typical of the many Tottenham Court Road furniture stores: at the turn of the twentieth century it became closely identified with the design agenda of the Arts and Craft movement, owing to the allegiances of the new managing director, Ambrose Heal. The very singularity of the Heal's profile, however, is itself illuminating, shedding light on taste and fashion among the more design-conscious purchaser as well as among the buyers of cheaper machine-made styles.

Heal's began as a feather-dressing business and mattress manufacturer in 1810, but soon expanded into the production of bedsteads and bedding. By mid-century they were selling an extraordinarily wide variety of bedsteads, single and double, in metal and wood, elaborate and simple, expensive and cheap. Their 1853 catalogue shows four-poster bedsteads in mahogany and brass; canopy, half-tester and tent bedsteads; French, Parisian and stump-end bedsteads; portable iron bedsteads for army officers on the move; press bedsteads for servants, folding iron bedsteads, and chair, couch, ottoman, sofa and stretcher bedsteads; cribs, cots and children's beds; bedsteads ranging in price from thirteen shillings and sixpence for a small, plain iron bedstead to £45 for an enormous (six foot by eight foot) 'Four-Post Bedstead of Elaborate and Chaste Design', and every price and size in between (Heal and Sons 1972: n.p.).[1] A dizzying array of bedsteads, of all sizes, styles and prices, could be purchased at Heal's, but nowhere in this cornucopia of sleep apparatuses can twin beds – two matching single beds, placed side by side – be found.

The inference to be drawn from the Heal's 1853 catalogue is that to sleep together meant to share a bed. A marriage bed was still unquestionably a double. This was certainly the case at the International Exhibition, an art and industry fair held in London in 1862, more extensive in scope even than the Great Exhibition of 1851, and attracting more than 6 million visitors (Greater London Council 1975: 137). Here, Heal's exhibited an opulent half-tester bed in mahogany faced with white enamel (Figure 3).[2] It attracted a short but approving review in the *Illustrated London News*, its decorated carvings singled out for particular praise: 'The symbols in which it abounds', wrote the reviewer, 'manifest that its designer was a devout devotee at the altar of Hymen'. Those symbols included 'two cooing doves enjoying each other's caresses … a pair of arrows braided together … everything is in pairs, and these pairs are always united' (*Illustrated London News* 27 September 1862: 22). Exhibited before the heyday of domestic sanitarianism, this bed, with its proliferation of iconographic conjugal pairings and its emphasis on union and harmony, was a fitting edifice upon which to enthrone and celebrate the married couple.

The importance of the later hygienic 'craze' (Elder-Duncan 1907: 178) associated with sanitarianism can be gauged by another Heal's exhibit at an international exposition some two decades later. The International Health Exhibition was held in London in 1884, with the aim of extolling, showcasing and selling the latest sanitarian recommendations and products. Once again, Heal's contributed a stand to the exhibition, this time a fully furnished set showing 'a dainty little bed-room, for a young lady' (*Illustrated London News* 2 August 1884: 6).[3] The bed here could hardly be more different from the one exhibited in 1862. The bedstead itself is simple and modest, of brass or iron rather than carved wood, industrially produced rather than handmade,



HEAL & SON, 196 *Tottenham Court Road, London, W.*—Bedroom furniture, wardrobe, dressing table and glass.

GEO. SMITH. Sc.

BEDSTEAD.

Bedstead in the style of Louis Seize, of mahogany, with enamelled white surface, carved and gilded. The furniture and eider-down quilt are of cerise-colour silk. The curtains are lined with white silk. The head-cloth is of white silk, embroidered in cerise colour, and the valance is trimmed with white silk.

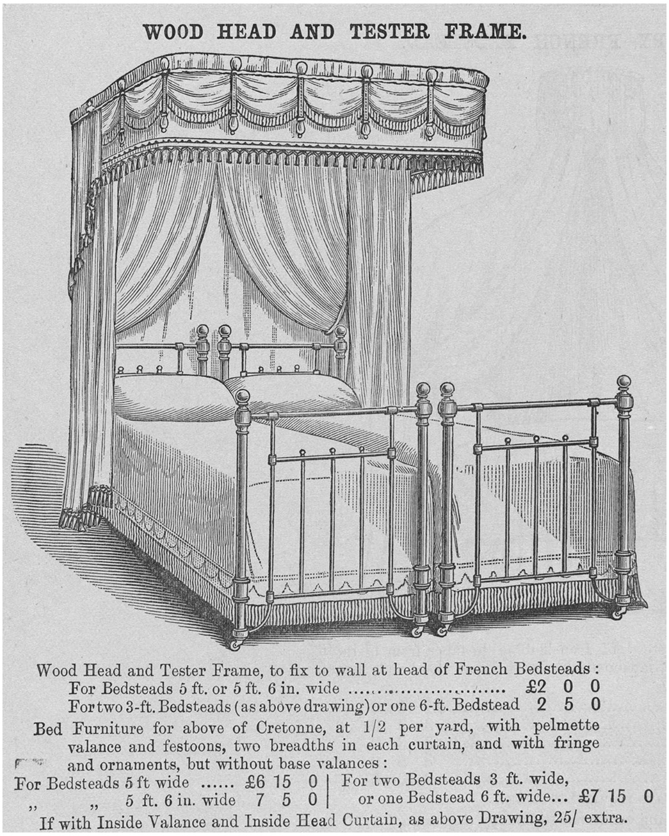
(16)

FIGURE 3 *Heal's half-tester bed from the 1862 International Exhibition.*

although its drapes lend it a comfortable feel. It is, strikingly, a single bed. However, even with the growing influence of the domestic sanitation movement and the focus of the exhibition on new modes of sanitary house design and equipment, the only concessions Heal's made to hygienic design were the fabrication of the bedstead in metal rather than wood, and its being a single not a double bed. They did not capitalize on health-related marketing possibilities by imagining the hygienic bedroom as twin bedded. Perhaps, as the historian Esmé Wingfield-Stratford was later to speculate, to do so would have been seen as 'not very nice' (1930: 142). For whatever reason, Heal's did not exhibit twin beds at the exhibition, nor did they advertise them in their catalogues through the 1880s, the high point of sanitarian influence. At a time when suites of bedroom furniture were widely available for sale, Heal's sold no ready-matched set of single beds which announced themselves as a pair, as belonging together as well as standing apart.[4]

For most of the nineteenth century, therefore, Heal's designed, produced, sold and exhibited every kind of bed imaginable except for twin beds. Beds intended for one person, and beds intended for two (or more), had always existed. From time to time married couples slept in the same room in separate beds: notably, Samuel Pepys encountered such an arrangement on his travels in 1661: 'Of all the nights that ever I slept in my life, I never did pass a night with more epicurisme of sleep' (Pepys 2003: 155). It was even the case, as all historians of the bed note, that twin bedsteads had made a brief first appearance at the end of the eighteenth century, when Thomas Sheraton had designed his elaborate 'Summer Bed' for couples (Wright [1962] 2004: 201). These notwithstanding, their moment had not yet come, nor was it to for another century. Only in the 1880s did they make their cultural – though not yet commercial – debut, in the advocacy of the domestic sanitarians.

While Richardson's term for separated sleeping was 'the single bed system', by the 1890s 'twin beds' had become the recognized term, both in Britain and the United States, for the separated marital beds gaining currency in the two countries. In 1892, the popular magazine *Comfort* noted the discarding of the 'old-fashioned double bed' in favour of 'the fashion of "twin beds"', observing that 'no fashion has more quickly obtained a firm hold' (*Comfort* 4, October 1892: 8). Their rise in popularity might have been rapid, but the name was clearly still novel enough to warrant the use of inverted commas. A piece in the *Medical Brief* in 1900 suggests the trend continued unabated, the author titling his article 'The Twin Bed Fad' and noting disapprovingly, 'In the homes of wealth and refinement one sees more and more of twin beds – for use by married people' (28.1: 205). These were both American publications, but, at much the same time, the term also entered the English lexicon. By 1892, Maples' stock 'comprised 600 designs in French, Italian, Half-Tester, Four-Post and Twin bedsteads' (Barty-King 1992: 49). Heal's was slower to feature these new paired bedsteads in their marketing materials. They first pictured twin beds, although they did not yet name them, in a small 'Curtains and Carpets' catalogue in 1893, where what was being advertised was not the beds but the fitment (frame and drapes) over the beds' heads: 'Parisian Bed Drapery … to be used over one large double bedstead or two single bedsteads, placed side by side as shown' (Heal's archive, AAD/1978/2/267). In the following year, the same image appeared in the catalogue of bedsteads and bedding, joined by another, this time of a half-tester (canopy) over twins. In both cases, the beds are shown closely side by side, with no space between. Indeed, initially they might be taken for a double, particularly since in both cases the two beds are further unified by having a single half-tester over their heads ('Catalogue of Bedsteads and Bedroom Furniture', 1894. Heal's archive, AAD/1994/16/2278/1 1885; Figure 4). Again, in neither case is it the bedsteads themselves that are being advertised, but their accessories – the half-tester, the Parisian drapery. The existence of accessories designed either for two singles or for a double suggests that an appreciable number of couples were already



WOOD HEAD AND TESTER FRAME.

Wood Head and Tester Frame, to fix to wall at head of French Bedsteads :
For Bedsteads 5 ft. or 5 ft. 6 in. wide £2 0 0
For two 3-ft. Bedsteads (as above drawing) or one 6-ft. Bedstead 2 5 0

Bed Furniture for above of Cretonne, at 1/2 per yard, with pelmette valance and festoons, two breadths in each curtain, and with fringe and ornaments, but without base valances :

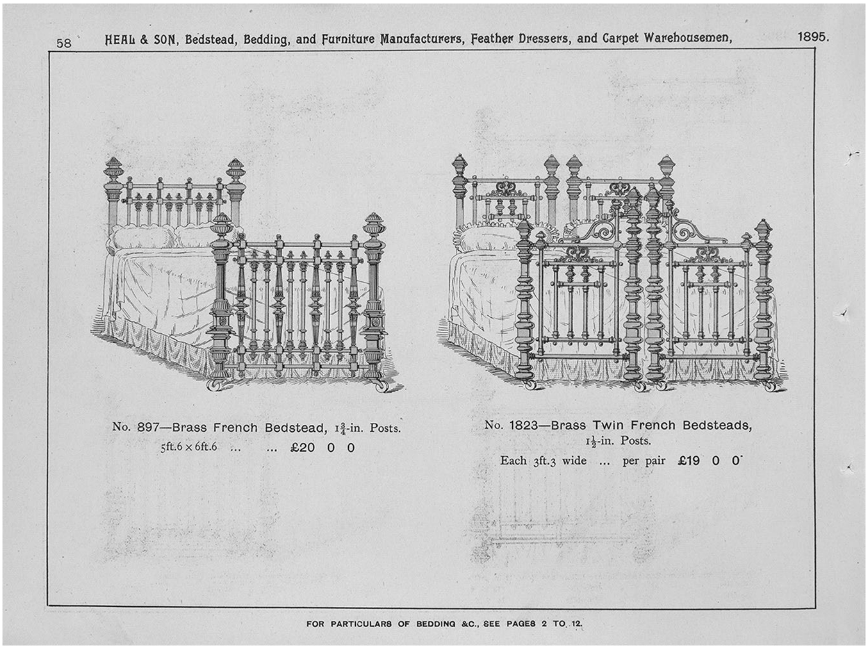
For Bedsteads 5 ft wide £6 15 0
„ „ 5 ft. 6 in. wide 7 5 0
For two Bedsteads 3 ft. wide, or one Bedstead 6 ft. wide... £7 15 0

If with Inside Valance and Inside Head Curtain, as above Drawing, 25/ extra.

FIGURE 4 *Heal's wood head and tester frame.*

sleeping this way, and choosing between a double or two singles for the marital bedchamber.

At last, in the 1895 Heal's catalogue twin bedsteads make their entrance proper, appearing as a product dignified and made visible by their own name: 'Brass Twin French Bedsteads, 1 ½-in. Posts. Each 3ft 3 wide … per pair £19.0.0' ('Catalogue of Bedsteads and Bedroom Furniture', 1895. Heal's archive, AAD/1994/16/2291 1895; Figure 5).[5] No longer are customers left to undertake the twinning of two singles for themselves; no longer do they have to imagine the effect of two single beds placed side by side. Instead, the catalogue makes that imaginative move for them, explicitly inviting customers to consider twin bedsteads as an alternative to the double. Now, finally, the single and the double had been joined in the pantheon of beds by twin bedsteads – two identical single beds sold as a set and intended for use in one room, each bed for one person, but for one person alongside another. Sleepers in twin



58 HEAL & SON, Bedstead, Bedding, and Furniture Manufacturers, Feather Dressers, and Carpet Warehousemen, 1895.

No. 897—Brass French Bedstead, 1¾-in. Posts.
5ft.6 × 6ft.6 ... ... £20 0 0

No. 1823—Brass Twin French Bedsteads,
1½-in. Posts.
Each 3ft.3 wide ... per pair £19 0 0

FOR PARTICULARS OF BEDDING &C., SEE PAGES 2 TO 12.

FIGURE 5 *Heal's brass twin French bedsteads.*

bedsteads were, *by design*, simultaneously together and apart. Just in time for the new century, twin beds had arrived at Heal's.

Twin bedsteads had come out of the shadows, and from then on were everywhere represented as something distinct. Their ascendency in the British home was gradual, but they gained steadily in visibility in the early years of the century, by which time Heal's was advertising a catalogue entirely devoted to 'Twin bedsteads in brass, iron and all kinds of wood' ([untitled], 1902–1909. Heal's archive, AAD/1978/2/176). In 1907, an advertisement in *The Gentlewoman* magazine informed readers, 'A Special Show of Bedsteads suitable for standing side by side is now being made' (1 June 1907: xxi. Heal's archive, AAD/1978/2/176). Twin bedsteads had achieved an identity and a level of popularity that afforded them a prominent place both in store and in advertising materials.

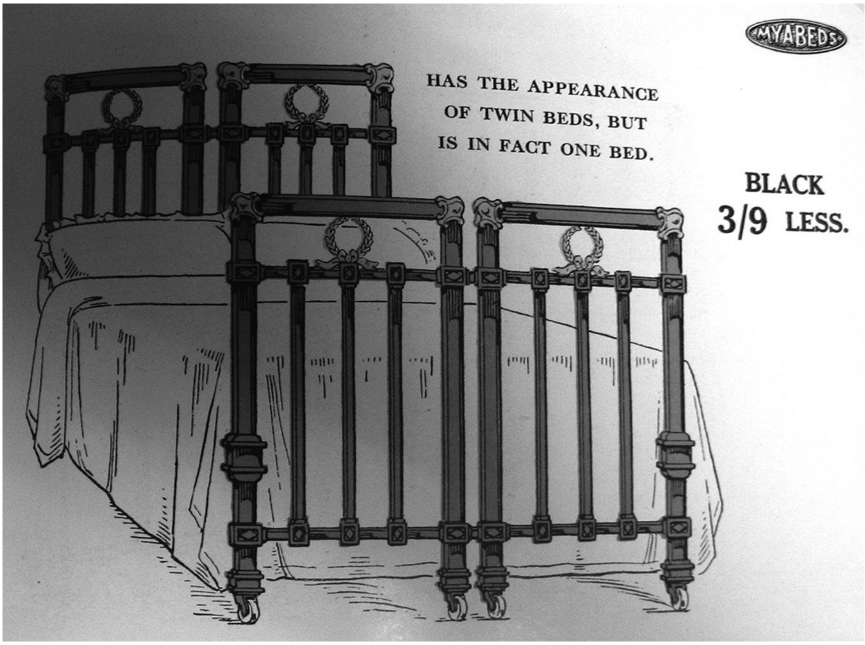
Commentators and advisers on household decoration noted this trend in the furnishing of the bedrooms of married couples. In *Das Englische Haus* (1904–5), a landmark book in architectural history and criticism, Hermann Muthesius, the German architect and cultural attaché to Britain, observed that nowadays 'the English custom whereby married couples share a conjugal bed is occasionally abandoned' in favour of twin beds, also noting how 'great is the preoccupation with questions of hygiene in the English bedroom'

(1979: 227, 224). We are left to infer the extent to which the change to twins was attributable to this English 'cult' of hygiene. In 1907, the architect John Hudson Elder-Duncan made a similar remark in his book *The House Beautiful and Useful*: 'The double bed has given way to some extent to the French twin bedstead – which should be selected is a matter of choice' (Elder-Duncan 1907: 179).[6] By the 1920s, the press and household advice books made frequent reference to their popularity, and by 1930 Esmé Wingfield-Stratford was able to take for granted that his reference to the greater 'convenience' of twin beds needed no explanation.[7] *The Complete Household Adviser* offers some clarification: twin beds are 'much more easy to move, make, clean, and take to pieces than double beds, and more convenient during illness' (n.d.: 21). Twin bedsteads had been generated by a desire for a healthy house, but were now sustained by a desire for a convenient and rational one – more practical, easier to keep clean, more efficient. Given the 'servant problem' – after 1918, the enduring lament of the English middle classes was that good servants were hard to find and harder to keep (Light 2007: 178–87) – such matters were of increasing interest to the housewife, now sometimes finding herself participating in housework as well as overseeing it. A decade later, another advice book, *The Home of To-Day* ([1934?]), was still testifying to both the ubiquity and greater convenience of twins: 'Single beds are now almost universally the custom, not only for convenience, but also for health reasons' ([1934?]: 114). Hygiene and convenience have become the bywords for twin-bedded sleep, the nineteenth-century rationale for twin beds now joined by a twentieth-century one. The bedroom was to be rationally equipped, its furnishing choices governed by good sense and practicality.

Home advice publications certainly noted the arrival of twin beds, but so too did social commentators. Early in the Second World War, the poet and novelist Robert Graves and historian Alan Hodge published a social history of the interwar period, *The Long Week-End* (1941). The book was, they wrote, 'intended to serve as a reliable record of what took place, *of a forgettable sort*, during the twenty-one-year interval between two great European wars' (Graves and Hodge 1941: 11; my emphasis), and as such it is an invaluable catalogue of small-scale events and cultural ephemera. One such forgettable detail, recorded in a chapter offering a vignette of recent changes to domestic life, noted that, during these years, 'White painted wooden twin-beds replaced the old mahogany or brass double-bed for married couples' (ibid.: 181). Twin beds were not only perceived by Graves and Hodge to be the new norm. Their introduction was also seen to be noteworthy, an indicative domestic fragment in the piecing together of a social history.

Graves and Hodge do not invoke twin beds approvingly, as part of a roll call of contributors to the long march of progress towards greater health and a more efficient home. Instead, their twin beds belong to a list dedicated to exposing the lapses in taste of the class adopting them. The newly built houses in the suburbs might be the objects of 'a new-found pride of the younger women, who wished everything to conform in cleanliness and respectability to their new domestic standards' (ibid.: 171), but they reintroduced a taste for sham, so long the object of contempt for the critics of Victoriana. Not only was there a tendency towards mock-Tudor and 'pseudo-Jacobean', but more generally, Graves and Hodge suggest, 'this was the age of disguise', evinced in such atrocities as 'a William-and-Mary commode … gutted to house a gramophone and records; a Georgian sewing-box repartitioned for cigarettes' (ibid.: 180). They might have added to their list, but didn't, the interwar double beds sold by Myer's whose headline selling point was their mimicry of twins: 'Imitation of Twin Bedsteads', announced one, and 'Has the Appearance of Twin Beds, but Is In Fact One Bed', the other (Figure 6; see too Myer 1976). Graves and Hodge's white-painted twin beds may not themselves be sham, but they jostle with a mish-mash of objects that together suggest social and aesthetic anxiety, aspiration, inauthenticity and uncertainty: 'glass-topped dressing-tables: buoyant imitation-leather chairs; chromium-plate and glass bathroom appliances; miraculously organized kitchen-cupboards with white enamel fittings; lamps and lamp-shades of degenerately seductive style' (Graves and Hodge 1941: 181). However twin beds may have been seen in the 1920s, by 1941 they can occasion an unmistakable curl of the lip. No longer the preserve of the health-conscious forward-thinking middle classes, they have joined other objects of lower-middle-class consumer desire made increasingly available by hire purchase. Graves and Hodge's dismissive mockery of the taste of this class is as unashamedly snobbish as Betjeman and Orwell's Gordon Comstock had been in the 1930s.[8] Whether deplored as adjuncts of ersatz suburban style or celebrated for their contribution to the practicality of the modern rational home, twin beds were an interwar innovation that, for better or worse, defined – as Lytton Strachey might have said – the spirit of the age.

It was not only in the bedrooms of the English middle classes (however defined and judged) that twin beds, with their twin promise of better health and convenience, found a place. If the middle classes secured their place in modern popular domesticity, their claim to be modern went well beyond this, into their reproduction in the more rarefied domains of art and design. By the turn of the century twin beds were to be found not just in furniture emporia such as Heal's and Maples, but also in the cultural milieus that helped define understandings of just what constituted 'the modern' in matters of taste and style. They feature in influential art magazines such as *The Studio* and the *Magazine of Art*; at national and international exhibitions associated with innovations in architecture, art and design, such as the Paris Expositions of 1900 and 1925, as well as the more commercial and conservative


MYABEDS
HAS THE APPEARANCE
OF TWIN BEDS, BUT
IS IN FACT ONE BED.
BLACK
3/9 LESS.

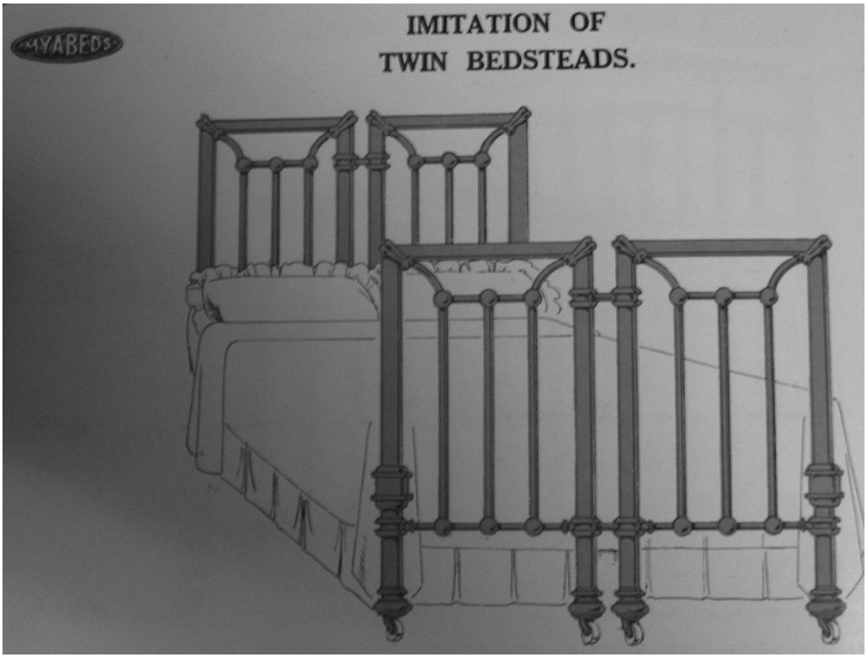

MYABEDS
IMITATION OF
TWIN BEDSTEADS.

FIGURE 6 *Myer's double beds mimicking twin beds.*

exhibitions such as the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibitions that began in 1908. They figure too in the work of prominent British, European and American architects and designers such as Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Betty Joel, Wells Coates, Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright. Whether as part of the Ideal Home Exhibition's promotion of a modern consumerism represented by the technologization of the domestic environment, or of the anti-Victorian aesthetic of the Morris-inspired Arts and Crafts movement promoting simplicity and integrity of materials, design and function, or of the emerging values and machine-age agenda of the International Modern Movement, twin beds were part of the international currency of modernity, regularly featuring in the designs and displays through which these movements and designers became known. All were self-consciously turning their backs on Victorian design values, albeit in different ways. But in each case, twin beds' formal qualities were deemed congruent with emerging definitions of both the modern interior and the modern couple who would inhabit it.

Such movements were influential not only in the rarefied atmosphere of small arts journals, exhibitions, workshops and the private commissions of the wealthy, but also made their mark in more commercial environments. Heal's was a key site for the bringing together of machine-produced, reasonably priced furniture with the ideals and agendas of modern design movements: initially, the Arts and Crafts movement and, later, modernism. This unusual sympathy between art and commerce is largely attributable to the influence of Ambrose Heal, who entered the family business in 1893 after having trained first in fine art and then as a cabinet maker. He began designing furniture in the mid-1890s, and although his designs did not always sit easily alongside the store's prevailing ethos – Heal's staff reputedly described it as 'prison furniture' (Goodden 1984: 19) – it was admired by the Arts and Crafts designers whose own ideals had inspired him, but whose insistence on making only one-off, hand-crafted pieces put them beyond the reach of most people. Heal saw no necessary disjuncture between good design and machine production, and was committed to bringing the aesthetic values of the Arts and Crafts movement into the furniture sold in his family's store, and thus within the reach of a middle-class clientele: 'It took the conviction of a man like Ambrose Heal to successfully marry the philosophical aims and practical intentions of the movement – good design at reasonable prices' (ibid.: 24). Heal's therefore sat at the intersection of two quite distinct expositions of 'the modern' in matters of furnishing: the reasonably priced, machine-made furniture selling in department stores, benefiting from constantly evolving methods of production, advertising and marketing; and the design-led, ideological and idealistic work of the Arts and Crafts movement. These two tendencies met in the person of Heal and, through him, in the store of which he became the presiding genius as managing director in 1905 and chairman in 1913.

Ambrose Heal's credentials and connections as a designer and advocate of Arts and Crafts furniture elicited endorsements of his firm's furniture from several influential figures from the worlds of art, architecture and design, and it was in part through their interventions that Heal's positioned itself as a design-conscious store governed by taste and art as well as by its bottom line. In 1898, for example, Joseph Gleeson White, editor of the magazine *The Studio*, lent his support to Heal's ambitions for the store by writing a booklet called 'A Note on Simplicity of Design in Furniture for Bedrooms'. White wrote against 'vulgar ornament' and in favour of 'Mr Ambrose Heal's admirable designs for bedroom furniture'; he was happy that this 'also reflects praise on his firm' ('A Note on Simplicity of Design': 4, 6. Heal's archive, AAD/1978/2/272). The booklet, elegantly typeset and illustrated with woodcuts by the young architect Charles Quennell, was published by Heal's and distributed as part of their publicity material. The distinctiveness and the quality of both the booklet – its manifest style and good taste – and the furniture were both noticed and well received (Goodden 1984: 24).

This booklet was the first of several stylish manifesto-cum-endorsements produced for Heal's by prominent figures from the world of art, design and architecture. In 1912, the typographer, journalist and drama critic Joseph Thorp wrote a short study in praise of Heal's craftsmanship and design ethic, called 'An Aesthetic Conversion'. It was written, he insists, 'entirely at my own suggestion', which 'should make the notes a better guide to the spirit and character of this old-established and justly respected house of business than the discounted utterances of the ordinary trade announcement' ('An Aesthetic Conversion', 1. Heal's archive, AAD/1978/2/286: 1). The message was explicitly anti-Victorian and anti-Art Nouveau, and made a direct link between the work and ideals of William Morris and of Heal's (ibid.: 3, 9, 12–13). In 1926, the architect Sir Lawrence Weaver, shortly to become president of the influential Design and Industries Association, praised the Heal's bedroom at the 1925 Paris Exhibition, calling it 'well-mannered and reasonable, modern beyond all question, but mindful that furniture has a long history, and that no art with which one has to live can afford to be insane' ('A Few Notes on Architects and Furniture', 1926. Heal's archive, AAD/1978/2/304); the emphasis on a combination of good sense and modernity was characteristic of Heal's self-presentation. In 1930, the publisher and book designer Noel Carrington wrote the preface to a marketing booklet recommending Heal's as 'the one firm, above all others, to initiate and develop the claim for modern design in furniture' (*Heal's Catalogues 1853–1934* 1972: n.p.). Each of these booklets includes a by-line naming a well-known figure associated with art, design or architecture, lending to their endorsement of Heal's a sense that their recommendations inhabited a dignified and disinterested aesthetic space beyond mere commerce.

The association between Heal's and 'the modern' was consolidated by the opening of the in-store Mansard Gallery in 1917. An exhibition of paintings and sculpture by 'the London Group', including Roger Fry, Nina Hamnett, Wyndham Lewis and Paul Nash, was held in 1918, and in August to September 1919 Sacheverall Sitwell organized a show of recent French art, showing for the first time work by Picasso, Derain, Utrillo, Matisse and Modigliani; the preface to the catalogue was written by the novelist Arnold Bennett (Goodden 1984: 63). The press were not uniformly impressed: a *Manchester Guardian* review called it an 'admirable exhibition', the most interesting of the year (9 August 1919: 9), but a reviewer from the *Times* reportedly described how he 'tottered from one "ghastly" picture to another' (Goodden 1984: 63).[9] Nevertheless, its association with the new, the unconventional and the challenging were part of what marked out the gallery, and the store, as modern. Starting in 1930, the Mansard staged a series of annual exhibitions called 'Modern Tendencies', showcasing the latest designs in furniture and decoration, further collapsing the distinction between modern art, contemporary design and affordable furniture.

Heal's not only benefited from the endorsements of contemporary designers and from an association with modern art, but they also showed their work in contexts where they would be judged artistically rather than commercially. In 1900, they exhibited a specimen room entitled 'A Guest's Room' at the Paris Exposition Universelle, a major retrospective on the old century and a fanfare for the new. The Heal's room included twin beds designed by Ambrose Heal with hangings by Godfrey Blount.[10] Heal's bedroom ensemble won two silver medals, which, it was noted with some pride, was 'the only instance of so high an Award being made for a display, consisting … solely of Bedroom Furniture' ('Paris Exposition', 1900. Heal's archive, AAD/1978/2/274). Twin beds continued to figure at later Paris exhibitions. At the 1925 Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes – the famous 'Art Deco' exhibition – the Heal's exhibit, entitled the 'Painted Bedroom', featured twin beds, as did their exhibit in the 'Week-End House' in the British Pavilion at the 1937 Paris International Exhibition ('A Few Notes on Architects and Furniture', 1926; 'Architectural Review', September 1937. Heal's archive, AAD/1978/2/304; AAD/1978/2/183). Heal's also exhibited twin beds in the more commercial context of the Ideal Home Exhibition of 1930 ('Stand 31 – Ideal Home Exhibition'. Heal's archive, AAD/1978/2/308), showing a range of bedroom furniture available for purchase in their stores – a bedroom suite in weathered oak – rather than a specially designed, one-off exhibit. While the modernity invoked here was more narrowly commercial and domestic than that characterizing the Paris exhibitions, the emphasis remained emphatically on the 'modern' as a governing principle.[11]

Heal's was unusual for combining a reputation for modern design with commercial acumen, but it was not alone in choosing twin beds to represent the latest in fashionable design; so too did high-profile figures such as the Scottish architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the British furniture designer Betty Joel. Mackintosh's work included designs centring on twin beds in the Bassett-Lowkes' house at 78 Derngate, Northampton (1916). Best known is the spectacular geometric guest room (1919; Figure 7), but the main bedroom in that house also included twins; both houses were featured in *Ideal Home* magazine. The furniture in the main bedroom was 'all in grey sycamore of severe design, quartered and relieved by black inlay, twin beds are also in same wood and finish'– much more muted than the twins in the guest room, and perhaps less exhausting for daily occupation; the overall effect was 'delightfully cool and refreshing' (*Ideal Home* September 1920: 93).[12] The Bassett-Lowkes' later house, the 'super modern' 'New Ways' (1926), was designed by Peter Behrens, a German architect in the modernist vanguard. This house also featured in *Ideal Home*, including on its cover, and again both the main and the guest bedrooms were furnished with twin beds – indeed, photographs suggest that the Bassett-Lowkes kept the beds from their bedroom at Derngate (Figure 8), although the guest room was newly equipped (*Ideal Home* January 1927: cover, 20–28). The two houses, separated by ten

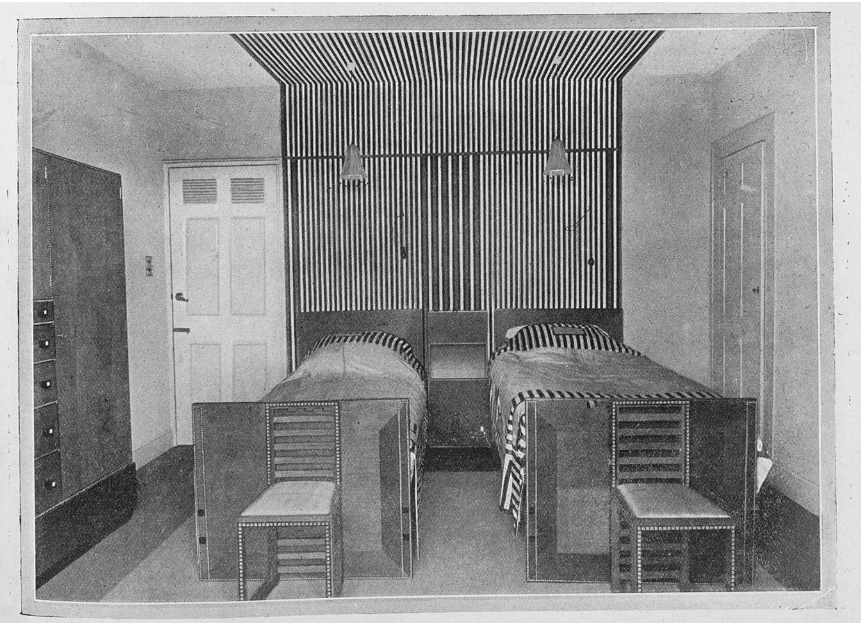
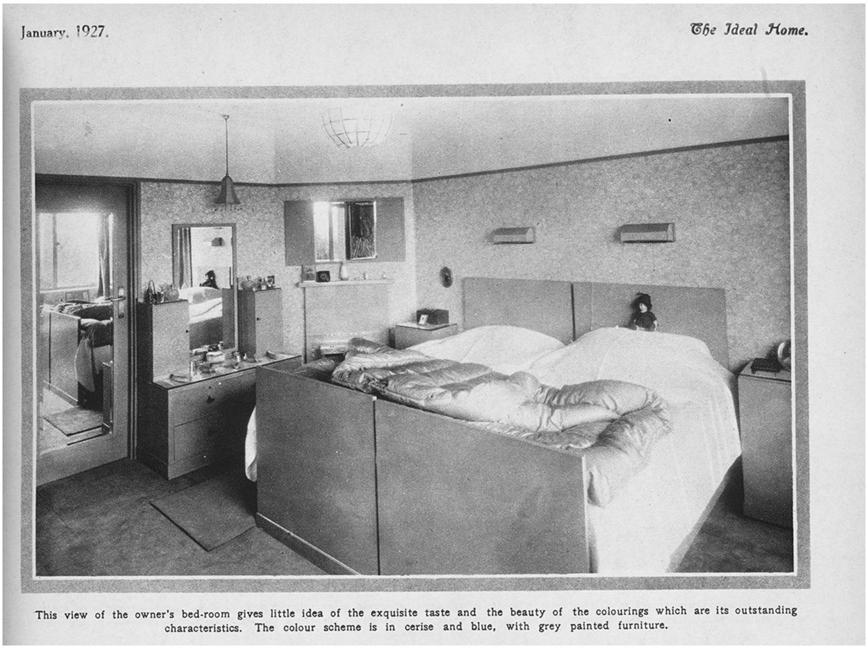


FIGURE 7 *The guest bedroom at 78 Derngate, Northampton.*



January, 1927. The Ideal Home.

This view of the owner's bed-room gives little idea of the exquisite taste and the beauty of the colourings which are its outstanding characteristics. The colour scheme is in cerise and blue, with grey painted furniture.

FIGURE 8 *The main bedroom at 'New Ways', Northampton.*

years, together with the *Ideal Home* features which applaud them, confirm the continuing association of twin beds with cutting-edge modernist architecture and design throughout the 1920s.

Mackintosh's designs prior to the celebrated guest room at Derngate were not themselves twin bedded, but nor do they ignore this fashionable mode of sleeping. His best-known bed was designed for himself and his new wife Margaret Macdonald in their apartment at 120 Mains Street, Glasgow. The bed made its mark as an instance of design innovation, featuring in Charles Holme's *Modern British Domestic Architecture and Decoration* (1901b: 112; Figure 9), a book published as a manifesto for the new century. Muthesius somewhat hyperbolically wrote that the Mains Street interiors 'mark the way to excellence for mankind in the future' (quoted in Brett 1997: 2.761).[13] It might therefore seem odd that the bed draws heavily on the iconography of the massive Victorian marriage bed: it is a four-poster constructed of oak, with a wooden canopy and embroidered hangings. The scale of the bed, however, is significantly smaller than that of its predecessors (the Mains Street flat was small), making it more intimate than imposing.

The modernity of Mackintosh's bed inheres in its simplicity of form and its colour. In contrast to the dark wood and drapes of Victorian four-posters, the wood is enamelled white and inset with 'glass jewels', its hangings featuring

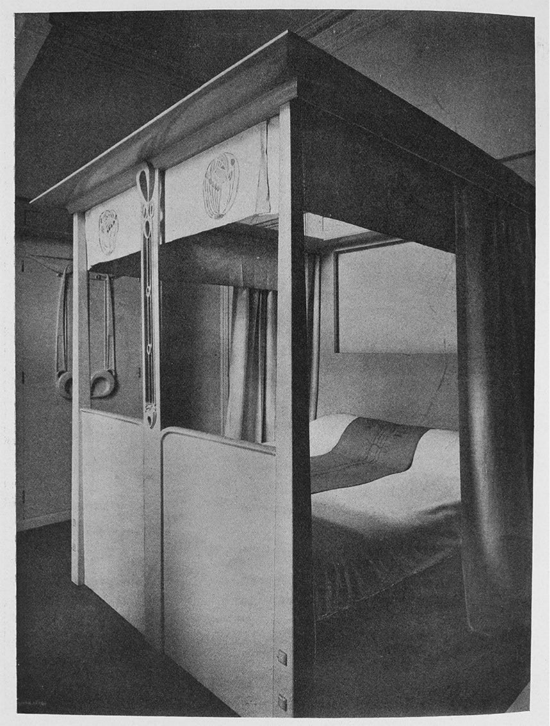


FIGURE 9 *Bed designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh for the use of himself and his wife, Margaret Macdonald at 120 Mains Street, Glasgow.*

a stencilled floral design in pink and green (Holme 1901b: 112). The bed has an unusually high footboard, divided by a central post supporting the canopy; where it adjoins the central post, each side has rounded corners, interrupting the continuity of the line. The single footboard, divided by the central post and the break in the horizontal line, gives the impression of being two. While the bed is a double, therefore, it composes its doubleness from singular elements, and presents it as composite and contingent. It suggests the coming together and the persistence of two separate entities, rather than their merging into a unity. This sense is reinforced by the division of the original bedcover into two distinct elements by a broad dark contrasting panel in the centre. Overall, the initial impression is as much of two single beds as it is of a large double – or, rather, the effect is of *doubling*, rather than of a double.[14] The Mackintosh bed faces two ways at once. It looks back to the traditional marriage bed – the massive four-poster, redolent of the Victorian age – but it also refers to the newly fashionable twin beds, in a style characterized by the simplicity and clean lines of the new century. Perhaps the bed's insistence on the stylistic presence of singularity in doubleness embodied something of how

Mackintosh and Macdonald viewed their marriage. Whatever was the case, when they moved from the rented accommodation for which it had been designed to a new house, they took the bed with them (Sparke 2008: 44–5).

The Mackintoshes' bed was not the only one to feature in art journals that mingled references to the traditional and modern, double and twin. In a 1904 article on bedroom furnishing in the *Magazine of Art* by the designer and architect Aymer Vallance, not only are a pair of striking Art Nouveau twin beds by Liberty featured, but so too is a bedroom by J. S. Henry showing 'the arrangement of what are called "twin" beds, constructed on the old four-post mode' (Vallance 1904: 179, 180). Vallance continued, 'The intention … is to combine classic details with furniture forms suited to thoroughly modern needs' (ibid.: 182). The 'modern needs' are realized in the beds' twinned form, but their four-poster frames reference the classic Victorian double. Owing to the traditional form of the canopy and the carved bed-posts, the two beds appear at first sight to be a double. The combination in this room reverses Mackintosh's double-as-twins, and offers instead twins-as-double. In both cases, however, the traditional connotations of the double marital bed are borne by the beds' four-posted forms, while the 'twin' element – whether appearing as citation, as in the Mackintosh case, or in the actual construction, as in the Liberty beds – is the one signifying 'the modern'.

Beds such as those of Mackintosh and Macdonald, or designed by J. S. Henry, or even by Liberty were likely to have been beyond the reach of most people, because of their scale as much as their cost. Such furniture would not have fitted easily into smaller houses and flats, whether the late Victorian mansion flats or the later properties built during the boom in speculative building. Overall, Edward Gregory noted, there was a new 'tendency for bedrooms to be made smaller, particularly in towns' (Gregory 1913: 85). It was for these smaller living spaces that the British designer Betty Joel worked. John Gloag noted approvingly that her designs represented 'altogether practical solutions to the varied problems of accommodation in the smaller houses and flats of today' (quoted in Joel 1953: 74). Betty Joel's work initially 'represented a stripped-down Arts and Crafts style with neo-Georgian overtones', but in the 1930s it 'developed a more dashing Modernistic manner' – what Anne Massey refers to as '*moderne*' (West 1997: 657; Massey 1990: 91–121, 2000: 63–70, 79–91). The style combined elements of 1920s Art Deco with more functionalist International Style modernism, resulting in a sleeker and simpler style.

Joel's best-known design was her prizewinning circular bed exhibited at the 1935 British Art in Industry exhibition at the Royal Academy, although opinion on this was divided: the poet and art critic Herbert Read condemned it as resembling a 'dislocated hip bath' (Joel 1953: 93; Read 1935: 48). Most of her bedroom designs were more conventional, however, featuring both doubles and twins in the simpler style for which her work became known.[15] The scale of her twin beds was certainly more modest than the Mackintosh-Macdonald, Liberty or Henry beds. They were French bedsteads, low to the floor, their heads and ends typically plain in style, any sense of opulence deriving from their construction from expensive imported hardwoods.[16] The archive of the photographers Millar and Harris includes pictures of many twin-bedded room displays from her London showrooms in the 1930s; a design from 1937 shows the 'severely simple' lines noted by Gloag (Joel 1953: 74; Figure 10).[17]

Yet there is a telling contradiction in Joel's design profile. Designing for small spaces might more practically have led her to concentrate on doubles, for, as Edward Gregory had noted, twin beds are not the obvious – or perhaps even rational – choice for the smaller house or flat: 'Twin bedsteads take up more room than one double one … Twin bedsteads, even if they each measure only two feet six inches in width, will occupy more space than the largest double bed' (1913: 84–5). Whatever the practicality and convenience claimed in household manuals for twin beds, these did not extend to their being the rational, space-saving choice for those living in small houses or flats.[18] Betty Joel's twin beds would not only have occupied a larger floor area than a double, but they were also usually displayed in a way that required still more space. Rather than being set closely side by side, as they had been in

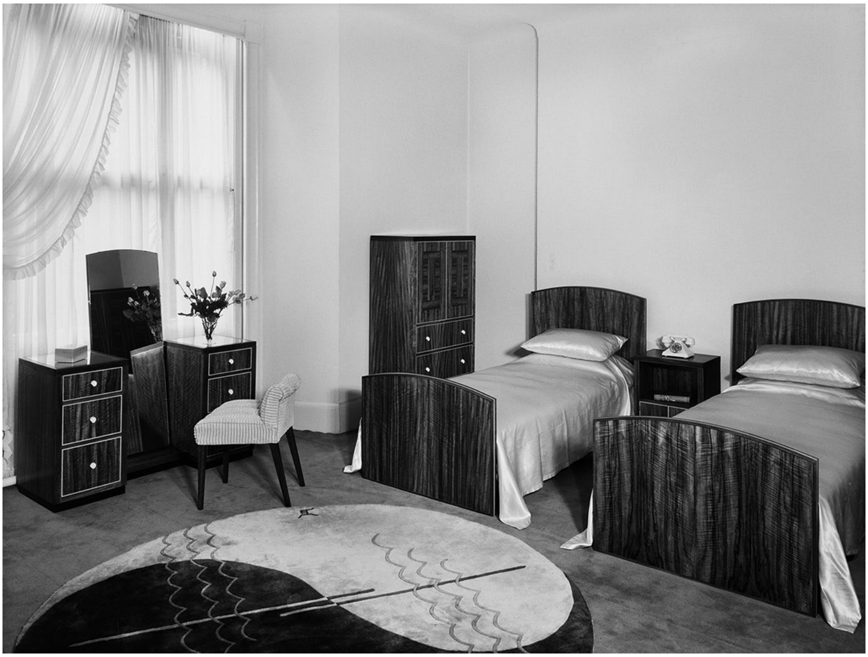


FIGURE 10 *Twin beds designed by Betty Joel.*

the earlier Liberty and Henry designs, and as they usually were in the early room sets advertising Heal's twin beds, Betty Joel's twins were typically separated by a bedside table as in Figure 10, thereby increasing still more the space needed to accommodate them. Given her reputation as a designer for smaller houses, Betty Joel's choice of twin beds was not driven by practicality. The choice was aesthetic and commercial. Her twin beds helped produce an identifiable, successful and fashionable 'Betty Joel Ltd' style, and one whose modernist credentials were widely accepted. By 1930, David Joel, her then-husband and business partner, notes that their showroom in Knightsbridge was 'regarded as a fashionable rendezvous for modern furniture and other aspects of the Modern Movement' (Joel 1953: 90). Betty Joel's twin beds – simple, unadorned, sometimes severe – were known not for their practicality in small spaces but for their ability to materialize ideas about modernity in design.[19]

It was not in Britain alone that twin beds carried the banner of modernity in domestic design, nor only in the homes of the middle classes. In mainland Europe and the United States, twin beds were also an integral part of the vision of the progenitors of modernism in architecture and domestic design. In Germany, for example, an architectural exhibition organized in Stuttgart by the Deutscher Werkbund in 1927 on the theme of contemporary living included the Weissenhofsiedlung, a model development of 'a group of dwellings designed by various architects and incorporating the current technical, hygienic and aesthetic ideas for domestic architecture' (Beckett 1979: 29) and intended to address some of the pressing housing needs of the post-war environment.[20] The exhibition was a showcase for the architectural avant-garde, the exponents of High Modernism who became synonymous with the International Style. As well as the Germans Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Peter Behrens and Walter Gropius, it included J. J. P. Oud and Mart Stam (from Holland), and Le Corbusier (from Switzerland). The contributions of Le Corbusier, fresh from his controversial exhibit at the Paris Exposition of 1925 (the 'Maison de l'Esprit Nouveau'), also drew considerable attention: 'Not only did his two houses succeed in dominating most of the critical reports of the Weissenhof Siedlung (favourable as well as hostile), but it was his ideas and his slogans (especially the notorious "house as a machine for living in") which came to be accepted as the rallying cries of modernists and traditionalists alike' (Benton and Benton 1977: 24). The 'Double House' was one of the two houses at the Weissenhofsiedlung designed by Le Corbusier and his cousin Pierre Jeanneret. Characterized by its long horizontal window and flexible living spaces, where living room was designed to convert to bedroom, the furnishings were an integral part of the design, and included tubular steel twin beds designed by the Swiss architect and artist Alfred Roth (Figure 11). Unadorned and utilitarian to the point that they resemble the metal-framed

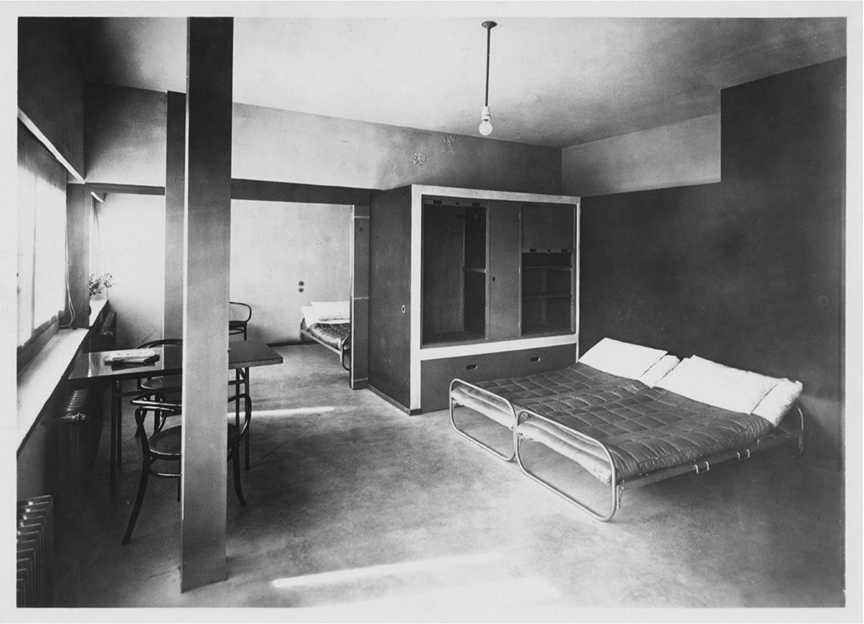
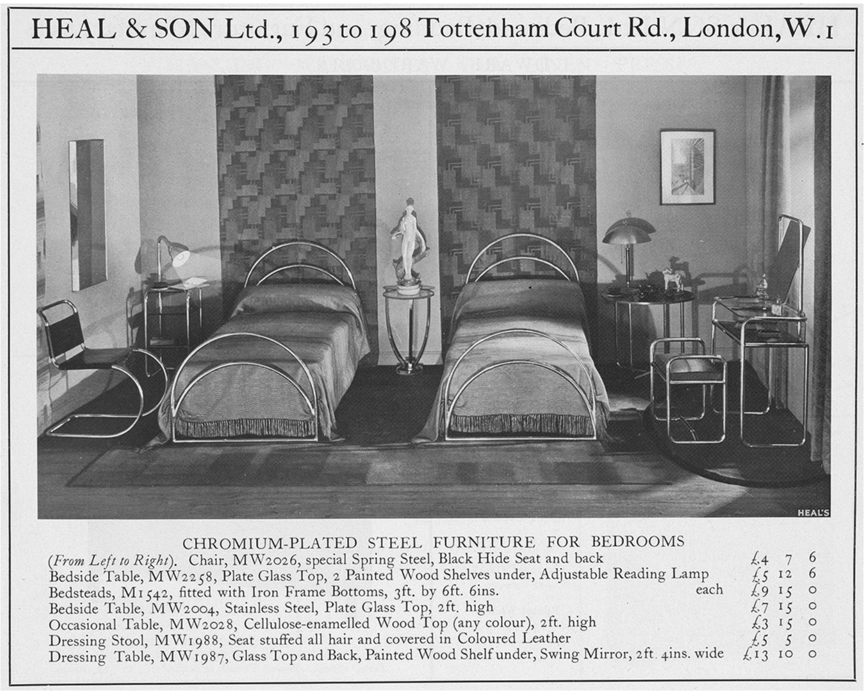


FIGURE 11 *Tubular steel twin beds designed by Alfred Roth for Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret's 'Double House', at the Weissenhofsiedlung exhibition, Stuttgart, 1927.*

beds now associated with boarding schools, prisons and hospitals, they share the functional and flexible aesthetic of the rest of the house.

