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Imagining Sex

Pornography and Bodies in
Seventeenth-Century England

SARAH TOULALAN



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Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	viii
<i>Introduction</i>	1
1. The Circulation of Texts: Publishers and Readers	37
2. 'What a Fountain of Joys': Reproduction and Sexual Pleasure	62
3. 'New from Battersey': Fantasies of Sexual Flagellation	92
4. 'An Extraordinary Satisfaction': Imagining Homosexuality	132
5. 'Erotopolis': Voyeurism and the Illusion of Privacy	161
6. 'Unexpected Bed Fellows': The Comic and the Erotic	194
7. 'The Naked Truth': Images of Bodies and Sex	233
<i>Conclusion</i>	271
<i>Bibliography</i>	279
<i>Index</i>	321

List of Illustrations

1. Illustration to Jane Sharp's <i>The Midwives Book</i> (1671)	14
2. Frontispiece to <i>A Nest of Serpents</i> (1641)	98
3. Frontispiece to the 1718 edition of Meibomius' <i>A Treatise of the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs</i>	110
4. Frontispiece to <i>A True Relation of the Life, Conversation, and Just Deserved Sentence of James Naylor the Grand Quaker of England</i> (1656)	115
5. An illustration from Part 3 of <i>The English Rogue</i> (1665)	118
6. An illustration from a Latin edition of Chorier's <i>The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea</i> (c.1690)	140
7. Frontispiece to Nicholas Goodman's <i>Hollands Leaguer: Or An Historical Discourse of the Life and Actions of Dona Britanica Hollandia the Arch Mistris of the Wicked Women of Eutopia</i> (1632)	171
8. Engraving from a Latin edition of <i>The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea</i> (c.1690)	177
9. Engraving from a Latin edition of <i>The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea</i> (c.1690)	180
10. Engraving from a Latin edition of <i>The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea</i> (c.1690)	189
11. Title page of <i>The Ranters Ranting</i> (1650)	190
12. Engraving from a Latin edition of <i>The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea</i> (c.1690)	227
13. The frontispiece to a Latin edition of <i>The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea</i> (c.1690)	237
14. Illustration from a Latin edition of <i>The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea</i> (c.1690)	238
15. Engraving from a Latin edition of <i>The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea</i> (c.1690)	239
16. Frontispiece to Richard Head's <i>The Miss Display'd</i> (1675)	241
17. Frontispiece to Alexander Oldy's <i>The London Jilt: Or, The Politick Whore</i> (1683).	242
18. Frontispiece to <i>The Crafty Whore</i> (1658)	242
19. Title page of Samoth Yarb, <i>A New Sect of Religion Descryed, Call'd Adamites</i> (1641).	244
20. Frontispiece to <i>The Quakers Art of Courtship</i> (1689)	245
21. Title page of <i>The Brothers of the Blade Answerable to the Sisters of the Scaberd</i> (1641)	247
22. Title page of <i>The Sisters of the Scabards Holiday</i> (1641)	248
23. Title page of <i>The Adamites Sermon</i> (1641)	251
24. Title page of <i>The Ranters Religion</i> (1650)	253
25. Title page of <i>The Ranters Declaration</i> (1650)	254

26. Title page of <i>The Declaration of John Robins, the False Prophet, Otherwise Called the Shakers God</i> (1651)	255
27. Title page of <i>A Declaration of a Strange and Wonderful Monster</i> (1645)	256
28. Title page of <i>The Parliament of Women</i> (1656)	258
29. Engraving from a Latin edition of <i>The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea</i> (c.1690)	259

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Introduction

Pornography may be—and do—different things at different times, but one thing it must always do is offer ways of imagining sex that find resonance with its audience. Pornography may not necessarily be reflective of a society's actual practice, but it must be sufficiently in tune with its contemporary audience's desires and understandings to find a market prepared to spend both time and money on its consumption. Pornography is a term that is notoriously difficult to pin down, partly because it is one that is to a large extent subjective in nature—one person's pornography is another person's sex education.¹ Today the term itself is even becoming detached from the idea of sex itself and can be found used as a generic term for a kind of debasement of an issue: public displays of feeling that seem excessive compared to their cause, for example, might be referred to as a 'pornography of emotion'.² A definition of pornography in different historical periods is therefore likely to be fluid, eluding our best efforts to pin it down and state with precision what it means in a way that is recognizable to our modern understanding but that also fits with what we know about earlier societies.

Very often, John Cleland's classic work of 1748–9, *The Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (known more popularly as *Fanny Hill*), is taken as the starting point for English pornographic literature.³ However, this beginning has been pushed further back by those who, like Thompson in *Unfit for Modest Ears* and Foxon in *Libertine Literature in England, 1660–1745*, identify a body of earlier works emerging in the second half of the seventeenth century, at the Restoration, when 'the 1660s saw the beginnings of home-grown pornography'.⁴ In *Festum*

¹ On texts, readers, and interpretation see, for example, Wolfgang Iser, *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore and London, 1989), esp. sect. I.

² See, e.g., Decca Aitkenhead's use of 'emotional pornography' in 'The Things Left Unsaid', *Guardian Weekend*, 29 Oct. 2005, 25.

³ For example, the television series on the history of pornography also published as a book barely mentions the seventeenth century. See Isabel Tang, *Pornography: The Secret History of Civilization* (London, 1999).

⁴ Roger Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears: A Study of Pornographic, Obscene and Bawdy Works Written or Published in England in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century* (London and Basingstoke, 1979); David Foxon, *Libertine Literature in England, 1660–1745* (New York, 1965); Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing 1649–88* (London, 1988), 18 (citing Thompson).

voluptatis: A Study of Renaissance Erotica, David O. Frantz argues for the existence of such a body of literature in England in the sixteenth century, and, although he rejects pornography as a meaningful term for categorizing and discussing early modern texts, Ian Moulton nevertheless locates a wide variety of erotic writing in the period.⁵ Undoubtedly, what we might term pornographic representations have been produced in most, if not all periods: Michael Camille has done much to uncover medieval obscene images, Bette Talvacchia has illuminated the study of the erotic in Renaissance culture, and classical scholars have contributed a great deal to the study and discussion of pornography in early Greece and Rome.⁶

Nevertheless, it is still difficult to discuss pornography in these earlier periods, as there remains a great deal of confusion over exactly what constitutes 'pornography' in any particular period. Some argue that it is entirely anachronistic to use a term that was coined only in the nineteenth century to describe and define a body of work that was produced very much earlier, although, as we shall see, variations on the term were in use in both the classical and the early modern periods.⁷ The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have been defined in one analysis as existing 'Before Pornography', as they constitute a historical period that had passed long before the word 'pornography' was in any way in common usage as a term to categorize a particular type of literature (or visual material) that took sex as its central subject matter.⁸ Even in the early twenty-first century there are still arguments over what constitutes pornography, with some in the so-called moral majority arguing that works of information about sexual matters designed for the purposes of education are pornographic (even though their overt intention is to educate, not to arouse) and should not be generally available. If we think about pornography in a modern context, what immediately springs to mind are images of naked bodies and sexual activity as presented in magazines, films, and videos, and, most particularly now, on the Internet: that is, primarily as part of visual culture. If we consider the written word, it is usually as text accompanying pictures in a magazine. If we do think about the written word alone, then it is

⁵ David O. Frantz, *Festum voluptatis: A Study of Renaissance Erotica* (Columbus, Oh., 1989); Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁶ Michael Camille, *Gothic Art: Glorious Visions* (New York, 1996); Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London, 1992); Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge, 1989); Bette Talvacchia, *Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture* (Princeton, 1999); Amy Richlin (ed.), *Pornography and Representation in Greece & Rome* (New York and Oxford, 1992); Amy Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor* (New Haven and London, 1983).

⁷ Classical scholars have identified the use of the word *pornographos* (pornographer) in the context of a discussion on prostitutes and their verbal or pictorial representation. See Madeleine M. Henry, 'The Edible Woman: Athenaeus's Concept of the Pornographic', in Richlin (ed.), *Pornography and Representation*, 250–68, esp. 261–5. The word 'pornography' is a nineteenth-century creation that was originally applied to descriptions of prostitutes or prostitution, as a matter of public hygiene' (*OED*).

⁸ See Moulton, *Before Pornography*.

likely to be as 'erotica': the 'soft-porn' novel now sold in most large bookshops, often in a section of its own, like crime, romance, or science fiction. The idea that it is fairly obvious what pornography as a category is immediately gives rise to difficulty when it is applied retrospectively, anachronistically, to a different period and to a different culture. There have been such significant changes in printing technology and the economics of the print trade that we have to confront, not only conceptual differences, but also physical differences in the nature of the objects that we are discussing, and who would have had access to them.

Attempts at defining pornography vary enormously.⁹ There is little argument that pornography is a visual or literary representation of 'sex', but it is the quality and nature of the representation that give rise to significant dispute. The peculiar and distinctive quality of pornography as a type of representation is that it is not only a 'thing': it is also thought to *do* something. It thus becomes something that is judged to have a social effect, and therefore about which moral judgements can be made. The intention of the producer of pornography takes on significance, and, for some, becomes as important as the content and nature of the text itself in deciding whether or not a work is pornographic. Societies, whether democratic or authoritarian, thus must decide whether the effect it is thought to have, and that the author is thought to intend, both on the individual and on society as a whole, is beneficial or deleterious, and hence whether it is something that should be regulated. In this context, pornography as political satire or as expressing a libertine philosophy might receive particular attention from regulating authorities. A number of scholars have concentrated on looking at pornography in its role as political satire: for example, Ian McCalman in *Radical Underworld*, Lynn Hunt in the 1991 collection *Eroticism and the Body Politic*, and, more recently for the seventeenth century, James Grantham Turner in *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London* and Melissa M. Mowry in *The Bawdy Politic in Stuart England, 1660–1714*.¹⁰ Alternatively, these early works of pornographic literature have been discussed in terms of uncovering the beginnings of a materialist and individualistic view of the world. This strand of

⁹ For an extended discussion of these issues see, for example, Walter Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, and London, 1987; paperback edn., 1996); and Linda, Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the 'Frenzy of the Visible'* (London, Sydney, and Wellington, 1990).

¹⁰ Ian, McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London 1795–1840* (Cambridge, 1988); Lynn Hunt (ed.), *Eroticism and the Body Politic* (Baltimore and London, 1991); James Grantham Turner, *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics and Literary Culture, 1630–1685* (Cambridge, 2002); Melissa M. Mowry, *The Bawdy Politic in Stuart England, 1660–1714: Political Pornography and Prostitution* (Aldershot, 2004). See also Jeremy M. Webster, *Performing Libertinism in Charles II's Court: Politics, Drama, Sexuality* (Basingstoke, 2005); Rachel, Weil, 'Sometimes a Scepter is Only a Scepter: Pornography and Politics in Restoration England', in Lynn Hunt, (ed.), *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500–1800* (New York, 1993), 125–53; Rachel Weil, *Political Passions: Gender, the Family and Political Argument in England, 1680–1714* (Manchester, 1999).

analysis traces the development of a libertine philosophy, which finds its ultimate expression in the work (and life) of de Sade at the end of the eighteenth century. In this context, the most important works recently to appear on the subject are James Grantham Turner's *Schooling Sex* and Lynn Hunt's 1993 collection *The Invention of Pornography*.¹¹ Essays in this volume (among other things) closely analyse particular works of Restoration 'erotica' to reveal the function it had as criticism of the restored monarchy in England and of late-seventeenth-century society. The idea of regulation as a means of categorization allows historians to avoid the trap of attempting to fix a timeless, unchanging category, as both regulations, and what is regulated, change over time. Lynn Hunt in *The Invention of Pornography* questioned any such ahistorical approach and traced instead a changing set of meanings intimately dependent on the changing social and cultural environment. Pornography 'was defined over time and by the conflicts between writers, artists and engravers on the one side and spies, policemen, clergymen and state officials on the other'.¹² One history of pornography is therefore a history of regulation.¹³ Work by Alec Craig, Donald Thomas, and Geoffrey Robertson on the history of censorship and the obscenity laws have given further clues as to what was considered obscene literature during the period. They have also helped to indicate the extent of the circulation of these works at that time.

The idea that pornography as a genre is endowed with the capacity to incite action is reflected in discussion of this genre in three ways. It stands behind the definition of pornography that is reliant upon the intentions of the author. Kearney, for example, subscribes to this definition: 'Erotica . . . is seen as a matter of intent in that the authors and publishers had it in mind to provide the reader of their wares with sexual stimulation of one sort or another.'¹⁴ The question of intention is also foremost for Roger Thompson. In *Unfit for Modest Ears* he clearly defines pornography as 'writing or representation intended to arouse lust, create sexual fantasies or feed auto-erotic desires'.¹⁵ Thompson further suggests

¹¹ See Joan, DeJean, 'The Politics of Pornography: L'Ecole des Filles'; Paula Findlen, 'Humanism, Politics and Pornography in Renaissance Italy'; Margaret C. Jacob, 'The Materialist World of Pornography'; Rachel Weil, 'Sometimes a Scepter is Only a Scepter: Pornography and Politics in Restoration England', all in Hunt (ed.), *The Invention of Pornography*; James Grantham Turner, *Schooling Sex: Libertine Literature and Erotic Education in Italy, France, and England 1534–1685* (Oxford, 2003).

¹² Hunt (ed.), *The Invention of Pornography*, 11.

¹³ See Alec, Craig, *The Banned Books of England and Other Countries: A Study of the Conception of Literary Obscenity* (London, 1962); Alec, Craig, *Suppressed Books, A History of the Conception of Literary Obscenity* (Cleveland, Oh., and New York, 1963); Ian Hunter, David Saunders, and Dugald Williamson (eds.), *On Pornography: Literature, Sexuality and Obscenity Law* (Basingstoke and London, 1993); Geoffrey Robertson, *Obscenity: An Account of Censorship Laws and their Enforcement in England and Wales* (London, 1979); Thomas, Donald, *A Long Time Burning: The History of Literary Censorship in England* (London, 1969).

¹⁴ Patrick J. Kearney, *A History of Erotic Literature* (London, 1982), 7.

¹⁵ Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 1.

that the defining characteristic of a work of pornography must be whether it has the ability to induce ejaculation or not—thereby clearly defining it as the province of men only. He tells us: ‘One can imagine Pepys sniggering over some of the sexual innuendo, but hardly ejaculating as he confessed to doing when he read *L’Escholle des Filles*.’¹⁶ In one of the most comprehensive books on the development of pornography to have emerged in recent years, Julie Peakman similarly elevates the intention of the author in her definition of pornography as ‘material that contains graphic description of sexual organs and/or action (for example, detailed descriptions of masturbation, or anal, oral and penetrative sex) written with the prime intention of sexually exciting the reader. Pornography is not merely a series of repetitive scenarios, but a particular way of writing to fulfil a particular function, to create the desired effect of physical pleasure.’¹⁷

The particular ability of pornography to incite action is also reflected in those feminist analyses in which its capacity to create sexual fantasies is conflated with the idea that the reading of pornography leads directly to sexual violence against women. Robin Morgan’s slogan ‘pornography is the theory, rape is the practice’ is the most well-known expression of this idea, which has given rise to feminist campaigns against pornography. Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin have been the most prominent advocates of this view. Pornography in this reading not only incites violence; it *is* violence against women. It is analysed as a genre that is produced by men, for men, and is therefore inherently anti-woman. Much feminist debate over pornography (modern and historical) has thus focused on the issues of misogyny and censorship.¹⁸ For example, in *Virtue of Necessity*, Elaine Hobby asserts that early modern pornography demonstrates ‘an overwhelming contempt for Women’ in which ‘Women, these texts proclaim, are essentially masochistic’. Hobby concludes that ‘these texts make terrifying reading’.¹⁹ It is only more recently, however, that there has been much attempt by historians, feminist or otherwise, to try and situate works of

¹⁶ Roger, Thompson, ‘Popular Reading and Humour in Restoration England’, *Journal of Popular Culture*, 9/3 (1976), 653–71, at 670 n. 38. *L’Escholle des Filles* (London, 1655) is translated as *The School of Venus* (London, 1972). I use the English title throughout, except for quotations or in a reference where the French title has been used; this may be in a variety of spellings, according to the author’s usage.

¹⁷ Julie, Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books: The Development of Pornography in Eighteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke, 2003), 6.

¹⁸ See, e.g.: Alison Assiter and Carol Avedon (eds.), *Bad Girls and Dirty Pictures: The Challenge to Reclaim Feminism* (London and Boulder, Colo., 1993); Carol Avedon, *Nudes, Prudes and Attitudes: Pornography and Censorship* (Cheltenham, 1994); Gail Chester and Julianne Dickey (eds.), *Feminism and Censorship: The Current Debate* (Bridport, 1988); Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York and London, 1981); Pamela Church Gibson and Roma Gibson (eds.), *Dirty Looks: Women, Pornography, Power* (London, 1993); Catherine Itzin (ed.), *Pornography: Women, Violence and Civil Liberties, A Radical New View* (Oxford, 1992; paperback edn., 1993); Lynne Segal and Mary McIntosh (eds.) *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate* (London, 1992); Nadine Strossen, *Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women’s Rights* (New York and London, 1995).

¹⁹ Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity*, 87.

pornography in their historical context, or to explore themes and issues that are not underpinned by the assumption that all pornographic depictions of women can only be oppressive and demeaning to them (though this is not to say that authors consider misogyny to be entirely absent from the material they discuss).²⁰

Finally, the intention of the author is also interpreted as including some element of transgression. Hence it is also inherently anti-social. In *Eros Revived* Peter Wagner defines pornography as 'the written or visual presentation in any realistic form of any genital or sexual behaviour with a deliberate violation of existing and widely accepted moral and social taboos'.²¹ A classification can therefore be made by listing all those publications that have been targeted, or selected, for prosecution or censorship. Such regulation has given rise to a category of illicit or clandestine literature, where 'everything about erotica is invariably disguised behind false authors, publishers, dates and places of publication'.²² But a history of pornography that is a history of regulation, and that also depends on a history of clandestine publishing, must necessarily be an incomplete history. Censorship is an inexact pursuit, and is not always either imposed or enforced (and what is targeted at any one time will always be shifting, and will not necessarily always be comprehensive: some pornography is frequently regarded as more acceptable than others, and hence allowed more freedom of circulation, such as today's 'top-shelf' publications). For the seventeenth century in England, defining a category by prosecution or by false imprint would only confuse the issue even further, as not only would there be some odd gaps (it was not until later in the eighteenth century that a publisher was fined for an edition of *Venus in the Cloister* (1683)), but authors and printers did not always hide behind pseudonyms or false imprints, as we shall see in Chapter 1. There were also very few attempts at prosecution. On different occasions, post-Restoration printers and booksellers were fined and/or imprisoned for printing and selling *The School of Venus* (1655), an English adaptation of Chorier's *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* (c.1660) entitled *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid. Tullia and Octavia* (c.1684), *The Whores Rhetorick* (1683), *The Wandring Whore* (1660–1), Rochester's *Sodom* (c.1680), and his *Poems on Several Occasions* (1680), suggesting that these works

²⁰ Joan Hoff, 'Why Is There No History of Pornography?' in Susan Gubar and Joan Hoff (eds.), *For Adult Users Only: The Dilemma of Violent Pornography* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1989), 17–46; Hunt (ed.), *Invention of Pornography*; Hunter et al. (eds.), *On Pornography*; Kendrick, *The Secret Museum*. On early pornography as misogynist, see, e.g., Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, and Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity*, 18. Turner in *Schooling Sex* also remarks on the misogyny of this early pornography. Analysis of this literature has also formed part of studies of the history of popular culture. See, e.g., Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1981); Margaret, George, 'From "Goodwife" to "Mistress": The Transformation of the Female in Bourgeois Culture', *Science and Society*, 37 (1973), 152–77; Thompson, 'Popular Reading and Humour'.

²¹ Peter Wagner, *Eros Revived: Erotica of the Enlightenment in England and America* (London, 1988), 5

²² Kearney, *History of Erotic Literature*, 9

were considered to be offensive at the time.²³ The issue of censorship will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, but just because the printers and/or sellers of these selected works were prosecuted on at least one occasion did not mean that the texts were not available freely at other times, or in other forms, such as manuscript.

Using legal definitions also leads on to further entanglement with arguments about 'high' and 'low' art:

In both American and British legal theory, a work having literary or artistic value cannot be obscene; likewise, one found obscene is, *ipso facto*, without intellectual or aesthetic worth. . . . No less muddled is the tendency of some critics to use 'pornography' and 'pornographic' as pejoratives. Thus a work is pornography when it is poor art, and art when it is acceptable pornography.²⁴

Many historians, sociologists, and literary critics who have written about pornography make just such an aesthetic judgement, defining pornography negatively in contrast with 'erotica' or 'Literature'.²⁵ In this definition, pornography is invariably described as a subject that is repetitious in nature, that is regarded as having little literary merit and that is therefore judged to be generally tedious. Goulemot exemplifies this interpretation, adding that it is the most obvious characteristic of this particular genre, which even the most cursory reader can hardly fail to notice.²⁶ There is some truth in these observations. After all, pornography *is* a genre of writing (or a variety of visual culture) in which the same activities are repeatedly described (or pictured) in different scenes or circumstances, with a necessarily limited number of variations. The intention of the pornographic text to arouse is also taken as further evidence of its lack of literary merit: pornography, it is argued, has only one intention (sexual arousal),

²³ See Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 21–2. There has been much debate over the attribution of this play to Rochester, but most recent scholarship has concluded that it is his work. I will maintain this attribution throughout. See J. W. Johnson, 'Did Rochester Write "Sodom"?', *Publications of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 81 (1987), 119–53. There are no extant printed versions of the play from the seventeenth century, although it may have been printed in 1684 and again in 1689 when the printer was prosecuted. Modern copies have been produced from seven extant manuscript versions. I have used the printed version in *Rochester: Complete Poems and Plays*, ed. Paddy Lyons (London, 1993), which includes the two extant versions of the Prologue. Although it appears that an English printed version of Chorier's *Satyra Sotadica* (*The Dialogues of Lusía Sigéa*) entitled *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid. Tullia and Octavia* was available by c.1684, the version I have used is the 1740 edition extant in the British Library.

²⁴ Richard S. Randall, *Freedom and Taboo: Pornography and the Politics of a Self-Divided* (London, 1989), 68.

²⁵ See, e.g., Gloria Steinem, 'Erotica and Pornography: A Clear and Present Difference', in Laura Lederer (ed.), *Take back the Night: Women on Pornography* (New York, 1980), 35–9 (first published in *Ms* magazine); Susan Sontag, 'The Pornographic Imagination', and Anthony Burgess, 'What Is Pornography?', in Douglas A. Hughes (ed.), *Perspectives on Pornography* (New York, 1970), 131–69, 4–8.

²⁶ Jean-Marie, Goulemot, *Forbidden Texts: Erotic Literature and its Readers in Eighteenth-Century France*, trans. James Simpson (Cambridge, 1994; first published in France as *Ces livres qu'on ne lit que d'une main* (1991), viii.

while 'Literature' is more complex, having many. For example, David Farley-Hills argues that Rochester cannot be accused of producing pornography, for what he does is more sophisticated and complex than the simple motivation of the writer of pornography: 'The pornographer uses writing as sexual substitute; Rochester's poetry is an exploration of sexual experience that asks us to face up to all the facts, from the sublimest to the most ridiculous.'²⁷ There is additionally a moral difference that is implied, if not always stated overtly. Peter Webb, for example, goes to great pains to define the difference between pornographic and erotic representations of sex, concluding: 'The difference between eroticism and pornography is the difference between celebratory and masturbatory sex.'²⁸ In this vein, Roger Thompson describes *The Whores Rhetorick* as a 'squalid little book'.²⁹ How an artist or author ensures that a work invokes only the 'intended' response, however, is not entirely clear, and the use of medical or midwifery texts for masturbatory purposes, for example, clearly indicates that an educational purpose did not obviate a sexual response on the part of the reader. Neither is it entirely clear how readers may have been certain of knowing an author's intention: while we might assume that the primary purpose of an author of a midwifery text was educational, we can never be sure that he or she did not deliberately word descriptions in such a way that a reader might also find them sexually arousing while at the same time disclaiming that the work had any obscene intent or function. But an aesthetic appreciation of artistic or literary merit is somehow thought to preclude any stimulation to sexual action, while not necessarily obviating an erotic response.

However, these analyses ignore not only the varied and quite sophisticated nature of some of these seventeenth-century texts. They ignore also the response of the reader, who presumably did not find them boring and tedious, or there would not have been a market for this material. There is an element here of the academic justifying the analysis of sexual material by implying that it is not enjoyable or stimulating, a response that might call into question his, or her, scholarly objectivity. Rather, in the same way that the authors of this material found it necessary to insert an *apologia* denying that they wrote with any obscene purpose, so some academics have found it necessary to justify any detailed examination of such texts, in order to defend themselves against any suspicion of perversity or sexual obsession, or indeed, of producing pornography themselves by reproducing the pornographic text through extensive quotation followed by detailed, explicit, analysis.³⁰ Others have refused to use such a loaded term as

²⁷ David, Farley-Hills, *Rochester's Poetry* (London and Totowa, NJ, 1978), 2.

²⁸ Peter, Webb, *The Erotic Arts* (London, 1975; new edn., 1983), 2.

²⁹ Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 37.

³⁰ Amy Richlin remarks how the insertion of such an *apologia* was a standard part of classical texts that contain material that might be judged obscene. See Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus*, esp. ch. 1, 'Roman Concepts of Obscenity'. See also Hunter et al. (eds.), *On Pornography*, ix-x, 47: 'The discourse on pornography is always in part a pornographic discourse.'

‘pornography’, and prefer instead to talk of ‘sexual fiction’ as ‘it is intentionally broad enough to include all narrative material that makes important and open use of sexual activity as its subject matter. In sexual fiction the interest in sexuality is continuous throughout the book and not just confined to certain episodes.’³¹ But this sort of categorization of pornography by virtue of aesthetic merit is not only inherently flawed, being somewhat circular, but also causes problems when material from this earlier period is explored.³² Many of the texts from both the Renaissance and the seventeenth century were produced by highly educated and sophisticated authors for an audience of a similar social and educational standing, and employed textual strategies that could be appreciated fully only by those who had extensive learning. For example, one could read and completely comprehend a text such as Chorier’s *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* only if one knew Latin and Greek, and had a knowledge of both classical history and literature. Although versions of this text were soon printed in both French and English, all its allusions and subtleties were available only to the classically educated—though clearly one could enjoy the erotic and humorous parts without grasping all the references. Philip Stewart, in *Engraven Desire*, makes the same point with respect to eighteenth-century erotic engravings. An erotic engraving is an expensive item, produced for the same ‘high’ culture that appreciated and enjoyed art of a more conventional nature.³³

The criticism of pornography as a literary form that soon becomes boring, because it is repetitious and inherently limited in subject matter, also ignores the historical specificity of pornography. Whereas modern pornography, whether literary or visual, has become restricted to the representation of images of the sexual body and the body engaged in sexual acts, the pornography of the seventeenth century suffered no such limitation. These texts, like many others in this period, did not restrict themselves to repeated descriptions of the sexual act, but interspersed other sorts of material, such as philosophical discussion or comic narrative, with the sexual. As I shall argue, specifically in Chapter 6 but also throughout the book, these texts are humorous and entertaining, providing other sorts of pleasure for the reader in addition to any erotic or sexual enjoyment.

The content itself, of course, is most often the starting point for a definition of pornography. Some scholars have begun with the word itself, tracing its meaning back through early dictionaries to find its first appearance, and following its evolving meanings over time.³⁴ Its subject matter thus becomes the defining principle. The etymological origins of the word in this context define pornography as writing or depiction either by, or about, prostitutes. Much

³¹ Maurice Charney, *Sexual Fiction* (London, 1981), 5.

³² Singleness of intention is not, of course, in itself a defect.

³³ See Philip Stewart, *Engraven Desire: Eros, Image & Text in the French Eighteenth Century* (Durham, NC, and London, 1992), 318–19. See also Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*, ch. 4, ‘The Issue of Prints’.

³⁴ See, e.g., Jane Mills (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Guide to Erotic Literature* (London, 1993).

early pornography—classical, renaissance, and seventeenth century—*does* take prostitutes, their lives, and exploits as its subject matter, and there is a whole subgenre that consists of dialogues between prostitutes. Recent scholarship has to a large extent focused on this prostitudinal literature, examining it particularly in the context of political discourse in the period.³⁵ But analysis has not been restricted to a reading of their political meanings; they have also been examined in the context of work on consumption and culture. James Grantham Turner has analysed several of the shorter pornographic pamphlets to show how women's economic activity in this period was represented as a kind of prostitution in order 'to sexualize and thereby ridicule the very idea of autonomous social or political action by women'.³⁶ In the same volume, and following a similar theme, Elizabeth Bennett Kubek discusses a small number of these texts to show how early modern urban women were represented 'as objects to be sexually, visually, or verbally consumed'.³⁷ As will be discussed in more detail later, Paul Griffiths has also looked at a small number of texts such as Dunton's *The Night-Walker* (1696–7) and Cranley's *Amanda* (1639) in the context of a discussion of early modern prostitution.³⁸ But not all pornography is restricted to prostitudinal literature (and not all prostitudinal literature is pornography), and the content has been analysed to give further clues. Robert Darnton in *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* remarks that the defining characteristic of pornography seems to be the voyeurism that is so prevalent a feature of these texts.³⁹ The voyeuristic act of the reader reading the book is everywhere mirrored within the text by the use of physical mirrors in which the characters watch themselves in the act of sex, or by other characters who spy through windows, doors, keyholes, holes in walls or ceilings, from behind curtains or under beds, or from any other convenient vantage point. This is clearly a substantial and important element of a large number of these texts (and which is discussed in detail in Chapter 5), but seems to exclude a variety of works that do not include this element, such as, for example, the pseudo-medical literature.

Content and, more particularly, style, are clearly important when the explicitness of the text is taken as indicative of whether it should be classified as 'pornography', or something with fewer pejorative overtones, such as 'erotica'. Karen Harvey argues that pornography presents explicit and repeated representation of the sexual body parts and the sexual body in motion, and uses explicit language to describe such bodies and scenes to the reader. Erotica, however, is

³⁵ See Mowry, *The Bawdy Politic*, and Turner, *Libertines and Radicals*.

³⁶ James Grantham Turner, '“News from the New Exchange”: Commodity, Erotic Fantasy, and the Female Entrepreneur', in Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (eds.), *The Consumption of Culture 1600–1800: Image, Object, Text* (London and New York, 1995), 419–39.

³⁷ Elizabeth Bennett Kubek, 'Women's Participation in the Urban Culture of Early Modern London: Images from Fiction', in Bermingham and Brewer, *The Consumption of Culture*, 440–54.

³⁸ Paul Griffiths, 'Meanings of Nightwalking in Early Modern England', *Seventeenth Century*, 13/2 (Autumn 1998), 212–38.

³⁹ Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (London, 1996), 72–3.

less explicit, more veiled, and makes much more use of metaphor, suggestion, allusion, and deferral, so that it creates an illusion of distance between the reader and the bodies that are engaged in sexual action.⁴⁰ Philip Stewart in *Engraven Desire* makes a similar argument with respect to erotic engravings. He defines the difference between ‘decent’ and ‘indecent’ images that deal with erotic encounters as residing in whether the picture actually depicts sexual activity, or suggests that it has either just taken place, or is about to take place: the characters are depicted either *before* or *after*, but never *during*, sexual intercourse. Following this, the naked or nude body can be depicted, and the genitalia suggested, but any clear delineation of the male or female genitals turns it into a licentious or obscene representation. In a similar fashion, Melissa Mohr argues that the difference between acceptable and obscene language for the sexual parts is that ‘respectable words conceal while obscene ones reveal. Appropriate words such as “vulva” function to hide . . . Inappropriate ones, such as “cunt”, *display* them.’⁴¹ In basing this distinction between erotic and obscene or pornographic representation on the question of the explicitness of language, style, and content, both Harvey and Stewart avoid the usual pitfalls of a differentiation based on an aesthetic or moral judgement. They also remove the element of subjectivity that is so much a part of this argument. As has been pointed out by several critics, a judgement by a viewer or reader about whether a text or an image is pornographic or erotic, based on aesthetics or morals, will depend on many different variables: age, sex, class, education, and cultural or religious background. However, while avoiding the issue of aesthetic or moral judgement, it rather begs the question, why make such a distinction in the first place? What purpose does it serve, if not to suggest that ‘erotica’ is more acceptable, more ‘decent’, than ‘pornography’? The moral question still lurks behind it, whether or not erotica is regarded as ‘a more pleasant version of pornography’.⁴² The difficulty of clearly, and satisfactorily, differentiating between the two is exemplified by Peakman, who, having offered a very clear definition of pornography (previously quoted in full), goes on to erase it by situating ‘pornography as one genre within a superfluity of other types of erotica, erotica being used as an overarching description for all books on sex’.⁴³ Ian Moulton’s rejection of both ‘pornography’ and ‘erotica’ in favour of the term ‘erotic writing’ also seeks to move away from this moral differentiation between genres to encompass ‘any text, regardless of genre or literary quality, that deals in a fundamental way with human physical sexual activity’.⁴⁴

However, I would question the idea that the use of metaphor rather than direct language always serves to make a text less explicit. I argue rather that

⁴⁰ Karen Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* (Cambridge, 2005), 20.

⁴¹ Melissa Mohr, ‘Defining Dirt: Three Early Modern Views of Obscenity’, *Textual Practice*, 17/2 (2003), 253–75, 266.

⁴² Harvey, *Reading Sex*, 21.

⁴³ Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*, 7.

⁴⁴ Moulton, *Before Pornography*, 5.

the clever use of language, of metaphor, euphemism, double entendre, pun, and allusion, is an integral part of early modern pornographic representation. Authors, perhaps in imitation of Aretino, repeat and pile up image upon image, metaphor upon metaphor, in a way that becomes paradoxically as explicit as using more direct language. In this way authors also create an alternative language of the obscene in which repeatedly used words, phrases, and metaphors become instantly recognizable in their double meaning, and in some cases are so close to the original obscene word that authors really must be teasing their readers in substituting one for the other: there is no need to use ‘cunt’ when ‘cut’ serves just as well, if not better, in that it brings with it a wealth of meaning. There is a playfulness with regard to language that is both exuberant and mocking, and that offers the reader an intellectual as well as a physical, erotic enjoyment of the text.

It is worth quoting in full an excerpt (in translation) from Aretino’s *Ragionamenti* (1534) to illustrate this argument. The prostitute Antonia rebukes Nanna in no uncertain terms for (figuratively) beating around the bush:

Oh, I meant to tell you and then I forgot: Speak plainly and say ‘fuck’, ‘prick’, ‘cunt’, and ‘ass’, if you want anyone except the scholars at the university in Rome to understand you. You with your ‘rope in the ring’, your ‘obelisk in the Colosseum’, your ‘leek in the garden’, your ‘key in the lock’, your ‘bolt in the door’, your ‘pestel [*sic*] in the mortar’, your ‘nightingale in the nest’, your ‘tree in the ditch’, your ‘syringe in the flap-valve’, your ‘sword in the scabbard’, not to mention your ‘stake’, your ‘crozier’, your ‘parsnip’, your ‘little monkey’, your ‘this’, your ‘that’, your ‘him’, and your ‘her’, your ‘apples’, ‘leaves of the missal’, ‘fact’, ‘*verbigratia*’, ‘job’, ‘affair’, ‘big news’, ‘handle’, ‘arrow’, ‘carrot’, ‘root’, and all shit there is—why don’t you say it straight out and stop going about on tiptoes?⁴⁵

The humorous point—the joke—of this passage is that all this ‘beating around the bush’ is, in fact, no less understandable or explicit than ‘plain speaking’.⁴⁶ It is also both fun and funny. There are recurrent and commonly used metaphors that are used by a variety of authors in a wide range of different types of text that would be familiar to readers, and that carry a weight of meaning no less clear for being metaphorical. Moreover, this style of writing was entirely consistent with other writing in the period, which is characterized by allegory, symbolism, allusion, and double meaning, intended not to obfuscate or to hide its ‘real’ meaning, but rather to illuminate it. Moreover, the use of explicit description and words in a text did not exclude its use of metaphor and allusion; texts might employ both strategies at different moments or even within the same passages. This kind of metaphorical and symbolic representation is also a key

⁴⁵ Aretino’s *Dialogues*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (London, 1972), 43–4.

⁴⁶ The virtue of plain speaking was promulgated by a number of the religious sects in the seventeenth century, and the use of extended religious metaphor, double entendre, and pun in texts satirizing these groups can be seen as yet another means of sending them up. See, in relation to Quakers, James Walvin, *The Quakers: Money and Morals* (London, 1997).

element of pictorial representations, as I shall argue later on in Chapter 7, where explicit nakedness is not necessary to convey an explicit message about sexual activity. A differentiation between the erotic and the pornographic that is based upon degrees of explicitness neglects to pay attention to historical and cultural contexts, as explicitness, as illustrated above, may also be culturally determined. As Ian Moulton has pointed out: 'Material seen as scandalously titillating in one cultural context often seems innocuous in another.'⁴⁷

Metaphors for the sexual act and reproduction that are used in pornography in the seventeenth century also appear in contemporary medical and midwifery books. Authors of medical and scientific works in this earlier period still used what we might consider today to be a more literary style of writing, employing metaphor and simile. So, Jane Sharp, for example, in *The Midwives Book* (1671) could write describing the female genitals using the metaphor of the rose, which was also commonly used in pornographic and erotic writing: 'The four fleshy knobs with this are like a Rose half blown when the bearded leaves are taken away, or this production with the Lap or privy is like a great Clove-gille-flower new blown, thence came the word deflowered.'⁴⁸ This metaphor is repeated in the visual imagery in the illustration to the book, where the centre of the woman's body is opened up like the petals of a flower to show the womb containing the growing foetus within, and a flower itself is drawn in place of the genitals (see Figure 1). Throughout *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* the female characters speak of 'my garden' when they refer to their genitals. 'The Crafty Whore' terms her virginity 'the cheife flower of my Garden'.⁴⁹ So also, more explicitly, does Mother Creswell in *The Whores Rhetorick* when she is describing to Dorothea the pain she will feel on losing her virginity: 'The smart thou felt then is just like that thou mayest expect, when thy vaginal flower is snatched away.'⁵⁰ Though metaphorical, the rose was in fact a very explicit means of picturing the female genitals for the reader: it suggested not only appearance, but colour, formation, scent, and the feel of the tender, soft skin of the genital area to the touch. The knowledge that the rose carries a thorn might also suggest to the reader, especially in the context of writing about prostitutes, the possibility of harm and pain for any unwary enough to try and 'pluck a rose' (euphemism for having sexual intercourse with a prostitute) through the risk of catching the pox, or venereal disease.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Moulton, *Before Pornography*, 4.

