

Tamar Jeffers McDonald is Reader in Film at the University of Kent. She is the author of *Romantic Comedy: Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre* (2007) and of *Hollywood Catwalk* (I.B.Tauris, 2010).

‘Demonstrably a labour of love . . . this is an accomplished study of the very highest quality. It is an admirable example of cultural and historical analysis that manages to be, simultaneously, forensic whilst it also sparkles with wit and erudition.’

John Mercer

Senior Lecturer in Screen Cultures,
Birmingham City University (UK)

DORIS DAY

CONFIDENTIAL

Hollywood, Sex and Stardom

Tamar Jeffers McDonald

I.B. TAURIS

LONDON · NEW YORK

Published in 2013 by I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd
6 Salem Road, London W2 4BU
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010
www.ibtauris.com

Distributed in the United States and Canada
Exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010

Copyright © 2013 Tamar Jeffers McDonald

The right of Tamar Jeffers McDonald to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in a review, this book, or any part thereof, may not be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

ISBN: 978 1 84885 582 3

A full CIP record for this book is available from the British Library
A full CIP record is available from the Library of Congress

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: available

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Page Bros, Norwich

Contents

<i>Illustrations</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ix</i>
Introduction	1
Section 1: Contexts	15
Section 2: Film Fan Magazines	35
1 Overview	35
2 Account of the Persona	43
3 Tropes	59
4 Magazines in Micro	90
5 Film Fan Magazines – Conclusion	133
Section 3: Performance Analysis	137
1 Introduction	137
2 <i>Romance On The High Seas</i>	140
3 <i>Love Me Or Leave Me</i>	156
4 <i>Lover Come Back</i>	174
5 <i>The Doris Day Show</i>	193
6 Performance Analysis – Conclusion	214

Conclusion	223
<i>Notes</i>	235
<i>Synopses</i>	241
<i>Bibliography</i>	245
<i>Filmography</i>	257
<i>Index</i>	259

Illustrations

1	Martha Gibson (Doris Day) being posed for a photograph (<i>My Dream Is Yours</i> , 1949)	3
2	Martha on the cover of <i>Look</i> magazine	4
3	Magazines on the news-stand	4
4	A slow fade positions the news-stand....	5
5under the superimposition of Martha singing	5
6	Bundles of fan mail for Martha	6
7	Louella Parson's by-line lends credibility	6
8	Atomic energy: The cover of <i>Modern Television and Radio</i> January 1949 positions Day as the nucleus of an atom	64
9	<i>Motion Picture</i> August 1948 cover	92
10	Day appears to point to the article about her	96
11	Reinforcing Day's new stardom: The Toni Creme Shampoo model looks like Shirley Temple	97
12	<i>Motion Picture</i> May 1956 cover	102
13	<i>Show's</i> baby Doris dreams of success	112
14	<i>Mad</i> (January 1971) posits Day working secretly to usher in Feminist rule	125
15	Day's cherry-laden ice cream sundae	128
16	Costume confusion in <i>Romance On The High Seas</i>	143
17	Day as Etting performs in <i>Love Me Or Leave Me</i>	164

18	<i>Lover Come Back</i> revises <i>Pillow Talk</i> 's equitable split screen with a less fair division	182
19	Carol's innocent haircut	183
20	Jan's sensuous glamour	184
21	'Today you are a woman!' Increased allure in <i>Lover Come Back</i>	185
22	Doris Martin's knock-out dress	205
23	The mere idea of Henry Fonda arouses Doris Martin	210
24	Kit is terrified in the elevator in <i>Midnight Lace</i>	225

Acknowledgements

The books with the longest gestations obviously have the longest lists of thank yous and acknowledgements. Over the past 22 years that I have been thinking, writing, and arguing about Doris Day, many people have kindly listened to and debated with me, and I would like to thank them all for their insights and provocations.