Such solutions to affordable housing were, at this point, deemed too radical and too European to be embraced in Britain, where commentators remained largely unimpressed by the Modernist machine aesthetic and the related penchant for tubular steel furniture. Nonetheless, a photograph of the Roth tubular twin beds accompanies an article about metal furniture in the trade journal *The Cabinet Maker*, quoting at length from a German pamphlet, 'Stahl Uberall' ('Steel Everywhere'), which lauds the durability, hygiene and space-saving properties of such furniture. The *Cabinet Maker* journalist remains non-committal, however, hedging his bets by suggesting that such ideas 'are not without interest, though they are undoubtedly open to question' (20 October 1928: 119; Campbell-Cole 1979: 52, 57). The sense is that such an aesthetic, however acceptable to Europeans, is likely to stick in the craw of the English consumer whose 'conservative modernity' (Light 1991: 11–14) insisted on good sense and tradition as checks on the extremes of modernist design. Practicality and good value were important, but so too was comfort, and if tubular steel furniture failed to meet these criteria, then its cutting-edge credentials would not be sufficient to secure its adoption in Britain.

It was not until the advent of chromium steel plating in 1930 that tubular steel furniture found a significant market in Britain, its striking high-gloss finish allowing it to be rebranded as fashionable rather than as just functionally modern and economical. Chromium-plated tubular steel gave the market a much-needed fillip at a time of slumps in the sales of all bedsteads. It was smart, shiny, hard-wearing and represented the acceptable face of European modernism, imparting to British homes some of the glitz and glamour of the then-fashionable Art Deco style so strongly associated with Hollywood. Heal's launched their new range of chromium steel bedsteads in an attempt to revive the bed department's flagging fortunes (Figure 12). Sales of metal beds had been in decline since the 1920s, and even their wooden bedsteads had been selling badly. Chromium-plated beds first appeared at Heal's in the opening 'Modern Tendencies' exhibition in the Mansard Gallery in 1930, and were seen as 'a splendid way of creating new cheap and fashionable chassis for the bedding department, while stocking up with a range of matching "ultra-modern" furniture' (Benton 1978: 112). The beds did better than Heal's expected: the style 'was regarded as a bit of a gimmick until it met with such an enthusiastic response from customers' (Goodden 1984: 71; see too 63–85). The success of these beds is attested by a 1932 feature in *Ideal Home*



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CHROMIUM-PLATED STEEL FURNITURE FOR BEDROOMS

(*From Left to Right*). Chair, MW2026, special Spring Steel, Black Hide Seat and back	£4	7	6
Bedside Table, MW2258, Plate Glass Top, 2 Painted Wood Shelves under, Adjustable Reading Lamp	£5	12	6
Bedsteads, M1542, fitted with Iron Frame Bottoms, 3ft. by 6ft. 6ins. each	£9	15	0
Bedside Table, MW2004, Stainless Steel, Plate Glass Top, 2ft. high	£7	15	0
Occasional Table, MW2028, Cellulose-enamelled Wood Top (any colour), 2ft. high	£3	15	0
Dressing Stool, MW1988, Seat stuffed all hair and covered in Coloured Leather	£5	5	0
Dressing Table, MW1987, Glass Top and Back, Painted Wood Shelf under, Swing Mirror, 2ft. 4ins. wide	£13	10	0

FIGURE 12 *Heal's chromium steel bedsteads.*

magazine on a stylish contemporary house. The main bedroom includes a chromium-plated steel double bed from Heal's, while a second bedroom is equipped with a pair of their chromium-plated twins (*Ideal Home* June 1932: 425).[21] Unmistakably modern but also relatively cheap, chrome beds allowed customers to be identified with the latest style while not spending improvidently – a not unimportant consideration during the economic slump of the 1930s.

Not all consumers, however, were convinced that the enduring English desire for comfort as well as fashion was answered by this new material. Deborah Cohen notes how one woman returned two chrome-plated settees to the manufacturer, complaining that 'my friends say sitting on the smaller one is like sitting in a third-class railway carriage', while another found that a 'chrome dining-table suggested "a Nudist colony in November rather than a gathering of rational human beings": "cold, stark, and repulsive, a negation of comfort and all the gentle things of life"' (Cohen 2006: 178, 179). Associated here with both the discomfort of lower-class travel and the chilly and outré predilections of the nudist, clearly not all the English middle classes were ready to put up with chrome-plated furniture in the name of fashionable modernity.

While mainstream middle-class British consumer taste was reluctant to embrace styles that smacked of European high-modernist experimentation, there were nonetheless architects working in Britain who were fully behind the vision of a dwelling as a minimalist, unadorned and uncluttered 'machine for living'. Lawn Road Flats, in Hampstead, London, designed by the architect Wells Coates and completed in 1933, were, according to his obituarist, 'nearer to the *machine à habiter* than anything Corbusier ever designed' (Richards 1958: 359; Figure 13). Coates's vision for the interior, an integral element of the architectural design, included 'standardized built-in furniture, designed for maximum economy of space. ... [The furniture] made no concessions to decoration, its aesthetic being derived from its function' (Hoyte 1997: 286).[22] Once again, the modernist aesthetic of functionality and economy included twin beds (Figure 14). Just as the stark lines of the unadorned, massive exterior were fundamental to Coates's vision, so too the agenda of the modern bedroom was realized in twin-bedded form.

In the United States, whose history of twin-bedded sleep had always been intertwined with Britain's, twentieth-century architects also included single bedsteads in their designs for new kinds of living. The iconic modernist architect Frank Lloyd Wright, designer of the distinctive 'Prairie-style' building, worked with a 'holistic organic' (Robertson 1995: 194) architectural vision, designing living rooms, dining rooms and bedrooms as well as the external architecture. Cheryl Robertson has found the information regarding his bedroom designs scantier than for the public rooms; nonetheless, his bedroom designs for

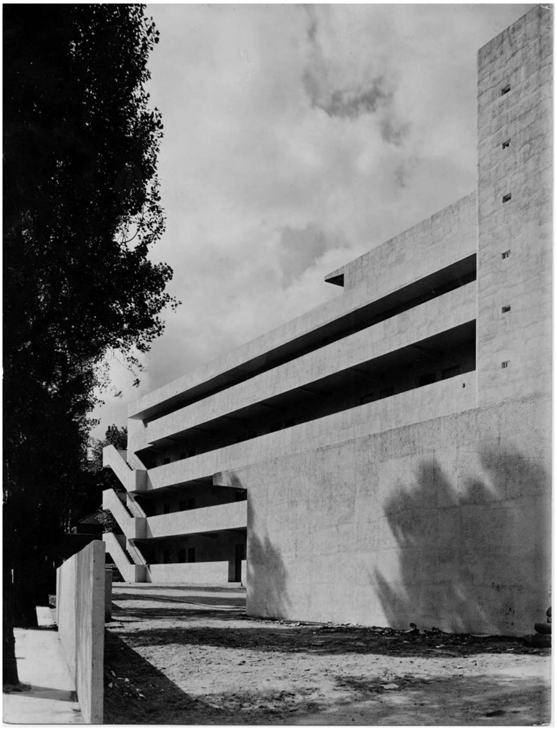


FIGURE 13 *Lawn Road Flats, Hampstead, London, designed by Wells Coates.*

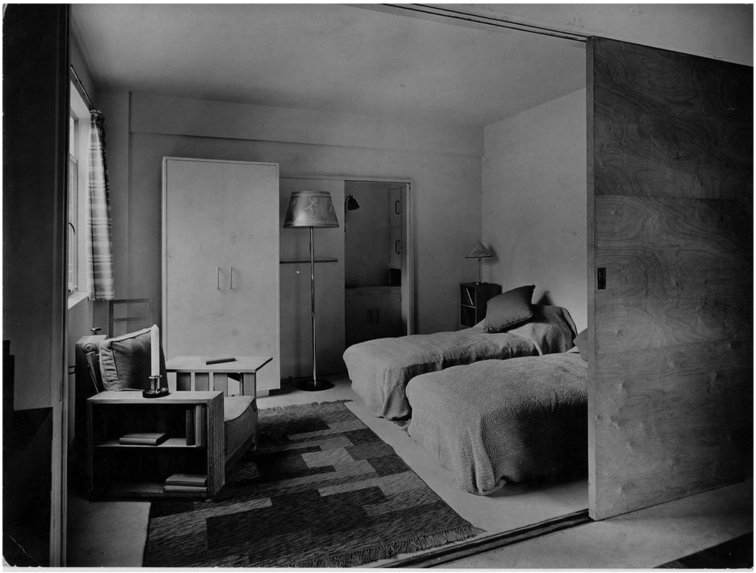


FIGURE 14 *Twin beds in interior of Lawn Road Flats, Hampstead, London.*

the Meyer May house (1909) in Grand Rapids, Michigan, are unequivocal. Turning away from the traditional iconography of the master bedroom, with its celebration of 'the marital bed, made conspicuous with elaborate, costly textile hangings, and sometimes elevated on a dais', he instead designed for Mr and Mrs May 'spare, wooden twin beds set side by side' (Robertson 1995: 196). His designs continued to include twin bedsteads over several decades. In 1912, a country house designed for the Littles in Wayzata, Minnesota, featured paired single beds; so too did the master bedroom in the Prairie house built for Henry and Elsie Allen in Wichita, Kansas, in 1917–18; and much later, in the Usonian Clarence Sondern House built in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1940, twins once again figured in the plans (ibid.: 200, 196, 199).

What is most striking about these instances is not that Wright included twin beds in his plans – this was, after all, a commonplace sleeping arrangement – but that in some ways they run counter to his aesthetic. On the one hand, they help fulfil his ambition to make bedrooms into living rooms, echoing both the fireside inglenook and the 'benches, or day beds, Wright sometimes had provided as part of Prairie living room ensembles' (ibid.: 199). On the other hand, Wright disliked the way conventional houses comprised a series of small, differentiated rooms, advocating instead integrated and unbroken spaces, 'uninterrupted lines and axial vistas' which made 'a single spacious, harmonious unit of living room, dining room, and kitchen'. 'Instead of many things, one thing', he wrote (quoted in Robertson 1995: 198). Given this emphasis on continuity of living space, the rejection of the 'boxy house made up of a series of mini boxes' (ibid.), his preference for one thing over many, and the stripping out of extraneous fixtures, he nonetheless included the atomized 'mini boxes' of twin beds rather than the continuous form of the double. Perhaps a rationale can be found in his discomfiture with the social aspect of domestic life, apparent in his furniture's 'few concessions to the human form' (Massey 1990: 50). Wright's ambivalence about those who inhabited his dwellings is apparent in his observation that 'human beings must group, sit or recline – confound them – and they must dine, but dining is much easier to manage and always was a great artistic opportunity' (quoted in Robertson 1995: 195–6). Perhaps for Wright the 'confounded' human need to recline in the bedroom was best dealt with by designing that room not as a place of communion or intimacy, a place of disorganized 'grouping', as might be implied by a double bed, but as a place dedicated to the individual and solitary act of sleep. Perhaps twin bedsteads, these one-person *machines à dormir*, came as close as possible to turning the need to sleep into an integral element of the design by organizing the couple more closely as they settled into their beds at night.

While the presence of twin beds in the bedrooms of Wright's wealthy clients testifies to the presence of this mode of sleeping in the work of American modernist designers as well as of European ones, these beds would have had no more cultural visibility or impact in Britain at the time than those of the relatively little-known European designers (Massey 1990: 88). Certainly, the work of avant-garde designers would not have figured significantly in how British people imagined the sleeping habits of Americans. Such imaginings were far more likely to be shaped in the interwar period by that most pervasive of American cultural institutions, the Hollywood film industry, with its attendant commercial satellites of product placements, consumer tie-ins, movie magazines and press features on celebrities and their homes.

The importance of Hollywood as an engine of consumer culture as well as of dreams is well attested. As Anne Massey has shown, on both sides of the Atlantic there was perceived to be a direct link between 'the transient, two-dimensional image projected on the screen and the more permanent, three-dimensional artefact', and the connection forged between Hollywood and the marketplace from the early days of the film industry 'manifested itself in all areas of design and consumption – from buildings, interiors, advertising to clothing and beauty products' (Massey 2000: 2). The capacity of Hollywood to serve as a stimulus to consumption was quickly exploited: Ruth Vasey notes that by 1922 'the U.S. Department of Commerce had coined the slogan "trade follows the motion pictures"', and in 1928 the secretary of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America told a gathering of salesmen that 'the motion picture has dropped into your laps a selling agency, the like of which you advertising experts never even dreamed of. People are going to the motion picture as to an animated catalogue for ideas of dress, of living, of comfort' (Vasey 1997: 42, 43). The effect was as significant in Britain as in the United States: David Joel remarked that by the 1930s, 'the cinema, whether for bad or for good, had become part of the life of the people and was influencing the furnishing of people's homes. Usually the film showed glamorous interiors, sometimes good examples of the best of the Modern Movement' (Joel 1953: 83). Bedrooms frequently figured in this 'animated catalogue' of dream interiors: 'The mass-circulation magazines provided ideas for emulating the luxury of the stars' bedrooms. ... "Bedroom Secrets" were revealed by Julia Cairns, and the beds of Norma Shearer, Lelia Hyams and Jeanette MacDonald were illustrated' (Massey 2000: 132). The bedroom, while more remote from public scrutiny than the rest of the house, was as ripe for stylish modern remaking as the living room or bathroom, the Hollywood promise it embodied as desirable and resonant there as elsewhere.

In Hollywood's heyday in the 1930s and 1940s, when the bedroom in question belonged to a married couple, it was invariably shown as twin bedded, to the extent that 'twin-bed marriages actually mark a whole Hollywood epoch of bedroom customs' (Tyler 1974: 61). The then-current consumer fashion for twin-bedded sleeping was not only represented in the movies, but also in press reports on the lifestyles of the stars. The *Daily Mirror*'s gossip column 'Bedtime Chatter', by Molly Castle, known as 'The Hollywood Spy' (Lovell 1987: 216), featured stories about the bedrooms of the stars. On 14 December 1939, for example, the focus was on Bette Davis, her four-poster and her predilection for reading in bed, while on 7 March 1940, the subject was Cary Grant, his large double bed and his broadcloth pyjamas. In April 1940, the column featured the actress Gail Patrick, and included a detailed description of the Hollywood home she shared with her husband, Bob Cobb. As well as learning that Gail's favourite colour is red, her latest dressing gown faux leopard skin, and her ambition is to bathe in perfume, we are also told that 'the Cobbs have twin beds. The bed heads are covered in quilted burgundy faille, and there are burgundy faille spreads' (*Daily Mirror* 22 April 1940: 12). Such columns offered a glimpse of how the other half lived, and passed on the secrets of their fashionable and luxurious lifestyles. Twin beds, like leopard-skin dressing gowns, benefited from the reflected and glamorous glow conferred by the films themselves and by their appearances in the habitats of the stars.

The presence of twin bedsteads in Hollywood's marital bedrooms was not the outcome only of consumer preference and social mores, nor of successful product placements. If the overall history of twin beds is a shadowy one, Hollywood's habitual representation of the bedrooms of married couples as twin bedded is so well known as to be legendary, and the origin of this convention in the censor's office equally so. The Motion Picture Production Code, or 'Hays Code' (named after its first chief censor, Will H. Hays, replaced in 1934 by Joseph Breen), comprised the rules and guidelines adopted voluntarily by the movie industry from the 1930s to the 1960s setting out what was and was not acceptable film content. In 1927, a list of 'Don'ts' and 'Be Carefuls' had been drawn up which formed the basis of the later code, specifying that 'special care' needed to be taken when presenting 'First night scenes', 'Man and woman in bed together' and 'The institution of marriage' (Gardner 1987: 213–14). Care might have been needed in such scenes, but nonetheless it was not unthinkable at this point that 'man and woman' be shown 'in bed together'. Indeed, in his history of film censorship, Anthony Slide notes that 'there is no reference to the need for twin beds in the published Production Code' (1998: 14) adopted in 1930.[23]

Nonetheless, by the mid-1930s the industry wisdom had become that twin beds were standard equipment in Hollywood's bedroom scenes. In 1937, Olga Martin's *Hollywood's Movie Commandments* was published, a handbook intended for the movie industry and drawing out the implications of the censors' stipulations regarding the screening of the bedrooms of married couples:

> *Marital Relations*
>
> The Code warns against 'certain facts' regarded as 'outside the limits of safe presentation. These are the manifestations of passion and the sacred intimacies of private life.'
>
> Under this regulation a picture portraying the intimate marital relations could not be approved. In fact, there should be no dialog or action introduced into a screen story indicative of the marital relationship. Where it is necessary to include bedroom scenes, twin beds should be shown to permit delicate treatment of the implied intimacy. (Martin 1937: 173–4)

While the Code itself did not specify the need for twin beds, by 1937 the advice to moviemakers was unequivocal: a double bed was too explicit in its sexual associations for 'safe presentation' in films intended for the general cinema-going public. Only twins had the necessary cultural delicacy. They had the advantage of *implying* marital sexual intimacy without showing a bed that might have facilitated it.

Much of the fine detail of what was and was not acceptable to the Hays/Breen Office evolved over time through the application of the Code to particular film scripts, submitted to the censors for approval and in response to which detailed advice was given. Strikingly, however, the evolution of the requirement to show twin beds rather than a double was not straightforwardly the result, as is often assumed, of the conservatism of the American censors, but was as much a result of the requirements of the British ones. Films were made to be distributed in Britain as well as in the United States, and, 'pointing out that the British usually deleted scenes of married couples in double beds, Breen would commonly ask producers to put their couples in twin beds' (Gardner 1987: xxi). Perhaps Breen was in part passing the buck of an unpopular prudishness to the British. Even so, the evidence suggests that twin bedsteads in the movies, so frequently attributed in popular memory to the puritanism of the Depression-era United States, were in no small part a British requirement.

This was a requirement, moreover, which endowed the British censors with a certain ability to – quite literally – call the shots. Since the British market represented 30 per cent of Hollywood's profits, Hollywood could not afford to alienate the old country (Massey 2000: 34). The memoir of Jack Vizzard, who had worked in the censor's office, confirms this account. Vizzard is unequivocal about it being the British censors who insisted on twin beds, and he dates this demand to the making of the comedy-cum-mystery film *The Mad Miss Manton* in 1938. The film included a scene with an elderly caretaker and his wife in a double bed, disturbed by a noise in the night. Despite the non-sexual character of the scene, the British censors 'presented a stony countenance' (Vizzard 1970: 114) to it, and refused to distribute it. The matter was finally resolved, but rather than risk a recurrence, thereafter the Production Code office in Hollywood responded to bedroom scenes by warning films' production managers that 'twin beds would be needed for England':

> Since England was a good market, the production manager usually complied, and ordered twin beds for his set. And since it was too much trouble to dress two sets in two different ways, one with a double bed for the U.S.A., and another with a pair of twin beds for the British Isles, it became commonly supposed that the Code forbade the double beds, and the myth was born. (ibid.: 115)

Vizzard's first-hand recollection is compelling. However, he only started work in the censor's office in 1944, so was perhaps himself instrumental in producing a counter-myth, implicating the British in twin-bedded film history. After all, Olga Martin's handbook had been published in 1937, by which time the advice was already current.

Whatever the origin of the demand for twins in Hollywood's bedroom scenes, British censors certainly wielded power in this regard, and continued to do so into the 1940s. In 1947 the *Daily Mirror* reported on a new comedy from Columbia Pictures starring Lucille Ball and Franchot Tone, called *My Awful Wife*. Columbia had shot a scene with the requisite twin bedsteads, but the British censors were unhappy because the two beds were pushed together, and they refused distribution: '"It violates our rules", the censors declared. "Twin beds *must* be *at least* a foot apart"' (*Daily Mirror* 3 May 1947: 6–7; original emphasis). To satisfy the British censors, the twin beds had to comply with the spirit of the guidelines as well as the letter, and be positioned at a 'delicate' distance from each other (Figure 15). To ensure British distribution Columbia had to reshoot the scene, at a cost of £7,500 – '£625 for every inch the bed was moved', spluttered the *Mirror* in exasperation. The *Mirror* also noted that Lucille Ball – later associated with marital twin beds in the minds of early television viewers owing to their presence in her long-running show 'I Love Lucy' – commented 'sarcastically: "Is it getting old-fashioned for husband and wife to make love?"' (3 May 1947: 6–7).[24] The tone of the *Mirror* article suggests that by 1947 there was a growing sense of popular frustration with a code of propriety seen as rigid and outdated. If in the interwar period twin beds had been given a boost by the censors' insistence on them, in the immediate post-war period that insistence no longer identified these beds as fashionably and desirably stylish but rather as decidedly prudish and passé. The objections raised in articles such as this gave early notice of the ultimate banishment of twin beds into design oblivion in the 1960s and 1970s, their turn-of-the century associations with a modern commitment to innovation and autonomy finally replaced by those of coyness and repression.

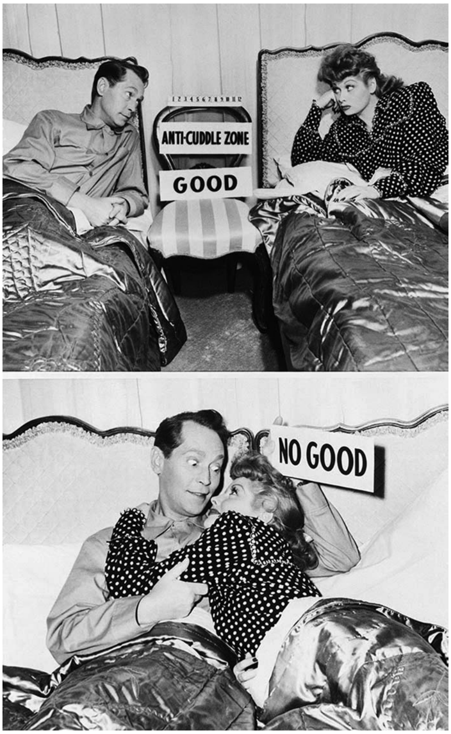


FIGURE 15 *Press photograph of Lucille Ball and Franchot Tone taken following Columbia Pictures' decision to reshoot a scene in* My Awful Wife *(released as* Her Husband's Affairs *in 1947) to comply with the British censor's requirements.*

Twin beds' Hollywood history suggests something of the complexity of their twentieth-century associations with modern design, on the one hand, and propriety, on the other. Through to the 1920s and 1930s, twin beds were endlessly reproducible as markers of the modern in the Art Deco or *moderne* bedrooms featured in the Hollywood film sets. They could be as glamorous or as ordinary as other commonplace household objects – tables and chairs, cups and plates. By now, twin beds had lost the aura of being 'not very nice' which Esmé Wingfield-Stratford (1930: 142) had discerned at their inception. His characterization of them suggests that their two-part form had reminded people of something usually obscured by the familiarity of the double bed to which they were a new-fangled alternative: namely, the night-long encounter of two people in a shared bedroom. Some 'old-fashioned' people still retained these feelings about their impropriety, Wingfield-Stratford suggests, even in the early 1930s; but for most people, to the contrary, twin beds had acquired the patina of social and sexual delicacy and desirability.

This transition from indelicacy to delicacy was achieved in part through the gradual absorption of twin beds over the years into the category of the ordinary. They were gradually emptied of their earlier associations with the intimate nocturnal lives of their inhabitants and became instead more readily legible (though never exclusively so, as will be discussed in the final section of this book) as unremarkable household objects, worthy of comment not for their formal composition – the fact that they were *twin* beds – but for the ways that they announced themselves as, for example, expensive or cheap, ostentatious or simple, tasteful or tasteless, glamorous or modest, fashionable or dowdy. In other words, in the first half of the twentieth century these beds were usually read in terms of their style rather than their twinned form. Their ordinariness was the result of their widespread adoption across an increasingly broad social spectrum. They achieved a cultural acceptance which enabled the distinctiveness of their separate-but-proximate form to fade into the background. In the early years of the century their newness had marked them out as modern, forward-thinking and stylish, but later, by the 1940s, they had become more indicative of an everyday middle-class domestic landscape. In the cartoons of the *Evening News*'s Joseph Lee, for example, the cartoonist who most regularly situated his middle-aged middle-class couples in twin beds, the joke is staged in the context of twin beds, but is not about them (Figure 16). As long as twin beds continued to be perceived as ordinary and unremarkable, questions of propriety – their status as 'nice', on the one hand, or as prudish, on the other – could be left at the margins of conscious association. The choice of double or twin was largely reducible to questions of class-inflected personal preference, with neither choice necessarily attracting opprobrium or stigmatization.

By the time of the making of *My Awful Wife* in 1947, however, twin beds were emerging again into cultural visibility regarding questions of conjugal sexuality. As post-war ideas about marriage and the couple changed, so too did ideas about their sleeping arrangements. In this context, twin beds gradually came to be read as indicative of a marriage in trouble, or, conversely, defended as nothing of the sort. There was no sudden or wholesale cultural repudiation of this way of sleeping, no rapidly consensual excoriation or dismissal of them as divisive or outmoded. Rather, their withdrawal from the realm of the ordinary to become sexually and maritally suspect was slow and uneven, taking the best part of twenty years. For example, two years after the *Mirror* was expostulating at the ridiculousness of the British censors' insistence that a married couple be shown in twin beds a foot apart, the designer David Joel patented his 'Drop-arm Bedsteads' (Figure 17), which were vigorously promoted by Heal's and won a place in Joel's *Adventure of British Furniture*. While the *Mirror* might dismiss the strictures of the British film censors as

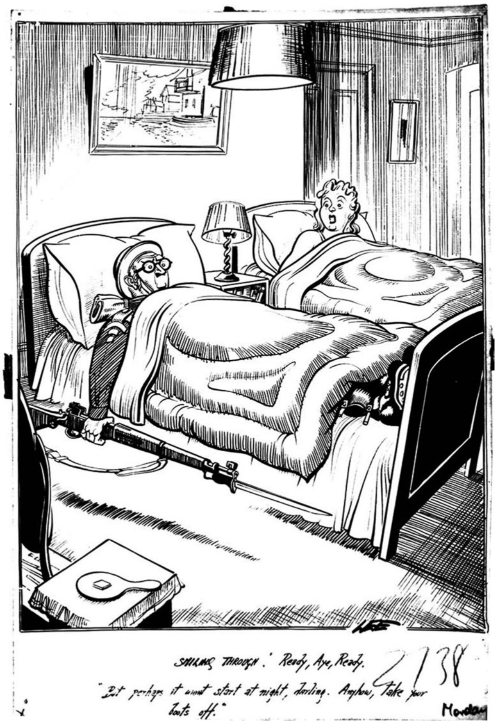

SMILING THROUGH.' Ready, Aye, Ready.
"But perhaps it won't start at night, darling. Anyhow, take your boots off."
2138
Monday

FIGURE 16 *'SMILING THROUGH: Ready, Aye, Ready. "But perhaps it won't start at night, darling. Anyhow, take your boots off."' Cartoon by Joseph Lee in the* Evening News *(21 June 1943).*

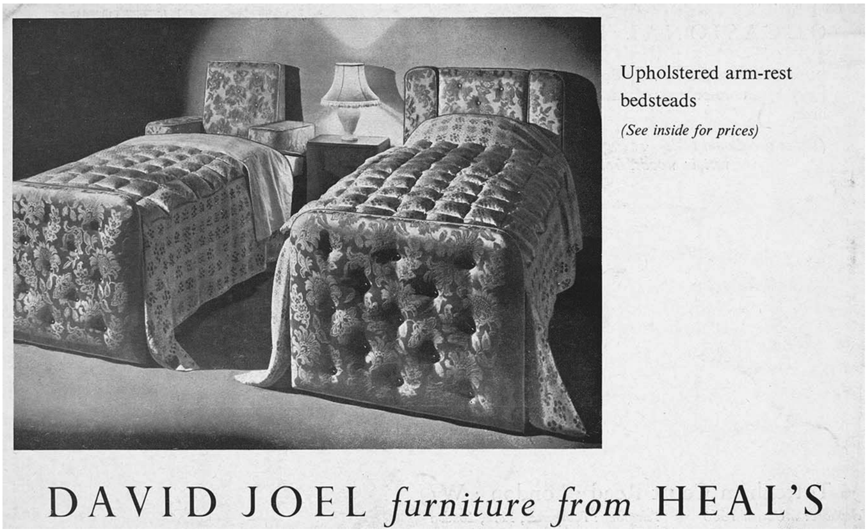
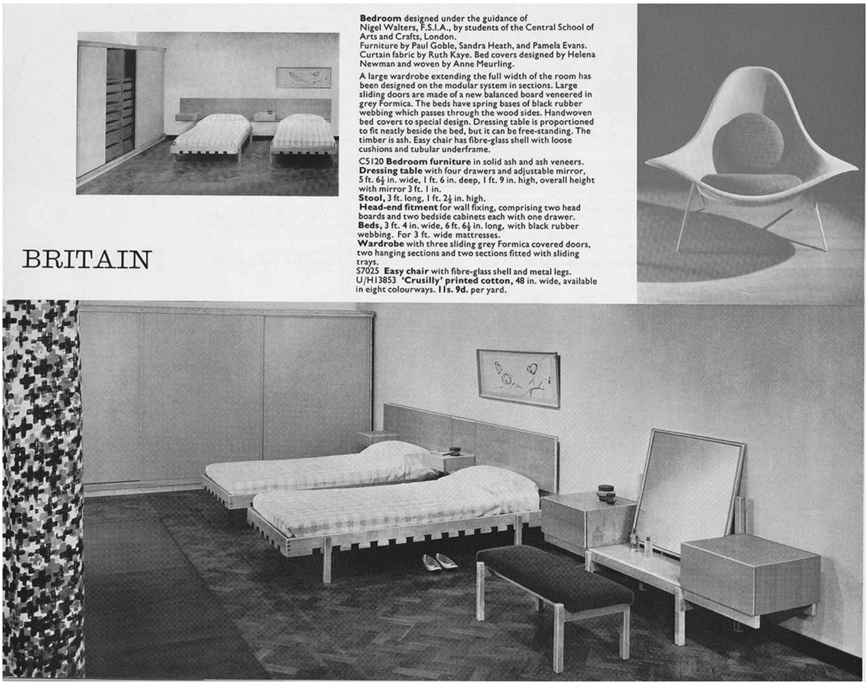

Upholstered arm-rest bedsteads
(See inside for prices)
DAVID JOEL furniture from HEAL'S

FIGURE 17 *David Joel's 'Drop-arm Bedsteads'.*

old-fashioned, the paired forms of these beds were nonetheless still available to be marketed as desirable and stylish.

The *twinness* of these beds was therefore most frequently the object of comment, whether favourable or condemnatory, at either end of their century of cultural prominence. In the course of their rise to popularity, they were introduced, explained, debated, critiqued and commended for their formal distribution of the sleeping bodies of their occupants. They offered something new, different, innovatory, perhaps even controversial. As their popularity declined after the Second World War, their formal characteristics were once again discussed. They became objects in cultural contention as they gradually accrued associations with an outmodedness both stylistic and sexual. For the half-century or so in between, however, twin beds reached a level of popular adoption which rendered their form less worthy of comment, but nevertheless left them available as signs of a wide range of different kinds of modernity.

The modernity of twin-bed design was not a singular phenomenon, however, but a multiple one. They could simultaneously figure as a forward-thinking, fashionable but not especially radical middle-class choice, but also as international markers of stylish design contemporaneity, deployed by retailers



BRITAIN

Bedroom designed under the guidance of
Nigel Walters, F.S.I.A., by students of the Central School of Arts and Crafts, London.
Furniture by Paul Goble, Sandra Heath, and Pamela Evans.
Curtain fabric by Ruth Kaye. Bed covers designed by Helena Newman and woven by Anne Meurling.

A large wardrobe extending the full width of the room has been designed on the modular system in sections. Large sliding doors are made of a new balanced board veneered in grey Formica. The beds have spring bases of black rubber webbing which passes through the wood sides. Handwoven bed covers to special design. Dressing table is proportioned to fit neatly beside the bed, but it can be free-standing. The timber is ash. Easy chair has fibre-glass shell with loose cushions and tubular underframe.

C5120 **Bedroom furniture** in solid ash and ash veneers.
Dressing table with four drawers and adjustable mirror, 5 ft. 6½ in. wide, 1 ft. 6 in. deep, 1 ft. 9 in. high, overall height with mirror 3 ft. 1 in.
Stool, 3 ft. long, 1 ft. 2½ in. high.
Head-end fitment for wall fixing, comprising two head boards and two bedside cabinets each with one drawer.
Beds, 3 ft. 4 in. wide, 6 ft. 6½ in. long, with black rubber webbing. For 3 ft. wide mattresses.
Wardrobe with three sliding grey Formica covered doors, two hanging sections and two sections fitted with sliding trays.
S7025 **Easy chair** with fibre-glass shell and metal legs.
U/H13853 **'Crusilly' printed cotton,** 48 in. wide, available in eight colourways. **11s. 9d.** per yard.

FIGURE 18 *Twin beds at Heal's 'Designers of the Future' exhibition, 1960.*

and designers alike to communicate the bold design innovations of modernity. The combination of nostalgia and idealism in the Arts and Craft movement was modern, but so too was the melding of the traditional and the contemporary, the craft and the commercial, at Heal's. Differently but equally modern were the starkly functionalist industrial aesthetic of the European avant-garde, the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, the simple lines and muted aesthetic of Betty Joel's designs, and the Art Deco and *moderne* styling showcased in Hollywood interiors. In all these design environments, with their distinctive politics and agendas, twin beds were flexible enough to be foregrounded for their modern credentials.

As late as 1960, to celebrate the store's centenary Heal's 'Designers of the Future' exhibition selected twin-bedded designs from both Britain and Germany to carry the banner of futurity (Figure 18). The social pendulum was unquestionably swinging back towards the double, but nonetheless the design agenda of modernity could still be embodied by twins. The choice of twin beds was not only about hygiene, or convenience or comfort. For more than half the twentieth century they were also, in their radical formal difference from the ornate double Victorian marriage bed, a manifestly modern choice for married couples.

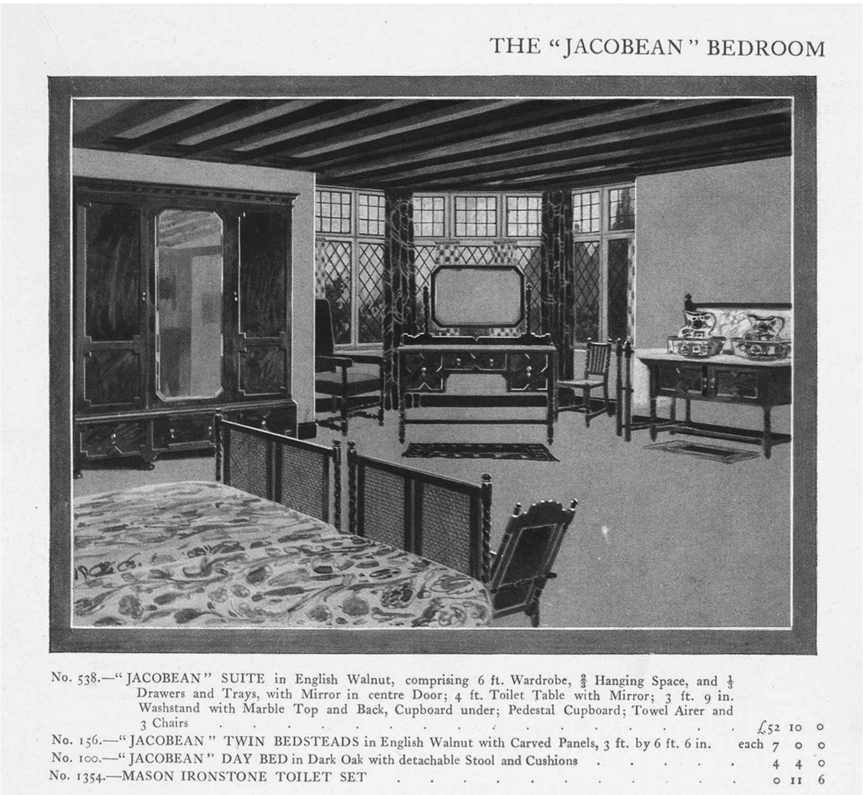
7

Coda

The *mise-en-scène* of modern marriage

'What do you think of our twin bedsteads?' asks Mrs Challoner, as she proudly shows her visitors into the best bedroom in her newly refurbished house, furnished by Heal's (Figure 19). What indeed? When Mrs Poole-Bennett (described as a 'Philistine') and George Browne (an 'artist') see the Challoners' Jacobean-style English walnut twin beds, with their twisted uprights and chintz covers, the beds intimately contiguous, set in the large, bright room with its quaint slanting floor, its picturesque exposed beams, its big bay window with leaded lights, with the paired blue-and-white china jugs and basins on the wash-stand echoing the paired beds on the near side of the room, what might they have thought of the Challoners' choice of twin beds rather than a double? (*The Evolution of 'Fouracres'* 1911: 32. Heal's archive, AAD/1978/2/287).

Mrs Challoner's question is a confident one, designed to elicit murmurs of approval from her guests, but now, from the perspective of the early twenty-first century, the question warrants more careful consideration. How might twin beds have been understood during the years they became fashionable? In what ways did they contribute to a distinctly modern *mise-en-scène* for middle-class couples of the new century? Throughout her guided tour, Mrs Challoner presents her home not only as a repository of good taste, but also as a carefully constructed environment for the lives that were to be lived in it, a setting redolent not only of the Challoners' aesthetics but also of their histories, values, affections and aspirations. This was not just a backdrop against which they would continue to be the selves they already were. Rather, insofar as it was a place generated by and displaying those histories and values, the home represented the materialization, improvement and augmentation of those selves.



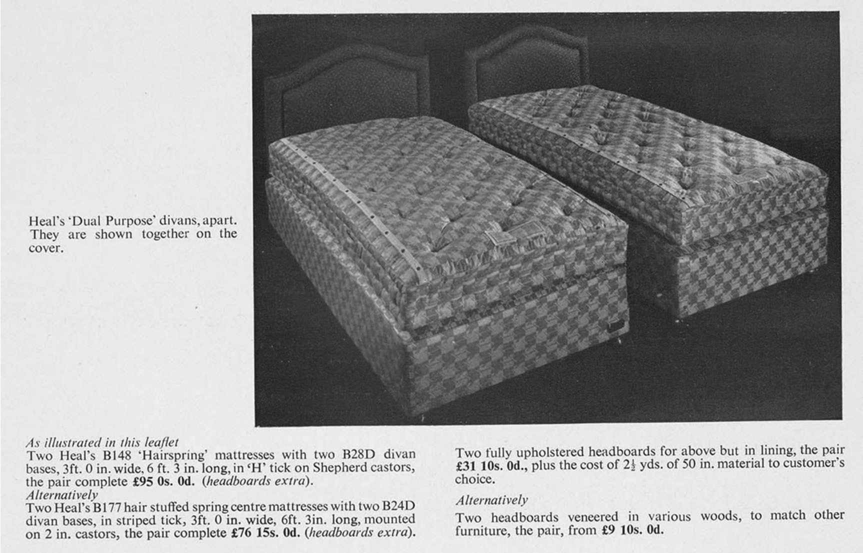
THE "JACOBEAN" BEDROOM

No. 538.—"JACOBEAN" SUITE in English Walnut, comprising 6 ft. Wardrobe, $\frac{2}{3}$ Hanging Space, and $\frac{1}{3}$ Drawers and Trays, with Mirror in centre Door; 4 ft. Toilet Table with Mirror; 3 ft. 9 in. Washstand with Marble Top and Back, Cupboard under; Pedestal Cupboard; Towel Airer and 3 Chairs		£52	10	0
No. 156.—"JACOBEAN" TWIN BEDSTEADS in English Walnut with Carved Panels, 3 ft. by 6 ft. 6 in.	each	7	0	0
No. 100.—"JACOBEAN" DAY BED in Dark Oak with detachable Stool and Cushions		4	4	0
No. 1354.—MASON IRONSTONE TOILET SET		0	11	6

FIGURE 19 *From the Heal's 1911 booklet* The Evolution of 'Fouracres'.

By 1911, when the story of the Challoners appeared in *The Evolution of 'Fouracres'* – a Heal's publicity booklet and advice manual in the form of a short story – twin beds had won their place in the household not as signifiers of hygiene, as they had earlier in domestic sanitarian discourse, but of modernity. They were now manifestly modern in design, in their more modest and simpler forms, and in the contexts in which they were displayed, invoked, produced and consumed. But this is to identify twin beds with modernity only by association, because of the company they kept. By this account they bask only in the reflected glow of modernity – whether the modernity of the Arts and Craft movement, of the Heal's bedroom interiors shown at the Paris exhibitions of 1900, 1925 and 1937, of Betty Joel's fashionable Knightsbridge premises, of the International Style interiors of Wells Coates's Lawn Road flats or of the Hollywood films in which they featured. Might it not also be the case, however, that twin beds are legible within the discourses of modernity in their own right? Might not their form speak quite directly to something in an emerging modern sensibility? Are they reproduced within self-consciously innovative art and design contexts because their individuated forms, their simultaneous insistence on singularity and doubleness, materialize something specific about a sense of what it meant to be 'modern'? If so, then this is to be located not in the design credentials of the bedsteads themselves, for twin bedsteads were not exclusive to these contexts. While they were to be found in the pages of the *Magazine of Art* and *The Studio*, they were also to be found in the cheaper, decidedly non-avant-garde pages of the Maples and Myer's catalogues. There is, therefore, no paradigmatic or archetypal 'modern' set of twin bedsteads. The Challoners' Jacobean walnut twins have little in common visually with Heal's dual-purpose twin divans or the 'regal elegance' of Oetzmann's top-of-the-range Windsor beds, with their blue lacquer finish, carving and gold-leaf decoration (Figures 20 and 21). But despite their visual differences, all paid their dues to modernity.

Nonetheless, despite differences in price, finish, materials and design, and their varying allegiances to tradition and the contemporary, twin bedsteads, no matter how modest or opulent, always have one thing in common: their disposition of the couple settling for the night into these two discrete, demarcated, one-person apparatuses. Twin beds structurally announce their ambiguous presentation of the couple whose bodies they are organizing. These two sleepers are distinct and separate, with a space or a boundary between them. But they are also a pair, related formally, structurally and spatially, rather than just adjacent to each other. How should we read twin



Heal's 'Dual Purpose' divans, apart. They are shown together on the cover.

As illustrated in this leaflet
Two Heal's B148 'Hairspring' mattresses with two B28D divan bases, 3ft. 0 in. wide, 6 ft. 3 in. long, in 'H' tick on Shepherd castors, the pair complete **£95 0s. 0d.** (*headboards extra*).
Alternatively
Two Heal's B177 hair stuffed spring centre mattresses with two B24D divan bases, in striped tick, 3ft. 0 in. wide, 6ft. 3in. long, mounted on 2 in. castors, the pair complete **£76 15s. 0d.** (*headboards extra*).

Two fully upholstered headboards for above but in lining, the pair **£31 10s. 0d.,** plus the cost of 2½ yds. of 50 in. material to customer's choice.