⁴⁸ Jane Sharp, *The Midwives Book. Or The Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered. Directing Childbearing Women how to Behave themselves in their Conception, Breeding, Bearing, and Nursing of Children* (London, 1671), 48.

⁴⁹ *The Crafty Whore: Or, The Mistery and Iniquity of Bawdy Houses Laid Open . . .* (London, 1658), 5.

⁵⁰ Philo-Puttanus (pseud.), *The Whores Rhetorick, Calculated to the Meridian of London; and Conformed to the Rules of Art. In Two Dialogues* (London, 1683; facsimile reproduction edn., New York, 1979), 199.

⁵¹ See Jeffrey Richards, *Sex, Dissidence and Damnation: Minority Groups in the Middle Ages* (London, 1991), 116.



Fig. 1. Illustration to Jane Sharp's *The Midwives Book* (1671), BL 1177.b.19. By permission of the British Library

Such parallels are continued in the close resemblance between descriptions of the genitals and other reproductive organs that appear both in medical and midwifery books of the period and in pornographic texts. For example, the similarity of this description of the testicles in the English edition of *Bartholinus Anatomy* (1668) to the following passage from Chorier's *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* is immediately apparent:

The *Stones* or *Testicles* so called, as witnessing the courage and strength of a man, without which a man was no sufficient witness in the Roman Court, are also called *Didumoi* or *Gemelli* Twins, because commonly They are in *Number* two. Seldom one great one and no more, as in *Sylla* and *Cotta*, Witness *Arrianus*; seldomer three, as in *Agathocles* the Tyrant of *Sicilie*, and some Families of *Italy* of the *Colci*, especially at *Bergoma* . . .⁵²

Owing to their being two, the Greeks call them 'didyms' (twins), and many great heroes have borne this name. There were some to whom Nature, in her munificence, delivered one more, so that they had three. Among these was Agathocles, the tyrant of the Syracusians, whom they surnamed on this account *Triorchis*. Under the same title is well known amongst us the noble family of the *Coleoni*, from which that Bartolommeo *Cleoni*, the famous Captain of the wars in Italy, sprung. All the heroes in this family nearly always present themselves at the duels of *Venus* with three witnesses, as they display the most daring courage on the battle-fields of *Mars*.⁵³

⁵² Bartholinus, *Bartholinus Anatomy; Made from the Precepts of his Father, and from the observations of All Modern Anatomists, together with his own* (London, 1668).

⁵³ Nicolas Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea (Aloisiae Sigee Satyra Sotadica de arcanis Amoris et Veneris) Literally Translated from the Latin of Nicolas Chorier* (London, c.1660; Paris, 1890), 38–9. For a discussion of testicles as witnesses, see Raymond Stephanson, *The Yard of Wit: Male Creativity and Sexuality, 1650–1750* (Philadelphia, 2004), 32.

Similarly, Bette Talvacchia has shown how illustrations in contemporary medical books had marked similarities to erotic engravings.⁵⁴ It is such crossing over of styles of writing, of description and use of metaphor, that help explain how seventeenth-century midwifery and medical books, including works on venereal disease, could be read as pornography, and why some authors, such as Culpeper, were derided by their contemporaries for writing obscene and licentious material.⁵⁵

Although the use of the term 'pornography' is clearly fraught with difficulty and pitfalls, and it is tempting to abandon it for a more inclusive term such as 'erotic writing' (Moulton's argument is very persuasive), I do not think that it is either appropriate or helpful to abandon it altogether. Despite the fact that the term was not one that was used in the seventeenth century, there clearly was a concept of the 'pornographic' at that time, though many different terms were used to invoke it. There is contemporary evidence that suggests there was a kind of sexual literature that, while not termed 'pornography' at the time, was of a particular nature, and into which a wide variety of texts were thought to fit. There is a large body of printed material produced in England in the seventeenth century, in a wide range of formats or genres, which has been variously described as 'bawdy', 'erotic', 'ribald', 'lewd', 'libertine', or 'pornographic'. In addition, there are several works that were produced on the Continent, but that were available in England both in the original French, Latin, or Italian, and in English translation, or as English adaptations of the original.⁵⁶

Our modern 'understanding' of the nature of pornography as the explicit depiction of sexual body parts, both in isolation and in conjunction with those of others, whether moving or still, rapidly rids the field of the vast majority of these seventeenth-century texts, leaving only two or three continental works, which seem—for the most part, though not entirely—to match this definition.⁵⁷ But

⁵⁴ Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*.

⁵⁵ For John Cannon, masturbation, and the midwifery text, see Tim Hitchcock, *English Sexualities, 1700–1800* (Basingstoke and London, 1997), 28–9. On Culpeper, see Audrey Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Tudor and Stuart England* (London and Canberra, 1982). Eccles quotes a contemporary writer who refers to Culpeper as producing obscene texts (p. 13).

⁵⁶ For an extensive cataloguing of such works available in the seventeenth century, see Foxon, *Libertine Literature in England*; Kearney, *A History of Erotic Literature*; Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*; Wagner, *Eros Revived*. Christopher Hill also points out that the first English translation of Aretino's *Dialogues* appeared, in England, in 1658. See Christopher Hill, 'Censorship and English Literature', in *Collected Essays*, i. *Writing and Revolution in Seventeenth Century England* (Brighton, 1985), 46. See also Henrietta R. Palmer, *List of English Editions and Translations of Greek and Latin Classics Printed before 1641* (London, 1911). Works by Juvenal, Martial, Ovid, Petronius, and Virgil, for example, were all available.

⁵⁷ I refer here to the three French works, one of which was originally written in Latin, known in their English translations as: Jean Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister: Or, The Nun in her Smock. Translated from the French by a Person of Honour* (London, 1683; new edn., 1725); Michel Millot and Jean l'Ange, *The School of Venus: Or, the Ladies Delight Reduced into Rules of Practice* (Paris, 1655), trans. and introduced by Donald Thomas (London, 1972); and Churier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*. Even though these three works are generally accorded the description

I would argue that we need to redefine both our understanding of the term 'pornography' for this period, as well as our understanding of the nature of that pornographic material. Pornography is clearly not the same in all times and in all places, and the problem of finding appropriate terminology to define this material reflects the fact that texts in this period neither fit neatly into a particular, clearly bounded category or genre, nor conform to modern expectations of the pornographic.⁵⁸ Although the title of a particular text might indicate that its subject was clearly defined, the contents might roam widely over a variety of subjects. For example, books of midwifery might also contain recipes for salves or medicines for the relieving of various female ailments, as well as the listing and description of those ailments. So it is with pornography, which, as Dorelies Kraakman points out, 'has long been a hybrid in Western European literary history, partaking of genres as diverse as medical and paramedical advice literature, drinking songs, political pamphlets and the novel'.⁵⁹ This body of literature thus encompasses a wide range of material, in a variety of genres, which a narrower modern definition would simply exclude.⁶⁰ In this book I will discuss printed texts that encompass the following kinds of material: medical, midwifery, and quasi-medical literature, trial reports, prose dialogues, news-sheets and early periodicals, pamphlets, extended prose narratives, jest books, ballads, poetry, and plays.⁶¹ It is clear that there was a contemporary notion of the 'pornographic' as comprising works that contained subject matter of a sexual nature, that might be discursive and metaphorical rather than explicit, and that could be used to learn about sex and/or to stimulate a sexual response in the reader. In *Unfit for Modest Ears*, Roger Thompson records several seventeenth-century references to

'pornographic', others disagree, such as Donald Thomas, who describes it in his introduction to *The School of Venus* as 'a realistic glimpse of sexual happiness' rather than 'a piece of escapist pornography'.

⁵⁸ See Elizabeth, Tebeaux, 'Women and Technical Writing, 1475–1700: Technology, Literacy, and Development of a Genre', in Lynette Hunter and Sarah Hutton (eds.), *Women, Science and Medicine 1500–1700* (Stroud, 1997), 29–62.

⁵⁹ Dorelies Kraakman, 'Pornography in Western European Culture', in Franz X. Eder, Lesley A. Hall, and Gert Hekma (eds.), *Sexual Cultures in Europe: Themes in Sexuality* (Manchester and New York, 1999), 104–20, at 105. See also Dorelies Kraakman, 'Reading Pornography Anew: A Critical History of Sexual Knowledge for Girls in French Erotic Fiction, 1750–1840', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 4/4 (1994), 517–48, at 519.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., *The Practical Part of Love. Extracted out of the Extravagant and Lascivious Life of a Fair but Subtle Female* (London, 1660), in which a variety of works are listed as suitable for 'Love's Academy', including Culpeper's *Compleat Midwife The Crafty Whore*, and a list of all the whores in the city, which could refer to John Garfield, *The Wandring Whore. A Dialogue between Magdalena a Crafty Bawd, Julietta an Exquisite Whore, Francion a Lascivious Gallant, and Gusman a Pimping Hector. Discovering their Diabolical Practises at the Chuck-Office. With a List of all the Crafty Bawds, Common Whores, Decoys, Hectors, and Trapanners, and their Usual Meetings* (London, 1660–1). Culpeper's *Compleat Midwifery* refers to his *A Directory for Midwives* (1651).

⁶¹ I will not, however, discuss bawdy ballads, almanacs, or drama in any depth, or as separate genres. I refer to ballads, plays, and almanacs when it is appropriate to do so in the context of a particular theme or argument. See Moulton, *Before Pornography*, for a discussion of manuscript erotica.

various texts that clearly, in his view, classify them as pornographic.⁶² But these works of sexual fiction are also to an extent self-defining. The inter-textuality of this literature has frequently been remarked upon: one text will refer to others, so that the reader is alerted to the existence of other similar texts that might be enjoyed. Each text then gains depth and resonance from the use of allusions, familiar metaphors, and similar textual stratagems. One of the ways in which a number of these texts drew attention to each other was by styling themselves as responses to a previously published work. Ostensibly a text may purport to be a rebuttal of an earlier work, but in fact the rebuttal serves to draw attention to the earlier work and to repeat what it has said, while allowing further elaboration. *The Wandring Whore* gave rise to such ripostes as John Heydon's *The Ladies Champion Confounding the Author of the Wandring Whore* (1660). But the largest group of pamphlets that worked in this way comprised those that arose from *The Ladies Parliament* (1647). The various character sketches such as *The Character of a Town-Misse* (1675) also inspired responses, as did the various petitions arising from the pulling-down of bawdy houses in 1668. But this inter-textuality also works to define a body of literature that can be categorized as being of a particular type at this time, and that, despite its lack of clearly defined generic boundaries, we can discuss as pornography. There was clearly a contemporary idea of a kind of sexual literature that was of a particular nature, but that encompassed a very wide range of styles of writing, format, and subject, and in which the explicit or realistic depiction of sex was not as crucial an issue as it is for modern commentators. Metaphor, symbol, and allusion were regarded, not as a means of hiding meaning, but rather as revealing and illuminating. Pornography in this period also reveals preoccupations, and addresses issues that do not necessarily conform to what a modern audience, or readership, would expect to find in a work of pornography.

In *The Practical Part of Love* (1660), the author has one of his characters give a list of books and pictures that are considered to be appropriate to 'Love's Academy'. These include pictures of lovers such as Venus and Mars lying naked together and, of course, 'Aretines postures'. In the library are

a Pece called *Venus undrest*, likewise *the Life of Mother Cunny*, never yet printed, in Folio. *The Anatomy of Cuckoldry*, *Luteners lane decipher'd*, cum mille aliis. On the right hand stood *Francions bawdy History*, Folio, bound in Turkey leather, *Jovial drollery*, *marbled Venus* and *Adonis*, *Lusty Drollery*, *Venus her Cabinet unlockt*, *Ovids Art of Loving*, *Natures chief Rarities*, *The crafty whore* reprinted in Folio, with the *English Bawd*, and *errant Rogue*, together with a *Catalogue of all the whores in this City*, containing thirty sheets of paper.

⁶² Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 22–3. The works he refers to are *The School of Venus*, *Tullia and Octavia*, *The Whores Rhetorick*, *Aretino's Postures*, *Rochester's Poems*, and *The Secret History of Dildos*. See also Roger Thompson, 'The Puritans and Prurience: Aspects of the Restoration Book Trade', in H.C. Allen and Roger Thompson (eds.), *Contrast and Connection: Bicentennial Essays in Anglo-American History* (London, 1976), 36–65, at 37; items included in addition to those listed above are *The English Rogue*, *Venus in the Cloister*, and *The Nuns Complaint against the Fryers*.

There were likewise all sorts of books of Midwifery, as *Culpeppers Midwife, the compleat Midwife, the birth of Mankind, Child-birth, &c.*⁶³

This list covers a whole variety of books, including works on cuckoldry, whore and rogue narratives and lists, songs and poems, medical and pseudo-medical texts, and classical literature. The unifying factor is that they all deal with sexual activity in one way or another, so that they can be used both for education in sexual matters and for sexual arousal or enjoyment, and there is no differentiation between texts according to function. In the same way as a reference to 'Aretine' or 'Aretine's Postures' becomes shorthand for invoking the obscene or pornographic, so in the seventeenth century do references to *The School of Venus* or *L'Académie des dames* (1680) or to Aristotle and works of midwifery.⁶⁴ In *The Parliament of Women* (1684) girls are said to learn more 'either by discourse among themselves, or else by reading *Aristotles Problemes*' so that they 'know as much at Thirteen as if they had been Mid-wives of twenty years standing'.⁶⁵ This also repeats a comment in Edward Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds* from 1682: 'Girles now at sixteen are as knowing as Matrons were formerly at sixty, I tell you in these days they understand *Aristotle's Problems* at twelve years of age.'⁶⁶ Midwifery texts are thus seen as repositories of female sexual knowledge. In the same work, Lady *Nimble-Clack* is made to describe how *The School of Venus*, '*Eschole defilles*', arouses 'strange Passions' in her. But the book that has the most stimulating effect is '*Aloysia sigea*', which is 'a Book so ravishing—I lost my Virginitie with only hearing it read'.⁶⁷ Early modern authors, then, were conscious too that representations of bodies and sex in a variety of styles and contexts were likely to incite action in the form of lascivious thoughts and deeds.

Pepys is usually referred to as the first reader who recorded his experience of reading pornography, the French book *The School of Venus*. But Pepys's diary entries in which he records his buying and subsequent reading of this book are highly revealing in more ways than this.⁶⁸ In the entry for 13 January 1668 Pepys

⁶³ *The Practical Part of Love*, 39–40.

⁶⁴ Horner refers to *The School of Venus* in Wycherley's *The Country Wife*; Edward Ravenscroft refers to *The Schoole of Women (L'Académie des Dames)* in *The London Cuckolds* (London, 1682). 'Eschole defilles', 'Ragionamenti D'Aretino', and 'Aloysia sigea' are all referred to in *The Parliament of Women: Or, A Compleat History of the Proceedings and Debates, of a Particular Junto, of Ladies and Gentlewomen, with a Design to Alter the Government of the World. By Way of Satyr* (London, 1684), as sexually stimulating books that women desire to read (pp. 30–2).

⁶⁵ *The Parliament of Women*, 29

⁶⁶ Ravenscroft, *The London Cuckolds*, 2.

⁶⁷ *The Parliament of Women*, 30–2.

⁶⁸ Pepys is discussed in an enormous number of books and articles, from a wide variety of standpoints. Writers on seventeenth-century sexuality and erotic life invariably refer to the *Diaries*, as they offer a unique recording from this period of a man's sexual habits and thoughts. Any list will necessarily be incomplete and subjective, but see, for example, Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (Ann Arbor, 1995); J.G. Turner, 'Pepys and the Private Parts of Monarchy', in Gerald MacLean (ed.), *Culture and Society in the Stuart Restoration: Literature, Drama, History* (Cambridge, 1995), 95–110; and Mark S. Dawson, 'Histories and Texts: Refiguring the Diary of Samuel Pepys', *Historical Journal*, 43/2 (2000), 407–31.

records how he ‘stopped at Martins my bookseller, where I saw the French book which I did think to have had for my wife to translate, called *L’escolle de Filles*;⁶⁹ but when I came to look into it, it is the most bawdy, lewd book that ever I saw, rather worse then *putana errante*⁷⁰—so that I was ashamed of reading in it . . .’⁷¹ This was obviously not the first ‘bawdy, lewd book’ that Pepys had come across, as he compares it to the Italian *La puttana errante*. This is a reference to either Niccolò Franco’s prose work or to Lorenzo Veniero’s extended poem, both bearing the same title and both produced in the 1530s by contemporaries of Aretino. Pepys thus bracketed them together as works of the same nature. The way that Pepys came across *The School of Venus* suggests that it was not a book that was displayed in any special way, denoting it as a particular type of work: Pepys mistook it from its title for a possible work of instruction, which might be suitable for his wife to translate. The title did not automatically tell him that the book contained explicitly sexual material. Neither was the book hidden under the counter so that the customer would have had to request it by title, already knowing of its existence, or be offered it in response to a request for a book of a particular type. Significantly, despite the author’s stated purpose of directing the book to girls and women for their education, Pepys did not consider that it was suitable reading for his wife. He felt also the need to justify his own reading of the text in a later entry in the diary, nearly a month later, after he had purchased the book, when he argued that it was ‘not amiss for a sober man once to read over to inform himself in the villainy of the world’.⁷² Pepys further recorded how he intended to burn the book once he had read it (hence he purchased it in a cheap binding, rather than in a more expensively bound edition), not wishing it to be found among the rest of his collection of books. Pepys therefore made a distinction between *this* book and other works that he collected, such as the small chapbooks that have been collected together as ‘Penny Merriments’, and that contained marital and sexual stories and jokes that are also quite explicit in nature and make use of sexual language. Unfortunately, Pepys did not record what he considered to be the difference between these texts, so we can only conjecture.

When examined as a whole, there is an immediate apparent difference between the three French texts *The School of Venus*, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* and

⁶⁹ *L’Ecolle des filles, ou La Philosophie des dames, divisée en deux dialogues*; usually attributed to Michel Millot and Jean L’Ange (first published, Paris, 1655; other editions, 1659, 1667, and 1668; several later editions and translations). Millot was condemned and the book burnt in Paris in 1655; English translations were the subject of prosecutions in 1677, 1688, and 1744–5. See Foxon, *Libertine Literature in England*, 5–6; cf. Horner in Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* (i. i), written c.1670–1: ‘I have brought over [from France] not so much as a bawdy picture, no new postures, nor the second part of the *Ecole des Filles* . . .’.

⁷⁰ *La puttana errante* by Veniero was wrongly attributed to Aretino. Lorenzo Veniero was a pupil of Aretino. See Foxon, *Libertine Literature*.

⁷¹ *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews (London, 1970–83), ix. 21–2, entry for 13 Jan. 1668.

⁷² *Ibid.*, ix. 58, entry for 9 Feb. 1668.

Venus in the Cloister, and the texts that were produced in England in English. Stylistically they are highly sophisticated, and are unique at this time for the sustained and explicit descriptions of sexual organs and sexual acts contained within their pages. At first sight these three texts probably conform most to what we might think of today as constituting pornographic literature, and James Grantham Turner has described Chorie's text as 'the most "pornographic" text of the seventeenth century'.⁷³ However, while it cannot be denied that these three texts are generally more consistently explicit and sustained in their repeated descriptions of sex than most of the texts originating in English, they nevertheless have many similarities with the English material. Much English writing is also explicit: for example, to name but two, Rochester's *Sodom*, though it is drama in poetic form rather than prose, and Garfield's *The Wandring Whore*. The usual characteristic of such literature at this time—that it contains other material, such as philosophizing or political or religious commentary and criticism, as well as the descriptions of sexual acts and the sexual body—applies to all these texts whether originating on the Continent or in England. The French texts also contain episodes of what might be described as 'perverse' or 'libertine' sexual practices such as 'lesbian' sex and sexual flagellation. But there are also different varieties of English text that represent whipping or beating for sexual purposes, and discussion and representation of homosexual sexual acts. The translator/author of *Rare Verities* (1658), for example, makes reference in verse to Dr Gill of St Paul's School and his apparently well-known predilection for whipping in his preface to the reader anticipating censure: '*For my part I expect no less then to be whipt by every squint-eyed fellow, worse then Dr Gill lash'd his maids Bumbgillion. . .*'.⁷⁴ There were other works of poetry on the same subject with which readers may have been familiar, such as 'On Doctor Gill, Master of Pauls School', in which he is described as 'a noble Ferker', and 'Gill upon Gill, Or, Gills Ass Uncas'd, Unstript Unbound', both of which are reproduced in a 1662 copy of Ovid's *De arte amand*.⁷⁵

Neither is length solely a characteristic of these three French texts: Richard Head's *The English Rogue* (1665) is of a comparable length, and, when the subsequent three parts continued by Francis Kirkman are taken into

⁷³ Turner, *Libertines and Radicals*, 6.

⁷⁴ Giovanni Benedetto Sinibaldus, *Rare Verities. The Cabinet of Venus Unlocked, and her Secrets Laid Open. Being a Translation of Part of Sinibaldus his Geneanthropeia, and a Collection of Some Things out of Other Latin Authors, Never before in English* (London, 1658), sig. B2. I have named Sinibaldus as the author of this text as this is how it appears in the British Library catalogue. However, as the title suggests, the text has been compiled by an anonymous 'author' from part of Sinibaldus' *Geneanthropeia* (1642), which he has translated, as well as from other, unnamed, texts. The text is thus a selection of choice sexual 'facts' or information, which, despite the anonymous author's (or compiler's) disclaimer, can be read as a pornographic text. *Rare Verities* is also listed in the BL catalogue under the author's pseudonym 'Erotodidasculus'.

⁷⁵ Ovid *de arte amand. And The Remedy of Love Englished. As also the Loves of Hero & Leander, a Mock-Poem. Together with Choice Poems, and Rare Pieces of Drollery* (London, 1662), 125–8.

account, surpasses them. Other works such as *The Crafty Whore* (1658), *The Practical Part of Love*, *The Whore's Rhetorick* (a loose English adaptation of *La retorica delle putana*), and Charles Cotton's *Erotopolis* (1684) also sustain their sexual narratives for a considerable number of pages. But the similarities are not limited to the question of explicitness, the variety of sexual content, or length and sophistication. The techniques employed by the authors and their use of similar literary conventions also suggest that they belong to a recognizable type of literature that described and discussed sexual encounters.

That sexual arousal was an inherent quality of this literature was also understood at the time: not only the intention of the author to arouse the reader, but also of the reader to seek sexual arousal by reading the text. A variety of texts, not just *The Practical Part of Love*, as we have seen, specified the keeping of particular items in brothels for the entertainment and arousal of the customer. But they were not kept only for the purpose of stimulating the customer: they were also there 'to train up the younger sort'.⁷⁶ One contemporary text that seems to have served both purposes is Culpeper's book of Midwifery, which is listed in *The Practical Part of Love* as suitable reading matter for instruction in the arts of love, and was used by the young John Cannon as an aid to masturbation.⁷⁷ Part of the training-up of the young, it is implied, involves the arousal of the younger, novice whore's sexual instinct, and her desire to try what is described, as well as teaching her all the various ways of pleasing a customer. This use of 'lewd' books in bawdy houses also highlights one respect in which the term 'pornography' is not entirely anachronistic when applied to this period: pornography is, in its etymological sense, the depiction of whores. Although the word 'pornography' was not used at this time, some authors did use the pseudonym 'pornodidasculus', meaning 'teaching by or about whores', suggesting that this sense of the word was not entirely foreign to the period. The author of *Rare Verities*, in his address 'To the Amorous Readers', refers to Sinibaldus, and the other authors from whom he has 'borrowed' his content, as 'Pornodidascalians', and signs himself pseudonymously as 'Erotodidasculus'. He describes this book as a work of instruction, for the benefit of the reader to learn about 'the mysteries of generation', and distances himself from any questionable purpose or responsibility: 'Moreover, if I write anything that is obscene, it is because my Authors wrote so, from whom I Collected this miscellany.'⁷⁸ The reference to 'Pornodidascalians' is likely to be

⁷⁶ Peter Aretine (pseud.), *Strange & True Newes from Jack-a-Newberries Six Windmills* (London, 1660), 5.

⁷⁷ Both Roy Porter, in Roy Porter and Lesley Hall, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650–1950* (New Haven and London, 1995), and Tim Hitchcock in his *English Sexualities*, cite the case of John Cannon, whose mother caught him using Culpeper's *Midwifery* as an aid to masturbation.

⁷⁸ See *Rare Verities*. I am grateful to Professor Jonathan Powell and to Dr Richard Hawley at Royal Holloway for their help and advice with Latin translations.

a reference to Aretino, who is sometimes referred to as 'Pornodidasculus',—for example, in a 1623 Frankfurt edition of the first part of the *Ragionamenti*. The author/translator is thus suggesting to the astute, educated, widely read reader that this text too might contain material originating from Aretino, and that it is therefore likely to be highly sexual in nature. It thus functions in a more subtle way than a direct reference to 'Aretino' or 'Aretine', including the reader who 'gets it' in an unstated 'club' of those 'in the know', and hence encouraging a sense of pleasure in belonging to a wider community of discerning readers.⁷⁹ Much of the material I will discuss here as pornography is writing (purportedly) by whores or about whores, continuing the literary tradition of the whore dialogue, which dates back at least to the classical era.

Despite the difficulties of categorization inherent in this seventeenth-century material, it is possible to discuss a wide variety of texts as pornography, but it must be recognized that the material is both similar to pornography in other periods *and* at the same time substantially different from modern pornography. This seventeenth-century pornography has a history, so that its origins in classical and renaissance works can be traced, but it is also uniquely of its time. It demonstrates concerns that were particular to the period in which it was created, and interconnects with other contemporary genres, developments, and events. Modern analyses of pornography, informed by feminist theory, make assumptions about what pornography does, and how it does it, that have led to ahistorical, and frequently erroneous (in my view), interpretations of early modern pornography. Although it is possible to detect representations of women in these texts that are misogynist and that show them as oppressed by a patriarchal culture that seeks to restrict them to a narrow, 'private' sphere of activity, these are not the only representations, nor, necessarily, the overwhelming impression of the body of material as a whole. The category 'pornography' is thus a useful term that can be used to embrace a wide range of disparate texts, however little relation they may apparently seem to have to each other. My argument therefore overlaps with Moulton's, in that 'sexual representation of all kinds permeated literary culture in ways that were often profoundly different from what our own cultural experience of pornography might lead us to expect', but, unlike Moulton, I do not reject the term pornography as therefore 'meaningless'.⁸⁰ To do so would, I believe, ignore contemporary categorizations, understandings, and reactions to such representations, however broad they may be. This book, then, examines a wide range of publications, a total of about 270 texts, dating from around 1600 to the first decade of the eighteenth century, and aims to be reasonably comprehensive, and therefore able to argue for representativeness, without claiming to be exhaustive. It is not intended to

⁷⁹ See Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore and London, 1974), 31.

⁸⁰ Moulton, *Before Pornography*, 6.

be a history of seventeenth-century pornography, tracing the development of a genre over the course of the century, nor does it seek to police the boundaries of such a genre, but rather to identify common and recurring themes, issues, and preoccupations that can tell us something meaningful about contemporary understandings of bodies, sex, and gender and their relationship to broader seventeenth-century social, cultural, and political change and development.⁸¹ However, where significant changes in representation during the period are remarked, I will attempt to account for them and to offer explanations that are consonant with other contemporary circumstances and issues, rather than seeking to fit them into established narratives of change. While it may seem perverse to categorize medical and midwifery texts or travel narratives and joke books as pornography, I want to demonstrate that all these kinds of text share a reflexivity, language, and styles of writing, and a common cultural context that means that ‘pornographic writing’ was a widespread feature of a range of texts. Thus some texts can be seen as more ‘pornographic’ than others, but *no* text, whatever its nature or origin, was entirely ‘pornographic’ in the modern sense that it focused exclusively on repeated explicit descriptions of the sexual body and acts of sexual intercourse in a variety of sexual scenarios. Hence Turner can describe Chorier’s *Aloisiae Sigaeae* (which I refer to as *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* throughout this book) as ‘the most “pornographic” text of the seventeenth century according to the modern use of the term’ in recognition of this distinction.⁸² To attempt to differentiate between ‘erotic’ and ‘pornography’, in the seventeenth century only unnecessarily complicates and confuses an already difficult category, and, moreover, makes a distinction that early modern authors and readers did not themselves appear to seek to establish.

Works such as Patrick Kearney’s listing of the contents of the British Library’s Private Case and his history of erotic literature have provided invaluable information about the surviving literature of the period. In addition, David Foxon’s *Libertine Literature in England, 1660–1745* and Roger Thompson’s *Unfit for Modest Ears* have given us a very clear idea of the content of those surviving works that were in circulation in the mid- to late seventeenth century.⁸³ Peter Wagner in *Eros Revived* has also described the development of the pornographic novel from the seventeenth century into the eighteenth century through short prose fiction, the whore biography, and whore dialogues.⁸⁴ His work has in addition given us comprehensive descriptions of the subject matter of most of these works. However, despite thoroughly investigating, describing, and cataloguing the surviving pornographic literature of the period, to establish its historical authenticity and provenance, these early works had little in-depth analysis. For

⁸¹ See Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*.

⁸² Turner, *Libertines and Radicals*, 6.

⁸³ Foxon, *Libertine Literature*; P. J., Kearney, *The Private Case: An Annotated Bibliography of the Private Case Erotica Collection in the British (Museum) Library* (London, 1981); Kearney, *A History of Erotic Literature*; Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*.

⁸⁴ Wagner, *Eros Revived*.

the most part they were descriptive only. These books are, however, invaluable as a starting point for any study of pornography/erotica in the period, as they supply a wealth of bibliographical information about the texts themselves, and without which this book could not have been written.⁸⁵ It is not possible to provide here a history of all the texts discussed in this book (and this would be contrary to its aim), but some brief explanation about the origins of those to which I refer most often will be helpful to place them in context.⁸⁶

As already noted, the three texts to which I refer most often and which are usually referred to as the ‘classics’ of seventeenth-century literary pornography are the three French works *L’Ecole des filles*, *Aloyisiae Sigaeae* or *Satyra Sotadica* (c.1660), and *Vénus dans le cloître* (1683). *L’Ecole des filles* was first published in France anonymously with a false imprint, printed by Louis Piot at the instigation of Michel Millot and Jean L’Ange, to whom it has subsequently been attributed. L’Ange was arrested, fined, and banished for three years, while Millot, to whom L’Ange attributed the writing or translation of the book, claiming only to have copied and edited it himself, was sentenced to be hung and burnt with the books, and all his property forfeited.⁸⁷ Millot escaped and was punished in effigy in his absence, but later had an appeal accepted.⁸⁸ Speculation about the book’s true authorship continues and has been attributed to the poet Paul Scarron or to his then wife, the future Madame de Maintenon. The first evidence of an English edition, translated as *The School of Venus: Or, The Ladies Delight Reduced into Rules of Practice*, comes from the trial of Joseph Streater and Benjamin Crayle for its publication in 1688. It was, however, available in the original French from at least 1668, when Pepys recorded buying it from his bookseller, Martin, and had been available on the Continent in Dutch editions from 1658. Only very short extracts from the English translation are quoted in the 1688 indictment, though a later one from 1744 contains a transcript of an abridged version of the text, but it is not known whether this is the same as the 1688 version.⁸⁹

Nicolas Chorier’s text first appeared in Latin, probably printed in either Lyons or Grenoble in 1659 or 1660, and representing itself in its title as a translation by a Dutch scholar named Johannes Meursius of a Spanish work by Luisa Sigae: *Aloisiae Sigaeae Toletanae Satyra Sotadica de arcanis Amoris et Veneris. Aloisia hispanice scripsit, latinitate donavit Ioannes Meursius*. A French translation in two

⁸⁵ I am utterly indebted to the work of these scholars despite my disagreements about interpretations.

⁸⁶ Bibliographical information is sourced from Foxon, *Libertine Literature*; Kearney, *A History of Erotic Literature*; Wagner, *Eros Revived*; and Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*.

⁸⁷ Peakman in *Mighty Lewd Books* (p. 17) implies that Millot was the author, because this is what L’Ange admitted under questioning. However, we cannot know whether this was true, or merely an attempt to shift the blame onto the absent Millot—a sensible tactic, given that Millot was sentenced to be hanged and burnt for the crime.

⁸⁸ Foxon, *Libertine Literature*, 30–4.

⁸⁹ For completeness, I have used Donald Thomas’s 1972 translation of the French text based on Pascal Pia’s 1959 modern French edition, rather than the text from the 1744 indictment.

parts appeared in 1680 as *L'Académie des dames, divisée en sept entretiens satiriques*, with the seventh dialogue 'Fescennini' separated from the rest of the text into the second part.⁹⁰ Latin editions seem to have been available in England by at least January 1677, when a bookseller was shut down for several hours for selling both *Aloyisiae Zigaëae Amores* and *L'Escole des filles*.⁹¹ The earliest version in English that has been located is a 1676 manuscript translation of the fourth dialogue, 'The Duell', found in a commonplace book, but printed editions appeared from at least 1684, with indictments issued in 1688 for an English adaptation entitled *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid. Tullia and Octavia*.⁹² However, Edward Ravenscroft refers to a translated book entitled *the Schoole of Women* in his *The London Cuckolds* in 1682, suggesting that an English translation of the French version of this book was available at that time, if not earlier.⁹³ The first, French, edition of *Vénus dans le cloître, ou la religieuse en chemise* appeared in 1683 with a Cologne imprint and has been attributed to Jean Barrin, although its title page names the Abbé du Prat. It was swiftly translated into English as *Venus in the Cloister: Or, The Nun in her Smock* and was published in the same year by Henry Rhodes, with another edition, claiming to be the sixth, appearing in 1692. *Venus in the Cloister* can be seen to owe a debt to Chorier, as there is a remarkable similarity between some passages, as will be discussed in Chapter 3 on flagellation.

A number of English works owe a considerable debt to earlier Italian publications, particularly to Aretino's *Ragionamenti* (1534), and the dialogue 'the lives of whores', Franco and/or Veniero's *La puttana errante* also from the 1530s, and Ferrante Pallavicino's *La retorica delle puttane* (1642). These Renaissance publications gave rise to a large number of English adaptations (loose translations with both additions and omissions) such as, respectively, *The Crafty Whore*, the series of pamphlets entitled *The Wandring Whore*, and *The Whores Rhetoric*. In addition, a host of other publications appearing throughout the century, too numerous to list, were inspired either by the Italian originals or by their English adaptations, some written in dialogue form and regaling the reader with racy conversations between whores and their pimps or bawds, or with stories about their lives. Others appeared as catalogues or lists of whores with descriptions of their attributes and where they were to be found, some possibly real, others obviously created with punning names intended for salacious enjoyment. There were also spurious news-sheets such as *Select City Quaeries* and *Poor Robin's Intelligence*, mock-petitions purporting to be from prostitutes, their champions, or their attackers, poems, songs, and so on. A number of texts were translations and/or adaptations of other imported continental works, such as medical books.

⁹⁰ For a brief discussion of the attribution to Chorier, see Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 28.

⁹¹ Foxon, *Libertine Literature*, 9.

⁹² The version used in this book is dated 1740, and is in the British Library.

⁹³ Ravenscroft, *The London Cuckolds*, 2; also cited in Foxon, *Libertine Literature*, 6.

For example, *Rare Verities* is a compilation of parts of Sinibaldus' *Geneanthropeia* and other medical texts, where the author has selected items that deal with sexual matters and woven them together into his own racy version. Such 'borrowing' was not an uncommon feature of early modern writing.⁹⁴ In the context of this literature of sex, this inter-textuality gave an authenticity to the material at the same time as it engendered a sense of familiarity, and hence a veracity, to its content. The texts discussed here, then, are highly variable in terms of origin, format, and style, but share one major characteristic: they are predominantly (but not exclusively) fictional.

The relationship of 'fiction' to 'history' and the problems of using literary sources as historical evidence have long been debated, and writing a history of sex, bodies, and sexuality using primarily fictional sources is clearly problematic.⁹⁵ However, I would maintain that we cannot fully understand contemporary sexual practices without also comprehending the discursive context in which they took place, and that both reflected and informed them. This book is concerned with analysing representations of sexuality and eroticism in historical context to try to tease out contemporary thinking about these subjects, and using contemporary evidence of actual practices where relevant and available to support or inform an interpretation. Whether or not one wishes to regard these texts as further evidence of the reality of seventeenth-century sexual relations and activities, they nevertheless constituted an imagined reality that had to be in some degree believable to its audience. For some feminists, pornography has an especially problematic relationship to reality, interpreted as both cause and effect of women's oppression in a patriarchal society. The pro-censorship lobby argues that pornography is both a literal representation of women's sexual subjugation and denigration, and that it incites further real oppression and violence against women by its effect on its (male) readers. The anti-censorship lobby has argued against this literal reading of pornography, pointing out that pornographic representation is an expression of sexual fantasy, and should not be confused with reality: violence against women and the oppression of women are not caused by pornography, and no scientific study has ever definitively proven that they are.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ See Linda Woodbridge, 'Patchwork: Piecing the Early Modern Mind in England's First Century of Print Culture', *English Literary Renaissance*, 23/1 (Winter 1993), 5–45.

⁹⁵ The literature on the subject is far too numerous to list here, but see, e.g., Peter Laslett, 'The Wrong Way through the Telescope: A Note on Literary Evidence in Sociology and Historical Sociology', *British Journal of Sociology*, 26/3 (1976), 319–42; Christopher Hill, 'Literature and the English Revolution', *Seventeenth Century*, 1/1 (Jan. 1986), 15–30; Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives* (Stanford, Calif., 1987); Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 65/1 (Jan. 1990), 59–86.

⁹⁶ Those studies that purport to do so have been seriously flawed in their construction, and other studies have concluded that there is no such link. Convicted rapists who use pornography have been shown to do so as part of their fantasy life, rather than the pornography causing the violent fantasy that they then acted out. See, e.g., Daniel Linz and Neil Malamuth, *Pornography* (London, 1993), and Gillian Rodgers and Elizabeth Wilson (eds.), *Pornography and Feminism: The Case against Censorship* (London, 1991).

However, this oppositional relationship between fantasy and reality does not take account of psychoanalytical theory that argues that fantasy can be viewed as a dimension of the real, as it constitutes a kind of psychic reality.⁹⁷ In this way we can look at pornography in its historical context as representational of one kind of reality: a discursive reality that constructs scenarios expressive of thoughts and beliefs that held at least some currency, for some people, at the time in which they were produced. Repeated themes and scenarios across genres, written by different authors and printed by different printers at different times, give some clues as to what kind of ideas and fantasies attained common currency, and hence were likely to have meaning and resonance for a significant number of early modern people.