Particular debts of gratitude are owed to colleagues and students at: Birkbeck Extra-Mural Centre for Education evening class 2002–3, Warwick film seminars 2002–3, Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College (now Bucks New University), Oxford Brookes University, and the University of Kent, in addition to audience members at conference presentations and invited talks in Reading, Nottingham, London, Kent and Leicester, and Minneapolis, Potsdam, Boston and Glasgow.

Librarians have been particularly generous in their assistance in chasing elusive magazine issues and references, and I would like to thank in particular the staff at the Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, especially Lea Whittington and Sandra Archer; Ned Comstock at the library of the University of Southern California for access to the Constance McCormick Collection; James Lewis, Librarian, CFC New Jersey Information Center, New Jersey; Sean Delaney at the BFI, and staff at the Los Angeles Public Library, in the Motion Picture and Television Reading

Room at the Library of Congress, Washington DC, in the Magazine and Newspaper Center of the San Francisco Public Library and at the Boston Public Library.

Thanks must also go to the Arts and Humanities Research Council, who aided my travels and researches with a grant (AH/I000178/1) in spring 2011, and the anonymous reviewers who appraised my application and helped me improve my research questions.

Finally, special thanks to those who believed in this project long before, and longer than, anyone else did: Richard Dyer and Philippa Brewster; my familial support-team Candy, Chloe, Jessica, and, always, Paul; and anyone else who ever helped me source a pertinent film or article, or listened patiently to me when I explained for the *millionth* time why Doris Day doesn't always play a virgin.

Introduction

Even now, 40 years after Doris Day's last film and 20 since her last regular television appearances, the star's name retains currency: she is often invoked as shorthand for a kind of outmoded sexuality, with virginity firmly maintained until marriage. Although this assumption is widespread, close attention to the facts of Day's own life challenges it, and the majority of her film roles also prove otherwise, with Day most frequently portraying a woman of maturely sexual desires. This book will investigate why the rigid view of Day's maintained virginity should have arisen and become so indelibly fixed to the star, one of the most popular in American cinema during the 1950s and 1960s. Despite this popularity, and the longevity of Day's career, work on the star is curiously meagre, and what material there is generally assumes, without actually testing, Day's supposed maiden status. There has been, then, no previous sustained exploration which attempts as this book does to deconstruct the aged virgin myth by tracing its evolution and exposing its fallacies.

Taking a twofold approach, the project both closely examines Day's film roles and performances, and explores material from other popular media for the source of the virgin myth. First, the project focuses on contemporary popular culture contexts. Using a variety of sources, including newspaper stories, articles from

film, fan and lifestyle magazines, reviews and gossip, the developments in Day's screen 'persona' are charted, highlighting changing popular perceptions. Second, key characters and performances from across Day's career are analysed in detail, to see if maidenly qualities are always present. Findings indicate that this was not the case, but that although Day did play a variety of women with different sexual statuses (shy ingénue, brassy chorus girl, wife and mother, dignified widow), most often her characters had clearly defined sexual desires and experiences. Film theorist Richard Dyer affirmed in his 1979 book *Stars* that a star persona was constructed across a range of media texts. These included film roles, but also moments outside the films, both public events such as premiere attendances, and more private ones like changes in partner. With Day, however, neither public *nor* private facts correspond with the aged maiden she is popularly supposed to play and be.

I start with a close analysis of a very short sequence in Day's second film, *My Dream Is Yours* (1949), a fame montage of about one minute in duration. Although rapid, this montage vividly encapsulates the mechanics of stardom in a way which not only comments overtly on Day's *own* rise to Hollywood fame, from singer to movie star, but also on the significance of forces outside the studio in creating film celebrity. Up to this moment, the narrative has been devoted to detailing the efforts of Martha Gibson (Doris Day) and agent Doug Blake (Jack Carson) to launch Martha as a singer. Eventually, Gibson gets her big break when she has to stand in for the man she loves, Gary Mitchell (Lee Bowman), on a popular radio show, when he is too drunk to broadcast. Although she is happy to be hired, Martha is distraught when Mitchell views her performance as a personal betrayal.