Alternatively

Two headboards veneered in various woods, to match other furniture, the pair, from **£9 10s. 0d.**

FIGURE 20 *Heal's dual-purpose twin divans.*

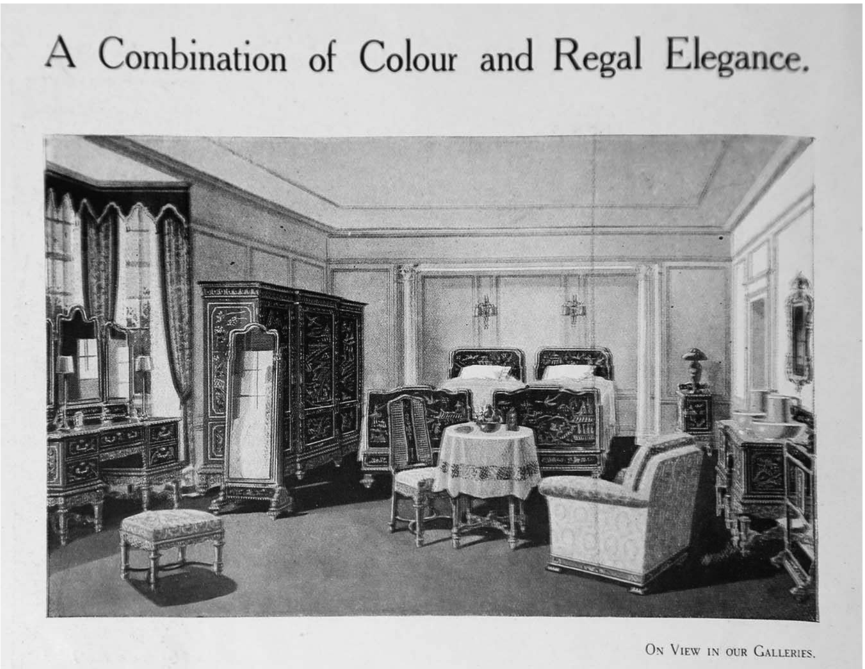

A Combination of Colour and Regal Elegance.
On View in our Galleries.

FIGURE 21 *Oetzmann's Windsor beds.*

beds' placement of the couple in two one-person beds rather than one two-person bed? How does this recalibrate the composition of the couple? How do twin bedsteads configure the space in between? Is it a gap, a chasm to be traversed? Is it a boundary or border to be observed, respected, policed and enforced? Or is it a suture, a refusal of separateness, an insistent bridging or binding together of the two elements? Moreover, how might we read the negotiation of this space in relation to existing and emerging ideas of 'the modern'?

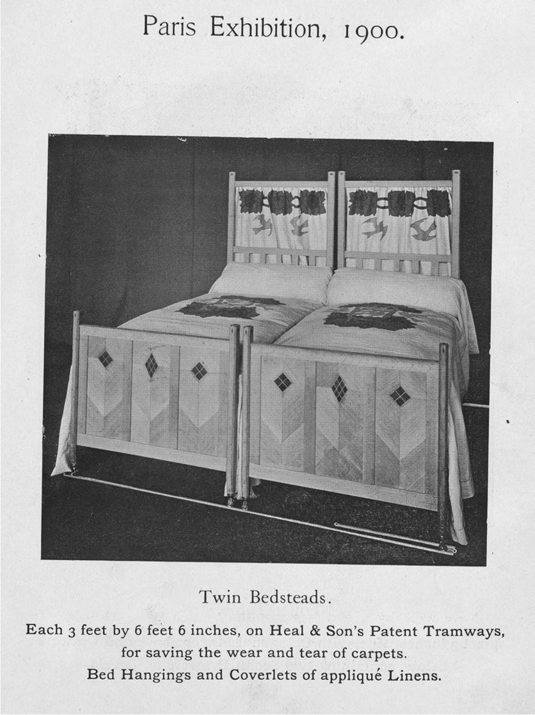
Twin beds' nineteenth-century origins and the design contexts of their twentieth-century proliferation have in common a belief in and commitment to progress. Benjamin Ward Richardson's hygienist programme had been a utopian one – implicitly so in his household advice articles, and explicitly so in *Hygeia: A City of Health* (1876), his narrative blueprint which imagined a city built entirely on domestic sanitarian principles. Hygienic homes, in a rational, planned hygienic city, would not only result in a healthier populace, but also in a morally improved and happier one. Hygiene was not an end in itself but part of an optimistic and progressive drive for human perfectibility.

Richardson shared this dual focus on the practical and the utopian with William Morris, progenitor and leading light of the Arts and Crafts movement.

As well as being a working architect and designer, he was the author of the literary utopia *News from Nowhere* (1890). Unlike Richardson, for whom the past was little more than a dystopian sink of ignorance and filth, Morris's socialist utopianism had a nostalgic dimension, lamenting the current condition of alienated labour and shoddy machine-made goods via a romantic view of the lost world of medieval crafts: small scale, based in workshops, working for and responsible to their communities. But for both men the possibility of perfectibility and progress to which their versions of modernity subscribed existed somewhere between the co-ordinates of the practical (domestic sanitarianism for Richardson, furniture-making for Morris) and the explicitly utopian. The genesis of twin beds in the domestic sanitation movement of the 1880s, and their later appearance in the Arts-and-Crafts-related work of Ambrose Heal, Mackintosh and Liberty, makes them players in the visionary as well as in the practical programmes of the hygienists and designers. The utopian dimensions of separated sleep can be seen not only in Richardson's promise of improved health and longevity for those who follow his sanitarian programme but also in the twin-bedded forms appearing at the turn of the century.

The beds designed by Ambrose Heal and exhibited at the 1900 Paris exhibition ('Paris Exhibition, 1900'. Heal's archive, AAD/1978/2/274; Figure 22) are clearly visually identifiable as Arts-and-Crafts-inspired artefacts, and as such they declare a stake in a particular politics. They embody a rejection of the paucity of design and shoddiness of construction of mass-produced goods; an adherence to William Morris's often-reiterated dictum urging people to 'have nothing in your homes that you do not know to be useful and believe to be beautiful'; and an ethics of labour that rejected the alienation of the modern conditions of factory production and argued instead for the humane scale of workshop production. Although in practice the movement's politics vis-à-vis production meant that its democratizing ideals of consumption could not be realized, as the cost of individually designed and workshop-produced furniture put it beyond the reach of most people, it is nonetheless the case that the design agenda was explicitly progressive. Human beings not only deserved better, but could take control of their environments in such a way that they improved at work and at home, both materially and spiritually. Morris's social vision refused the injustices and impoverishment of contemporary 'modern' life, and both imagined and worked towards an ameliorated and reformed modernity.

The twin bedsteads designed by Ambrose Heal for the Paris Exhibition of 1900, together with the hangings at the heads of the beds by Godfrey Blount, give a sense of the special contribution of twin beds to the semiotics of modern co-sleeping. In contrast to the dominant aesthetic of the 1900 exhibition (the lush and sinuous organic forms of Art Nouveau), and in contrast



Paris Exhibition, 1900.

Twin Bedsteads.

Each 3 feet by 6 feet 6 inches, on Heal & Son's Patent Tramways,
for saving the wear and tear of carpets.
Bed Hangings and Coverlets of appliqué Linens.

FIGURE 22 *Twin bedsteads by Heal's at the Paris Exhibition, 1900.*

too to the bedsteads appearing in the Heal's catalogue that year, the style of Ambrose Heal's bedsteads conforms to the design ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement. The pillar-and-panel form of the French bedsteads was simple, even austere. Their claim to beauty was largely dependent on the immanent beauty of the wood from which they were made and on the congruity of design and material: wood panelling at the end, for example, rather than the wooden rods or bars that were shortly to be rejected by Hermann Muthesius as belonging properly only to the metal bed (Muthesius 1979: 227). And while the bedsteads were not without decoration, they refused extraneous and gratuitous ornament.

The utopian dimension of the bedsteads is apparent not only in their design allegiance to the Arts and Crafts agenda, but also, and even more immediately, in the origins of the hangings at the heads of the beds. These were designed by Godfrey Blount, one of the founders of the Haslemere Peasant Arts movement, an Arts-and-Crafts-inspired artisanal community established in the mid-1890s. There, Blount and his wife Ethel founded the Peasant Tapestry Industry, whose primary aim was not to make a profit but to employ women from the local community and teach them artisanal skills.[1]

The idealism of the hangings' genesis is also apparent in their symbolism. One hung at the head of each bed, each bordered with a frieze of large, stylized flower heads, below which flies a pair of birds. The birds too are conventionalized, perhaps composite. While their back-swept wing-shapes are reminiscent of the swallows on the hanging by Blount in the Victoria and Albert museum, they do not have those birds' deeply forked tails. Rather, the heads and wedge-shaped tails are closer in form to the twinned birds that adorn the ornate half-tester on the Heal's bed exhibited at the 1862 International Exhibition – the 'two cooing doves enjoying each other's caresses' (see Figure 3, p. 89). The turtle doves here seem to be blessed with the wings of swallows, their legendary devotion to each other now enhanced by their dexterity and swiftness in flight. The disposition of each of the paired bodies echoes the other, as do their outspread wings. One bird forges upwards, towards the centre point of the hanging, the other, relaxed, glides down towards the first. The effect is striking, the design constituted by the two bodies held in dynamic and harmonious tension as the birds' movements take account, but remain independent, of each other. The pairing of the birds is doubled by the pairing of the hangings, each similar to, but not quite identical with, the other. Each sleeper is not only paired with their fellow, a pairing echoing through the twinned beds, the matching hangings and the paired birds, but each sleeper is crowned by a pair of birds identified uniquely with him or her, one of whom strains upwards and outwards while the other coasts back towards its mate. The sleeping couple is evoked not only by the paired beds and the matching hangings, but also by the pair of birds silently soaring overhead. The birds, like the beds, are manifestly and forever both together and apart.

The ensemble comprises a series of pairings: the bedsteads, the hangings, the pairs of birds reproduced between the two hangings but also within each one. Just as the matrimonial bed shown by Heal's at the 1862 International Exhibition had featured the 'two cooing doves enjoying each other's caresses', so these beds also figure an idealized pair, if anything still more insistently. Despite these being twin bedsteads, formally introducing a boundary between fellow sleepers, they nonetheless reiterate their investment in the couple, at the same time as they rewrite that couple's meaning. No longer do the twinned birds simply and conventionally assert the union and devotion of the married couple. Instead, the iconography of the hangings suggests that each of the sleepers is now also more than one half of a couple. If each component within a pair is structurally positioned as incomplete without the other, here each bedstead is endowed with its own pair of asymmetrical but complementary birds – the one who aspires, and the one who returns. Each sleeper participates in a pair, but is not limited by it. Neither is now rendered complete only by association with their fellow, but instead the singularity of each is revealed as comprising its own complex doubleness, through the duality of contrary impulses animating his or her own paired birds. The harmonious unity of the pair is a familiar trope, but a simultaneous acknowledgement of the contrary impulses within each half of the pair is strikingly different. The utopian associations of both the Heal's bedsteads and their hangings are legible not only in the Arts and Crafts origins of both, but also in their continuing celebration of the symbolism of the pair, and in their refusal to interpret the dissolution of the united double into disaggregated twins as a threat to the status of that couple. The bedsteads and hangings announce their continuing allegiance to each other loud and clear.

Is there, however, something overly insistent about the proliferation of the pair in these twin bedsteads? Do they assert too loudly the special capacity of the twin bedsteads to both recognize the complex individuality of each sleeper and also safeguard and celebrate disparity within the pair? Placed in close adjacency to each other – just as twin bedsteads were in most marketing materials in the early twentieth century – do they deny the formal boundary they introduce between the two? Is that boundary legible as politically progressive in its refusal to merge the two sleepers by subsuming them within the undifferentiated space of the double, insisting instead on preserving their separate identities within their paired one? Or is the gap or boundary better read through less consoling narratives of modernity – as the materialization of the anti-Enlightenment recognition in the emerging discourses of sociology and psychoanalysis of the hollowness of progress, the limits of rationality, the fundamental and inevitable opacity of the other and the self? Perhaps the gap between the beds is a defensive retreat from the utopian project of marital relations, introduced in the recasting of spouse as stranger, or at least in recognition of the irreducible core of strangeness, unknowability, in that relation.

The iconography of the twin bedsteads raises many such questions. But only when attention is paid to those who slept in them, thought of sleeping in them, were imagined as sleeping in them or refused to sleep in them does it become possible to answer them. Design records, advertisements, marketing materials, exhibits, magazines and household advice books have established the modern credentials of twin bedsteads, but to catch the nuances of their contributions to the dramas of twentieth-century marriage it is necessary to turn to a different set of texts, and in particular the marital advice books people consulted and the novels they read. It is here that, finally, we might find out what Mrs Poole-Bennett really thought of the Challoners' new twin beds.

PART THREE

Marriage

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

8

At home with a stranger

When Lytton Strachey turned his critical eye on the décor of 69 Lancaster Gate, the house in which he grew up, his account might be characterized (as I suggested in Chapter 5) as exhibiting an Oedipal shudder. There is a visceral quality to his distaste for his family home which is as much psychic as aesthetic. The incommensurability of the domestic interior as he describes it; its power as a player in, not just as a backdrop to, the internal dramas of its inhabitants; his inability to pin down its significance to him – this is an account in which Strachey expressly refuses the approach of his Victorian forebears to their environments. They were interested in the 'mental and moral implications of their surroundings', he wrote, so 'their spirits, so noble and oblivious, escaped the direct pressure of the material universe' (Strachey 1971: 16). Strachey, in contrast, is highly attuned to the aesthetics of his physical environment – his generation, he avers, 'find satisfaction in curves and colours' – but he also relishes the slide from the aesthetic to the psychic: 'We are agitated by staircases, inspired by doors, disgusted by cornices' (ibid.), he writes, and as the list progresses, the sense is less and less secure that his emotional reactions are only to the house's artistic merits or deficits.

The impression that the looming distortions of the domestic interior are psychically as well as aesthetically disturbing and, as such, participate in the constitution of Strachey's own interiority is reinforced when he recounts a recurrent dream he had about his childhood home, long after he had left it:

> We are in the drawing-room, among the old furniture, arranged in the old way, and it is understood that we are to go there indefinitely, as if we had never left it. The strange thing is that, when I realize that this has come about, that our successive wanderings have been a mere interlude, that we are once more permanently established at number 69, a feeling of intimate satisfaction comes over me. I am positively delighted. And this is strange because, in my working life, I have never for a moment, so far

> as I am aware, regretted our departure from that house, and if, in actuality, we *were* to return to it, I can imagine nothing which would disgust me more. So, when I wake up, and find myself after all at Gordon Square or Tidmarsh, I have the odd sensation of a tremendous relief at finding that my happiness of one second before was a delusion. (ibid.: 17)[1]

Strachey's account pays nuanced attention to dream-detail, to the interplay of the waking and sleeping self, to the affects generated by the dream – delight, disgust, relief – all glossed with a commentary accentuating the strangeness of the mismatch between his unconscious and conscious associations with the family home. The account depends on an awareness of the limits of awareness, and thereby of the power of the unconscious, in adequately communicating that mismatch.

Strachey's attitude to his dream could not differ more starkly from that recounted by the domestic sanitarian doctor Benjamin Ward Richardson and discussed in Chapter 3. Richardson's dream of the fictional island castaway Philip Quarrl – avowedly a dream of solitude and desolation, perhaps also of autonomy and abandonment – leads him not to insights about the state of his own psyche, but to the imperfectly dried and decomposing feathers of his pillow which were giving him an oppressive headache and nausea. For Richardson, his dream was a kind of *roman à clef*, its singular and simple meaning borne in the direct and closed correspondence between the dream pillow and his own, and thus readily available for extraction and application. For Strachey, in contrast, his dream was an open, enigmatic and supercharged text, a generator and bearer of feeling as much as meaning.

Between the accounts of the two dreams lie some forty years and – among other things – the transformative interventions of Sigmund Freud, after which no dream could ever again be approached with Richardson's literal-minded pragmatism. Strachey was familiar with Freud's work – his brother James was an early analysand of Freud and became the general editor of the English translations of his works – but by the 1920s psychoanalytic ideas were also starting to permeate, albeit in a simplified and popularized form, the wider culture. In Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), reputedly the first novel actively to engage with psychoanalysis, the Freudian doctor describes the premises of this new theory:

> The mental life that can be controlled by effort isn't the mental life that matters. You've been stuffed up when you were young with talk about a thing called self-control – a sort of barmaid of the soul that says, 'Time's up, gentlemen,' and 'Here, you've had enough.' There's no such thing. There's a deep self in one, the essential self, that has its wishes. And if those wishes are suppressed by the superficial self – the self that makes, as

> you say, efforts and usually makes them with the sole idea of putting up a good show before the neighbours – it takes its revenge. Into the house of conduct erected by the superficial self it sends an obsession. ([1918] 1980: 163–4)

The doctor describes the ego-cum-superego as a householder dwelling in a 'house of conduct' and anxious about the neighbours' disapproval.[2] The internal dramas of the conflicted self are translated into a series of commonplace domestic and neighbourhood analogues.

The domestic parallel is found too in psychoanalytic writings. At the margins (and psychoanalysis is particularly interested in the ill-defined territories of the margin: the dream half-remembered, the feeling barely registered, the slip of the tongue corrected before it is completed), Freud, like Strachey, paid serious attention to the psychic dimensions of the domestic environment in at least two ways. First, as well as being detective stories, his case histories are also family melodramas, played out in the claustrophobic interiors and public spaces of the European middle classes. If the Victorian sensation novel *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) is susceptible to a psychoanalytic reading, Freud's case history 'Dora' (Freud [1905] 1977) is equally legible as a melodrama. It is a tale of sexual intrigue, forbidden love, jealousy, loyalty and betrayal, involving a coercive father, secret mistress, angry daughter, depressed and deceived mother and sexually knowing governess, all generated in a matrix of tumultuous and ambivalent emotions. Such melodramas do not unfold in a social or material vacuum, but in domestic environments whose structure, equipment and familial usage not only stage them but also shape them.

Secondly, when Freud sought to capture the unsettling admixture of familiarity and strangeness by which people periodically find themselves ambushed – when we glimpse ourselves in a mirror, for example, and take a moment to realize the image is ours, or when we experience a sense of déjà vu – the term he used is *unheimlich*, translated as 'uncanny' but literally meaning 'unhomely' (Freud [1919] 1985). The uncanny describes a phenomenon or experience whose identity, apparently commonplace and stable, is suddenly revealed to be something quite different. The material environment and the psyche collide with each other: one thing collapses into another, the other is revealed to be the self, the present shows itself to be the past. The unconscious, that is, momentarily appropriates and animates a face, an object or a place, rendering strange the familiar and unsettling the sense of the everyday as given, knowable and dependable.

The home itself, as Freud's case histories and those of his psychoanalytic colleagues demonstrate repeatedly, shares this doubled identity. As Strachey's dream account shows so concisely, home is at once the place to which we yearn to return and from which we long to escape. It is material, bricks and mortar, but also psychic, fabricated of the disturbing and unsettling as well as the comfortable and safe, of loneliness and alienation as well as filiation and intimacy, of the casual unkindnesses and sometimes cruelties of those we love as well as their care and nurturance. The uncanny is only unhomely in its refusal to conform to anodyne, ameliorative and consolatory fictions of the meanings of home. In its capacity to be its own opposite, in its compaction of strangeness and familiarity, comfort and unease, a sense of safety and of threat – the movement from one term to the other registered in a momentary visceral jolt of disturbance – the uncanny is as homely a phenomenon as can be imagined.

If our homes are at times as odd and unnerving as Strachey's dream rendered his, how much stranger are their inhabitants – not (or not only) in their being unusual, but rather in their gradually revealed unfamiliarity and unknowability. The pervasiveness of transference – the process whereby 'we all invent each other according to early blueprints' – means that our encounters with others are inevitably 'a messy jangle of misapprehensions, at best an uneasy truce between powerful solitary fantasy systems' (Malcolm [1981] 2004: 6). In short, as Janet Malcolm concludes her summary of Freud's concept, 'we cannot know each other. We must grope around for each other through a dense thicket of absent others. We cannot see each other plain' (ibid.). Owing to transference, our personal relationships are as much encounters with ourselves as with other people, and the others we do engage with are not even present, but revenants from our pasts. If others remain strangers to us, so too, according to Freud, do our unconsciouses render us strangers to ourselves, putting our behaviour, motivations, desires and anxieties beyond the constraining grip of understanding, reason and will.[3] Georg Groddeck, Freud's contemporary in the field of psychoanalysis, made this observation most starkly and simply: 'One goes through life without knowing the tiniest thing about oneself' ([1923] 1949: 196). How strange our relationships with those closest to us – our parents, siblings and friends, our spouses and children – will prove to be, therefore, as the imperfectly known self encounters a misrecognized other. As well as bequeathing the twentieth century a body of analytic theory, a series of techniques for accessing the unconscious, therefore, Freud also left a sense of the home as a profoundly transformed environment: more ambiguous, but also with more to tell, of more import, than previously, its strangeness compounded by the familiar and intimate strangers dwelling within it.

What might happen when the kind of critical scrutiny of the home exemplified by Strachey, where it is less an expression of its inhabitants and more an extension of them, meets with the sense that those with whom we share our houses, lives and most intimate relationships must always, inevitably, remain opaque to us, and elude our cognition? Might this combination help to make sense of the brief flowering of the twentieth-century predilection for twin beds? Might the married couple of the twentieth century, an intimate and enduring pairing of two people destined to remain strangers to themselves and to each other, require a domestic *mise-en-scène* that takes figurative account of the notion that a marriage is founded not so much in mutual recognition but in its impossibility? As the protagonist puts it in Elizabeth Taylor's *A Game of Hide and Seek*, marriage comes to seem 'a frayed, tangled thing made by two strangers … [It] does not solve mysteries … It creates and deepens them ([1951] 2009: 147, 146). If this was an increasingly commonly held perception, might it not also be the case that domestic life found commensurate material forms? Perhaps twin beds' formal reconfiguration of the sleeping pair as always and necessarily both together and apart might be understood as a material manifestation of a new cultural inflection of the married couple, expressive not only of new political agendas about marriage and gender (the New Woman, suffrage campaigns, law and marriage reform) but also of the insights deriving from the emerging disciplines of psychoanalysis and sociology. Indeed, Groddeck's interest in psychoanalysis was precipitated by his recognition that 'I have never felt that anyone was not a stranger to me' ([1923] 1949: 197). The perception was shared by his contemporary, the founding sociologist Georg Simmel, who suggested not only that 'a trace of strangeness … enters even the most intimate relationships', but also that there was a 'unity of nearness and remoteness involved in every human relation' ([1908] 1950: 406,402). Psychology and sociology: two of the new disciplines shaping twentieth-century understandings of what it meant to be a modern subject, seeking their meanings on the one hand in internal psychic structures and on the other in wider social ones, found themselves required to acknowledge, confront, work with and account for the intimate strangers whom their investigations delivered up to them. Twin beds might therefore be framed as a social phenomenon with both psychic analogues and cultural reverberations.

It was not only in arcane medical and academic discourse that such psychoanalytically informed perceptions were to be found. The impact of a popularized Freudianism, in particular, was such that these ways of thinking filtered into the broader culture, not only of those moving in the circles of the modernist intelligentsia such as Lytton Strachey and Rebecca West, but also into middle-class culture – the main milieu in which twin beds were adopted. Even a light-hearted handbook on marriage entitled *Bed Manners* started from the premise of the inherent strangeness of the marital encounter: 'The strangest adventure of all is to find yourself locked in a bedroom with a person of the opposite sex, with whom you are required to go to bed and get up for thousands and thousands of nights. This is called "marriage"' (Hopton and Balliol 1936: 16).[4] The rest of the book suggests how best to navigate – and survive – these nightly close encounters with a stranger.

In middlebrow, middle-class culture, marriages were frequently anatomized and differing configurations of marital closeness and remoteness were tested and renegotiated, celebrated or destabilized. In *Mrs Miniver* (1939), for example, a novel by Jan Struther that began life as a series of popular columns in the *Times* and was later made into a Hollywood film, the eponymous heroine, the epitome of middle-class intelligence and good sense (though now in danger of appearing insufferably self-satisfied), reflects on the mysteries of marriage, especially her own, to Clem. The two of them have, she notes, a different approach to the expression of their feelings:

> Whereas words, for her, clarified feelings, for Clem, on the whole, they obscured them. This was perhaps just as well. For if they had both been equally explicit they might have been in danger of understanding each other completely; and a certain degree of un-understanding (not mis–, but un–) is the only possible sanctuary which one human being can offer to another in the midst of the devastating intimacy of a happy marriage. (Struther [1939] 1989: 39–40)

A happy marriage is characterized by its 'devastating' intimacy. What is it that intimacy 'devastates', or to which it lays waste?[5] Why might a happy marriage be particularly vulnerable? A partial answer lies in the suggestion that too much consciously articulated understanding in a marriage is perilous. In contrast, a degree of 'un-understanding', a benign mental space apart, is a sanctuary gifted by one spouse to the other. Such a space – unconscious, unelaborated, inchoate – is a refuge, perhaps, from the more acute demands made by the twentieth-century ideal of the much discussed companionate marriage, whereby husbands and wives were increasingly exhorted to be all in all to each other, not only committed spouses and parents, but also best friends and enduringly passionate lovers.[6] The expectations generated by the all-encompassing demands of twenty-four-hour companionship, Mrs Miniver suggests, need to be offset by, at the very least, a psychic room of one's own.

Mrs Miniver also suggests that intimacy is much more than just emotional or relational. It is also material and environmental. Arriving home after a holiday, she notices how 'the key turned sweetly in the lock. That was the kind of thing one remembered about a house: not the size of the rooms or the colour of the walls, but the feel of door-handles and light-switches, the shape and texture of the banister-rail under one's palm; minute tactual intimacies, whose resumption was the essence of coming home' (ibid.: 2). For Mrs Miniver, the intimacy and familiarity of the home is tactile as well as emotional. It is to be found not only in the conjugal and familial affiliations that play out within its walls, but also in the barely observed relationships that one develops with the materials making up the fabric of that home – those 'minute tactual intimacies' generated by the contact between skin and metal or wood or Bakelite. And it is these, Mrs Miniver suggests, that capture and conjure the essential meaning of home.

So what happens when Mrs Miniver's two observations meet – that is, the need for a personal space as a refuge from the 'devastating intimacy' of a happy marriage and the recognition of the capacity of inanimate domestic objects to be powerful generators and mediators of intimacy? She imagines the emotional intimacy of the married couple as itself spatial, a Venn diagram with a balance between shared and private spaces and resources: 'She saw every relationship as a pair of intersecting circles. The more they intersected, it would seem at first glance, the better the relationship; but this is not so. Beyond a certain point the law of diminishing returns sets in, and there aren't enough private resources left on either side to enrich the life that is shared' (ibid.: 40). Too much overlap, Mrs Miniver notes elsewhere, can result in married couples 'turning into Siamese twins' (ibid.: 47) – an unfortunate term of its time which nonetheless conveys her sense that such a marriage represents an unhealthy and unnatural kind of marital conjoining. The problem, she thinks, is that 'a single person is a manageable entity … But half of a married couple is not exactly a whole human being' (ibid.). A finely judged combination of being together and being apart, of closeness and distance, is needed to negotiate this phenomenon.

In the Miniver marital bedroom, this perceived necessity of a balance between privacy and intimacy is substantiated in Kay and Clem's twin beds. These are glimpsed in the novel when the children come into their parents' bedroom on Christmas morning. The younger two climb into their mother's bed, while their older brother 'curled himself up on the foot of his father's bed' (ibid.: 17). This Christmas scene offers the novel's sole entrée into the marital bedroom of Clem and Kay, where it epitomizes the text's idealizing vision of family life. In the Hollywood film adaptation (1942: dir. William Wyler), however, the Minivers' bedroom becomes centrally important. It emerges as the shared space at the heart of the home, and cements the image of the marriage as untroubled, companionable, but also intimate, the *mise-en-scène* for the sometimes humorous, sometimes flirtatious, sometimes nurturing exchanges between husband and wife. Twin beds are here a long way from being the sign of a disappointing marriage, the position they later assumed in the symbolic geography of the marital bedroom. Rather, their beds serve as the furnishing equivalent of the intersecting circles imagined by Mrs Miniver. They are together, always a pair, always close by, but also apart, their separateness leaving in place a reservoir of privacy as a sanctuary from the devastating intimacy of happy togetherness.

In neither novel nor film is the 'devastating intimacy' of the Minivers' happy marriage ever shaken. The enduring balance between un-understanding and intimacy renders this fictional union either a backdrop to social comedy or a source of commonplace wisdoms. More compelling, perhaps, because more ambivalent, is the anatomization of a middle-class marriage to all appearances very similar to that of the Minivers but where its equilibrium is profoundly shaken, in the classic British romance film *Brief Encounter* (dir. David Lean; 1945). Here, the marriage of Laura and Fred is destabilized not by a flaw inherent in its own conjugal fabric, unless that flaw be the insufficient cultivation of 'un-understanding' between the spouses, but by the devastating intimacy of an affair, when Laura falls in love with Alec, a doctor she meets in the station tea-room. At a crucial narrative juncture, in the midst of the crisis that the affair precipitates for Laura, her assumptions about the proper distribution of knowing and unknowing, of nearness and remoteness, are played out across the gulf between the couple's twin beds.

In this scene Laura lies in bed, wakeful and restless. The voiceover confirms what the audience already knows: Laura is ashamed of the lie she has told Fred to conceal the fact that she had spent the afternoon with Alec. Laura turns and looks across at Fred as he sleeps untroubled in his own twin bed, separated from hers by a bedside table (Figure 23). Her gaze takes in the table, on which sit two objects implicated in Laura's emotional drama. The first is a book: she had first met Alec on a day when she had changed her library

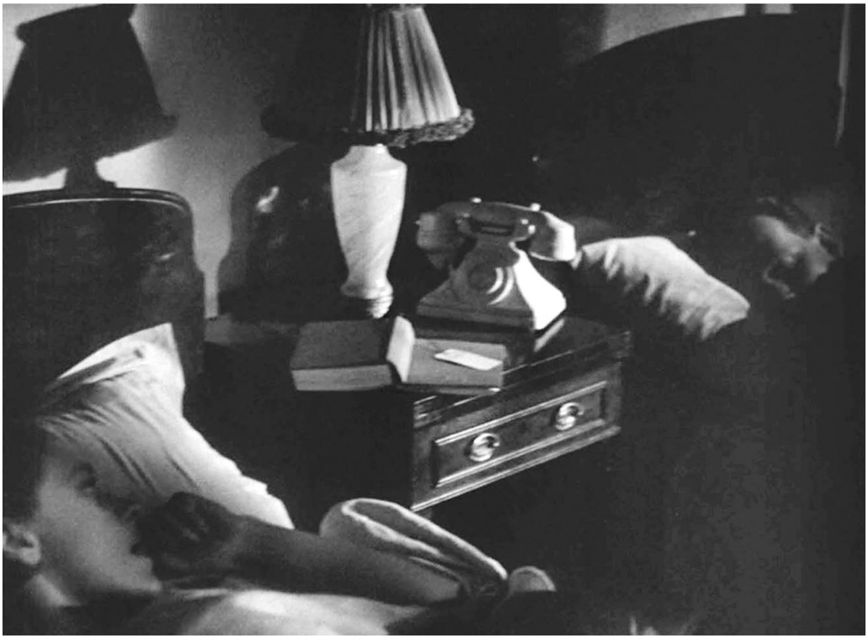


FIGURE 23 *Twin beds in* Brief Encounter *(1945).*

book at Boot's. The second is a telephone, the instrument with which Laura had that evening compounded her lie by seeking its false corroboration by her friend. Together, these two objects, positioned between Laura and Fred, serve as reminders of the innocent beginning of her romance with Alec and of its latest all-too-guilty staging post.

The scene is accompanied by Rachmaninov's second piano concerto, music 'by turns turbulent, yearning and mournful' (Dyer 1993: 17) and a marker of Laura's tumultuous and disordered emotional state, as well as by the voiceover. The voice is Laura's, her words addressed to Fred as she reflects on the now-ended affair. This has shaken her to the core through its unloosing of an overwhelming desire for the intimacy and intensity of romantic passion, while also leaving intact both her love for Fred and the children and her attachment to decency, loyalty and self-respect, the values of her milieu. Looking across to Fred, asleep in his twin bed, with a perspective afforded by the distance between them, her voiceover recalls, 'That week was misery. I went through it in a sort of trance. How odd of you not to have noticed that you were living with a stranger in the house.' This reflection accompanies a shot of the two of them side by side in their twin beds. Laura's gaze traverses the gap between the beds; it addresses Fred, just as her words do. The sleeping Fred, facing Laura, is oblivious to her anguish. The voiceover identifies Laura as the stranger in the house – somebody unknown to him, an interloper in the sanctuary of the home, the marital bedroom, the parallel bed – yet unrecognized as such by Fred.

Perhaps worse, however, Laura is also a stranger to herself. She is horrified at her own resourceful dishonesty in telling her lie to Fred, a duplicity made literal in her doubled presence in the preceding scene, where she is filmed from behind as she sits at her dressing table talking to Fred, her face seen only in the mirror. The successful accomplishment of the first lie precipitates the need for a second – the story given to her friend on the telephone. The stricken looks on Laura's face after the telling of each lie suggest her revulsion at her facility with these falsehoods, her ability to breach her own moral code with such inventiveness and ease. It is not her affair with Alec that has made her unfamiliar to herself, but the telling of her easy and expert lies which marks the beginning of her shame, guilt and fear.

But if she is a stranger to Fred and to herself, the scene shows Fred to be a stranger to her too, closed to her as he sleeps just as he is – albeit in a benign and affable way – when awake. 'Hi, Laura – you were miles away!', he says to her as they sit in the drawing room, recalling her from her reverie but showing no concern for where it might have taken her. The affair with Alec takes place in the space opened up by Fred's distance from her. Early on, when Laura suggests inviting Alec and his wife to dinner, Fred's response is 'Must it be dinner?', preferring it to be lunch because he is never at home then.

Throughout, his calls on Laura concern the children or his dinner, or he asks for assistance with his crossword. Laura's interiority, made present in the film by the voiceover and by the many close-ups of her face and, in particular, her eyes (windows if not to her soul, then at least to her heart), is in stark contrast to Fred's resolute exteriority, his refusal to engage with Laura in any way that might demand his emotional presence: 'Have it your own way!', he says to her on three occasions, ducking the possibility of any difference of opinion. He remains at an emotional distance from her until the final scene when, Laura and Alec having separated, putting a geographical gulf between them of the magnitude necessary to keep them apart (Alec emigrates to South Africa), Laura returns to the family home and to Fred. Now, finally, against all the evidence, Fred shows that he has been aware all along of Laura's unhappiness and distance from him. 'You've been a long way away', he says; 'thank you for coming back to me'. This scene, quite at odds with the bluff and cheerfully oblivious persona he has inhabited hitherto, may return him to Laura as an observant and caring husband, but it nonetheless leaves him for the audience as a new kind of stranger in the house, one introduced by the *volte face* in his capacity for observation, delicacy and intimacy.

Brief Encounter offers nothing as straightforward as a contrast between an emotionally distant if companionable marriage and the intensity of a love affair. Intimacy, proximity and distance are triangulated across the two relationships. They are configured, on the one hand, across the gulf at the heart of the marriage of two strangers, and on the other by the bridge formed by the passionate intensity of the affair between two other strangers: 'I hardly know him at all really', comments Laura of Alec after they have finally gone their separate ways. Twin beds preserve Laura and Fred as a pair, but also maintain them as separate people. Suspending them somewhere between the merged form of the married couple and the self-sufficiency and autonomy of two individuals, the couple are simultaneously together and apart, the tension between the two terms generated by the contrary dynamics which hold the couple in place.

The troubled marriage of Laura and Fred and the happy one of Kay and Clem Miniver are both staged against the backdrop of a pair of twin beds which introduces the balanced distribution of distance and intimacy appropriate for the marriages of two strangers. The space between the two beds makes literal the space at the heart of each couple, a space that can serve as boundary or as bridge, which can separate or connect, facilitate either the inclusive gaze or the oblivious unknowing of fellow sleepers. In Kay Miniver's terms, twin beds could be said to introduce the ambiguous but necessary space of un-understanding.

If fictional marriages, with their privileged *mise-en-scène* of interiority and affiliation, can accommodate the space between in this way, what happens to it in other discourses of modern marriage? In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, as twin beds appeared in the shops, as the figure of the fashionable New Woman campaigning for social reform increasingly refused the terms of a marriage forged in the separate spheres of husband and wife, how did new thinking about the proper relation of the married couple conceptualize and negotiate that space? And in what ways did such thinking interpret, deploy or refuse its respatialization of the marital bedroom, in the fashionable and popular twin bedsteads?

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Marie Stopes and modern marriage

When advisers, designers, manufacturers and consumers found in twin beds a structural form that signified modernity, and which did so in part by virtue of its anti-Victorian character, much more was being reshaped than the cumbrous form of the nineteenth-century four-poster. From the 1880s onwards, the relationship of the occupants of the imposing and ornate Victorian marriage bed was also the object of intense public, press and intellectual critical scrutiny and reforming zeal.

The contours characterizing Victorian marriage – the ideals through which it was rehearsed, the contradictions inherent in its practised forms, and the shifts in these through the long nineteenth century – are well known, and have been the object of much scholarly attention.[1] In brief, the patriarchal or 'separate spheres' model informing Victorian marriage had posited and celebrated a complementarity in an avowedly unequal relation between husband and wife: 'Each has what the other has not: each completes the other, and is completed by the other: they are in nothing alike', as John Ruskin famously put it (Ruskin 1905: 121). It was this polarized model, in which having nothing in common was elevated to a marital virtue, and in which the mystical completion of the composite couple was the promised outcome of the union of these entirely dissimilar beings, that was increasingly called into question, in part because of the hypocrisy of a sexual double standard, whereby infidelity on the part of husbands was tolerated, even expected.

For many contemporary critics of the mores of late Victorian marriage – epitomized in particular by the figure of the iconoclastic 'New Woman' of the 1890s: liberal, reformist and independent – the *fin de siècle* brought with it a sense that the injustices inherent in this model of marriage could no longer be tolerated, let alone celebrated.[2] Just what should and could characterize an alternative and modern view of marriage was the subject of much debate, but by the 1920s a consensus was beginning to form which advocated marriage as – potentially, ideally, at least – the site of a joyful union between companionable and intimate equals, and based not on division but on partnership. As Marcus Collins put it, this new marital mutualism placed ‘equality, intimacy, sharing and communication’ (2003: 90) at the heart of an ideal that informed discourses of marriage into the mid-century and beyond. The intimacy at the heart of this view of marriage was thoroughgoing, involving ‘privacy, closeness, communication, sharing, understanding and friendship’ (ibid.: 93). These conscious and far-reaching changes to ways of thinking about marriage coalesced into the so-called companionate marriage, a marital ideal which pertained, albeit with variations, through most of the twentieth century.

The companionate ideal was expounded in a wide variety of published materials, popular, scientific and religious: ‘The idea of spouses as companions and “chums” … was voiced in the new, Stopes-founded genre of marital literature, in novels at all literary levels and in women’s magazines, especially those which promoted “modern” womanhood (within the boundaries of marriage and modernity)’ (Hall 2000: 108). Edward Griffith, marital adviser and co-founder of the National Marriage Guidance Council, clearly articulated this sense of a newly reformed institution: ‘Our conception of the purpose and meaning of marriage has changed in a generation’, he wrote. ‘What was good enough for our mothers and grandmothers is not good enough for us’ (Griffith [1935] 1940: 18). If the critique of Victorian marriage was founded in a rejection of its structures, principles and practices, it was also driven by a sense of idealism at times pragmatic, at times utopian, as people sought to determine just what kind of marriage would be ‘good enough’ for them. ‘What are the elements which together make an ideally happy marriage?’ asked marriage adviser Helena Wright in her best-selling *The Sex Factor in Marriage* (1930); and her answer is, first, ‘companionship and co-operation between husband and wife, involving every side of their personalities – spiritual, mental, and physical’ (1930: 23–4). She assures readers that this ‘lasting and satisfying happiness in marriage is a possibility for nearly all couples’ (ibid.: 11). The ideal is not only a comprehensive one, requiring compatibility of mind, body and spirit, but also, she promises, within reach.

If intimacy spread its net wide in this new kind of marriage, and was to be found in close and complementary companionship, so it also went deep. Increasingly, for marital agenda-setters such as Griffiths and Wright, the bedrock of the ‘ideally happy’ marriage was to be found in the couple’s sexual relationship. ‘It is the presence of the sexual relation that constitutes the peculiar nature of the married state’, wrote Wright; ‘the sex-relation is one of the sacraments of life; to married people it should be a continual source of joy, health, self-fulfilment, and self-expression’ (ibid.: 27, 29). Sex is definitive of a marriage, simply by virtue of its presence. But more than this, the happiness and the health of the union is explicitly taken to be rooted in the sexual relationship, bringing with it a sense of completion for the sexual subject, both psychically (in 'self-fulfilment') and interpersonally (in 'self-expression'). In its ennobling and transformative work of completion for both individual and couple, marital sex is also sacramental, a culturally determined and spiritually underwritten ritual conferring divine sanction on the participants. In this new identification of a happy and healthy marriage with a sexually satisfying one – indeed, of the prescription of the latter as a means to attain the former – the marriage bar was set ambitiously high, for what was both promised and required was not just a satisfactory sexual relationship but what Helena Wright called 'the perfect sex-act' (ibid.: 62). It was with the achievement of this carefully defined and normative 'act' that the plethora of marital advice books kick-started by Marie Stopes's *Married Love* (1918) in the first half of the twentieth century were concerned. Biology and physiology were to be put to work not in the service of mere physical satisfaction, but also of self-fulfilment, marital harmony and, not infrequently, a stable and smooth-running society.

It was in the midst of the *fin-de-siècle* flurry of concern about the New Woman and the future of marriage that twin beds made their appearance in the shops, and after which, through the early years of the new century, they became increasingly visible as ambassadors of modernity in showrooms and studios, at exhibitions and in magazines, and in the bedrooms of the middle classes. However, not all social commentators saw the relation between twin beds and modernity as deserving acceptance or approval. Indeed, their most vigorous twentieth-century antagonist, Marie Stopes – birth control campaigner, eugenicist and author of several popular marital advice books – saw them as nothing less than a sign of the impoverishment of human relations under the conditions of modernity. Her vehement denunciation of this sleeping arrangement brings twin beds squarely into focus as contributors to the drama in which they thereafter most insistently and protractedly played their part: namely, sex and marriage or, more precisely, sex in marriage. Gradually and unevenly, as the twentieth century proceeded, twin beds moved from being understood as indicative of a commitment to health and as a sign of modernity to being read exclusively as an indicator of the relationship – the marital priorities, values and practices – of the couple who chose to sleep in them.

Stopes's contributions were made in explicit defiance of the ways of thinking about sexuality and marriage put forward by the emerging psychological and sexological discourses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In particular, her marital advice books *Married Love* (1918) and *Enduring Passion* (1928) were concerned to dispel any sense of the complexity and unpredictability of the marital union, its dwelling beyond the reach of the conscious will, insisting instead on its malleability and responsiveness to spousal attentiveness, affection and common sense. Happy marriages, she maintained, could be achieved and sustained by showing married people how to secure lasting joy in each other's embrace. She was not entirely dismissive of the focus of the new psychological sciences: Freud's work, she thought, had the advantage of taking sex seriously, but his 'patter', like Jung's, 'is mostly the bemused maunderings of slightly abnormal male individuals of a foreign race, whose introspective data do not tally with the straightforward, clean, comparatively simple reactions of the Anglo-Saxon or Celtic stock mainly composing our England' (Stopes 1935: 59). So-called experts, she thought, 'are almost all warped and rendered myopic by their continual encounters with diseased, abnormal, and suffering examples of humanity' (Stopes 1928: 17). The result was excessive dwelling on the 'abnormalities which bulk so largely in most books about sex' (Stopes [1918] 2004: 10). The disturbing and murky view of sexuality expounded in these theories was, to her mind, distorted, extrapolated as it was from excessive study of the sexually 'abnormal'. Stopes's mission, in contrast, was to shift the focus of attention to 'the great majority' of married people 'who are nearly normal' (ibid.). The fully normal did not need her help, only those who found themselves to one side or another of normality – within reach of it, but unsure how to grasp all that it offered.[3]

Stopes's self-differentiation from psychoanalytic and sexological approaches is therefore twofold. It lies first in her promise to address the needs of the near-normal majority. In so doing, she offers a double comfort to the unhappily married, in that the nature of their sexual desires situates them in the ambit of the 'normal', while their troubles in this domain are also recuperated as widespread, the result not of individual failings or perversions but of an ignorance that, it turns out, is symptomatic of modernity itself. Marital difficulties thereby also become 'normal'.[4] Second, Stopes's approach is pragmatic and prescriptive: do as I say, she suggests, and you too will enjoy the heady raptures of sexual and marital joy described in these pages. She promises both agency and success. The 'experts' took sex seriously, as she did, and recognized its far-reaching importance, but their practices were well beyond the reach of ordinary people, their ideas new, contentious, shadowy and largely inaccessible, mostly to be found in weighty books in specialist libraries and in medical journals. Their theories and treatments may have offered hope to the unhappy, but they were only able to offer it by means of processes that were protracted, circuitous and expensive – and even then, they could not offer it with any certainty of a successful outcome.

Stopes's recommendations, in contrast, resounded with an infectious certainty, breezily sweeping to one side the objections of doubters and naysayers. The unconscious had no part in her diagnosis or in her programme. Instead, through the combination of the knowledge she would impart, the application of certain scientific observations and the good sense and good will inherent in the feelings that bind married people together, all could be brought within the reach of the conscious will. Stopes's popular appeal was, therefore, the result of a potent mix. Her anti-expert populism brought sexuality – although she disliked the word 'sexual', finding it an 'ugly slimy sounding word' (1928: 15) – and normality into the same well-lit frame, out of the shadowy territory of the medically pathological, sexologically perverse and psychoanalytically neurotic. Moreover, she promised hope to married people who found themselves confused and disappointed, offering them a pragmatic and empowering programme for the fulfilment of their dreams of married bliss. It was a combination that early readers found compelling.

Best known now as a birth-control campaigner, Marie Stopes shook post-war society with her first book, the sex and marriage manual *Married Love* (1918), a book with minimal interest in contraception but a zealous and campaigning interest in the sexual practices and attitudes of married people. The book was an instant success, selling two thousand copies in two weeks, going into six editions within a year, and twenty-two reprints (406,000 copies) in five years (McKibbin 2004: xxxvi; Haste 1992: 60; see too Cook 2004: 187–206). Stopes herself anticipated that the book would 'electrify' the country (McKibbin 2004: vii), and, looking back on its impact from the mid-1930s, she described it as having 'crashed into English society like a bombshell' (Stopes 1935: 44). For once, her hyperbole was warranted. There had been marriage manuals of one sort or another for many centuries, and since the late nineteenth century these had been concerned with the sexual relationship within marriage as a way to cultivate 'affectionate mutual regard and unselfish devotion' (Porter and Hall 1995: 203; see too Hall 1991: 63–88). However, these works 'still eschewed exact physiological instructions for rendering the act mutually pleasurable' (Porter and Hall 1995: 203). *Married Love* 'breached the dam of reticence' (ibid.: 208), using an anatomical and sexual terminology absent from earlier manuals in order, Stopes wrote, to enable 'average, healthy, mating creatures [to] find the key to happiness' ([1918] 2004: 11). Her insistence on the normality of sexual desire for both men and women combined with a physiologically explicit vocabulary culled from her research in 'the Cupboard' at the British Library made her book unlike anything hitherto published.[5] Not only did it assert that 'normal' women felt sexual desire, it also suggested that it was the duty of their husbands (and it ought also to be their joy) to ensure their wives experienced a sexual pleasure as great as their own. The task of *Married Love* was to ensure that women and – just as importantly – the 'young husbands' to whom the book was dedicated knew how that joy could be attained.

Married Love was groundbreaking not only in its unambiguous technical terminology and in its assertion of the normality and mutuality of sexual desire, but also in its combination of these with a high-flown romantic rhetoric promulgating and celebrating the utopian potential of marriage for both sexes. Stopes had initially intended to disseminate her thoughts on married love 'not in a strong solution as it now is in one book, but diluted into a series of novels and romances. The first of these I drafted as a narrative interspersed with poems conveying one of the many facets of the subject through the medium of a tale' (Briant 1962: 90; see too Hall 1977: 113–14). The lukewarm response of the historical-romantic novelist Maurice Hewlett, whose work Stopes admired and to whom she showed the draft, was such that she destroyed it and started afresh. His advice, together with the advent of the First World War in 1914, convinced her 'that what the world wanted was not the themes diluted into novels … but help in some form direct, swift and simple' (Briant 1962: 91).