The most obvious variety of repeated imagined sexual scenario that is to be found in a large number of these texts is to do with prostitution. This can be accounted for, to an extent, through the history of pornography: as we have seen, it grew out of a classical and renaissance heritage of whore stories and dialogues. However, this alone is an insufficient explanation to account for the large volume of writing about prostitutes and their lives, which indicates just how popular a genre it was. Furthermore, pornography in this period was developing and moving away from the whore as central character of a narrative, as can be seen in the three major French works, two of which date from the middle of the century. In *The School of Venus* and *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigee*, the main female characters narrating their sexual experiences are not whores, but rather middle- and upper-class women. We can see from the kinds of stories that the women narrate about their lives in these whore narratives, or the stories that are told about them, that these texts have a basis in reality.⁹⁸ Rather than just being fantasies of sexual opportunity, stories of seduction or rape in the household can be seen to reflect the very real dangers for those who worked as domestic servants or apprentices.⁹⁹

The diaries of Samuel Pepys reflect this kind of sexual opportunism, particularly his relationship with his wife's maid companion, Deb Willett, which resulted in

⁹⁷ See Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, 'Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality', in Victor Burgin, James Donald, and Cora Kaplan (eds.), *Formations of Fantasy* (London and New York, 1986), 5–34. For a theoretical dissection of the pro-censorship argument employing psychoanalytical theories of fantasy, see Judith Butler, 'The Force of Fantasy: Feminism, Mapplethorpe, and Discursive Excess', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 2/2 (Summer 1990), 105–25.

⁹⁸ See especially Faramerz Noshir Dabhoiwala, 'Prostitution and Police in London, c.1660–c.1760', D.Phil. thesis (Oxford, 1995), and Paul Griffiths, 'The Structure of Prostitution in Elizabethan London', *Continuity and Change*, 8/1 (May 1993), 39–63, for an excellent comparison of literary and legal sources. See also Griffiths, 'Meanings of Nightwalking'.

⁹⁹ See Tim Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender 1660–1750: Life and Work in the London Household* (Harlow, 2000), esp. 100–17. See also Cissie Fairchild, 'Female Sexual Attitudes and the Rise of Illegitimacy: A Case Study', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 8/4 (Spring 1978), 627–67. Fairchild demonstrates that women in France who worked as domestic servants in the eighteenth century were vulnerable to the sexual advances of both their employers and other male domestic servants.

her dismissal from the household when Elisabeth Pepys caught them together: 'my wife, coming up suddenly, did find me imbracing the girl con my hand sub su coats; and ended, I was with my main in her cunny.'¹⁰⁰ Pepys recognized the precariousness of Deb Willett's position, as he acknowledged: 'I fear I shall by this means prove the ruin of [her].'¹⁰¹ John Dunton in *The Night-Walker* narrated many stories describing the fall into prostitution of women who had been seduced, or raped, and turned out from their homes or positions on being discovered to be pregnant. Even a man whom Dunton accosted picking up a woman in the street says that he had turned to using whores because it was too costly to keep a wife or to seduce his servants:

he told me that truly he saw so many Men ruined either by bad Wives, or such as brought them too many Children, that for his part he was afraid to Marry for fear of being brought into poverty as he had seen many others; and that he had formerly made bold with his *Maids and Housekeepers*, but that they happening either to be with Child or to grow imperious, that was so expensive and troublesome to him, that for some time he had resolved to live upon the Common wherein a Shilling or two and a Bottle of Wine, or sometimes a Quatern of Brandy or two was his ultimate Charge. . . .¹⁰²

Dismissal arising from the discovery of illicit sexual conduct, whether between master and servant or between domestic servants, is frequently represented in these texts as the cause of a woman's 'fall' into prostitution. Similarly, abandonment on discovery of pregnancy following sexual intercourse after a promise of marriage, or loss of reputation on discovery of extramarital sexual activity, is often given as the reason for a young woman's becoming a prostitute:

*she came acquainted with many loose young Women, and Men too; . . . the rest all withdrawing with their Sparks into places which they knew well enough, left her and her Spark together, to whom she became an easie prey, he being too strong for her: And by this means getting an ill name no body would Marry her, and so she was forced into her present employ. . . .*¹⁰³

Dabhoiwala has argued that the prostitute as victim is as much a stereotype as the prostitute as corrupter of innocent young men, but that both had a basis in reality.¹⁰⁴ High levels of bridal pregnancy across Europe at this time also attest to the frequency of premarital intercourse.¹⁰⁵ However, these texts are not

¹⁰⁰ Repys, *Diary*, ed. Latham and Matthews, ix. 337, entry for 25 Oct. 1668.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, ix. 343, entry for 31 Oct. 1668.

¹⁰² John Dunton, *The Night-Walker: Or, Evening Rambles in Search after Lewd Women, with the Conferences Held with Them, &c.* (Oct. 1696), 15.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* (Jan. 1697), 5.

¹⁰⁴ Dabhoiwala, 'Prostitution and Police'. See esp. ch. 1, 'The Pattern of Sexual Immorality'.

¹⁰⁵ Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570–1640* (Cambridge, 1987); Sara Heller Mendelson, "'To Shift for a Cloak': Disorderly Women in the Church Courts', in Valerie Frith (ed.), *Women & History: Voices of Early Modern England* (Concord, Ont., 1995), 3–17; Sandra Cavallo and Simona Cerutti, trans. Mary M. Gallucci, 'Female Honor and the Social Control of Reproduction in Piedmont between 1600 and 1800', in Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (eds.), *Sex & Gender in Historical Perspective* (Baltimore and London, 1990), 73–109; and Rublack, Ulinka, *The Crimes of Women in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford, 1999).

reliable sources for reconstructing a literal view of the world (or underworld) of seventeenth-century prostitution, and should not be taken at face value. The authors of these texts generally have a purpose in what they are writing, whether it is, like Dunton in *The Night Walker* or Cranley in *Amanda*, an ostensibly moral and reforming purpose; or, like Ames in *The Female Fire-Ships: A Satyr against Whoring* (1691), a misogynist, denigrating purpose; or, like the author of *The Wandring Whore*, what seems to be a primarily entertaining and humorous intent.¹⁰⁶ Characters and events are thus presented and constructed in a particular way to support or to make a particular point, or to serve a particular function. Dabhoiwala argues strongly, and persuasively, that Dunton's intention was not pornographic. However, though his intention may have been to produce moral reformation rather than pornography, when his work is placed in the context of other similar works it is clear that it can be read as a pornographic text. The claim of moral reformation was a standard ploy of pornographic texts of this and earlier periods. Whether or not Dunton was sincere in his disclaimer would be of little or no consequence to the reader, who could choose to read it as ironic or sincere (or to ignore it). Moreover, the sincerity of Dunton's motives in producing his short-lived periodical does not alter the fact that his text conveys an eroticism in a manner that would be familiar to the reader from the community of texts in which it can be placed.¹⁰⁷ As Paul Griffiths and others have pointed out, this kind of literature is sensationalized and salacious, whether intentional or not.

Descriptions of people, places, and events, while having some factual basis, should not be read as reportage. A large number of these texts can be seen to be inspired by real events and people. The literature that focuses on prostitution often takes as its central subjects women who are known to have existed and to have plied their trade, or events that are recorded elsewhere as having really occurred. For example, in his diaries Pepys refers to Damaris Page, 'the great bawd of the seamen', and to the riots that occurred when the apprentices pulled down bawdy houses.¹⁰⁸ These events gave rise to a series of mock petitions in 1668 as well as to the publication of subsequent trial reports.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, a

¹⁰⁶ Dunton, *The Night-Walker*; Thomas Cranley, *The Converted Courtezan, Or, The Reformed Whore. Being a True Relation of a Penitent Sinner, Shadowed under the Name of Amanda* (London, 1639); Richard Ames, *The Female Fire-Ships: A Satyr against Whoring* (London, 1696); Garfield, *The Wandring Whore*.

¹⁰⁷ Dabhoiwala, 'Prostitution and Police'.

¹⁰⁸ Pepys, *Diary*, ed. Latham and Matthews, ix, 132, entry for 25 Mar. 1668.

¹⁰⁹ *The Whores Petition to the London Prentices* (London, 1668); *The Poor-Whores Complaint to the Apprentices of London, &c* (London, 1672); *The Citizens Reply to the Whores Petition, and Prentices Answer* (London, 1668); Madam Cresswell and Damaris Page (attrib.), *The Poor-Whores Petition. To the Most Splendid, Illustrious, Serene and Eminent Lady of Pleasure, the Countess of Castlemayne, &c. The Humble Petition of the Undone Company of Poore Distressed Whores, Bawds, Pimps and Panders &c* (London, 1668); *The Prentices Answer to the Whores Petition* (London, 1668); Peter Messenger, *The Tryals of Such Persons as under the Notion of London-Apprentices were Tumultuously Assembled in Moore-Fields, and other Places, on Easter Holidays Last, under Colour of Pulling down Bawdy-Houses. Taken at the Sessions in the Old-Bailey, On Saturday April 4. 1668* (London, 1668). For an excellent

number of texts that reproduced what today might be prosecuted as obscene libel take as their subjects the King's mistresses, Nell Gwyn, Lady Castlemaine, and the Duchess of Portsmouth.¹¹⁰ However, it should be remembered that these are still works of imagination that embroider on real people and events for particular purposes (including sexual titillation). Such characters and episodes might be the starting point for a particular text, but the details given may not necessarily be true.

Hobby and Thompson, as we have seen, interpreted these texts as displaying all the characteristics of a misogyny that can be traced back in writings about women through the renaissance and medieval periods.¹¹¹ Furthermore, the lustfulness of women in this early modern pornography is attributed to an idea of pornography as male fantasy that is therefore expected to depict women as eager and willing for sex with any man (or beast) who wanted it. In this analysis, women are passive puppets merely acting out a male fantasy of desire and sexual willingness, while at the same time being cast as victims of a double standard that consequently condemned them for being sexually active and available. But is this the case? Early modern ideas about female sexuality characterized women as the more lustful of the sexes. It is, therefore, not surprising to find the characterization of women in pornography conforming to this view. However, what is interesting about this literature is that it both conforms in one sense with ideals of patriarchal control and at the same time undermines them. The prostitute, linked to other kinds of civic unrest and disorder, such as drunkenness, rioting, and theft, represents the potential for unruliness and the undermining of authority that threaten the stability of society. A literature that focuses on representing this kind of disruptive behaviour therefore both serves as a warning against it (the overt purpose of some texts) but also paradoxically reproduces it, representing it as common, normal, and endemic (if not as a kind of epidemic) to early modern society. According to Stoller in *Observing the Erotic Imagination*, the two key words to consider in relation to fantasy are 'risk' and 'safety'.¹¹² A fantasy allows the fantasist to explore dangerous scenarios while remaining in control and within the limits of a personal 'comfort zone'. It can be argued, therefore, that these early modern collective fantasies of sexually voracious and active criminal women, disrupting social norms through the freely indulged exercise of their sexual natures, allow

analysis of the bawdy-house riots of 1668, see Tim Harris, 'The Bawdy House Riots of 1668', *Historical Journal*, 29/3 (Sept. 1986), 537–56. Harris does not, of course, discuss these publications in the context of pornography, but Melissa M. Mowry does in *The Bawdy Politic*.

¹¹⁰ See, e.g., *The Duchess of Portsmouth's Garland* (London, 1682; Edinburgh, 1837); *Madam Gwinn Answer to the Dutches of Portsmouths Letter* (London, 1682); *A Pleasant Dialogue betwixt Two Wanton Ladies of Pleasure; Or, The Dutches of Portsmouths Woful Farwel to her Former Felicity* (London, 1685); George, Duke of, Buckingham, *The Lady of Pleasure, A Satyr. By Sir George Etheridge, Knight., in Miscellaneous Works, Written by His Grace, George, Late Duke of Buckingham. Collected in One Volume from the Original Papers* (London, 1704).

¹¹¹ See, e.g., Ian MacLean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* (Cambridge, 1981).

¹¹² Robert J. Stoller, *Observing the Erotic Imagination* (New Haven and London, 1985), 54–62.

the exploration of a fantasy world of sexual incontinence that does not actually disturb the reality of a world in which prostitutes and ‘night-walkers’, fornicators and adulterers, vagrants and masterless men and women could be apprehended and punished.¹¹³ But just as I contend that we can view sexual religious and political satire the other way around—as a way of writing about sex—so this prostitudinal literature can be read in the same way. Prostitutes deal in sex: discussing prostitutes allows description and discussion of sex.

How these texts may have been read, and by whom, is addressed in Chapter 1 on the circulation of texts, which examines the book trade, authors, readers, and the nature of the particular texts that are analysed throughout this book. It has been argued that pornography appeared in significant amounts only after the Restoration, but I demonstrate here that works of a similar nature were being produced throughout the century, and increased in numbers during the Civil War years as the printing trade flourished. There is little evidence to suggest that regulation of the press had much impact on the circulation of texts with a sexual content at this time. Censorship was aimed rather at the regulation of political opinion or unorthodox religious belief (particularly Catholic), or the maintenance of the monopoly on printing of the London printers. Authors and printers did not, therefore, generally conceal their identities to evade prosecution. Neither can we argue for an exclusively male trade of works produced by men for men: women were involved in the print trade and can be identified as printers of some of the items discussed here. Female authors who can be identified with any certainty are rather thinner on the ground, but cannot be entirely ruled out. Identifying readers, and their response to their reading, is a much trickier proposition; Pepys is rare in his recording not only of his purchase of a pornographic text, but also of his reaction to its consumption. Evidence of reading relies upon anecdotal evidence and on interpreting the texts themselves, and how they characterize their anticipated readership to suggest how they may have been read. The material reality of the texts as cheap or expensive consumer items and their pricing goes some way to suggesting which sections of the population might have had access to which texts, as do rates of literacy. However, this was still very much a period in which oral and literate culture, including both manuscript and print, overlapped, so that the inability to read did not necessarily exclude people from access to printed matter: those who could read, read both to those who could not and to those who could.¹¹⁴ Although evidence for a female

¹¹³ On crime and punishment, see, e.g., J. A. Sharpe, ‘Crime and Delinquency in an Essex Parish 1600–1640’, in J. S. Cockburn (ed.), *Crime in England 1550–1800* (London, 1977), 90–109, and J. S. Cockburn, *Crime in Early Modern England 1550–1750* (London and New York, 1984); Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991). See also Dabhoiwala, ‘Prostitution and Police’. All sexual immorality was viewed as socially disruptive, especially when an illegitimate child placed an unwanted burden upon a parish.

¹¹⁴ See Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge, 1994); Adam Fox and

readership is limited (just as it is for real male readers), it is likely that women were not excluded from reading, and enjoyment, of these texts.¹¹⁵ Several of these texts are also addressed specifically to women, and, while this is clearly not necessarily indicative of their expected readership, as authors characterized women's reading and the reading of pornography in particular ways, women may have interpreted such stratagems as nevertheless validating their reading. So what did early modern men and women encounter in these pornographic texts, whether reading themselves or listening as others read aloud?

One of the most significant ways in which I argue that this material is different from modern pornography is in its preoccupation with the theme of fertility. Pornography today is concerned with sex as pleasure, and has separated it from its primary function of reproduction. But seventeenth-century pornography did not do this: sexual pleasure is seen as intimately connected to the possibility of conception. As a consequence, this pornographic literature appears to be quite didactic, emphasizing the importance of, and prescribing, particular kinds of sexual behaviour—those that promoted the possibility of conception. Moreover, the literature does not conform to a modern feminist interpretation of pornography that regards women as the sole, passive sexual objects of description by a male author. Rather, the male body with its important role in conception is equally the focus of the text. These arguments, set out in Chapter 2 but pursued throughout the book over a range of issues, challenge previous historiography, which has maintained that sex changed from an early modern 'polymorphous' sexuality in which a wide range of sexual activities were practised (not necessarily including penetrative sex), to a more restrictive sexuality from the eighteenth century onwards in which penetrative sex took primacy of place. This narrative of change has been used to account for the rising population levels in the eighteenth century (more penetrative sex meant more conceptions) and also for the changing perceptions of female desire and pleasure, in which women became more passive and maternal, losing their early modern lustfulness.¹¹⁶ The evidence of these seventeenth-century texts does not, however, support this narrative of change, as they emphasize the primacy of penetrative intercourse for the purpose of procreation, linking it with political and economic concerns about inheritance and legitimacy. This theme is explored in detail in Chapter 2 and is further developed in Chapters 3 and 4 through exploration of the representation of sexual flagellation and homosexual desire respectively. I argue that seventeenth-century representation of what is now defined as sadomasochistic sexual behaviour is to do primarily

Daniel Woolf (eds.), *The Spoken Word: Oral Culture in Britain 1500–1850* (Manchester and New York, 2002); Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500–1700* (Oxford, 2000).

¹¹⁵ On this point, see also Moulton, *Before Pornography*, who argues for both female readers and authors of English erotic texts.

¹¹⁶ Changing medical and scientific understandings of male and female roles in reproduction also implicated the 'loss' of female sexual pleasure.

with contemporary understanding about the body, desire, and sexual response, and especially, with fertility. It is not, as has been argued previously, about female masochism and power relationships, though the representation of pleasure in cruelty is undoubtedly present. However, the pleasure taken in inflicting pain on another is not represented as solely a male preserve: women are depicted as the instigators of such encounters as well as taking pleasure in actively applying the lash, or watching another do so. Similarly, the representation of homosexual sexual acts also revolves around the issue of fertility. Male homosexual sexual acts are condemned because they are sterile: there is no possibility of reproduction and so are 'unnatural'. Description of sexual acts between women occupy more page space than those between men, but these representations have frequently been dismissed by scholars as of little interest, being simply a staple of the pornographic genre, mere titillation for the male heterosexual reader. Ros Ballaster, Emma Donoghue, and Lillian Faderman have examined some of these early modern pornographic texts as part of their work on 'lesbian' culture and relationships during this period, but generally the genre has been dismissed as confused and illogical in its understanding of sexual relationships between women, reflecting the ignorance of male authors.¹¹⁷ Sex between women is shown as an activity that merely passes the time and that prepares the innocent and inexperienced young woman for the 'real' business of heterosexual sex. Christopher Rivers's essay on the French libertine convent novel of the eighteenth century combines an analysis of sex in the cloister as politico-religious criticism with a wider investigation of questions about sexuality: 'Sex between nuns violates at once the tradition of rigorous denial of female sexual agency, the interdiction of sex outside of marriage, the vow of celibacy imposed by the Church, and the taboo of same-sex sexuality.'¹¹⁸ But the representation of female homosexual acts, of 'lesbian' desire, in these texts is not just about male fantasy and titillation, as is generally asserted today, but rather can be read as having to do with both the origins of the literature in its classical heritage and contemporary understanding of female sexual development and the female role in conception. In other words, paying attention to the contemporary context of understandings about bodies and sex allows a different, more nuanced interpretation, one that is not overshadowed by modern comprehension of lesbian sex in pornography as being 'for' men only.

Chapter 5 looks at the issues of voyeurism and the gaze, and the treatment of space in the context of the public/private debate, and in doing so continues

¹¹⁷ Ros Ballaster, '“The Vices of Old Rome Revived”: Representations of Female Same-Sex Desire in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century England', in Suzanne Raitt (ed.), *Volcanoes and Pearl Divers: Essays in Lesbian Feminist Studies* (London, 1994), 13–36; Emma Donoghue, *Passions between Women: British Lesbian Culture 1668–1801* (London, 1993); Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York, 1981; paperback edn., London, 1991).

¹¹⁸ Christopher Rivers, 'Safe Sex: The Prophylactic Walls of the Cloister in the French Libertine Convent Novel of the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 5/3 (1995), 381–402, at 398.

to develop arguments made in the previous chapters. The idea of privacy and its violation through voyeurism is an integral part of the pornographic and is central to the pleasure of these early modern texts. Voyeurism is an essential component: both the representation of the voyeur within the text itself, which allows the narrator to describe to another sexual scenes that have been observed either deliberately or by chance, and the reader as voyeur reading or looking at the sexual content of the text (which is paradoxically made public as publication). This focus on the importance of looking at the sexual body in order to inspire desire and as a means of knowing the body can be detected in almost every work of every type, and in every theme. This issue thus again highlights the fact that seventeenth-century pornography was rooted in the body, and in contemporary understanding of how bodies work. This may seem self-evident—after all, pornography is about revealing the sexual body—but modern understanding of the pornographic, especially informed by feminist debate and psychoanalytic theory, focuses on psychological interpretations. For example, the representation of flagellation today would be interpreted in the context of the dynamics of power: the enjoyment of domination or submission. The representation of female homosexuality in mainstream pornography today is generally interpreted and understood in terms of the exploitation of female sexuality for male pleasure in a patriarchal culture and male-dominated economic systems. However, in this earlier period, the representation of the naked body, and the body engaged in sexual acts, is connected to how the sexual body was understood to work. Pleasure is connected to conception and reproduction; looking is about desire rather than domination; women are sexually voracious and desiring subjects because that is their sexual nature, not because all pornography necessarily represents women as masochistically eager for whatever dominating men wish to subject them to. Looking at the sexual body and watching the sexual body in action are constructed as central to sexual pleasure, both as a sexual pleasure in itself, and as one that is an incitement to sexual action for the voyeur. These texts legitimize both the pleasure of the reader in reading about sex, by acknowledging and stressing the pleasure of looking, *and* the incitement to sexual action that they may provide.

As will swiftly become apparent throughout the book, a distinctive feature of these seventeenth-century texts is that they are humorous. The comic and the erotic are intimately entwined in the vast majority of texts, whatever their nature, format, function, length, or provenance: there is no split between ‘high’ and ‘low’ forms of literary production. This point further suggests that distinguishing between a ‘high’ or morally superior ‘erotica’ and a ‘low’ morally questionable ‘pornography’ at this time is both spurious and questionable. It is clear that seventeenth-century readers of the pornographic expected to be aroused to laughter as much as to sexual excitement. This important, neglected, aspect of seventeenth-century pornography is explored in Chapter 6, also further developing points made in the previous chapter to do with exposing and looking at the body, as humour is yet another means of uncovering the body. The

final chapter takes this focus on looking to its logical conclusion by examining pornographic pictorial representations as they are deployed in a variety of texts as textual illustrations. Here, arguments made earlier on in this Introduction about the use of metaphor, symbol, and allusion, and their relationship to the explicitness of early modern representations, are explored in more detail, with specific reference to a variety of pictures and to the texts they accompany. It is my contention that, as with metaphorical description in the text, pictorial representations of bodies and sex may not have had to include complete nudity to be considered explicit. Textual illustrations also highlight again the importance of voyeurism to early modern pornography, as they invariably include either the figure of another watching or looking in at the action, or something that performs the same function, such as a statue or carving, or a picture on the wall. The contemporary understanding of the power of descriptions of, and talk about, sex to arouse that has been brought out in the earlier chapters is also developed in discussion within the texts themselves of the power of images to arouse. And, significantly, these early modern texts make no distinction between male and female responses to images, again calling into question modern understandings about male and female responses to pornography and their appropriateness for an understanding of both the pornography of this period and its contemporary reception. The assumption that pornography is by men for men automatically excludes women from the category of those who may possess or enjoy such material. While erotic images of women may be intended primarily for—and in this period, commissioned by—heterosexual men, this cannot preclude women's enjoyment of them, whether through a desiring position or identification with the characters (male or female) depicted. More particularly, the images that appeared in the 1640s and early 1650s that are discussed in some detail in this final chapter and that specifically depict male sexual excitement complicate any assumption of who they were intended for, as does the medium in which they were printed (cheap pamphlets), which would have been available to both men and women at most levels of society, both literate and illiterate.

This book, then, offers an analysis of seventeenth-century pornography that acknowledges wide differences between types of text, but that also finds common links and themes that can be identified not only through content but also through the use of language and metaphor. Seventeenth-century pornography does not demonstrate a timeless, libertine, polymorphously perverse attitude to the sexual body, but rather is concerned to reinforce moral boundaries and to integrate the sexual with the social.¹¹⁹ This material does not describe the libertine expression of unfettered sexual desire, where all sex is good and there are no limits. The range of sexual activities, and the characters shown as enjoying them, are clearly circumscribed. Both explicit and implicit statements in the text give the reader

¹¹⁹ 'Polymorphously perverse' refers to sexuality, usually infantile or puerile, that is characterized by sexual feelings that have no specific object or direction.

clear messages about what is acceptable sexual behaviour and what is not. For example, male homosexuality is unequivocally condemned, there is little that can be described as oral sex, and there is no discussion or representation of sexual acts between adults and children. There is much discussion of the age of sexual maturity for girls and boys in the various texts, and, while it may be slightly lower than our current age of consent (15 rather than 16), it is not significantly so. The literature does not so much reflect a post-Restoration rise in libertinism as aim to restate contemporary moral strictures on sexual activity. It has a temporal and cultural specificity that reflects contemporary thinking about the body, sexuality, and gender relationships. However, while arguing that this material should not necessarily be interpreted as misogynist or as reinforcing the stereotypes of patriarchal culture (which is not to say that it is never misogynist and does not reflect and reinforce early modern patriarchal culture), I am not suggesting that it should be viewed therefore in the opposite way: as portraying positive images of women that celebrate their sexuality, allowing them full expression as autonomous, desiring subjects.¹²⁰ I maintain rather that this material is not reducible to these simple terms: it is a complex body of literature that is different in significant ways from modern pornography. There is a different understanding of bodies and sexuality, which means that there is as much emphasis on male sexuality as there is on female. Representation of the body also focuses as much on the male body, and especially the penis, as it does on the female body. In one of the most important aspects of this early modern pornography, its humour, women are not always the butt of the joke, the focus of male aggression and hostility. Men, too, are mocked and humiliated for their failings, sexual and social. This suggests that seventeenth-century pornography is functional in nature, serving an ideological purpose in seeking to reinforce cultural and social norms. To a degree this is the case, especially where a particular text is making a specific political or religious point. However, these texts are not just in the service of political or religious criticism and may be looked at the other way around: the politics and religion, which are the ostensible point of the text, can be seen as the vehicle for the sex. Moreover, the function of the particular text—religious or political satire, or humour in the case of joke books, for example—can also be viewed as the acceptable contemporary means of putting the discussion and representation of sex into the public domain. But, whatever else it may be doing, this early modern literature provides entertainment and pleasure, both intellectual and erotic, to the reader in the myriad of ways in which it imagines sex.

¹²⁰ For a discussion of early modern texts as validating female desire and sexual agency, see Manuela Mourão, 'The Representation of Female Desire in Early Modern Pornographic Texts, 1660–1745', *Signs* 24/3 (Spring 1999), 573–602.

1

The Circulation of Texts: Publishers and Readers

It is often suggested that pornography in England appeared in any quantity only following the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 and the embracing of a culture of libertinism at the new court. However, material of this nature was being produced well before 1660, throughout this and previous centuries. *The Crafty Whore* published in 1658 was modelled on Aretino's dialogue 'The Lives of Whores' from the *Ragionamenti*, and the English adaptation of Sinibaldus' *Geneanthropeia* entitled *Rare Verities*, a pseudo-medical treatise on sexual matters, appeared in the same year. John Taylor was producing short works that fit into the genre of whore literature much earlier in the century with his *A Bawd* and *A Common Whore* (reprinted in his collected works in 1630). Although there is clearly less of this kind of literature earlier in the century (around 20 per cent of the texts discussed in this book appeared before 1650), with the explosion of print culture that took place during the Civil War years there was a concomitant expansion in the production of literature of a sexual nature. Despite the rise of puritanism to which the licentiousness of the Restoration court is seen as both antidote and reaction, there were still significant numbers of texts produced between 1640 and 1660, especially as political or religious satire that focused on sexual satire as the vehicle for criticism of unorthodox religious groups. It was during this period that the explicit illustrations to the text depicting naked male and female bodies, and showing male sexual excitement, were printed. But the literature of repression can become a literature of licence, as authors were only too aware, such as Nicholas Goodman, who wrote in his preface to Holland's *Leaguer* in 1632:

But you will tell me, to detect sinne is to teach sinne, the discovery of vice like *Hydras* heads, doth rather increase then decrease the vitious, for vertue is seldome found to spring from *Lacedemonian* Tables, and chastity much lesse from *Aretines* pictures; that wicked persons, and wicked actions, should rather bee damn'd in obscuritie, then preserved for eternity, that it is a sinne against piety, to give wickednesse any life of memory . . . ¹

¹ Nicholas Goodman, *Hollands Leaguer: Or, An Historical Discourse of the Life and Actions of Dona Britanica Hollandia the Arch Mistris of the Wicked Women of Eutopia. Wherein is Detected the Notorious Sinne of Panderisme, and the Execrable Life of the Luxurious Impudent* (London, 1632), sig. A3.

Despite such protestations of innocent intent, it is, of course, possible to view these works the other way around: not only are they using sexual satire to denigrate unorthodox religious views (or to attempt to reform the unchaste), but such criticism also allows the production of works of a highly sexual nature. The same applies to political satire. Frequently in the analysis of religious or political satire the vehicle for the satire (the sex) is regarded as unimportant, or incidental. The erotic nature, and sheer exuberant eroticism, of these texts is thus lost in the rush to 'legitimize' them by ascribing a serious other purpose to them (religious or political criticism). But we should not forget that sex has been chosen as the text's content, so they serve not only as satire but also as pornography in the way they incite the reader to imagine the body, and sexual acts and to think about sex. Although the largest number of surviving texts are from the period following the Restoration, there were also a significant number produced before 1660, particularly during the Civil War years. The Restoration period does not so much see the beginning of the production of an English pornographic 'industry' as continue and expand on an already existing tradition of writing and production of printed matter of a sexual nature.

From the incorporation of the Stationers' Company in 1557, printing was restricted to London and to the university towns of Oxford and Cambridge. Although during the Civil War presses were set up in other provincial towns, such as Exeter, Newcastle, York, and Worcester, it was not until the eighteenth century that printing outside London became more firmly established. The book trade outside London was therefore mainly restricted to the role of distribution and selling.² In addition to provincial booksellers, there was a proliferation of itinerant sellers—petty chapmen, hawkers, pedlars, and mercury men and women—who brought printed matter within the reach of both urban and rural communities throughout the country, and whose numbers increased from the 1670s to an estimated 10,000 by the 1690s.³ Printed matter was sold on the streets, in coffee houses, alehouses, markets, and fairs, and might also reach provincial readers through correspondence, particularly news where there was a market for professional or semi-professional newsletter writers, thus overlapping with both manuscript circulation and oral culture.⁴ In London the book trade, both printers and booksellers, was centred around St Paul's Churchyard, which by 1700 had around thirty bookshops, and spilled over into Paternoster Row next to it. But this was not the only place where bookshops could be found, as they flourished to the north of St Paul's in Duck Lane and Little Britain, and in both the City and Westminster in well-frequented areas where they might catch passing trade—busy routes such as Cheapside, Cornhill, Fleet Street, and

² See John Barnard and Maureen Bell, 'The English Provinces', in John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, iv. 1557–1695 (Cambridge, 2002), 665–86.

³ *Ibid.*, 666–7.

⁴ See Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1993), 9–14.

London Bridge, or public spaces like the Royal Exchange, and after 1666 in Covent Garden, when the well-to-do and fashionable moved westwards. It has been estimated that there were over 150 bookshops in London by 1695, though contemporaries put the figure much higher, perhaps including temporary and peripatetic stallholders.⁵ The regulation of the press also included restrictions on the setting-up of presses, and at various times the authorities tried to restrict their numbers to no more than twenty besides the presses at Oxford and Cambridge and the royal printing house at Blackfriars. After the Restoration, when control of the press was re-established, the fifty-three presses operating in 1661–2 were by 1675 reduced to about twenty-three, but numbers immediately increased after 1695 and the lapsing of the Licensing Act, reaching at least sixty-two by 1705.⁶ The diversity of printed texts discussed in this book is reflected in the variety of printers and booksellers and their locations identified in the imprint, ranging from as far afield as Smithfield to St Paul's Churchyard and Westminster.

Did particular printers and booksellers specialize in producing such material?⁷ Peter Wagner describes Henry Rhodes, who published an English translation of Barrin's *Venus in the Cloister* in 1692, as specializing in erotica.⁸ However, Plomer describes him as a prolific publisher of miscellaneous works.⁹ Of the texts for which there is a publisher's imprint, Rhodes is named only as the printer of *Coffee-House Jest*s (4th edition, 1686) and *The London Jilt: Or, The Politick Whore* (1683).¹⁰ In the same way as the texts vary in size, format, genre, and price, so there is no clear pattern of publication. From the small amount of information about who printed what that is available, it is clear that a variety of printers printed and sold a variety of works. Conforming to the London near monopoly of the trade, the vast majority of texts were printed in London, with only a very small number coming from sources elsewhere. The texts that were printed outside London signal their origins in an obvious fashion: *Bristol Drollery* (1674) was printed in Bristol, *Norfolk Drollery* (1673) was printed in Norwich,

⁵ Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago and London, 1998), 66, citing Michael Treadwell, 'The English Book Trade', in R. P. Maccubbin and M. Hamilton-Phillips (eds.), *The Age of William III and Mary II: Power, Politics and Patronage 1688–1702* (Williamsburg, 1989), 358–65.

⁶ Johns, *The Nature of the Book*, 72.

⁷ In this period little distinction was made between the publishers (i.e. printers) of texts and the sellers of those texts (i.e. bookshops/booksellers). I will therefore refer to 'publishers' for convenience, rather than distinguishing between printer and bookseller. It is not unusual to find partnerships or 'consortiums' of printers and booksellers who together printed and sold particular items, so referring to a 'publisher' or group of 'publishers' simplifies the issue.

⁸ Peter Wagner, 'Anticatholic Erotica in Eighteenth-Century England', in Wagner (ed.), *Erotica and the Enlightenment* (Frankfurt and New York, 1991), 166.

⁹ Henry Plomer, *A Dictionary of the Booksellers and Printers who were at Work in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1668 to 1725* (Oxford, 1922), 252.

¹⁰ The full title of this work is *The London Jilt: Or, The Politick Whore. Shewing All the Artifices and Stratagems which the Ladies of Pleasure Make Use of for the Intreaguing and Decoying of Men; Interwoven with Several Pleasant Stories of the Misses Ingenious Performances* (London, 1683). It is by Alexander Oldys.

Oxford Drollery (1679) was printed in both Oxford and London, and reports of the trial and execution in Dublin of John Atherton, Lord Bishop of Waterford and Lysmore (1641), came from Dublin. Only one or two printers can be seen to produce particular kinds of text, and these were not the only kinds of material that they produced. For example, the satirical character sketches *The Character of a Town-Gallant* (1675) and *The Character of a Town-Misse* (1675) seem to have come from the same source, identified only by the initials W.L.;¹¹ Thomas Fox printed both William Hicks's *Grammatical Drollery* (1682) and Charles Cotton's *Erotopolis*; and T. Passinger printed both *The Dutchess of Portsmouths Farewel* (1685) and *The Academy of Complements: Or, A New Way of Wooing* (1685). However, Passinger obviously did not have a monopoly on satirical sexual slander of the Duchess of Portsmouth, as *A Pleasant Dialogue betwixt Two Wanton Ladies of Pleasure; Or, The Dutchess of Portsmouths woful Farwel to her former Felicity*, also dated 1685, was printed by I. Deacon, and other such titles from the early 1680s come from a variety of other printers. Edward Crowch is identified as the printer of two texts: *A Dialogue between Mistris Macquerella, a Suburb Bawd, Ms Scolopendra, a Noted Curtezian, and Mr Pimpinello an Usher, &c.* (1650) and *The Merry Dutch Miller: And New Invented Windmill* (1672). The twenty-two-year gap between these two publications does not suggest specialization. In 1649 Crowch was bound over for printing seditious pamphlets, so clearly had other, political, printing interests, and little concern was shown about those publications of a sexual nature (though *A Dialogue between Mistris Macquerella* . . . can, of course, be read as a political pamphlet, as it was sending up the passing of the 1650 Act against adultery).¹²

The exception to this rule appears to be Thomas Palmer. From an advertisement in a copy of William Hicke's *Oxford Drollery*, printed in Oxford but sold at two booksellers in London, it is possible to infer that he made a point of advertising books of a sexual nature—or that at least suggested in their titles that this was the nature of their content. The advertisement lists four books, two of which suggest that they are anti-Catholic religious sexual satire: 'Rome exactly Described, or a Relation of the present State of that Court . . . in two curious Discourses', and 'Putanism de Roma, or, The History of the whores and whoredoms of the Popes Cardinals and Clergey of Rome, discovered by a Conclave of Ladies, convened for the Election of a new Pope'. Both these texts are advertised for sale at 1s 6d. At the same price, the advertisement also advertises a version of *Rare Verities. The Cabinet of Venus Unlocked, and her Secrets Laid Open*, which is entitled *Venus Cabinet Unlocked, and Natures Chief Miracles Laid Open, Being a Curious Collection out of the Two Eminent Physicians Levinus Lemnius and Sinibaldus*, translated by a Doctor R. Miller. The word 'curious' in a title seems to signal sexual content in the same way as does 'Aretine' or 'Aretino'. The final work, advertised at a price of 1d, is *Cupid's Courtship, or*

¹¹ I have not been able to identify W.L. in Plomer, *Dictionary*.

¹² Plomer, *Dictionary*, 58.

the Celebration of a Marriage between the God of Love and Psyche in a Droll-Poem by the Author of the English Rogue. The subject matter, Cupid, son of Venus, and the advertised genre, 'Droll-Poem', together with the reference to the author by a previous title that has a high sexual content, suggests to the reader that this is a title that similarly will be of a sexual nature.¹³ A reader who was familiar with such titles, and who perhaps frequented 'Thomas Palmer *at the Sign of the Crown in Westminster-Hall*', might also be aware of another of his titles from 1673, Baltheo de Montalvan's *Naked Truth*, an extended religious sexual satire playing on sexual interpretations of religious language that is both humorous and sexually titillating. Although this is but one example that clearly is not representative, it suggests that at least one bookseller thought that it was profitable to try to entice readers to his shop through advertising a stock of books for sale that were clearly of a sexual nature.