At this point, the screen fades to black and the fame montage begins. Fourteen shots tell the story of Martha's meteoric rise; instead of cuts in the sequence, each image is replaced using a

very slow fade, so that one picture never fully vanishes before the next arrives. First a newspaper with a column signed 'Walter Winchell' rises towards the screen. A new shot superimposes itself, showing Martha being posed for a photograph (Figure 1). This fades to another similar shot, again showing the new radio star being photographed. Another fade reveals the result of this sitting: a picture of Martha, now printed on the front cover of *Look* magazine (Figure 2). The camera pans backwards to reveal customers reading the magazine, and several other titles all with her face on their covers displayed on the news-stand (Figure 3). Fading into this, so that the magazines are still clearly visible as her image appears, a new shot presents Martha on stage for a broadcast (Figures 4 and 5). An applauding audience replaces this, succeeded in turn by another newspaper, with Hedda Hopper's by-line. Martha appears again, this time wearing a different gown; next comes a superimposition of Doug's delighted face and then mounds of bundled fan mail addressed to Martha (Figure 6).



Figure 1. Martha Gibson (Doris Day) being posed for a photograph (*My Dream Is Yours*, 1949).



Figure 2. Martha on the cover of *Look* magazine.



Figure 3. Magazines on the news-stand.

A further shot of her is replaced by another newspaper, with Louella Parsons' announcement: 'New Singing Star to be Signed by Major Studio' (Figure 7). Finally a new shot appears: Martha emerges from a limousine, wearing a white fur coat and glittering diamonds, to pose for photographs and sign autographs.



Figure 4. A slow fade positions the news-stand...



Figure 5. ... under the superimposition of Martha singing.

Although it takes less time to watch the sequence than to read this description, a detailed examination of the montage is justified by its overt acknowledgement of how Hollywood stardom was made and maintained at this point in time, the



Figure 6. Bundles of fan mail for Martha.



Figure 7. Louella Parson's by-line lends credibility.

late 1940s. Martha achieves success as a radio star, propelling her into the public eye; once prominent in this field she is then eligible for transfer into a related area of entertainment, the movies. Throughout the sequence the montage testifies to the

importance of audience popularity via shots of applauding viewers, and the mound of fan mail, and to the vital role not only played by popularly-known arbiters of taste and purveyors of gossip (Winchell, Hopper, Parsons) lauding the new star's name, but also the importance of fan magazines making sure her image is reproduced everywhere. Furthermore, the saturation at magazine-level leads not only back to Gibson singing in a more glamorous outfit and with more evident confidence, but to the next newspaper review which asserts her fitness for film, and thus national and international stardom.

Besides this highlighting of the importance of extra-filmic agencies in bringing about stardom, the sequence achieves one more thing. As it contains no sharp or clear cuts, but achieves each change of image through protracted fades and superimpositions, the montage demonstrates just how *interconnected* the parts of the fame machine are. Where a cut might suggest a clear distinction between one area of endeavour and another, the fades blend everything – manager's effort, star's active vocal performance and passive photographic posing, audience approval, magazine ubiquity, gossip columnists' attention, fan mail, and more – illustrating the synergy of all these areas, the overlapping, interrelated importance of each enterprise in building and sustaining the star. I have chosen to highlight this very brief scene because it works so well to illustrate the main topic with which this book concerns itself: the formation of a celebrated public persona through *both* the labour of the performer *and* the attention of ancillary media. Richard Dyer's work on stars (1979; 1986) has demonstrated that although viewers think they 'know' about their favourite screen actors, they actually only ever interact with those actors' 'personae', agglomerations of characteristics, attitudes, and traits which seem to be guaranteed authenticity through their presence in the single body of the star. It was equally the task of the movies, and

the magazines that both served and fed off them, to create the contrary fantasy that by buying film tickets and viewing a performance, or by purchasing a movie magazine and reading an article, fans were being granted access to some inner truth about their favourites.