Despite the change of genre, Stopes did not abandon the romantic impulse, and consequently the prose of *Married Love* comprises a sometimes dizzying mix of biology and high romance. The physiological technicalities of female sexual arousal are described in terms hitherto unavailable outside publications intended for the medical profession, but these are combined with parenthetical glosses in a quite different register:

> When the woman is what is physiologically called tumescent (that is, when she is ready for union and has been profoundly stirred) these parts are flushed by the internal blood supply and to some extent are turgid like those of the man, while a secretion of mucous lubricates the channel of the vagina. In an ardent woman the vagina may even spontaneously open and close. ([1918] 2004: 55)

A woman's ardour and her capacity to be 'profoundly stirred' – attributes with spiritual and affective as well as physical connotations – are here firmly and unanswerably rooted in her body, their corporeality celebrated rather than euphemized. The explicit physiological description is not just in the service of scientific accuracy, however, but is aspirational and invested in what Stopes elsewhere calls a 'noble frankness' (ibid.: 60). Frankness is rendered noble by being linked to the capacity to be 'profoundly stirred' or 'ardent', which in turn justifies the explicit physiological detail. These states serve to spiritualize the body, making pleasure morally serious. Sexually unambiguous language is literally and metaphorically brought out of 'the Cupboard' and into the well-lit spaces of the middle-class home, where it is reframed as an aspect of emotional or spiritual depth instead of indicating an unseemly, lascivious or immoral physicality. As such, the physiological phenomena so explicitly described become not only legible and nameable, but also socially acceptable and morally desirable states towards which readers should aspire.

In contrast to her description of sexual arousal, which yokes together the physical, emotional and spiritual, Stopes's characterization of orgasm bypasses the body altogether. It relies instead on a rapturous language that owes nothing to the medical textbook and everything to the romantic novel, an overheated Swinburnian poetics and popular mysticism:

> The half swooning sense of flux which overtakes the spirit in that eternal moment at the apex of rapture sweeps into its flaming tides the whole essence of the man and woman, and as it were, the heat of the contact vapourises their consciousness so that it fills the whole of cosmic space. For the moment they are identified with the divine thoughts, the waves of eternal force, which to the Mystic often appear in terms of golden light. (ibid.: 78)[6]

Stopes's melding of the scientific with a form of literary and quasi-religious metaphysical language gives *Married Love* its distinctive rhetorical character, and is the basis of the promise made by the book. It assures readers that an understanding of the physiology of sexual response, if combined with study of the arts of sex and with the exercise of 'the discipline of control' in sexual encounters, without which 'there is no lasting delight in erotic feeling' (ibid.: 59), will grant access to the ecstatic delirium described in this high-flown and entirely disembodied description. 'Only by learning to hold a bow correctly', she reminds her readers, 'can one draw music from a violin: only by obedience to the laws of the lower plane can one step up to the plane above' (ibid.: 21).[7] Sexual pleasure – of the right sort, and in marriage – leads to, and is inseparable from, spiritual ecstasy. It is recuperated as entirely normal; and to settle for anything less is to sell oneself short, to live an impoverished life, and to risk physiological, emotional and marital ill-health: 'To have had a moderate number of orgasms at some time at least is a necessity for the full development of a woman's health and all her powers' (ibid.: 63). The promise of rapture made by the book is counterbalanced by the threatened consequences of a failure to achieve the requisite fulfilment.

Married Love is at once utopia, manifesto, guide book, polemic and clarion call on behalf of sex in marriage. Stopes makes clear why she feels there is a need for such a bullish intervention: sexual desire and sexual pleasure in marriage might be normal, but they have ceased to be ordinary. 'In this country, in modern times', she writes, 'the old traditions, the profound primitive knowledge of the needs of both sexes have been lost, and nothing but a muffled confusion of individual gossip disturbs a silence, shamefaced or foul' (ibid.: 10). The conditions of modern life are at the root of this loss – 'Love loses, in the haste and bustle of the modern turmoil' (ibid.: 26) – and the loss is different for women and for men:

> The evil results of the haste which so infests and poisons us are often felt much more by the woman than by the man. The over-stimulation of city life tends to 'speed up' the man's reactions, but to retard hers. … the opportunities for peaceful, romantic dalliance are less to-day in a city with its tubes and cinema shows than in woods and gardens where the pulling of rosemary or lavender may be the sweet excuse for the slow and profound mutual rousing of passion. (ibid.)

The utopia comprising an intuitive sexual knowledge and a harmonious sexual pace is identified nostalgically as pastoral, both in its origin and in its healthy performance. Modern marriage, in contrast, where both sexes expect joy but too often find themselves 'bitterly disappointed' (ibid.: 9), has lost its way, both in the speed and distractions of the modern city and in the cramped spaces of modern urban (or, more likely, suburban) living. 'In the rather trivial terms of our sordid modern life', she writes, 'the married pair share a bedroom, and so it comes about that the two are together not only at the times of delight and interest in each other, but during most of the unlovely and even ridiculous proceedings of the toilet' (ibid.: 70–1). While it might be enchanting for a man to 'see a beautiful woman floating in the deep, clear water of her bath', the same response cannot be expected when he watches his 'goddess … soap her ears' (ibid.: 71). The solution to this problem advocated by Stopes was, for most middle-class and working-class readers, as impossibly utopian as her rhetoric: 'Whenever the finances allow, the husband and wife should have separate bedrooms' (ibid.: 72). Such an 'inviolable retreat' allows 'a married woman's body and soul … [to] be essentially her own' (ibid.). However, this arrangement should not be allowed to preclude, on a nightly basis, the 'tender companionship and whispered intimacies which are, to many people, only possible in the dark' (ibid.: 73). Obeying this injunction 'overcomes the objection some people make to separate rooms as a source of estrangements' (ibid.). Whatever the danger might be that physical distance proves a prelude to emotional distance – and Stopes recognizes that this is a concern – it is not sufficient for her to eschew all separate sleeping arrangements within marriage. On the contrary, she was their champion.

Continuing her impassioned analysis of the disappointments of modern marriage and prescriptions for their rectification in subsequent books, Stopes returned to the part played by sleeping arrangements in the maintenance or erosion of a marriage. Separate bedrooms, double beds and twin beds all carry quite distinct emotional and rhetorical weight, but together they constitute a Stopesian economy of sleep with its own domestic geography, its own laws and beliefs, as well as its own ideals, anxieties, risks and promises. In her second handbook on marriage, *Enduring Passion* (1928), she addressed the phases of marriage that follow the heady early stages considered in *Married Love*, elaborating her earlier prescriptions for a healthy marriage. *Enduring Passion* names the double bed as the arena in which the marriage is to be nurtured through the sexual, physiological and emotional merging (or 'welding', as she calls it) of the couple.[8] With reference to two case studies, Stopes instructs her readers on the proper post-coital procedure during which merging is effected, beginning with the sonorous warning: 'The hour directly *after* coitus, the hour commencing at the moment of ejaculation, is one recurrently fateful in the love-lives of the partners. This hour, mishandled on myriads of occasions, has done much to injure morality' (1928: 116). Health, happiness and morality itself are at stake. Careless couples risk not only their own well-being, but that of the religious, spiritual and ethical code of principles and practices ('morality') which underpins and ensures the welfare and interests of the nation. The most public and grandiose of consequences depends on the negotiation of the most private of moments.

What is required to navigate this moment in such a way as to safeguard both personal happiness and the nation's moral and social health, Stopes insists, is the maximization of the bodily interpenetration and commingling of the couple. The instructions for the achievement of this state are precise:

> The male organ, scarcely yet retracted, is held gently but firmly in its place within the vagina .... Within the woman's vagina at this time, that is after she has herself experienced orgasm, and after the husband has ejaculated, there will be not only the seminal fluid and the various secretions of the accessory glands placed there by the man's ejaculation, but there will be the special fluids secreted or ejaculated from her own glands, alkaline in nature, altering its usual content from acid to alkaline, and containing substances of inestimable value, but which science has not yet troubled to analyse and discover in detail. In these, the sensitive, very absorbent skin of the *glans penis* of the man is bathed and immersed. I am certain that ultimately it will be proven that the man absorbs directly and beneficially through the *glans penis* something of the woman's secretions. (ibid.: 116–17)

Such close bodily contact and the intermingling of what are figured as sexual elixirs must be allowed to continue for at least an hour, after which the man 'moves apart, either to his own room or remaining with her' (ibid.: 118). In the case of Mr and Mrs O., who observe the Stopesian prescription, the benefits are immediately apparent. The next morning, Mr O. 'is observed to whistle and sing on his way to the bathroom; to be bright and happy, to have a gaiety and vitality which has not been robbed but added to'; more generally, he 'looks very much younger than his age' (ibid.). The promise continues to be made in this book that sexual joy is the route to spiritual rapture – 'The body is both the garment and the instrument of the soul' (ibid.: 199) – but here the tone is less romantic and more practical than in *Married Love*, focusing less on access to a diffuse cosmic joy and more on the physicality of sexual exchange, on post-coital cheerfulness and quotidian marital harmony. Strikingly, in the Stopesian prescription, separate sleeping arrangements are not anathema to such a state – indeed, they are a healthy adjunct to it – but they must be counterbalanced by spells of prolonged bodily fusion.

It is in the vignette that precedes the case of Mr and Mrs O. that Stopes first names twin beds as antagonists in the scene of marriage. In this counter-scenario, featuring Mr and Mrs N., after ejaculation 'the man feels that the union is over, his sex organ shrinks and becomes soft' (ibid.: 114–15)

> and, instead of following the *right* course, the man draws apart. Although they may have the sense not to disturb themselves to perform any of the foolish acts suggested by too many birth-controllers, or to return to that invention of the devil – the twin bedstead, they *draw apart* at once to sleep. (ibid.: 115; original emphasis)

The consequence? 'The next morning, little details of the household, of the breakfast table, of the day's plans seem to irritate and fret the man' (ibid.). The twin bedstead, in this account, is an instrument of the wrong kind of separation, intervening at a time and in a manner contrary to the one set out in the case of Mr O. It stands on a par with 'the foolish acts' advocated by some birth-controllers (presumably, post-coital douching), both of them inhibiting the creation or maintenance of an environment conducive to the proper mutual exchange of health-giving sexual fluids.[9]

The twin bedstead is named here as 'that invention of the devil', a designation Stopes returns to in later years. In *Sleep* (1956), her final, eccentric, self-regarding, opinionated and highly entertaining book, she continued her invective against twin beds:

> The 'double-bedded room' with twin beds is to be execrated. The miserable little shanties that are being built now instead of the comfortable houses of our forefathers are forcing the twin-bed-room on people who are willing to, or have to put up with them. Yet many of their inhabitants get devitalized, irritable, sleepless and unhappy, I think, because of them. The twin bed set was an invention of the Devil, jealous of married bliss. (Stopes 1956: 38)

In prose that is almost a parody of her earlier confident and no-nonsense style, her objections are now as much to do with the shoddiness of modern living as with marital well-being. To designate twin beds the 'invention of the Devil, jealous of married bliss' underscores the sense of Stopes's zeal and spiritual mission, and the utopian foundation of her analysis. Sexual harmony is a route back to prelapsarian conjugal perfection, while the disharmony of the Fall originates in part in the interruption of the proper nocturnal distribution of the married pair.[10]

Stopes's vision of the ideally functional and happy marriage is consolidated spatially and materially. It consists in a combination of the right kind of closeness (sexual, corporeal, biochemical, emotional), to be experienced in the marital bed, and the right kind of separation, involving the husband's extra-sexual occupation of his own bedroom when the wife, in particular, desires it. Stopes's advice in this regard did not change over the course of forty years. In *Married Love*, she recommended that 'the husband and wife should have separate bedrooms' ([1918] 2004: 72), and in *Sleep* she wrote that 'the best way for the majority is for the wife to have a room with a double bed, and the husband to have a bedroom to himself for general use, keeping the wife's bedroom a romantic place' (1956: 38). Twin beds have no place in paradise.

Stopes underpins her claims for the importance of marital sexuality with what she might have termed a proto-scientific biochemistry and biophysics: that is, she implies that her theories were not so much hypothetical or unproven as simply awaiting scientific confirmation. As well as asserting the importance at a chemical level of the absorption of the bodily fluids of one's sexual partner, she also speculates on the importance of an electro-magnetic interchange between men and women: 'I have a half-formed theory', she wrote, 'that men and women can affect and enrich and to some degree interpenetrate each other in some subtle way depending on electrical or magnetic currents characterizing each sex and mutually affecting them' (1928: 18). While she presents this as her own theory, it is in fact a residual reiteration of the ideas of heterodox practitioners such as R. B. D. Wells and Edward B. Foote explored in Chapter 3. Like them, she writes of the relationship between magnetism and vitality, the latter still understood by her as a finite resource, some of which is 'used up' by sexual activity, and which thereafter needs to be restored by the interpenetration of bodily secretions as enjoyed by Mr and Mrs O., who have wisely 'learned the secret of vitality directly *after* coitus' (ibid.: 4, 115; original emphasis). Her claims to iconoclasm and innovation are founded in part on a genuinely new emphasis on the mutuality of marital sexual desire and pleasure, and especially in a frank and joyous celebration of marital sexual abundance. But her ideas also articulate beliefs and practices deriving from, or at least characteristic of, longstanding and sometimes discredited disciplines such as mesmerism and hydropathy.

For Stopes, marriage is to be sustained through the couple's sexual interpenetration, their biochemical, magnetic or electrical exchange and emotional merging. From this, she maintains, all else will follow: 'In marriage, as distinct from any other human relationship, the bedrock of lasting happiness, of security, of health in every respect, lies in a proper *physical* adjustment of the two persons, and a proper physical management of their mutual experiences of union' (ibid.: 20–1; original emphasis). The arena in which this physical management is to take place is the double bed. In *Marriage in My Time*, her third and final book about marriage, this time more focused on social analysis than marital advice, Stopes returns to her vision of an optimal domestic sexual geography, with the double bed at its heart: 'It is in the marriage bed nightly, or at varied intervals according to the temperament and desire of the two participants, that the central physical act of marriage takes place' (1935: 62). The importance of the double bed is symbolic as much as practical. Marriage requires a platform – Stopes styles it as throne, but it is also altar – commensurate with its sacred, governing and elevated purpose: 'Marriage to-day would do well to go back to the Victorian era, and throne itself on a marriage bed, large, square and comfortable, attended by a single bed either in the same room or in a near-by dressing-room for one or other of the partners when either desires solitude' (ibid.: 58). While she recognizes the need for separate spaces for husbands and wives, this is not answered by the twin bedstead, whose 'recent widespread invasion of the home is one of the features of marriage to-day':

> The twin bedstead, each bed narrow, each bed covered with sheets and blankets of 'single-bed size,' is one of the enemies of true marriage. It gives a false pretence of nearness in union which is a travesty. Its narrowness creates cold draughts at a time when warm comfort and space is vital. It secures the ever-present sense of intrusion when real solitude is desired. It enforces continual proximity, and deadens feeling, without that intimate and close contact which rests, soothes and invigorates. (ibid.: 57–8)

The vehemence with which she inveighs against twin bedsteads is not only intense but also precise. Their very form, she suggests, precipitates a 'travesty' or distorted parody of the proper distribution of intimacy and distance required in marriage: 'It enforces continual proximity, and deadens feeling'. Neither sufficiently together nor sufficiently apart, twin beds lock the couple into the worst of all possible marital worlds. Their narrowness precludes the warmth and comfort given by the easy closeness of another body, and their close juxtaposition produces a sense of intrusion. By forcing the couple always to be in each other's company, but formally inhibiting the health-giving mingling of bodily fluids and electro-magnetic energies, twin beds enforce nearness but prohibit intimacy. They are both too close together and too far apart.

Proximity without emotional or sexual intimacy: this is Stopes's diagnosis of the affective impact of twin beds and of the root cause of the marital disappointment of which they are both cause and symptom. Stopes's recommended combination of a marriage bed and a nearby single bed – a choice requiring the means, both financial and spatial, of the wealthier classes – facilitated the periodic separation and reunion of the married couple in an echo of what she termed 'the Law of Periodicity of Recurrence of desire in women' ([1918] 2004: 39). Under this title, she argued that a woman's experience of sexual desire – what she called her 'rhythmic sex-tide' (ibid.: 36) – ebbed and flowed in relation to her menstrual cycle. 'There are two wave-crests in each twenty-eight-day month' (ibid.: 42), she contended, and it was these that should determine sexual contact. A husband should 'endeavour to adapt his demands on her so that they are in harmony with her nature' (ibid.: 47). Presumably, as her sex-tides ebbed and flowed, so husband and wife should move between the opportunities for proximity and distance offered by the double-plus-single bed arrangement. Even if 'the pulling of rosemary or lavender' ([1918] 2004: 26) remained beyond the reach of those living under the conditions of urban modernity, the artificial and frenetic tempo of modern urban life could still be banished by looking within, to the natural oceanic rhythms of the woman's love-tides.

In the Stopesian economy of sleep, twin beds disrupt the proper geography of the marital bedroom by formally insisting on the relative separateness – the enduring 'twoness' – of the constituent elements. Their disposition *vis-à-vis* one another suggests proximity and relationality, but not, as does the double bed, blending or union. The double bed constituted the arena in which Stopes, the high priestess of utopian married love, envisaged the melting, merging union of the ecstatic couple, materializing in quotidian form the blended marital relation she advocated. During the critical coda to coitus, this union was physical and biochemical, but it was also mystical in its power to reconfigure the couple metaphysically. The transfigured spouses are defined by their two-in-oneness as a 'higher unit of humanity, "the pair," rather than a couple of isolated individuals' (1928: 24). She refers to this pair 'in a very beautiful old-English word, now fallen into disuse, which I should like to see revived, the human "duity" in contrast to God's Unity' (ibid.):

> This duity, this unit composed of two like but dissimilar lives interlocked so as to make one unit existence [*sic*], is an extremely important item in the social system of any State desiring permanence, continuity and stability. (ibid.)

In serving the interests of the state, the duity has a pragmatic dimension, but it is also the means to access the metaphysical ecstasy envisaged in *Married Love*: 'When knowledge and love together go to the making of each marriage, the joy of *that new unit, the pair* will reach from the physical foundations of its bodies to the heavens where its head is crowned with stars' (Stopes [1918] 2004: 106; original italics). Both the stability of the state and a condition of metaphysical rapture emanate from the 'physical foundations' of the duity.

Twin beds cannot unite 'the pair' into a new merged unit, and so cannot stage the necessary formal combination of two becoming one. These beds take an initial step. They make a link between the pair that emphasizes their relation to each other by presenting them as a couple rather than just 'a couple of isolated individuals', thereby precluding any sense of this being a merely random encounter. However, twin beds fail formally to reify or materially embody this idealized 'duity', these interlocked 'like but dissimilar' entities. Unlike the double bed, their material form cannot reproduce the terms of the utopian marital paradigm advocated by Stopes. Where the double bed figures a complementary likeness in dissimilarity melded into a harmonious whole, twins insist on preserving the two as separate beings. Twin beds' proximity and adjacency, their narrowness and draughtiness, stand in the place of merging and union.

Stopes's endorsement of the double-plus-single arrangement gives material and spatial form to the complexities of her ideological investment in the happy marriage. Her political agenda is explicit: from mutually satisfying sexual relationships will follow enduringly happy marriages, which in turn will serve the stability of the nation. Indeed, among the opening sentences of *Married Love* is the following: 'The only secure basis for a present-day State is the welding of its units in marriage; but there is rottenness and danger at the foundations of the State if many of the marriages are unhappy' ([1918] 2004: 9). She reiterates the claim in *Enduring Passion*: 'Who can doubt that the stability of the nation depends on the health and *happiness* of its homes' (1928: 9–10; original emphasis).[11] Those homes will be happy not simply with happy individuals living in them, but because of the merged pair at their heart. None of Stopes's books is concerned with sexual pleasure as an end in itself. In *Married Love* and *Endearing Passion* in particular, it is explicitly named as important in serving the healthy longevity of the marriage and thereby the stability of the nation. A social agenda unashamedly frames the sexual prescriptions for unhappy married couples. The happiness of marriage is the foundation of the nation's health.

So it was that the health claims made for twin beds in the later nineteenth century continued to attach to questions of sleep hygiene in the twentieth century. As beliefs about disease transmission through foul air were refuted and anxieties about loss of vitality to a bedfellow through the equalization of electro-magnetic energies abated, choices of sleeping arrangement did not shed their associations with regimens of healthy living. The question of double or twin was not reduced, in Stopes's economy of sleep, to being simply a matter of preference. Rather, it continued to be informed by the moral imperative of making the right choice, the healthy choice, even though the health concerned was now not simply the bodily health of the individual but also the health of the marriage and thence of the nation. This connection was by no means Stopes's alone: her work is explicitly eugenicist, a discourse founded on the rehearsal of causal connections between parents' health, both physical and moral, the robustness of their children, and the consequent vigour of the national stock.[12] Stopes's inflection of these elements, however, insisted on a clear teleology between sexual pleasure, marital happiness and the state of the nation. The health at stake in the choice of sleeping arrangement was different from fifty years previously, but it nevertheless provided the motive and moral force of her denunciation. In their introduction of an unholy and ambiguous space between, twin beds threatened much more than the temper of a disgruntled husband.

Stopes's excoriation of twin beds is of a piece with her blueprint for marriage: be fully separated, or fully merged; unite in a double bed, or sleep (after sharing nightly 'whispered intimacies') in your own room; be together, or be apart. Twin beds break all these rules. They are an obstacle to intimacy. Not only does their narrowness militate against the continuing physical union of the duity during that crucial post-coital hour, but their distance from each other presumably requires intimacies to be uttered at full voice. They also preclude proper solitude by keeping the fellow sleeper ever-present, even if at arm's length. Twin beds prevent the formation of the duity, instead locking the couple into their atomized and unmerged states.

Condensed in the three possibilities for the distribution of the sleeping forms of the married couple – double, single or twin – are the essential components of the discussion about the changing character of marriage that was conducted across the twentieth century. After marriage, how much closeness, and of what kind, should be expected? How much independence was appropriate for each? Were husband and wife to be all in all to each other? Were the desires of each, sexual or otherwise, to have equal claim? Were the couple to be conceived as a merged duity or as two autonomous subjects, in close relation but with continuing independent identities? Such questions echo through twentieth-century debates about marriage. However, as the next chapter will show, they had also been repeatedly asked by Marie Stopes's predecessors, the marital advisers of the late nineteenth century.

10

Late Victorian marital advice

Marie Stopes's marital advice, as well her advocacy of birth control, secured her reputation as a trailblazer for a new attitude to sex in the years following the First World War. Emphasizing the importance of sex to marriage and the mutuality of its joys, combining frankness and romanticism, and optimistic in the promises made, her publications struck a chord with their readership. There was certainly much that was groundbreaking about Stopes's approach, but she was also highly invested in her own reputation as an innovator and iconoclast. 'I have some things to say about sex, which, so far as I am aware, have not yet been said', she wrote, suggesting that *Married Love* was 'based on a very large number of first-hand observations', and that some of these 'will be new even to those who have made scientific researches on the subjects of sex and human physiology' ([1918] 2004: 9, 9, 10). Her most insistent emphasis was on what she brought new to the discussion.

Stopes also recognised, however, even if she did so less forcefully, her dependence on the work of others. She acknowledged that *Married Love* was based on 'facts gleaned from wide reading' (ibid.: 9); in particular, her debt to the work of the socialist poet, social reformer and campaigner for homosexual rights Edward Carpenter and the sexologist Henry Havelock Ellis is well-attested. Among other commonalities, *Married Love* echoed the rapturous and mystical tone of Carpenter's *Love's Coming of Age*, while it also learnt from the sexual frankness of Havelock Ellis's sexological writing (McKibbin 2004: xxiv–xxvi; Porter and Hall 1995; Weeks 1989).[1] Beyond this, however, her wide reading yielded a series of less easily attributable but perhaps more longstanding ideas that circulated in a host of advice work from the late nineteenth century. The previous chapter noted the continuation in Stopes's work of the nineteenth-century anxiety about the electro-magnetic exchange between the proximate bodies of fellow sleepers, and her concern about the loss and replenishment of vitality in and after sex also maintained the nineteenth-century paradigms of the health discourses discussed in

Chapter 3. Stopes's sexual science drew not only on the innovatory work of the sexologists, but also on a body of heterodox physiological ideas by then largely discredited by orthodox scientists and medical practitioners.

By incorporating twin beds into her schema of marital advice, albeit to reject them, Stopes was also less innovatory than she might have seemed. In writing so vehemently against them, she was responding to a fashionable mode of sleeping and to the place accorded them in some visions of modern marriage. Since the late nineteenth century, twin beds had been part of the repertoire both of writers concerned with health and hygiene and of those dispensing marital advice – and very often these were the very same advisers and practitioners. These included writers who, like Stopes, were convinced of the broader health implications of the transfer of vital energies between co-sleepers and those whose interest was more squarely in the physiology, affective dynamics and politics of the marital sexual relationship *per se*. Just as twin beds were mobilized as a prophylactic barrier against the transfer of vital energies or foul air between sleepers, so too they lent themselves to the increasingly hard-fought and contentious debate about marriage. As always, consensus was hard to come by: what kind of separation was desirable, not just on health grounds, but also on marital? The American physician George Napheys observed in *The Physiological Life of Woman* (1869), 'A great deal has been written upon the effect on health and happiness of occupying separate apartments, separate beds in the same apartment, or the same bed. This vexed question it is impossible to settle by absolute rules, suitable to all cases' (1869: 61).[2] Napheys' call for a moderate pluralism, however, did not stop his contemporaries from fighting their particular corners, and by the end of the century, when separate beds for married people were often mentioned explicitly in marital advice literature, the tendency was to recommend them.

Nonetheless, the rationales underpinning these recommendations of twin-bedded sleep remained diverse, even contradictory. Some advocated them as a safeguard to the married couple's sexual relationship, to be sustained through a physiologically based compatibility founded in physical differentiation. Others, more concerned to reform the sexual balance of power within marriage, suggested that twin beds were not so much a route to sexual desire but, on the contrary, a useful aid to achieving the desired state of sexual continence. Common to all was a conviction of the importance of achieving the optimal positioning of the sleeping bodies of the married couple in order to protect and ensure their affection and respect for each other. All convey a sense of a relationship vulnerable to being buffeted, becalmed or scuppered by the vagaries and inequalities of sexual desire, but all also saw this as a vulnerability that could be mediated, mitigated and managed by the proper spatial distribution – in double bed, twins or separate rooms – of the two spouses. Moreover, all advisers recognized the bedroom as a place of pleasure as well as of danger. Some were more concerned with one side of the equation than the other, but all were seeking to minimize the threat and maximize the joy by means of the technology of the couple's sleeping arrangement.

Warnings about the dangers of impure air bore frequent reiteration alongside or as a part of more explicit delineations of the pleasures and dangers of the marital bedroom. 'Re-breathed air is poisonous', George Napheys reminds his readers. 'A room twelve feet square is too small for two persons, unless it is so thoroughly ventilated that there is a constant change of air' (ibid.: 62). Unusually, however, he did not see this as sufficient justification for separate sleeping: 'When both parties are in good health, and of nearly the same age, one bed-chamber, if sufficiently roomy, may be used without any disadvantage to either. Such an arrangement is also to be commended, because it secures closer companionship, and thus developes [*sic*] and sustains mutual affection' (ibid.: 61–2). The exceptions to this were in the case of illness or a substantial age difference between spouses.

More immediately relevant to the marital, as opposed simply to the bodily, health of the couple was the exchange of electrical or magnetic influence. The phrenologist Orson Fowler was one of the few who welcomed this exchange. '[W]here two really love each other', he wrote, 'both *get and give* strength' ([1875?]: 550; original emphasis) by it. This judgement formed the foundation of his antipathy to twin beds or separate rooms for married couples. For Fowler, sharing a room and a bed is productive of physiological and emotional harmony, for 'It interchanges their magnetisms; … creates many a cosy chit-chat; and facilitates all the other mutualities inherent in married life'. Conversely, 'separate dormitories', as he calls them, 'rob each of a true God-created luxury' (ibid.). Such an arrangement was desired only by 'poorly sexed wives' and spouses who are repellent to each other, and is 'a virtual divorce in spirit'. The choice, he avers, is straightforward, if stark: 'Either affiliate, or else separate' (ibid.). Fowler's recommendation is rooted in a sense of both the desirability of mutual physiological exchange and the reciprocity of sexual desire. For him, the 'marvellously vivifying' effect of magnetic interchange provides a foundation and blueprint for a wider commonality and mutuality of sexual communication. The merging of magnetisms results in a healthy equality of energetic investment in the marital relation. The position of the British hydropathic practitioner R. B. D. Wells was similar. 'Married couples, between whom there is a natural affinity, and when one sex is of a positive and the other of a negative nature, will be benefited by the magnetism reciprocally imparted', he wrote. He concedes, however, the rarity of such a circumstance: 'Unhappily, such cases of connubial compatibility are not common' ([1880?]: 65). For the most part, married people were therefore best advised to sleep separately.

Most advisers felt that such magnetic or electrical exchanges necessarily damaged the marital relationship owing to the deleterious leaching of vital force by the weaker party. Edward B. Foote, in *Plain Home Talk about the Human System* (1896), based his argument on the necessity of dissimilarity rather than mutuality: 'Physical adaptation in marriage consists in part of a perfect dissimilarity in the electrical conditions of the husband and wife', he wrote, 'The amount of enjoyment which is realized in the sexual embrace, must depend upon the electrical differences existing between the two. If the quantity and quality of this element is nearly alike in both, then will intercourse be insipid' (1896: 805). 'A perfect dissimilarity', for Foote, is necessary to secure sexual compatibility. Harmony is the result of difference, while similarity induces insipidness. Sharing a bed on a regular basis will generate this equalization of electrical difference, even if these energies are disparate at the outset:

> Married people sustaining the monogamic relation, especially, make a great mistake in allowing themselves to sleep together. This practice leads in a measure to uncongeniality. From five to eight hours bodily contact in every twenty-four with one person not only causes an equalization of those magnetic elements which, when diverse in quantity and quality, produce physical attraction and passional love, but it promotes permanent uncongeniality by making the married pair grow alike physically. The interchange of individual electricities, and the absorption of each other's exhalations, lead directly to temperamental inadaptation. (ibid.: 867)

Contrary to George Bernard Shaw's later pronouncement that marriage combined 'the maximum of temptation with the maximum of opportunity' (quoted in Wingfield-Stratford 1930: 142), Foote's understanding is that sexual desire is dissipated by over-exposure to the beloved. Contrary to Stopes's rhapsodic recommendation of marital bodily intermingling, Foote deplored the intercorporeal merging brought about by bed-sharing, an equalization of the magnetic or electrical elements resulting also in a physical equalization as the couple begin physically to resemble each other. Far from a harmonious marriage being rooted in a couple's similarity to each other, the opposite is the case. The remedy was to sleep separately, and twin beds had the advantage over separate rooms as they continued to allow spouses the 'social enjoyment' of '[t]he retiring chit-chat, and the morning helps of a little pinning or brushing, and aid in buttoning or hooking' (Foote 1896: 868), while preserving the electrical dissimilarity which sustains marital affection. To Foote's mind, twin beds are a mechanism of mediation which allows the free flow of social enjoyment while inhibiting the dissipation of vital force through the equalization of bodily energies.

For many advisers, marriage was threatened not only by such physical and physiological risks but also by the moral dangers excited by the proximity of the spouses in the bedroom. This was particularly the case for those associated with the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century 'social purity' and 'social hygiene' movements. These advocated temperance, self-discipline and continence in sexual matters (anti-masturbation, anti-prostitution, anti-sexual excess in marriage), and they rejected the double standard in marriage (one set of rules about marital fidelity for husbands and another for wives), arguing instead for wholesale marital reform and the elevation, equalization and spiritualization of the marital sexual relationship.[3]

For such commentators, the problem inflamed by spousal proximity was the exacerbation of sexual temptation: 'Our system of sleeping in the same bed … is the most ingenious of all possible devices to stimulate and inflame the carnal passion. No bed is large enough for two persons', wrote homeopath and temperance advocate Dio Lewis (1875: 71).[4] In the following year, Eliza B. Duffey argued that 'the close bodily contact under common bed-covering, in the slight protection which the night-clothing affords, is a constant provocative of amorous ideas and sensations to the husband, if not to both' ([1876] 1889: 224). And as late as 1911, Eli Brown and Joseph Greer concluded, 'Double beds are a relic of a primitive age, and should be relegated to the past with other things which the present has outgrown. And no matter who else may sleep together, husband and wife should not' (1911: 240). The remedy recommended for such temptation is either separate rooms – Emma Drake found that the fact of there being two rooms relieves 'many temptations and prevents the familiarity, which even in married life, breeds contempt' (1901: 85) – or separate beds. Dio Lewis suggested that '[a] little curtain which may be drawn aside at pleasure will serve to protect you from each other's observation when bathing and dressing' (1875: 81). The curtain's other benefit was the social one identified by Foote: 'Two narrow beds, separated by the curtain, will make conversation as easy as though you occupied the same couch' (ibid.). While for Foote separate beds were a mechanism to safeguard sexual desire, for Lewis, Drake and Duffey they were a device to contain, marshal and regulate it, to allow the relationship to thrive on a higher plane. For all, desire was not only a force at once potent, precarious and unstable, but also, ultimately, subject to the will, self-discipline and ingenuity of the married couple.

Sexual temptation, if not resisted or avoided, was likely to lead to sexual incontinence and excess within marriage as much as outside it, and this is something that nearly all such writers warn against. Even Orson Fowler, the greatest celebrant of marital sexuality, and for whom everything, even 'the rap at the door' ([1875?]: 203), was sexed, was far from recommending the unchecked yielding by married people to every sexual whim, warning that 'sensuality leads to excessive indulgence' (ibid.: 625).[5] His advice was to 'keep your mind pure, your thoughts and affections continually upon the highest plane … and the animal part of your nature will be easily controlled' (ibid.). Dio Lewis tells one of his correspondents, a recently married man, that 'your shameful indulgences have spoiled everything. When you destroyed the delicacy of your sentiment by gross excess, you had no resource left' (1875: 81). Premature and excessive sexual indulgence in a young man, Eliza Duffey agrees, 'will stunt his development and perhaps kill him outright' ([1876] 1889: 178–9), but excess in marriage is no less debilitating:

> The tender, delicate organs of generation in woman are often abused to such an extent by too frequent use, that they become inflamed, and ulcerate, and render the woman an invalid. Even the husband does not see the cause, or measure the extent of his folly, but persists in his selfish course in spite of the suffering he causes his wife. (ibid.: 215)

For women the danger is to their physical well-being, but for husbands the dangers are still greater: 'in lessening their respect and consideration for women, in deadening their finer sentiments, strengthening their sensual impulses' (ibid.: 220), their moral well-being is also compromised. This compounds the concomitant threat to men's physical health:

> When it [the conjugal act] is repeated too often, the man will become gradually conscious of diminished strength, diminished nervous force, and diminished mental powers. Excess weakens a man's energies, and enervates and effeminates him. It moreover renders a man liable to an infinity of diseases, and a readier victim to death. All the train of evils which follow masturbation, attend, only in a lesser degree, the too lustful marriage bed. (ibid.: 220–1)

In Duffey's understanding – and it is by no means hers alone – excessive marital sex renders the husband less of a man. The diminishment he suffers is not just to his mental, physical and nervous capacities, but also to his very masculinity. The explanation is, once again, rooted in a common physiological rationale: a certain amount of semen needs to be retained and 'reabsorbed into his system, adding vigor and tone to his whole being' (ibid.: 179). If the prompts of every desire are answered, 'the most important agent for the nourishment of the brain, and strengthening and hardening the body is wasted' (ibid.). The British hydropath R. B. D. Wells concurred. In a chapter on 'Matrimonial Excesses' he observed, 'When a married man indulges too freely with his wife he loses spirit, energy, and enthusiasm, and becomes a tame, inefficient, undignified, and debilitated member of society. … he drains his system of its best blood, and robs his body of that which should give it nourishment' (Wells [1878] [1910?]: 50, 51). The scope of the bedroom to become a site of vitiation is thus expanded. It continues to encompass environmental depletion, as the air in the room is poisoned by the exhalations of those who sleep there, but this is now matched by the degradation of its occupants' bodies, drained of vital force by reckless sexual self-indulgence. The consequence, many writers remind their readers, is damage not just to the health and morale of the spouses, but also to the well-being of the marriage. All too frequently, a failure of sexual continence results in the distaste of each spouse for the other and disaffection with the marriage itself (Duffey [1876] 1889; Lewis 1875; Wood-Allen 1901).

For each of these advisers, sexual continence – whether understood as total abstinence or, more frequently, as the willed moderation of sexual intercourse – is the cornerstone of conjugal happiness. Alongside the related issues of diet, sleep and exercise, which also required heightened levels of self-scrutiny and self-restraint, it is the discipline which will best ensure the enduring well-being of the couple. The sexologist Havelock Ellis shared this conviction, calling chastity 'the natural instinct of dignity and temperance' (quoted in Hall 2011: 97). The aim was to nurture the higher forces and contain the lower. J. E. H. (Jane Ellis Hopkins), the author of an essay entitled 'True Manliness' and addressed to male readers, agreed: 'Will you let the animal that is in you, maddened by the spiritual forces of your nature, drag you at its heels in the dirt; or will you master it and make it serve the man? The man or the maddened beast, which is it to be?' (1903: 125).[6] The quest for self-control might be a noble and civilizing one, but it required elemental struggles on the part of anyone seeking 'true manliness'.

Despite the common call for sexual continence, none of these writers are quite sure what constitutes the desired optimum. R. T. Trall, in the much-republished *Sexual Physiology and Hygiene* (1903), notes a 'diversity of opinion' on the question, and suggests that it can only be decided by reference to 'normal instincts, and these, unfortunately, we do not know where to look for' (1903: 232). In the absence of such hard data, and taking account of differences in stamina, temperament and so on, Trall suggests that 'few should exceed the limit of once a week; while many cannot safely indulge oftener than once a month' (ibid.: 233), and these become the parameters within which many advisers work. Some are more troubled by this inability to define 'the normal', however, and so recommend no sexual indulgence 'beyond what is required for the creation of our offspring'. To permit the gratification of any measure of 'animal enjoyment' separate from procreation would be to risk leaving 'no solid barrier between us and an ever-descending scale of sensuality' (*Duties of Parents* 1872: 37, 38).[7]

Within this regime of moderation and continence, the clear consensus is – again, anticipating Stopes – that women should set the sexual pace. For

Fowler, 'Woman is the final umpire as to its frequency. Following her lead will usually conduct all to matrimonial harmony, ignoring it to discord' ([1875?]: 625). Emma Drake urged this as the basis of equality within marriage – 'liberty for both equally. Not liberty for one, and the grossest bondage for the other. Nowhere does the wife's opinion deserve greater respect and tolerance than here. Nowhere should her negative be so willingly accepted' (Drake 1901: 90–1). So too argued the anonymous author of *The Duties of Parents*. 'In all matters respecting connubial indulgence', it was suggested, 'it is time that the principle should be universally recognized that pure women are the final and authoritative judges. It is for them to determine how frequently, and at what intervals, such indulgence is admissible, whether as an expression of mutual delight, or for the higher purposes of propagation' (*Duties of Parents* 1872: 39–40). Despite her different counsel regarding the frequency of marital coitus, Stopes's advice to husbands that 'each act of union must be tenderly wooed for and won, and that no union should ever take place unless the woman also desires it and is made physically ready for it' ([1918] 2004: 53–4) was again an echo of the work of marital advisers of an earlier moment and quite different ethos.

The admonitions of the nineteenth-century advisers and the attendant recommendations of separated sleep convey a sense of the importance given to the cultivation of sexual continence. The twin strategies of self-denial and self-discipline were to be exercised in the service of better health, an elevated moral sense and an enhanced spiritual dimension to the marital relation. Twin beds, by this account, are objects of prophylaxis and aids to willpower, working in the interests of an enhanced moral state, and as such they easily find a place in the familiar twentieth-century narrative of the nineteenth century's anti-sex ethos. Foucault famously termed this 'the repressive hypothesis': the belief that, in the long history of western sexuality, the nineteenth century was characterized by the 'monotonous nights of the Victorian bourgeoisie', when 'the conjugal family took custody of it [sexuality] and absorbed it into the serious function of reproduction' (1979: 3). Sex became utilitarian, the story goes, a matter of duty and fertility rather than pleasure.

While continence is unquestionably a frequent refrain in the marital advice literature of this period, to interpret it all as straightforwardly and prudishly anti-sex would be misleading. Its advocacy is of a particular kind of sex, in a particular context, and to a particular end; and important within this range of particularities is pleasure, including sexual pleasure, for the wife as well as the husband. 'Whatever may be the object of sexual intercourse, whether intended as a love embrace merely, or as a generative act', wrote R. T. Trall, 'it is very clear that it should be as agreeable as possible to both parties. Indeed, when it is otherwise to either party, it is a cruelty' (1903: 234). Fowler thought the question of sexual pleasure was particularly germane to women. 'Right intercourse', he suggests, 'strengthens and benefits both, without exhausting or injuring either. It exhilarates the female more yet. She receives an exchange of magnetism that is most thrilling to her every function of mind and body. All female experience is summoned to attest this act practically' ([1875?]: 622). Such pleasures might not be valued for their own sake, but for the sake of the health of the wife, the marriage, or the offspring conceived thereby, its importance is forcefully affirmed.

Part and parcel of these formulations was the recognition – again, reiterated by Stopes some decades later – that the sexual relationship was of a piece with the happiness of the relationship. To be sure, not all wrote of it in these terms. The physician, social purity campaigner and temperance advocate Mary Wood-Allen, for example, saw married companionship as quite distinct from sex: 'There may come times when to occupy the same bed, with no thought of physical union, will be to both a source of rest and sympathetic companionship' (1901: 49). But nor was it uncommon to see a harmonious sexual relationship described as an important means of securing the ideal of marital companionship. Dio Lewis suggests, 'When young people are just married, the principal attraction is the sexual contact. With little opportunity to know each other's moral qualities, they have, at first, scarcely any bond of union but the animal' (1875: 70); in Lewis's account, sexual attraction forms the initial bond from which can develop the later moral union. Sylvanus Stall, writing for the *Sex in Life* series, was not only as keen on a regime of continence as anyone, but also made a point of validating marital sex: 'The act of sexual congress may be indulged in between husband and wife for the purpose of expressing their mutual affection, augmenting their personal endearments, and for quickening those affections and tender feelings which are calculated to render home the place of blessing and good which God intended' ([1897?]: 88). The condition most conducive of this ideal state, Stall suggested, was '[m]arital moderation', and this 'is most easily secured and maintained where married people occupy separate beds' (ibid.: 98). Sex, in Stall's account, is not simply a symptom of humanity's baser animal forces, but, when properly regulated by the will and its material aids, is also understood as an integral part of the emotional-moral-physical complex that is capable of rendering the marital relationship ideal.

For Edward Foote too, twin beds were part of the regime of discipline and continence, but this was not an end in itself. Rather, it was aimed not at the stifling of pleasure but at its protection and production, its sharpening rather than its extinction. Foote argued, 'Sexual pleasure depends, in great measure, on the *electrical difference* existing between the parties, and the longer intercourse is abstained from, the more unlike will they become electrically, and consequently, greater will be the enjoyment if long intervals intervene between each copulation' (Foote 1896: 871; original emphasis). His argument depends not on any simple condemnation of the moral dangers of sensuality, but on continence as an act of good husbandry in the marital economy. Desire, like the air in the bedroom, like the vital force that sustains life in the human frame, is finite, vulnerable and precarious. It is a resource to be preserved and cultivated, not mindlessly squandered or dissipated.

Even Eliza Duffey, who argues that women's passions are more maternal than sexual and is vociferous regarding the importance of continence, is careful to delineate the significance of marital sexual pleasure. Nor does she leave vague the means to this end, naming the clitoris as 'the female organ of sensation in the generative act' (Duffey [1876] 1889: 30), and advising husbands to take the time to awaken women's desire for and pleasure in sexual intercourse. In an extraordinarily uncharacteristic, but nevertheless repeated, discursive turn, she urges husbands to 'use the same arts that the libertine in his superior wisdom knows so well how to employ – arts perfectly proper and commendable in lawful wedlock' (ibid.: 204). A woman forced into sex rather than wooed – or, given Duffey's own characterization, seduced – will find that 'the apple of pleasure will turn to ashes in her taste … [and] she will feel deep regret that she should have lost out of her life something so essential, which of right belonged to her' (ibid.: 206). So important is this advice that she repeats it, almost verbatim, a few pages later when she urges husbands to 'practice in lawful wedlock the arts of the seducer' (ibid.: 208). Duffey's emphasis on sexual pleasure belies Axel Nissen's recent conclusion that her book is a 'concerted attack on sexual passion', her mission to save women from 'the undesirable, even life-threatening sexual passions of husbands and bachelors' (Nissen 2009: 99, 98–9). Her allegiance to sexual continence is more nuanced than such an interpretation allows. In particular, when her recommendation of the arts of the seducer in the context of marriage is put alongside her advocacy of twin-bedded marital sleeping, her advice takes on a rather different character:

> If married people *wish to gather all the delicate aroma of mutual passion*, there should be no occupying the same bed, nor even the same room. There should be no robing and disrobing in each other's presence. All the duties of the toilet should be performed in the secrecy of their individual dressing-rooms; and there should be the same outward show of decorum, one towards the other, that there was in their unmarried days. These seem like little things, and they are almost universally disregarded. But it is a great mistake. This kind of familiarity surely breeds contempt and indifference. (Duffey [1876] 1889: 224; my emphasis)

These words serve as a prelude to her endorsement of twin beds' contributions to morality and good health. They establish the expectation that married people will, indeed, wish to experience the raptures of 'mutual passion', and then warn readers of the practical impediments to its achievement – a lack of decorum regarding the 'duties of the toilet'. Like Stopes, Duffey names the daily necessities of washing and dressing as insidious spoilers of sexual desire, calculated to breed 'contempt and indifference'.

Having established these as impediments to the maintenance of mutual passion in marriage, Duffey turns her attention to more positive interventions, and in particular to the capacity of twin beds to safeguard desire: 'I would especially recommend the use of separate beds by married people on the score of morality and good health. Two people are seldom, if ever, both benefitted by sleeping together' (ibid.). But this advocacy of separate beds here has nothing to do with prudery or an 'attack on sexual passion' (Nissen 2009: 99), and everything to do with cultivating the most satisfying sexual relationship. She warns that 'satiety blunts the edge of passion' ([1876] 1889: 223); but twin beds, she suggests, keep that edge honed. Like Stopes more than forty years later, Duffey's strategic prescription is to deploy distance in the service of intimacy and passion.

This is not to underplay the contrast in tone and emphasis in the two advice books. While Stopes acknowledges the commonplace sexual trials and shortcomings of modern marriage, she refuses, especially in *Married Love*, to dwell on these, concentrating instead on the utopian possibilities – physical and metaphysical – afforded by the sexual rapture which is every wife's due. In Duffey's text the accent falls differently. There is, to be sure, a nod to the clitoris, the 'organ of sensation in the act of generation'; there is a glimpse of the promise of 'mutual passion'; there is, most strikingly, the welcoming of the arts of the libertine into the marital bedroom. Her credo, indeed, is that it is sex that sets the perfect marriage apart from the merely satisfactory one: 'I believe in marriage *all through* – the soul, the mind, the heart, and the body, and I would make the last the weakest and least indispensable tie; though I would say that a perfect marriage includes this with the others' ([1876] 1889: 212; original emphasis). While Stopes suggests that a harmonious sexual relationship generates the mutual regard and affection that can secure the happiness of the marriage, Duffey's view is that a merely good or satisfactory marriage can be sustained without sex. An ideal marriage, however, cannot.