But the most notable group of texts that carry the publisher's imprint also seem to have been produced by the same small group of printers. This group of texts was produced mostly in the early 1640s and 1650s and satirizes unorthodox religious groups such as Adamites, Ranters, and Shakers. These texts are particularly noteworthy because they included, unusually for the time, sexually explicit pictures. Even if the text itself was not particularly focused on the (alleged) sexual activities of these groups (though it usually was), the explicitly sexual nature of the frontispiece would influence any reading of it. Bernard Alsop, J. C. (who is likely to have been John Crouch the printer, who included anti-sectarian sexual slander in *Mercurius Democritus, Or, A True and Perfect Nocturnall* (1653)) and George Horton all produced several of these texts.¹⁴ This suggests that there was a small group of printers who were particularly interested and involved in producing anti-sect literature that was sexually explicit and titillating (other printers also produced similar texts, though without the explicit illustrations). George Horton, in particular, printed pamphlets attacking both Ranters and Quakers.¹⁵ It has been argued that these texts may describe completely fictitious events and characters, so adding to the suspicion that they are indeed more erotic fantasy for entertainment and sexual titillation than serious description of religious aberration.¹⁶ These pictures are discussed in Chapter 7.

¹³ On drolleries and drolls, see Turner, *Libertines and Radicals*, 172.

¹⁴ George Horton, for example, also printed *The Black and Terrible Warning Piece. Or, A Scourge to Englands Rebellion* (London, 1653), which is in the same anti-sectarian vein, alluding to witchcraft, etc.

¹⁵ Though named on several publications in both 1650 and 1654/5, George Horton's name does not appear among the 'List of English Printers 1649–50' in Henry R. Plomer, *A Short History of English Printing 1476–1898* (London, 1900), 221–3. A number of those named as the printer on these pamphlets do not appear in Plomer's list. For example, there is also no R.H. in this list for this time, but there is a Richard Hodgkinson listed in 1668.

¹⁶ See David Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissension* (Oxford, 2000), ch. 15, 'The Adamites Exposed: Naked Radicals in the English

As remarked earlier in the discussion of definitions of pornography in the Introduction, one of the ways in which a definition has been constructed is through illicit publication. However useful this may be in helping us to understand what the authorities considered to be unacceptable obscenity in the seventeenth century, as a means of categorizing pornography in the period it is woefully lacking, being both partial and inconsistent. The system of licensing lapsed and was reimposed at different times throughout the seventeenth century, but does not seem to have stopped such material being available, or from circulating, however illegally. In 1637 a decree of Star Chamber ordered the licensing and entering of books at Stationers' Hall, but it was abolished in 1641 only for the Stationers' authority to be restored by ordinance two years later. A regulating Act in 1649 and the Licensing Act of 1662 were both intended to restore control of the press, but this finally lapsed in 1695. There is little evidence, however, to suggest that the licensing system was used specifically to suppress literature that had a sexual content in the seventeenth century. Rather, it was concerned to regulate the expression of dissident political opinion or unorthodox religious belief (particularly through the dissemination of Catholic books), or to maintain the monopoly on printing of the London printers, but 'was essentially *ad hoc*, inconsistent, opportunistic and usually ineffective'.¹⁷ One of the main concerns of the authorities was to do with the sale of illegally printed or imported Bibles and psalms that had been produced more cheaply abroad.¹⁸ Action taken against printers and booksellers for 'obscene' publications were a minuscule proportion of the authorities' attempts to regulate the press. David Foxon in *Libertine Literature in England, 1660–1745* has recorded variously: the imprisonment of John Garfield for writing *The Wandring Whore*; the shutting-down for several hours of a bookseller in January 1677 for having copies of *L'Escole des filles* and *Aloyisiae Zigaëoe Amores*—the bookseller did not believe that they were prohibited in England; a fine of 40s imposed on John Wickins in 1683 for printing *The Whore's Rhetorick*, an English adaptation of Ferrante Pallavicino's *La retorica delle puttane* of 1642 published under the pseudonym 'Philo-Puttanus'; prosecutions in 1688 of Joseph Streater for *The School of Venus* and *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid*, of Benjamin Crayle 'for selling several obscene and lascivious bookes', and of Francis Leach for the poems of the Earl of Rochester (though Streater and Crayle appear only to have been

Revolution', 251–80, esp. 265. Also J. C. Davis, 'Fear, Myth and Furore: Reappraising The "Ranters"', *Past & Present*, 129 (Nov. 1990), 79–103.

¹⁷ John Barnard, 'Introduction', in Barnard and McKenzie (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Book*, 3. See also Christopher Hill, 'Censorship and English Literature', in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill* (Brighton, 1985), 32–71; Nigel Smith, (ed.), *Literature and Censorship* (Cambridge, 1993); Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison and London, 1984); and Susan Wiseman, *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1998).

¹⁸ Barnard and Bell, 'The English Provinces', in Barnard and Mckenzie (eds.), *Cambridge History of the Book*, iv. 680–1.

fined—40s and 20s respectively—for *The School of Venus* alone).¹⁹ Streater and Crayle were prosecuted again in 1689, this time for printing Rochester's *Sodom*.²⁰

However, this clearly did not stop these works either being available for purchase or circulating in manuscript: Foxon, for example, finds that *The Whore's Rhetorick* was advertised in February 1684 in the *Term Catalogue* despite the fining of John Wickins for printing it in 1683, and, while Edmund Curll was fined for publishing *Venus in the Cloister* in 1725, he claimed in his defence that Henry Rhodes had been able to publish it in 1683 without consequence. Curll was also prosecuted at the same time for his 1718 English translation of Meibomius' *De flagrorum usu, A Treatise of the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs*, which had first appeared in Latin on the Continent in 1639, and then again, in an edition corrected and added to by his son, in Frankfurt in 1670. The original Latin version had also circulated in England without suppression by the authorities in the seventeenth century.²¹ Nor did it mean that booksellers did not openly display them for purchase, as can be seen from Pepys's diary entry recording his purchase of *The School of Venus* in 1668. That *The School of Venus* was freely available for purchase in at least one bookshop in the late 1660s (and therefore very probably in others both at the time and after that date) undoubtedly contributed to the understanding of the bookseller whose shop was closed down in 1677 that this was not an illegal work. The law appears not to have been used at all against smaller pamphlets (apart from Garfield's *The Wandring Whore* in 1660), chap-books, or news-sheets, which were produced in much greater numbers and had a correspondingly wider circulation and content of an equally salacious nature.²² More interestingly, those few works that were published with explicit pictures illustrating the content of the text appear to have circulated freely. During the 1640s and 1650s a number of texts that purported to reveal the activities of sects such as Adamites and Ranters, and that were illustrated with woodcuts depicting naked men and women (the men frequently with flagrantly displayed erect penises), were printed and circulated apparently without any attempt at either suppression or retribution against the printers and sellers. It has been pointed out that regulation of the press was virtually impossible to enforce, given that there were always various ways in which it could be evaded: clandestine printing presses, the printing of books abroad and smuggling them into the country, private circulation of manuscripts, and so on.²³ Seventeenth-century writers such as Milton, in *Areopagitica* (1644), argued that censorship was ineffective, and

¹⁹ Quotation cited in Foxon, *Libertine Literature*, 11.

²⁰ There is no extant printed version of the play. See *Rochester*, ed. Lyons, 312–14.

²¹ Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 164–5.

²² For example, the short weekly periodical *Mercurius Fumigosus, Or The Smoking Nocturnall, Communicating Dark and Hidden Newes out of all Obscure Places in the Antipodes, either in Fire, Aire, Water or Earth. For the Right Understanding of all the Mad Merry People in the Land of Darkness* appeared regularly between 1654 and 1660. This publication is almost completely given over to material of a sexual nature, and reads rather like a modern tabloid.

²³ See Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation*, 12.

modern historians of the book such as D. F. McKenzie have pointed to 'the relative inefficiency of control'. There was, then, also a large black market for unlicensed printed works.²⁴ In the first decade of the eighteenth century, the inconsistency in selecting items for prosecution can be noted more clearly, as a charge was brought against the publishers of *The Fifteen Plagues of a Maidenhead* (1707), while others of the same type published both earlier in the seventeenth century (*Fifteen Real Comforts of Matrimony* (1683), *The Fifteen Comforts of Rash and Inconsiderate Marriage* (1694)), and at the same time in the eighteenth century, escaped censure. Similarly, John Marten was indicted in 1709 for publishing his *Gonosologium novum* (1709), a further disquisition on venereal disease following an earlier treatise of c.1704. But why this particular work should have drawn attention when others of the same nature (including the earlier treatise by the same author, which was reprinted in a sixth edition in 1708, attesting to its popularity, and which contained a discussion of other means of contracting venereal diseases such as through buggery and oral sex, including homosexual oral sex) escaped the attention of the law is an issue that a study of content alone is unlikely to resolve.²⁵

Censorship could not be applied in any systematic way to works that were circulated privately in manuscript within small circles, such as Rochester's *Poems* or the dramatic work *Sodom*, although some censoring of works could be applied by those who copied manuscripts before circulating them, altering the meaning.²⁶ In 1685, when only manuscript or illegally printed versions of Rochester's *Poems on Several Occasions* were available, an edition was prepared for sale that was rewritten to tone down the sexual content as well as omitting nine of the poems.²⁷ But manuscript circulation, or 'scribal publication', of works did not mean either that they necessarily had a very restricted readership or that authors could evade prosecution, so it was not necessarily a preferred medium for 'sensitive' material.²⁸ Harold Love has argued that 'scribal publication, operating at relatively lower volumes and under more restrictive conditions of availability than print publication, was still able to sustain the currency of popular texts

²⁴ D. F. McKenzie, 'The London Book Trade in 1644', in McKenzie, *Making Meaning: Printers of the Mind and Other Essays*, ed. Peter D. McDonald and Michael F. Suarez (Amherst, Mass., 2002), 126–43, at 137. See also Robertson, *Obscenity*, 19.

²⁵ Details of prosecutions from Foxon, *Libertine Literature*, 12–13. John Marten, *A Treatise of all the Degrees and Symptoms of The Venereal Disease, in both Sexes* (6th edn., London, 1708), 68.

²⁶ In this way it has been argued that a kind of 'corporate' authorship was created in which the precise identification of particular authors was not as important as we might think it is today. See Paul Hammond, 'Anonymity in Restoration Poetry', *Seventeenth Century*, 8/1 (Spring 1993), 123–42, and his 'Censorship in the Manuscript Transmission of Restoration Poetry', in Smith (ed.), *Literature and Censorship*, 39–62.

²⁷ Harold Love, 'Refining Rochester: Private Texts and Public Readers', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 7/1 (1996), 40–9, at 43–6.

²⁸ Sheila Lambert cites the case of Edmund Peacham, who was sentenced to death for treason for writing a sermon that he had neither delivered nor reproduced in print. See Sheila Lambert, 'State Control of the Press in Theory and Practice: The Role of the Stationers' Company before 1640', in Robin Myers and Michael Harris (eds.), *Censorship and the Control of Print in England and France 1600–1900* (Winchester, 1992), 1–32, at 6.

for very long periods and bring them to the attention of considerable bodies of readers'.²⁹ Some authors may not have moved from manuscript to print simply because of the prohibitive cost of printing, rather than any concerns over either wider distribution or potential censorship.³⁰ This might then have been a preferred method of circulation, and not intended only for those in a tight-knit social circle (although it may well have enabled to some extent more control over circulation, if not over content), so that manuscript circulation continued to exist alongside printed publications, and oral culture, throughout the seventeenth century. This was 'a society in which the three media of speech, script, and print infused and interacted with each other in a myriad ways', so that those who could not read were not excluded from print culture.³¹ Manuscript publication was not then necessarily a preferred means of publication for texts of a sexual nature in this period.³²

It has been suggested that authors and publishers hid names and places of publication in order to avoid being identified, and hence possibly prosecuted, as the source of particular publications.³³ However, in this period in England, this categorization by clandestine publication does not work, although it is more relevant on the Continent, where authors hid real identities behind spurious attributions with good cause: *L'Escholle des Filles* was burnt in Paris in 1655 and the alleged author condemned to be hanged. First, although the 1637 Decree of Star Chamber ordered that all books must carry the name of the printer, with the abolition of Star Chamber in 1640 regulation of publishing lapsed. Further regulation was reimposed in 1643 and 1647, but the Civil War meant that control was difficult to implement effectively. The explosion of print that occurred during the Civil War years reflects this, and can be seen most clearly in the huge difference between the tiny number of pamphlets and news-sheets (22) collected by George Thomason at the beginning of the Civil War period in 1640, and the enormous number he had collected by the time of the Restoration (22,000).³⁴ In at least one year over 2,000 titles were published, but this rate of production was not maintained consistently throughout the Civil War years.³⁵ Strict regulation was re-enacted in 1662 after the Restoration, which again limited the number of printers who were licensed

²⁹ Love, *Scribal Publication*, 38.

³⁰ McKenzie, 'The London Book Trade in 1644', in McKenzie, *Making Meaning*, 131–2.

³¹ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England*, 5.

³² For a discussion of sexual representation in manuscript literature, see Moulton, *Before Pornography*, ch. 1, 'Erotic Writing in Manuscript Culture'.

³³ See Hunt (ed.), *Invention of Pornography*; Kearney, *History of Erotic Literature*.

³⁴ See Plomer, *Short History of English Printing*; Jerome Friedman, *Miracles and the Pulp Press during the English Revolution: The Battle of the Frogs and Fairford's Flies* (London, 1993), esp. ch. 1. It has also been noted that Thomason collected only around 60% of those datable to 1642. See D. F. McKenzie, 'Printing and Publishing 1557–1700: constraints on the London Book Trades', in Barnard and McKenzie (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Book*, 553–67, at 561.

³⁵ McKenzie, 'The London Book Trade in 1644', in McKenzie, *Making Meaning*, 129.

to trade, but in practice the law was flouted. Furthermore, it was not unusual for publishers and authors *not* to identify themselves on the texts they produced, whatever their nature, and frequently only a date and place appears.³⁶ McKenzie argues that authors and printers did not choose to remain anonymous to evade censorship; it was a long-established convention and 'a normal expression of the general pattern of trade'.³⁷ For example, he estimates that in 1644 only 46 per cent identified a printer, 32 per cent a bookseller, and 40 per cent an author; 22 per cent identified neither a printer nor a bookseller.³⁸ Where only the year of publication is noted, it is likely that this indicated that the costs of printing had been borne by the author rather than a deliberate attempt to avoid identification of either printer or bookseller. The use of anonymity might have served numerous functions, including non-attribution to a single author when a text might have been the result of a multi-authored collaboration. An implied authorship might also bestow legitimacy on a text, especially when it was a loose adaptation of a well-known original, such as with *Aristotle's Masterpiece* (obviously, Aristotle), *The Whores Rhetorick* (Pallavicino), and *Rare Verities* (Sinibaldus). Anonymity in any case did not ensure that an author could not be identified, and the use of satirical pseudonyms and imprints might be designed not so much to hide authors and printers as to be yet another way of engaging with the reader who colludes 'in the process of concealing and revealing'.³⁹

On the occasional publication the imprint was used as a further means of continuing, and advertising, the sexual satire and innuendo of the text itself, as, for example, on *The Good Womens Cryes against the Excise of all their Commodities* (1650), where the publisher is identified thus: 'WESTMINSTER: Printed at the Signe of the *Hornes* in *Queen-street*, neere my Lord *Fairfax's* House, and are to be sold at the *Dildoe* in *Distaffe-Lane*'. Such satirical imprints were a common device in the period, and this essential ingredient of the pamphlet's title page thus provides another opportunity for the author to tell the purchaser and reader what he or she could expect to find inside its pages: sexually suggestive writing (signalled by the frequently used double-entendre of 'Commodities' (vaginas), the use of '*Queen-street*' and '*Distaffe-Lane*' to suggest prostitution, '*Hornes*' to suggest cuckolding, and, most explicitly, '*Dildoe*') and pro-Royalist political satire (signalled by the identification of place of printing as Westminster and the reference to Lord Fairfax). But, as Adrian Johns points out, these jokes also

³⁶ See Plomer, *Short History of English Printing*; Friedman, *Miracles and the Pulp Press*.

³⁷ McKenzie, 'Printing and Publishing 1557–1700', 564. In his essay on 'The London Book Trade in 1668', McKenzie notes that of the extant items published that year over 54% were printed anonymously. McKenzie, *Making Meaning*, 109–25, and 'The London Book Trade in 1644', 130.

³⁸ McKenzie, 'The London Book Trade in 1644', in McKenzie, *Making Meaning*, 131.

³⁹ See Marcy L. North, *The Anonymous Renaissance: Cultures of Discretion in Tudor-Stuart England* (Chicago and London, 2003), 90.

'reflected a real truth about the culture in which it seemed funny enough to be worth telling'.⁴⁰ Jokes and their possible meanings will be discussed in Chapter 6. These stratagems suggest that publishers could easily avoid identifying themselves on items that they considered risky to publish, and, if pornographic texts were considered to fit such a category, then one might expect this to be the route most publishers took. In fact, the opposite appears to be the case.

While a large number of these texts appear without a named printer or bookseller, those that might be considered the most obviously pornographic, and that are usually referred to in this context, *do* carry the publisher's imprint. As noted above, Henry Rhodes did not hide his publication of *Venus in the Cloister* in either 1683 or 1692; Humphry Mill's *A Nights Search Discovering the Nature, and Condition of Night-Walkers with their Associates* (1640), usually regarded as one of the antecedents of Dunton's *The Night-Walker*, names the printer and bookseller, as does Dunton's text at the end of the century.⁴¹ The printer is also named, for example, for: *Rare Verities* P. Briggs); *The Crafty Whore* (Henry Marsh); *The Sixth Part of the Wandring-Whore Revived* (John Johnson, 1663); *The English Rogue* (Francis Kirkman, 1668; Anne Johnson for Francis Kirkman, 1680); *Whipping Tom Brought to Light, and Exposed to View* (Edward Brooks, 1681); *The Whores Rhetorick* (George Shell—though this may be a false imprint); *Fifteen Real Comforts of Matrimony* (Benjamin Alsop); *Aristotles Master-Piece* (J. How, 1684; another edition dated 1698 also identifies the printer by the initials BH); *Nugae Venales* (Edward Poole, 1686); *The Fifteen Comforts of Rash and Inconsiderate Marriage* (William Croke and Matthew Gillyflower).⁴² Printers clearly did not feel any need to hide the origins of these works and were not deterred from printing by any moral objections to their content. Neither were authors forced to avoid print circulation.

Although the majority of named printers of these texts are male, they are not exclusively so. The London book trade may have been male dominated, but numerous women participated, not only in their own right as owners of a business but also as partners or assistants to fathers or husbands. It was common practice for a widow to take over the running of a business on the death of her husband.⁴³ A number of the printers who produced these texts were succeeded by their

⁴⁰ Johns, *The Nature of the Book*, 74.

⁴¹ Richard Bishop for Laurence Blacklock at the Sugar-loafe next Temple-Barre, and James Orme in St Bartholomew's-Hospital respectively.

⁴² Plomer gives information about the sorts of books printed and sold by particular printers and booksellers, which indicates that, while a particular printer might have specialized to a certain extent, for example, in producing Greek and Latin texts or law books, he or she would also print other items. Foxon suggests that the Shell imprint may be false. Foxon, *Libertine Literature*, 10.

⁴³ See Paula McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace 1678–1730* (Oxford, 1998), esp. ch. 1: 'Women in the London Book Trade', 33–62. See also Plomer, *Dictionary*. Plomer indicates when a particular printer was succeeded by his widow in several cases—for example, Thomas Passinger was succeeded by his widow Sarah in 1689.

widows, and one or two were, like Anne Johnson above, named in the imprint. Although the evidence is therefore slim, it does not seem to be the case that texts of a sexual nature were produced solely *by* men.⁴⁴ The question of whether they were produced *for* men will be addressed in the discussion of the possible readers of these texts below. More significantly, those who were prosecuted for printing or selling these books clearly did not attempt to do so in secrecy, as they were identified for prosecution: John Wickins for *The Whores Rhetorick* in 1683, Joseph Streater and Benjamin Crayle for *The School of Venus and Sodom*, Francis Leach for Rochester's *Poems on Several Occasions*. It would seem, then, that authors, printers, and booksellers did not expect that producing or selling works with a sexual content, however explicit, would inevitably lead to prosecution, and at least one bookseller, as we have seen, did not expect to be shut down in 1677 for stocking what were regarded as two of the most 'lewd' books originating in the period, *The School of Venus* and *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigee*. Of all the items discussed in this book (including jest books and some medical and midwifery texts), around 60 per cent identify a printer, even if only by initials. A far smaller number, around 27 per cent, identify the, usually male, author either by name or initial, excluding those who used a pseudonym.⁴⁵ Turner in *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London* suggests that 'the improbable-sounding book-lists in the University of Love serve as a catalogue of the underground book trade newly burgeoning in London', but, as this discussion of printers, authors, booksellers, and regulation has demonstrated, this was very far from being an 'underground' trade.⁴⁶

That the Restoration period is credited with a flowering of licentiousness suggests that not only was there a noticeable expansion in production at this time, but that the nature of the material produced after 1660 is likely to be substantially different from what came before it. Are post-Restoration texts different from those that were pre-Restoration? Some differences can be discerned, but there is little that marks a major shift in either style or content, except, arguably, a shift towards greater explicitness as the century progresses. But even this can be contested: Nashe's *The Choice of Valentines (or the Merry*

⁴⁴ For example, the 'R. Bonwicke' listed among the publishing group responsible for reprinting editions of Charles Cotton's works at the beginning of the eighteenth century is Rebecca Bonwicke. See Plomer, *Dictionary*.

⁴⁵ Although the majority of texts do not identify the author, of those that do, the overwhelming majority are male. The only woman to be identified as the author, or editor, of a text that is not a midwifery book is Aphra Behn. However, this authorship (of *Fifteen Real Comfords of Matrimony. Being in requital of the Late Fifteen Sham-Comfords . . . Written by a Person of Quality of the Female Sex* (London, 1683)) is an attribution and is not stated on the text itself. Paul Hammond has questioned the attribution to Aphra Behn of the collection *Covent Garden Drolery* (1672), arguing that the initial 'A' has been mistakenly substituted for 'R'. See Hammond, 'Anonymity in Restoration Poetry', 142 n. 46.

⁴⁶ Turner, *Libertines and Radicals*, 126. The list of books is the one cited from *The Practical Part of Love* in the introduction. Mourão also uncritically embraces this idea of the trade as one that is underground, neglecting to take account of differences between the book trade in France and England. See Mourão, 'The Representation of Female Desire in Early Modern Pornographic Texts'.

Ballad of Nash his Dildo), which dates from the end of the sixteenth century, is quite explicit, and the pamphlets satirizing religious sects that date from 1641 are very explicit indeed, depicting, as they do, both naked male and female bodies, and particularly the male body clearly in a state of sexual excitation. Religious sexual satire continued to be published throughout the century, though no longer with the explicit woodcuts that illustrated the pamphlets of the 1640s and 1650s. The difference between the earlier pamphlets from the Civil War years and those that were printed later in the century is therefore both in the lack of explicit imagery and in the specific subject matter. The earlier texts from the 1640s and 1650s focus on Ranters, Shakers, Adamites, and Quakers, reflecting the proliferation of unorthodox ideas and beliefs in the wake of disagreement about how the Laudian Church should be reformed, while the later texts, in the decades after 1660, tend mostly to satirize Quakers, perhaps in reaction to their greater longevity, persistence, and growth in the face of persecution (numbers nationally rose to possibly as many as 60,000 in the 1660s).⁴⁷ However, the language used, the puns and double entendres, and the kinds of sexual behaviour that are attributed to these dissident groups are remarkably similar. The same can be said for the prostitudinal literature, which increased in quantity rather than changed in nature as the century progressed (although its content was shaped by the particular political and social climate in which it was published).⁴⁸ Some kinds of text were obviously popular as the format was used and reused: the mock petition, the character sketch, the dialogue, and so on. One text that appears to have no similar antecedent for at least its first part is Charles Cotton's *Erotopolis*, which appeared in 1684.⁴⁹ This first part is an extended topographical metaphor and was clearly very popular, as this kind of text was developed and elaborated on well into the eighteenth century in works such as Thomas Stretser's *Arbor vitae: Or, The Natural History of the Tree of Life* (1741). However, although this first part seems unique, the rest of the text is an extended narrative describing a 'ramble' through the streets and whore-houses of the city, another popular form of erotic narrative throughout the century, exemplified in the late 1690s by Dunton's *The Night-Walker*, and perhaps modelled on an earlier text, Richard Head's *The Floating Island*, dated 1673.

Reflecting the fact that all this material encompasses a wide range of sources, the texts as physical objects came in all shapes and sizes, ranging from cheap ephemeral publications (which have nevertheless managed to survive from the seventeenth century into the twenty-first century, albeit probably as a tiny

⁴⁷ Barry Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (London, 1985), 27; John Spurr, 'From Puritanism to Dissent, 1660–1700', in Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (eds.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700* (Basingstoke, 1996), 234–65.

⁴⁸ See Melissa Mowry's analysis of political prostitudinal pornography in *The Bawdy Politic*.

⁴⁹ Although there are certain similarities with Richard Head's pseudonymous (writing as Franck Careless) 1673 work *The Floating Island: Or A New Discovery, Relating the Strange Adventure on a Late Voyage from Lambethana to Villa Franca, alias Ramallia, to the Eastward of Terra del Templo*.

proportion of the numbers actually printed in the period) to highly expensive, leather-bound editions incorporating additional illustrations.⁵⁰ They range, for example, from a cheap, single printed sheet such as *Poor Robins Intelligence, or, News from City & Country, On Fryday, July 17th, 1691. Number 2* (1691), which recounts in humorous style full of innuendo and double entendre the amorous escapades of various characters in different locations around London; to an expensive leather-bound version of Chorier's *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, attributed to Joannis Meursius entitled *Joannis Meursii elegantiae latini sermonis*, containing all seven dialogues in the original Latin, dated c.1690, and which includes a frontispiece and thirty-one plates of explicit representation of a variety of sexual acts, not all of which are illustrative of the contents of the text.⁵¹ The texts were printed in a wide variety of formats, reflecting the wide variety of genres in which they were written. Many were quarto or octavo, but there were also a number in large folio (mostly expensive medical texts intended for a specialist library rather than for personal possession) or small duodecimo, which could be carried in a pocket. The length of the texts also varied enormously: ballads, poems, or songs and short narratives could be on single sheets; short pamphlets or news-sheets and periodicals varied from four to eight or ten pages. Longer works in narrative or dialogue format also differed substantially in length: Baltheo de Montalvan's prose dialogue *Naked Truth* (1673) has 67 pages, while Chorier's *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* numbers over 300. Head and Kirkman's *The English Rogue* has around 300 pages per volume and is in four parts.

Variations in price reflected this variation in length, format, and type of work, although specific price information for most of these texts is not available. Roger Thompson tells us that copies of *The School of Venus* were found in 1688 priced from 2s 6d to 6s. John Dunton's *The Night-Walker*, printed monthly at the end of 1696 and the beginning of 1697, sold for 6d, as did his *The He-Strumpets: A Satyr on the Sodomite-Club* (4th edition, 1710). A collection of poems and 'drolleries', *Delight and Pastime* (1697), had a price of 1s, while a 1718 edition of Meibomius' *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs* (first published in Latin in 1639) printed by Edmund Curll was priced at 3s. Chapbooks, ballads, and news-sheets, smaller and more cheaply printed, cost 1d or 2d, so could be afforded by those with less disposable income.⁵² Larger, more expensive works would be beyond the purchasing power of those lower down the social scale, though how a purchaser chose to have a book bound would have an impact

⁵⁰ See Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550–1640* (Cambridge, 1991). Watt estimates the survival rate for ballads at around 1 in 10,000, and notes that a survival rate for newsbooks from 1620–42 has been calculated at 0.013 per cent.

⁵¹ There is no printer name, date, or place of publication on this edition of Chorier's text, but the British Library catalogue dates it as c.1690. I have not used this version of the text, but I have discussed some of the plates in Chapter 7 on illustrations.

⁵² Roger Thompson (ed.), *Samuel Pepys' Penny Merriments* (London, 1976), Introduction, 11–12.

on its price.⁵³ Pepys, as we have seen, selected a cheap, plain binding when he purchased *The School of Venus* in 1668, rather than a more expensive binding, as he did not intend to keep it.⁵⁴ Books and other printed matter might also be more or less expensive depending on the type, or grade, of paper used. It was not until the second half of the sixteenth century that England began to develop its own paper industry, and, even though by the 1670s the industry had expanded sufficiently to produce both brown paper for packaging and poorer-quality white paper, imports still supplied at least a third of requirements. The finer quality paper for writing and printing continued to be imported from abroad.⁵⁵ Books printed on better-quality paper as well as bound in leather rather than cloth and board would be items purchased by those who were not only able to purchase them in financial terms, but who were also willing to make such expenditure on this type of luxury goods.

Although the much cheaper items priced at *1d* or *2d* could be afforded by those working for wages lower down the social scale, who was likely to have sufficient disposable income to purchase such ephemera? In the early part of the seventeenth century wages were low. Those who worked in poorly paid occupations such as labouring, either in the building trade or in agriculture, and where they were unlikely to be fully employed all year round, probably earned no more than around £9 or £10 a year. These earnings were barely sufficient to keep themselves and their families, and this sector of the population was thus highly unlikely to have income to spare for the purchase of non-essential items such as printed matter.⁵⁶ However, after 1650, the position improved, as stagnation in population growth and a fall in the price of grain meant that there was a rise in the standard of living, even for the poorest. While wages did not rise particularly fast, their purchasing power did increase significantly, and, for those able to work, and to find and keep regular work, their spending power was no longer confined to subsistence level, but could be stretched to include other consumer goods.⁵⁷ The period also saw the growth in numbers of 'the middling sort', the more prosperous tradespeople and manufacturers, farmers and those who provided professional

⁵³ It would also have an impact on the nature of the book itself, as a purchaser might choose to have several works bound together in one volume. A particular text might therefore need to be read in the context of those that accompany it. See Barbara M. Benedict, *Making the Modern Reader: Cultural Mediation in Early Modern Literary Anthologies* (Princeton, 1996). Leather for book covers was expensive, so leather binding increased the cost of a book again. See Miriam J Foot, 'Bookbinding', in Barnard and McKenzie (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Book*, 620–31, at 622.

⁵⁴ See Pepys, *Diary*, ed. Latham and Matthews, ix, 58, entry for 8 Feb. 1668. It was forbidden to import already bound books, so it was usual to have to choose a binding for a book originating from the Continent.

⁵⁵ C.G.A. Clay, *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500–1700*, ii, *Industry, Trade and Government* (Cambridge, 1984), 38–9.

⁵⁶ Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven and London, 2000), 195.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 229–31.

services such as in the law and medicine, whose ability to afford new consumer goods correspondingly increased. This term disguises the wide variations in social standing and wealth experienced by this sector of the population poised between the landed gentry and the labouring poor, but even the less well off were able to afford a standard of living that allowed for the acquisition of inessential consumer items, reflected in the evidence of inventories detailing the increasing levels of domestic comfort provided by items such as linens, clocks, china, and books.⁵⁸ The second half of the seventeenth century saw an increasing demand for reading matter, particularly from the propertied members of this sector of the population, and changes in the book trade came about as a result.⁵⁹ The sale or auction of libraries of books following a death also meant that there was a second-hand market that could be afforded by those who otherwise might not purchase them new, and such sales increased as the century progressed.⁶⁰ A significant proportion of young women, and men, worked in service, whether in the household as domestic servants or as servants in husbandry in agriculture.⁶¹ The seventeenth century saw the expansion of towns and cities, and with this expansion came a growing demand for servants who were able to ask for higher wages, though in cash terms these were still low.⁶² Service for women was usually a stage on the way to adulthood, and wages would be saved to enable marriage and the setting-up of one's own household. Although servants received bed and board as part of their employment and therefore might have had disposable income, the need to save for marriage suggests that it is unlikely they had money to spare for books, or even cheap pamphlets or single-sheet publications, even though they might have been able to read.⁶³ Masters and mistresses would, of course, be concerned at the type of reading matter consumed by their servants or apprentices, intending reading to be for their right education and spiritual development. Lady Anne Clifford, for example, bought devotional books for her household and estate workers.⁶⁴

So who did read these books and pamphlets? Evidence of real readers is scant, and, as Robert Darnton has remarked, 'we can only guess at its effects on the hearts and minds of the readers'.⁶⁵ In the absence of sufficient historical evidence about

⁵⁸ Keith Wrightson, 289–306. See also Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660–1760* (London, 1988).

⁵⁹ James Raven, 'The Economic Context', in Barnard and McKenzie (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Book*, 568–82, at 571–2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 575–6.

⁶¹ A. Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1981).

⁶² Pepys records having to pay more to a new cook-maid in 1663: 'This morning came a new Cooke-maid at 4*l* per annum, the first time I ever did give so much—but we do hope it will be nothing lost by keeping a good cook' (Pepys, *Diary*, ed. Latham and Matthews, entry for 25 Mar. 1663). iv. 86.

⁶³ Though Fox cites Gervase Markham arguing in his *The English Husbandman* (1635) that servants in husbandry had no need of literacy. Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, 20.

⁶⁴ Barnard and Bell, 'The English Provinces', in Barnard and McKenzie (eds.), *Cambridge History of the Book*, 685.

⁶⁵ Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers*, 85.

real readers to assert confidently a particular constituency of readers for the titles discussed in this book, we must turn to the evidence of the texts themselves, and to external clues, such as consumer behaviour and literacy, to construct a putative readership and to attempt to gauge its reactions. Pepys's diary is a rare recording of the purchase, reading, and reaction to reading of a 'lewd' book from the period. John Cannon's diary provides other evidence of reading for sexual stimulation, as he recorded using his mother's midwifery book as an aid to masturbation.⁶⁶ How common or widespread a practice this was is impossible to ascertain, but may have been more usual than we might expect, given that contemporaries of Culpeper condemned him for writing 'obscene' books, and midwifery texts were more generally regarded as repositories of female sexual knowledge.⁶⁷ Margaret Spufford similarly found very little direct evidence for the readers of the cheaper publications, ballads, and chapbooks, priced at 6d and under, which are known to have penetrated further afield into rural areas through chapmen, pedlars, and hawkers, but argues that they were directed at a very broad readership, both urban and rural, 'from merchants to apprentices in towns, and from country-farmers to day-labourers in the countryside'.⁶⁸ Few women in the period recorded their reading, and even fewer recorded their recreational reading. One of the few seventeenth-century women to have recorded her recreational reading in her diary was Lady Anne Clifford (1590–1676), but she was exceptional.⁶⁹ This reading included Ovid and Chaucer, both of whom included the explicitly sexual in their writing. However, Ian Moulton has found that, in manuscript culture, erotic writing was 'pervasive', with erotic poems (some ascribed to women) included in collections of other types of poetry. Women included erotic satires and sexual jokes in commonplace books, including, for example, Thomas Nashe's *A Choice of Valentines*.⁷⁰ In France, correspondence revealed the scandal at court when one of the maids of honour was discovered to have a copy of *L'Escole des filles*, but there is no record of how she may have responded to her reading.⁷¹ We can perhaps safely assume that women enjoyed sexual jokes as much as men (through oral circulation if not through the reading of jest books), as Sir Nicholas L'Estrange recorded several examples provided by his mother, and, as Moulton has demonstrated, included them in commonplace books.⁷² But such reliable evidence is limited.

⁶⁶ See Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, 28–9. For other, earlier examples of reading 'the dirty bits', see Andrew Taylor, 'Reading the Dirty Bits', in Jacqueline Murray and Konrad Eisenbichler (eds.), *Desire and Discipline: Sex and Sexuality in the Premodern West* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London), 280–95.

⁶⁷ On Culpeper, see Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology*. Eccles quotes a contemporary writer who refers to Culpeper as producing obscene texts (p. 13).

⁶⁸ Spufford, *Small Books*, esp. ch. 3; see p. 51.

⁶⁹ Jacqueline, Pearson, 'Women Reading, Reading Women', in Helen Wilcox (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1500–1700* (Cambridge, 1996), 80–99, at 83–4.

⁷⁰ Moulton, *Before Pornography*, 54–64.

⁷¹ Turner, *Schooling Sex*, 112.

⁷² Spufford, *Small Books*, 79 n. 60.

There is, however, a great deal of unreliable, anecdotal evidence, which can be found in much of the literature of the period. Women are described reading erotic works, such as Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, and their behaviour being influenced by this reading. Edward Ravenscroft in his play *The London Cuckolds* (1682) had one of his characters tell another that he caught 'two young wenches, the eldest not above twelve, reading the beastly, bawdy translated book called *the Schoole of Women*'.⁷³ In *The Parliament of Women* (1684) girls were said to learn more 'either by discourse among themselves, or else by reading *Aristotles Problemes*', so that they 'know as much at Thirteen as if they had been Mid-wives of twenty years standing'.⁷⁴ Such comments constructed midwives as experts in female sexual knowledge and the secrets of women's bodies, and works of midwifery, alongside female gossip, as the means of disseminating this information. This also repeats a comment in Edward Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds*: 'Girles now at sixteen are as knowing as Matrons were formerly at sixty, I tell you in these days they understand *Aristotle's Problems* at twelve years of age.'⁷⁵ But reading about sex did not only transmit sexual knowledge; it was understood also to arouse sexual passion. Lady *Nimble-Clack* in *The Parliament of Women* describes how *The School of Venus* stimulated her desire, while *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* was 'so ravishing' that she felt she had indeed been ravished.⁷⁶ *Eschole defilles*, *Ragionamenti D'Areino*, and *Aloysia sigea* were all identified as books that women desired to read, both for sexual knowledge and for sexual stimulation.⁷⁷ In *Letters Written from New-England, A.D. 1686* John Dunton recorded an American woman wishing to purchase *The School of Venus*.⁷⁸ However, such references should not be taken as evidence that young girls and women really were reading these texts, though it is entirely possible that some did. Rather, in such satirical contexts, these references serve as shorthand to emphasize women's lustful nature, their weaker self-control, and hence their susceptibility to being led astray by their unsupervised reading. Similarly, attributing the reading of such texts to someone, male or female, is sufficient to call into question his or her reputation and seriousness of purpose, as does the author of *An Answer to Doctor Chamberlaines Scandalous and Faslse [sic] Papers* (1650). It is alleged that he reads '*Areino and Aristotles Problems*', hence confirming the imputation of debauchery.⁷⁹

Several of these seventeenth-century pornographic texts were explicitly addressed to women for their education in sexual matters, or as exemplary figures in the world of 'Venus'. However, the fact that a text was ostensibly

⁷³ Ravenscroft, *The London Cuckolds*, 2; also cited in Foxon, *Libertine Literature*, 6. The reference is to Chorier's *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*: the French version, *L'Académie des dames*, was translated into English as *The School of Women*.