Doris Day is a particularly interesting case to examine in light of the constructed aspect of stardom, since much of her appeal was specifically built around how natural and unpretentious she was, at least at the beginning of her career. Her inner truth, then, is not supposed to be buried deeply but worn on the surface, obvious to all. While contemporary stars such as Ava Gardner, Elizabeth Taylor, Rita Hayworth and Lana Turner at times cultivated a 'sex goddess' persona which stressed their exquisite individual beauty and thus their distance from normal female fans, Day's popularity was grounded in the reverse, in an assumption of absolute normality. Actually, this normalcy was far from being found in Day's real life: on the road travelling across America with all-male big bands from 17, twice-married and a mother by 20, she actually experienced a profoundly atypical youth. In a self-referentially circular manner, then, the eventual cultivation of Day's persona as the ultimate girl-next-door was predicated on roles she played in the movies, rather than anything in her own biography.

As this book will reveal, the same is true of her now seemingly inevitable association with virginity. Not only do the facts in her own life discount that Day was ever overly-invested in chastity, was prudish or sex-averse, however; any idea of inherent coyness should be also contrasted with Day's initial fame as a singing star with a particularly husky, seductive and overtly sexualised voice. One reviewer called a couple of her recordings 'as soft and humid as torch songs can be and still be legal' (Roddy, 1950: 109) and Day was well-known for singing not only songs about sexual yearning such as 'While The Music Plays On' (1940), but also for a

version of an infamous navy ditty, 'A Guy Is A Guy' (1952), which evokes the well-known dirty lyrics even as it replaces them. Day's now much-vaunted virginity was neither something that originated with her, nor present throughout all her career.

In her first few films, for example, she plays a series of generally cynical, wise-cracking and worldly-wise chanteuses. Martha Gibson is less irreverent than other initial Day roles Georgia Garrett (*Romance On The High Seas*, 1948) and Judy Gibson (*It's A Great Feeling*, 1949), but like them, her chastity is also not at issue, as she starts the film already a single mother. Just like the girl-next-door persona, then, that virginal prudish maiden associated with Day actually originates in *films* – and in later films – rather than in her biography. I want to explore how, once established in filmic vehicles, this figure began to dominate the star's persona to the point that extra-filmic material, like fan and lifestyle magazines, had to try to incorporate it into their accounts of the star, with many resultant torsions to narrative logic in their stories.

What I want to do in this book, therefore, is explore Doris Day's star persona, charting developments from its early establishment when she first appeared in Hollywood, building on her success as a radio and recording star, on through its evolutions as her roles changed and her popularity grew over time. In so doing, I will inevitably be taking note of events which enlarged her profile professionally, such as her films, as well as occurrences in her personal life which prompted widespread media coverage, such as the death of her third husband in 1968.

Day's popularity as a film performer commenced with her very first movie appearance, and thereafter waxed and waned in interesting ways that did not always correspond with how she was presented onscreen. The consonance or dissonance, therefore, of her presentation across other media with her portrayal in

films is one of the principle objects of examination in this study. In tracing the evolution of her star persona across the period of her main film and television stardom, from 1948 to 1973, I will thus be looking not only at Day's roles and performances, but also, crucially, at how these interacted and chimed with, or alternatively varied from, the Day that was being presented in other media, chiefly film fan and lifestyle magazines.

My main areas of investigation have now been introduced: I want to analyse what is written about the star at various periods, pulling apart the writing to explore the play of fantasies, desires, and anxieties underneath, and to return these writings to their originating contexts as far as possible, to read them as contemporary viewers would have done, alert to topical references, in-jokes and allusions. Alongside this is my other main task, that of reading the film roles and performances, also in their contemporary contexts. Fresh examination of her film performances is necessary in the same way that pulling apart the written pieces on Day is necessary: what has been said about the star before cannot necessarily be taken as true, since all too often those authors who have written about Day have done so without the aim of challenging old assumptions about her.