Duffey's conclusion is not dissimilar to the one arrived at by Stopes by a different route: namely, that the addition of the body to the union of soul, mind and heart qualitatively transforms a marriage, elevating it to the level of perfection. But Duffey's book, like those of many of her contemporaries, dwells not on the possibilities, let alone the mechanisms, of mutual passion, but on the pitfalls, abuses and disappointments of contemporary sexual practice in marriage. Her book reverberates with her concern for 'the moans of suffering women … [and] husbands [who] are inconsiderate and even brutal' ([1876] 1889: 198). It is above all this contrast in emphasis and tone that sets Stopes's work apart and makes it new. Her impulse is optimistic and utopian, while Duffey's is diagnostic and corrective. This notwithstanding, the essential co-ordinates of Stopes's case – men's ignorance of women's sexual responses, the importance of the frequency of sexual contact being set by women, the centrality of mutual passion to the perfect marriage – were firmly established not only in the work of Duffey (in particular), but also that of other social purity marital advisers.[8] Rather than their advocacy of continence being straightforwardly anti-sex, it was instead an attempt to safeguard the sexual and affective dimensions of the marital relationship by equalizing the access to desire of husbands and wives. For Foote, it was the 'perfect dissimilarity' (1896: 805) of the two spouses as manifested in their unequal magnetic or electrical energies that safeguarded the sexual relation, while for Duffey and others it was to be secured by seeking – by recourse to the barrier method of twin beds – a more equal desire for sexual contact.

In common, too, to the late Victorians and the would-be iconoclast Marie Stopes was a clearly developed sense of the conscious management of the proximity of the spousal co-sleepers. While Stopes was to throw in her lot squarely with the double-plus-single bed arrangement, earlier writers, although generally against the double bed, were less dogmatic about the relative merits of separate beds and separate rooms. The author of *The Duties of Parents* argued for periodic separation, on the wife's terms, thinking it indispensable that:

> every bride should, if practicable, have her separate sleeping-apartment. … I am far from meaning that, as a rule, husband and wife should habitually sleep apart; this is a matter which every couple must decide for themselves; but there are seasons when isolation is desirable; and all that I am urging is, that women should have a place of refuge at such periods. (1872: 45–6)

More absolute was Dio Lewis: 'Change your large bed for two small ones, and let them be in adjoining rooms, so that you can converse, but not see each other while undressing or bathing and dressing', he advised one correspondent expressing dissatisfaction with his marriage (1875: 71). For Sylvanus Stall, 'Marital moderation is most easily secured and maintained where married people occupy separate beds' ([1897?]: 98), and Duffey ends her chapter on marriage and its abuses by making her recommendation of separate beds for married people ([1876] 1889: 224).

Strikingly, however, there was no necessary correlation between sexual attitude and preferred sleeping arrangement, as testified by the instance of George Drysdale, 'the one declared sexual liberationist of the nineteenth century in Britain' (Mason 1994: 179). Drysdale was passionately and earnestly against the cultivation of sexual abstinence as a virtue. He saw this aspiration as dangerous, and 'frequently attended by consequences not one whit less serious than sexual excess' (Drysdale 1886: 80). The remedy for the deleterious effects of abstinence in young men was, to his mind, 'a moderate indulgence in sexual intercourse, together with the freedom from study, exercise and amusements in the open air' (ibid.: 82). Despite his anti-abstinence stance, however, Drysdale wrote in favour of separate beds: 'The custom of two persons sleeping together, which is so general in this country, is not, I believe, so healthy as the continental one of using separate couches' (ibid.: 207). Drysdale's exceptional, controversial and avowedly high-minded argument for the benefits to health, both bodily and mental, of sexual intercourse is not incommensurate with a preference for separate beds.

As well as dispensing marital advice, commentators such as Fowler, Foote, Duffey and Stall were all also contributors to wider health cultures, broadly vitalist, fully persuaded of the health-giving benefits of fresh air, and advocating moderation in matters of food, alcohol, sleep, dress and exercise as well as in marital sexual contact. Twin beds had currency between as well as within regimes of health and marriage. A writer might recommend them not only as aids to health, but also as technologies conducive to the equalization and enhancement of marital sexual desire. The introduction of a space between co-sleepers was in many cases, therefore, part of a totalizing regime of self-management, justified not on one count but on several. In their capacity to signify across a range of domains, the invocation of twin beds in the service of health and the regulation of desire is premised on their mediation of proximity and distance. Marital intimacy, alongside sleep hygiene, was constituted and fine-tuned across the space between.

The cultivation of self-discipline, restraint and continence, informed by the desirability of sexual moderation for the sake of physical and marital health, the nurturance of character and the moral well-being of the couple, is most explicitly advocated by commentators aligned with the social purity and temperance movements, and for this reason their work is easily susceptible to being read as confirmatory of the fabled and paradigmatic, if now largely discredited, Victorian squeamishness about sex.[9] To read this work as straightforwardly anti-sex, however, is to underestimate the importance of such principles from a range of diverse ideological perspectives. Temperance, moderation, continence and restraint were ideals rehearsed so regularly as to enter the realm of common sense. Still more strikingly, these attributes were also valued by theorists associated with sex reform but not with social purity, including Havelock Ellis himself: 'Asceticism is the virtue of control that leads up to erotic gratification', he wrote, 'and chastity is the virtue which exerts its harmonizing influence in the erotic life itself' (quoted in Hall 2011: 97).

Continence was as available to the idealizing impulse as were other modes of self-discipline and self-restraint, and its discourses extended far beyond the teachings of social purity campaigners. These cultures of restraint in the service of self-improvement need to be understood not only as arising from a habituated and multiply constituted ethos of denial, but also from a cultural fascination with, and endless scrutiny and anatomization of, the mysteries and precariousness of human sexuality, and a need for its conscious and attentive safeguarding and management. It is at the intersection of these two phenomena that twin-bedded sleep becomes indelibly meshed with ideas and ideals about sex in marriage.

Twin beds were generated by two overlapping idealizing discourses. The first was the fearful culture of nineteenth-century health regimes, whether orthodox or fringe, with their anxious desire to isolate sleepers in the relative safety of their own single beds, separated from the threat posed by the exhaled breath and vitiating energies of their bedfellow. The second was the sometimes optimistic and ameliorative, sometimes castigatory and anxious, culture of the marital reformers who sought to improve the lot of married women not only by protecting them from the more insatiable sexual demands of their husbands, but also by intervening to equalize, maximize and eulogize the possibility of sexual pleasure for both spouses. Both sets of ideals found the double bed to be a space too undifferentiated, too vulnerable to action without reflection, too likely to militate against the conscious exercise of self-discipline. In the context of health regimes, individuation promised safety; in discussions of marriage, it offered mediation. With twin beds, the space between introduced a material break that brought with it a temporal one; it prompted a pause, a moment of reflection, an extra beat in the rhythm of the communication between fellow sleepers. In so doing, the space between twin beds becomes a player in the twentieth-century realignment of the terms of marital engagement.

11

Abstinence and ambivalence

The prescription of twin beds as an aid to self-restraint in the marital advice literature of the late nineteenth century establishes this as an ideal in a discourse concerned to equalize the balance of power and pleasure available to husbands and wives. To what extent, however, did such dictates reach into the wider culture, and for how long? The cultivation of regimes of continence might, after all, have existed as a matter of recherché and minority interest, advocated by the few at the fringe, but impinging little on the ways in which marriage was lived and understood more generally.

A letter received by Marie Stopes in September 1918 suggests that marital reformers' recommendation of twin beds as an aid to moderation did indeed make its mark on the conduct of at least some marriages of the time. Following the publication of *Married Love* in 1918, many readers wrote to Stopes seeking advice regarding their marital problems. Mrs J. from Waterford in Ireland was one such correspondent. Mrs J. and her husband had adhered to the regimen prescribed by many of the advisers discussed in the previous chapter, strategically adopting twin beds as an aid to sexual moderation. However, the plan backfired:

> Before I married I stipulated that we should have separate beds in the hope that this would help us to practice self-restraint; but we found this most unsuccessful. It was cold and lonely, and the separation was sure to cause undesired excitement whenever we did happen to lie for a short time together in one bed. After nearly two years we abandoned this plan and have for the last 9 or 10 months been sleeping always together. As a result we are both much better in health and content with much less frequent unions than we were when sleeping apart.[1]

Far from aiding self-restraint, twin beds had stimulated 'undesired excitement', and the couple had had to resort to a double bed in order to achieve the improved health and contentment associated with less frequent sexual contact. Nonetheless, despite – or perhaps because of – these unintended consequences, the anecdote is instructive. It suggests that sexual restraint in marriage was an aspiration, embraced as a means to attain a sense of general well-being; that twin beds were seen as a technology likely to aid its achievement, but that such technologies sometimes malfunctioned, and so could not always be trusted to deliver on their promise.

While the experience of Mrs J. suggests that marital continence was an ideal consciously adopted by some, it is, on its own, no more than an indicative anecdote concerning the early twentieth-century ethos of sex in marriage. However, the work of recent historians, in particular Simon Szreter (1996), suggests that the key co-ordinates in her account – marriage, sex and continence – were widely understood to exist in a strong and active relationship to each other. Far from abstinence inhabiting the cultural margins, Szreter suggests it to be a defining and longstanding phenomenon. This chapter begins by exploring his proposition of a widespread 'culture of abstinence', considering the ways this manifested in twentieth-century marriages, and then asks how the material organization of conjugal sleeping might have figured in this dynamic. To what extent were twin beds understood as players within discourses of marital sexual continence?

Analysing the marked reduction in the British birth rate after 1870, Szreter posits the prevalence of a wide-ranging and longstanding culture of abstinence. Historians and demographers had long accepted that the decline in the birth rate was the result of widespread, conscious and willed changes in sexual behaviours and practices, but Szreter concluded, contrary to others' arguments, that this was not the result of greater recourse to barrier methods of contraception. To these he found a good degree of hostility, whether from feminists, who thought these gave further licence to husbands to demand sex without consideration of their wives' wishes, or from some doctors, who thought them injurious to the health (Bland [1995] 2001: 189–221, Mason 1994: 52–64, 1995: 211–12). The decline in the birth rate was instead, Szreter argues, the consequence of married couples limiting their sexual activity, motivated by a conscious wish to control the frequency of childbirth and thereby to lower the costs (financial, physical and emotional) of childrearing.

Couples sought to limit the number of children they had by a variety of means, Szreter suggests, all of which involved voluntary sexual restraint. These included delayed marriage and *coitus interruptus* but also sexual continence, all located on a continuum of restraint, with abstinence at one end of the spectrum and the moderation of sexual contact at the other. While he rejects the idea that the conscious embrace of continence evinces a widespread ideological turn against sex, he nonetheless suggests that this normalization of an ambition of sexual continence was underpinned by an enduring cultural validation of abstinence (1996: 361–96). A centuries-long British tradition of late marriage had meant that 'for generations sexual self-denial had been the institutionalised norm for young unmarried adults in Britain's culture'. Consequently, the population 'had been thoroughly schooled over centuries in the attitudes and expectations required for acceptance of this form of self-restraint' (ibid.: 393).

What was new in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, was 'the increasing extension of the long-established, indigenous practice of sexual abstinence among young adults into married life' (ibid.: 398), so that rather than pre-marital sexual abstinence ceasing with marriage, it seems rather to have come to serve as a training ground for sex in married life. In his analysis, marriage did not serve as a place of untrammelled and unlimited sexual encounter. Its sexual ethos did not serve as a contrast – even if only for the husband – to a cultural field of sexual constraint and prohibition which warned of the dangers of masturbation, nocturnal emissions, spermatorrhoea, leucorrhoea, prostitution, venereal disease and impotence, as well as of alcohol, tobacco, a rich diet and salacious reading. Instead, the dominant culture of marriage now embedded these constraints within the conjugal sexual dynamic (ibid.: 398–9). And this importation of the practice of abstinence into marriage itself broadly coincided with the adoption of twin beds by married couples.

Szreter's study provides an empirical counterpoint to the idealist discourses of sex in marriage discussed in the previous chapter, suggesting that however much social purity writings might seem to be utopian fantasies of marital equality, they were written and read in a context highly attuned and receptive to discourses of self-scrutiny and restraint. But just as significant as the statistical dimension of his study, which establishes the extensive reach of abstinence, is his attempt to extrapolate from a range of qualitative sources just what the affective climate of such a culture might have been. Like other historians of sexuality, he points to the importance of the social and political circumstances that precipitated the social purity and social hygiene campaigns with their intense scrutiny of sexuality and morality. Public and political interest in these issues in Britain can be gauged, for instance, by the response to the passing of the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869 (Bland [1995] 2001: xiii–xiv, 32–7; Weeks 1989: 85–92). Ostensibly aimed at addressing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases associated with prostitution in barrack towns and ports, these Acts resulted in the implicit legalization of prostitution, the tacit acceptance of men's recourse to prostitutes and an increasingly draconian policing of prostitutes themselves. Subsequently, diverse political constituencies found common cause against the Acts. Evangelical conservatives were outraged by the insult to marriage inherent in such a position, for example, while feminists deplored the institutionalization of the double standard regarding the men and women involved in prostitution. A period of intense public debate and activism ensued (Szreter 1996: 415). The Acts were finally repealed in 1886, a year after two landmark interventions. The first of these was the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, raising the age of sexual consent for girls from thirteen to sixteen and criminalizing all homosexual activity; the second was the publication of a series of articles concerning child prostitution in London in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, causing a public furore and feeding into the already vocal social purity campaigns (Bland [1995] 2001: xiv–xvii, 7–9, 58–60). In short, late in the century there was a period of intense public discussion about the unacceptable face of sexuality, accompanied by 'an increasingly strict formal regulation of various dimensions of sexuality … into a heterosexual, monogamous straitjacket' (Szreter 1996: 415). If sex was rarely off the public agenda, it was present in forms categorically marked out as morally and socially reprehensible and requiring prohibition and reformation.

The familial corollary of such a highly sexualized but prohibitive public culture, Szreter suggests, is that people might 'have come to entertain quite strongly negative or at least guilty and ambivalent feelings towards sex' (ibid.: 416). Such an attitude would have been 'conducive to a régime of low coital frequency voluntarily adopted by both partners and therefore seen by them as merely normal and "civilised" behaviour'. In turn, such beliefs would 'provide the rationale for investing abstinence itself and the practice of conscious self-restraint with a positive evaluation' (ibid.: 416–17). He suggests, that is, a correspondence between the discussion of public sexual morality and the negotiation of private sexual mores in marriage, and posits the permeability of the latter to the former. Marital abstinence could be seen, in some measure, not only as a pragmatic bid for family limitation, therefore, but also as a rebuff to the sexual iniquities of the public sphere. This could be found either in the repudiation of all sexuality as a bestial and lowering force and thus to be eschewed, or else it could be recast, refined and elevated through certain consciously adopted disciplinary means to the status of a morally or spiritually enhancing practice (ibid.: 456; Mason 1994: 221–6).

How might such a marital and familial culture of abstinence have been inhabited? How might it have shaped the ethos of the relationship of those seeking to live by its codes, or at least to accommodate themselves to its demands? Szreter provides some intriguing, if preliminary, answers to these questions. From the 1860s to the 1930s – that is, right through to the Second World War, by which time barrier contraceptives were more widely available and socially acceptable – is likely, he suggests, to have been a period 'of *increased* public inhibitions and private difficulties in sexual relations between husbands and wives, men and women' (ibid.: 560; my emphasis). This is an arresting proposition. Its conclusion that married people of the mid-nineteenth century were *less* sexually inhibited and experienced fewer sexual difficulties than their putatively better-informed and better-equipped counterparts in the first third of the twentieth century contradicts any comfortable assumption of a twentieth-century sexual progress narrative. The birth-control methods identified in his study, and indeed in many others, as the most commonly used between the 1860s and the 1930s – abstinence, continence and *coitus interruptus* – produced marriages in which spouses made 'artificial, stressful attempt[s] to keep a physical, emotional distance from each other', characterized by 'ritualised and formulaic patterns of sexual interaction, in order to deal with the problem … of chronic uncertainty over their own and over each other's genuine sexual wishes and motives' (ibid.: 566, 422). Overall, Szreter identifies this as a time not of gradual sexual emancipation but of 'an increasing intensity of cultural negotiation and private bargaining between husbands and wives over the terms and conditions on which sexuality was enjoyed *in marriage*' (ibid.: 578; my emphasis). Consequently, married life was characterized by inhibition, stress, distance, uncertainty and bartering. In short, he concludes, 'Sexual "bad faith" (in Sartre's existentialist sense) is endemic in such a culture' (ibid.: 422): that is, its practices are the result of a self-deception whose aim is to deny that matters could be other than as they are. Abstinence, in other words, was recuperated as both inevitable and desirable.

While Szreter's is the most exhaustive investigation and characterization of a habitually abstinent culture, his hypothesis finds echoes elsewhere. When, for example, Marie Stopes addresses the bitter disappointment experienced by people who marry expecting joy only to find frustration, confusion and unhappiness, her intervention is at the level of the sexual relationship and of issues of trust and communication between spouses. It is hard not to read this as a refusal of the bad faith proposed by Szreter, and, indeed, the deluge of letters received by Stopes following the publication of *Married Love* offers testament enough to this: one woman even referred in passing to a man who 'got bitten with the celibacy craze' (Hall [1978] 1981: 103). Many of the letters from middle-class correspondents, in particular, speak of both sexual ignorance and sexual anxiety occasioned by abstinence and *coitus interruptus*. Engagement was a period of especially acute confusion. One woman, engaged to marry a missionary, reports that until reading *Married Love* she and her fiancé 'had both looked upon the sex-life as something rather degrading and a kind of necessary evil' (ibid.: 69). A young man, anxious about feeling 'sexual longing when sitting on the couch with my fiancée', asks whether such feelings are 'normal and natural'; he concludes, 'I suppose I should try and smother my sexual feeling?' (ibid.: 170). Another, also engaged, is concerned about the consequences of self-restraint as a method of birth control: 'I can't understand how people can be married for a year or two and have no children without injuring their health' (ibid.: 164). A husband of twelve years confessed, 'Until about a year ago we never knew a woman was capable of a full orgasm' (ibid.: 147). Fear of pregnancy was a widespread inhibitor: a man wrote that his wife was so anxious about becoming pregnant that 'the sex relations are rather abnormal between us and I have had unwillingly to practise "coitus interruptus"' (ibid.: 148), and a 37-year-old woman from London who had had '14 children nine living' wrote asking for contraceptive information: 'I realy must try something as my Husband is not a careful man in that respect I dont want any more if I should sink with having another what would become of all the other little ones my nervs are getting quite bad worrying from one month to another' (ibid.: 16; original spelling). While fear of pregnancy is mostly expressed by Stopes's female correspondents, anxiety and ignorance – articulated in terms sometimes puzzled, at other times shamefaced or desperate – are just as commonly expressed by men as by women, by members of the armed forces as by clergymen, by the upper and middle classes as by the working class.[2] It seems as if the culture of sexual abstinence, with all its attendant stresses, was truly a national one.

Stopes's correspondents were self-selecting for their sexual and reproductive anxiety or ignorance, so it is not surprising to find these traits in their letters. Confirmatory of the tenor of this correspondence, however, is Lella Florence's *Birth Control on Trial* (1930), a study of the first 300 women, mostly working class, to attend the new Cambridge Birth Control Clinic. Examining the attitudes of a group of women interested in limiting their family size, the book tells a similar story to that found in the letters to Stopes. The women express a generalized state of sexual anxiety and ignorance, and a profound fear of further pregnancy. Florence confirms the still widespread recourse to *coitus interruptus*, but also reports the practice's emotional cost (1930: 90, 105).[3] Many women reported feeling 'very great anxiety, which results in nervous tension and strain' owing to its effect on their own sexual pleasure; 'even though they were extremely fond of their husbands, they felt intense resentment, amounting almost to hatred, when this interruption deprived them of a proper climax' (ibid.: 103). Fear of pregnancy was also a major determinant of the ethos of their sexual relationship with their husbands:

> Many wives have told me how the dread of pregnancy haunts their lives like a nightmare, how they dare not show any affection for their husbands for fear it will lead to sex indulgence; how, when they can no longer 'put off' their husbands, they think of nothing except a possible 'accident'; the endearments of wife to husband take the form of: 'Do hurry up!' 'Do be careful!' 'Don't be so long!' 'I'm sure you're not going to be in time!' The whole act, which ought to be a happy expression of their love for each

> other, becomes a strained and miserable business, more often than not resulting in quarrels, ill-temper, and worry. (ibid.: 104)

Marie Paneth, a social worker in London during the blitz, worked with children who also 'reproduced shouts and quarrels which they must have witnessed when sharing their mother's room and probably her bed .... "You beast, I've had enough of it. Don't hurt me. Let me alone," and worse' (Paneth 1944: 41). Accounts such as these, shot through with anger and fear, clarify the appeal of Stopes's high-flown romantic characterizations of the marital sexual encounter and of her promise of its accessibility to all, but they also throw into sharp relief the widespread interest in her advocacy of contraception. While fear of pregnancy was not the only determinant of the still-prevalent culture of marital continence, it clearly remained central: 'The wife always felt the necessity of restraining any demonstrations of affection for her husband, and of meeting his affectionate overtures with coldness and rebuff, until gradually there grew up an icy barrier between them which both felt and recognized, but which they could not alter so long as abstinence was enforced' (Florence 1930: 119–20). The result, Florence concludes, has been the normalization of continence and abstinence in marriage:

> It was a genuine surprise to me to find how many couples indulge only moderately: how many habitually leave intervals of two, four, or six weeks; how many, in reply to my question, answered, 'oh, three or four times a year'; how many others practise abstinence over long periods – six months or a year, after the birth of a child; and how many others have adopted abstinence permanently. (ibid.: 118)

Reporting a still taken-for-granted acceptance of a life lived long-term on a continuum of restraint, contemporary accounts such as this confirm the proposition of a thoroughgoing and deep-seated 'culture of abstinence'.

The sexually restrained culture to which Szreter and Florence, among others, bear witness was doubtless far from monolithic, but as varied and as susceptible to change as the ideological, material and social conditions in which modes of sexual life were forged and lived out. The late nineteenth-century idealization of marital continence, for instance, was a far cry from the pragmatic, normalized, angry, resigned or fearful continence of the 1920s. This notwithstanding, it is also the case that abstinence remained available long into the twentieth century as a common expectation of marriage, whether as marital resource or marital problem, or – not uncommonly – as both. One commentator, E. L. Packer (a probation officer), writing about working-class sexual attitudes in 1947, found that 'the normal attitude towards copulation before marriage is one of indifference and disgust', and that 'indifference and dislike of sexual intercourse is the norm of the attitude of working-class wives who have consulted the writer. "I can do without it always," "it doesn't interest me; we've had it four times in ten years," "He's always messing you about," are typical statements' (Packer 1947: 98). In this context, continence might have figured as a socially validated mechanism for the avoidance of sexual contact experienced as distasteful or repugnant.

As late as the 1950s, the reverberations of such sentiments could still be felt. Elizabeth Roberts's oral history of working-class women in the north-west of England found striking evidence that, even 'at such a comparatively late date, sexual abstinence in marriage was equated with "behaving yourself"' (1984: 84). Her interviews suggested that:

> the two most common methods of family limitation were total abstinence and coitus interruptus; this would seem to be true of the later as well as the earlier period. … Abstinence was sometimes voluntary, sometimes as a result of one of the partners being ill, and sometimes forced on the couple by overcrowding. Sometimes it was due to successful evading tactics practised by the wife. (ibid.: 95)

Roberts's study implies, in effect, the longevity of British cultural attitudes towards abstinence as a commonplace part of marital sexuality extending from the late Victorian period to the post-war period, and epitomized by its equation of abstinence with 'behaving yourself' (see too Faulkner 1992). Perhaps it continued even as far as the famous watershed of 1963, the date immortalized by Philip Larkin as the moment at which 'sexual intercourse began/ … Between the end of the *Chatterley* ban/And the Beatles' first LP' (1974: 34).[4] The speaker's sense of melancholic regret at being too old to participate in the more carefree sexual behaviours of the 1960s, condemned by his age and perhaps his temperament to be only a wistful bystander, has resonated such that these lines have become a touchstone for pinpointing British society's change of sexual gear. However, enduringly resonant as these lines are, it is the next stanza of Larkin's poem which condenses the ethos of the hitherto prevalent culture of sexual abstinence only belatedly coming to an end:

> Up till then there'd only been
> A sort of bargaining,
> A wrangle for a ring,
> A shame that started at sixteen
> And spread to everything. (ibid.)

Bargaining, wrangling and shame: a whole pervasive cultural ethos is adumbrated in these three sadly impoverished and mean-spirited elements.

Moreover, the fact that there was awareness only of 'a *sort of* bargaining' as one of the cornerstones of intimate relationships identifies its rules and practices as semi-conscious, barely enunciated.

The poem's reference to a 'wrangle for a ring' is a reminder that the culture of abstinence was not only to be found at an affective or emotional level. This was also a material culture, constructed as well as mediated by the artefacts among which it was lived out – here, the presence or absence of a wedding ring, and elsewhere by the commonplace effects of daily life. Carolyn Steedman's critical history and memoir *Landscape for a Good Woman* (1986) tells one such story, of the quid pro quo existing between motherhood and materiality. Her account turns on an exploration of the ways in which her mother's aspirations for happiness in post-war, post-austerity Britain were condensed in her longing for a New Look dress. Even as a young child, Steedman understands 'that dresses needing twenty yards for a skirt were items as expensive as children – more expensive really, because after 1948 babies came relatively cheap, on tides of free milk and orange juice, but good cloth in any quantity was hard to find' (Steedman 1986: 29). Her children represent an insuperable barrier between Steedman's mother and the New Look dress that represents all her disparate personal, social and material longings. This dynamic of yearning and resentment is mapped out in one indicative incident, when her mother's gaze travels from a woman wearing a full-skirted dress down to her own straight-skirted suit, 'and then at us [her children], the two living barriers to twenty yards of cloth' (ibid.: 30). Steedman's analysis suggests the complex relation between the material and psychic, for to desire a New Look dress was to long for so much more than an item of clothing. Its 'twenty yards of cloth' represented fashion, glamour and extravagance, the opposite of the 'make do' mentality that had prevailed through the 1940s. But it also promised the plenitude of an imagined and somehow replete self – it is significant that the skirt in question is a 'full' one – in contrast to the scrimping paucity and lack felt to define the circumstances in which she was currently obliged to live. The New Look dress gives form to a complex set of inchoate wishes, its impossibility serving as a touchstone of compromise, regret and envy.

Reading accounts of material lack through the lens of Steedman's study fleshes out the already poignant narratives and oral histories of married life from the middle years of the twentieth century. It conveys a sense of the emotional investments in and costs of the material environments in which these lives were lived. Lella Florence notes that most of the patients who attended the Cambridge birth-control clinic 'live in tiny, overcrowded houses' with no bathrooms, so that 'the woman has no place in the house where she can go in privacy and be alone, much less where she can prepare and administer a douche' (1930: 65). Douching – still a fundamental dimension of many birth-control regimes – was either not feasible or simply too awkward in houses with no bathroom. This lack of space and privacy extended to the sleeping arrangements. Not only was there 'never an opportunity for a separate room for husband and wife, or even a separate bed', but couples 'more often than not share their bedroom with several children' (ibid.: 121). The idea of consciously managing marital intimacy through the adjustment of proximity and distance facilitated by the introduction of twin beds, let alone of Stopes's preferred arrangement of a marital double paired with a single in another room, had no chance of realization in such cramped domestic environments.

In these circumstances, as in those of Steedman's mother, the number of children stood in starkly direct relation to the material comfort of the domestic environment. One woman said to Lella Florence, 'When my sixth baby was born the doctor comes in and he says to me, "You've got a nice little boy. Did you want a little boy?" And I says to him, "No. I'd rather have a chest of drawers"' (1930: 130). Not only would she have preferred the new piece of furniture, but the extra mouth to feed meant that the chance of getting it receded still further into the future. This weary and reluctant mother was acutely aware that a new baby had a direct – and probably terminal – impact on the longed-for chest of drawers, along with whatever that represented psychically. Parental feelings did not inhabit a domain separate from the environment in which parents and children were to live. The two cohabited in a more or less explicit way, and – as Steedman's history, Florence's clients and Stopes's correspondents confirm – the more straitened the circumstances, the more conscious was the relationship between the material and the affective.

If the cost of raising a child could be set so knowingly against the acquisition of a new piece of clothing or furniture, then how much more immediately might the presence of twin beds or a double have figured in the intimate emotional dynamics of married life? Accessing first-hand accounts of this is not easy, but newspapers shed some light on the way that double beds and twins were interpreted in the configuration of a marriage and its intimacies. Reports of divorce cases frequently mention twin beds, but they figure variously in these glimpsed narratives of loyalty and adultery, guilt and innocence, longing and disappointment. The *Times*, for example, reports a 1938 case, where Major Thompson and the co-respondent Miss Causton were said by a servant to have shared a twin-bedded room. This proved to be a significant element in the judge's finding: he declared himself 'regretfully forced to the conclusion that the respondent and the intervener had had mutual intercourse amounting to adultery in law' (*Times* 1 April 1938: 4), and this despite the presence of medical documents to the effect that Miss Causton was *virgo intacta*. The presence of twin beds rather than a double did not signal an asexual encounter to the judge. On the contrary, the beds were clearly material to his conclusion that adultery had taken place. Ten years later, however, in a divorce case reported in the *Daily Mirror*, an ambiguous reference to a husband's choice of twin beds both signals a sexually unsatisfactory marriage and indicates an adulterous response to it: 'Twin beds which had caused some trouble between them when bought by him in 1939 had been pushed into a corner and joined together' (24 July 1947: 8) by the allegedly adulterous wife. In this instance, the inferences were unambiguous. The twin beds were indicators of the husband's failure to consummate the marriage and a source of conflict between husband and wife, while the joining of them together was interpreted as evidence of the wife taking of her sexual pleasure with other men in his absence.

To these judges, twin beds just as easily indicated adultery as they did non-consummation. Their pronouncements suggest that the presence of twin beds in a marriage was not irrelevant, but that it had no necessary or inherent meaning. They were understood as players in the sexual relationship of the couple whose marital breakdown was under scrutiny, but as ambiguous ones. It simply depended on what kind of interpretative framework was brought to bear on the phenomenon: twin beds as a historically specific, fashionable, popular and unremarkable alternative to the marital double, on the one hand, or, on the other, a sleeping arrangement that hindered the sexual relationship of the married couple by physically separating them. One judge foregrounded the proximity of the two beds, their framing of their inhabitants as a couple, the other focused on the distance between them, the beds' separation of the spouses.

At times, judges permitted themselves to speak out not only on the particularities of the case they were adjudicating but also more generally on the implications of twin beds in a marriage. Once again, however, even well into the post-war period when the cultural tide was beginning to turn against twin beds, there was no agreement as to just what these implications might be. In 1946, for example, a headline in the *Daily Mirror* read 'Judge Says Twin Beds Help To Make Rush of Divorces' (9 July 1946: 3), under which was reported Judge Thesiger's suggestion that 'the old double bed has almost gone out of fashion' and his opinion that this was contributing to the rise in the number of divorces. However, in 1950 another judge, Sir Reginald Sharpe, decided that separate beds could not be used as evidence of a withdrawal from the marriage: 'Twin beds in the bedroom of a husband and wife are indistinguishable from a double bed and form the "matrimonial bed", a divorce commissioner said in London yesterday' (*Daily Mirror* 14 December 1950: 5). The *Mirror* periodically reported on cases in the American courts commenting on twin-bedded marriages: in 1944, a Chicago judge reportedly said that 'the introduction of twin beds into the marital boudoir has caused dissension, disunity and distrust, quarrelling, trouble and laxity in parental supervision.' She concluded that 'Divided beds mean divided families' (11 April 1944:

2).[5] And as late as 1967, a divorce court judge found that twin beds did not represent 'a complete withdrawal from sex life', even though the husband 'had been so informed by some of his married friends' (*Times* 11 March 1967: 2). This ambiguity of interpretation (twin beds are divisive; twin beds are indistinguishable from a double) is not to argue that during the half-century or so during which twin beds achieved the status of the commonplace they were neutral or culturally invisible objects, for throughout their lengthy heyday they had their critics as well as their advocates. Instead, it is to suggest that they compacted the capacity to signify simultaneously something in harmony with a marital ideal as well as something at odds with it. Judges, like everyone else, could not agree on what to make of them.

If judges disagreed on how to assess the significance of twin beds in a marriage, they shared their ambivalence with the respondents participating in two studies from the post-war period which address the question of the 'double or twin?' directly. Both were associated with Mass-Observation, the project started in 1937 by Charles Madge, Humphrey Jennings and Tom Harrisson and intended as an exercise in 'anthropology at home' (Hubble 2006: 4), collecting and analysing information about everyday life in Britain from volunteer participants as well as from surveys. The first was the article by E. L. Packer already mentioned, 'Aspects of Working-Class Marriage', published in 1947 in *Pilot Papers*, a journal set up by Madge as a forum for sociological essays by non-academics; the second was a Mass-Observation File Report of 1947 on 'The State of Matrimony'.[6]

Packer's study of working-class marriages includes a section on 'The Double Bed'. His starting point – quite contrary to Judge Thesiger's, despite being contemporaneous with it – was that 'the double bed, which is very much a national institution, has contributed to the failure to achieve sexual harmony … [as] continuous physical contact in time is productive of boredom and satiety' (1947: 100–1). Far from the double promoting sexual and emotional intimacy, as its champions argue, Packer suggests that it actually compromises it. Furthermore, he observes that the bed is actively deployed in the daily disputes of married life: 'To quit the marriage bed is a weapon frequently used by married couples when serious quarrels have occurred. … [B]ecause of its implications relative to the refusal of intercourse, it is a gesture of considerable weight' (ibid.: 101). Here is corroborative evidence of Larkin's suggestion that relationships turn on 'a sort of bargaining' and of Szreter's identification of 'bargaining between husbands and wives over the terms and conditions on which sexuality was enjoyed in marriage' (1996: 578), although enjoyment seems manifestly less at issue in the negotiations than control. Cutting across the culture of abstinence, and related to it, was strategic sexual acquiescence and denial, a process fought out in and over the marriage bed itself.

Packer drew on first-hand material deriving from his work as a probation officer as well as on published studies of marriage, and addressed himself particularly to the place of the double bed in working-class marriages. A Mass-Observation report of the same year on 'The State of Matrimony' included a section called 'Single or Double', which picked up on Packer's findings and added to them, for 'the tradition of the double bed … is a matter of some importance in considering the changes in social outlook surrounding marriage today' (File Report 2495 'The State of Matrimony', 20 June 1947: 12). Drawing on submissions from Mass-Observation respondents, the report concludes that most people, male and female, married and single, prefer double beds. Only about one in three 'said single beds were best' (ibid.). The reasons given for these preferences are tabulated 'in rough order of frequency':

Prefer Double Beds	Prefer Single Beds
Should be, this is marriage	Healthier, more hygienic
Sexual spontaneity etc.	Less disturbance, more sleep
Makes for happier marriage	Cooler
Habit; always have used one	Modern idea
Keeps you together (psychologically)	More privacy
Warmer	More comfortable
Usual thing, normal	More freedom
More friendly, more intimate	
More comfortable	
More fun	

(ibid.: 13)

Devotees of both modes of co-sleeping claim their preference to be the 'more comfortable', although this is not high on their lists. But the other reasons given – which coalesce, one might infer, into the respective claims of greater comfort – are telling. Those favouring double beds prioritize tradition and convention ('should be, this is marriage', 'habit', 'usual thing, normal') while those preferring twins still identify their choice as 'modern' and offer this as a reason for their preference. Tradition brings with it a version of marriage close to that eulogized by Stopes in the notion of the merged pair or 'duity': sexual spontaneity is high on the list, but other understandings of what constitutes the ground of that merging also figure: warmth, intimacy, fun, friendship and psychological proximity.

For respondents favouring twins, the reasons are different. Strikingly, health and hygiene continue as the primary rationale, fifty years after the end of the sanitary 'craze' which initially prompted their introduction. If the claim of the greater comfort of twins is calibrated with other considerations, however, this seems to emerge not from marital merging but from twin beds' ability to sustain autonomy within the pair: less disturbance, greater privacy and freedom. These evaluations are endorsed elsewhere in the report: other respondents gloss the double as 'the emblem of married life', while twins 'don't seem like being married' (ibid.). Perhaps fearing the 'freedom' claimed by twin-bed sleepers, one working-class husband offered the tantalizingly opaque suggestion that in single beds 'the husband and wife might get suspicious of one another' (ibid.: 14). To him, twin beds indicate a state of disconcerting unknowing: incomplete knowledge and hidden truths which could not exist in a double.

Two interrelated features stand out in this post-war interest in twin beds. First, this mode of married sleeping re-emerged as a topic worthy of comment, and even of study: press discussion of twin beds increased, whether in reports of divorce cases, in letters' pages, or in feature articles, and Mass-Observation turned their attention to them as a distinctly modern phenomenon. While twin beds had had considerable cultural visibility in the interwar period, whether in Hollywood film, at Ideal Home exhibitions or in Heal's publicity materials, this had not prompted much comment in the press or in household advice books, beyond their desirability as either fashionable or convenient furnishing choices. They could be seen in the stores and in the bedroom, but there seemed to be little to say about them, at least in these forums. After a flurry of attention when they had come into vogue in the late nineteenth century, they achieved a degree of familiarity or normality (to use Stopes's term) which rendered them, for the most part, largely beyond discussion until after the Second World War.

Secondly, and related, the interwar silence on the place of twin beds in marriage – Stopes's was a lone voice inveighing against them as enemy agents in the field of marital harmony – gave way, gradually and unevenly, to discussion of them as objects that signified overwhelmingly within the domain of marriage. Judges Thesiger and Sharpe, and the participants in and compilers of the Mass-Observation studies, were confident that the choice of marital bed – double or twins – communicated something important about those who chose one arrangement over another. None suggested that the issue was irrelevant to the marriages of the couple concerned, but nor could they agree on quite what that meaning might be. To some, twins spoke of individual autonomy, of peace, of an intimate proximity without intrusion or disturbance. To others, the space between the beds represented a symbolically insuperable barrier to the free flow of interconnection, whether sexual, tactile, emotional or verbal. Should twin beds be read as signs of a commitment to autonomy in the service of intimacy, or of an intrusion into a space and time that should more properly be dedicated to marital 'togetherness'? What distribution of proximity and distance best represented the aspirations of those seeking happy and fulfilling marriages? This, in essence, was the dilemma governing the discussion of twin beds in this period of ambivalence, the twenty-five years following the Second World War. It was not that participants in the discussion rejected the idea that twin beds spoke of marriage. They just disagreed as to whether the space between the beds was productive of benign autonomy or malign separation.

This discussion took an unusually literal and detailed form in the pages of the *Observer* newspaper. In May 1964, a letter was published from a woman whose husband, after nineteen years of sleeping soundly in the marital double, has announced that he wants single beds. 'Am I mistaken in thinking that those who sleep apart, grow apart?' she asks. 'Or does the average husband in his fifties long for dignified, solitary slumber?' (*Observer* 31 May 1964: 33). The letter-writer signs herself 'Puzzled Wife', suggesting confusion about what her husband's desire for twin beds says about their marriage, and her recourse to a pseudonym suggesting anxiety about publicly owning up to his request. In 1964, the year after Larkin's 'annus mirabilis', it is still a matter of some uncertainty, at least to the *Observer*-reading class, whether her husband's wish for twin beds ought to give her concern.

A fortnight later, readers' responses to Puzzled Wife's letter were published under the headline of 'Double – or Quit' (*Observer* 14 June 1964: 31). As that title suggests, the choice of marriage bed is a gamble. The letters from readers offer no consensus on the better option: 'There was no agreement, and Puzzled Wife will remain as puzzled as she was at the start'. Some readers excoriate twin beds, others applaud them; some find the double a haven of intimacy and 'togetherness', while others lament the intrusiveness and poor sleep it brings with it. One reader contributed a lengthy elaboration of the premise that 'those who sleep apart are already apart in some other way', and suggesting renewed attempts at spousal communication: 'It may be heavy going at first but if you love each other the double bed may yet prevail.' A man who had swapped to twins lamented the loss of intimacy but concluded gloomily that, once that particular marital Rubicon had been crossed, there was no going back: 'no more confidential murmurings, instead an invisible barrier across which one talks as if addressing a public meeting'. Not all were convinced by the idea that the double bed conferred a unique kind of intimacy. One correspondent dismissed 'sleeping together (in the unfashionable literal sense)' as 'just about the most absent-minded kind of togetherness imaginable, and any relationship that depends upon it can scarcely be worth preserving. The double bed is merely a marital symbol' (ibid.). Evaluations of the double ranged from finding it an incomparable site of marital communication to dismissing it as a meaningless emblem of union.

As much attention was given to twins as to the double, however, with several readers writing enthusiastically in their favour. For some they were just a pragmatic measure to improve sleep quality by serving as a counter to snoring, cold feet, sharp elbows and cover-thieving, but others celebrated twins more overtly as a source of delight in themselves. One letter, signed by an 'Adoring Husband', sent news from his twin bed of unanticipated pleasures: 'Often when my wife wakes up, she shoots out a toe which I endeavour to grab, and waggle it with joy!' Nor are the pleasures more conventionally associated with the bedroom beyond the remit of twin beds. One reader was moved to verse by her nineteen years of enthusiastic twin-bedded marriage:

> As for thinking that Romance goes out with the 'Twin,'
> Believe me, it very much beckons it in.
> A come-hither look, and a frank invitation,
> Is far more exciting than forced situation.
> I could list other reasons, but won't be a bore.
> A Twin Bed Supporter, and Mother of Four. (ibid.)

As the article's prefatory warning predicts, no agreement emerges among the *Observer*'s readers. Some insist that only the double can offer the kind of intimacy necessary to sustain a marriage. Others find twins not only better in terms of the quality of sleep they allow, but also, as in the final example, as straightforwardly productive of the circumstances – 'A come-hither look, and a frank invitation' – that generate and sustain romantic and sexual interest across the years. The jury is, at this point, still very much out about the meaning of marital twin beds.

The *Observer* article deems readers to have responded to Puzzled Wife's letter in three ways: 'romantically, realistically or severely practically' (ibid.). Some readers prioritize the sexual and emotional dimension of the marriage in their answers; others accept the shortcomings and compromises of a less-than-perfect situation; others still, perhaps bypassing the emotional altogether, respond to Puzzled Wife with a brisk pragmatism. These attitudes, however, by no means divide straightforwardly between champions of the double responding romantically and advocates of the twin favouring a more pragmatic approach. Indeed, the most joyful romantic contributions come from twin-bed enthusiasts.

This balancing of the romantic and the pragmatic in readers' evaluations of the conjugal dynamic chimes with questions of the place more generally of romance and pragmatism in marriage in the post-war period. *The English* *in Love*, Claire Langhamer's study of the evolution of the twentieth-century companionate marriage, analyses precisely this question, examining changing ideas about the proper basis of a marriage. In its interwar manifestation, she suggests, people accommodated pragmatism in their expectations of marriage. Love and companionship were important, certainly, but so too, in these pre-Welfare-State days, were economic and domestic security. Long-term, one's romantic partner might also become one's carer, whether financially or physically. This interwar model of the companionate marriage, argues Langhamer, was re-inflected after the war (and, indeed, because of it), in favour of a new investment in 'togetherness' to the exclusion of pragmatism. Now, all was staked on love. Care of a practical kind, relating to income, health and old age, was increasingly relocated to new kinds of state provision, and so an accommodation of pragmatism regarding these elements of care was no longer widely accepted as necessary. Sensibility won the day over sense (Langhamer 2013: 1–60)

Enmeshed in this broad spectrum of change was a related one, concerning the meaning of sexual abstinence or continence in marriage. Despite the insistence of advisers that marriage was unlikely to flourish without a mutually satisfying sexual relationship. Langhamer argues that in the interwar period the giving of 'care' within marriage was often understood to take the form of sexual moderation or abstinence, glossed (in Elizabeth Roberts's terms) as 'being careful', 'being good' or 'not bothering me' (Roberts 1984: 38–49). Lesley Hall's work on the place of abstinence in British marriages in this period chimes with Langhamer's. For many women, she concludes, 'lack of sexual interest if not complete revulsion was more or less standard', and she quotes a number of surveys in which a husband was praised when he did not 'bother me much' (Hall 2011: 92, 93). Such attitudes prevailed until after the Second World War when, in the context of post-war ideas of togetherness, an absence of sex was increasingly widely interpreted as meaning a loveless and dysfunctional marriage (ibid.: 88; Langhamer 2013: 6–7).

How do such shifts in the evaluation of the balance between pragmatism and romanticism in the post-war marriage, entailing a reinterpretation of the presence or absence of a moderated or 'managed' sexual relationship, articulate with the choice of double or twin? Strikingly, the renewed interest in the implications of this choice and the eventual hardening of attitudes against twins and in favour of the double coincided with two other distinctive cultural phenomena: first, the cultural endorsement of romantic love as the only proper basis of marriage and the concomitant downgrading of pragmatism as playing its rightful part in the forging of unions; and second, the recommendation of marital 'togetherness' as the principal basis on which marriage should be conducted. Together, these factors helped cement the status of the double as the natural and healthy sleeping arrangement in marriage, and helped to stack the increasingly univocal case against twins.

However, while those marrying in the post-war period might have increasingly eschewed pragmatism in favour of love alone as a basis of their union, couples maintaining those relationships longer term, which is what the *Observer*'s correspondents were discussing (several note their decades of marital experience in their letters), still find themselves exercised by its pragmatics. The marriage may have been forged in the white heat of togetherness, but for many it was sustained by a judicious application of pragmatism. For some, this meant the introduction of twin beds as a way to manage the intrusions of a too-insistent proximity, manifested in snoring and cold feet. For others, it meant treating the double bed as a therapeutic couch, 'the place to know each other better in every sense. The place to know oneself better. The place to express all one's feelings, the nasty as well as the nice' (*Observer* 14 June 1964: 31). Long-term intimacy, the *Observer* letters suggest, is tricky and needs to be approached via the active management – whether romantically or pragmatically – of proximity and distance.