⁷⁴ *The Parliament of Women*, 29.

⁷⁵ Ravenscroft, *The London Cuckolds*, 2.

⁷⁶ *The Parliament of Women*, 30–2.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Cited in Turner, *Libertines and Radicals*, 5.

⁷⁹ Philalethes, *An Answer to Doctor Chamberlaines Scandalous and Faslse [sic] Papers* (London, 1650), 2.

addressed to a female readership can be misleading. An explicit dedication does not guarantee an intended readership—if that is, in fact, the intended readership. A dedication to ‘the most famous University of London-Courtezans’ is clearly ironic when it is qualified by the question ‘if it be true, that evry [*sic*] thing does naturally tend to its proper sphere’.⁸⁰ It is more likely that this witty introduction was a joke, meant more for the entertainment of the reader than to suggest that the author really aimed his book at the whores of London. The joke works on the assumption that the reader was, of course, not a prostitute, at the same time as it implied that the reader was a whore for reading a book about prostitutes and sex that was ostensibly aimed at prostitutes. Similarly, when a text was dedicated to one of the King’s mistresses, it is more likely that this dedication was intended as an implicit criticism of notorious sexual licence rather than as a desire for that particular woman to read the work. It has been suggested that dedications to women could legitimate their reading, and that some women did interpret them in this way.⁸¹ But, more generally, women’s reading was not unproblematic. On the one hand, it could have an uplifting, moral purpose, providing spiritual and moral guidance through the reading of devotional and prescriptive literature; on the other, if unsupervised, it could, through the reading of unsuitable works such as erotic poetry, romances, and plays, serve to lead her astray and put dangerous and unsuitable thoughts and beliefs into her head. Louis XIV clearly thought that *L’Escole des filles* was utterly unsuitable reading for young women, as not only was the particular maid of honour who was discovered to have the book expelled from her position, but also all the others (although the book was apparently given to her by a man rather than acquired by her own choosing).⁸² It was thought that women’s reading should be directed and not left to her own judgement.⁸³ In pornographic writing, books dealing with sexual matters were represented as eminently suitable reading for women, as they were both educational and likely to arouse sexual feelings. In the same way as prescriptive literature for women recommended suitable reading that would encourage the virtues of modesty, piety, chastity, and obedience, so pornographic literature sometimes represented itself as a kind of sexual prescriptive literature for the education of women and with its own set of recommended reading.⁸⁴ But such representations are clearly problematic, as they attempt to characterize both women’s reading and the reading of pornography in particular ways. The suggestion that such reading can be educational and beneficial for women (and so indirectly benefit a husband) was surely yet another facet of an author’s traditional *apologia*, however ironic, in which he claimed a moral purpose in writing what some may view as obscene or licentious material and likely to incite the reader to debauchery. But it also

⁸⁰ *The Whores Rhetorick*, The Epistle Dedicatory.

⁸¹ Pearson, ‘Women Reading’, 89.

⁸² Turner, *Schooling Sex*, 112.

⁸³ Pearson, ‘Women Reading’, esp. 81–2, 85–6.

⁸⁴ See Ruth Larson, ‘Sex and Civility in a 17th-Century Dialogue: *L’Escole des Filles*’, *Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature*, 24/47 (1997), 496–511; and Turner, *Schooling Sex*, 106–64.

linked female learning with sexual knowledge, and contemporary analogies of female speech with sexual looseness. Reading and whoring, as implied by *The Whore's Rhetorick*, became interchangeable.

In the introduction to *The Invention of Pornography*, after narrating how Pepys bought and reacted to reading *The School of Venus*, Lynn Hunt goes on to assert: 'Respectable men (not to mention women) did not collect works known to be "mighty lewd" in their libraries, though they often did seek them out for their own private pleasures.'⁸⁵ This, however, is clearly not true: if books and pamphlets from the period had not been collected by a variety of people, it is unlikely that any would still be in existence today. The little knowledge we do have of who might have read such books comes from information gained from inventories, so that we can see that 'respectable men' did indeed include such works in their libraries or collections of books. A large number of the texts discussed in this book as pornography were collected in the seventeenth century by George Thomason and are available to the modern scholar in the Thomason Collection at the British Library (and via the Internet through Early English Books Online). Roger Thompson has compiled information from library and sale catalogues in *Unfit for Modest Ears*, which indicates that owners of such books were indeed respectable men, many of them either clergymen or from strong religious, often Puritan, backgrounds.⁸⁶ In 'The Puritans and Prurience: Aspects of the Restoration Book Trade' Thompson lists, for example, Thomas Barlow, Bishop of Lincoln, as the owner of a copy of *La Puttana errante*.⁸⁷ Pepys also had a copy of *La Puttana errante* (though, like *L'Escholle des filles*, he did not keep this in his collection of books, supporting Hunt's assertion in this particular case that respectable men did not keep such books in their libraries) and Rochester's *Poems on Several Occasions*.⁸⁸ Roger Thompson also records Anthony à Wood as possessing one part of *The Wandring Whore* and Lord Burghley a copy of Aretino's *Ragionamenti*, among other contemporaries possessing works as various as Sinibaldus' *Geneanthropeia* and *The London Jilt*. Of the owners of works that Thompson has traced, he defines eight as 'aristocrats or gentlemen, ten bourgeois and one came from yeoman stock'.⁸⁹

Although we may assume that such men read the books they bought or acquired, ownership of books does not, of course, mean that they were read, though comments in commonplace books and on flyleaves indicate that some clearly did read them, as do references to these books in works by other authors.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Hunt (ed.), *The Invention of Pornography*, 20.

⁸⁶ Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 197–207.

⁸⁷ Thompson, 'The Puritans and Prurience', 47.

⁸⁸ Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 198.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁹⁰ For a discussion of book ownership, see Peter Clark, 'The Ownership of Books in England, 1560–1640: The Example of Some Kentish Townsfolk', in Lawrence Stone (ed.), *Schooling and Society: Studies in the History of Education* (Baltimore and London, 1976). See Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 198–9.

Books had other meanings and functions too. They could be given as gifts or passed on in bequests, so held as items of sentimental value, ornament, or status. A Bible, particularly, could be a valued family item in which family history could be traced through the recording of births, marriages, and deaths. It has also been suggested that, in a period in which belief in witchcraft and the Devil was as strong, firm, and real as belief in God, a Bible would have symbolic value as a charm to ward off evil and offer healing and protection.⁹¹ Analysis of inventories of women's possessions show that they were as likely to own books as men, though few women had their own library. Ann, Countess of Coventry, had a substantial collection, which included a wide variety of works, including plays by Aphra Behn and Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds*, which mentions Chorier's *The Schoole of Women (The Dialogues of Luisa Siged)*.⁹² Women may have had access also to collections owned by a husband, father, or other male relative. However, not only does ownership of books not necessarily indicate reading ability; it also indicates the potential reading matter and skills of only a very small section of the population: those with sufficient possessions to warrant an inventory or listing in a will.⁹³

Although there is general agreement that levels of literacy in the population as a whole had risen by the end of the seventeenth century, there was also enormous variation depending on social class, gender, and regional location.⁹⁴ There were higher levels of literacy in urban centres such as London, where there were greater opportunities for learning basic literacy skills, as well as more demand for those skills, not only in the trades and professions but also from servants, as discussed above. More men were literate than women (around 30 per cent compared to 10 per cent), though these are averages, and there was wide variation between counties as well as between urban and rural areas, and between the beginning of the century and the end, by which time Fox has argued that 'it may reasonably be assumed that England was a society in which at least half the adult population could read print'.⁹⁵ Though still in fewer numbers than men, more women in London could read than women living in the provinces. It is also difficult to measure literacy when it is likely that a person might be able to read but not write, though it can be assumed that all those who could

⁹¹ David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980), 51–2. On the various uses of religious printed matter, see also Alexandra Walsham, "'Domme Preachers'?: Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the Culture of Print', *Past & Present*, 168 (Aug. 2000), 72–123.

⁹² Pearson, 'Women Reading', 82.

⁹³ See Clark, 'The Ownership of Books', 98–101.

⁹⁴ Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*; Margaret Spufford, 'First Steps in Literacy: The Reading and Writing Experiences of the Humblest Seventeenth-Century Spiritual Autobiographers', *Social History*, 4/3 (Oct. 1979), 407–35, and Spufford, *Small Books*; Lawrence Stone, 'The Educational Revolution in England, 1560–1640', *Past & Present*, 28 (July 1964), 41–80.

⁹⁵ Evidence of literacy taken from ability to sign one's name. Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*, 2. See also Spufford, 'First Steps in Literacy', 407–35, and Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England*, 19.

sign their name could read, as it is understood that reading was usually taught before writing in this period.⁹⁶ Margaret Spufford has argued that those who had the opportunity to attend school at the age of 6 or 7 were likely to be able to read, while those who could attend until 8 years old or more would be able to write as well.⁹⁷ Prescriptive literature aimed at those employing servants often prescribed teaching servants basic literacy, and sometimes also basic numeracy.⁹⁸ Pepys, for example, even taught his boy, Will, some Latin.⁹⁹ A male child who could continue to attend school after the age of 8 would have learned Latin, and, if he attended a Grammar School, he would have learned both Latin and Greek. It was unusual for girls to be taught academic subjects such as classical languages. They might rather be taught French.¹⁰⁰ Translating was thought to be suitable for women, and some women who did publish, did so as translators. Many women with academic accomplishments were the daughters of learned men or of rich men who employed tutors.¹⁰¹ In a household such as the Pepys's, where a lady's maid could be afforded in addition to other servants, the ability to read and write was likely to be a requirement for such a position. For example, Deb Willett, who was taken on as maid companion to Elisabeth Pepys, was able to write, though not as well as she might have wished, as we can see from the occasion of her distress when unable to do so: 'I called Deb to take pen, ink, and paper and write down what things came into my head for my wife to do, in order to her going into the country; and the girl writing not so well as she would do, cried . . .'.¹⁰² Spufford has also argued that a 'trickle-down effect' of semi-educated children into the lower social classes meant that illiterate groups came to contain literate members who could influence the skills of those around them, and bring them into contact with print culture, by reading aloud to their peers, and cites examples of literate labourers who did so.¹⁰³ It was common practice to read aloud to others, whether in the home or in public spaces such as marketplaces, barbers' shops, and the newly proliferating coffee house from mid-century. This was a way of consuming printed and manuscript texts that brought 'everyone into the ambit of the written word'.¹⁰⁴ Not everyone yet

⁹⁶ Moira Donald, however, has challenged this orthodoxy of the early modern attainment of literacy. I am grateful to Moira for many conversations on this point.

⁹⁷ Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*, 29; Spufford, 'First Steps in Literacy', 410; Stone, 'Educational Revolution'.

⁹⁸ See, e.g., *The Compleat Servantmaid, Or The Young Maidens Tutor* (London, 1685).

⁹⁹ Pepys, *Diary*, iv. 236, entry for 20 July 1663.

¹⁰⁰ Suzanne Hull, *Chaste, Silent & Obedient: English Books for Women 1475–1640* (San Marino, 1982), 2–13. Some families educated their daughters in the classics, but this would have been a very limited number and only in the higher social classes.

¹⁰¹ Lisa, Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (London, 1983), esp. ch. 2.

¹⁰² Pepys, *Diary*, ed. Latham and Matthews, ix. 143, entry for 31 Mar. 1668.

¹⁰³ Spufford, *Small Books*, 32. Spufford notes that 15% of labourers were able to sign their names between 1580 and 1700 and were therefore also likely to be able to read.

¹⁰⁴ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, 37.

practised silent reading, and many texts lent themselves to being read aloud in both style and format, in the case of the dialogue format perhaps by more than one person.¹⁰⁵ Ballads and jokes, of course, occupied an indeterminate cultural space where they circulated in print, scribal, and oral forms, crossing over from one into the other and back again.¹⁰⁶ In an era of low literacy, the traditions of oral culture continued alongside the newly burgeoning print culture, so that those unable to read kept abreast of current events, news from home and abroad, and the latest songs and stories through hearing them repeated, recited, and sung about in alehouses, marketplaces, fairs, and the new coffee houses. But it was not only the illiterate who participated in oral culture; those much higher up the social scale and who moved in court circles also exchanged news, gossip, scandal, or the latest verse and ballads by mouth, as well as through the printed word.¹⁰⁷ Pepys refers on numerous occasions to the singing of ballads and songs in company, and also in court circles, including the King.

What does all this information about levels of literacy, ownership of books, the availability of formal education, and the distribution of printed matter tell us about the potential audience for the variety of material discussed here as pornography? First, although the potential individual reading audience may have been only a small proportion of the population as a whole, in practice some texts would have been available to a larger audience (to what Chartier has termed 'communities of readers') through the persistence of oral culture throughout the seventeenth century, and the practice of reading aloud, not only to those who could not read themselves but also to other readers.¹⁰⁸ Secondly, the potential audience for such works would also be dictated by the nature of the written object itself. A work in Latin such as Chorier's *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* would be restricted to a predominantly (if not exclusively) male readership from the upper echelons of society, who had both the education and the disposable income to purchase such an expensive item. However, it would become available to a wider audience, both male and female, on translation into English, though probably still restricted to a certain extent by cost. An English printed loose translation, or adaptation, of Chorier's text was available in England by 1684. As we have seen earlier, from the example of Pepys and his purchase of *The School of Venus* in 1668, a more expensive text could become a cheaper item if purchased in a cheaper binding, thus bringing it within the purchasing range of a larger number of people. Many other texts that included Latin and Greek

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. ¹⁰⁶ See *ibid.* for the interchange between oral and literate cultures.

¹⁰⁷ Harold Love, 'Oral and Scribal Texts in Early Modern England', in Barnard and McKenzie (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Book*, 97–121, at 101. See also Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*.

¹⁰⁸ Chartier, *The Order of Books*. See also Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (eds.), *A History of Reading in the West*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge, 1999); Cressy, *Literacy and Social Order*; James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor (eds.), *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge, 1996); Jonathan Barry, 'Literacy and Literature in Popular Culture: Reading and Writing in Historical Perspective', in Tim Harris (ed.), *Popular Culture in England, c.1500–1850* (Basingstoke, 1995), 69–94.

quotations might be thought to be aimed only at an educated male audience, who would have the learning to understand fully the meaning of what they were reading.¹⁰⁹ However, many such books and pamphlets also included English translations of the quotations, so these books were not entirely exclusive to a particular, educated, elite; rather they were likely to have been aimed at a very broad readership with varying levels of literacy.¹¹⁰ Elizabeth Tebeaux, in her discussion of women and technical writing, has shown how books aimed at women generally avoided the use of Greek and Latin, as did women who wrote books.¹¹¹ Latin was the language of the learned, and of scholarly writing. To write in Latin was therefore to write for a particular sector of the reading public, and to claim respectability and classical authority for the work in question.¹¹² In *The Parliament of Women* Latin is described as ‘the *Language* of the *Whore*’ in a reference to *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* (1660), reminding the reader of such a work’s long classical heritage.¹¹³ But, at the same time as it restricted any potential readership (to educated, wealthy men), writing in Latin also paradoxically widened it. Latin also operated as an international language, so that such texts would not require translation before being published in other countries, facilitating their availability to a supranational audience.¹¹⁴

At the other end of the scale, small pamphlets, news-sheets, chapbooks, and ballads would have reached a much wider audience, encompassing all sections of society, and including women.¹¹⁵ These items could have achieved a wide distribution throughout the country through the pedlars or chapmen who hawked their wares throughout early modern England.¹¹⁶ They would also have been passed around and read (or sung) in marketplaces, inns, and coffee houses as

¹⁰⁹ See Peter Burke, ‘“Heu domine, adsunt Turcae”: A Sketch for a Social History of Post-Medieval Latin’, in Burke, *The Art of Conversation* (Ithaca, NY, 1993), 34–65.

¹¹⁰ Lambert notes that Robert Burton translated most of his Latin quotations, including some passages from Aretino, hence bringing an acquaintance with classical and Renaissance literature within the reach of those without a knowledge of the classics. Lambert, ‘State Control of the Press’, 5.

¹¹¹ Tebeaux, ‘Women and Technical Writing’, 29–62.

¹¹² In her essay ‘Humanism, Politics and Pornography in Renaissance Italy’, Margaret Jacobs quotes the 1563 *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, which allowed that ‘ancient books written by the heathens may by reason of their elegance and quality of style be permitted, but by no means read to children’. Thus, by appealing to the classical heritage, authors implied they were writing in a tradition that was acknowledged to be respectable and permitted. In Hunt (ed.), *Invention of Pornography*, 49–108, at 55.

¹¹³ *The Parliament of Women*, 31.

¹¹⁴ See Burke, ‘Heu domine’, esp. 35–7.

¹¹⁵ Spufford, *Small Books*. Pamela Allen Brown also points out that there is a significant amount of evidence, literary and anecdotal, that ballads enjoyed circulation in all ranks of society. Pamela Allen, Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep: Women, Drama, and the Culture of Jest in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 2003), 25.

¹¹⁶ See Tessa, Watt, ‘Piety in the Pedlar’s Pack: Continuity and Change, 1578–1630’, in Margaret Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520–1725* (Cambridge, 1995), 235–72. See also Michael Frearson, ‘The Distribution and Readership of London Corantos in the 1620s’, in Robin Myers and Michael Harris (eds.), *Serials and their Readers 1620–1914* (Winchester and New Castle, Del., 1993); Michael Harris and Alan Lee (eds.), *The Press in English Society from*

well as in the household in the evening, reaching both those who could read and those who could not.¹¹⁷ Research on coffee-house culture has shown that women both frequented, owned, and ran these establishments, so would have had access to such reading matter both directly and indirectly.¹¹⁸ The relative cheapness of coffee as a drink also meant that men and women of quite modest means could have access to printed material in this environment.¹¹⁹ So, although it is likely that the majority of readers were male, especially at the more expensive end of the market, and for those imported texts in Latin, French, or Italian, we should not ignore the probability of a female readership, however small or indirect.¹²⁰ And pictures illustrating a text could be 'read' by all, male and female, young and old, educated and uneducated.

The wide variety of texts, then, in addition to the general lack of restriction on the circulation and availability of this kind of printed matter, means that pornographic writing in the seventeenth century must have reached a correspondingly varied audience, including both men and women, and those who could read and those who could not. What this audience might have understood this material to mean, and how they may have interpreted it, will be discussed in the following chapters.

the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries (London and Toronto, 1986); and Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641–1649* (Oxford, 1996).

¹¹⁷ For example, Helen Berry argues for a large circulation for John Dunton's *Athenian Mercury* (1691–7), using a network of contacts and booksellers around the country and coffee houses, in addition to the female hawkers who distributed it on the streets of London. Helen Berry, '“Nice and Curious Questions”: Coffee Houses and the Representation of Women in John Dunton's *Athenian Mercury*', *Seventeenth Century*, 12/2 (Autumn 1997), 257–76, at 258.

¹¹⁸ Steve Pincus, '“Coffee Politicians Does Create”: Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture', *Journal of Modern History*, 67 (Dec. 1995), 807–34, esp. 815–16.

¹¹⁹ Pincus, 'Coffeehouses', 833–4.

¹²⁰ Spufford in *Small Books* argues for a female readership, although also based on little direct evidence.

2

‘What a Fountain of Joys’: Reproduction and Sexual Pleasure

It seems to be stating the obvious to say that pornography in the twenty-first century is about sex but not about reproduction. In the modern pornographic text (whether visual or literary) sex is represented as being for pleasure in itself, and is divorced completely from its primary purpose, the reproduction of the human race. To modern eyes, pornography and the discussion and representation of reproduction (including issues to do with the care of the woman during pregnancy, childbirth, post-parturition, and lactation) are mutually exclusive, despite having a common subject matter: sex. This was not the case, however, in early modern England, where representations of sex and the sexual body were not yet divorced from their purpose of ‘generation’.¹ It is not only that the outcome of the act of intercourse was expected to be pregnancy in a period in which known methods of contraception could not be relied upon always to be successful, but that complete sexual pleasure was understood to require conception to occur.²

Many analyses of early pornography are often ahistorical in this respect, assuming that pornography represents the pleasures of the sexual body in isolation from its function of reproduction for the pleasure of the reader or viewer. This assumption may owe something to the fact that much of this material is writing (purportedly) of or about prostitutes, reflecting the etymological origins of the word ‘pornography’ and its historical roots as a variety of literature. A literature about prostitutes immediately suggests a genre in which sex will be represented as for pleasure alone: a prostitute supplies sex as a commodity (and ‘commodity’ was a common early modern term for the vagina, emphasizing the idea of sex as transaction) rather than as a means of producing a child. One would expect, therefore, any reference to conceiving a child to be as an occupational hazard,

¹ ‘Generation’ is the term used for reproduction in the early modern period. See Barbara Duden, *The Woman beneath the Skin: A Doctor’s Patients in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1991), 28, esp. n. 99, 205; and Elizabeth B. Gasking, *Investigations into Generation 1651–1828* (London, 1967), introduction.

² However, see John M. Riddle, ‘Oral Contraceptives and Early-Term Abortifacients during Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages’, *Past & Present*, 132 (Aug. 1991), 3–32. Herbs such as rue, savin, and pennyroyal with their contraceptive or abortifacient properties also appear in early modern medical books and herbals. See also P. P. A. Biller, ‘Birth-Control in the West in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries’, *Past & Present*, 94 (Feb. 1982), 3–26.

rather than as an integral part of the pleasure of sexual intercourse. Sometimes this is indeed the case, but more usually the contemporary theory of the barrenness of whores is propounded in a variety of texts, from the medical to the comical. The assumption that pornography is about pleasure for its own sake can also give rise to a taxonomical problem for the modern analyst of this material. These seventeenth-century texts do not conform to modern ideas about the nature of pornography, where even pornographic texts define sexual intercourse as being for the purpose of procreation. In this context, the author of a selection of sexual 'facts', translated and compiled for the delectation of a wider readership than the original medical source material, can instruct: 'Copulation is a conjunction of male and female, by fitness of instruments, with an ejection of seed to beget their likeness.'³

In this way also seventeenth-century pornographic texts are not transgressive, as some scholars have insisted is a necessary part of such literature, as we have seen Peter Wagner do in *Eros Revived*, arguing that it includes 'a deliberate violation of existing and widely accepted moral and social taboos'.⁴ Rather, these texts reinforce contemporary moral strictures, expounded in sermons and other prescriptive literature, that the primary purpose of marriage, and hence sexual intercourse, is procreation.⁵ They also bolster other contemporary promotion of population growth, linking it with economic prosperity through lower wages and prices: 'The more are maintained by Laborious Profitable Trades, the richer the Nation will be both in People and Stock and . . . Commodities the cheaper.'⁶ This idea perhaps became more important after 1650, when the steady rise in population that had been taking place throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries came to a halt, falling again until the early eighteenth century, when it resumed its expansion.⁷ This period also saw emigration of around 300,000 people, mostly men, to the West Indies and the North American colonies, as well as the final major outbreak of plague and the spread of other potentially fatal diseases such as typhus and smallpox, perhaps increasing

³ Sinibaldus, *Rare Verities*, 3. ⁴ Wagner, *Eros Revived*, 5.

⁵ See, e.g., Henry Smith, *A Preparative to Marriage* (London, 1591). For a discussion of marriage and marital conduct books, see Kathleen M. Davies, 'Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage', in R. B. Outhwaite (ed.), *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London, 1981), 58–79, Anthony Fletcher, 'The Protestant Idea of Marriage in Early Modern England', in A. Fletcher and P. Roberts (eds.), *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1994), 161–81, and Erik R. Seeman, "'It is Better to Marry than to Burn': Anglo-American Attitudes toward Celibacy, 1600–1800', *Journal of Family History*, 24/4 (Oct. 1999), 397–419, esp. 400–1. On Protestant reproductive polemic and its influence on vernacular medical and midwifery literature, see Kathleen Crowther-Heyck, "'Be Fruitful and Multiply': Genesis and Generation in Reformation Germany', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 55/3 (Autumn 2002), 904–35.

⁶ J. Pollexfen, *A Discourse of Trade, Coyn and Paper Credit* (1697). Cited in D. C. Coleman, 'Labour in the English Economy of the Seventeenth Century', in Paul S. Seaver (ed.), *Seventeenth-Century England: Society in an Age of Revolution* (New York and London, 1976), 112–38, at 113.

⁷ E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541–1871: A Reconstruction* (London, 1981).

contemporary perception of a need for more bodies. It was also a time of high infant mortality: one child in four died before reaching the age of 9. Again, this may perhaps have encouraged a contemporary perception that more pregnancies might ensure more surviving children.⁸

Discussion of ideas about fertility therefore can be found alongside descriptions of the sexual body and sexual acts. In this period, the pleasures of sex represented in the pornographic text are intimately entwined with ideas about reproduction and conception, and an understanding of the body that is temporally and culturally specific: sexual pleasure was understood as not complete pleasure if it did not have the possibility of conception. This concern with fertility and reproduction manifests itself in a wide variety of texts in different ways. In a humorous work such as *The Mid-Wives Just Petition: Or, A Complaint of Divers Good Gentlewomen of that Faculty. . . for their Want of Trading* (1643), reprinted in 1646 as *The Mid-Wives Just Complaint*, the connection is presupposed. The pursuit of sexual pleasure goes hand in hand with the need for the services of a midwife, 'since our felicity cannot subsist without the others fertility and fruitfullnesse'.⁹ In those texts that specifically, and explicitly, describe the sexual body engaged in sexual intercourse, such as the three originally French works *The School of Venus*, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, and its shortened English adaptation, *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid. Tullia and Octavia*, and *Venus in the Cloister*, the sexual act is at the same time linked to reproduction. While it is acknowledged that sex is highly pleasurable and that is why people—both men and women—experience such a strong desire for sexual engagement, at the same time it is invariably stated that the pleasure stems from a desire to reproduce. The moment of conception is the moment of exquisite sexual pleasure. To this end, then, the sexual act is primarily described in terms that make this belief apparent, and that emphasize the need for penetrative heterosexual sexual intercourse with mutual, if not simultaneous, orgasm. This understanding of the connection between pleasure/orgasm and conception is also reflected in wider contemporary cultural practices such as the law, and can be seen particularly with regard to the prosecution of rape: until the early eighteenth century an allegation of rape was discounted if pregnancy resulted, because the sexual encounter must have been pleasurable for conception to have occurred.¹⁰ Similarly, changes in reproductive knowledge are reflected in later

⁸ For a contrary argument, that there was a contemporary perception of overpopulation and scarce resources, see Seeman, "It is Better to Marry than to Burn", 402–3.

⁹ *The Mid-Wives Just Petition: Or, A Complaint of Divers Good Gentlewomen of that Faculty. Shewing to the Whole Christian World their Just Cause of their Sufferings in these Distracted Times, for their Want of Trading. Which Said Complaint they Tendered to the House on Monday Last, Being the 23. of Jan. 1643* (London, 1643), sig. A4.

¹⁰ Patricia Crawford, 'Sexual Knowledge in England, 1500–1750', in Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (eds.), *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science: The History of Attitudes to Sexuality* (Cambridge, 1994), 82–106, at 87–8. Crawford cites eighteenth-century justices' handbooks as reflecting this change in attitude, dating from 1716. See n. 42.

eighteenth-century erotica, where the linking of female orgasm with conception gives way to new theories.¹¹ Other kinds of sexual activity such as manual stimulation, flagellation, or homosexual sexual activity are, therefore, described and discussed within this reproductive framework, as will be demonstrated in later chapters. In other sorts of text, as for example, Rochester's 'closet drama', *Sodom*, and Cotton's *Erotopolis*, the connection between the sexual act and its reproductive function is conveyed through metaphors that connect the body and the state or the land, emphasizing the notion that social and economic stability depends on reproductive ability.

This issue again reveals how in the early modern period pornography is not a discrete genre that confines itself to the description of the sexual body and the body engaged in sexual intercourse. Not only does the pornographic percolate into other kinds of text, but the flow operates in a two-way direction. Thus, though we might not wish to read medical and pseudo-medical works, or midwifery texts, as pornography, an awareness of the pornography of the period allows us to understand how they could be read as such at the time. As we have seen, the imagery of pornography and of medical description inhabited a common ground.¹² The same metaphors for sexual body parts and the act of sexual intercourse were used in both pornographic and medical discourse. Thus Jane Sharp in *The Midwives Book* can describe the act of intercourse and the role of men and women as follows: 'Man in the act of procreation is the agent and tiller and sower of the Ground, Woman is the Patient or Ground to be tilled, who brings Seed also as well as the Man to sow the ground with.'¹³ This agricultural imagery is deployed also in pornographic texts, such as, for example, Cotton's *Erotopolis*: 'He was so great a husbandman that there was never a Farm either in the Terrestrial or Celestial *Betty-land*, but he would be thrusting his Spade into it.'¹⁴ This overlap between textual terrain helps explain not only how early modern readers such as John Cannon could read a midwifery book as an aid to masturbation, but also how pornographic texts could include midwifery and medical texts in lists of 'lascivious' and 'lewd' books.¹⁵

¹¹ See Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*, 78–92, and Harvey, *Reading Sex*, 122.

¹² For a discussion of the similarity of medical illustrations and pornographic prints, see Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*.

¹³ Sharp, *The Midwives Book*, 33. See Mary Fissell, 'Gender and Generation: Representing Reproduction in Early Modern England', *Gender & History*, 7/3 (Nov. 1995), 433–56. Fissell analyses how metaphors for sexual parts of the body and sexual intercourse used in medical and midwifery books turn on reproduction and fertility. See also her *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2004). Fissell here argues (p. 186) that in *The Compleat Midwife's Practice* (London, 1656) the reproductive function is secondary to male pleasure.

¹⁴ Charles Cotton, *Εροτοπολις (Erotopolis). The Present State of Betty-Land* (London, 1684), 39.

¹⁵ For John Cannon, masturbation, and the midwifery text, see Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, 28–9. See *The Practical Part of Love*, 39–40, for a list of books, as quoted above in the Introduction. See also Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology*. Eccles quotes a contemporary writer who refers to Culpeper as producing obscene texts.

In 'Redefining Sex in Eighteenth-Century England' Tim Hitchcock argues that the eighteenth century saw a fundamental change in sexual practice that can account for major demographic changes.¹⁶ He suggests that 'sex changed. At the beginning of the century it was an activity characterized by mutual masturbation, much kissing and fondling, and long hours spent in mutual touching, but very little penal/vaginal penetration—at least before marriage.' He continues: 'But the important thing is that there was an equality of emphasis on a wide range of different parts of the body.'¹⁷ Pornography is, among others, one genre of literature that Hitchcock cites in support of his argument. However, I will show that a detailed analysis of a variety of seventeenth-century pornographic texts does not, in fact, support Hitchcock's assertion. What these texts actually reveal in their depictions of a variety of sexual activities is a privileging of heterosexual penetrative sex over all other varieties of intercourse. The emphasis in these representations is clearly on penetrative heterosexual sex with male ejaculation—and preferably simultaneous male and female orgasm to ensure conception. The pornography of the seventeenth century does not celebrate a 'polymorphous perverse' attitude to the sexual body, but rather focuses on the male and female genitalia in close conjunction as the site of sexual pleasure.¹⁸ In this construction of desire, it is the male genitals that are particularly privileged and that are inscribed as both the objects of desire and the means of satisfying desire.¹⁹

In these seventeenth-century texts we see a phallo-centrism that Hitchcock has argued became a phenomenon only in the late eighteenth century:

By the end of the century sex had become increasingly phallo-centric. Putting a penis in a vagina became the dominant sexual activity—all other forms of sex becoming literally foreplay. . . . But, more significantly, it was the penis that became the active member. What the eighteenth century saw was the development of an obsession with the penis, and of an assumption that there was only one thing to do with it.²⁰

¹⁶ The population increased threefold in the 150 years from 1680 to 1831. Analysis has shown that this was due more to an increase in fertility than to a decline in mortality. Historians have therefore sought to find convincing explanations that could account for this phenomenon. See Henry, Ablove, 'Of Sexual Intercourse during the Long Eighteenth Century in England', *Genders*, 6 (Fall 1989), 124–30. There has been much debate over the cause of the population increase in the eighteenth century, beginning in the late seventeenth century. See, e.g., E. A. Wrigley, 'The Growth of Population in Eighteenth-Century England: A Conundrum Resolved', *Past & Present*, 98 (1983), 121–50, and Peter Razzell, *Essays in English Population History* (London, 1994).

¹⁷ Tim, Hitchcock, 'Redefining Sex in Eighteenth Century England', *History Workshop Journal*, 41 (1996), 72–90, at 79.

¹⁸ See Chs. 3 and 4 for discussion of representations of other varieties of sexual activity, such as flagellation and homosexual sex (both male and female), which supports this analysis.

¹⁹ Although these texts generally reproduce the Galenic–Hippocratic two-seed model of conception in which a conjunction of both male and female seed produces the resulting embryo, they also reflect the Aristotelian model, in which the male has the defining and most important role in conception.

²⁰ Hitchcock, 'Redefining Sex', 79.

However, this development can be traced back through the seventeenth century, revealing that it builds on an already existing, well-established construction of sexual practice as depicted in both popular and more elite forms of literature.²¹ Hitchcock goes on to suggest that the popular sex manuals of the eighteenth century, together with the hugely popular anti-masturbation literature, helped to create a body of sexual knowledge in which penetrative and procreative sex had primary place. This in turn helped to shape a profound shift in sexual practice. The two popular sex manuals to which he refers are *Aristoteles Master-Piece, Or The Secrets of Generation Displayed in all the Parts thereof* (first published 1684) and Nicholas Venette's *Tableau de l'amour conjugal*, published in France in 1696 and translated into English as *Conjugal Love Revealed* in 1703.²² As both these works appeared only towards the end of the seventeenth century, and achieved much more widespread distribution and popularity in the eighteenth century, it would be hard to argue that they influenced sexual practice to any great extent in the seventeenth century, as Hitchcock argues they did in the eighteenth. However, what Hitchcock ignores is that they arose *out of* a seventeenth-century culture and society that *already* gave primacy of place to penetrative, procreative sexual intercourse, as these seventeenth-century texts confirm. Furthermore, *Aristoteles Master-Piece* may have appeared only in 1684, but a similar text also attributed to Aristotle was in circulation much earlier in the century. *The Problems of Aristotle, with Other Philosophers, and Physicians [Sic]. Wherein are Contained Divers Questions, with their Answers, Touching the State of Mans Bodie* was published in 1647, and is referred to by other texts subsequently published. In this work as in *Aristoteles Master-Piece* (1684), not only is the act of sexual intercourse discussed, but also a variety of other issues to do with 'generation', such as women's 'monthly terms or flowers' and the care of the infant in the womb. Sexual intercourse is defined as 'the most natural work which is in living creatures, to beget the like unto themselves in kinde, to continue the kinde', and is not divorced from other reproductive issues.²³

Hitchcock further suggests that the early modern construction of women as sexually appetitive and desiring necessarily constructed a mutuality in sexual relations. It meant that the expectation of satisfying the woman, of bringing on her orgasm, would allow varieties of sexual activity in which penile penetration would be merely one variety. But what these texts actually reveal is an understanding of

²¹ See Spufford, *Small Books*. Elizabeth A. Foyster in *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* (London and New York, 1999), 72–3, uses literary and legal sources to question Hitchcock's assertion.

²² For a detailed analysis of *Aristoteles Master-Piece*, see Porter and Hall *The Facts of Life*, ch. two; for Venette, see Roy Porter, 'Spreading Carnal Knowledge or Selling Dirt Cheap? Nicolas Venette's, *Tableau de l'Amour Conjugal* in Eighteenth Century England', *Journal of European Studies*, 14 (1984), 233–55, at 238. Porter argues that Venette discourages sexual practices that are not likely to result in conception.

²³ *The Problems of Aristotle, with Other Philosophers, and Physicians [sic]. Wherein are Contained Divers Questions, with their Answers, Touching the State of Mans Bodie* (London, 1647), sig. D2.

the sexual body in the seventeenth century in which mutual sexual satisfaction *required* penis/vagina sexual activity. And in this scenario the penis with its ejaculate is the active, controlling part. We therefore see consistent representation of the penis and the testicles as the objects of female desire, and as the dominant image in descriptions of sexual activity.²⁴ The male body, and especially the penis, are frequently described in this literature, and described in terms that emphasize not only the strength of the penis, but also its beauty. For example, in *The School of Venus* (1655) Susanne describes the penis to Fanchon: 'It's thicker and half as long again, hard and stiff as a truncheon, quite sturdy enough to stand erect in the way I've described. There's a fold of skin towards the tip of it which draws back and uncovers a head like a huge red cherry—as pleasant to the touch as anything could be.'²⁵ The image of the cherry suggests at the same time a similarity to the female body, as 'cherry' is slang for both male and female sexual parts, and that the penis is both good to look at and delicious to the taste.²⁶ The metaphor thus plays on mouth/vagina analogies, implying that the sensation of the penis in the vagina is as delicious as the flavour of ripe cherries in the mouth. Through the woman (Susanne) describing a lover's body to her female companion (Fanchon), the mid-seventeenth-century reader is able to gaze at, and is invited to join in admiration of, and pleasure in, that male body:

Then I felt something hard pushing into my hand and Robinet, realising at this point that I'd never seen a thing like this before, unbuttoned himself. Guiding my hand inside, he said, 'Touch it, my love. Stroke it, my dear.' . . . It seemed that he must die with joy at each caress and soon he took hold of my hand and said, 'Touch here, stroke it there, and lower on my stones, darling. Do you feel the hair? Back here again. Take hold and rub up and down.' . . . After that he said, 'I want you to see it,' and with that he made me draw it out through his flies. I was amazed at the shape and size of it, for it's quite different when it's stiff to when it's slack and soft.²⁷

The male gaze also reveals the male body to the reader: 'When I went back upstairs, I closed the door again and went over to the bed where Robinet was sitting and gazing at his weapon, which was almost upright in his hand.'²⁸ Even in passages where our first impression is that the female body is being described, what the text leads us to focus on is the action of the man in revealing and touching that female body, and of the reaction of the male body to the female body:

The firm well-rounded breasts are a delicious handful and bring the yard to attention at the thought of other good things to come. After these bubbies come the thighs, where

²⁴ See Fissell's discussion in *Vernacular Bodies*, 185–7.

²⁵ Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 84.

²⁶ See Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature* (London, 1994), i. 232–3.