By going back and forth between the films and the magazines that supported, surrounded and fed off the films for information and opinion on Day, I hope to contextualise both the film roles and the periodical material, noting moments of smoothness, when all the narratives on the star seem to be in accord, as well as occasions of unease when, for example, a film role suggests one thing that the magazines then work hard to deny – or vice versa. The structure of the book is thus threefold; a short initial section sets out the historical contexts of my investigation, including the contemporary fascination with an active female virginity aroused in the American public by Kinsey et al's 1953 'Report' on *Sexual Behavior In The Human Female*; it then presents evidence that

Day has, over time, become a cipher for the coy, manipulative, or pathologically sex-averse aged maiden. Thereafter the in-depth exploration begins, with the second section dedicated to investigating the magazine material, and the third the performances.

The periodical section begins with an overview of Day's persona as it was first established on her arrival in Hollywood and then was subject to various alterations, refinements and deteriorations over the length of her main film and television career. Importantly, the 'Virgin' trope proves to be the very final one which evolves, beginning around 1961; this is very noticeable given that a full 50 per cent of the 32 total repeated common ideas – tropes – concerning the star had been in place since 1948, and 12 more arrived by 1952. Next, a section details the collection of the project's raw data: 479 articles from film fan magazines and lifestyle periodicals from 1948 to 1986, which were analysed for the tropes clustering around the star¹. These 32 tropes were found to be reoccurring across the range of pieces on Day, but while the regularity of these terms' usage seemed to hold remarkably steady, their meanings changed over time, especially as tropes which began as positive became increasingly slewed to the negative over time, eventually shading into pathology. This chapter focuses on the tropes themselves, drawing them individually out of their magazine contexts to analyse their meanings, ponder their longevity, and see how such notions as 'Cleanliness' and 'Energy', initiated early on as compliments to the new starlet, eventually became associated with the idea of a sexual innocence stridently maintained long after it was healthy or wise to do so. The final chapter of the section looks at all the tropes operating in individual articles taken from four key moments in Day's career. This chapter importantly reverses the trajectory of previous ones that removed the tropes from their immediate contexts; by returning them to

their originating articles and issues, the variety of tropes operating and their interplay can be studied in situ, as the whole magazine becomes part of the mechanism through which Day's stardom was perpetuated and her persona framed. Examination of the magazines as physical artefacts reveals the significant part played by the design, colour, and placement of the articles on the star in constructing, maintaining or attempting to transform her persona.

The third section of the book then takes these same four key moments from Day's career – her first film in 1948, the first overt assertion of a mature sexuality in 1955, the conscious portrayal of an aged maiden in 1961, and the self-referential play on Day's known personality and history in her television show around 1972 – to discover whether these same tropes played out in her performances. Close reading of *Romance On The High Seas*, *Love Me Or Leave Me*, *Lover Come Back* and several episodes of *The Doris Day Show* reveals that notions and performances of Day's screen innocence were demonstrably absent from her earlier films, as borne out not only by the star's acting choices but also the films' narratives, scripts and costumes. This chapter's analysis then demonstrates that Day's filmic virginity was not a constant presence in her acting; instead it was a quality which manifested itself not only late on in her career but also at a time when it ran counter to other dominant messages about the star's mature and active sexuality. Arriving in the early 1960s, the virgin trope does turn out to have links to aspects of earlier Day roles and performances but, fascinatingly, appears in texts and ways that might not be expected. Although, therefore, this book seeks to undermine the idea of the monolithic aged maiden being all that Day could play, it also works to uncover the origins of this idea and elements that tended to support it.