The sexual revolution was slow to complete its changes to the ways in which twin beds were evaluated. The sexual advice manuals which replaced the earlier marriage advice books – the most famous of which was Alex Comfort's *The Joy of Sex* (1972) – explicitly repudiated twin beds: these 'have no place in a full sexual relationship'. Instead, the cornucopia of promised sexual riches was to be discovered on 'a full-size double bed', although 'really enthusiastic sex usually involves at one time or another almost every piece of furniture in the house, at least experimentally' (Comfort [1972] 1974: 14). Such advice is distinct, however, from the *marital* counsel which continued to be dispensed in other forums. In the pages of *Woman* magazine, it was delivered by the redoubtable Marje Proops, addressing a rather different constituency of interest.[7] Proops's column addressed (though not exclusively) a middle-aged readership, as well as those embarking on their sexual or marital careers. And here, from her position as straight-talking elder stateswoman of the company of agony aunts, Proops mounts a late but spirited defence of twin beds as an honourable choice in a marriage. In 1967 – the year of the Summer of Love, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and the decriminalization of both homosexuality and abortion – readers remained exercised by the enduring and thorny problem of the proper distribution of proximity and distance, companionship and intimacy, in a long-term marriage. Proops devotes a full page to answering a letter from a reader happily married for twelve years but nonetheless struggling with sharing a bed with her husband, each spouse complaining of the other's nocturnal teeth-grinding, sleep-talking and cover-stealing. Changing to two singles is the obvious next step, she writes, but ‘the gloomy forecasts of relatives and friends prophesying a swift end to our marriage has made us nervous’ (*Woman* 25 February 1967: 13). Proops will have none of it. She refutes the received wisdom frequently mobilized in favour of the double that it is impossible to maintain a quarrel in one, parrying with the view that ‘it’s just as easy to keep a frosty distance in a 4 ft. 6 in. double as it is in a 3 ft. single with a narrow gap between’. She continues:

> I don’t think it makes one darned bit of difference to a happy marriage if a couple sleep in one bed or two. There is something to be said in favour of each.
>
> A double is, of course, cosier. Singles are, perhaps, more practical if one or both are very restless or very greedy with the blankets. The maddening nocturnal noises you’ll hear in either. (ibid.)

Romance and practicality are here invoked again, this time lined up respectively with double and twins. But pragmatism still, for Proops, has its place, and does not compromise a ‘happy marriage’. Intimacy can thrive in twins but be absent in the ‘cosier’ double.

Few such stalwart defenders as Proops would speak up for twin beds thereafter. She was writing towards the end of the post-war age of ambivalence, the extended cultural moment during which press comment on twin beds was as likely to find them as satisfactorily intimate as a double as it was to reject them as a sign of marital dysfunction. There is in her response a slightly exasperated tone, as if she is aware that she is fighting a rearguard action, speaking against the naysayers who prophesy doom to a twin-bedded marriage. The moment of cultural authority for the apologists of twin beds – a surprisingly protracted one, lasting the best part of a century – was almost at an end, as agreement was gradually reached about the pernicious intervention made by twin beds in a marriage. By now, apologists for the double included not only those persuaded of the virtues of marital togetherness, but also those rejecting marriage as a bourgeois straitjacket and agitating for sexual revolution. Twin beds had finally had their day as a sleeping arrangement accorded the dignity of being taken seriously.

Proops’s column can be read indicatively as the last gasp of twin-bedded advocacy. After a century in which the merits of this mode of marital co-sleeping had at times been vigorously debated, at others taken for granted and deemed no more contentious than the wingback chair or the kitchen table, broad consensus against them was coalescing, and they were soon relegated to the guest bedroom and the hotel room, or associated with the bizarre sexual mores of a previous generation. The century during which they had jostled for position with the double in the marital bedroom was drawing to a close, their claim to dignity and desirability finally extinguished in the post-war climate of conjugal togetherness. Ironically, their death knell was sounded by an ideology now generally seen as deeply conservative in its investment in a narrowly restrictive inflection of the companionate marriage and nuclear family, and particularly so for the women who were enjoined to derive their satisfactions entirely within its bounds (Nicholson [2015] 2016: 203–11). Twin beds were rejected as misguided, retrograde and inimical to marital happiness in narrowly normative models of the couple and the family themselves later rejected as oppressive and leading to unhappiness, at least for the women constrained by their terms of reference.

Ironic too is twin beds' post-hoc reputation as the symptom and agents of sexual prudery. While their heyday broadly coincides with Simon Szreter's long period of culturally validated sexual abstinence, the evidence examined in this chapter makes clear that abstinence by no means maps simply or monolithically on to a prudish unwillingness to engage sexually. Rather, twin beds emerge as objects that could be mobilized to contribute to many differing conversations about the meanings and regulation of sex in marriage. These figure within a range of situations and suggest an array of emotional responses ranging from indifference and disgust to marital delight and adulterous lust. They excited sexual desire in Mrs J. and her husband in 1918 just as they did for the versifying celebrant of twin beds who wrote to *Observer* in 1964. They could be introduced to fend off the too-enthusiastic sexual appetite of a spouse, as noted by judges in the divorce courts in the 1940s, or they could be chosen by spouses seeking to discipline their own desires, as had Mr and Mrs J. in 1918. They might have served as a contraceptive technology, aimed at reinforcing continence and limiting pregnancies. And they may too have been adopted as a sign of love and care offered by one spouse to the other, signifying a willingness to 'not bother' them sexually, or by being willing to recognize the off-putting effects of cold feet or snoring.

To reduce this set of quite nuanced engagements with the sexual environment of marriage to prudery is in danger of naming it as a choice driven by simple sexual repression rather than as a social or cultural phenomenon. Prudery suggests neurotic retreat, hysteria and a host of other psychopathologies from the Freudian lexicon. The materials discussed in this chapter suggest instead that twin beds bear witness to a century of socio-sexual, more than individual, anxieties, ranging from ignorance of or indifference to women's sexual pleasure, fear of multiple pregnancies and the continuation until the advent of the Welfare State of the accommodation of pragmatic as well as romantic considerations in marriage. If marriage included aspects of social and financial care as well as personal and emotional, then twin beds are themselves more easily legible as signifying socially rather than individually.

This chapter has traced the social contexts of twentieth-century sexual abstinence or continence in marriage and their correlations or associations with the marital cultures tracked by historians and sociologists and underwritten by the British press. The next chapter presses this study towards its conclusion by examining the literary response to twin beds as a register of their emotional connotations. If the press fought shy of a frank engagement with the sexual associations of twin beds, might we find a fuller exploration of this relation in the twentieth century's imaginative writing?

12

Twin beds

The literary verdict

It may be difficult to clean underneath a double bed, conceded the *Daily Mirror* in 1955, and it might 'start rows over blanket-snatching …. But one thing must be admitted. It's so darned friendly' (11 October 1955: 9). Hygiene, convenience, comfort: all played their part in the century-long debate about double or twin, but for the *Mirror* the trump card in favour of the double is that it is 'so darned friendly' – that 'so darned' introducing an air of wholesome and naïve surprise, but also, through its own euphemistic substitution of 'darned' for 'damned', suggesting another lurking euphemism: the sexual as well as the companionable 'friendliness' of the double.

The invocation of friendliness by the *Mirror* acknowledges that the battle over 'double or twin?' would never be won on practicalities alone. The choice inevitably concerns sleepers' affective connections. Friendliness marks the spousal relationship as companionable, returning it to the territory of the companionate marriage discussed in Chapter 9. It gestures towards the fashionable buzz-word of the 1950s, 'togetherness', a concept condensing a marital ideal and the means to achieve it. But while few would suggest that friendliness in a marriage is undesirable, it sheds only a dim light on to the complexities of the emotional and sexual geography of the marital bedroom.

The previous chapter sought the emotional associations of twin-bedded marriage in the newspaper columns of the twentieth century, the Mass-Observation archive and oral histories. It also drew, as has the whole book, on literary texts. Jan Struther's *Mrs Miniver* (1939), Orwell's *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), Betjeman's *Mount Zion* (1931) and Larkin's 'Annus Mirabilis' (1974) among others, have all made their contributions along the way. This final chapter, however, turns its attention wholly to literature, and particularly the novel, as a key cultural site for the elaboration of ideas about the domestic *mise-en-scène* of marital intimacy. Fiction, especially in its classic realist mode, frequently offers direct access to the interiority of its characters. The fleeting thought, the barely registered wince, the vindictive snub – the full emotional palette, however ambiguous, finds its place. Such subtleties of register are not the stuff of newspapers or furniture catalogues. They are, however, the meat and drink of literature.

Such interiority is not simply individual but also profoundly social, prompted by the network of others which holds, enables and frustrates the interiorized subject. The novel form is often said to be particularly suited to conveying the complexity of the social world not only because of its historical connections to social realism but also by its capacity to speak in many voices. Its language is polyphonic (Bakhtin 1984), its narrative not so much productive of the definitive resolution of conflicting discourses but characterized by its dialogic quality – however harmonious or discordant that dialogue might be – whereby a range of perspectives, interpretations, values and judgements meet, engage, jostle and separate. In this, 'there is no finalizing, explanatory word; the voices of the characters and that of the narrator engage in an unfinished dialogue' (Dentith 1995: 42). Rather than modelling singularity or conclusiveness, the novel is well-suited to ambiguity and irresolution, to holding two points of view in equilibrium. Consequently, the question 'double or twin?' is likely to be answered there neither definitively nor consensually, but with the emotional stakes in that choice intact.

Literature locates its interiorities not only individually and socially, but also spatially. Dialogues and reflections, encounters and misadventures, typically unfold in a recognizable world of cities and villages, and as often as not in houses, streets and tea-rooms rather than the more exceptional environments of battlefields, jungles or distant planets. The houses in the 'house of fiction' (James 1934: 46), the homes in which characters live out their dramas, are never innocent of the emotional texture and implications of the narration overall. Some novels lead from the domestic front, as it were: *Wuthering Heights* (1847), *Bleak House* (1852–3), *Howards End* (1910) and Lettice Cooper's *The New House* (1936; discussed later in this chapter) are just some of novels where the house at the centre of the narrative gives the work its title. Countless other fictional houses and domestic interiors condense the novel's ethos as a whole. The gloomy interior of Thornfield in *Jane Eyre* (1847), the drawing room of *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), the unlovely bedsit in *The L-Shaped Room* (1960), Barbara Pym's vicarages and suburban villas: all are integral to the novels' narrative architectures.

Nor do such dwellings need to announce their importance in the title or through the extremity of their interventions. Indeed, the novel, particularly in certain of its historical iterations, is particularly fond of the everyday and the domestic, and of the unexceptional character of the houses and the objects that furnish them. Robinson Crusoe's obsession with the details of his cabin on the island sets the terms of the genre of which it was the progenitor. For Crusoe, indeed, such domestic activity is fundamental: 'Having settled my household Stuff and Habitation, made me a Table and a Chair … I began to keep my Journal' (Defoe [1719] 2007: 60). The book does not just foreground the importance of the things of the household, but it is the consequence of them. Without them, there would have been no journal, no novel.

The twentieth-century novel is less concerned with the construction of household furniture than Crusoe was, and more interested in its capacity to speak of those who live among it. The novel's characteristic concern with the exteriority of domestic milieus is, therefore, of a piece with its anatomization of the interiority of those who dwell there and with its polyphonic form. Indeed, the novelist Christopher Isherwood argued that this combination of interiority, dialogue and domesticity was the special contribution of a certain tradition of twentieth-century fiction originating with E. M. Forster (whose approach he consciously emulated) which invested the minutiae of domestic life with the gravitas and consequence of the epic and the tragic. Isherwood recalls his friend, the novelist Edward Upward, suggesting that 'the whole of Forster's technique is based on the tea-table: instead of trying to screw all his scenes up to the highest possible pitch, he tones them down until they sound like mothers'-meeting gossip' ([1938] 1996: 107; see too Izzo 2001: 47–51). For Isherwood, this insight was revelatory, and led to a technique that he called 'tea-tabling'. In redrafting one novel, for example, he records his revisions: 'The murder was cut – "tea-tabled" down to an indecisive, undignified scuffle; and the ending was an apotheosis of the Tea-Table, a decrescendo of anti-climaxes' (ibid.: 159). Nor does the tea-table merely provide the occasion for social interaction, but its accoutrements intervene, furthering the cause of one party, parrying the advances of another. 'I was Christopher Isherwood no longer', he wrote, 'but … a martyr-evangelist of the tea-table, from whom the most atrocious drawing-room tortures could wring no more than a polite proffer of the buttered scones' (ibid.: 122). If scones could so potently intervene in the cut-and-thrust of the drawing room, what might be precipitated by the presence of double or twins in the marital bedroom?

This chapter considers how a strand of twentieth-century domestic literature, written at the high-water mark and during the subsequent decline of twin-bedded marital sleep, furnished the bedrooms of their characters' homes. It examines how the emotional economy of the bedroom – the traffic in cultural freight and ascribed value circulating between twins and doubles, shared rooms and separate rooms – participates in the contemporary conversation about marriage, its mores and material environments. It asks how literature plots the respective claims and powers of the emotional and the material in marriage, and how the marital bed or beds intercede.

A long-forgotten novel published in 1934 makes the case in its starkest form for the significance of the bedroom furnishings to the fate of the house's inhabitants. Noël Godber's *Twin Bedsteads* is a comic novel whose two intertwined plots both turn on twin beds. Following a miscommunication over the breakfast table, the recently married John and Norah Orston-Lee exchange their double bed for a pair of 'chastely designed little walnut bedsteads' (Godber 1934: 13). Distraught by what each takes this to mean about the other's feelings, they separate. Meanwhile, John's friend Archie Nutting takes a job at Prodmore and Prickle, a bedstead manufacturer fallen on hard times in the recession. Hitherto their beds had sold well but now, according to the foreman, they are a 'ruddy wash-out' (ibid.: 44). Archie's job is to revive the firm's fortunes. After a series of diversionary mishaps, both plot strands are resolved. The Orston-Lees reunite, jettisoning their twin beds in favour of a 'gorgeous four-poster' (ibid.: 285), and Archie introduces a range of twin beds – the 'Antony and Cleopatra' – which puts Prodmore and Prickle back on its feet. John and Archie meet for a drink to celebrate. '"Here's to Twin Bedsteads!" said Archie, sipping his Snifter', to which John retorts, '"To blazes with Twin Bedsteads – here's to Double Beds!"' (ibid.: 283). Twin beds might be instrumental in saving Prodmore and Prickle, but it is the double that rescues the marriage of the Orston-Lees.

Twin Bedsteads was a novel of its moment. It was preoccupied with the effects on manufacturing of the recession: the author had clearly informed himself of the economic struggles of bedstead manufactures in the 1930s. It takes for granted the power of modern celebrity: the 'Antony and Cleopatra' are successfully marketed by the creation of a living advertisement, with the twin beds placed in a department store window and occupied by two film stars. The beds, moreover, are named after two of history's most famous lovers, an association that proves commercially smart while contributing to the novel's mockery of the misguided vagaries of this furnishing fad. More ominously, 1934 was also a moment when it was still possible for a novel to include an enthusiastic self-proclaimed Fascist within its repertoire of comic characters (ibid.: 252–5). But in its own rather schematic way, the novel is also concerned with the fault-lines of modern marriage, instantiated through the twin bedsteads. In focusing entirely on the phenomenon of these beds, the novel gives unusually close consideration to the ambiguous associations of both twin and double beds, and of the ways in which these were inflected by class, gender and age to comic effect. Their cultural currency was such that readers could be trusted to get the joke.

It is the modishness of twin bedsteads that drives both plotlines: it salvages Prodmore and Prickle's fortunes and threatens to undo the Orston-Lees' marriage. Fashion, the novel warns, is never merely trivial or superficial, but can have disastrous effects on the lives of those who unthinkingly follow its whims. In a relay of misunderstandings, it is partly the modishness of the choice that John and Norah Orston-Lee each believe to be driving the other's wish to switch from double to twin. Yet neither understands the choice as *only* a matter of style, irrelevant to the emotional dynamics of their marriage. Each is hurt by the other's (mis)perceived preference. Norah introduces the possibility of the more fashionable option as a test of John's priorities and commitment: if he chooses twins, it will demonstrate his under-valuation of their nocturnal intimacy. As the cook correctly surmises, he ''Adn't the nouse to see that she was only trying to make 'im say 'ow much 'e liked sleepin' in the same bed with 'er' (ibid.: 19). For his part, John, immersed in the financial pages of the newspaper, agrees to the change because he is distracted, and assumes she favours fashion over intimacy. Crestfallen, he concludes that 'double-bedsteads were very Victorian and not in keeping with modern ideas' (ibid.: 21). Careless inattentiveness is his contribution to the debacle.

The Orston-Lees' trusty servants foresee the trouble such folly will produce. Only the young parlourmaid, her head turned by marital inexperience and the allure of fashion, speaks out in twin beds' favour: 'I think they're much nicer. So smart and up to date like' (ibid.: 14). The redoubtable cook, Mrs Roly, and the butler disagree with her:

> '"Them that's been joined together in 'oly matrimony let no man tear asunder,"' misquoted Mrs. Roly gravely. 'They're agin Nature. "One flesh – one bed," I says, "The two shall be twain … "'
>
> 'Hear, hear!' approved the Orston-Lee's butler … 'A good big double fourposter, like Queen Elizabeth used to sleep in. That's my idea of a bed for married couples.' (ibid.)

This wisdom from below is not only the result of the servants' innate good sense insulating them against the foolishness of fashion – the parlourmaid, after all, would opt for twins if she married. It is more the wisdom of age, of those who have been around long enough to understand that what keeps a marriage on its feet depends, in large part, in what happens in the bedroom. In Mrs Roly's terms, the 'twain' become one flesh more easily in one bed. The double guarantees a bond that cannot be secured by emotion alone; it needs the help of the bedroom furniture.

The emotional co-ordinates of the choice of marital bed, in however slight and sketchy a form, are all present in *Twin Bedsteads*. Norah's suggestion of twins is an indirect question about her husband's happiness, and one which he answers in deference to what he casually assumes about her own priorities. Miscommunication about desire and intimacy results in dismay and distress, alienation and withdrawal. The twin bedsteads are the platforms on which the Orston-Lees' marital drama is performed, the narrative making abundantly clear that they represent misguided modishness over good sense, and practicality ('hygiene') over intimacy (Godber 1934: 152). The novel sets its face against these fashionable interlopers by mobilizing precisely the associations adumbrated by Marie Stopes in her marital advice books. Stopes thought that twin beds were the 'invention of the devil' (1928: 115), and John Orston-Lee agrees: they are the work of 'the fiend incarnate' (Godber 1934: 126). Stopes's book starts from a premise of marital disappointment, though promising hope and redemption, while Godber's dedication 'to all young people contemplating matrimony' (Godber 1934: n.p.) frames his novel as a cautionary tale. Nevertheless, *Twin Bedsteads* inhabits the same diagnostic territory as *Married Love*, and its case regarding the damage to marriage caused by the careless adoption of twin beds strikes the same chord as Stopes's polemic.

It was not until much later in the century that marital advisers voiced a similar antipathy to twin beds, and a comparable time-lag was also apparent in the literary response. After the Second World War, the literary keynote becomes more consistently one of, at best, pragmatic acceptance or indifference and at worst, and increasingly, antipathy and repudiation, until twin beds became a literary shorthand for a failing marriage. *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) sets the post-war tone, with the unsatisfactory character of Celia, the wife of the narrator-protagonist Charles Ryder, established and parsed across a twin-bedded scene. Following a two-year separation, the couple are reunited in New York. As they prepare for bed Celia chats brightly about their children, but their estrangement is redolent in every detail:

> She talked … while she undressed, with an effort to appear at ease; then she sat at the dressing table, ran a comb through her hair, and with her bare back towards me, looking at herself in the glass, said 'Shall I put my face to bed?'
>
> It was a familiar phrase, one that I did not like; she meant, should she remove her make-up, cover herself with grease and put her hair in a net.
>
> 'No,' I said, 'not at once.'
>
> Then she knew what was wanted. She had neat, hygienic ways for that too, but there were both relief and triumph in her smile of welcome; later we parted and lay in our twin beds a yard or two distant, smoking. (Waugh [1945] 1962: 219)

The whole awkward and unpleasant scene is constructed through a series of splits, displacements and circumlocutions. The twin beds ensure that there will be no contact between Charles and Celia without prior consultation, their separation of the couple giving Celia the advantage in the back-and-forth of their negotiations. At the fork in the road of her nightly routine, she strategically forces Charles to declare his sexual intentions, which in turn confirms her rights as his wife subsequently to discuss the state of their marriage. While a double bed would not have rendered redundant the question 'Shall I put my face to bed?', the twins ensure that the rapprochement she initiates is temporary, strategic and unconvincing, with the next phase in their negotiations conducted from the demarcated territories of separate beds.

The repudiation of Celia is effected not only by her strategic manoeuvres but also by the attribution to her of a quality more often attributed to twin beds themselves: hygiene. Charles notes the 'curiously hygienic quality of her prettiness' and the similarly 'neat, hygienic ways' with which she transacted their sexual encounter (ibid.: 218, 219). The longstanding association of twins with hygiene is here displaced, rendered objectionable. However appropriate hygiene may be in the design of bedsteads, it is scarcely recuperable as sexually appealing, yet deference to the dictates of hygiene governs how Celia looks and behaves. A quality previously celebrated as the proper preoccupation of the assiduous household manager is internalized and distorted by the managerial wife. *Brideshead Revisited*, renowned for its fascination with the English upper classes, plays its small part in the narrowing and hardening of the emotional repertoire associated with that most middle class of sleeping choices, twin beds.

The positioning of twin beds as symptomatic of a restricted emotional repertoire became increasingly habitual in the post-war period, their invocation certain to be a sign of a marriage in trouble. Indicative of this is a short story in John Updike's *Too Far To Go* (1979), a collection of fourteen stories originally published between 1956 and 1976 (Updike [1979] 1982: 9). These trace in real time, as it were, the decline and fall of the marriage of Richard and Joan Maple, each story a staging post – though never an unambiguous or inevitable one – on the road to divorce.

The title of 'Twin Beds in Rome' (1964), the fourth in the sequence, brings together in melancholic contradistinction the romantic associations of the Italian capital and these markers of marital malaise, suggesting a hopeless mismatch of romantic expectation and marital experience. The twin beds which the Maples find in their hotel room prompt them to reflect on their marriage and their inability finally to settle for each other. Joan doesn't think the twin beds really matter: 'This isn't a honeymoon … You can come visit me in my bed if you can't sleep'. But Richard finds them an affront: 'He felt they had been insulted. Until they finally parted, it seemed impertinent for anything, even a slice of space, to come between them' (Updike [1979] 1982: 63). The equation of proximity with intimacy familiar from Stopes's writing is taken for granted by Richard, but the different emotional reactions of the spouses to the spatial interruption serve as a litmus test of their attitudes to each other, and to long-term marital intimacy more generally.

As it turns out, the initial response of each spouse to the twin beds proves unreliable. While Richard 'fell easily into a solid sleep' (ibid.: 64), Joan found it more difficult: 'I couldn't go to sleep, and every time I reached over to give you a little pat, to make you think you were in a double bed, you'd say, "Go away" and shake me off' (ibid.: 65). The distribution of unconscious acceptance and refusal of this nocturnal arrangement did not finally fall along predictable lines, and in each case a seeming ease – Joan with the prospect of the beds, Richard with the fact of them – conceals a deeper ambivalence about what they introduce into their relationship. Joan's initial indifference is followed by a desire to reassure Richard of her continuing proximity; Richard's apparently peaceful sleep is broken by a shout of 'Leave me alone! ([1979] 1982: 65), an eruption which Joan welcomes for its truthfulness even though his words contradict his avowed desire to share a bed with her. Contradiction, ambivalence, equivocation – all forms of doubled or split states – characterize Richard and Joan in their unconscious as well as conscious lives. There is no singular perspective, no unambivalent decision to be reached. The 'technical purity' (no space between) of their long-term double bed has no more secured their rocky, 'mangled' marriage than, in the end, their twin beds in Rome deliver its death-knell (ibid.: 63, 60). A benign lack of understanding, or rather a set of incompatible truths, is almost the best they can hope for. 'You're such a nice woman', says Richard. 'I can't understand why I'm so miserable with you' (ibid.: 63).

In delineating the shifting dimensions of the marriage, the story refuses to endorse the judgement on twin beds made by Richard, piecing together a more finely balanced picture of the tensions that keep the spouses together and drive them apart. The story's opening lines confirm the mismatch signalled by its title: 'The Maples had talked and thought about separation so long it seemed it would never come. For their conversations, increasingly ambivalent and ruthless as accusation, retraction, blow, and caress alternated and canceled, had the final effect of knitting them ever tighter together in a painful, helpless, degrading intimacy' (ibid.: 59). Intimacy, usually invoked as an unalloyed marital good, is stripped of its golden glow and becomes a source of shame and suffering. Paradoxically, the Maples' conversations about separation only bind them together more tightly, generating an intimacy that is not only 'painful, helpless, degrading' but also constitutive of the whole 'ambivalent and ruthless' process of mutual dependence and marital unravelling.

In a further refusal of familiar assumptions regarding intimacy as an index of marital health, the Maples' sexual relationship shares in the messy and unpredictable balance of forces shaping the whole relationship: 'Their lovemaking, like a perversely healthy child whose growth defies every deficiency of nutrition, continued: when their tongues at last fell silent, their bodies collapsed together as two mute armies might mingle, released from the absurd hostilities decreed by two mad kings' (ibid.). Their desire for each other emerges not from healthy and harmonious communication but as a surprisingly – 'perversely' – vigorous respite from their endless, exhausting marital skirmishes. The result – at this stage of the story cycle, at least – is that 'their marriage could not die' (ibid.: 60).

The Maples' responses to the twin beds are played out through a series of more or less conventionally gendered positions, from Joan's pragmatic refusal to feel her relationship with Richard is either symbolized or determined by their separate beds, to Richard's sadness, wounded sexual pride and gloomy over-reading of the beds on this of all trips. A similar distribution of gendered affiliations or refusals of what twin beds offer is echoed later in the decade, when the American playwright Robert Anderson, best known for *Tea and Sympathy* (1953), and, according to his obituary, 'among the theater's most visible, serious playwrights of the 1950s and '60s' (*New York Times* 10 February 2009: A25), staged *You Know I Can't Hear You When the Water's Running* (1967), first on Broadway and then in London. The work comprises four one-act sketches about marriage, all focused on 'restoring ordinary conjugal sex as a subject of nonblack comedy' (quoted in Adler 1978: 124). One of these, 'The Footsteps of Doves', is set in the showroom of a bedding store. Harriet and George, couched for their twenty-five married years in a double bed, are shopping for twins. Harriet, menopausal, practical and 'aloof' (Anderson 1967: 33), seeks the change in the hope of a better night's sleep. George is reluctant, perplexed and nostalgic, seeing this as the end of their sexual relationship and marriage: 'The longest distance in the world', he says, 'is the distance between twin beds. I don't care if it's six inches or six feet. It's psychological distance' (ibid.: 34). He is only reconciled to the transition by scenting the promise of an affair with Jill, a young divorced woman he meets in the store who is browsing the doubles (she and her ex-husband having slept in twins (ibid.: 43)). The play closes with George, out of Harriet's earshot, addressing the double bed with the words 'Be seeing you', and the lights gradually fading until they leave illuminated only 'the fifty-four-inch [double] bed' (ibid.: 50, 51). Marriages and affairs may come and go, this tableau suggests, but the double will inevitably, in the end, triumph.

Anderson said that he wrote *You Know I Can't Hear You* because he 'wanted to write a man's play' (quoted in Adler 1978: 123), and, indeed, the sympathies of 'The Footsteps of Doves' undoubtedly lie with George. Harriet's perspective is glimpsed briefly, when she parodies George's 'very romantic picture' of the joys of the double as 'a couple of soup spoons nestled in a drawer' (Anderson 1967: 40). She refers to her own marginal place in this sentimental account as 'old ever-ready .... I may want the space so that you'll have to make the effort. ... Not just suddenly decide you might as well since you hardly have to move to get it' (ibid.). But George is given more time than Harriet to express his point of view: when Harriet and the salesman leave the stage to choose headboards, George remains and encounters Jill. The implication is clear: Harriet has only herself to blame if he looks elsewhere for sexual intimacy, for George has spelt out to her what is at stake: 'I'm fighting for our marriage, Harriet. … Nietzsche said the big crises in our lives do not come with the sound of thunder and lightning, but softly like the footsteps of doves' (ibid.: 37). The play's title confirms George's warning: this is indeed their crisis, and it is entirely of Harriet's making.

George protests at the decision to shift to twins as a kind of domestic determinism: the dimensions of the house (the bedroom is too small to accommodate the king-size he favours) are calling the shots, he argues, rather than the wishes of those who live in it. 'The house is meant to serve *our* purposes, not the other way around' (ibid.: 40; original emphasis). A similar sense of passive domestic determinism is critiqued in Edward Albee's play 'Counting the Ways' (1977). More formally experimental than Anderson's, this play is also interested in the dynamics of change in the later phases of a marriage, again figured in the transition from a double to twins. This time, however, the shift is not instigated by the conscious intervention of either spouse (named only as He and She). One day, instead of waking up in his familiar king-size, He finds twin beds, and asks, 'When did it happen? When did our lovely bed … split and become two?' (Albee 1977: 33). Her response – predicated on 'calm and reason' – is 'Well, I suspect it's been coming. … These things sneak up on you' (ibid.: 29, 34). The unsought change accrues a sense of inevitability confirmed by She's passive acceptance of it. Once again, acquiescence to the change is gendered feminine while the husband, distraught, protests the loss of the intimacy figured by 'our lovely bed'. In both plays, as in 'Twin Beds in Rome', the men are the emotional registers of the change, voicing grief at their loss, while the women's pragmatism refuses to recognize that this is territory fraught with emotion.

Anderson and Albee mark out twin beds as sites of casual feminine betrayal and dismayed masculine protest, and as harbingers not only of sexual death, but of death *tout court*. Anderson's George says of the single bed that they could 'put sides and a lid on it and bury us' (1967: 33), while Albee's He says 'they're for a solitary, or for a corpse!' (1977: 34). In the theatre of the 1960s and 1970s, the equation has become a simple one. While the wives accept, welcome or seek the new sleeping arrangement, for the husbands, twin beds are anti-sex, their separation of the spouses signifying psychological distance, sexual withdrawal and marital coldness. Inexorably, they presage the ultimate terminus of death. The double, on the other hand, is celebrated by the husbands as a sign of marital vitality and sexual vigour casually discarded by their careless wives. The men care about the emotional and sexual intimacy attributed to the power of the double; the women are weary of it. When Norah introduced the twin bedsteads in Noël Godber's novel, it was a change made in error, without the intention of inflicting pain on her husband. By the 1960s, twin beds' anti-sex associations are explicit, their unilateral imposition on a hitherto healthily intimate marriage attributed to the middle-aged wife. Proximity might continue, but it is impoverished. For Rosamond Lehmann in *A Sea-Grape Tree* (1976), 'Austere twin beds in shadow suggest a long habit of counter-erotic nuptial intimacy' ([1976] 1982: 146). While twin beds confirm a habituated nuptial intimacy, this is named as explicitly 'counter-erotic'. They are not just asexual, therefore, but actively anti-sexual agents.

This too is the tenor of Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair* (1951), where twin beds condense the shortcomings of Sarah and Henry's marriage, itself the emotional foil to Sarah's affair with Maurice Bendrix. Henry is a civil servant with an incipient bald patch and an expertise in widow's pensions, while Bendrix is the intense and saturnine writer with whom Sarah falls passionately and irrevocably in love, in contrast to her anodyne fondness for Henry. After Sarah's death, Henry 'moved into his dressing-room, and the room they [he and Sarah] had shared with the cold twin beds was left for guests who never came' (Greene [1951] 1975: 171). Henry's paradigmatic loneliness is prefigured by the twin beds and compounded by their subsequent failure to be taken up by guests.

The couple's twin beds stand in contradistinction to the far from chilly double bed in which Sarah and Bendrix conduct their affair, and which metonymically exemplifies the intermingled joy and pain, love and hate, into which their affair binds them. When Bendrix, jealous and insecure, wants to hurt Sarah, his desire forms as a wish 'to take a woman back with me and lie with her upon the same bed in which I made love to Sarah; it was as though I knew that the only way to hurt her was to hurt myself' (ibid.: 57). The lovers' sexual relationship adumbrates a psychic and subjective commingling at once sadistic and masochistic, and that undifferentiated state is figured by the materiality of the double bed. Indeed, the complexity of the emotional entanglements occasioned by the double is in part what marks the affair out as a vital, mature and complex dynamic, in contrast to the implicit and irreducible infantile paucity of the marriage and its analogue twin beds, the nature of both of which – 'cold' – is deemed by Bendrix to be adequately registered in that single monosyllabic adjective.

The contrast between double and twins is underlined by the circumstance of Bendrix and Sarah's first sexual encounter in a cheap hotel near Paddington, in 'a real Edwardian room with a great gilt double bed and red velvet curtains and a full-length mirror. (People who came to Arbuckle Avenue never required twin beds.)' (ibid.: 44). There, in miniature, is the by now familiar dichotomy: the double bed equals sex – even if charged with agony as well as joy – while twin beds stand for a chilly if companionable marital celibacy, 'a quiet friendly marriage that would go on and on' (ibid.: 56). Proximity continues and intimacy of a kind persists, but in a form deficient, flawed, decidedly counter-erotic.

Sexless marriage set against passionate affair, fondness against desire, bureaucrat against writer: such contrasts are simplistic, even hackneyed. And, indeed, there is something curiously conventional and over-determined about the co-ordinates between which the novel is plotted. The familiarity of the romance narrative, however, is no bar to its continuing popularity or capacity to hold readers' attention: as Lynne Pearce and Jackie Stacey remind us, romance remains 'one of the most compelling discourses by which any one of us is inscribed' (1995: 12). In *The End of the Affair*, the well-worn romantic scenario is renewed by Bendrix's compulsive anatomizations of his feelings – his capacity as a writer to plot, describe, capture a mood or a nuance, a fear or a longing, in a well-turned phrase or startling trope, his sense of the power and the pitfalls of storytelling. Hereby the familiar emotional distribution between affair and marriage accrues texture, heft and nuance. Bendrix's first-person narration is in turn recalibrated by the introduction of the unmediated voice of Sarah in the sections of her diary that comprise Book Three, gradually revealing her account of the affair, her reason for ending it and its aftermath. The novel is spoken in the two distinct voices of the lovers, although these never directly address each other.

Of still greater importance than the discerning consciousnesses of the narrative voices to the translation of *The End of the Affair* from conventional if sophisticated romance to a much more unorthodox narrative, however, is the intrusion into the three-way relationship between Bendrix, Sarah and Henry of the ultimate *deus ex machina*, God. When Sarah believes that Bendrix has been killed in an air raid (the affair is conducted during the London Blitz of 1940) she prays, making a pact with God: if Bendrix's life is spared, she promises to give him up and to return to her marriage. It is, and she does, without giving Bendrix any explanation. Baffled and intensely jealous (assuming Sarah has a new lover), Bendrix is compelled to relinquish his hold on the narrative, as on his life, signalled by the handing over of the narrative reins to Sarah's diary. There, she recounts her struggles with the pain and joy occasioned by her promise to God, with the echoes between her experiences of profane and sacred love, and the abandonment of the rational self that both kinds of love precipitate. In so doing, Sarah finds carnal love and love for God to be indistinct. She asks God, 'Did I ever love Maurice as much before I loved You? Or was it really You I loved all the time? Did I touch You when I touched him? Could I have touched You if I hadn't touched him first, touched him as I never touched Henry, anybody?' (Greene [1951] 1975:123). Her all-too-human love for Bendrix has tipped her into belief in a God towards whom she had been hitherto agnostic. 'I've fallen into belief like I fell in love', she tells Bendrix in a letter (ibid.: 147).

And Bendrix, despite his impotent rage at his displacement, finds himself tracing a similar trajectory in his own experience of love. 'The words of human love', he writes, 'have been used by the saints to describe their vision of God, and so, I suppose, we might use the terms of prayer, meditation, contemplation to explain the intensity of love we feel for a woman' (ibid.: 47). Despite his furious railing against belief, his love for Sarah finally results in his own submission to it, the last words of the novel a weary prayer addressed to a God who has battered down his resistance: 'O God, You've done enough, You've robbed me of enough. I'm too tired and old to learn to love, leave me alone for ever' (ibid.: 192). In this apostrophic concession, Bendrix unwillingly confirms the words of the Catholic convert Léon Bloy which form the novel's epigraph: 'Man has places in his heart which do not yet exist, and into them enters suffering in order that they may have existence' (ibid.: [6]).

The End of the Affair takes literally the proposition advocated by Marie Stopes – although in less overblown, more orthodox and more disturbing terms – that the sexual might open a route to the metaphysical. Greene's narrative, however, refuses the simplicity of Stopes's conclusion that this physical and metaphysical rapture will be straightforwardly pleasurable, let alone marital. The extra-marital passion Sarah experiences with Bendrix in the undifferentiated space of his double bed introduces her to the possibility of the existence of a God in whom she had previously disbelieved, and to a transcendence and relinquishment that is the source of acute and enduring pain for all. There is no comfort in the access to divine mystery, only anguish. Miracles neither soothe nor placate. Rather, they profoundly upset and displace the consolations of 'ordinary corrupt human love' (ibid.: 124), for ultimately the living – Sarah, before her death, and thereafter Bendrix – are forced to confront its limitations and ephemerality, and as a result are left bereft, shattered and comfortless, delivered to faith reluctant and exhausted.

The novel's delineation of the unpredictability and incommensurability of desire within marriage refuses the simple contrast between a marriage condemned as arid and the revivifying powers of the passionate affair, and neither does it endorse the opposite set of judgements. The paradoxes posited in answer to such oversimplifications are multiple, but one strand can be tracked through the relationship of the novel's beds with sex, with sleep and with friendship. Henry and Sarah's twin beds might be cold, but Henry, at least, sleeps easily in his. Sarah records in her diary watching him sleep; she feels towards him 'not intimate but companionable … I must have wanted him, in a way, once, but I've forgotten why, and I was too young to know what I was choosing. It's so unfair. While I loved Maurice, I loved Henry, and now I'm what they call good, I don't love anyone at all' (ibid.: 104). 'It's so unfair': the complaint of a child as yet unreconciled to life's inevitable injustices, but also a verdict on the insubstantiality and unpredictability of desire, and on the conundrum of the demise of Sarah's socially sanctioned, genuine, if no longer sexual love for Henry simultaneously with the truncation of her illicit but passionate love for Bendrix.

Love and desire, sadly, do not play by the rules – not for Henry, nor Sarah, nor indeed for Bendrix, whose double bed brings him love and sex but denies him the sleep so easily accessed by Henry: 'I would take pills at night to make me sleep quickly, but I never found any pills that would keep me asleep till daylight' (ibid.: 74). The price Bendrix pays for intensity is tormented wakefulness. Henry sleeps soundly in an innocent oblivion that has the effect of binding Sarah to him. Just as the access to the metaphysical via the physical does not constitute an endorsement of this trajectory, neither does the naming of the 'cold twin beds' of Henry and Sarah's marriage erase the companionable love that is sustained by Sarah's affair. Ironically, Sarah's death leads to the intensification of the friendship and mutual reliance of Bendrix and Henry. The bond that ultimately endures throughout the novel, albeit transferred from Sarah and Henry to Henry and Bendrix, is neither sexual nor romantic love, marital or otherwise, but affectionate friendship.

The End of the Affair endorses twin beds' associations with Lehmann's 'counter-erotic nuptial intimacy', but in such a way as to problematize this correspondence as much as to reinforce it. Nonetheless, the novel remains an instrument in the post-war narrowing of the emotional repertoire attributable to twin beds until they became unambiguous indicators of sexual failure. They increasingly figured as, at best, the misguided choice of menopausal wives, and at worst – as in the contemporary American poet Robert Gibb's poem 'An End to the Marriage: My Step-Mother Buys Twin Beds' – as a structural bromide administered by a woman of almost fairy-tale malevolence: in this case, the poet-speaker's wicked stepmother, who condemns her hapless, powerless husband to a nocturnal life 'billeted upon that small celibate bed' (Gibb 2005: 183). Oozing with contempt for his stepmother and writing of her introduction of twin beds as a vengeful act of virtual castration on his long-suffering father, the poem is an act of masculine bonding and filial identification, articulating an incredulous fury at the blighting of his father's life by the (presumed) sexual privations inflected by his stepmother. Drawing on a by now longstanding set of associations between twin beds and a marital-sexual death-knell, the poem represents the nadir of twin beds' literary fate.

The effect of the growing post-war consensus on the iniquities of twin beds was to normalize what had been a much more contested and nuanced set of emotional associations and judgements. Before the Second World War, even those few texts (such as Godber's *Twin Bedsteads*) which situated twin beds as players hostile to marital happiness were nonetheless alert both to the contrary case and to the partiality, both historical and psychological, of their own argument. There remained a case to made, an argument to be conducted; the jury was out on twin beds, their pleasures and dangers. Their deleterious effect could not simply be taken for granted, nor their invocation straightforwardly assumed to condense associations of a chilly marriage in sexual retreat. In these earlier texts, the judgement on twins – and indeed, at times, on the double – was less bullish, less certain, more open to discussion, more aware of its position *as* a stance rather than a self-evident truth universally acknowledged. This is particularly the case with fiction of the interwar years, where the conjugal bedroom frequently figures in the *mise-en-scène* of marriage. There, marital exchanges are stage-managed and mismanaged, the choice of double or twin not infrequently organizing the encounter as well as playing its part in its emotional charge. The tenor and texture of the marriage are condensed, explored and weighed up – though not always predictably so – in the way the couple sleep. In such texts, twin beds appear without prejudice, without the almost invisible commonsense ease of consensual meanings. They are contributors to the marital debates and the dramas, but they play a range of different parts. They signify, but their significations are open, elastic, contested and – to twenty-first readers, at least – surprising.

Such is the case in *The Way Things Are* (1927), a deft and deceptively humorous novel by E. M. Delafield, best known for the *Diary of a Provincial Lady* (1930) but a prolific and popular middlebrow author from 1915 until her death in 1943. *The Way Things Are* anatomizes the muted pangs and longings of a woman in a disappointingly prosaic marriage. Laura is married to the dull but dependable Alfred, whose conversational enthusiasm is reserved for the cultivation of sugar-beet. One morning, Laura awakes and surveys the landscape of her bedroom and her marriage: 'Alfred lay sleeping on the far side of the double bed. They ought to have had modern twin beds, of course – much more hygienic, and, Laura could not help thinking, much more comfortable as well. They often talked about it. Or, rather, Laura often talked about it. Alfred, like so many husbands, was of a silent disposition' (Delafield [1927] 1988: 19). The epithets Laura applies to twin beds – modern, hygienic and comfortable – are familiar, associated with them from their inception. Nonetheless, they give pause when included in a morning reverie prompted by a husband's somnolent form. Twin beds might belong to the modern world of hygiene and comfort, but their appeal surfaces in response to the disappointments of marriage. Is their invocation simply defensive, desired for their capacity to mitigate marital disappointment? Does their allure consist only in their pragmatic capacity to give material equivalence to her emotional distance from Alfred – a distance soon to be filled by a serious and invigorating flirtation with a composer of popular tunes called Duke Ayland? Or do their twinned forms, with their associations with modernity, hygiene and comfort, offer Laura a more ameliorative if elusive form of spatial and emotional recalibration of the marriage?

Laura is a woman of her time. A published author of short stories, fashionably agnostic, comfortable in her use of a popular Freudian language of repressions and sex-complexes and the unconscious, she also owns 'a small volume of Dr. Marie Stopes … bestowed by Laura beneath a pile of her more intimate underwear at the back of her chest of drawers' (ibid.: 99). Her interest in psychology and the presence of a book by Stopes may not put Laura in the sexual avant-garde, but they do place her among the forward-thinking of her time. Nonetheless, there is a poignancy to the location of Stopes's book – presumably *Married Love*, still by far her best-known volume in 1927 – concealed beneath her 'more intimate underwear' at the back of a drawer. The services of neither the underwear nor the book, it seems, are called on very often. *Married Love* is addressed to the many, 'particularly in the middle classes', who 'marry expecting joy [but] are bitterly disappointed' (Stopes [1918] 2004: 9). Perhaps Laura had acquired the book when she felt that her own disappointment might be temporary, and that joy could still be hers. By now, however, married for seven years, *Married Love*'s promise of sexual rapture in marriage would have rung hollow. Her own marriage had delivered two children (to one of whom she is passionately attached), but only a yawning emotional and sexual distance from Alfred: 'Marriage, indeed, had served to inculcate in her the chastity – than which there is none more rigid – of a romantic woman, married to a man with whom she has never been in love' (Delafield [1927] 1988: 183). Laura's struggles are therefore generated by the conjunction of a romantic disposition, a loveless marriage, and a communicative and passionate lover.

'Conflict, in the language of psycho-analysis, was the almost incessant companion of Laura's psychological existence' (ibid.: 14), and the main psychic conflict she experiences is between the demands of the 'things' of the book's title and her longing for an emotional life. That ominous title, *The Way Things Are*, redolent of stasis and weary resignation, suggests the inevitability of their power. Laura is left only with the distinctly cold comfort of her own clear-sightedness, apparent throughout the novel but intensified at the end, when she finally sees through the false promises made by the 'insidious and fatally unpractical qualities' of 'imagination, emotionalism, sentimentalism' (ibid.: 336) – all of them the stuff of romance, all ultimately doomed to evaporate and disappoint. This recognition allows her to see that she is not the romantic heroine whom Duke encouraged her to consider herself, but just 'an average woman' (ibid.). Both she and Duke 'were incapable of the ideal, imperishable love' (ibid.: 335), but to tolerate the prospect of living with this insight, she realizes that 'only by envisaging and accepting her own limitations, could she endure the limitations of her surroundings' (ibid.: 336). To go on living, she needs to internalize – match herself to – this newly diminished version of herself, to make bearable the emotional wasteland of 'the way things are'.

If the title points to Laura's ultimate surrender to her domestic circumstances, the novel also allows glimpses of other interpretations of 'the way things are'. As someone familiar with the basics of psychoanalytic and sexological thinking (she has read Freud, Jung and Havelock Ellis (ibid.: 110, 207, 158)), and indeed someone who before her marriage was fully familiar with the corporeality of human life (she had qualified as a masseuse (ibid.: 4)), Laura is someone whose view of human character and motivation comprehends the complexities of both mind and body. She is drawn to her sister's friend Losh, a medical student with a special interest in abnormal psychology, and recounts to him in thinly disguised form her impossible dilemma: married to Alfred, in love with Duke. His response is not encouraging: 'It's a vicious circle, I know, but I don't believe in all this blinking optimism. Better face things as they are' (ibid.: 291). For Losh, 'the way things are' comprehends not just the inevitable disappointments of married life, but also their (to him) inevitable psychological consequences: neurosis and nervous breakdown. In conversation with him, the 'things' of the title acquire a psychic dimension alongside their more general circumstantial one.

Laura's judgement of the relative importance to be accorded the clamour of her desires, however, never equates with Losh's. While he suggests that the best course of action would be to 'go off with him for a bit' (ibid.: 290), she cannot bring herself to deceive Alfred. Decency and common sense, the values of her class and milieu, continue to matter to her. Consequently, *The Way Things Are* is less concerned with her romance than with Laura's continuing attachment to her marriage, children and home, and the relative claims and limits of each. Laura may offer an 'unspoken tribute … to romance, that lurking possibility' (ibid.: 37) every morning, but this longing is ultimately incompatible with her marriage vows, her attachment to her children and the demands of the household.

The intensity of the 'tremulous fervour' Laura experiences with Duke is founded as much in her longing for communication as in sexual desire. Alfred is of a 'silent disposition', whereas Duke talks. He is attentive, observant, frank and sympathetic, and 'Laura yielded to the insidious rapture of talking about herself exactly as she wished herself to be talked about' (ibid.: 117). Yet seductive as this is, she is also dimly aware that such intensity is fragile and temporary. Even at the height of the affair, Duke's letters are disappointing, and his powers of communication already fail at crucial moments (ibid.: 224, 173). What's more, her sister, the thoroughly modern Christine, pronounces 'her verdict upon Laura's problem of the emotions' (ibid.: 204) in a characterization of the likely trajectory of an affair for a married woman:

> If one has married the wrong person, more or less – and after all, almost anyone feels like the wrong person after one's lived with them for a number of years, I imagine – surely it's better to go on, than to begin all over again with somebody else. It's such a waste of all the adjusting that one has learnt to do. Because the awful thing is, that one love affair is very like another. It gets to a certain pitch, and then – practically always – it declines. And it seems to me it would decline even faster than usual, if the woman knew all the time that she'd given up, say, her children for the sake of the man. (ibid.: 203–4)

Christine's words induce in Laura a 'revulsion of feeling' against such a course of action, entrenching her still more deeply in her sense of the impossibility of the situation. Marriage disappoints, of course, but so too will romance, and all the more quickly if chosen at the expense of her children.