²⁷ Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 114.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

there is a different kind of pleasure in handling two columns of plump and living alabaster, over which the hand wanders. And so, indeed, the hand makes its progress everywhere, the belly, full and rounded, the mossy mount of Venus, which it holds and tugs by the hair, probing and delving with the fingers towards the entrance of the cunny, opening those two lips with quickening and glowing passion. From there, following the hips, the hand reaches the buttocks, which are like a magnet for it, attracting it so strongly that the limb of love points stiffly towards the downy vortex which draws it onwards. The yard, too, has its own particular pleasure in touching and so it enjoys being held in a girl's hand, between the cheeks of her bottom or between her breasts.²⁹

In these narratives, which are the most explicit about describing heterosexual sexual encounters, the penis is thus centre stage. As Fanchon puts it in *The School of Venus*: 'From everything we've said about pleasure, love, I've naturally gathered that this part of man which we call the yard is the one which gives the most pleasure to the woman.'³⁰

Although most of these texts are in dialogue format, and are usually a dialogue between women, the male body occupies a significant proportion of discussion and description. This could be accounted for in two ways. Several texts are explicitly addressed to women for their education in sexual matters, or as exemplary figures in the world of 'Venus'. We may accept, therefore, that the text should reveal to women what they are least familiar with: men. In addition, the women who are the subjects of the text are talking to each other about their sexual encounters, so they are likely to describe their male lovers and what they have done, rather than to concentrate on themselves and their own bodies. However, the fact that a text is ostensibly addressed to a female readership can be misleading. As I have argued in the Introduction, an explicit dedication does not guarantee an intended readership. While it is likely that these texts were read by women, or read to them, it is more likely that most readers were men.³¹ Neither does it follow that, because it is women who are discussing their sexual encounters, they would prefer to describe the male body and what it does, rather than their own sexual responses. It should not be forgotten that the authors of these texts were male, though their protagonists are female, which complicates any simple interpretation of the textual voice.³²

In *The School of Venus*, this valorization of the penis is seen consistently throughout the text. It is at the forefront of all action and description of sexual activity. The feel of the penis in the woman's hand or the sight of it displayed to her arouses her desire: 'I no sooner felt it, stiff as it was, than I gave up all thoughts of sleep and responded to his caresses . . . then he bounded about all

²⁹ Ibid., 105. ³⁰ Ibid., 137.

³¹ See, e.g., Thomas, *A Long Time Burning*, 27. Also Donoghue, *Passions between Women* 10–24, and Hull, *Chaste, Silent & Obedient*, 2–13. See also the discussion of readership in the Introduction.

³² On male-authored texts and female voices, see Madeleine, Kahn, *Narrative Transvestism: Rhetoric and Gender in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1991), esp. ch. 1.

over the bed, showing me his yard erect.³³ There is an expectation here that the mere sight of the male sexual organ is arousing to the woman. As Susanne continues her narration of her night of love-making with her lover, we become aware that the description is focused on the man. What begins as a description of the female body slides back to describing her male partner's body. But, in addition, the initial description of her body is generalized and in fact focuses on the man's activity in looking, his turning her this way and that so that he can look at different parts of her body, then his positioning of her so that he can penetrate her.

Then he held me on my knees in front of him, gazing at me from top to toe, his eyes ravished with ecstasy. He extolled my belly, then my thighs, bobbies, the swell of my mount of Venus, which he found firm and rounded, running his hand there several times, and I can't pretend that I wasn't absolutely delighted by all these little whims of his. Turning me away from him, he gazed at my shoulders, my buttocks, and then making me lean on my hands on the bed, he got astride my back and made me move forward. After some time like this he got down from his horse, not at the side but by way of the croup—because he said he had no need to be afraid that I should kick him! At the same time he lowered his yard between my buttocks and thrust it into my cunny. At first I wanted to rear up on my hind legs and show how restive I was, but, in his despair, he begged and conjured me to such an extent that I had to take pity on him. I resumed my posture and felt his pleasure in driving into me and drawing back all in one movement, amusing himself by watching the way it moved in and out.³⁴

This passage reveals not so much the woman's body but rather the controlling action of her male partner, which is symbolized by his riding her like a horse: the horse may be able to walk and run on its own, but it needs an experienced rider to direct it where to go. This is a metaphor for male control of sexual activity, which we find recurring in other pornographic texts, and which was used in conduct books in the period.³⁵ It is also the man's pleasure that we are made aware of, and finally, what we watch is the man watching his own sexual organ in action. Our gaze is directed in the direction of his—towards his penis. And this direction of attention to the penis continues in every description of love-making. For example, later on that night: 'I opened my thighs for him, sitting there as I was, and holding his instrument in my hand I drew him on his knees between my legs. He said that he only wanted to shelter his yard and he soon managed this, holding me impaled upon it but not going any further.'³⁶

The author draws our attention explicitly to the male body at the end of this passage: 'What else is there to say? All we needed was a mirror so that we could gaze at our own posturing but instead of this he showed me all his limbs—how

³³ Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 100–1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

³⁵ See Peter, Stallybrass, 'Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed', in Margaret W. Ferguson Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago and London, 1986), 123–42, at 126.

³⁶ Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 102.

handsomely made they were!—asking me to caress them, and taking as much pleasure in having them stroked as he did in fondling me himself.³⁷

In the absence of a mirror to reflect the bodies and produce further images for the pleasure of the characters (and of the reader), the author rather offers us a further reflection of the male body only. The penis is revealed to the view of both the lover and the reader in these sexual encounters, with the implicit suggestion that in itself it is capable of arousing desire.

We find this expectation of female desire being aroused by the sight of the penis in other works. Tullia describes to Octavia in *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid* how her husband Horatio first made love to her on their wedding night, showing her his penis to arouse her desire: ‘But this Time I felt something thro’ his Shirt very pressing against my Thigh, which when, by my Blushing, he found I had perceived, he threw off the Cloaths, and taking up his own Linnen, shewed me a long stiff-headed P_____ ck . . .’³⁸ Although Horatio then touches Tullia with his finger, it is only to confirm that she is still a virgin. Having satisfied himself on this count, he then proceeds to try and penetrate her with his penis, with no ‘fore-play’ to arouse her—the sight of his penis is sufficient. Similarly in *Venus in the Cloister*, Angelica is aroused by the sight of the gardener masturbating:

I saw him throw himself upon the Bed, and handle his Play-Thing with a very deep Sigh or two . . . I perceived, that since he had no other Conveniency, that he was resolved to make Use of what Nature had given him. What! thought I, shall I stand thus, and see that thrown away which may be better elsewhere bestowed; no, no, if he has any Occasion, I’ll go and content him after a more agreeable Manner.³⁹

And these penises are, as Rachel Weil has pointed out, ‘magnificent’.⁴⁰ Our attention is drawn time after time not just to the male member, but to the male member and its prodigious size. As we will see in Chapter 6, jokes that involve the penis also tend to focus primarily on its largeness. Horatio directs Tullia to hold his penis, which she takes and finds ‘’twas as much as my Hand could well grasp’.⁴¹ Tullia tells Octavia she will be fortunate in her own husband in this respect: ‘Thy Mother is overjoyed with the Reputation he has of being the best provided young Man in all this City, but it will cost thee some Tears; yet be not afraid, my Husband had the same Reputation, and with Reason, and yet I am alive and well.’⁴² Tullia goes on to describe the ideal penis: ‘In ordinary men, ’tis about seven or eight of their own Thumbs Breadth long, when it stands, and about four of their Thumbs in Compass: But, in those whom Nature has

³⁷ Ibid., 102.

³⁸ *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid. Tullia and Octavia* (London, 1740), 17–18.

³⁹ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 144.

⁴⁰ Rachel Weil, ‘Sometimes a Scepter is Only a Scepter: Pornography and Politics in Restoration England’, in Hunt (ed.), *The Invention of Pornography*, 148.

⁴¹ *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid*, 21.

⁴² Ibid., 14.

favoured, 'tis about ten or eleven of their Thumbs Breadth long, and six or more in Compass, as I have seen my Husband measure his, and make me do it in wanton Humour.⁴³

In *The Wandring Whore* Julietta's reply when asked about her encounter with Francion emphasizes both the large size of his penis and his virility in making love more than once: 'he pass't and repass't very pleasantly, and was mighty tender of me; for lest he should put me to too much pain, or endanger beating the bottom of my belly out, he wrapt an Ell of Holland neer the root of his P_____ but I snatch't it off, and cool'd his courage quickly.'⁴⁴ Similarly, in pseudo-medical and midwifery texts, the importance of a large penis is stressed. In *Rare Verities* not only is the importance of penis size emphasized, but it is also explicitly linked to male fertility: 'the short yard is the least of the two to be endured. . . . Because (though it stands more stiff, and ejects the seed more vigorously) yet it reaches not so far as sufficiently to provoke a womans lust and seed.'⁴⁵ This preoccupation also continued into the eighteenth century.⁴⁶

But a large penis alone is not sufficient for the satisfaction of female desire. The testicles also are objects of desire, pleasure, and value. In *The Practical Part of Love* (1660), in a play on words about gemstones, the precious 'stones' that are testicles are praised above all others:

As for the word Pretious, I look upon it as an Epethete belonging either to Stones or Jewels. I confess I love a Diamond, Rubie, Emerald, &c. But above all pretious Stones, that I know there is none like those — You know my meaning, such is their great utility and excellency; I could even lose my self in writing their Encomium, they offered so much matter, that if I should but once begin, I should not know when to end.⁴⁷

Man is crucially, physically, necessary for complete female gratification in the act of love because his semen is required to bring on the supreme female physical pleasure. While women are described in these texts as achieving orgasm by a variety of means, this is not characterized as complete sexual gratification unless it is orgasm achieved simultaneously with a man during heterosexual penetrative sexual intercourse. As a result there is considerable ambiguity and seeming contradiction within these texts in the representation of female orgasm. It is quite apparent that female orgasm can be brought on by manual stimulation (whether by herself, another woman, or a male partner), or by stimulation with an object (a dildo), and this is clearly described and explicitly stated in different texts at different times.⁴⁸ But at the same time, it is also explicitly stated that

⁴³ *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid*, 15.

⁴⁴ Garfield, *The Wandring Whore* (1660), 12.

⁴⁵ Sinibaldus, *Rare Verities*, 40.

⁴⁶ See Harvey, *Reading Sex*, 129–33. For a discussion of penis size and its significances, see also Stephanson, *The Yard of Wit*, 62–5.

⁴⁷ *The Practical Part of Love*, 21–2.

⁴⁸ Female orgasm was recommended to cure various disorders, and some medical works suggested that a midwife should rub the female genitals in order to bring this on to cure a particular affliction.

semen is necessary to bring on orgasm and complete female pleasure. Indeed, semen is represented as a fluid of extraordinary powers and properties.

There seems to be, in the representation of sexual activity, a hierarchy of pleasure, with the supreme pleasure consisting in penile penetration *with* ejaculation. Penile penetration alone is not sufficient. This is illustrated by references to *castrati*, who are able to achieve erection but not orgasm: 'Those whom you mentioned just now—the ones who never have an orgasm—are known as castrati, and have had their stones cut off: such men are good for nothing, except sometimes for an erection. But women in this country don't like that at all and one never hears of them showering their favours on men like that.'⁴⁹ Discouragement of such sexual partners, which would allow women the free indulgence of their lust without fear of pregnancy, and therefore the risk of being caught, might be expected. And James Grantham Turner in *Schooling Sex* suggests that a poem inserted into the text of the 'Fribourg, 1668' edition goes further than the text, with its 'violent hostility' expressing 'the anger and fear inspired by the idea of an autonomous female libertine, insisting that sexual freedom must be linked to contraception and procuring her own pleasures when she cannot trust male responsibility'.⁵⁰ However, in the context of the rest of the work, which (however dismissively) suggests other means of either avoiding pregnancy, or of dealing with it should it occur, it is significant that such sexual activity is *not* represented as desirable from the woman's point of view, suggesting that the representation of female desire for the male ejaculate has a deeper source than a possible male anxiety that men may be unnecessary for the satisfaction of female lust, or that women might pursue sexual pleasure with impunity.

It could be argued that it is not surprising to find an early modern pornographic literature that does not divorce sex from reproduction, as it was produced at a time in which there did not exist the reliable and efficient means of contraception that are available in the twenty-first century. However, although undoubtedly seventeenth-century men and women did not have access to chemical or barrier methods of contraception that matched the almost 100 per cent reliability that today's scientific and technological innovation has brought to modern society, women were able to control their fertility to a certain extent. They could practise abstinence, *coitus interruptus*, abortion, and infanticide, but, most importantly, prolonged lactation.⁵¹ Audrey Eccles argues that women were aware

See, e.g., Nicholas Culpeper, Abdiah Cole, and William Rowland, *The Practice of Physick, in Seventeen Several Books* (London, 1655), 419–20. For a discussion, see Porter and Teich (eds.), *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science*, esp. ch. 5, Robert Martenson, 'The Transformation of Eve: Women's Bodies, Medicine and Culture in Early Modern England'.

⁴⁹ Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 129. ⁵⁰ Turner, *Schooling Sex*, 145.

⁵¹ See Angus McLaren, *Reproductive Rituals: The Perception of Fertility in England from the Sixteenth Century to the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York, 1984), and Dorothy McLaren, 'Marital Fertility and Lactation 1570–1720', in Mary Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society*

of possibilities for both abortion and contraception in the period, and it is clear from legal records that women did procure abortions, both through the use of oral abortifacients and the use of instruments inserted into the womb, albeit at the risk of killing themselves as well as the foetus in the process.⁵² More recently, Laura Gowing has also shown how women's knowledge of the female body and its reproductive capacities included awareness (and use) of herbs and potions to prevent pregnancy, as well as techniques for 'unblocking' the courses, or menstrual periods, which were clearly understood as intended to produce abortion.⁵³ It was also possible to read these early pornographic texts 'against the grain'. While the overt message of the text advised and promoted methods of ensuring fertility and conception, it also covertly informed readers how to restrict their fertility by practising the opposite of what was prescribed. However, the message here must be also that such sexual activity will not be as pleasurable as that which was likely to ensure conception.

Semen is credited with amazing powers in the production of female pleasure in these texts. Not only is there 'no kind of sugar or confectionery as sweet in the mouth as that liquid in the cunny', but it is 'what actually causes pleasure'.⁵⁴ Repeatedly we see described the special pleasures of semen and the ecstasy that it brings to the woman. In the 1740 edition of *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid* Octavia's mother is pleased to see the state of Octavia's dress following her first sexual intercourse after her marriage: 'Having said this, she bid me shew her my Smock; which when she saw, all wet, and almost stiff, with Philander's Liquor, Oh! what a Fountain of Joys has this Husband of thine in Store for thee!'⁵⁵ Quantity is important here, a copious amount of semen was to be preferred: 'In that Instant such a Shower of Seed fell into my Womb, that I was wet all over.'⁵⁶ In *The School of Venus* Fanchon naively asks: 'Then there is nothing more exciting than the coming of this fluid and you move in such a way

1500–1800 (London, 1985; paperback edn., London and New York, 1991), 22–53. See also E. A. Wrigley, 'Family Limitation in Pre-Industrial England', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 19/1 (1966), 82–109, at 104; and Wrigley and Schofield, *The Population History of England*. Wrigley notes that population growth could be limited by the use of coitus interruptus, abortion, and infanticide—all options open to English communities in this period.

⁵² Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, 67; John Keown, *Abortion, Doctors and the Law: Some Aspects of the Legal Regulation of Abortion in England from 1803 to 1982* (Cambridge, 1988), 6–8.

⁵³ Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven and London, 2003), 46–7. See also G. R. Quaipe, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives* (London, 1979), 120: Quaipe argues that 'attempted abortions were widespread and often successful, but they were resisted by many girls for fear of their physical safety. . .'; Riddle, 'Oral Contraceptives and Early-Term Abortifacients'; and Biller, 'Birth-Control in the West'.

⁵⁴ Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 117, 151. On the powers of semen, see also Stephanson, *The Yard of Wit*, 35–44; Stephanson does not, however, discuss its role in producing/enhancing female sexual pleasure in sexual intercourse, omitting to note the significance of references to 'heat' and 'fire'.

⁵⁵ *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid*, 33.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 35–6.

as to stimulate it?' To which Susanne can reply only: 'Of course.'⁵⁷ And, again, the quantity of the emission is all important: 'I must add, though, that the men who achieve fewest nevertheless produce more substance than the others, so that they give and receive the most pleasure.'⁵⁸ *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* go even further in praising the properties of this liquid. Not only is it the source of the greatest of pleasures, but the continuation of human race is owed to it: 'I am indebted to this dew for my little daughter; I also owe it all my joys; the human race is indebted to it for its existence.'⁵⁹ The especial virtue of quantity is extolled, as Tullia envies those lucky women who are married to men who have three testicles and who are therefore able to produce even more semen: 'All the heroes in this family nearly always present themselves at the duels of Venus with three witnesses. . . . Lucky are the wives they possess! . . . those that have three operators engaged at it, as, for instance, Fulvio, the brother of my friend Pomponia, flood of course the women with a still greater quantity than those who have only two.'⁶⁰ Turner dismisses this as a 'ludicrously mechanical equation between the volume of sperm injected and the amount of pleasure experienced by the woman'.⁶¹ But the great desire for the male ejaculate—and preferably in large quantities—that was attributed to women in these texts sprang from an understanding of the body based on humoral pathology and the Galenic–Hippocratic two-seed model of conception. This model was frequently repeated in midwifery and medical books of the period, such as in this wonderful description from Culpeper's *The Practice of Physick* (1655), which is reminiscent of the descriptions quoted above: 'her Genitals ought to swel at the instant of Generation, that her womb skipping as it were for joy, may meet her Husbands Sperm, graciously and freely receive the same, and draw it into its innermost Cavity or Closet, and withal bedew and sprinkle it with her own Sperm, powred forth in that pang of Pleasure, that so by the commixture of both, Conception may arise.'⁶² In this model women are cold and moist while men are hot and dry. To experience sexual pleasure women must become hotter. A woman's sexual temperature must be raised during intercourse until she reaches the point of orgasm, which may occur before or after her male sexual partner, but it will be most intense if it occurs at the moment when the heat of the sperm touches the womb: 'Then, like a flame flaring when wine is sprinkled on it, the woman's heat blazes most brilliantly.'⁶³ Sperm has vital heat in three elements: its natural, elemental heat, heat from the father's soul, and

⁵⁷ Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 99.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁵⁹ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 39. This passage suggests an Aristotelian view of conception in which the male sperm is the active, formative seed.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Turner, *Schooling Sex*, 145.

⁶² Culpeper et al., *The Practice of Physick*, 503.

⁶³ See Thomas Laqueur, 'Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology', in Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur, (eds.), *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1987), 8, and Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1990; paperback edn., 1992), 35–52.

from the heat of the sun.⁶⁴ So it is not only the greater heat that results from the two simultaneous orgasms that ensures the greater pleasure, but also the special properties of the semen itself. As Laqueur has observed: 'Semen, in addition to being the product of genital heat, is also thought to produce specific local effects. Its fluid parts constitute an acrid humor that accumulates under the skin and causes an itch that . . . is enormously pleasurable to relieve.'⁶⁵ In addition, female sensing of her male partner's orgasm increases her own pleasure: as Susanne puts it in *The School of Venus*: 'That's why the pleasure is greater as well. The girl feels two coming at the same time, the man's and her own, when she coincides with him.'⁶⁶ The man's greater heat is required further to heat up the woman and bring her to greater pleasure than she is capable of by herself, or with other women, or with inanimate objects. Heat is increased by the friction of intercourse and then raised even further by the emission of semen, thus increasing pleasure. But the semen itself also has properties and characteristics that in themselves inflame desire: 'It is a serous, irritating humor that produces a most demanding itch in precisely that part of the body contrived by Nature to be hypersensitive to it.'⁶⁷

This understanding of the qualities of semen, the requirement for heat for the production of orgasm, and hence female sexual pleasure and conception is one that had wider cultural ramifications in the period, and that we can see informing witchcraft beliefs. Sexual intercourse with the Devil was understood to be sterile because his semen was cold. This belief in the coldness of the semen of the Devil was repeated in witchcraft confessions in the period, such as that of Françoise Secretain in 1598, who reported 'that the Devil had four or five times known her carnally, in the form sometimes of a dog, sometimes of a cat, and sometimes of a fowl; and that his semen was very cold'.⁶⁸ The Devil is unable himself to generate because he does not possess a physical body of his own. This idea was succinctly put in the *Malleus maleficarum*: 'Moreover, to beget a child is the act of a living body, but devils cannot bestow life upon the bodies which they assume; because life formally only proceeds from the soul, and the act of generation is the act of the physical organs which have bodily life. Therefore bodies which are assumed in this way cannot either beget or bear.'⁶⁹ However, a child may be begotten on a woman's body through the injection of semen stolen from a human body, but this is only if 'devils are able to store the semen safely, so that its vital heat is not lost'.⁷⁰

The pleasure of an orgasm that was brought on by the pleasure of feeling the heat of the male ejaculation was therefore unquestionably superior to one that

⁶⁴ See Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, 1988; first published, France, 1985), 52–60.

⁶⁵ Laqueur, 'Orgasm', 7.

⁶⁶ Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 147.

⁶⁷ Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 44.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Darren Oldridge (ed.), *The Witchcraft Reader* (London and New York, 2002), 6.

⁶⁹ Heinrich Kramer, and James Sprenger, *Malleus maleficarum* (c.1486); trans. Revd. Montague Summers (London, 1928; repr., 1969), 22.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

was brought on by other means. A dildo may afford a woman pleasure in the absence of a penis: 'Others make use of a saveloy sausage or large four ounce candles or, failing that, insert their fingers as far as they can and so achieve an orgasm. Many poor girls who are shut away despite their wishes, and all women in religious orders who only see the world through a grill, are obliged to resort to such methods. . .'.⁷¹ But the pleasure gained from the use of such implements was inferior to the pleasure of using a dildo that also had some mechanism for emitting a semen-like fluid. Susanne relates a story that she claims to have read in a history book 'about a king's daughter who made use of a pleasant device instead of a real man'. This woman used a bronze replica of a man, which had a life-like penis made of some other, softer material, and which could also be made to emit a semen-like substance when desired: 'At the moment of orgasm she turned a certain knob which protruded from the rump of the statue so that its member squirted a non-stop flow of a certain warm, thick, and white liquid—like a gruel—into the girl's cunny, which irrigated her and provided a satisfactory form of intercourse.'⁷² The nearer we get to the likeness of a penis that can ejaculate, the nearer was the possibility of complete female sexual satisfaction. But this variety of pleasure was in its turn an inferior pleasure to that which was brought on by penetration with a real, live, penis and the ejaculation of seminal fluid. It is the possibility of conception that is the crucial ingredient for the greatest of pleasures, for it was only when male and female ejaculate met that the greatest heat, and therefore the greatest pleasure, resulted. The woman's greater pleasure in, and appetite for, intercourse was thus accounted for, but in terms that gave primacy to the male role in delivering her satisfaction.

These texts thus reveal a culture in which heterosexual, penetrative sexual intercourse, completed by orgasm, was the form of sexual activity that was considered most acceptable and capable of delivering complete sexual gratification for both partners. Manual stimulation of genitals was represented either positively as a means of further arousal designed to give pleasure to the partner (where mutual attraction has already ensured there is mutual desire) before or after penetrative intercourse, or negatively as the resort of impotent men who cannot achieve erection. In this case, the man feverishly, and generally uselessly, 'toys with' and 'fondles' the woman in a vain attempt to arouse his desire, and the woman tries her best to stimulate manually his recalcitrant penis into a semblance of life. Mother Creswel in *The Whores Rhetorick* describes such a type in scathing tones:

The same a Miser has for his Bags, he loves to be contemplating the beauty of his bright Treasure, but has it not in his power to turn one Penny to its natural use. Thus the old Squire pays his respects to his Virgin, in teasing her, and tumbling her over and over, and fumbling her from Head to Toe. . . hanging about her Neck for hours together, then hiding themselves under her Petticoats, to raise their decayed appetites by the warm sauce

⁷¹ Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 146.

⁷² Ibid., 145.

to be found under those Robes. . . . Then they fall to dallying and sucking the Pappies, as if they expected to extract thence some sovereign Cordial, that would introuduce a new Spring into their frozen Hearts, and snowy Heads. . . . I must still laugh, when I think of the excuse he has, when all his endeavours have proved ineffectual in the matter of erection.

As we will see in a later chapter, jokes about the sexual incompetence of old men with young wives were ubiquitous. Such a man was invariably portrayed as stereotypically cuckolded by his sexually unsatisfied and lustful young wife, no doubt easily finding a target in a society in which such May–December matches formed a substantial proportion of the remarriages of older men.⁷³ The contempt for this lack of erection continued:

It is impossible to express the hugging, squeezing, antick gestures, and ridiculous expressions the old dotard will use on this occasion, just such as Nurses prate to their fondlings, who understand not what they say. . . . So, Child, this decrepit Minion, this sickly lover, will never of himself be able to elevate his drooping courage, unless thou raise and encourage him with thy warmer hand. If thou wouldst have him spit in the proper place, thou must chase him like a mortified piece of flesh, scratch him in every wrinkle, tickle him in the Flank, and under the Arms. . . . But then after all thy industry, when thou hast animated the insensible log, and inspired it with a faint venereal motion, the terrible tryal of thy patience is then at hand. . . . when the crazy Lover is emboldened to pay a debt, he has for many Months owed *Cupid*; he will be so tedious and nauseous in the performance, he will go near to tire any Woman of ordinary Flesh and Blood.⁷⁴

In both these passages the man is referred to in images of childhood: he has become like a baby looking for the sustenance of life in a mother's breast milk, and his actions belong in the nursery. Contrary to what Hitchcock has suggested, extended foreplay is represented here as irritating and unsatisfactory for the woman, rather than as essential for her sexual satisfaction. The foreplay here is not 'for' her, it is for the benefit of the man to try and arouse his flagging sexual capacity. These passages also suggest that the breasts were not a focus for sexual pleasure for women (she takes no pleasure in his 'dallying and sucking the Pappies') but were rather associated with their generative function of lactation, of sustenance for the infant. This lack of sexual focus is reflected also in the fact that sexual jokes about breasts are rare, and are conspicuously missing from jest-book collections.⁷⁵ Bared breasts in woodcut illustrations of the period might

⁷³ See, e.g., Margaret Pelling, 'Who Most Needs to Marry? Ageing and Inequality among Women and Men in Early Modern Norwich', in Lynn Botelho and Pat Thane (eds.), *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500* (Harlow, 2001), 31–42, esp. 34. However, impotence was not always the lot of old men, and Alexandra Shepard has shown that parenthood in older age was not uncommon; Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003), 240.

⁷⁴ Philo-Puttanus, *The Whores Rhetorick*, 137–42 (and quote above).

⁷⁵ For a discussion of the breast, see Valerie Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles, and Babies: A History of Infant Feeding* (Edinburgh, 1986); Kathryn Schwarz, 'Missing the Breast: Desire, Disease, and

be used to represent immorality, as well as reflecting the contemporary fashion, copied from court circles, for décolleté, but most often suggested fecundity, motherhood, and nourishment.⁷⁶ Difficulty of achieving erection means loss of manhood reflected in a need for maternal care through suckling of the breasts providing restorative healthy nourishment: this was a remedy for flagging male virility recommended in some Renaissance texts.⁷⁷ Elizabeth Foyster too has shown how male sexual performance was an important component of male honour in this period. Masculinity required a fully functional penis and a sexually satisfied wife.⁷⁸

Similarly in *The Crafty Whore* Thais tells us of 'an old drie bon'd fellow' who fell in love with her, but who 'was fit for nothing but to sleepe and snore by a womans hot side, lying there like a senseless block'. To try and rouse his desire:

the day before the nocturnall combat, indeavours to provoke and stirre himselfe up by imbracing, kissing and feeling mee, nay he tooke many restoratives to strenthen [*sic*] his nerves. And now thinking he had inabled his body to correspond with his desires, he went to bed with me, and so prepares himselfe for a battery. But alas poore man, as soone as the fight began, his Standard fell just as he was entring the breach. And no wonder, for this member is as really dead as the rest of his body is a dying. It serves him, but as the Eunuchs quill for an aqueduct.⁷⁹

A man who cannot control his erection is thus either likened to a baby or to a eunuch, the latter particularly suggesting loss of manhood, whether through total

the Singular Effect of Amazons', in David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (eds.), *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* (London and New York, 1997), 146–69; Ruth Perry, 'Colonizing the Breast: Sexuality and Maternity in Eighteenth-Century England', in John C. Fout (ed.), *Forbidden History: The State, Society, and the Regulation of Sexuality in Modern Europe* (Chicago and London, 1992), 107–37 (first published in *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 2/2 (1991); Simon Richter, 'Wet-Nursing, Onanism, and the Breast in Eighteenth-Century Germany', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 7/1 (1996), 1–22. The maternalizing of the breast is seen as beginning in the eighteenth century, conforming to the narrative of the history of women's sexuality, which argues for the development of female 'passionlessness' following the discovery of the irrelevance of women's orgasm to conception. See also Marilyn, Yalom *A History of the Breast* (New York, 1997; London, 1998), esp. 87–8: 'In allegorical paintings devoted to the five senses, it was standard practice throughout Europe to represent the sense of touch by a male hand on a female breast. Among German artists, the heterosexual couple was frequently depicted as an old man and a young woman, with his hand on her breast and her hand in his purse. Such works injected a moralistic message into erotic art, equally condemning his lust and her venality.'

⁷⁶ See Angela McShane Jones, 'Revealing Mary', *History Today* (Mar. 2004), 40–6.

⁷⁷ See Valeria Finucci and Kevin Brownlee (eds.), *Generation and Degeneration: Tropes of Reproduction in Literature and History from Antiquity to Early Modern Europe* (Durham, NC, and London, 2001), 2–3.

⁷⁸ See Foyster, *Manhood*, 67–72. For a different angle but with a similar conclusion, see Kathleen, Brown, "'Changed . . . into the Fashion of Man": The Politics of Sexual Difference in a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Settlement', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 6/2 (1995), 171–93, at 182. Impotence, though hard to prove, could also be grounds for the annulment of marriage.

⁷⁹ *The Crafty Whore*, 62–3.

or partial castration, this latter allowing erection but not insemination.⁸⁰ Alan Bray argues that in early modern society lack of control over the body made a man unmanly—although it is lack of control over appetites run wild (gluttony, thieving, and sodomy) that he particularly specifies.⁸¹ More specifically with regard to control over sexual function, Thomas A. Foster, in an analysis of male sexual competency in New England revealed through divorce proceedings, has argued: ‘Men were expected to control discouraging thoughts and potentially disruptive powers of the imagination while performing their marital duty. Inability to do so was a source of sexual problems and was itself symptomatic of the erosion of manly self-mastery.’⁸² This literature of sex reinforces these analyses: an inability to control the male body, to make it do as he desired, made a man unmanly. If a man was unable to make his body respond as it ought to his desires, then he was not a man.⁸³

But not only must a man have a penis that will achieve erection at his desire; he must also have a penis that can be brought to ejaculate. The importance of both erection and ejaculation was also demonstrated in divorce trials where impotence was alleged: proof of virility required evidence of ability to achieve not only erection, but also penetration and ejaculation.⁸⁴ Virility therefore requires an easy achievement of orgasm: ‘If thou canst get the way of exciting him to the youthful game, the exquisite arts of hastening the pleasure, and bringing off the disabled Warrior from the assault with honour and reputation; there is nothing between Heaven and Earth, he would not procure for thy satisfaction.’⁸⁵ Prolonged intercourse is not portrayed as necessarily more pleasurable for the woman, or as the visible proof of a man’s virility. In the same way, premature ejaculation (in this context defined as the male orgasm occurring before the woman’s) is never referred to as a problem, although it is described several times in different texts. In *The School of Venus*, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigee*, *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid* and *Venus in the Cloister* there are many

⁸⁰ The image also paradoxically suggests a sexualizing of the mother–baby relationship, if suckling the breasts is described as producing a male erection, even if it is not subsequently sustainable. As well as providing nourishment for the infant, it is suggested that breastfeeding was known to be physically pleasurable for the infant, if not for the nursing mother. See also Turner, *Schooling Sex*, 149–51, for a discussion of castrati.

⁸¹ Alan Bray, ‘To Be a Man in Early Modern Society: The Curious Case of Michael Wigglesworth’, *History Workshop Journal*, 41 (Spring 1996), 155–65, at 158.

⁸² Thomas A. Foster, ‘Deficient Husbands: Manhood, Sexual Incapacity, and Male Marital Sexuality in Seventeenth-Century New England’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 56/4 (Oct. 1999), 723–44, at 740.

⁸³ However, the relationship between will and sexual potency was also understood to be not so straightforward, as erection could also occur involuntarily and could influence behaviour, just as willing an erection was not always possible. See Stephanson’s discussion in *The Yard of Wit*, 65–92.

⁸⁴ See Stephanson, *The Yard of Wit*, 83–90; Pierre, Darmon, *Trial by Impotence: Virility and Marriage in Pre-Revolutionary France*, trans. Paul Keegan (London, 1985).

⁸⁵ Philo-Puttanus, *The Whores Rhetorick*, 142. The ubiquitous use of military metaphors for sexual intercourse implies that honour consists in conquest, in proof of sexual virility. See Foyster, *Manhood*, 72–3.

descriptions of men achieving their orgasm before the woman has reached her climax, but there is never any suggestion of dissatisfaction on the woman's part with this performance. On the contrary, it is the opportunity for further displays of virility, as the man soon regains an erection and returns to the 'assault'. For example, Angelica in *Venus in the Cloister* tells of her encounter with the gardener: 'but presently my Fears were over, when I saw by an involuntary Discharge of his Ammunition before he reached the Counterscarp, his Vigour lost. . . . however, this did not last long, the Champion rallied his Forces, and pushed so furiously in the Attack, that he gained the Fort entirely, tho' with the Effusion of much Blood.'⁸⁶ Even when there have been several scenes of penetration with the man achieving orgasm each time but the woman not achieving hers, there is no suggestion of dissatisfaction with his performance. She may then achieve her climax with her male partner providing penetrative stimulation with a finger:

No sooner was he off me, but I began to be tickled with a certain Itching in those Parts, that I catch't fast hold of him in my Arms, and, with Sighs and Kisses, demanded, as it were, that he should help me: He could not do it with the proper Instrument, it was not then in a Condition to obey his Desires, therefore, putting his Finger into my C____t, and stirring gently up and down, towards the upper part of it, he made me spend so pleasantly, such a Quantity of the delicious Nectar, that it flew about his Hand, and all wetted him.⁸⁷

Semen being already present and producing sexual arousal, the woman may achieve her orgasm with penetration by another means. As the emission of semen is so important during the act of heterosexual intercourse, there is a corresponding unwillingness to define premature ejaculation as a sexual problem, or as in any way diminishing a man's virility.

But the woman's stimulation to orgasm is still through penetration. Even though stimulation of the clitoris was known to produce female sexual pleasure, and is referred to in these works as doing so, yet penetration is still represented as being the necessary means of bringing on female orgasm, together with the presence of semen. In *The School of Venus* when Fanchon asks Susanne what she should do when she finds herself in a state of sexual excitation at night that prevents her from sleeping, Susanne's immediate response is that she needs a penis: 'All you need is a big, sinewy yard to penetrate your femininity, to make the sweet sap flow there and soothe the inflammation.'⁸⁸ Failing the immediate availability of the male instrument, she might use her fingers to bring herself to orgasm: 'Or alternatively, when this happens you should rub it with your finger for a while and then you'll taste all the pleasures of an orgasm.'⁸⁹ But, having advocated this solution, Susanne goes on to describe how her (male) lover

⁸⁶ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 146.

⁸⁷ *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid*, 36.

⁸⁸ Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 91.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

performs this action for her, and Fanchon's immediate response is to ask how she can find a man to do this for her.

While auto-eroticism is presented as a variety of sexual activity that leads to sexual satisfaction in terms of orgasm, it is clearly rated as less satisfactory than, primarily, penetrative heterosexual sex, and, secondarily, to manual stimulation by a male partner where semen is already present. The function of the clitoris is to produce sexual pleasure for the woman, but female pleasure is equated with orgasm and the release of her seed for conception to occur.⁹⁰ The author of *Rare Verities* reminds the reader: 'This is the seat of love and pleasure; for by a mutual contrition of the mans yard with it, their seed is provoked, and so meet for the propagation of mankind.'⁹¹ Similarly, Sharp tells her readers that the clitoris 'makes women lustfull and take delight in Copulation, and were it not for this they would have no desire nor delight, nor would they ever conceive'.⁹² Conception does not occur without pleasure, but neither does complete pleasure occur without conception.

To this end, not only did early modern 'sex manuals' apply a moral dimension to the 'proper' forms of intercourse; they also stressed that these forms of intercourse were preferable because they promoted conception. Although these prescriptions may have been read in their opposing sense, as covert instruction on how to avoid pregnancy, given the overwhelming emphasis on the importance of conception to sexual pleasure, it is unlikely that this was their intention, though it may, of course, have been how some readers *did* interpret the text.⁹³ Moreover, an author may have given reluctant approbation to a position for intercourse that would normally have been censured morally, if it was thought of as efficacious for the achievement of conception. For example, authors usually expressed absolute disapproval of vaginal penetration from behind in the manner of the copulation of animals, precisely because it was in the manner of animals. But in a passage headed 'Whether to copulate backwards after the manner of beasts is best', the author of *Rare Verities* seems to suggest that sexual intercourse in this position was more likely to result in conception than the more usual, and morally approved, face-to-face man-on-top position:

The causes of sterility are many, many of which proceed not from the yard or seed, but from an absonant and incongruous use of Venus. Although the common way of congression be more civil and comely, yet its less fruitful then that way which nature shewed every beast. The womb is inflex, and therefore it stands to reason that the nature ought to be in the like posture.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ On the discovery and role of the clitoris, see Laqueur, *Making Sex*, esp. 64–70; Gallagher and Laqueur, *The Making of the Modern Body*; Katharine Park, 'The Rediscovery of the Clitoris: French Medicine and the Tribade, 1570–1620', in Hillman and Mazzio (eds), *The Body in Parts*, 170–93; Patricia Crawford, 'Sexual Knowledge in England, 1500–1750', in Porter and Teich (eds.), *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science*, 82–106; Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, esp. 33–7.

⁹¹ Sinibaldus, *Rare Verities*, 55.

⁹² Sharp, *The Midwives Book*, 43–4.

⁹³ See Porter and Hall, *The Facts of Life*, ch. 2, on these works as 'pro-natalist'.

⁹⁴ Sinibaldus, *Rare Verities*, 64.