Finally, why is the book called *Doris Day Confidential*? I developed the title because it seemed to evoke the prurient

promises nestling inside all the articles on the star, not just the ones in the particularly trashy scandal rags such as *Confidential*, *Hush Hush*, *Whisper* and *Top Secret*, but also in the middlebrow film fan magazines and the upmarket lifestyle and current affairs periodicals. In his fascinating study of the developments of Hollywood stardom, Richard deCordova analyses what is at the heart of the star's appeal and concludes that it is always about sexualised secrets (1990: 141).² Following Foucault's lead, he suggests that this is because the sexual is always viewed as the ultimate truth about a person's identity. In order for the fan to find out, therefore, the 'real' truth about a favourite star, s/he needs to discover the truth about that star's sexual secrets. To a certain extent, magazines at every level of respectability did seem to operate a policy of catering to the fans' needs in this area, exploiting the potential for offering the ultimate revelation. A problem with this idea, however, impacts my twin study of the periodicals and Doris Day. With all the possible sexualised secrets in circulation – adultery, nymphomania, homosexuality, even incest – virginity disappoints the reader and undermines the entire edifice of stories built on the fact of revealing 'what really happened'. A nothing, a *not-yet*, virginity nullifies the excitement of seamy revelation by stating bluntly that nothing has *ever* happened. Not only, then, is virginity an odd attribute to assign to a woman in her 40s who has been married three times and has a 20-year-old son; it is one that would challenge the salacious selling point upon which the success of the periodicals was supposedly predicated. By returning to the variety of stories on the star printed during her career, it is possible to build a more accurate picture of the magazines' changing presentation of Doris Day during the 25-year period of her live career, and thus to demonstrate that the maidenly obsession obtained both relatively late and relatively partially.

As the tropes attest and the film performances bear out, there was a central core of meaning clustering around and seemingly evoked by the name 'Doris Day', but within this core was a multiplicity of elements which variously increased or diminished at various points across the span of her onscreen career – and the idea of sexual continence or abstinence was only ever a tiny and partial part of them. This multiplicity brings me back to an image from the fame montage in *My Dream Is Yours*: Doris Day as Martha Gibson, her face repeatedly reproduced on the covers of different magazines on a news-stand. This multiplicity of Doris Days on the *outside* of the magazines echoes the multiplicity of Doris Days *inside* them, in the various stories the periodicals present about her talent, life, interests, and film projects, as well as her loves. It is this awareness of the multiple, rather than the monolith, that needs to be recovered and returned to Day's career. My argument throughout this book will be, therefore, not only that Day didn't 'always play a virgin' in her films, nor ever conduct herself like one off-screen, but that there is no *always* about what she did – or, in aggregate, how the magazines presented her.

SECTION 1

Contexts

Since I have declared that the current monolithic view of Day as a coy old maid persists so strongly partly because it is never taken apart and investigated, but always taken for granted, it behoves me not just to take for granted myself the fact that it is an established – if erroneous – fact. If ‘everyone’ really does believe Doris Day always plays a virgin, I should be able to demonstrate instances where this has been asserted or insinuated. Beyond this provision of evidence, however, I think a greater historical context is also necessary for Day’s career and press reception, in order to explain why the issue of her sexual status should ever have arisen. Put in the context of today’s celebrity-saturated mediascape, where the internet records every peccadillo, affair, liaison, DUI and drinking binge of a bewildering array of stars and wannabes, Day’s pillorying for *not* doing something – which is what virginity means – seems non-news, tame rather than compelling. What was it about the particular period of her stardom, then, that meant a mature woman, thrice-married and a mother, could be associated with sexual innocence, and this association be found intriguing, even perversely stimulating? In order to answer this question I will look here at a specific moment in American popular culture when the virgin female became the object of intense scrutiny, debate and mingled anxiety and excitement.

Exploring the virginity obsession of the mid-50s to early 60s alongside invocations of Day the virgin, this section attempts to provide twin backgrounds for this study's twin foci.

Released in 1953 with as much careful preparatory fanfare as the most skilfully ballyhooed film, Kinsey's second 'Report', his *Sexual Behavior In The Human Female*, set out to do what his first investigation had done for the male six years before: comment dispassionately on the norms of human sexual behaviour, based on the findings within his sample. Although the Report meticulously presents data solely on the sample of 5,940 unmarried white women, his audience – fellow scientists, church leaders, social critics, journalists, and the mass of general readers – inevitably extrapolated the findings to make assumptions about *all* unmarried American women. When he mildly noted that the popular presumption that unmarried women were virgins had, based on his sample, proved to be erroneous, Kinsey seemed to have little idea of the 'K bomb'³ he was unleashing:

Because of [the] public condemnation of pre-marital coitus, one might believe that such contacts would be rare among American females and males. But this is only the overt culture, the things that people openly profess to believe and to do. Our previous report (1948) on the male has indicated how far publicly expressed attitudes may depart from the realities of behaviour – the covert culture, what males really do. We may now examine the pre-marital coital behavior of the female sample which has been available for this study.