Laura is defeated not only by her doubts about the longevity of romance, by love for her children and by her fondness for Alfred, but also by the snares of domesticity. She finds that the house itself conspires against her: 'At Applecourt, it [her romance with Duke] had lost poignancy from the sheer weight and force of other preoccupations' (ibid.: 274), such as the insistent, nagging need to decide what pudding should be served at lunchtime. In the end, the forces of domesticity triumph: 'The atmosphere of the house was too strong for her' (ibid.: 334). Compounding her sense of personal inadequacy, she realizes that she has not simply been beaten in a fair fight by a more powerful opponent, for the house's atmosphere is, she knows, her own creation: 'A vague recollection of a sentence, read somewhere, to the effect that it is always the wife and mother who is primarily responsible for the atmosphere of the house, depressed Laura's spirits' (ibid.: 36). In further testimony to her personal failure, she has herself created the domestic ambience that finally overcomes her. Everything confirms Laura's sense that there is no real alternative to the emotional barrenness of her marriage, and that this is, if not her own fault, at least her responsibility. In the end, inevitably, she concedes defeat: 'The children, her marriage vows, the house, the ordering of the meals, the servants, the making of a laundry list every Monday – in a word, the things of respectability – kept one respectable' (ibid.: 335–6). These 'things of respectability' hold her in her marriage, numbing her sufficiently to be able to relinquish Duke. The status quo – 'the way things are' – remains in place, unshaken and utterly indifferent to her unhappiness.

The 'things' of the title by which Laura's romantic longings are defeated are therefore not only circumstantial and psychic but also material – they are, quite literally, things. These include not only puddings and laundry lists but also the bed she shares with Alfred. Laura's desire for 'modern twin beds' is caught up in her ambivalence about 'the way things are'. Her longing for twin beds is a bid to take charge of 'things', to interrupt their capacity to govern her most intimate life, to use them rather than being controlled by them. Twin beds would signal her association with modernity – something to which Laura is committed, refusing 'absolutely to be anything but truly modern' (ibid.: 183) – but which her sister embodies with much greater ease. 'Hygienic' twin beds also indicate a modern pragmatism which Christine again embodies, her own marriage a companionable but briskly unromantic contract entered into 'without earnestness, without illusion, and without emotion' (ibid.: 296), and nonetheless – or consequently – destined to be a success. Such pragmatism is not available to Laura, 'by nature earnest, and emotional, and desperately given to illusions' (ibid.). The longing for twin beds is a bid to be more like Christine, but too much stands in her way. There is a mismatch between Laura's mind and her emotions: 'Her brain might function with all the clarity of 1927 but her emotional reactions remained those of 1912' (ibid.: 150). Pragmatic marital modernity such as Christine's is available to Laura intellectually, but this does not touch her feelings. The way things are emotionally for Laura is how they were in 1912. Her inability to be emotionally 'modern' in 1927 – to align her desires with the marital modernity of the longed-for twin beds – means that things will remain in their current unsatisfactory form, double bed and all.

The novel is a powerful rebuttal of the 'blinking optimism' of Marie Stopes's marriage manuals. While Stopes argued for the power of 'a marriage bed, large, square and comfortable' (1935: 58) in helping secure marital happiness and as a route to the spiritual raptures of married love, Laura knows that it takes more than the proximity engineered by a double bed to produce intimacy. If she is compelled to acknowledge the power of 'the things of respectability' to keep one respectable, so too she has to recognize their limits: they can keep her respectable, but they cannot make her happy. Her ambitions were in some ways modest: she would have settled for 'an emotional life – of her own' (Delafield [1927] 1988: 8), but even this remains beyond her reach. The emotions plotted across the expanse of the double bed early in the novel are still more entrenched at its resolution, in the diminution of expectation, disillusion and disappointment. The way things are is the way things will stay.

While for Laura twin beds are signs of modernity, hinting at the possibility of a nocturnal prophylactic against the disappointments of the marital double, other novels of the interwar period – the high-water mark of twin-bedded marriage – take a more Stopesian line on the question of double versus twin, but nuance their judgements by situating them in the 'unfinished dialogue' (Dentith 1995: 42) of characters and narrator. It is precisely owing to the unfinished nature of such dialogues that characters' emotional and material investments are held in the balance. It is not that no judgements are made, that the novel's voices do not speak more persuasively for one side or the other, nor that twin beds float free of ideological baggage, but that the unfinished dialogue leaves these open to contestation. Contrary verdicts are allowed to enter the frame.

Lettice Cooper's *The New House* (1936) is a paradigmatic instance of such a narrative dialogue. The novel's structure contributes to this sense of debate between a multiplicity of viewpoints and voices, as successive chapters comprise a mix of third-person narration and free indirect discourse from the perspectives of different members of the family: Natalie – an elderly widow moving out of the old family home, Stone Hall, and into the nameless new house of the title – and her three children. As Natalie undresses in her new bedroom at the end of removal day, she sees the familiar furniture and thinks back to her secret dislike of sharing the marital bed with her husband: 'She had been glad when they followed the changing fashion and bought two single beds, although she would never have admitted to herself or anyone else that she did not like the physical proximity. Married people did sleep together, and presumably enjoyed it' (Cooper [1936] 1987: 294). Fashion facilitates the switch to twin beds, but the change also articulates and rearranges the intimate dynamics of her marriage, the beds channelling her more general disposition of disappointment and sense of entitlement. Stopes, no doubt, would have declared that Natalie's problem was not to be found in the double bed but in her casual revelation that the marriage bed's association with enjoyment was based only on presumption, rather than on experience or expectation.

While such judgements are in tune with twenty-first-century assumptions about twin beds, they are, however, in danger of blunting readings of their earlier literary appearances as contributors to the marital negotiations crisscrossing these texts. While twin beds certainly provide these novels with a shorthand for marital sexual distance, neither rests their case there. As in Greene's *The End of the Affair*, *The New House*'s apparently straightforward condemnation of twin beds obscures a more nuanced set of judgements of the double-versus-twin dynamic. Natalie's son, Maurice, offers a recognizably Stopesian perspective on the errors of modern marriage and its sleeping arrangements, but while the novel largely endorses his views, it also problematizes Maurice himself, as well as affording a glimpse of his wife Evelyn's quite different perspective. Maurice is subject to Evelyn's desire for fashionable conformity, and so finds himself unwillingly sleeping in a twin bed. For him, the double bed signifies a bygone golden age of easy marital intimacy:

> He remembered a blissful week-end in his own old home in the big old-fashioned bed in the spare room, when Evelyn had come into his arms without any arranging and calculating, and he could wake up and touch her, feel her warm and sweet by his side, so that he had really felt as though he was married. Evelyn had not liked it; she said that everybody had single beds nowadays. She had talked as though it were almost indecent to have anything else. (ibid.: 286)

Proximity, for Maurice, means sexual spontaneity, whereas twin beds introduce a gulf which, on his part, has to be navigated and negotiated, but which offers Evelyn – shallow, fashion-conscious, consumerist – the opportunity for a degree of sexual control. Crossing the divide between the beds requires 'arranging and calculating' – precisely the intermission for reflection advocated by the nineteenth-century marital reformers discussed in Chapter 10 and welcomed by Harriet in 'The Footsteps of Doves'. The spontaneity for which Maurice longs positions Evelyn as 'old ever-ready', as Harriet complained George saw her.

Maurice, as one of the four protagonists of the novel, governs much of the characterization of Evelyn (although his mother and siblings largely confirm it). Overall, the control she seeks in the bedroom is indicative of her calculating and acquisitive character, her investment in superficial and materialist values. However, her preference for twin beds also implicitly signals her aversion to sex: anything other than twin beds, she thinks, was 'almost indecent'. Maurice's perspective is endorsed by an encounter following an earlier argument:

> When Maurice came cautiously into the room, her bedside lamp was still on, and she was lying high up on the pillows, her fair skin a mother-of-pearl pink in the shaded light …
>
> He smiled at her, and said frankly:
>
> 'I'm sorry I was so bad-tempered this evening.'
>
> That sudden and unexpected apology disarmed and softened her, making it easier for her to do what she meant to do, what she had determined to do to try and put things right between them. She pushed back the bedclothes, and said to him with a gesture of invitation:
>
> 'Maurice. Come here, darling.'
>
> Later, when they were each lying in their own bed, Maurice, drowsy after the physical release, thought clearly. But she didn't really want me! (ibid.: 288)

The bedroom had long been understood as a female-defined terrain, its style and furnishings chosen by women. Charles Eastlake had noted this in his influential *Hints on Household Taste*: 'A lady's taste is generally allowed to reign supreme in regard to the furniture of bed-rooms' (1869: 191). Hermann Muthesius confirmed it at the turn of the century: 'In English opinion the bedroom belongs essentially to the woman and it might almost be said that the man enters it as her guest' (1979: 92).[1] And the evidence of Godber's *Twin Bedsteads* and Anderson's 'The Footsteps of Doves' suggests that it remained a feminine domain through the twentieth century. Evelyn is therefore sparring with Maurice in circumstances of her choosing, not his. He is already on the back foot, positioned by her choices as supplicant to her for the satisfaction of his own. The discordancy of their desires and values are made visible by their twin beds.

Evelyn takes back control where she can – in the bedroom. When the narrative is from her point of view, as it occasionally is, it becomes clear that there is indeed control to be retaken, for her marriage to Maurice – who is undoubtedly the more sympathetic of the two – is largely on his terms. The novel is organized through values identified with a series of dwellings – the old house versus the new, the free-living virtues of a flat in London, the contempt for the suburban villa – but characters are placed regionally as well as architecturally. The novel is set in the north of England, but Evelyn is a southerner who has moved north when she marries and so is separated from her family, for whom Maurice has little liking and no respect. Her husband is no tyrant, neither in the home nor beyond it. He is an unusually affectionate father as well as a still loving husband. He is a socialist, though one who feels compromised by the necessity of small-scale ruthlessness in his professional life. Nevertheless, his marriage is lived out fully on his territory, and underpinned by his extended family whose house he still calls 'home' – the home with the double bed about which he reminisces. That bed may have afforded him the intimate spontaneity for which he longs, but its location in the home from which he has failed to separate, to which he endlessly compares the house he lives in with his wife and child, also identifies the rose-tinted memory as an aspect of his continuing nostalgic idealization of his childhood. Evelyn may be brittle, materialistic and calculating, but her isolation in the north, in the midst of Maurice's ever-present family, makes her insistence on calling the shots in the bedroom – her choice of twin beds and the sexual manoeuvres they entail – seem less manipulative or unfeeling. Required by Maurice to be fully integrated with his family and separated from her own, Evelyn, in her twin bed, takes back for herself a small piece of autonomous sovereign territory.

Scenes such as these offer a slightly different perspective on *The Way Things Are* and Laura's desire for twin beds. Perhaps her wish was not simply to literalize the distance between herself and Alfred, but rather to set and control the sexual agenda as Evelyn had. Is this what lies behind her sense of twin beds as the predilection of women rather than men? It is in their gift precisely to eliminate Maurice's preferred scenario, the double bed's facilitation of sex 'without arranging and calculating'. Their introduction of a space requiring negotiation, invitation and refusal not only appeals to Evelyn, but might also enable Laura to imagine a place in which a different kind of marriage could unfold. Far from confirming Lehmann's characterization of twin beds as inevitably signifying a 'counter-erotic nuptial intimacy', they instead expose the complexities of that intimacy's nuanced, and gendered, negotiation.

Dorothy Whipple's *They Were Sisters* (1943), a study of the contrasting marriages of the sisters Lucy, Charlotte and Vera, reframes the erotic and intimate associations and interventions of twin beds still further. The painfully dysfunctional marriages of the bullied and terrified Charlotte to the sadistic Geoffrey, and of the spoilt and highly strung Vera to the uxorious and lachrymose Brian, are variously furnished. Geoffrey and Charlotte share a double bed, from which, during a furious argument, he throws her out: '"Get out of my bed", Geoffrey burst out again. "Go on. Get out. What man would want you in his bed?"' ([1943] 2005: 92). Vera, for her part, has long ago relegated Brian to a makeshift single bed in his dressing room: 'This was the bed he slept in. It was hardly more than camp, it had been meant to be temporary, but it had become permanent. Night after night now, he extended his large frame on this bed' (ibid.: 232). Only the third sister, Lucy, married to William, is happy; indeed, 'Lucy was so happy that she sometimes felt she ought not to be' (ibid.: 30). Her happiness is not unalloyed: they have not been able to have children, and Lucy finds William's self-absorption irksome. It is this marriage, however, that is both successful and twin-bedded: 'Lucy, propped on her elbow, considered William's long, sardonic cheeks in silence. Then she leaned over him from her bed' (ibid.: 52). The sisters' different sleeping arrangements epitomize the marital dynamics of each. Geoffrey and Charlotte's shared bed contributes to their disturbingly sado-masochistic mutual dependence; Brian's bed fails to accommodate him adequately, suggesting the short shrift that Vera accords him and which he is prepared to tolerate, however self-pityingly; while twin beds allow William a degree of detached obliviousness, and enable Lucy to see him clearly and whole. None of these three marriages is perfect – far from it. But the one that embodies not just contentment but an enviable degree of clear-sighted happiness is the one in which the spouses sleep in twin beds.

Happiness in a well-established marriage might be quite easily reconciled with twin beds, particularly one where the husband is somewhat emotionally semi-detached. Lucy and William's harmony and intimacy is precisely predicated on their more general occupation of separate territories, at the breakfast table as well as in the bedroom. However, it is E. M. Delafield, like Whipple interested in the mores of middle-class marriage, whose work most thoroughly undoes the familiar association of twin beds with a counter-erotic companionship or disconnection. Even in *The Way Things Are*, when the conjugally disappointed Laura gazes at the taciturn Alfred sleeping on 'the far side of the double bed', it is striking that for Laura the double bed has a 'far' side. She knows that proximity alone, without an intimacy sustained elsewhere, will not close the gap between them. Indeed, for her the double bed opens up a greater distance, intensifying an absence of which she is already acutely aware.

This observation is made still more starkly in Delafield's *Gay Life* (1933), set among the bored and wealthy British holidaying at a hotel on the French Riviera. Among them is Mary Morgan, another Delafield wife married to a silent and semi-detached husband. Disillusioned but still 'a romantic at heart' (1933: 115), she meets a quiet American who takes her to a firework display in a nearby village while her husband is away. Mary returns alone to her hotel room:

> Feeling suddenly very tired, Mary went into the double bedroom, and sat down on the edge of the bed without troubling to turn on the switch near the door. …
>
> She had wondered, when the American said good-night to her, if he wanted to kiss her.
>
> For a brief moment, before she sprang to her feet and switched on the light, she wished very much that he had done so. (ibid.: 258)

The double bed and Mary's position on its edge bring together a reminder of the promise of marital intimacy and of its evaporation in the reality of the lived relation, her disappointment restimulated by the romantic frisson of the evening. The double bed is as poignant an image of conjugal disillusion as twins are in other authorial hands.

If doubles can so succinctly figure marital loneliness, so too for Delafield twin beds can indicate a relation very different from that of a marriage gone wrong. Two examples suggest the availability of twin beds as open and flexible indicators of marital sexuality. In *Nothing Is Safe* (1937), the ten-year-old protagonist, Julia, is dealing with her mother's divorce and remarriage to 'Uncle Tom'. One night, Julia hears her brother being sick: 'At home in the old days, she would have gone straightway to fetch mummie. Now, she hesitated. Uncle Tom, she supposed, would be there – in mummie's new, fine room with the two beds – and the thought of seeing him in bed made her feel extremely shy' (Delafield 1937: 51). The thought of the marital bedroom induces an unfamiliar feeling of shyness in Julia – a feeling which, Elspeth Probyn argues (quoting Sylvan Tomkins), is on a continuum with shame and operates 'only after interest or enjoyment has been activated' (2005: ix); shame 'highlights unknown or unappreciated investments' (ibid.: 14). For Julia, the thought of Uncle Tom in his twin bed activates the shyness, making visible her registration of the sexual charge of the new relationship. Far from signifying a 'counter-erotic nuptial intimacy', twin beds' invocation here generates a quite contrary sense of the interesting if disturbing and unarticulated force of parental sexuality for children.

The second instance is found in one of a triptych of Delafield novellas published in *Three Marriages* (1939). All three concern troubled marriages: the first in the high Victorian moment of 1857, the second in 1897, the era of the New Woman, and the third in 1937. In the final story, 'We Meant to Be Happy', the protagonist, Cathleen, in a contented but emotionally abstinent marriage to Philip, goes into their bedroom: 'The sight of the neat little twin beds, each with its green silk eiderdown, made her think – as it almost always did – of the marriage relation. How very odd it was' (1939: 318). On this occasion, she is prompted not only to think about sex, but to reflect on the ebbing of her husband's sexual appetite. Early in the marriage she had been surprised by sex's importance for Philip; now, however, he 'never sought any greater intimacy with his wife than a single passionless kiss, night and morning' (ibid.). Her reflections on his equally incomprehensible sexual enthusiasm and later indifference combine with her own sense of how 'odd' the marriage relation was. For her, sex is both baffling and peculiar; she finds it 'faintly disagreeable and very tedious' (ibid.). Its oddness, however, also hints at the unevenness of desire and experience between the spouses, prompted perhaps by the identical twin beds, suggestive of similarity or comparability. Cathleen acknowledges, but does not yet understand, this disparity between them. Constant, however, in the midst of these ebbs and flows, presences and absences of desire, are the twin beds with the green silk eiderdowns. Far from acting as metonyms of the emotional distance now characterizing their marriage (and which for Cathleen has always done so), they stand instead as steady witnesses of the mysterious flux of sexual desire. In Delafield's economy of sleep, the two modes of marital sleeping – double and twin – are refused the comfortable simplifications whereby the former signifies healthy marital intimacy, the latter marital malaise. In her fiction, emotional distance can just as easily be signified by the double bed, and sexual intimacy, however variable and unfathomable, by the twins.

Marie Stopes's was the twentieth-century voice that spoke out the earliest and loudest against twin beds, damning them as signs of a marriage in trouble. For her, they represented a misguided modern refusal of the proper physical and metaphysical merging of the married couple. But hers was also the voice of a passionate polemicist with an agenda deriving from a particular, if idiosyncratic, political analysis: liberal and feminist with regard to sex in marriage and birth control, patrician and conservative in her ideas about class and population. Polemic, for all its vigour and clarity and persuasiveness, is by nature partisan and monolithic. It makes its case not through the accommodation of doubt or ambiguity but through their banishment. It is in other literary forms – the novels and plays whose territory was the domestic, the familial and the marital – that the conversation about twentieth-century marriage, its pressures, problems and possibilities, admitted to light and shade, to ambivalence and complexity, to uncertainty, paradox and unpredictability.

Some novels certainly speak as unequivocally of the perniciousness of twin beds as did Stopes. Godber's *Twin Bedsteads* is uninterested in complicating the picture unduly, relying on a neat polarization of the merits and dangers for marriages of doubles and twins, and attributing the current taste for twins to fashion and folly. Yet comedy rarely works by pushing at an open door, and the mere presence of *Twin Bedsteads* testifies not only to these beds' cultural visibility and widespread adoption, but also to the sense that their choice was not without consequence. They might be introduced in innocence or in error, but even so those sleeping in them would suffer.

For novels working beyond the bounds of slapstick, the problems of intimacy in marriage were not so easily categorized or resolved. Even texts situating twin beds critically within the marital *mise-en-scène*, such as *The End of the Affair* or *The New House*, do so within a domestic emotional geography characterized by dark corridors, blind turnings, forgotten corners and hidden rooms. In these novels, twin beds bear witness to a marriage's emotional disjunctures but they are not made to bear responsibility for them. In other texts, such as *The Way Things Are* or 'Twin Beds in Rome', twin beds initially seem to confirm a habitual bedroom iconography of marital distance and malaise, but, returned to the entirety of their narrative trajectories, ultimately contribute to the undoing of these more predicable associations, and may even be imagined as contributing to a solution to the problem of marital distance. Some fiction, such as 'We Meant to Be Happy', allows twin beds to prompt reflection on the complexity of conjugal desire, and others, such as *Nothing Is Safe*, even invoke twins to conjure the disturbing sexual intensity of a new marriage. The beds themselves are not empowered to enforce or destroy conjugal intimacy, but they are allowed to comment on it. They are neither innocent nor neutral, but nor is their effect predetermined or inevitable. In themselves, they mean nothing. Whatever meanings they accrue accumulate narratively, within a broader complex of domestic landmarks and emotions.

Common to all these fictional engagements is a sense of the unnerving precariousness of a marriage conceived as a site of long-term intimate fulfilment. Stopes had suggested that enduring passion could be secured through a mix of physical proximity and separation; spatial reorganization could steady that which was too often found to be unstable or transient. In restructuring the proximity of the spouses, twin beds testify to a similar desire to manage or re-engineer emotional intimacy, but as part of a literary engagement with the emotional economy of marriage, they cannot effect its utopian redistribution. Proximity, distance and intimacy were certainly entwined with each other, and might even be negotiated across the space between twin beds, but they prove resistant to the absolutist solutions advocated by Stopes. Their ambivalence, or multivalence, is found in the 'oddness' of the marriage relation as formulated by Cathleen, in Maurice's post-coital recognition that Evelyn didn't really want him, in Natalie's conclusion that married people 'presumably' enjoyed sleeping together. However these married people organize their nocturnal selves, their desires – often inchoate, beyond their own reach – resist attempts to secure them simply by rearranging the furniture. To be together or apart was a matter that went far beyond the choice of double or twin.

Conclusion

Together and apart

During their century of cultural prominence, twin beds were much more than just somewhere to sleep. They were symptomatic of the reconfiguration of domestic, familial and marital notions of the modern home: its reach and influence, but also its responsibilities and dangers. At different moments, twin beds signalled a commitment to health and hygiene, to being modern or to a particular understanding of marriage. At times, they inhabited a territory defined by all three, their modernity guaranteed simultaneously by their inbuilt commitment to hygiene as well as their preservation of the autonomy of each spouse. This sleeping arrangement arose in response to concerns about disease transmission via the inhalation of the exhaled breath of a fellow sleeper, and a century later its demise resulted from concerns about twin beds' deleterious effects on marital intimacy. But in each instance, it was twin beds' ability simultaneously to keep the couple in close proximity while also putting a boundary or space between them that was at the core of their acceptance or rejection. In the late nineteenth century, they were seen to offer a harmonious balance of togetherness and separation, preserving the special intimacy of the married couple while protecting them from each other's capacity invisibly to transmit infection. But by the late twentieth century the interpretative emphasis fell differently, and twin beds were seen to drive a wedge between the couple, the longevity and success of whose marriage was increasingly seen to depend on their sexual relationship. By then, twin beds' capacity to keep fellow sleepers apart was pre-eminent, and their bringing of them together seemed merely formal and notional. Initially, the separation of the sleepers was understood to enhance and safeguard their togetherness, but later it had been reinterpreted as a threat to it.

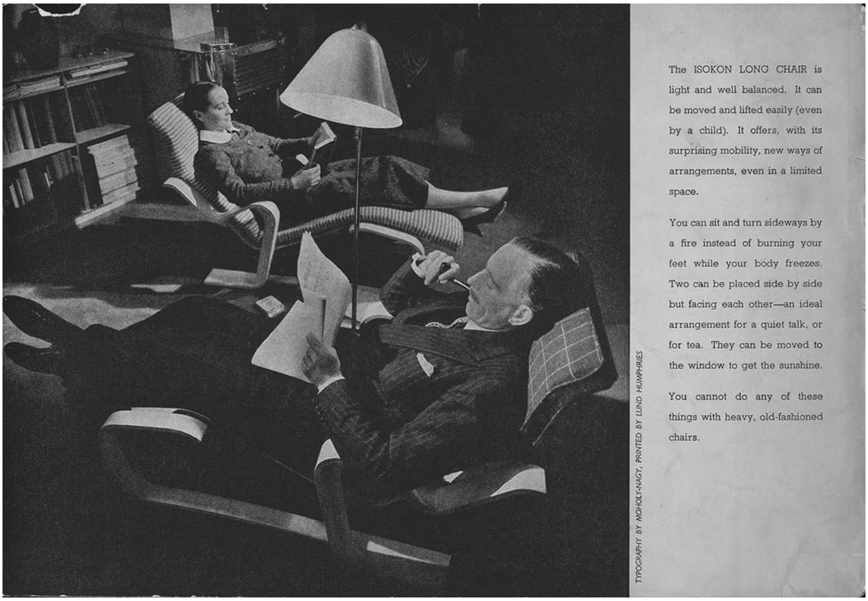
The capacity of twin beds to render fellow sleepers simultaneously together and apart is their most distinctive feature. Both terms are, of course, culturally loaded and contextually inflected. To be ‘together’ can signify intimacy and harmony, but also crowdedness or claustrophobia. To be ‘apart’ may have connotations of solitude and independence, or it might resonate with the associations of a separation hostile and alienated, or wistful and regretful, or of an experience of relief and liberation. While such associations are culturally determined, they are also materially mediated, in this instance by the form of the objects under scrutiny. Whether twin beds are perceived as primarily bringing the couple together or holding them apart, and whether these acts are understood as desirable or damaging, is refracted through a series of interpretations of the two beds’ spatial arrangement. Diverse, and at times quite contrary, meanings are found in twin beds’ adjacency or distance relative to each other. Not surprisingly, at least to twenty-first-century readers, the consequences of these attributed values are discussed most heatedly and at greatest length in relation to ideas about marriage. Here, it seems, there is a neat fit between the literal and metaphorical interpretations of being together and being apart, of proximity and separation, and of disposition. Even in the nineteenth-century discussions of twin beds as an innovation in domestic hygiene or individual health practices, conjugal compatibility was also seen to be at stake. However, a more precise understanding of how these beds figured in debates about marriage might be gained by considering the name by which these paired objects came to be known: *twin* beds.

Twin beds are, almost invariably, *identical* twins, and in this there might be found something puzzling. In the bedrooms of the twentieth-century English middle classes, the inner sanctum of the marriage, the room most associated with the privacy of the couple and the intimacy of the marital relation, a place where differences (whether physical, emotional or sexual) between husband and wife were thought to be fundamental and natural but were also required to resolve into a harmonious union of varied compatibilities – that is, the foundational heterogeneity of heterosexual marriage – the twin beds on which many couples chose to sleep replicated each other. All sense of difference and distinction was suppressed in favour of self-similarity or identicalness.

This was by no means the case for all household sets. A 1938 advertisement for a pair of Marcel Breuer’s iconic Isokon Long Chairs (Heal’s archive, AAD/1994/16/2847; Figure 24), for example, offers something akin to a visualization of the mid-twentieth-century ideals of the companionate marriage, most commonly articulated through ideas of an ‘equal but different’ complementarity.[1] The image makes much visual play with similarity and difference. The chairs are twinned, in that they are structurally identical, but this replication is counterbalanced by an individuality conferred by the different upholstery fabrics, one in checks, the other in stripes. The balance between similarity and difference is underscored by the chairs’ symmetrical arrangement, whereby they comprise a reverse echo of each other. The composition of the image also enhances the explicitly companionate character of the relation, for the couple are, with minimal movements of their heads, face to face (rather than facing the same direction, as in twin beds). The chairs' combination of difference and similarity produces a couple who are unmistakably together, optimally positioned for conversation, but also contentedly apart, each absorbed in their own reading.

Just such a counterbalancing of signs of similarity and difference is a frequent characteristic of the design of paired or grouped household objects. Like the Isokon chairs, objects as diverse as salt-and-pepper sets, nests of tables, three-piece suites and other furniture sets are designed to make clear that, despite their formal differences, these objects belong together. Moreover, unlike twin beds, other mid-twentieth-century pairs which share an explicit designation as 'twins' – twin tubs and twin sets – are notably *non*-identical. Their nomenclature identifies them as a pair, and their complementary similarity-in-difference ensures that together they form the perfectly functioning couple: after all, what would be the point of a pair of spin dryers? And two identical cardigans could scarcely be worn together as a set.

This impulse towards the materialization of an equal-but-different complementarity could easily have extended to the design of twin beds, such that the distinctly differentiated yet harmoniously mutual 'his-and-hers' character of the marriage was figured. The two bedsteads could have



The ISOKON LONG CHAIR is light and well balanced. It can be moved and lifted easily (even by a child). It offers, with its surprising mobility, new ways of arrangements, even in a limited space.

You can sit and turn sideways by a fire instead of burning your feet while your body freezes. Two can be placed side by side but facing each other—an ideal arrangement for a quiet talk, or for tea. They can be moved to the window to get the sunshine.

You cannot do any of these things with heavy, old-fashioned chairs.

TYPOGRAPHY BY MOHOLY-NAGY, PRINTED BY LUND HUMPHRIES

FIGURE 24 *Marcel Breuer's Isokon long chairs.*

shared the design of their heads and ends, for example, but the frames could have been constructed on different scales: the husband's bigger, more robust, and the wife's proportionately smaller, lower and more delicate. If differently scaled beds were felt to disrupt the aesthetic imperative too greatly by making too weak a set of visual associations between them, their essential complementarity could have been materialized in strong repetitions between the two bed-heads and ends, or in a design whereby two individually asymmetrical beds achieved a perfectly symmetrical form when brought together, side by side.[2] Alternatively, the covers might have deployed differently gendered styles and colour schemes: the husband's in a plain and masculine blue check, for example, the wife's marked as feminine by its use of pink or peach, perhaps with a ruffle or flounce. Complementarity could have been introduced in the counterpointing of the two colours across the two beds. Any number of design features could have answered the desire to underline the heterosexual imperative so frequently articulated in other cultural domains – from clothing and shoes to cars, toys and reading matter – in which masculinity and femininity, similarity and difference, individuality and union are so clearly marked.

On the exceptional occasion that identity between the twin beds is abandoned, the impact is stark and startling. In 1923, the avant-garde Bauhaus designer Peter Keler entered a furniture competition organized by Walter Gropius for the experimental Haus am Horn in Weimar, intended to be 'the architectural and livable expression of a new attitude toward life for modern mankind' (Friedewald 2009: 45). Keler's design (Figure 25) was as radical as was the house: beds for a man and a woman, and a cradle for a baby, where each artefact has its own basic form distinct from the others, based on Kandisky's theories regarding the relation of colour to form: 'The square was red. The circle was blue. The triangle was yellow' (*Financial Times* 4 July 2015: 19). Here, the differences between 'mann' and 'frau' are paramount and total: the bed of the former is characterized by the square, the latter by the circle. Their pairing – the sense of them as a set embodying the heterogeneity of gender as the basis of the couple – is achieved through stylistic consonance and juxtaposition rather than through visual continuities, and any sense of complementarity results from an inference of the gendered associations inhering within these basic geometric forms and primary colours. To break the pair apart in this way is a radical breach undertaken in a spirit of high modernist innovation and iconoclasm, and in a movement whose commitment to experimentation extended to their sexual relationships as well as their artistic agenda. It was not an innovation that found its way into the furniture shops of the Tottenham Court Road.

The twin beds found in English furniture stores and bedrooms eschewed not only the experimentation of Keler's design but also the non-identical

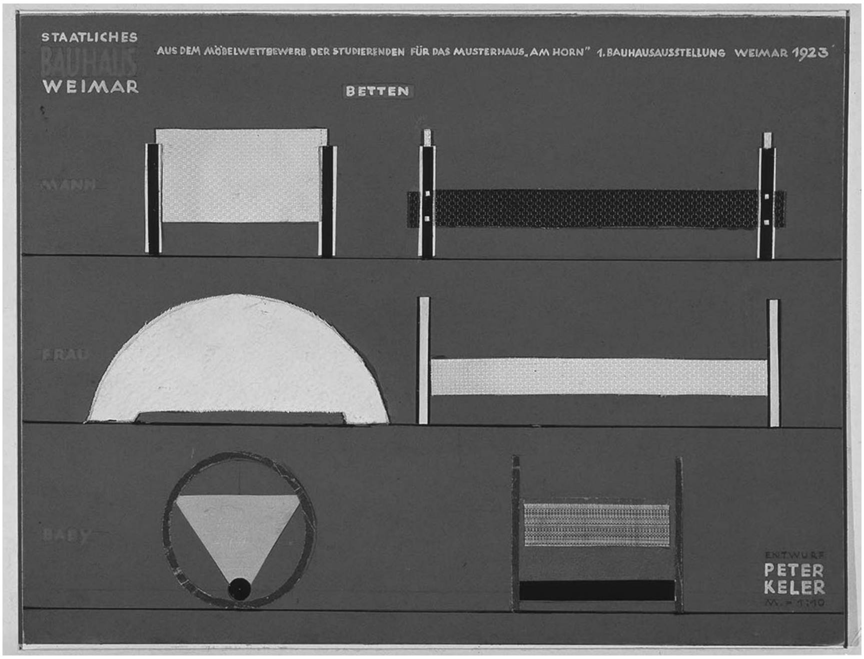

STAATLICHES
BAUHAUS
WEIMAR
AUS DEM MÖBELWETTBEWERB DER STUDIERENDEN FÜR DAS MUSTERHAUS „AM HORN" 1. BAUHAUSAUSSTELLUNG WEIMAR 1923
BETTEN
MANN
FRAU
BABY
ENTWURF
PETER
KELER
M. = 1:10

FIGURE 25 *Peter Keler's design for beds for a man, a woman and a baby.*

character of other design twins and sets such as the Isokon Long Chairs. The typical form of twin beds suggests not complementarity but indistinguishability and, by extension, interchangeability and equality. Certainly, in all instances illustrated in the marketing materials of Heal's, Maples or Staples, as well as in the bedrooms featured in exhibits and in magazines such as *Ideal Home*, the paired beds are almost always indistinguishable and side by side. These new beds were in general not significantly different in design from the singles which they had always sold – and indeed they could be bought singly – but this newly fashionable mode of sleeping demanded its own visualization, achieved by accentuating the 'twinness' of the two beds. This was the case not only in the marketing materials of the furniture stores, where it might be understood as necessary to draw the attention of potential buyers to this new product, but it was also manifest at the design stage. The archives of the Birmingham bedstead manufacturers Hoskins and Sewell and of the London-based Staples & Co. both include pattern books in which designs for twin beds show not just one bedstead, but two. Sometimes the design is fully realized for both beds (Figure 26), but more often one bedstead design (for headboard or footboard, in effect) is fully worked up while only a segment of the other is shown, sufficient to confirm that it indeed replicates the first

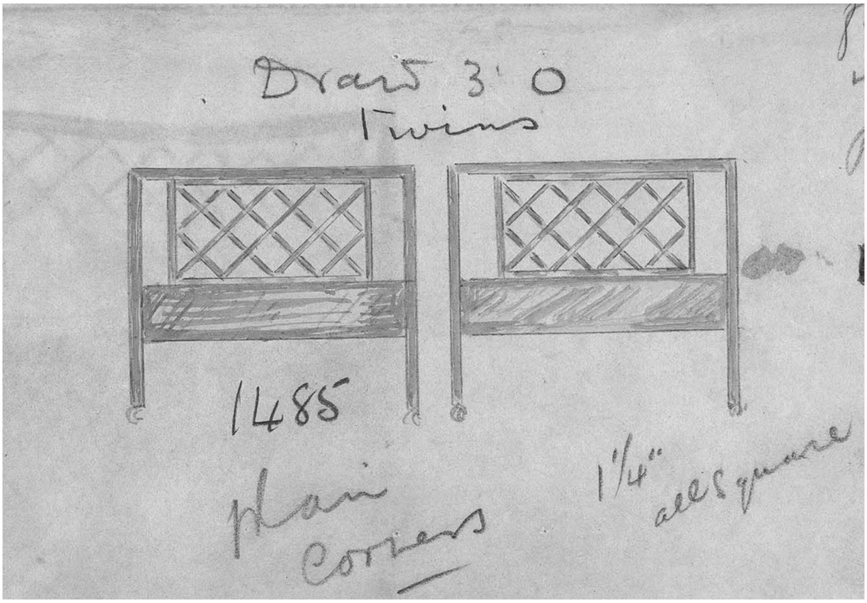


FIGURE 26 *Design for twin beds by Staples.*

and to give a sense of how they would appear side by side (Figure 27). The designer imagined and represented these beds expressly as twins, not just as a pair of singles. Their self-similarity distinguished and defined them, and the visualization of their matching forms was a necessary element of the design project. These were not two single beds, side by side. These were *twin* bedsteads.

The visual uniformity of twin beds is underlined by their disposition relative to each other. Invariably, they are shown or described in a symmetrical arrangement, as in John Gloag's description of the modern bedroom: 'The twin beds are of wax-polished mahogany, with semicircular heads and ends … ; between them is a bedside cupboard of mahogany, with a set of bookshelves above it …. Fan-shaped lights of clouded white glass are above each bed' (Gloag 1929: 116–17). The beds in Gloag's verbal tableau exhibit bilateral symmetry, in which 'the arrangement on one side of the central axis [is mirrored] on the other side' (Gombrich 1979: 126). The beds are disposed across a line of vertical symmetry running through the bedside cupboard and bookshelves. The twinning of the beds across this line is amplified by the twin fan-shaped lights, one above each bed and echoing the semicircular heads. The symmetry guarantees the harmony of the arrangement of the identical twins of beds, heads, ends and lights, and perhaps also of the marital ideal of those who occupy them.

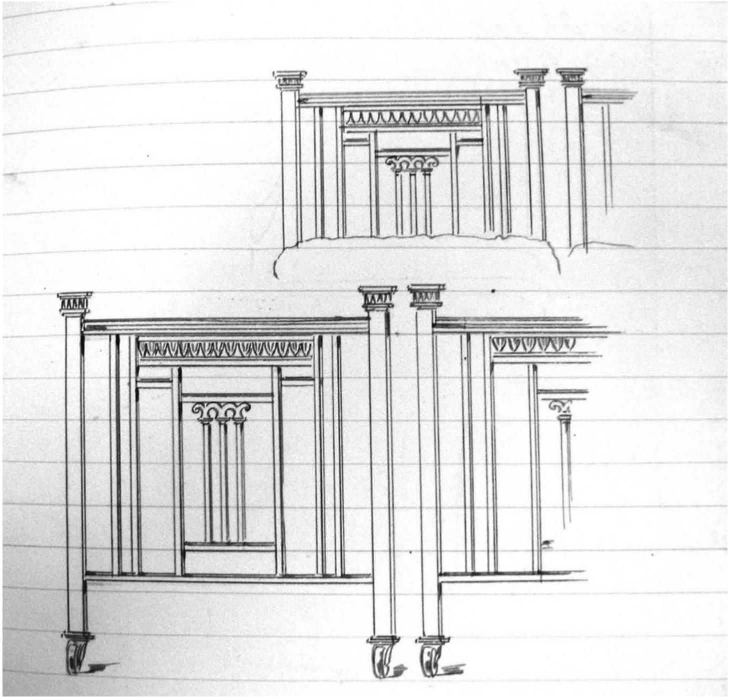


FIGURE 27 *Design for twin beds by Hoskins and Sewell.*

The illustrations of twin beds in marketing brochures and exhibits, in the stylish bedrooms depicted in *Ideal Home* magazine and in the twin-bedded rooms recorded in photographic archives were likewise composed in such a way that their symmetry and identicalness were mutually reinforcing. For the most part they were shown either contiguously, mimicking the appearance of a double bed, with matching bedside tables on either side, and sometimes with a single shared headboard, or else they were – as in Gloag's tableau – side by side but further apart, separated by a single bedside table. Exceptionally, twin beds might be shown more widely separated, on opposite sides of the room, as in John Gloag and Leslie Mansfield's *The House We Ought to Live In* (1923: 75) and in Heal's 'painted bedroom' exhibit at the 1925 Paris Exposition (Heal's archive, AAD/1978/2/180); and on very rare occasions, they were set end to end (Smithells and Woods 1936: 68). But, without exception, the two identical beds were positioned symmetrically.

Bedsteads that fail to observe the typical pattern of design and disposition – and there were a few – illuminate further what was at stake in twin beds' identicalness and symmetry. The aesthetic importance of this combination is apparent in the writing of Hermann Muthesius, in which he denounces those few twin beds that deviated from the norm. Muthesius was an architect, cultural attaché to the German embassy in London from 1896 to 1903, and an enthusiast for innovations in late nineteenth-century English domestic architecture. During his posting in England, he undertook a rigorous study of his subject, visiting many houses and recording what he saw. This resulted in a three-volume study, first published only in German as *Das Englische Haus* (1904–5), but later made available as an abridged English translation entitled *The English House* (1979).[3]

When Muthesius's survey identifies elements of English design that violate his taste and principles, he does not hesitate to write forcefully against them. He is scathing about what he calls 'absurd rubbish', such as a wine-cooler in the shape of a Roman sarcophagus, or the kind of 'nineteenth-century art in which it was to be considered the ultimate triumph to construct a clock in the shape of a hound that wags its tail with the swing of the pendulum and has the face incised on its flank' (1979: 153). And while he has no objection to twin beds *per se*, merely noting them as still the exception in England rather than the rule, the design of certain of them breaches his code of good modern design: 'Pairs of bedsteads are being made that embody the idiotic idea that the head and foot of each bed shall rise towards the central dividing-line, which means that each bed is asymmetrical. Thus the old double bed with the central ornament now makes its appearance chopped into two' (ibid.: 227).[4] Like many other twins, these beds mimic or reference double beds in their appearance, but they do so at the expense of both identicalness and their individual symmetry of design (Figure 28). For Muthesius, it is not enough that these adjacent twin beds demonstrate bilateral symmetry, for here the symmetry exists only in the pair, and is compromised by each bed's inherent asymmetry. Each is askew, out of kilter with its other self. Despite their obvious pairing, and despite the symmetry achieved through their combination, each bed looks different from the other. The twins, in this case, are not *identical* twins. They commit a stylistic affront, a crime against true symmetry. This mattered to Muthesius. He requires not only that the beds be arranged symmetrically, nor that each achieve symmetry only in combination with its twin, but that symmetry govern the design of each individual bed. His-and-hers beds were not to be visually distinct. On the contrary, their very indistinguishability was an essential part of their aesthetic.

Such stylistic choices, for Muthesius, relate not only to questions of taste, but materialize more inchoate matters of culture more broadly conceived. The English house, he suggests – or, at least, those examples of contemporary domestic architecture and interior design whose virtues he extolled – must be understood as an expression of the English character: 'No nation', he wrote, 'has identified itself more with the house' (1979: xv). As well as a commentator on architecture and design, the book shows Muthesius to have been a *de facto* anthropologist of Englishness: 'If we are to give an illuminating account

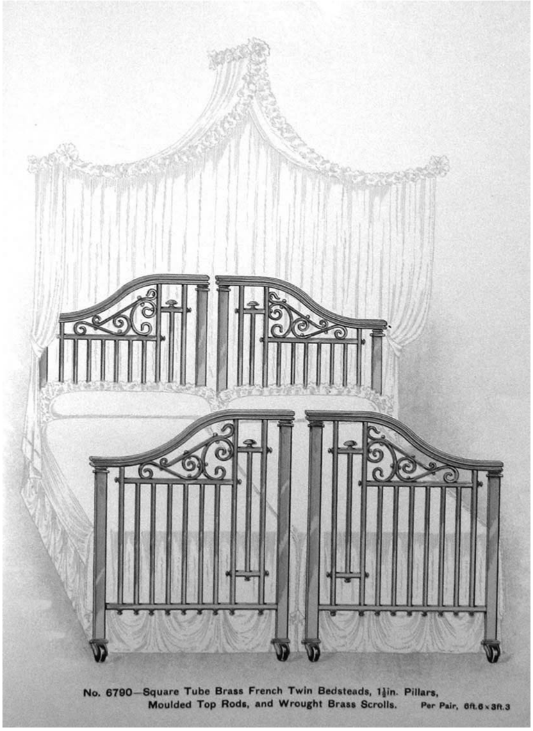

No. 6790—Square Tube Brass French Twin Bedsteads, 1⅛in. Pillars,
Moulded Top Rods, and Wrought Brass Scrolls. Per Pair, 6ft.6×3ft.3

FIGURE 28 *Asymmetrical twin beds by Hoskins and Sewell.*

of conditions in England we must widen our scope beyond a bare description of the house; we must describe the conditions that govern it, i.e. English domestic life, its *mores* and, indeed, the Englishman's whole philosophy of life' (ibid.: 4; original emphasis). The best English houses and their inhabitants are, to his mind, of a piece, and mutually illuminating. The defining characteristics of both are 'simplicity, homeliness and rural freshness', such that 'a sound down-to-earth quality is combined with a sure feeling for suitability. What we principally find here is a practical, indigenous and pre-eminently friendly house' (ibid.: 4). Practicality and simplicity characterize both the English nation and their homes, and, true to his Arts and Crafts allegiances in both architecture and furniture design, this is required to be apparent in a perfect fit between character, practicality and suitability, as between form and function. Bad design is not only an affront to the eye, nor is symmetry merely an element within a schema of design aesthetics. These are also matters of national character and family values.

Muthesius's insistence on the non-negotiability of symmetry confirms the critical consensus regarding the centrality, even ubiquity, of symmetry within most design contexts and milieus. One recent handbook for design students, indeed, goes so far as to call it 'the most basic and enduring aspect of beauty' (Lidwell, Holden and Butler 2010: 234). Some critics have sought to understand symmetry's pervasive cross-cultural presence through the laws of mathematics or geometry, while others account for it through reference to biology, noting it as a feature of natural formations as diverse as snowflakes, patterns of leaf growth and the human body just as much as it is a feature of material culture. Others attribute its cultural prominence to perceptual predispositions based on the evolution of brain structure and function.[5] Whatever the underlying reason, as the archaeologist Thomas Wynn notes, 'Symmetry is ubiquitous in human material culture. It appears in the form of artifacts, buildings, and built environments all over the world. It is a central component of decorative systems in almost all human culture and also a component of games (e.g., string games) and mathematical puzzles (e.g., tessellations)' (2004: 27). He notes too that symmetry is 'often endowed with meaning, carrying explicit and implicit information about fundamental values of a culture' (ibid.). Symmetry is at once natural, biological and neurological, but also actively and productively social and cultural.

If symmetry speaks of the social and cultural, and is a bearer of a culture's fundamental values, as commentators as diverse as Muthesius and Wynn suggest, what does it say and how does it signify? More particularly, how might the symmetry of twin beds, both in their design and in the way in which they are situated as simultaneously together and apart, contribute to their condensation of a range of cultural values and verdicts? The art historian Ernst Gombrich's *The Sense of Order*, a comprehensive study of the psychology of decorative art, offers a series of observations and analyses of the cultural purchase of symmetry that begins to allow these questions to be addressed. Bilateral symmetry (the typical disposition of twin beds), he suggests, spontaneously creates 'the impression of "balance"' (Gombrich 1979: 126): 'No doubt it [this impression] seems obvious if we think of elements of identical weight and equal size being placed on opposite scales .... We do not expect such an arrangement to be unstable and we transfer this confidence to the symmetrical design' (ibid.: 129). The trust associated with the concept of 'balance' transfers, through implicit association, to symmetry. Yet Gombrich reminds readers that this attribution of balance and stability to symmetry, this transfer of confidence from one to the other, is the result of an identification and substitution indicative of metaphorical thinking. There is nothing inherent or inevitable about the identification of symmetry with balance: 'Neither in mechanics nor in design is balance always dependent on such identity' (ibid.). Rather than being an inherent property of such a figure or arrangement, connotations of balance are conferred on symmetry.