Although he went on to say that it was not ‘proper’ to copulate in this manner, he did not forbid it altogether, as it was likely to increase the possibility of conception. Despite the general condemnation of sexual intercourse in this position in prescriptive literature, the prohibition was clearly neither consistently insisted upon, nor, in fact, observed. Pepys recorded having intercourse with Mrs Martin in this way in June 1666: ‘and so to Mrs Martin and there did what je voudrais avec her, both devante and backward, which is also muy bon plazer.’⁹⁵

The author of *Rare Verities* continued his discussion by listing various other styles of copulation with the appended conclusion that each was undesirable because it was not conducive to conception, and concluded his advice with a referral of the reader to ‘Aretine’s Postures’ for information about other possible sexual positions, with the inference that these also will not be desirable for reproduction:

Apuleius calls that pendulous venery, when the man lies under, and the woman upon him. . . . But as this is prejudicial to a mans health, so likewise it is unfit for generation. For by this means the seed cannot stay within the womb, it being naturally very slippery. Some again copulate standing, which much wearies the man, and hinders conception. Others do it sitting, but in that gesture there cannot be an apt and close connexion of the members. See more in Aretines Postures.⁹⁶

The author here is in effect saying that the lawful and appropriate way to engage in sexual intercourse and the method by which conception most usually occurs are one and the same, so all others might be engaged in if the reader wished to try and avoid conception—except for penetration from behind, as that might also ensure reproduction.

This ambivalence is most apparent in the few scenes in which anal sex is represented. It is unusual to find such an act described at this time, and it is significant that it is only described as taking place between men and women, and not between men and other men.⁹⁷ This passage, in *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, is the sole description of anal sex in any of the texts discussed here (any act of anal penetration referred to in Rochester’s *Sodom* is not dramatized ‘on-stage’) and it is accompanied by very specific comments that indicate when it is acceptable and when not, together with language that reveals a deep ambivalence towards it.⁹⁸ The representation of this act is enclosed within a strict moral framework that

⁹⁵ Pepys, *Diary*, ed. Latham and Matthews, vii. 142, entry for 3 June 1666.

⁹⁶ Sinibaldus, *Rare Verities*, 65.

⁹⁷ Acts of homosexual sex between men do not generally appear in seventeenth-century works of pornography, Rochester’s farce *Sodom* (c.1680) being the most notable exception. However, even in Rochester’s work these acts are only referred to; they are never actually represented as taking place in the present, on-stage.

⁹⁸ I have found only one report of a trial of a man for sodomy with a young girl, and this in the eighteenth century. See John Lord Fortescue, *Reports of Select Cases in all the Courts of Westminster-Hall* (1748), 91–6. The legal judgment in this case was that it was equally as heinous a crime as sodomy between two men and should be punished in the same way.

emphasizes that it is a forbidden act, but at the same time finds a way in which the act can be justified and held to be both moral and desirable. The act itself is first represented as one that is not usual between men and women, but rather one that is common between men and boys, particularly among Italians: 'As for the Florentines, they are in the habit of cozening Venus. It is said that they delight in having to do with young lads, and that they love those damsels who are willing to turn boys and supply the boyish part of the business.'⁹⁹ The justification for the act taking place between a man and a woman is that it can be allowable if ejaculation does not take place within the anus. Ejaculation must occur only in the vagina, because sexual activity is for the purposes of procreation: 'She warns Aloisio and Fabrizio to be upon their guard that I may not have to complain of being defiled by an obscene copulation. Although it was lawful for them to stick the coulter into my body by whatever furrow they choose, yet it was not equally lawful to introduce their seed into it.'¹⁰⁰ The ensuing description of the act describes the pleasure it brings, but conforms strictly to the rules laid down for its execution:

Thereupon, Aloisio bends downwards over my buttocks; he applies the ram to my back-door; he batters it; he makes it totter: with a final effort he breaks it in. I groaned. He immediately plucked the tool out of the wound, buried it in the womb, and sent forth a heavy shower of seed into the lubric avenue of my matrix. The deed being done, Fabrizio goes through the same process. With eager impetus he pushes his spear-staff, and in less than no time he buries the whole thing in my guts. He keeps a good while going and coming back by the same road; and, what I did not think was possible, such a fit of some sort of itching or other came over me, that I no longer doubted but I could accustom myself to this sort of thing, if I only wished.¹⁰¹

Despite the representation of pleasure in this form of sexual intercourse, and the suggestion that to continue to practise it would be merely a matter of choice, that it is not an act that should be pursued is underlined by how the author refers to the reversion to intercourse in the 'usual' fashion: 'They then proceeded along the straight way to the honest Venus.'¹⁰² But, having clearly established the moral framework for the act with a woman, the text goes on to suggest that it is not an act that is actually at all unusual. Not only is it prevalent among 'Roman girls', but it is further suggested that it is at some point an act that every husband desired to try with his wife.

The desire for anal sex is something that is attributed to men, and that is represented as arising out of a desire for pleasure: the anus is much smaller and thus much tighter around the penis during intercourse than is the vagina.¹⁰³ As a woman must obey her husband in all things, she may accede to his desire in

⁹⁹ Churier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 231.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 234–5.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁰³ See Turner's discussion of Alphonsus Gusman's anal rape of his 13-year-old bride in *Schooling Sex*, 206.

this respect, but only with the caveat that he must ejaculate in the vagina: 'Yet, very clever men state that such an act is not too reprehensible; that the hind-groto forms a part of woman's body, just as the hands do; that there is, therefore, no more harm in it than there would be for a wife to handle her husband's mentule. It would be wrong, however, unless the genital shower sprinkled the feminine garden.'¹⁰⁴ The wrongness of the act is always defined in terms of its opposition to reproduction: lawful intercourse must have the possibility of conception. Part of the justification for anal intercourse between a man and a woman was therefore that it may be used as a form of 'foreplay', as an 'interlude' that must be succeeded by penetration of, and ejaculation into, the vagina once the man has excited himself to the point of orgasm by the close friction afforded by insertion of the penis into the anus.

The wasting of seed through not ejaculating it into the correct orifice amounts to a crime as heinous as murder:

Whoever is unwilling to cast his seed into the female furrow intends to lose a man, or that which might become a man: he is a homicide and an adulterer. Men are killed even before they are born through this purulent pleasure. The refusing to give life is but the taking away of life. When Nature is working in her secret cells at the production of seed, her chief aim is procreation and not lechery.¹⁰⁵

This equation of the prevention of conception with murder was one that appeared elsewhere during this period, and that emphasized the argument that any form of intercourse that precluded the possibility of conception was 'unnatural' (just as a marriage that was not consummated could be ended, for procreation was the first aim of marriage, as stressed in marital conduct books in the period).¹⁰⁶ However, the emphasis that the text places on the impossibility of conception if sexual intercourse is directed at the anus rather than the vagina also told the reader very clearly that this was a certain method of avoiding conception, while at the same time continuing to enjoy sexual pleasure.

Indeed, the emphasis on the greater male pleasure in intercourse by this means when the woman has been stretched by childbearing (and, at this time, probably by repeated childbearing) may have suggested to the reader that this was a form of intercourse that could be used in order to restore sexual pleasure to a marriage. Not only might a man by this means spare his wife the possibility of further pregnancy and childbirth and all the dangers to her life and health that they entailed, but he might also regain the pleasure of sexual intercourse that he had during the pre-children stage of his sexual relationship (and the description of Tullia's stirrings of pleasure—'some sort of itching or other'—may suggest

¹⁰⁴ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 270.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 289.

¹⁰⁶ A marriage that could not be consummated might be annulled, as the begetting of children must be its first aim. See David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London and New York, 1993; paperback edn., 1996), 134–5; Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, 145.

that the pleasure is not entirely the male's).¹⁰⁷ And, if he has already fathered children, the argument that he was wasting seed that might otherwise have created life would probably have had less force—especially as the text continues with a discussion of whether or not making love to a woman who is already pregnant constitutes wasting of seed, followed by the argument from nature that some seed is always lost and nature makes allowance for it.¹⁰⁸ This, of course, puts a positive gloss on this argument when it can also be regarded as 'ugly and misogynistic'.¹⁰⁹ However, this tacit approval for this method of intercourse was given only after marriage had already produced children, thus emphasizing that reproduction must be the *first* consideration of sexual intercourse, just as the literature of marital advice, both Protestant and Catholic, placed procreation as its first aim but also acknowledged that sexual intercourse was important for other reasons, including mutual comfort and reinforcement of the marital bond, as well as avoidance of adultery and fornication.¹¹⁰

This same idea that sexual pleasure cannot be divorced from conception and 'generation' was expounded in Rochester's *Sodom*, though in a completely different fashion. Rather than focus on the necessity of conception for pleasure, the play reverses the equation and demonstrates the cataclysmic consequences of separating sexual intercourse from reproduction. The pursuit of sexual pleasure through barren and sterile forms of intercourse leads to disease and destruction, not only of the individual but of the State. Rochester represents sterility as the result of pursuing sex for pleasure to the exclusion of both morality and the requirement for reproduction. Ros Ballaster has remarked: 'That Rochester's writing is preoccupied with the physical mechanics of sexuality yet repeatedly eschews issues of procreation and generation indicates the ultimate barrenness of the totalizing philosophy it pursues.'¹¹¹ But *Sodom* is concerned precisely with the issue of procreation and what happens when it is divorced from sexual pleasure. The play is a sustained political satire that does not just criticize the king and the court for sexual excess, but also expresses concerns about royal authority and legitimacy that open themselves up to challenge when the monarch abnegates his responsibility for producing an heir. *Sodom* was written at a time

¹⁰⁷ Childbearing repeatedly endangers the life and health of the woman who may wish to end this possibility, but maternal mortality in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been estimated to be around 1–2%. See Adrian Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery: Childbirth in England 1660–1770* (London, 1995), 15–22. See also on childbirth, Jacques, Gélis, *History of Childbirth: Fertility, Pregnancy and Birth in Early Modern Europe*, trans. Rosemary Morris (Cambridge, 1991; first published in France as *L'Arbre et le fruit* (1984)); and Doreen Evenden, *The Midwives of Seventeenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 2000).

¹⁰⁸ See Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 290–1.

¹⁰⁹ Turner, *Schooling Sex*, 298.

¹¹⁰ For a discussion of the place of pleasure in marital sexual relations, and the importance of 'due benevolence' in Puritan marriages, see Foster, 'Deficient Husbands'; for a discussion of the continuing similarities between Protestant and Catholic advice on marriage, see Davies, 'Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage', 58–79.

¹¹¹ Ros, Ballaster, 'John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester', in Steven N. Zwicker (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1650–1740* (Cambridge, 1998), 204–23, at 208.

of acute anxiety about the succession. In the absence of a legitimate son and heir, it was becoming increasingly apparent that England would see the return of a Catholic monarch, as Charles II's Catholic brother, James, the Duke of York, would succeed to the throne should Charles die without legitimate male issue. *Sodom* portrays in dramatic form the bankruptcy and sterility of a nation in which the king pursues his pleasures to the detriment of his subjects' happiness and well-being, thus placing the nation in jeopardy.

The plot turns on a reversal of sexual norms. The King, Bolloximian, decrees:

Henceforth, Borastus, set the nation free.
 Let conscience have its force of liberty.
 I do proclaim, that buggery may be used
 O'er all the land, so cunt be not abused.¹¹²

The King's name itself, a play on slang for testicles, indicates that his function and his priority should be to reproduce, to ensure continuity and stability of rule.¹¹³ But, as the men have turned away from women, they are left to the pursuit of pleasure by other similarly sterile means: 'Dildos and dogs with women do prevail— | I saw one frigging with a dog's bob-tail.'¹¹⁴ That women have resorted to bestiality further emphasizes the turning-away from 'the proper object', the reproduction of the human race. Texts such as *The Problems of Aristotle*, *Rare Verities*, and *Aristotle's Master-Piece* all emphasized that intercourse was to be 'a mutual action of male and female, with instruments ordained and deputed for that act, to maintain the kind' and that 'by apt instruments is meant, male and female genitals, which are required to be fit and proper; and not, as some vainly suppose, that creatures may ingender by conjoyning mouth to mouth, or eyes to eyes, &c. or unnaturally one male with another, for that is not by apt instruments'.¹¹⁵ The result of this turning-away from 'natural' reproductive intercourse is disease of epidemic proportions that wastes the nation and leads to its destruction. The only remedy is

To Love and Nature all their rights restore,
 Fuck no men, and let buggery be no more.
 It does the propagable end destroy,
 Which Nature gave with pleasure to enjoy.
 Please her, and she'll be kind; if you displease,
 She turns into corruption and disease.¹¹⁶

The turning-away from the proper object of intercourse was not the only sexual error that led to barrenness. Sexual excess also had the same result. It was

¹¹² Rochester, *Sodom*, Act I, scene i, ll. 67–70, 131.

¹¹³ See Williams, *Dictionary of Sexual Language*, i. 61–3.

¹¹⁴ Rochester, *Sodom*, Act III, ll. 119–120, 145.

¹¹⁵ *The Problems of Aristotle*, sig. D2; Sinibaldus, *Rare Verities*, 3.

¹¹⁶ Rochester, *Sodom*, Act V, ll. 44–9, 152.

a commonly held belief of the time that whores did not conceive because of their exposure to excessive quantities of different seed. Though, as we have seen, a large quantity of seed ejaculated during intercourse was desirable to bring on the woman's pleasure and so ensure conception, too much seed emanating from a variety of sexual partners leads to the opposite conclusion, the impossibility of conception. So 'common women' and whores cannot conceive: 'By reason of divers seeds, which do corrupt and spill their instruments of conception; for it maketh them so slippery, that nature cannot retain the seed; or else it is, because one seed destroyeth another, and so neither is good for generation.'¹¹⁷ Anxiety about the succession, as there was no legitimate male heir to succeed to Charles II, and the probability that the Catholic Duke of York would succeed to the throne is reflected in a play in which all 'normal' sexual activities are inverted or cast aside, leaving only acts that are meaningless because sterile (and, of course, Catholicism was routinely associated with sodomy, as well as other sexual irregularities, in English anti-Catholic discourse, as we will see in the discussion of flagellation in Chapter 3). The play highlights the bankruptcy of the pursuit of pleasure for pleasure's sake, where there is no possibility of the 'natural' and expected outcome of sexual relations: conception and birth. Without the production of legitimate offspring to inherit either property or nation, the kingdom will fall apart. Here the modern understanding of pornography as a means of sexual pleasure for its own sake has been turned on its head: pleasure for its own sake is sterile and therefore destructive. Sexual pleasure required its 'proper' aim: reproduction.

This entwining of sexuality and reproduction is also apparent in two completely different seventeenth-century English erotic texts that deal with ideas about fertility. The popular genre of travel writing also spawned a subgenre of pornographic travel literature that took its conventions and exploited them for erotic purposes. Charles Cotton's *Erotopolis* and Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines* (1668) are both spoof travel narratives in which the fertility of the sexual body and its role in reproduction are its most important characteristics.¹¹⁸ In *The Isle of Pines* Neville highlights how the shipwrecked George Pines went about populating his idyllic new home through the four women who survive with him in what Daniel Carey calls 'a tale of exceptional fertility'.¹¹⁹ The population of

¹¹⁷ *The Problems of Aristotle*, sig. D9. See also Sharp, *The Midwives Book*, 80.

¹¹⁸ Daniel Carey has examined Neville's text in detail, and concludes: 'The work was treated as an item of drollery, either disreputable or entertaining according to the reader's taste, but very much a product of the imagination not to be confused with travel literature.' See Daniel Carey, 'Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines*: Travel, Forgery, and the Problem of Genre', *Angelaki*, 1/2 (Winter 1993–4), 23–39, at 31. Peter Wagner describes this work as a 'prototype of the exploration novel, later elaborated by Defoe', locating its eroticism in the description of how George Pines initiates sexual intercourse with the four women with whom he is stranded. See Wagner, *Eros Revived*, 152. The island of the title, of course, is an anagram of 'penis'. See Worthington Chauncey Ford, *The Isle of Pines 1668 An Essay in Bibliography* (Boston, 1920).

¹¹⁹ Daniel Carey, 'Travel and Sexual Fantasy in the Early Modern Period', in Ceri Sullivan and Barbara White (eds.), *Writing and Fantasy* (London and New York, 1999), 151–65, at 162. For a

the island comes to an eventual total of 'five hundred sixty-five of both sorts' through Pines's intercourse with his four female companions, and subsequently through the incestuous sex of the offspring. This incestuous sex is justified as having taken place 'formerly out of necessity'.¹²⁰ It had a moral aim: reproduction and survival. Incest between the close blood relation of brother and sister ceased as soon as there were sufficient children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, although clearly there would still be a degree of blood relation, but increasingly it would conform to accepted degrees of consanguinity. Felicity Nussbaum has suggested: 'The shipwrecked group enact the ultimate male fantasy as the women become the breeders and he the stud: "So that in the year of our being here, all my women were with child by me, and they all coming at different seasons, were a great help to one another."' The issue here is sexuality rather than maternity.'¹²¹ However, I would argue that the focus of the text is on the reproduction rather than on the sex. The text does suggest a fantasy of male sexual indulgence, desirability, virility, and voyeurism, though without explicit detail, but it is constantly hedged about by rules that are constructed around the production of children.¹²² Pines rationed his sexual activity with the women according to whether or not they had conceived: 'my custome being not to lie with any of them after they were with child, till others were so likewise, and not with the black at all after she was with child, which commonly was at the first time I lay with her.'¹²³ Thus sexual intercourse may take place only when it might lead to conception, unless all the women are simultaneously pregnant. Furthermore he no longer had sexual intercourse with the negro woman once her child-bearing

political reading of this text, see Susan Wiseman, "'Adam, the Father of all Flesh': Porno-Political Rhetoric and Political Theory in and after the English Civil War', *Prose Studies*, 14/3 (Dec. 1991), 134–57 (special issue on *Pamphlet Wars: Prose in the English Revolution*, ed. James Holstun).

¹²⁰ Henry Neville, *The Isle of Pines, or, A Late Discovery of a fourth Island near Terra Australis Incognita* by Henry Cornelius Van Sloetten (London, 1668), 14.

¹²¹ Felicity Nussbaum, 'The Other Woman: Polygamy, Pamela, and the Prerogative of Empire', in Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (eds.), *Women, 'Race', & Writing in the Early Modern Period* (London and New York, 1994), 138–59, at 146–7.

¹²² The text also deals with issues about race and class, which play a part too in the construction of the sexual relationships between Pines and the women. I am leaving these issues to one side here in order to focus on the theme of fertility. Nussbaum suggests that race and class are erased in the sexual narrative, but they are significant in shaping the nature of the relationships between Pines and the different women: there is a hierarchy of selection and preference. Pines begins having sexual relationships with the two maidservants, suggesting that their virtue is easier to subvert, but his emotions are engaged by his Master's daughter, placing that relationship on a more 'moral' footing: 'My Master's Daughter, by whom I had most children, being the youngest and handsomest, was most fond of me, and I of her.' He is most reluctant to engage in sexual intercourse with the black slave woman, who is represented as initiating their sexual activity and under cover of darkness so that he might not realize that it is her and not one of the other women. Furthermore, the other women are credited with consenting to the seduction before it may take place.

¹²³ Neville, *The Isle of Pines*, 13. This comment repeats the stereotyping of black women as highly fertile. See, e.g., Jennifer L. Morgan, "'Some Could Suckle over their Shoulder': Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500–1770', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 54/1 (Jan. 1997), 167–92.

years came to an end: 'my *Negro* having had twelve, was the first that left bearing, so I never meddled with her more.'¹²⁴ Sexual pleasure thus turned on the rhythms of fertility.

Cotton's text *Erotopolis* similarly works as a spoof travel narrative, but the theme of fertility is highlighted in his concentration on the description of the land as the female body emphasizing its fertility and how this can be enhanced and controlled.¹²⁵ Despite the extensive use of metaphor in this text, the analogy of female body to landscape is not pursued as extensively or as closely as it is in later eighteenth-century texts that use the extended botanical and topographical metaphor.¹²⁶ *Erotopolis* does not describe the charting of an entire land whose layout resembles the supine female body, over which the reader roves freely in exploration. Rather, the body appears dismembered and reduced to its reproductive function: 'These Soyls if they prove very fruitful indeed, shall sometimes bring you 3 Crops at a time, sometimes 2, but generally 1, a strange sort of Harvest, for it consists chiefly in Mandrakes, they bring forth both Male and Female . . .'.¹²⁷ The land is discussed in terms of its fertility and the control of that fertility.¹²⁸ The metaphors employed are all those to do with cultivation or barrenness of land, the enclosure and possession of land, taking responsibility for the products of the land, and the difficulties of holding on to land and reaping its benefits. The metaphors of conquest that are to be found in much literature of exploration—as they do in pornographic literature where the language of warfare is so frequently the language of sex—do not feature in this work. There is nothing that resembles, for example, the response of early travellers who saw new lands as a virginal body waiting to be penetrated, forcibly if necessary.¹²⁹ The emphasis on the fruitfulness of the land that is to be found in works such as Alsop's *A Character of the Province of Mary-Land* (1666) and Hammond's *Leah and Rachel, Or, The Two Fruitfull Sisters Virginia and Mary-Land* (1656) is exploited, but is deployed for a satirical purpose.¹³⁰ Cotton concentrates on the problems of controlling the fertility of the land/women, of ensuring that it continues to produce as required:

¹²⁴ Neville, *The Isle of Pines*, 14.

¹²⁵ See Fissell, 'Gender and Generation', 437. Fissell describes *Erotopolis* as 'the first erotic cartography in English'.

¹²⁶ See, e.g., Thomas Stretser, *Arbor vitae: Or, The Natural History of the Tree of Life* (1741). For a discussion of the gendering of landscape, see especially Carole Fabricant, 'Binding and Dressing Nature's Loose Tresses: The Ideology of Augustan Landscape Design', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 8 (1979), 109–35; Simon Pugh, *Garden–Nature–Language* (Manchester, 1988); and Harvey, *Reading Sex*, esp. chs. 6 and 7.

¹²⁷ Cotton, *Erotopolis*, 11.

¹²⁸ Patricia Parker notes how descriptions that itemize the female parts move on to controlling and limiting fertility in 'Rhetorics of Property: Exploration, Inventory, Blazon', in Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London and New York, 1987), 126–54, at 131.

¹²⁹ See Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1975).

¹³⁰ Both in C. C. Hall (ed.), *Narratives of Early Maryland 1633–1684* (New York, 1910).

tho it be fertile enough, yet after you have sufficiently plowed it and sown it, it requires neither showres nor the dew of Heaven, nor puts the husbandman to the troublesome Prayers for the alteration of weather; yet if the husbandman be not very careful to tend it and water it himself every night, once or twice a night, as they do Marjoram after Sun-set, he will find a great deal of trouble all the year long.¹³¹

This text repeats in metaphorical form the idea expressed, as we have seen, in jokes about cuckolds and May–December relationships, that a man must continue to satisfy his wife sexually in order to keep her from adultery. But the fertility of the land and any pleasure that it may currently bring cannot be relied upon to continue, for with long use it will become barren, and will eventually disappear: ‘in the Winter and Autumn seasons there is no enduring the Country: The Prospect is not worth one farthing, the ways grow deep and rugged, the land grows barren; there is little or no pleasure in tilling the ground.’¹³² Through the sustained use of these metaphors Cotton emphasized that sexual pleasure was tied to reproductive ability.

These seventeenth-century pornographic texts, then, do not deploy ancient tropes about man as tiller of female soil merely because they are common metaphors for the sexual act. They represent an act in which its outcome is crucial to its meaning and its pleasure. Contemporary understanding of the reproductive body and how ‘generation’ occurred linked sexual pleasure with conception. We misunderstand early modern pornography if we think about it solely in modern terms, as a means to the end of sexual pleasure in and for itself. We also lose the possibility of understanding how early modern men and women thought not only about sex and sexual pleasure, but also about their world and its purpose. If we read the texts’ emphasis on ensuring fertility and conception as merely an early modern guide to birth control, then we miss the most important dimension of this literature. Rochester’s pornographic farce *Sodom* serves as a timely reminder that fertility and the production of an heir were not only to do with sex and sexuality, but were also to do with politics and the nation. Heterosexual sexual intercourse and its ‘natural’ end, reproduction, were crucial for legitimacy, stability, and rule. Male sexual incapacity, whether as infertility or as impotence, might disrupt patriarchal control in the household through questioning male sexual control and competence, opening up the possibility of wider social disruption through adultery. These pornographic texts were not merely a precursor to changing eighteenth-century practices, as Hitchcock has argued; they offer a different, but equally important, way of understanding a seventeenth-century culture in which sex was not just sex. It was reproduction, land, inheritance, continuity, and stability.

¹³¹ Cotton, *Erotopolis*, 7.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 17–18.

3

‘New From Battersy’: Fantasies of Sexual Flagellation

In *Mighty Lewd Books*, Julie Peakman opens the chapter on flagellation with the statement that ‘John Cleland’s *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* was a defining moment in English erotica, not just in applying novelistic technique to erotica, but in recognizing that flagellation was a method to exploit English sexual fantasies’.¹ Peakman goes on to note that there are earlier instances in the seventeenth century of flagellation references in poems, plays, pseudo-medical literature, and pornography, but argues that these are not of any significance, tending to the fleeting and disparaging.² In the same vein, Peter Wagner tells us in *Eros Revived* that ‘flagellation and strangulation, in a sexual context, do not seem to have interested many readers and authors before the eighteenth century’.³ In this chapter I will argue that, on the contrary, flagellation narratives were both more extensive than these two comments suggest, and certainly were of more significance, with much to suggest about early modern sexual cultures. While agreeing that *Fanny Hill, Or, The Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* can be regarded as a defining moment in one particular respect to do with the representation of sexual flagellation, this is not the particular moment that Peakman identifies. Rather it is to do with the development of feelings of shame in desiring to be whipped to achieve sexual congress that are not present in earlier seventeenth-century representations, but that are stressed in *Fanny Hill*, suggesting that there was a fundamental shift in sensibilities between the late seventeenth century and the mid-eighteenth century that may be related to shifts in punishment practices, growing urbanization, and the development of interiority.

The subject of sexual flagellation is not likely immediately to strike the reader as either a subject for humour or as having much to do with reproduction. However, two principal characteristics of the flagellation scenes in seventeenth-century pornographic texts that leap from the page are their generally humorous treatment, and the textual explanations for the phenomenon that state the efficacy of flogging or whipping for promoting conception. This was a body-centric culture in which particular behaviours are given physical rather than psychological

¹ Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*, 161.

² *Ibid.*, 166–71.

³ Wagner, *Eros Revived*, 21.

meanings.⁴ Sexual flagellation is linked with fertility and reproduction, as it is explained as a way of generating and increasing the heat of sexual desire, thus promoting the release of both male and female seed for conception. A further characteristic, and one that clearly distinguishes seventeenth-century from later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century representations, is that flagellation for sexual purposes appears to be more a preference of Catholic foreigners than a peculiarly 'English vice', as it has been designated by historians of the practice.⁵ While these seventeenth-century narratives share a number of characteristics with later nineteenth-century pornography, such as, for example, a focus on the reddening of the skin caused by whipping or beating, they are also very different in many respects.⁶ Not only are the narratives themselves different in subject and characterization (Catholic adult or adolescent foreigners, for example, as opposed to English Protestant school-age children), but I will argue that such shared characteristics may also be interpreted differently in this earlier period, having a somatic rather than an anthropological or psychological explanation.

The idea that beating for sexual pleasure is something that is peculiarly English is suggested by Iwan Bloch in *Sexual Life in England*, and has been perpetuated in works such as Ian Gibson's *The English Vice* and Ronald Pearsall's *The Worm in the Bud*. However, this historiography obscures the fact that there was already a well-established tradition of pornographic writing in the seventeenth century in which narratives of sexual flagellation are both present and, in some works, highly developed. In these narratives, whipping or beating for sexual pleasure is usually (though not always) the practice of Catholic foreigners, both clergy and laity.⁷ The use of flagellation and its sexual effects was routinely attributed to the Catholic priesthood and laity, appearing as a familiar, and humorous, trope in popular anti-Catholic propaganda. For example, Pierre du Moulin in *The Monk's Hood Pull'd Off; Or, The Capucin Fryar Described* (1671) uses a common folklore motif, the fox tail, denoting both eroticism and the fool, in his

⁴ See Duden, *The Woman beneath the Skin*; also Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth Century England* (Cambridge, 1981).

⁵ Most notably in Ian Gibson, *The English Vice: Beating, Sex and Shame in Victorian England and After* (London, 1978), but also in Ivan (Iwan) Bloch, *Sexual Life in England*, trans. William H. Forstern (London, 1958; Corgi paperback edn., 1965; originally published in Germany as vol. 3 of *Das Geschlechtsleben in England mit besonderer Beziehung auf London* (1901–3), entitled *Der Einfluss äusserer Faktoren auf das Geschlechtsleben in England. Fortsetzung und Schluss* (Berlin, 1903); earlier translations were published in New York in 1934 as *Sex Life in England*, and in London in 1938 as *Sexual Life in England Past & Present*).

⁶ Peakman also identifies a focus on 'blood' in eighteenth-century flagellation scenes but does not offer any explanation for this preoccupation. Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*, 177–8.

⁷ Gibson goes further in asserting that sexual beating is a predilection of English and German societies and not of the different cultures of France, Spain, or Italy. He seems to subscribe predominantly to psychological explanations for this cultural split, attributing it to different attitudes towards breastfeeding, toilet-training, and infant aggression. Gibson ignores the religious dimension.

description of the monks' rule for self-discipline, and whose meaning would have been clear to an early modern audience: 'If any one hath whipt himself too gently, he is condemned to whip himself publicly upon the shoulders with a Fox-tail in the presence of those that are at dinner.'⁸ The most extensive and detailed descriptions of flagellation appear in texts that originated on the Continent, but this is not only a continental phenomenon. Such descriptions are frequently deployed in English texts as anti-Catholic propaganda, particularly at moments of high political and religious tension. But the fact that it is not confined to anti-Catholic propaganda argues that there was something more broadly sexually appealing about flagellation.

To date, historians who have enquired into past occurrences of this particular sexual practice have tended to focus on giving sadomasochism a history, by discussing past examples of sexual behaviour that might be identified as such.⁹ In these accounts psychoanalysis provides a framework for attempting to understand the phenomenon, but is applied in an ahistorical fashion that ignores the specific contemporary cultural context, attaching the labels 'sadistic' and 'masochistic' to those historical personages or literary characters who have been identified as exhibiting either an active or a passive role in the proceedings. Modern feminist discussions of sadomasochistic practice tend to focus on the issues of power, dominance, and submission.¹⁰ Those who have looked at the representation of sexual flagellation in seventeenth-century pornography as a manifestation of early modern sadomasochistic sexual practice have tended to see only a literature that is misogynist in nature and intent, as those on the receiving end of the lash in these texts are usually (but by no means always) women.¹¹ While this is unarguably the case, it does not follow that these scenes inevitably confirm that this early modern pornography perpetuates a tradition of anti-woman discourse. Seventeenth-century pornography is more complex and subtle than a feminist anti-pornography interpretation allows. These flagellation narratives work on several levels at once, and do not generally describe sadistic men flogging masochistic women for (male) sexual gratification. It is more usual to find women beating other women, or women beating men. And there is more going on than just a fantasy of domination or submission. Peakman is an

⁸ Pierre du Moulin, *The Monk's Hood Pull'd off; Or, The Capucin Fryar Described. In Two Parts. Translated out of French* (1671), 29–30. See Malcolm Jones, 'Folklore Motifs in Late Medieval Art III: Erotic Animal Imagery', *Folklore*, 102/2 (1991), 192–219, esp. 203–8. Jones describes a sixteenth-century painted ceiling in Germany in which a monk is depicted disciplining a nun with a fox tail, an image that was reproduced in seventeenth-century German prints (p. 206).

⁹ See, e.g., Vern L. Bullough, *Sexual Variance in Society and History* (Chicago and London, 1976), and Vern L. Bullough, Dwight Dixon, and Joan Dixon, 'Sadism, Masochism and History, or When is Behaviour Sado-Masochistic?', in Porter and Teich (eds.), *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science*, 47–62.

¹⁰ See Rosemarie Tong, *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction* (London and New York, 1989), 121–22.

¹¹ e.g. Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 12, 33, and Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity*, 87.

exception to these analyses, and her description of eighteenth-century flagellation pornography similarly notes the prevalence of the active female flagellant. She relates this to the predominance of the governess character or mother/stepmother in the narratives, arguing that a new domestic setting for such scenes develops a theme of incestuous relationships. However, Peakman does not develop her analysis any further than this to suggest how these may have been understood in the eighteenth century, or what meanings they may have carried for readers in the period.

This chapter analyses the representation of sexual flagellation in pornographic texts circulating in England in the seventeenth century, and argues for a more culturally specific interpretation of these scenes, which might account for both their presence and their enjoyment. But, while arguing that previous analysis of these narratives, informed by psychoanalysis, has resulted in ahistorical interpretations that ignore the cultural specificity of these texts, I do not wish to suggest that psychoanalysis is entirely irrelevant. While most of these texts resist a psychoanalytic explanation that locates the origins of a desire for whipping or beating for sexual gratification in early childhood trauma, and the psychic transformation of pain into pleasure, one scene in particular, in Otway's *Venice Preserv'd, Or, A Plot Discover'd* (1682), can be read as a classic literary example of a sadomasochistic scenario.¹² Psychoanalysis also converges with the somatic explanation that is offered by these texts in understanding that the desire for flagellation to produce a sexual response is about pleasure, not pain.¹³ Furthermore, these pornographic narratives must be understood also as fantasy, and not just as description of early modern sexual practices. We need to try and understand why and how these narratives were pleasurable for the reader: what was it about the particular representations of sexual flagellation at this time that gave their audience pleasure? Any purely functional explanation (that it is about how to ensure conception or cure impotence) loses the imaginative and playful quality of the material, its sexiness, and at the same time ignores its function as fantasy. The literature is about the body, pleasure, and the sexual imagination as much as it is about religion, punishment, or fertility.

¹² Sigmund, Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: I. The Sexual Aberrations' (1905), in Angela Richards (ed.), *The Pelican Freud Library*, vii. *On Sexuality* (Harmondsworth, 1979), 73; and Sigmund, Freud, "'A Child is Being Beaten': A Contribution to the Study of the Origin of Sexual Perversions', in James Strachey, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, xvii. 1917–19, ed. (Standard Edition; London, 1955), 179–204. See also Renate Hauser, 'Krafft-Ebing's Psychological Understanding of Sexual Behaviour', in Porter and Teich (eds.), *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science*, 210–27.

¹³ See Joyce McDougall, *The Many Faces of Eros* (London, 1995), 42–3: 'Beneath many forms of compulsive and deviant sexual practice we find a common theme: that childhood trauma was rendered bearable by turning it into an erotic game. . . . It is conceivable that the capacity to transform pain into a source of sexual ecstasy served to preclude a more psychotic outcome'. (See also Robert J. Stoller, *Perversion: The Erotic Form of Hatred* (Cambridge, 1976).

These qualities are exemplified in the following short story, or piece of 'news', from 'Battersy' (this joke on beating in the title immediately signals the nature of the piece) from the humorous, and generally titillating, weekly periodical *Poor Robin's Intelligence* dated 20 August 1677:

A youthful-minded Virgin, somewhat under threescore, kept honest in spite of her inclinations, by the uncharitableness of this hard-hearted Age, having an itching desire to study Anatomy, and be satisfied in the real difference of sexes, walking very pensively on the Banks of the Rhyne, one Evening spies a parcel of young fellows washing themselves; and not content with gazing, to obtain a nearer view of so pleasing a prospect, snatches up their cloaths on the bank; to recover which, several of them at once were obliged to put to shore and pursue her, who made no great speed away, but when they came up to her, drawing out a lusty Rod, began to play at Flogg with them, till one enraged with the smart and impudence of the old Gypsie, fairly canted her arm-pit hight into the water, some say she swam there like a Frog, and thence suspect her for a sorceress, others that hold there are no Witches but handsome Women, cannot but acquit her of that crime, but all conclude this cooling drench an excellent Remedy for the quavering of the Kidnies, arising from Inflammations of the lower Venticle, wherewith she long has been troubled.

What should we make of such an odd item, which is so obviously aimed at the entertainment of its audience, through humour and sexual titillation, in the same way as other items that, perhaps, describe more conventional sexual scenarios? As Robert Darnton suggests in *The Great Cat Massacre*, the obscurity and opacity of past 'narratives' can itself be the clue to unravelling past ways of thinking. By 'getting the joke' here, it may be possible to 'get' an understanding of early modern English sexual cultures.¹⁴

This story unites, in a very short space, a whole range of issues raised by the representation of sexual flagellation, or flogging, in seventeenth-century pornographic texts, through which the peculiarities and complexities of the various flagellation scenarios may be teased out. It is notable that, as with pornography, the eighteenth century is frequently identified as the historical period in which 'S and M' really appeared as a variety of sexual 'perversion', reaching its apogée in Victorian England.¹⁵ John Cleland's *Fanny Hill* is credited as exemplifying both these trends, as we have already seen. The seventeenth-century literature thus challenges this historiography and chronology. It suggests that representation of the practice of sexual flagellation in pornography has changed over time, from being most usually identified in the early modern period with a demonizing anti-Catholicism to becoming identified from the later eighteenth century onwards with the preferred disciplinary practices of English public schools. The seventeenth-century flagellation narratives also focus on

¹⁴ Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (London, 1984), esp. 75–104.

¹⁵ See Ronald Pearsall, *The Worm in the Bud: The World of Victorian Sexuality* (London, 1969); repr. Harmondsworth, 1971).

the pleasurable physical, rather than psychological, effects of whipping for the recipient and the sexual pleasure derived from gazing at the body of the recipient for the person administering the whipping. This short humorous ‘news’ item also illustrates the wider appeal of flagellation to a seventeenth-century audience, as it is not presented here as part of a larger anti-Catholic narrative. The text here instead explicitly, and repeatedly, associates witchcraft with flogging. The suggestion that the woman is a witch is made, as she escapes from the pursuit of the young men by swimming away, rather than sinking (as a person innocent of witchcraft would do), when pitched into the river.¹⁶ The analogy is further emphasized by the description of her swimming ‘like a frog’, suggesting that she has changed herself into the non-human form of a common witch’s familiar.¹⁷ Her advanced years (she is ‘somewhat under threescore’ or aged about 60) together with the description of her as an ‘old Gypsie’ reinforce the suggestion that she is a witch. Furthermore, the idea of witchcraft would have sexual connotations for a seventeenth-century audience, including the idea that familiars usually sucked on or near the sexual parts of the female body such as the breasts or ‘within the inward part of her secrets’ (the vagina).¹⁸ This association would again underline the sexually titillating nature of the story (and could argue for a further continental connection, originating in Catholic demonology as set out in the *Malleus maleficarum*).¹⁹ Although the title of the story locates itself in London through the double entendre ‘Battersy’, so presumably on the banks of the River Thames, it goes on to establish a continental connection through resiting it ‘on the Banks of the Rhyne’.