(Kinsey et al., 1953: 285).

It is possible that this broad assumption, that an unmarried girl was likely to be a virgin, was actually a post-hoc invention, a nostalgic notion which became more mourned at the moment of its perceived demise than was previously ever believed to be true. What does seem clear is that, from the moment Kinsey published

Sexual Behavior In The Human Female, the majority of his findings and observations were ignored. Only one was discussed and circulated in the media storm that greeted the book's publication, the most obviously newsworthy revelation: that 50 per cent of the unmarried 30 year olds in his sample had ignored the traditional idea that 'nice girls don't', and had done. This finding elicited not only solemn, in-depth analyses and counter-claims in serious periodicals and further scientific tomes, but also intensely curious examinations and requests for more information in women's and family magazines, cartoons, jokes and smutty stories in many different media (Jones, 1997: 711). This media storm seems both a reaction to, and an attempt to assuage, the anxiety the revelation evoked societally.

Although less frequently noted by the contemporary media, Kinsey's other achievements were no less significant. By the very act of taking women's sexual activities as the topic of the book, Kinsey assumed a parity between women and men, the subject of the first report in 1948. In counting women's activities, Kinsey thus made women's activities count. Moreover, by listing the variety of sexual activities that the women in his sample chose to indulge in besides actual coitus, Kinsey's report informed the reader how to experience various sexual pleasures without giving up virginity through penetrative sex, noting such techniques as:

Simple kissing [...] deep kissing [...] breast stimulation [...] mouth-breast contacts [...] manual stimulation of the female genitalia [...] manual stimulation of the male genitalia [...] oral contacts with female genitalia [...] oral contacts with male genitalia [...] genital apposition.

(Kinsey et al., 1953: 251–259).

This listing of various activities also importantly served to expose a hazy nebulosity over what 'virginity' meant contemporaneously. If the word was used as shorthand to indicate no

experience of penetrative sex, then nothing was breached by such ‘petting’ activities as those cited above. If, however, ‘virginity’ was endowed with some sense of moral value, seen as an intrinsic guarantor of innocence or purity, then *any* sexual experience nullified it.

An uneasiness about the notion that virginity is subject to gradations of loss, rather than being an either/or, is observable in the contemporary concept of the ‘technical virgin’, a woman who had done or permitted everything but the act of coitus itself. If virginity was supposed to matter, to be a guarantee of the woman’s lack of sexual history, then technical virginity undid this guarantee. The technical virgin threatened the status quo since she had arrived at her own independent concept of how much she could do and still retain her virgin status, as a *Playboy* writer bemoaned: ‘Each girl seems to have her own peculiar and rather precise idea of just how far she can go without losing it’ (‘Smith’, 1954: 9).

Kinsey’s Report had thus, in effect, informed America that the popular cultural concept of the ‘technical virgin’ was factually-based and statistically proven; worryingly, therefore, the division between virgin/post-virgin could not be uniform and clear-cut, if it were individual women, rather than societal consensus, who were deciding the definition of ‘virginity’. Furthermore, a belief that women were somehow manipulating this borderline, this metaphorical hymen, between the possible meanings of the word, was prevalent at the time. If technical virginity undid the guarantee of absolute innocence, it also undermined the double standard that assumed a man’s right to his bride’s chastity.

One further strand of contemporary anxiety is observable woven into this fretting over ‘technical virginity’: a belief in women’s detached exploitation of their sexual attractiveness, in their willingness to grant or withhold sexual favours. It was feared that the detached female gave in a little at a time in order