This metaphorical identification of symmetry and balance lends to the former the extensive and culturally loaded vocabulary and connotations that attach to the latter. This correspondence leads Gombrich to suggest that symmetry's regularity and repetition present 'a great economy' in meaning-making: 'Faced with an array of identical objects, whether they are the beads of a necklace, the paving stones of a street, or the columns of a building, we rapidly form the preliminary hypothesis that we are confronted with a lawful assembly' (ibid.: 151). The assembly of objects is perceived as 'lawful' because of its repetitions and its consequent perceptual orderliness and predictability. Through a series of further accretions, substitutions and extrapolations, order is taken to work towards harmony and integration, and so ultimately symmetry itself 'implies cohesion' (ibid.: 158).[6]

What better way to suggest the cultural associations of a pair of twin beds than by thinking of their symmetry as marking them out as a 'lawful assembly'? Identical, side by side, they are manifestly, irrefutably, 'together', their symmetry endowing them, through a series of metaphorical transfers and translations, with connotations of balance, stability, regularity and unity. It is a small step to further extend this list of harmonious, orderly and reliable epithets from the beds themselves to the relationship of those who choose them as the platform on which to stage their nightly encounters.

It is the specific constitution and terms of the order embodied by twin beds, however, that is striking, for not all kinds of order are underpinned in their rationale by an association with balance. To keep the comparison close to home, it is necessary to look no further than to other furniture sets to see how they have been understood as indicative of an order of a quite different kind. 'To own a suite, rather than a mixture of individual and unrelated chairs or items of bedroom furniture, was to stress one's taste for order and totality', argue Oliver, Davis and Bentley in their study of English suburban domestic life in the twentieth century (1981: 176). It was indicative of 'the capacity of the breadwinner to provide for his family; it was a symbol, too, of the completeness of the family and the hierarchy of its members. Father sat on one side of the fire in "Father's chair"; his wife sat on the other, or embraced her children on the settee' (Oliver, Davis and Bentley 1981: 176–8; see too Attfield 2007: 68). The suite does not simply seat the family members, but it confers and substantiates the distinctions between them, while simultaneously underwriting their harmonious togetherness. In contrast, the order promised by the symmetrical and lawful assembly of twin beds is one not based in hierarchy and difference, but in equality and self-similarity. They formally enact the erasure or denial of any distinctions between fellow sleepers.

Symmetry's contribution to the associations conjured by twin beds, however, extends beyond an articulation of cohesion and stability. The other essential structural element of bilateral symmetry analysed by Gombrich is the central axis itself. Far from being a mere boundary or point of demarcation between the entities reflected on either side of it, it plays its own part in the symmetrical ensemble. The central axis, he suggests, 'must offer a "magnet to the eye" since it is the only area which, by definition, is not repeated in the array' (1979: 126). Its singularity in a field otherwise characterized by repetition ensures that it draws and holds our attention, suspended as it is 'between two equal attractions'; consequently, the viewer 'locks in on [it as] the point of maximal information' (ibid.). Perhaps counterintuitively, the repetition found on either side of the axis de-emphasizes these two elements by de-individualizing them. 'It is precisely by draining the individual elements of their identity', Gombrich argues, that their overall orderliness is strengthened such that they are seen to 'fuse into a larger unit which tends to be perceived as an object in its own right' (ibid.: 157).[7] The axis – the space between – does not simply or only separate twin beds. Paradoxically, it also unifies them.

Not only does the axis unite the repeated elements symmetrically arranged, it also makes a further contribution to the ensemble. A consequence of the decentring of the importance of the individual elements through their repetition, Gombrich argues, is that 'gradients of meaning' intensify towards the central axial point: 'So strong is this feeling of an organizing pull that we take it for granted that the elements of the pattern are all oriented towards their common centre' (ibid.). So it is that the space between twin beds becomes 'the point of maximal information' (ibid.: 126). It teaches us to attend to the reiterated elements disposed to left and to right, it brings them into relationship with each other, and it indicates how to read them. The separation produced by the space between is as integral and communicative an element of the lawful assembly of twin beds as the objects themselves. Consequently, they have truly to be read as simultaneously and necessarily together *and* apart to grasp the range of meanings they have, in their time, been asked to bear.

The semiotic contribution made by twin beds' symmetry of design and disposition, with its associations of order, balance and cohesion, is still clearer when contrasted with the visual symmetry available to the double bed. In the latter, the claims of symmetry are more muted, visible only in the way the design might be focused around the central ornament at the head or foot, or, at the fin de siècle, in the sweep of the single canopy over it. The togetherness promised by the form of the double is of the merging of the couple who sleep in it – the 'duity', as Marie Stopes termed them (1928: 24) – with no formal counterbalance offered to its claims such as twin beds introduce in the space between.[8] If the double blends the pair into a duity, twin beds refuse this kind of union. While they embody much more than a chance encounter between two distinct and separate individuals – their identicalness and symmetry preclude this interpretation – they nonetheless do not reify the combination in a formal instantiation of two-into-one. Twin beds instead work on a model of one-plus-one, preserving the individuality of each while yoking them into an unmistakable pair. Proximity and adjacency stand in the place of the double's merging and union; and identicalness, proximity and symmetry bring equivalence and equality with them, instead of a complementary equality-in-difference. Twin beds insist not only on the relatedness of the pair, but also in their form insist on their separateness and continuing individuality.

This balance of associations between twin beds' simultaneous modelling of being together and being apart extends, as this book has argued, deep into diverse cultural domains and debates of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries regarding domestic hygiene, modernity and marriage. At the heart of the home, twin beds organize and fashion the relations and values of those who sleep in them. Symmetry plays its part in these formations as just one means among many of bridging the conceptual, the material and the social; the anthropologist Dorothy K. Washburn, for example, notes the correspondence between the 'symmetries [that] pervade social relationships' and 'the physical representations we make of these relationships that shape and enable our daily lives' (2004a: 1). However, the currents of continuity between twin beds and the social relationships explored in this book suggest that these acts of shaping and enabling operate within a correspondence much more diverse than that of a reflectionist continuity. Twin beds consistently enact much more than a mirroring or bodying forth of prior relational symmetries, as expressed by the cultural values associated with balance, order, equality and cohesion of those who sleep in them. Instead, these material objects need to be credited with a much less straightforward and transparent engagement with their occupants. Perhaps their symmetrical promise of balance and equality might at times be understood not as descriptive but as a decoy or a ruse, an instance of bad faith, or even as a coercive 'gaslighting', achieved by obscuring or denying the inequalities or hierarchies of those who sleep in them. Perhaps the disappointment attributed to those sleeping in twin beds is less to do with their chaste prudery, their interruption of marital intimacy, and more to do with the false promises of equality and independence they peddle. By this reading, if twin beds had only proved more robust and zealous in their safeguarding of the identity and autonomy of each sleeping spouse, then maybe they would not have suffered their ultimate ignominious fate of cultural ostracism.

Less gloomily, however, twin beds might be seen not as compromised, duplicitous or mealy mouthed, but as in the vanguard of progressive thinking about social and marital change. They might be understood as embodying a certain spirit of reform, of idealization or of aspiration, announcing as an intention a future moment when the symmetry, identicalness and equality that shape their formal contours will truly triumph over the asymmetrical differences that shape the conjugal relationship (itself disingenuously posing as ‘equal but different’) of these fellow sleepers. From this perspective, their promise might be accused of being naively utopian or over-ambitious (if only a change of nocturnal habitat alone were enough to secure such change), but certainly not of speaking with forked tongue.

From the perspective of the twenty-first century, it is challenging to entertain the possibility that twin beds were not always understood as indicative of abject lack or marital failure but as aspirational objects emerging from commitments to improvement and change, whether in the fields of domestic hygiene or, latterly, of marriage, invoking ideas of progress and marital autonomy. By bringing into focus the optimistic, dignified and aspirant lineage of twin beds, their histories within the ‘progressive’ discourses of domestic sanitation and twentieth-century marriage, their power to signify fashion and innovation, they begin to lose their aura of endemic outmodedness and permit instead a glimpse of their now lost patina of modernity, the excitement of choosing their simpler, more minimalist lines and forms, and perhaps even the frisson and freedoms of the innovatory practice of separated conjugal sleep. Perhaps these associations become more imaginable if they are read with reference to a particular configuration of the modern companionate conjugal ideal: nothing to do with formality or prudishness but premised on a commitment to ‘the pair’ counterbalanced by an independence within and beyond it. Such an ideal was not articulated through the reification of likeness in dissimilarity, but in proximity, adjacency and identicalness.

The implications of the form of twin beds, and their ‘twinness’ and identicalness, however, complicate their identification as fully or tidily located within twentieth-century discourses of the companionate marriage. Indeed, as we have seen, Marie Stopes excoriated the twin bedstead and eulogized the double precisely because she saw twins as violating the sacred marital principle of intimacy in proximity. The version of the modern married relationship materially legible in twin beds was in tension with the version animating the ‘equal-but-different’ discourses of the modern companionate marriage. It is not the case that the double represented a sexualized version of marriage and twins a companionable but asexual one, for a heavy and increasing emphasis was placed on sex as a key element within the ideal of companionate conjugality. Just as symmetry has no intrinsic connection to balance, so twin beds had no necessary relation to the desexualization of the marital relationship, with spouses seen as ‘chums’ rather than lovers. It is more the case that twin beds formally modelled the companionate relationship of the married couple not as complementary, ‘like but dissimilar’, as Stopes put it (1928: 24), but as based in identicalness and equality. Twin beds certainly invoke the notion of the pair; the two elements are clearly announced as ‘together’, in a close and mutually confirming relation to each other, and not as the random or contingent juxtaposition of two single beds. However, they figure not the *merged* pair, the duity, as does the double, but a pair of separable equals who can be, and sometimes are, 'apart', equal in their sameness rather than in their difference. They speak of a commitment to marital autonomy, though not of an absolute or fully individuated independence. Rather, they suggest a *relative* autonomy, an interdependence premised on a necessary, close but nonetheless separable relation with the other element of the pair.

Twin beds articulate a conjugal ideal of autonomy in proximity at odds with the dominant contemporary marital paradigm. As identical and autonomous elements within a defining relation, rather than as dissimilar elements within a merged duity, they offer a formal challenge to the dominant interwar paradigm of conjugal complementarity. Their relative autonomy suggests a more egalitarian and autonomous version of the companionate pair than that celebrated in articulations of the twentieth-century companionate marriage. Now, ironically, their capacity to be simultaneously together *and* apart marks them out as a risibly outdated and conservative mode of co-sleeping. Returning twin beds to the discourses of modernity redefines their materialization of the pair as indicative of a marital aspiration based on equality and autonomy, and recalls their capacity to be read as signs of something altogether more noble, expansive and idealistic.

In their disposition as well as in their form and design, twin beds took the early twentieth-century home into the front line of modernity. Originating in the health anxieties of the old century, they came to embody the excitement and iconoclasm as well as the agendas and aspirations of the new. Twenty-first century readers might with good reason not yet be ready to regret, let alone admire, this particular venture into domestic and marital innovation. Nonetheless, twin beds' abandonment of convention and embrace of the new deserve the recognition and respect prompted by an understanding of their cultural history. In acknowledging their capacity to rearrange and redefine the marriages as well as the bedrooms of those who chose to sleep in them, twin beds can now assume their rightful place in the pantheon of bold and idealistic, if short-lived, twentieth-century experiments in living.

Notes

Introduction

1 Theatre programmes included in the Library of Congress catalogue show that the play was staged again in 1916, 1939 and 1954.

2 The phrase is from a poster for the 1942 film version of *Twin Beds*.

3 See Ekirch's website for an ever-growing list of citations of this finding: http://www.history.vt.edu/Ekirch/sleepcommentary.html (accessed 16 August 2017).

4 Notable recent examples include Greaney (2018), Walker (2017), Handley (2016), Scrivner (2014), Crary (2013), Derickson (2013), Wortham (2013), Lockley and Foster (2012), Randall (2012), Sullivan (2012), Wolf-Meyer (2012), Williams (2011, 2005), Nancy (2009), Brunt and Steger (2008), Summers-Bremner (2008), Paquot (2003). For a comprehensive list see Sleep Cultures: http://www.sleepcultures.com/.

5 Harris (1981), Carlano and Sumberg (2006), Reynolds (1952), Gray and Gray (1946), Marx ([1930] 1976), Burgess (1982).

6 Eden and Carrington (1961), Wright ([1962] 2004).

7 Rybczynski (1987), Cohen (2006), Flanders (2003), Neiswander (2008), Oliver, Davis and Bentley (1981), Worsley (2011), Bryson (2010), Highmore (2014), Rivers et al. (1992).

8 See, for example, Attfield (2000, 2007), Mezei and Briganti (2002), Edwards (2005), Sparke (2008), Scott (2013), Pilkey et al. (2017), Gorman-Murray and Cook (2017), Briganti and Mezei (2004, 2006, 2018).

Chapter 1

1 The date of publication is uncertain, estimated in the British Library catalogue to be 1915, but the publisher, Allied Newspapers, was not formed until 1924: https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Allied_Newspapers (accessed 10 January 2018). The book is therefore likely to have been published in the second half of the 1920s.

2 Relative value calculated using the 'Measuring Worth' website: http://www.measuringworth.com/ (accessed 13 November 2017).

3 Noël Godber's novel *Twin Bedsteads* attributes the adoption of twin beds in part to the availability of hire purchase (1934: 152). The novel is discussed in detail in Chapter 12, 195–8.

4 On the figure of the clerk, see Carey (1992) and Wild (2006).

5 He defines the word in Betjeman (1933).

6 Since two singles equate to one double, the figure is three to one rather than three to two, as in the report.

7 The Married Women's Association had several well-known feminists among its members, including the Labour MP Edith Summerskill, writer Vera Brittain, barrister Helena Normanton and campaigner Lady Helen Nutting: http://www.aim25.ac.uk/cats/65/10644.htm (accessed 14 November 2017).

8 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. 'Frances, Juanita': https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/63847 (accessed 7 April 2018).

9 For more on his life, see Reynolds (1956). For his correspondence with Gandhi, see https://www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/Exhibits/GandhiWebSite/GandhiReynoldsCorrespondence.html (accessed 3 October 2016).

10 On Popenoe, see Garber ([1998] 1999: 208–9).

11 See, for example, *Times* (11 March 1967: 2), *Daily Mirror* (11 March 1967: 6).

Chapter 2

1 On *Good Words* and other Victorian periodicals, see Vann and VanArsdel (1994).

2 The American periodicals were *Appletons' Journal, The Chautauquan* and *The Library Journal*.

3 On bed-sharing, see Wright ([1962] 2004: 199–202), Ekirch (2005: 276–84), Worsley (2011: 5–6, 8–9).

4 On the moral dimensions of public health and sanitary reform, see Bashford (1998: 3–5).

5 For an analysis of shift in emphasis from public to domestic hygiene, see Bashford (1998: 1–20) and Allen (2008). For an instance of the coming together of public health and the domestic sphere, see Fyfe (1906).

6 Worboys defines the germ theory of disease as 'the aetiological construction of disease in which external agents entered the body to produce septic, infectious and other diseases' (2000: 22). Worboys's book is the fullest account of the uneven rise to pre-eminence of germ theory in Britain; for an account of this process in the United States, see Tomes (1998). See too Youngson (1979: 193–208), Tomes (1990), Adams (1996: 29–35), Bashford (1998: 127–47), and Bivins (2007: 161–2).

7 Temkin is here quoting Stillé (1848: 95). For an account of miasmatic theory, see Bashford (1998: 5–7), Worboys (2000: 38–42).

8 Sir John Simon's (1874) report had first been published as the introduction to the 'Supplementary report to the Local Government Board on some recent inquiries under the Public health act, 1858'. On zymosis, see Worboys (2000: 34–5), Tomes (1990: 517–8); on pythogenic diseases see Allen (2008: 10). On filth diseases, see Bynum (1994, 2008), Hamlin (1998), Jackson (2014), Lewis (1952).

9 Famously, the so-called 'Great Stink of London' in 1858 was in part caused by the newly overloaded drains and sewers of London emptying into the Thames, prompting Bazalgette's sewer building programme; see Halliday (1999), Jackson (2014: 97–8).

10 Teale's book went through four editions (1878, 1879, 1881 and 1883) and was translated into French, Spanish, Italian and German; see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. 'Teale, Thomas Pridgin', https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36442 (accessed 1 February 2019).

11 For contemporary accounts of the International Health Exhibition, see *The Cabinet Maker* (1884) 5.49: 1–6; 5.50: 21–5; 5.53: 81–6. For a recent analysis of the IHE, see Adams (1996: 9–35); the book is a comprehensive analysis of the domestic sanitation movement and its impact. Many of the key domestic sanitarians gave lectures at the exhibition: see Corfield (1884), Edis (1884), Teale (1884), Eassie (1884). See too Sparrow (1909).

12 'Phillis Browne' was a pseudonym of the writer Sarah Sharp Hamer. See http://householdbooks.ucdavis.edu/authors/1596 (accessed 13 September 2016), and Bilston (2004: 244).

13 Concern with dust was not the preserve of the anxious household manager, but also the object of serious and contentious scientific discussion: see Tyndall (1871).

14 Charles Dickens Jr. noted in 1882, 'As the outfall is now near the mouth of the river, the danger to health of the residents in the metropolis is considerably less than when the sewage was discharged at many points in the upper parts of the stream; but it is still carried by the tide far up the river, and, while that is the case, the sanitary condition of London can never be considered satisfactory' (1882: 95).

15 Richardson and Schofield's concern about dust was characteristic of most commentators: the sanitarian architect Robert Edis contended that 'dirt and dust are to a certain extent equally conducive to the unhealthiness and unwholesomeness of our houses as defective drainage and bad ventilation', and cited the case of a man whose wife and children died of 'seemingly untraceable causes' and who concludes that 'dust and dirt meant disease and illness, if not death' (1883: 359, 326).

16 On parallels drawn between body and house, see Adams (1996: 65–9), Bashford (1998: 16–19). Richardson contrasts the 'living house' of the body with 'that deadly-lively house' (1887: 188), the home within which the body was currently required to live.

17 Note also, however, Schofield's conclusion: 'Let us consider what a grand sphere has been opened up to women by this brief consideration of hygiene. There is no valid reason why each and all should not become intelligent practitioners of preventive medicine. All men's efforts in private life in this direction are useless until the women act, and there is one great consolation, that, as a rule, when a woman knows and understands a thing she does act upon it' ([1890?]: 170–1).

18 For further discussion of the importance of gender in these debates, see Adams (1996: 73–102), Bashford (1998: 1–20, 127–48).

19 On curtains, see Stanley-Wilde ([1879?]: 17), Edis (1883: 325–6, 354–5), Atkinson (1867: 43).

20 The turn to metal bedsteads had, according to the influential German architect Hermann Muthesius, begun in the 1850s, following the Great Exhibition (1979: 226). They were still the orthodox sanitary choice in the 1890s, when Florence Mary Gardiner wrote that 'iron or brass bedsteads, with a fine woven wire bottom, which can be regulated by means of a key, are all that can be desired from a sanitary point of view' ([1894?]: 42); in 1907 Cutler calls the choice of a metal bedstead on sanitary grounds 'very wise indeed' (82); and as late as 1920, when the sanitarian arguments for metal bedsteads had lost ground, Edwin Bowers still declared, 'There is only one bed that is absolutely sanitary, safe and sane. This is a well-constructed bed of metal' ([1919] 1920: 118). But for others the case was no longer compelling: Heal's furniture store had declared the 'sanitary' craze over in 1897 ('A Consideration of the New Wooden Bedstead', 1897. Heal's archive, AAD/1978/2/271); and in 1907 Elder-Duncan refers to the continuing 'hygienic craze' of excluding wooden bedsteads as misguided – not because hygiene is irrelevant, but because modern wooden bedsteads with spring mattresses are no more likely to harbour vermin than metal ones (1907: 178).

21 On the inadequacy of doors, windows and chimneys for ventilation, see Hall (1861: 254–5).

22 On the Hinckes-Bird system, see Richardson (1880: 4.384–5); on the Tobin tube, see Teale (1878: LIII); on the Sherringham, Watson and McKinnell ventilators, see Galton (1883: 523–7). See too Teale's fire-grate (1883: 544), and Eckford and Fitzgerald (1920: 31, 32).

23 A later edition of Teale's *Dangers to Health* (1883: 140) includes an account of the Floral Art Ventilator.

24 For a contrasting evaluation of city and country air, see Hall (1861: 268–9).

25 Carbonic acid, or carbonic acid gas, was the term usually used for carbon dioxide: see for example Galton (1883: 486).

26 Hall also notes the quantity of 'effete, decaying animal substance' (1861: 36) discharged by the lungs and pores of the skin.

27 The register regulates the passage of air, heat or smoke in a grate or stove.

28 On the perceived dangers of air-borne disease, see Adams (1996: 30–2). The emphasis on clean air in the home was an extension of the medical and public health discourse of the mid-century which had made similar recommendations: Florence Nightingale, a miasmatist, recommended the provision of pure air as 'the very first canon of nursing, the first and last thing upon which a nurse's attention must be fixed, the first essential to a patient, without which all the rest you can do for him is as nothing' (quoted in Johnson [2006] 2008: 123).

29 See Crook (2008) for an analysis of the debates about sleep in relation to nineteenth-century boarding schools.

30 Alexander Hay Japp was the pseudonym of H. A. Page, a prolific writer who published a range of work – verse, fiction and non-fiction – under seven pseudonyms; see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. 'Japp, Alexander Hay', https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34157 (accessed 7 April 2018).

31 The Celestial Bed was to be found in the Temple of Hymen on Pall Mall, London. It was an imposing construct: 12 foot by 9 foot, it was designed to help couples with their sexual problems, and featured coloured glass pillars, perfumes, mirrors, erotic paintings, live turtle doves, fresh flowers, flashing lights and organ music: see Syson (2008: 180–8). See too Porter (1982).

32 'Hygienic practitioners' such as Wells advocated cures through air, light, exercise, bathing, diet and so on, rather than through drug treatments. Wells is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

33 The book was republished in Montreal in 1870 and in London in 1871. The later editions included case studies as appendices.

Chapter 3

1 On the history of these debates, see Brown (1974), Hall (1979), de Klerk (1979), Channell (1991), Allen (2005), Packham (2012). See too 'Experiments in Vital Force' (1874).

2 I have silently corrected the quotation, replacing the clearly incorrect word 'goes' in the original with 'grows'. On *The Quiver* and other Victorian periodicals, see 'The Victorian Web': http://www.victorianweb.org/periodicals/quiver/cooke.html (accessed 14 September 2016).

3 One origin for eugenics was nineteenth-century self-improvement literature and the desire to control the quality of offspring through attention to the quality of sexual encounter: see, for example, Alcott ([1866] 1972: 20–3, 74).

4 For anti-masturbation literature, see, for example, Wells ([1878] [1910?]). For critical discussions of such literature, see Marcus (1966), Mason (2008).

5 British periodicals quoting Copland include *The Athenaeum* (1834), *The Mirror* (1840) and *Reynolds's Miscellany* (1866). American citations of him were included in *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology* (1849), *The American Medical Gazette and Journal of Health* (1850), and *The Water-Cure Journal, and Herald of Reforms* (1856). See too 'Transference of Vital Power', *The Athenaeum* (8 February 1834: 108); 'The Transferment of Vital Power', *The Mirror Monthly* (29 August 1840: 134); and 'Transferring of Vital Power', *Reynolds's Miscellany* (3 March 1866: 165).

6 For details of Jackson's publications, see Hoolihan (2001).

7 I have been unable to trace the original appearance, as no sets of the periodical are available in UK libraries.

8 The article is pasted into my great-grandmother's household scrapbook. There is no indication of its provenance, but most of her press cuttings were from the Anglo-Indian press of the late nineteenth century.

9 John Drysdale published a book on germ theory in 1878. Worboys records that he was a ‘Liverpool doctor who published [on] homeopathy, scientific materialism, theories of life and “pyrogens” – fever-producing chemicals in the blood’ (2000: 2n.9).

10 On Wells see Hoolihan (2004: 555).

11 See Richardson (1883: 22–5); Wilson ([1873] 1883: 63–72); Galton (1883: 486–7).

12 On the demarcation between orthodox and heterodox medicine, see Brown (1987); Cooter (1988b); Miley and Pickstone (1988). On the international cultures of nineteenth-century heterodox medicine, see Bivins (2007: 95–101); Brown (1988, 1985), Blake (1962: 219–34). On nineteenth-century heterodox health practices, see Stern (1971), Haller and Haller (1974), Nissenbaum (1980), Price (1981), Fuller (1982), Cooter (1984, 1991); Crabtree (1993); Winter (1998).

13 Dio Lewis, an American health and exercise reformer, drew a similar conclusion about the companionability of twin beds, although he recommended that they be separated by a curtain; see Chapter 10, 161–2.

14 For a full discussion of the implications of this view of vital force for conjugal and sexual relationships, see Chapter 11.

15 Advertisements can be seen, for example, in the *Athenaeum* (25 September 1875: 406, 416).

16 On Foote’s birth-control work, see Cirillo (1974).

17 Matthew Browne was one of the pseudonyms of William Brighty Rands (1823–1882), a parliamentary reporter and contributor to many periodicals.

18 Emerson, writing in praise of individuality in friendship, stated that ‘the only joy I have in his being mine, is that the *not mine* is *mine*. I hate, where I looked for a manly furtherance, or at least a manly resistance, to find a mush of concession’ ([1841] 1987: 121–2).

19 For Quarrl’s dream revelation of the ‘evil effluvia’ issuing from his pillow, see Longueville ([1727] 1744: 244–5).

20 See, for example, Mortimer-Granville (1879), Stanley-Wilde ([1879?]), de Manacéïne (1897), Devonshire (1917).

Chapter 4

1 For the groundbreaking anthropological analysis of the concept of common sense, see Geertz (1975).

2 This is no exaggeration of the case previously made against wooden bedsteads: Benjamin Ward Richardson had insisted that bedsteads needed to be of iron or brass; wooden bedsteads, he wrote, ‘are altogether out of date in healthy houses. They are not cleanly, they harbour the unclean, and they are not cleansible like a metal framework’ (Richardson 1880: 3.286). See too Gregory’s account (1913: 83–4) of the varying fortunes of metal and wooden bedsteads.

3 On the compatibility of domestic sanitarianism (of miasmatist origin) and the new germ theory, bringing together 'the new language of germs and bacteriology with established concepts of hygiene, sanitation, public health, [and] personal cleanliness', see Bashford (1998: 140).

4 In Heal's brochures for bedsteads, those specifically designated for servants are always shown as single, suggesting that it was taken for granted that this was now the appropriate choice for live-in employees, rather than the bed-sharing indicated in the 'Laws of Life' newspaper article in the *Penny Illustrated Paper* (30 March 1872: 203).

Chapter 5

1 Carey (1992), Reed (2002, 2004), Giles (2004).

2 Light (1991), O'Shea (1996), Nava (1996). See too Felski (2000), Bowlby (1985, 2000), Rosner (2005), Attfield (2007).

3 Christine Frederick applied the rationalist industrial theory and practice of Taylorism in the home: see Frederick (1913), Sparke (2008: 132–8).

4 On the place of materiality in the changing meanings of home, see Rybczynski (1987), Cohen (2006), Neiswander (2008), Hamlett (2010).

5 For an illuminating analysis of the continuities between the Victorian and the modern, see Feldman (2001).

6 A whatnot is a small open stand of shelves, a davenport a small writing desk fitted with drawers and a teapoy a small three-legged table, sometimes (owing to a false understanding of the etymology) incorporating a caddy for tea. Roger Fry (1919) wrote an essay on 'The Ottoman and the Whatnot'.

7 Betjeman was, by this time, an apologist and enthusiast for Victorian style, fighting a rearguard action against its denigration by those who favoured a modern or 'contemporary' aesthetic. See David Joel's time chart entitled 'Some influences on the Modern Movement in Furniture' (1953: 232–3) for the progressive view of modern design: the onward march from Paxton's design of the Crystal Palace in 1851, through Ruskin, Morris, Mackintosh, Voysey and so on, all moving towards a utopian present (1950), the moment of 'Design Set Free'.

8 There was, for example, a Victorian revival in the 1930s, as well as later, in the 1950s, and Roger Fry uses the vogue for collecting Victorian *objets* to reflect on historical and cultural memory: 'We have just arrived,' he suggests, 'at the point where our ignorance of life in the Victorian period is such as to allow the incurable optimism of memory to build a quite peculiar little earthly paradise out of the boredoms, the snobberies, the cruel repressions, the mean calculations and rapacious speculations of the mid-nineteenth century' (1919: 529). For an account of the reputation of Victorian decorative design in the twentieth century, see Burton (2004); see too Joyce (2007). On the 'othering' of the Victorians in relation to sexuality, see Hall (2015).

9 Such clarion calls were not, of course, universally followed: see Oliver, Davis and Bentley (1981: 161–3), Neiswander (2008: 164–8) and Ryan (2011) on the Edwardian predilection for the 'Tudorbethan' and Georgian styles.

10 On Gloag, see Hooper (2015). The MARS group (Modern Architectural Research Group) was founded in 1933 by a group of architects and critics as 'a support structure for the motley assortment of British-based architects, engineers and theorists, who shared the ideals of the European modern movement' but whose ideas were out of kilter with the prevalent conservatism in design in 1930s Britain: https://web.archive.org/web/20060127011441/http://www.designmuseum.org/design/index.php?id=61 (accessed 20 November 2017). See too Darling (2012: 108–9).

11 On British criticism of Art Nouveau, see Neiswander (2008: 151).

12 For a discussion of Woolf's essay and of Bloomsbury's relation to the Victorians more generally, see Joyce (2007: 1–40).

13 On the Memoir Club, see Holroyd (1971) and Lee (2002). The latter notes three essays read to the Memoir Club by Woolf; the first of these, '22 Hyde Park Gate', forms a fascinating companion piece to Strachey's 'Lancaster Gate'; see Woolf [1920?] 2002.

14 Strachey's designation of the house as a 'machine' predates by a year Le Corbusier's famous manifesto call in *Vers Une Architecture* (1923) for the house to be a 'machine for living in'. Strachey, however, identifies that machine-like construct as Victorian retrograde rather than Modern ideal.

15 Simmel's evaluation of the face is also fully Victorian, formalized in the pseudo-science of phrenology.

16 'Duncan' was his cousin Duncan Grant, with whom Strachey had later had an affair.

17 Taylor discusses G. M. Young's disapproval of the popular historical debunking of the Victorians by both Strachey and Wingfield-Stratford. On his own behalf, as well as in defence of Young, Taylor calls *The Victorian Tragedy* 'a terrible piece of scholarship' and 'a silly piece of bombast' (2004b: 82). See too *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. 'Stratford, Esmé Cecil Wingfield', https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/59622 (accessed 7 April 2018).

18 For the furniture designer David Joel, writing in the early 1950s, Wingfield-Stratford's assumptions still hold good. Joel too unequivocally associated the double bed with Victorian family life, noting that 'single beds for married persons were unknown' (1953: 18). Joel's own bed designs suggest that twin beds continued to represent a modern sleeping choice for couples well into the post–Second World War period. His 'Drop-arm' bedsteads (1953: 152; see Figure 17, 116), patented in 1949, where the sides of each upholstered headboard drop down to reshape the head of the bed as an armchair, signal the bedroom as a site of comfort and leisure (reading, knitting, sewing, doing crossword puzzles), associations far removed from the old-style monumental Victorian double.

19 The 'immensity' of the marriage bed is often noted. David Joel wrote that 'in the parents' room the double bed … was immense' (1953: 18). Similarly, Symonds and Whineray observe that ‘it was the custom up to Victorian times for man and wife to share the “family bed”, … a double bed of large dimensions’ (1962: 75).

Chapter 6

1 Thirteen shillings and sixpence (13s 6d) in 1853 had the purchasing power of £56 at current prices (2011 is the most recent comparative date); £45 is equivalent to £3740. Calculations derived from ‘Measuring Worth’: https://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/ (accessed 19 September 2016). These prices are for the bedstead alone; mattresses were purchased separately. Heal’s range of designs was not exceptional: in 1889, the furniture store Maples boasted that they had ‘seldom less than Ten Thousand Bedsteads in Stock, comprising some 600 various patterns’ (Barty-King 1992: 39).

2 The bed was designed by J. Braune in the Louis XVI style, and ‘the complete set would have carried a price tag of £2000, a rather exorbitant figure for those days’ (Goodden 1984: 7).

3 On the history of the use of room sets at exhibitions and in department stores, see Sparke (2008: 55–72).

4 For examples of the many kinds of bedroom suite, see Maples’ advertisements from 1889 and 1898: Barty-King (1992: 38, 39, 73).

5 This is equivalent to £1801 in 2011: ‘Measuring Worth’: https://www.measuringworth.com/ (accessed 21 November 2017).

6 A ‘French’ bedstead identified its style not its provenance; see note 16 below.

7 See Chapter 1 and Chapter 11 for a discussion of the press coverage of twin beds.

8 The impact of Hire Purchase on furniture sales and attitudes to twin beds is discussed in Chapter 1, as is the work of Betjeman and Orwell; 12–14.

9 I have been unable to locate the *Times* review in the newspaper’s digital archive; however, see a review entitled ‘Naked and Unashamed: French Pictures at the Mansard Gallery’ in the *Times*, 4 September 1919: 13. For an extended discussion of the place of the Mansard Gallery in Heal’s history, see Heal (2008: 295–306).

10 This exhibit is discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

11 For a study of the 1925 Paris exhibition, see Gronberg (1998). David Joel describes the Heal’s ‘Week-end house’ at the 1937 Paris exhibition as ‘designed with dignity’ and ‘outstanding’ (1953: 120).

12 It is unclear whether the twin beds in the Bassett-Lowkes’ room were designed by Mackintosh: Billcliffe claims they were (1984: 204), but in the museum guide ‘78 Derngate, Northampton: Souvenir Guide,’ Perilla Kinchin writes that they were ‘apparently purchased’ (23).

13 See Massey (1990: 53–8) on Mackintosh’s Mains Street flat and Derngate.

14 This sense of 'doubling' is also found in Mackintosh's design for the principal bedroom at The Hill House, Helensburgh (1902–1904): the design is annotated 'bed', but without this caption, it would be hard to conclude that this were a design for anything but twins. See http://www.huntsearch.gla.ac.uk/cgi-bin/foxweb/huntsearch_Mackintosh/DetailedResults.fwx?SearchTerm=41116&reqMethod=Link (accessed 23 November 2017).

15 On Betty Joel, see Joel (1953: 74, 90, 235); Ryan (1997: 49); West (1997); *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. 'Joel, Betty', https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/62991 (accessed 15 June 2018).

16 'French' bedsteads were those without posts, curtains or canopies, only low heads and ends.

17 Images of Betty Joel's designs can be found in Joel (1953: 101, 207). Other 'modern' twin beds are featured in Joel (1953: 89, 102, 152, 165, 172). Joel's appendix 'Chamber of Horrors' – examples of abominable designs of the twentieth century – includes no twins (1953: 200–5).

18 Manufacturers appealing to the cheaper end of the market were aware of the implications for space of twin beds; this may account for Myer's decision to produce some models of double beds that mimicked twins; see Figure 6, 95.

19 On the importance of Betty Joel's designs in the context of the 1930s, see Massey (2000: 128–34).

20 The Deutscher Werkbund was a German association of artists, architects, designers and manufacturers founded in 1907 at the instigation of the author of *Das Englische Haus* [The English House] (1904–5), Hermann Muthesius. It was intended initially to promote good design and quality in machine-made furniture.

21 The design of the double bed, but in a single version, can be seen in Goodden (1984: 43); for the twins, see Heal's 'Book of Bedroom Furniture' (1935: 41; Heal's archive, AAD/1978/2/315).

22 A detail which suggests something of Heal's reputation among the modernist avant-garde is that in 1927, when Coates married Marion Grove, they had to furnish their rented rooms: 'Wells went to Heals [*sic*] and chose the plainest furniture and haircord carpet and had plain curtains made of corduroy' (Grove, quoted in Darling (2009: 98)). Darling's essay analyses Coates's interiors as (in his own phrase) 'the scene in which the daily drama of personal life takes place' (quoted in Darling (2009: 96)).

23 The complete Production Code of 1930 (plus later amendments) is included in Vizzard (1970: 366–81).

24 I have found no record of a film entitled *My Awful Wife* in 1947 or any other year. However, Columbia released *Her Husband's Affairs*, starring Lucille Ball and Franchot Tone, in November 1947. Columbia seems to have decided to change the film's title as well as the sleeping arrangement of the principal couple. See *Chicago Tribune* (25 May 1947: 7, 14), where the plot summary of the still-to-be-released *My Awful Wife* is actually that of *Her Husband's Affairs*.

Chapter 7

1 On Blount and the Haslemere Peasant Arts Industries, see Crowley and Taylor (2000). See too http://peasant-arts.blogspot.co.uk/p/introduction.html (accessed 25 November 2017).

Chapter 8

1 Strachey lived at 51 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury, from 1909 to 1924; and at Tidmarsh, near Reading, with the artist Dora Carrington, from 1917 to 1924.

2 While it is often thought that Freudian ideas were not popularized in Britain until the 1920s, Dean Rapp (1990) has shown that there was quite widespread exploration of his ideas in the press aimed at the educated lay public from 1912 onwards. On the Bloomsbury group's relationship to Freudian ideas, see too Goldstein (1974), Meisel and Kendrick (1985), Winslow (1990), Johnson (1994); see too Bowlby (1997: 57). For a far-reaching study of the place of different kinds of psychology in how twentieth-century Britons thought of themselves, see Thomson (2006: 1–53 and passim).

3 Two critical studies take the phrase 'strangers to ourselves' as their title: Kristeva (1991) and Wilson (2002). There is also a novel of this title published by Shashi Deshpande in 2015.

4 *Bed Manners* assumes twin beds to be the norm: if a man finds his wife to be a reader, 'Provide separate lights for each bed, if you think the decencies require you to occupy a single room. Under no circumstances share a double bed with anyone who has contracted the habit of reading at night' (Hopton and Balliol 1936: 49).

5 The Edwardian novelist and journalist Maud Churton Braby used a similar phrase, expressly identifying it as a twentieth-century view, in her book *Modern Marriage and How to Bear It*: 'I don't know who it was who first coined the phrase "the appalling intimacy of married life"; certainly it is an apt expression, and one wonders at what period in the world's history men and women began to find that intimacy "appalling." It sounds a modern enough complaint, and somehow one feels sure it was never indulged in by our grandmothers, who looked upon their husbands as a kind of visible embodiment of the Lord's Will, and respected them accordingly' (1910: 79–80).

6 See Chapter 9, 141–3, for a discussion of the companionate marriage.

Chapter 9

1 In addition to the titles referenced in this chapter, the following histories of marriage, the family, love and sexuality in the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries have been consulted: Vicinus (1972), Holtzman (1982), Lewis (1984), Humphries (1988), Perkin (1989), Hall (2000), Seidman (1990), Faulkner (1992), Mason (1994), Summerfield (1994), Hammerton (1995), Davidoff and Hall (2002), Marcus (2007), Coontz (2005), Davidoff et al. (1999), Abbott (2003), Fisher (2006), Simmons (2009), Lettmaier (2010), Szreter and Fisher (2010), Sigel (2012), Bland (2013), Jagose (2013), Langhamer (2013), Nicholson (2016).

2 The New Woman was a figure variously comprising some or all of a constellation of characteristics: she was probably feminist, educated, middle class and cultured; she was politically aware: liberal, reformist, in favour of the expansion of the suffrage; her sexual politics were avowedly advanced, against the sexual double standard and in favour of greater equality between the sexes, and greater autonomy for women, whether in terms of education, employment or in marriage. Her fictional incarnations and anatomizations include (among many others) Henry James's Isobel Archer in *Portrait of a Lady* (1881), Olive Schreiner's Lyndall in *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), George Gissing's 'odd women' in his eponymous novel (1893), George Egerton's women characters in the short stories in *Keynotes* (1893), H. G. Wells's *Ann Veronica* (1909) and E. M. Forster's Schlegel sisters in *Howards End* (1910). See Heilman (1998) for a collection of 'New Woman' writings. See too Ledger (1997), Richardson and Willis (2002).

3 On Stopes in relation to contemporary ideas about sexuality, see Weeks (1989: 187–94).

4 On the importance of the idea of 'the normal' in the work of Stopes, see Doan (2017).

5 'The Cupboard' was the name given to the room where the restricted-access collections could be consulted (Hall 1977:101).

6 A similar tone is found in Helena Wright's account: 'As the act proceeds, the intensity of pleasure rises, thought is abandoned, a curious freeing of the spirit, very difficult to describe, takes place. It is as if there were, hidden among the sensations of the body, a spiritual counterpart, a pleasure of the soul, only attained for a few seconds, bringing with it a dazzling glimpse of the Unity which underlies all nature' (1930: 64).

7 Stopes takes her analogy from the work of the sexologist Havelock Ellis: 'It must be his [the husband's] hand and his bow which evoke the music' (quoted in Bland ([1995] 2001: 259)).

8 Her use of this verb can be found in the following places, among others: (Stopes ([1918] 2004: 9; 1928: 19, 20)).

9 On douching as a contraceptive practice, see Hutton ([1923] 1960: 147–8). Lella Florence observes that 'Dr. Stopes does not approve of douching, but has been obliged to recommend it in 761 cases on medical grounds'. She notes that Stopes was also 'emphatically opposed to the sheath'. At the Cambridge Birth Control Clinic, to which Florence's study relates, douching continued to be taught, in combination with the Dutch pessary (diaphragm); see Florence (1930: 39, 41, 26, 27–8, 37).

10 Stopes once claimed direct inspiration from God for her work: see her *A New Gospel to All Peoples* (1922), which began, 'My Lords [the bishops to whom it is addressed], I speak to you in the name of God. You are his priests. I am his prophet. I speak to you of the mysteries of the union of man and woman' (quoted in Rose ([1992] 2007: 179); see too Hall (1977: 160–1, 163–4)).

11 As late as 1953, in the new preface written for the seventh edition of *Enduring Passion*, Stopes was reiterating the point: 'The more *happy*, child-bearing and *enduringly* passionate marriages there are in a State, the more firmly established is that State.' ([1928] 1953: x; original emphasis).

12 On connections between Stopes, eugenics and birth-control movements in this period, see Soloway (1982, 1995), Peel (1997), Bashford and Levine (2010), Carey (2012).

Chapter 10

1 For discussions of Stopes's relationship to the ideas of writers such as Carpenter and Ellis, see Weeks (1989), McKibbin (2004), Porter and Hall (1995). On Ellis and Carpenter, see Rowbotham and Weeks (1977), Grosskurth (1980), Rowbotham (2009).

2 Napheys' book was much republished, not only in the USA, but also – and, as discussed in Chapter 3, in common with most heterodox medical texts – in Britain: editions were published in London and Edinburgh in 1875, and again in London in about 1895. The publisher of the 1889 edition claimed that it had sold 50,000 copies a year for three years.

3 On social purity and social hygiene movements, and the cultures of Victorian sexuality more generally, see Weeks (1989: 81–95), Mason (1994), Bland ([1995] 2001), Porter and Hall (1995), Szreter (1996), Hall (2000).

4 On Lewis, see Peña (2003: 20–3).

5 For a comprehensive study of Orson Fowler and his brothers, see Stern (1971).

6 Hopkins was a feminist social purity campaigner. Her essay reached a huge audience: 'over one million copies had been sold by 1909, a figure not including its circulation in *The Blanco Book*, a compilation of White Cross League pamphlets produced for issue to troops' (Hall 1991: 27). The White Cross League was a religiously affiliated organization which produced pamphlets 'aimed at the inculcation in men of a high and single standard of chastity' (ibid.).

7 The title page of the British Library's edition of *The Duties of Parents* gives the author (in a handwritten annotation) as 'Thomas J. Haslam'.

8 Trall made a very similar case to Duffey: 'whether intended as a love embrace merely, or as a generative act, it is very clear that it should be as agreeable as possible to both parties. Indeed, when it is otherwise to either party, it is a cruelty…. Each must be able to respond to the whole nature of the other – bodily, morally, and intellectually' (Trall 1903: 234).

9 Much scholarship has been instrumental in reshaping ideas about Victorian sexuality, including (among others) Marcus (1966), Vicinus (1972), Foucault

(1979), Perkin (1989), Weeks (1989), Seidman (1990), Hall (1991, 2000, 2015), Haste (1992), Mason (1994, 1995), Bland ([1995] 2001), Hammerton (1995), Porter and Hall (1995), Sweet (2001), Sigel (2002, 2012), Cook (2004), Coontz (2005), Marcus (2007), Mason (2008).

Chapter 11

1 Letter to Marie Stopes, 28 September 1918. British Library; Papers of Marie Stopes, Add MS 58670. I am grateful to Laura Doan for drawing this to my attention.

2 On Stopes's correspondents, see Holtzman (1982), Faulkner (1992).

3 As late as 1947, Mass-Observation found that 'among the working-class, coitus interruptus is still among the most frequent of birth control [*sic*], and the women are frequently quite unaware of contraceptive measures which they can use themselves' (MOA, File Report 2495: 19).

4 The trial of D. H. Lawrence's novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* for obscenity had taken place in 1960; the Beatles' first album was released in March 1963.

5 *Time* also reported this judge's 'hoary attack on twin beds' as an 'unholy system' which had 'worked a mighty revolution in the marital relationship' (17 April 1944: 25).

6 Mass-Observation File Reports (of which there are over 2000) provided overviews and conclusions of their studies. I am indebted to Claire Langhamer for drawing these materials to my attention.

7 On Proops's career, see Patmore (1993).

Chapter 12

1 Cheryl Robertson also notes the 'prevailing cultural understanding of the bedroom not as the master's but the mistress's space' in the early twentieth century (1995: 206–7). On the gendering of different rooms of the house, see Hamlett (2010: 73–110).

Conclusion

1 See 141–3 for a discussion of companionate marriage.

2 Gombrich suggests that a discontinuity or a 'disturbance of regularity' is akin to 'the jolt we receive when passing from order to disorder' (1979: 110).

3 A full English translation of *Das Englische Haus* was published in three volumes in 2007. For an account of the work's publication history, see Hill (2008).

4 The American Thomas Hamilton Ormsbee observed that many people, desirous of twin beds, literally bisect their old double: they commission 'a patient repair man to make the necessary reduction in width. This cutting off a foot or so robs the beds of proportion, destroys the symmetry of the originals, and turns them into just cut-overs. So much for beds that match exactly.... Therefore, both artistically and financially, if one must have beds of the twin variety it is better to get modern ones' (1946: 123).

5 On mathematics and geometry, see Hambidge ([1926] 1967), Hann (2013), Kubovy and Strother (2004). On biology, see Lidwell, Holden and Butler (2010), Washburn (2004a), Wynn (2004). On perception and psychology, see Humphrey (2004), Washburn (2004b). Gombrich (1979) engages with all these approaches.

6 Associations between symmetry, balance and order are also confirmed by, among others, Wynn (2004: 27), Lidwell, Holden and Butler (2010: 234), and Hann (2013: 7, 102).

7 Lidwell, Holden and Butler suggest that 'symmetric forms tend to be seen as figure images rather than ground images, which means they receive more attention and be better recalled than other elements' (2010: 234). This is compatible with Gombrich's argument, although his analysis suggests that it is the bipartite symmetrical 'larger unit' that draws the attention rather than the individual symmetrical forms themselves.

8 On the duity, see 153–5.

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