It will be argued in a later chapter, in an analysis of some pamphlet illustrations printed during the Civil War years, that sexual incontinence, blasphemy, witchcraft, heresy, and other religious unorthodoxy, including Catholicism, are all linked together with political propaganda during a period of civil and political upheaval, dissension, and instability. All religious dissidence in effect becomes tarred with the same brush, so that motifs from witchcraft or Catholicism further serve to damn the particular target by association. The flagellation motif appears in a woodcut twice used as a frontispiece for anti-sectarian pamphlets (see Figure 2). It was first printed in a pamphlet attacking Adamites in 1641 entitled *A Nest of Serpents Discovered. Or, A Knot of Old Heretiques Revived, Called the Adamites*, then reprinted in an anti-Ranter pamphlet of 1650 entitled *The Ranters Religion. Or, A Faithfull and Infallible Narrative of their Damnable and Diabolical Opinions, with their Detestable Lives & Actions*. An enormous number

¹⁶ See Barbara Rosen (ed.), *Witchcraft in England 1558–1618* (London, 1969; repr. Amherst, Mass., 1991), esp. 331–43, ‘The Swimming Test’.

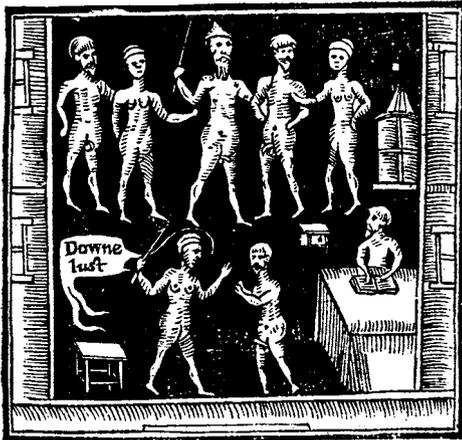
¹⁷ Witches often referred to toad, if not to frog, familiars. See, e.g., James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550–1750* (Harmondsworth, 1996), 70–1; also Rosen, *Witchcraft*, 70–1, 110, 115, 127, 161, 165.

¹⁸ Rosen, *Witchcraft*, 381.

¹⁹ I am grateful to Alex Walsham for drawing my attention to this connection.

**A Nest of Serpents
Discovered.
O R,
A knot of old Heretiques revived,
Called the
ADAMITES.**

Wherein their originall, increase, and severall ridiculous tenets are plainly layd open.



Printed in the yeare 1641.

Fig. 2. Frontispiece to *A Nest of Serpents* (1641), BL E.168.(12). By permission of the British Library. Image published with permission of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

of anti-Catholic tracts rolled off the presses at this time, including a number that, while not necessarily pornographic in entirety, contained material, sometimes substantial amounts, that was pornographic and that usually included salacious references to flagellation.²⁰ It was into an atmosphere of anti-Catholic hysteria following the 'Popish Plot' of 1678 and the exclusion crisis of 1679–81 when it seemed certain that a Catholic monarch would return to England's throne

²⁰ There are too many of these to list all, but see, e.g., Gregorio Leti, *Il putanismo di Roma, Or The History of the Whores and Whoredom of the Popes, Cardinals and Clergy of Rome. Discovered by a Conclave of Ladies Convened for the Election of a new Pope*, trans. into English by I.D. (1670); *Satyrs upon the Jesuits: Written in the Year 1679* (1681); Philanax Misopapas (pseud.), *Rome's Rarities; Or The Pope's Cabinet Unlock'd, and Exposed to View. Being a True and Faithful Account of the Blasphemy, Treason, Massacres, Murders, Lechery, Whoredom, Buggery, Sodomy, Debauchery, Pious Frauds, &c. of the Romish Church, from the Pope himself to the Priest, or Inferiour Clergy* (1684); various works by James Salgado printed in the 1670s and 1680s; *The Weekly Pacquet of Advice from Rome: Or, The History of Popery and The Popish Courant: Or, Some Occasional Joco-Serious Reflections on Romish Fopperies* (weekly periodicals, 1678–83). See also Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 133–57.

on the death of Charles II that Henry Rhodes published an English translation of the French pornographic text *Vénus dans le cloître, ou la religieuse en chemise* (*Venus in the Cloister: Or, The Nun in her Smock*) in 1683 without difficulty or condemnation by either civil or religious authorities.²¹ Nearly forty years later, and after the passage of the 1689 Toleration Act, in a different political and religious climate, Edmund Curll was prosecuted for 'obscene libel' for republishing another English edition of *Venus in the Cloister* and Meibomius' semi-medical examination of the phenomenon of sexual flagellation, *De flagrorum usu*, translated as *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs* (1718). Contemporary anti-Catholic writing rehearsed familiar tropes: monasteries and convents were hotbeds of vice where monks, nuns, and priests indulged all the physical pleasures of eating, drinking, singing, dancing, and, of course, a variety of sexual activity. Priests committed fornication and sodomy while finding scriptural justification for their behaviour; babies were killed and the bodies hidden to conceal any evidence of their activities; beating and whipping were practised supposedly for their alleged spiritual benefits, but really because they brought sexual pleasure and gratification.²² English Protestants were steeped in such anti-Catholic propaganda, so that Frances Dolan has argued that 'the specter of Catholicism was the animating and organizing obsession of early modern English print culture'.²³ Flagellation could, therefore, be related to Catholicism and to witchcraft with suggestions of sexual excess and immorality.

The representation of sexual flagellation in these texts should not be viewed as the expression of a seventeenth-century, polymorphously perverse, libertine sexual appetite, which includes description of a wide variety of different sexual activities for the pleasure of the reader, and which caters to all tastes. Rather, these representations conform to a very culturally specific idea about the sexual behaviours of particular sorts of people, in particular contexts. What has come to be regarded to as 'the English vice' receives its most extensive description in texts that either originated on the Continent, such as in *The Dialogues of Luisa*

²¹ David Foxon identifies 1683 as the year in which Rhodes published *Venus in the Cloister: Or, The Nun in her Smock*, but Peter Wagner puts it at 1692. See Foxon, *Libertine Literature*, 14; Wagner, 'Anticatholic Erotica in Eighteenth-Century England', 166.

²² See, e.g., Thomas Robinson, *The Anatomie of the English Nunnery at Lisbon in Portugall* (1622).

²³ Frances Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1999), 2. See also Robin Clifton, 'Fear of Popery', in Conrad Russell (ed.), *The Origins of the English Civil War* (London and Basingstoke, 1973; repr. 1978), 144–67; Robin Clifton, 'The Popular Fear of Catholics during the English Revolution', *Past & Present*, 52 (Aug. 1971), 23–55; Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (eds.), *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics 1603–1642* (London, 1989); Peter Lake with Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven and London, 2002); John Miller, *Popery and Politics in England 1660–1688* (Cambridge, 1973); Anthony Milton, 'A Qualified Intolerance: The Limits and Ambiguities of Early Stuart Anti-Catholicism', in Arthur F. Marotti (ed.), *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts* (Basingstoke, 1999), 85–115; Carol Z. Wiener, 'The Beleaguered Isle: A Study of Elizabethan and Early Jacobean Anti-Catholicism', *Past & Present*, 51 (May 1971), 27–62.

Sigea and *Venus in the Cloister*, or were attributed to Catholic communities or societies overseas, such as in *The Nunns Complaint against the Fryars* (1676) and Thomas Robinson's *Anatomie of the English Nunnery at Lisbon* (1622). For the most part, though not entirely, sexual flagellation is represented as a Catholic practice, pursued and promoted by a corrupt and hypocritical priesthood steeped in worldly pleasures. Thus we see priests or other religious figures advocating flagellation for their spiritual charges with duplicitous and 'Jesuitical' arguments for its beneficial purpose of achieving spiritual enrichment through chastisement of the physical body. The use of clever argument by a learned priesthood to debauch their spiritual charges is exemplified by Father Teodoro in *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, where Ottavia tells Tullia: 'He then entered upon a sermon intended to strengthen and embolden me. With my head to one side and my eyes rivetted on the ground while he was preaching, I felt so completely disposed by his harangue for all sorts of tortures that, had he decreed my death, I would have undergone it cheerfully. See, dear Tullia, how awfully he captivated my reason.'²⁴ Alternatively, flagellation is represented as paradoxically—and comically—producing release from the torments of physical desire, for those enclosed in a religious house, through the achievement of orgasm rather than the anticipated subjugation of the body and its sexual longings. In *Venus in the Cloister* Angelica remarks ironically, having described the self-flagellation of one of the nuns: 'This was Sister *Dosithea's* Case, she found by Experience, that these Whippings and Flagellations of her Posteriors, rather augmented than diminished her Fires; a very silly and ineffectual Remedy then against Concupiscence.'²⁵

The practice of flagellation as it is represented in both Chorier's *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* and *Venus in the Cloister* clearly targets the Catholic Church as the object of satire, sending up a hypocritical and unchaste clerical caste.²⁶ Both texts make much of the priest's devious arguments and manipulation of an innocent and unsophisticated female charge who can be induced to be compliant to his desires:

Besides, he proved, by a long and carefully worded sermon, that all pudicity independent of debauch is a sin; that only those that present themselves naked to men's eyes for the sake of voluptuousness and lust have need to blush, but not those who do so out of piety and repentance. The former is disgraceful and the latter decent; the one pleases men, the other the Gods; penance of this nature is therefore of the greatest use.²⁷

In a clever justification of such priestly behaviour, the author of *Venus in the Cloister* put into the mouth of his hypocritical priest very similar words

²⁴ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 185.

²⁵ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 112.

²⁶ It is highly likely that the flagellation scene in *Venus in the Cloister* in which a priest is involved was taken from Chorier's text, which was published twenty years earlier. Many of the details are the same, including the name of the priest (Theodore/Teodoro), and the story follows a very similar plot.

²⁷ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 147.

to those that were used by many authors to justify the publication of a text that contains much sexual material: 'They certainly, continued he, ought to be ashamed and blush, who shew themselves naked before Men, in order to prostitute themselves to their Concupiscence, but on the contrary, others are praise-worthy who do so only out of a Principle of Piety and Penance, and for a holy Zeal to purify their Souls.'²⁸ In continental pornography then, as well as English anti-Catholic literature that invokes all the usual practices of a debauched priesthood, flagellation is not something that has any particular association with Englishness.

But the exploitation of the possibilities of flagellation for anti-clerical satire was not reserved solely for the Catholic priesthood. English Presbyterians found themselves on the receiving end of this variety of satire in 1661 with the publication of Francis Kirkman's *The Presbyterian Lash. Or, Noctroff's Maid Whipt*, in which Zachary Crofton's sexually inspired whipping of his maid is lampooned.²⁹ This text reads very much like a tabloid reporting of a naughty vicar caught in an act of hypocritical sexual indulgence, and relishing the erotic potential of the narration as much as it does the possibilities for humour. These elements are combined as the characters speculate how it may have happened: 'I warrant he thought that the tickling the Wenches buttocks with the Rod, would provoke her to Lechery . . . , or else it may be the poor Whores breech was so cold that she could not bear it out stoutly against a bench or bed side, and therefore he was resolved to warme it.'³⁰

Flagellation thus becomes a signifier for sexual and religious hypocrisy, usually, but not always, associated with Catholicism, and so further calling into question the probity of anyone caught in such an act, and appealing to a broad coalition of interests.³¹ But it should be noted also that such anti-clericalism would be read differently by an English Protestant and a French Catholic public. Later eighteenth-century French political pornography is seen as part of the repertoire of a radical opposition to Church and State.³² It is surely going too far to read pornographic religious satire in England as a concerted undermining of religious and political dissidence by an orthodox Protestant establishment, especially as such satire is utilized to attack both establishment figures, including the monarchy, and dissident groups. But it must be remarked that an attack on Catholicism would have different meanings in the two different contexts. Nevertheless, the anti-clerical satire that is clearly part

²⁸ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 154–5. ²⁹ Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 43.

³⁰ Francis Kirkman, *The Presbyterian Lash. Or, Noctroff's Maid Whipt. A Tragy-Comedy. As it was Lately Acted in the Great Roome at the Pye Tavern at Algate* (London, 1661), 4.

³¹ For a discussion of sodomy and its use in anti-Catholic and anti-Puritan literature, see Alan Stewart, 'A Society of Sodomites: Religion and Homosexuality in Renaissance England', in Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter, and Miri Rubin (eds.), *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe, 1300–1800* (Basingstoke, 2005), 88–109.

³² See Hunt (ed.), *Eroticism and the Body Politic*.

of French pornography, and that was available in seventeenth-century England, would have found a highly receptive English audience that was predisposed to find it entertaining and enjoyable, confirming entrenched anti-Catholic prejudices.

The idea that the enjoyment of beating or flogging is something particularly English and arose from the extensive use of the practice for disciplinary purposes in English public schools and harsh penal practices does not generally appear in flagellation scenes that originated in England during the seventeenth century, and that do not focus on the Catholic dimension. A connection with schooling practices is made in some of the literature, but it is only one aspect of this seventeenth-century literature. It is not as marked or as extensive as becomes the case later on in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century flogging narratives.³³ There is no religious connection in Thomas Otway's beating scenes in *Venice Preserv'd*, and the play is set on the Continent, in the Venice of the title, rather than in England. It is thus a Venetian Senator, Antonio, who desires to be beaten rather than an Englishman. The idea that a man becomes addicted to the practice of flogging for sexual stimulation from becoming accustomed to frequent whippings at school makes its appearance very briefly in Meibomius' text, *De flagrorum usu*, available in Latin in England since its first publication on the Continent in 1639, only to be dismissed as insufficient an explanation that cannot account for the majority of cases.³⁴ In Shadwell's *The Virtuoso* (1676) Snarl explains his desire to be beaten with rods stems from the fact that 'I was so us'd to't at Westminster-School, I cou'd never leave it off since'.³⁵ This behavioural account suggests that a predilection for beating is a learned, or conditioned, response to a stimulus that has aroused sexual feelings. The repeated exposure to the stimulus and its associated sexual response leads to a need for the stimulus in order to reproduce the sexual response. Or, as Meibomius describes the process in the words of Coelius from Picus: 'it grew more obstinate and rooted in his Nature, from his using it from a Child, when a reciprocal Friction among his School-Fellows used to be provoked by the Titulation of Stripes'.³⁶

These seventeenth-century accounts refer only to the influence of custom on the recipient of the beating or whipping, not on the perpetrator. However, two humorous poems on the subject dated c.1662 also mock the schoolmaster, who seems to be addicted to the infliction of whipping.³⁷ Dr Gill of St Paul's School and Dr Busby of Westminster School seem to have been notorious for

³³ See Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*, 178–80.

³⁴ John Henry Meibomius, *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs: Also of the Office of the Loins and Reins* (1718; first published, Lübeck, 1639).

³⁵ Thomas Shadwell, *The Virtuoso* (London, 1676), Act III, scene vii, 1.46.

³⁶ Meibomius, *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging*, 14–15.

³⁷ *On Doctor Gill, Master of Paul's School; and Gill upon Gill, Or, Gills Ass Uncas'd, Unstript, Unbound*, in *Ovid de arte amand*, 125–8.

the pleasure they took in beating their pupils.³⁸ As we have seen, Dr Gill also receives a mention in the preface to the 1658 English version of Sinibaldus' *Geanthropeia* entitled *Rare Verities*, where the author writes,

For my part I expect no less then to be whipt by every squint-eyed fellow, worse then Dr Gill lash'd his maids Bumbgillion, when

He took up her smock
And then whip'd her nock.³⁹

The recipient of Dr Gill's apparent compulsion is here female, the maid, rather than his male pupils. The sexual aspect of his preferred form of discipline is made explicit: he lifts the maid's clothes, exposing and specifically whipping her sexual parts. That it is a compulsion, and is indiscriminate, is suggested in the poem 'On Doctor Gill', where he is described as whipping whoever he comes across, male or female, regardless of rank or nationality, and the reader is advised: 'Take heed that you pass, | Lest you taste of the Lash.'⁴⁰ There is, therefore, no suggestion at all of any homosexual dimension to the practice: Snarl in *The Virtuoso* wishes to be whipped by a woman, and Dr Gill is represented as not caring whom he whips, so long as he whips somebody.

Historians have documented the extensive use of physical discipline both at home and in schools during the seventeenth century. Lawrence Stone in *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800* argues that flogging was a routine and normal social practice, and that from the sixteenth century there were significant changes in education that meant that more children would be accustomed to being beaten on a regular basis than ever before.⁴¹ Although the extent of Stone's educational revolution has been disputed, nevertheless there was an extension of educational opportunities throughout the seventeenth century.⁴² John Addy in *Sin and Society in the Seventeenth Century* cites many examples of quite severe corporal punishment administered to schoolchildren.⁴³ Despite the suggestion by Addy that some parents did not accept the routine beating of their children at school and might go so far as to complain or to withdraw their children, and the modification of Stone's argument about the ubiquity and severity of school discipline by later scholars, physical punishment was quite usual in the home as punishment for both children and servants, and for apprentices

³⁸ Lawrence Stone refers to these two headmasters as having been 'pathological sadists'. Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800* (London, 1977; abridged paperback edn., Harmondsworth, 1990); 117–18.

³⁹ Sinibaldus, *Rare Verities*, preface, sig. B2.

⁴⁰ *On Doctor Gill*, 125, ll. 3–4. Psychoanalytic accounts also refer to the compulsive aspect of the paraphilias.

⁴¹ Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, 117. For the expansion in education during the seventeenth century, see also Stone, 'The Educational Revolution in England'.

⁴² See Helen M. Jewell, *Education in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998), ch. 2.

⁴³ John Addy, *Sin and Society in the Seventeenth Century* (London and New York, 1989), 89–92.

in the workshop.⁴⁴ Although some writers of domestic prescriptive literature stressed the need for moderation, they did not, as they did for wife-beating, suggest that it should not be used at all.⁴⁵ It was seen as the parents' responsibility to ensure that children were strictly controlled in order to keep them free from sin, with the adage 'spare the rod and spoil the child' based on the Book of Proverbs underpinning contemporary attitudes towards discipline.⁴⁶ That this punishment was sometimes taken to extremes can be seen from the evidence of court records, where both men and women appeared following the death of a child or servant who had been beaten, such as the trials in 1681 of John Sadler and Elizabeth Wigenton for whipping a 13-year-old girl, Wigenton's apprentice, to death.⁴⁷ The frequent recurrence of not-guilty verdicts in such cases reveals how corporal punishment of servants, however immoderate, was considered justifiable.⁴⁸ However, not all severe or excessive discipline went unremarked or even unpunished: there do appear to have been limits as to what communities found acceptable, and some were punished for going too far, as were Sadler and Wigenton. They were both convicted of wilful murder for the beating of Wigenton's apprentice, which resulted in her death after Sadler 'strip'd her, beat her 3 or 4 hours, still rubbing the Wounds with Salt: And the Woman who was Condemn'd the last Sessions for the same Murder, stop'd her Mouth with an handkercher, lest the Neighbours should pity her out-Cry for the hard cruel usage'.⁴⁹ This culture of corporal punishment for minors was not confined to England during the seventeenth century. Philippe Ariès has documented its

⁴⁴ For a detailed description of apprenticeship and the life of the child in early modern England, see Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England 1560–1640* (Oxford, 1996), and Steve Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 1989). For a discussion of Stone, see Richard Halpern, *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation: English Renaissance Culture and the Genealogy of Capital* (Ithaca, NY, 1991), 279.

⁴⁵ Ralph A. Houlbrooke in *The English Family 1450–1700* (London and New York, 1984) explains how a pessimistic view of the child's nature led to the belief that his innate depravity needed curbing through parental discipline for the child's own good.

⁴⁶ See Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500–1900, England, France & the United States of America* (Basingstoke and London, 1994), 47; Martin Ingram, 'Shame and Pain: Themes and Variations in Tudor Punishments', in Simon Devereaux and Paul Griffiths (eds.), *Penal Practice and Culture 1500–1900* (Basingstoke, 2004), 36–62, at 52–3.

⁴⁷ *The Tryal and Condemnation of Several Notorious Malefactors, at a Sessions of Oyer and Terminer which Began at the Sessions House in the Old Baily, with the Names of those who Received Sentence of Death, Burnt in the Hand, Transported, and to be Whipt* (1681), and *The True Relation of the Tryals at the Sessions of Oyer and Terminer, Held for the City of London, County of Middlesex, and Goale Delivery of Newgate . . .* (1681). For further examples, see F. G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Disorder* (Chelmsford, 1970), 155–6.

⁴⁸ J. A. Sharpe, *Crime in Seventeenth-Century England: A County Study* (Cambridge, 1983), 126. There has been much debate about the level and nature of violence in early modern English society. See, e.g., Lawrence Stone, 'Interpersonal Violence in English Society 1300–1980', *Past & Present*, 101 (1983), 22–33; J. A. Sharpe, 'Debate: The History of Violence in England: Some Observations', *Past & Present*, 108 (Aug. 1985), 206–15; Lawrence Stone, 'The History of Violence in England: A Rejoinder', *Past & Present*, 108 (Aug. 1985), 216–24.

⁴⁹ See the example of Cicely Sharpley in Paul Griffiths, 'Bodies and Souls in Norwich: Punishing Petty Crime, 1540–1700', in Devereaux and Griffiths, *Penal Practice*, 85–120, 96. *The Tryal and*

extensive use in both England and France, and Elizabeth Wirth Marvick has also demonstrated that it was common practice in French child-rearing.⁵⁰

Apart from Snarl in *The Virtuoso* there is little suggestion in these texts that disciplinary practices inflicted on children are the cause of an adult psychosexual disorder, though other contemporary writing does suggest this possibility, as Alan Stewart has suggested is the case in the 1669 *Children's Petition* and the 1698 pamphlet *Lex forcia*. He argues that the later pamphlet also 'links the beating of schoolboys to what he claims is a recent vogue for flagellation, in adult sexual relations'.⁵¹ Although it might be argued that the Catholic priests represented as enjoying the lash (either self-inflicted or as active flagellants) learned their habit as young boys in the seminary, where corporal punishment was as much the rule as in English schools, this idea is not actually present in the texts.⁵² Rather, flagellation, either of the self or of others, is represented as a discredited religious practice, because sexual in nature, which is practised precisely because it brings sexual pleasure. Snarl's remark that 'I was so us'd to't at Westminster-School, I cou'd never leave it off since' might have raised a knowing laugh from Shadwell's theatre audience, because it was common knowledge that there were some men who did derive sexual pleasure from flogging, having become accustomed to it from their schooldays, or equally because it was common knowledge that Dr Gill and other school headmasters derived particular pleasure from being able to inflict corporal punishment on their charges. As we have seen from the two poems and the comment in the preface to *Rare Verities*, the headmaster of Westminster School was the object of popular mockery because of his excessive taste for inflicting punishment. This could have been as much a specific 'in joke' about the headmaster of Westminster School as a comment explaining a phenomenon that would have made sense to a seventeenth-century audience.

It should be apparent by now that the joke, or humour, is as much an integral part of these flogging stories as it is of the pornographic narrative in general, as will be argued in Chapter 6. The most immediately striking characteristic of the short story with which this chapter begins is its humorous tone. The story was clearly intended to amuse as much as to titillate its audience. Some of the more extended flagellation narratives, such as in *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* and *Venus*

Condemnation of Several Notorious Malefactors and *The True Relation of the Tryals at the Sessions of Oyer and Termine*, trials of John Sadler and Elizabeth Wigenton.

⁵⁰ Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. Robert Baldick (London, 1962; first published as *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime* (Paris, 1960)), esp. 259–64; Elizabeth Wirth Marvick, 'Nature versus Nurture: Patterns and Trends in Seventeenth-Century French Child-Rearing', in Lloyd de Mause (ed.), *The History of Childhood: The Evolution of Parent-Child relationships as a Factor in History* (New York, 1974; London, 1976), 259–301.

⁵¹ Alan, Stewart, 'Boys' Buttocks Revisited: James VI and the Myth of the Sovereign Schoolmaster', in Tom Betteridge (ed.), *Sodomy in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester and New York, 1996), 131–47, at 131–2.

⁵² Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 260.

in the *Cloister*, make serious points, and are not entirely light-hearted in tone, but they also include some humorous moments. They are clearly satirical and often tease the reader. Other narratives such as Kirkman's *The Presbyterian Lash, Whipping Tom Brought to Light, and Exposed to View*, or the flogging scenes in Shadwell's *The Virtuoso* and Otway's *Venice Preserv'd* are almost entirely comic. The 'Nicky Nacky' scene in *Venice Preserv'd* appears to have been particularly popular when first staged in seventeenth-century London.⁵³ The humour in these scenes arises not from the act of whipping or beating itself but rather from the sexual circumstances surrounding it, and the observations of those reporting it. For example, in the story quoted at the beginning of this chapter from *Poor Robin's Intelligence*, it is not the fact of the woman beating the young men that is presented as funny so much as its sexual context. Her motive is sexual, and, in the context of a culture that understood flogging as raising lust so causing erection in men, her actions can be read as an invitation to sexual intercourse. The trick she plays on them, stealing their clothes, results in the revelation of their naked bodies for her (and the audience's) pleasure, and their physical retaliation, throwing her into the water, is intended to cool her ardour. In *Venice Preserv'd*, the entire scene in which Aquilina whips Senator Antonio would be hugely funny (as contemporary audiences appreciated): it is very physical comedy, as Antonio mimics various animals and Aquilina kicks and whips him round the stage. The language too is amusing, consisting of childish love talk, for example: 'Ay Nacky; Aquilina, lina, lina, quilina, quilina, quilina, Aquilina, Naquilina, Naquilina, Acky, Acky, Nacky, Nacky, Queen Nacky—come let's to bed—you Fubbs, you Pug you—you little puss . . .'.⁵⁴ The whipping forms just one part of a scene mocking the private vice and debasement of a prominent, publicly respected figure.⁵⁵

Irony plays a large part in the humour of the scenes narrated in *Venus in the Cloister*, where whipping, either as self-punishment or as punishment inflicted by another for the sin of sexual thoughts or actions, merely exacerbates the error it is intended to correct. We are invited to laugh along with the narrator as she points out how ridiculous it is to think that whipping will put an end to sexual feelings. The only way that whipping cures sexual desire is by satisfying it with arousal to orgasm. The author suggests that this effect is so obvious and well known that it is hugely funny that anyone should think otherwise. Angelica describes Dosithea's attempts to rid herself of her troublesome erotic preoccupations, showing how her redoubled efforts to flog them from her body have the required effect, but not in the anticipated fashion. Her strenuous efforts bring on her orgasm:

⁵³ See Malcolm Kelsall's introduction to Thomas Otway, *Venice Preserv'd, or, A Plot Discover'd. A Tragedy*, ed. Malcolm Kelsall's (London, 1682; repr. 1969), p. xii.

⁵⁴ Act III, scene i. Fubbs, small chubby person, a term of endearment; Pug, monkey or other small animal, imp or courtesan. Kelsall, notes to text.

⁵⁵ Otway, *Venice Preserv'd*, Act III, ll. 37–41.

She prayed, wept, and sighed, but all to no Purpose. She found herself more oppressed than ever: And in order to insult anew, and with greater Violence that opinated Nature, takes the Discipline in Hand, and pulling up her Coats and Smock to her very Navel, and tying them about her with a Girdle, she had no Mercy on her poor Thighs, and that Part which had caused all her sufferings, which then lay entirely bare and uncovered. . . . She fell into a very great Weakness, but it was a very amorous one, which the Fury of her Passion had caused; and made this young Thing taste such a Pleasure which ravished her to the very Skies. . . . Thou wouldst have seen that Innocent half naked, her Mouth smiling with those amorous gentle Contractions of which she knew not the Cause! Thou wouldst have seen her in an Ecstasy . . .⁵⁶

In a later story, which Angelica again narrates, the joke is further pressed home. Angelica describes how Alicia is flogged by both her aunt and the priest because she confesses to having engaged in some sexual activities, though not full intercourse, with Rodolphe, to whom she is betrothed.⁵⁷ Rather than cooling her ardour, the whipping inflames her passions so that she is even more receptive to Rodolphe's sexual advances, so that she then engages in full sexual intercourse with him to relieve and satisfy the sexual feelings that the whipping has aroused, contrary to its intended outcome.

The humour in these flagellation narratives serves also as a means of revelation for sexual titillation. In the sustained lampoon of Zachary Crofton, *The Presbyterian Lash*, the opportunity for salacious dwelling on all the imagined details is not lost, as the characters fantasize about what might have happened. Denwall suggests: 'I warrant he thought that the tickling the Wenches buttocks with the Rod, would provoke her to Lechery.'⁵⁸ Just as the Catholic priest in *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* is portrayed as using the opportunity provided by the prescription of a flogging for the atonement of female sins to look at and touch the naked female body, so Noctroffe uses the process to touch his maid's genitals. First, 'while he was struggling to get up my Coates, he would often thrust up his hand . . . I am ashamed to tell you where'. Then he uses the pretence of holding the maid down to touch her again: 'sometimes when he put his hand between my Thighs to keep me upon the Form, he tickled me so, that I think I was almost ravisht with it.'⁵⁹ Similarly in *Whipping Tom Brought to Light, and Exposed to View*, much is made of the exposure of the genitals, both male and female, for salacious and humorous effect:

His first Adventure, as near as we can learn, was on a Servant Maid in *New-street*, who being sent out to look [for] her Master, as she was turning a Corner, perceived a Tall black Man standing up against the wall, as if he had been making water, but she had not passed far, but with great speed and violence seized her, and in a trice, laying her cross his knee, took up her Linnen, and lay'd so hard up-on her Backside, as made her cry out

⁵⁶ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 108–110.

⁵⁷ It is this scene that is quite obviously modelled on Chorier's text.

⁵⁸ Kirkman, *The Presbyterian Lash*, 4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 10, 12

most pitiously for help, the which he no sooner perceiving to approach (as she declares) but he vanished . . .⁶⁰

As in the story in *Poor Robin's Intelligence* of 1677, there is a suggestion of the supernatural at work, as *Whipping Tom* is described as 'a Tall black Man' suddenly appearing and then disappearing from sight.⁶¹ It is ambiguous as to what exactly he does to the maid once he has lifted her skirt and petticoat: the description 'lay'd so hard up-on her Backside' could be either spanking, as the context suggests, or vigorous rear-entry intercourse. Humorous narrative is thus combined with sexually explicit and titillating detail, providing both erotic and comic entertainment, and leaving a space for the reader or listener to imagine the scene in different ways or to fantasize about what might happen next. This formula is repeated in a report of the trial of a Thomas Wallis from the mid-eighteenth century, who was accused of whipping and sexually assaulting numerous women, and who became known as 'Whipping Tom'.⁶² The suggestive nature of the narrative, filled with double entendres and titillating detail, argues for a continuing enjoyment of this kind of whipping narrative into the eighteenth century. For example: 'Mary Suttin *the Milkmade of Hackney also deposed that when the Prisener whipt'd her Backside in a Ditch near Shoulder of Mutton fields, to prevent her Crying out, he stuff'd his Handkerchief into her Mouth, and wuld [sic] have thrust something else into another place, had not the Watchmen come happely to her assistance.*'⁶³

This combination is a feature of all these texts, whether drama or prose narratives. The humour functions as a means of revelation, of the naked body as well as of the hypocrisy of a corrupt priesthood. But the humour in these flagellation stories is not confined to religious satire. Partly this must be to do with the fact that at this time there is no one sort of pornographic text—pornographic moments are to be found in a wide variety of different types of text. There are also differences between continental and English styles of writing. But these differences are often less significant than appears to be the case at first sight. The superficial farce and simplicity of English humour, which is often contrasted

⁶⁰ *Whipping Tom Brought to Light, and Exposed to View: In an Account of Several Late Adventures of the Pretended Whipping Spirit. Giving a Full Relation of Several Maids, Widows and Wives, etc. that have been by him Used in a Most Barbarous and Shameful Manner in and about the City of London, within Six Weeks Last Past, as also an Account of the Various Reports that are Spread Abroad concerning him* (London, 1681), 1–2.

⁶¹ The Devil is often referred to as a 'black man', as for example in *The Quakers Dream; Or, The Devil's Pilgrimage in England: . . . The Strange and Wonderful Satanical Apparitions, and the Appearing of the Devil unto them in the likeness of a Black Boar, a Dog with Flaming Eye, and a Black Man without a Head, Causing the Dogs to Bark, the Swine to Cry, and the Cattel to Run, to the Great Admiration of all that shall Read the Same* (London, 1655).

⁶² *The Tryal, Examination and Conviction, of Thomas Wallis, Vulgarly Called Whipping Tom, for Whiping and Abusing Mary Suttin, Susanna Murrey, Ann Evans, Dorothy Webster, and Several Others in and about London: With the Manner of his Sentence and Punishment, for his Notorious Crimes* (London, 1751).

⁶³ *Ibid.*

with the sophistication of the continental texts, contain a latent complexity not always immediately apparent. This complexity is revealed as soon as one tries to 'deconstruct' the story, as we can see in the narrative from *Poor Robin's Intelligence* quoted in full at the beginning of this chapter, where the brevity of the story belies the large number of ideas and connections that are packed into one short paragraph.

The importance of looking for both sexual pleasure and knowledge is a central part of the seventeenth-century pornographic text, and it is at the forefront of the short story that begins this chapter. A desire for sexual knowledge on the part of the supposedly virginal female, coupled with the imputation of almost uncontrollable sexual urges (the text suggests they have gone unsatisfied not through any female scruples about chastity and reputation, but rather as a result of the 'uncharitableness of this hard-hearted Age'), place this short narrative immediately in the realm of a highly familiar pornographic scenario, whereby an innocent young girl either watches others, or is instructed by another, to learn about the pleasures of sex. But part of the joke is that this familiar narrative is undermined, or subverted, by the details of the story. In view of her age ('somewhat under threescore', or around 60 years old), the description of the woman as a 'Virgin' is undoubtedly somewhat tongue-in-cheek (and the 'uncharitableness' of the 'Age' becomes comprehensible). The additional qualification 'youthful-minded' might suggest that despite her years she is young-at-heart, but is rather yet another joke, as her mind is revealed to be full of thoughts of youths or young men. The woman's desire for sex is underlined throughout the story, from the opening sentence as noted above, to the half-hearted manner of her attempt to escape with the young men's clothes (she 'made no great speed away'), to the final sentence, which describes the physical symptoms of her lust. Instead of the young, innocent girl's desire for sexual knowledge and experience of stereotypical pornographic fantasy, we have here the old woman's lust for sex with young, virile men, a joke often repeated in jest books of the period, as will be seen in Chapter 6 on sexual comedy.

The figure of the voyeur is a ubiquitous presence in all these texts, visual or literary, mirroring the gaze of the reader or viewer (as can be seen in the Frontispiece to the 1718 English edition of Meibomius' *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging*, where there are numerous observers, from the woman on the bed and faces in pictures on the walls to the watchers at the window; see Figure 3). The representation of the pleasure of looking is an essential part of the pornographic narrative at this time, whatever form it takes.⁶⁴ The exposure of the naked body is not limited to the female body, and neither is the active gaze, the desire to look upon and know, confined to the male in these seventeenth-century texts. This therefore upsets any simple interpretation of pornography as automatically objectifying women for male pleasure. The act of flagellation of the naked body

⁶⁴ This aspect of pornography will be examined in more detail in Ch. 5.



Fig. 3. Frontispiece to the 1718 edition of Meibomius' *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs*, BL: PC.20.19.23. By permission of the British Library.

allows the uncovering of the body to the view of the active flagellant, to others who are present while it is taking place, and so to the view of the reader in turn. In *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* the priest directs the women to assume postures that reveal the female genitalia to his—and so to the reader's—gaze:

'Bend your body and lower it as much as ever you can,' said he, 'that you may also receive the chastisement you deserve in the spot which the law of matrimony suffers to be polluted.' Her loins when bent gave greater relief to the buttocks and exposed the front place between her thighs. I cast my eyes on the affair: a place covered over with black crisped hair of moderate length; the long gaping cleft was of a lively red colour. At this moment a heavy shower of stripes fell upon the conch, a regular mark for the lashes.⁶⁵

Similarly in *Venus in the Cloister*, a major reason put forward for wishing to have the role of inflicting punishment on the young girls who are being schooled in the convent is that it provides a wonderful opportunity for looking at the naked female body. For Sister Angelica, this is an opportunity that she seizes whenever it presents itself: 'I should commit a Sin every Moment, for the Charge I have over the Scholars and Pensioners, obliges me to visit their Back-houses very often. It was but yesterday, I whipped one, more for my own Satisfaction, than for any Fault she had committed. I took a singular Pleasure in looking on her; she was very pretty, and only thirteen Years old.'⁶⁶

While it is a standard technique of the pornographic narrative for a character to describe what he or she is looking at to another, and hence to the reader, throughout these texts pleasure from looking at the naked body, and particularly at the sexual parts of the body, is commented upon as being entirely natural and understandable. The pervasive theme of voyeurism is discussed more fully in Chapter 5, but, in the context of flagellation and its pleasures, the desire to gaze at the naked flesh, and especially the naked whipped flesh, is given particular prominence. Bloch in *Sexual Life in England* discusses the delight that active flagellants take in looking at the body, and, especially, at the changing skin tone that occurs when flesh is flogged.⁶⁷ This pleasure in looking, and especially in regarding the changing skin tones, is fulsomely expressed by Sister Angelica in *Venus in the Cloister*:

Oh! let us see then unveiled that beautiful Countenance that has hitherto been always covered! kneel down upon the Mattress, and hold down thy Head a little, that I may observe the Violence of thy Stripes! Ah! Goodness of heaven, what Patch-Work is here? what variety of Colours? Methinks I see a piece of China Taffeta: Sure one must have a great deal of Devotion for the Mystery of Flagellation, thus to illuminate ones Thighs.⁶⁸

It is particularly the redness of the skin that is thrown into greater relief by its contrast with the surrounding, untouched, white skin that the flagellant finds

⁶⁵ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 187.

⁶⁶ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 24–5.

⁶⁷ Bloch, *Sexual Life*, 276.

⁶⁸ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 21.

alluring. Bloch again remarks on this, pointing out that ‘pictures of flagellation scenes, in which the flagellated parts are mostly painted a brilliant red, also provide proof of the attraction of this discoloration by beating’.⁶⁹ Why is this redness on the skin so important and attractive a part of the pleasure of flagellation? Gibson in *The English Vice* also devotes substantial discussion to the importance of the ritual of partially unclothing the body to reveal the buttocks and genitals, the bent-over position that gives prominence to the buttocks and displays the genitals, and also the redness of the skin produced by the infliction of a beating. Gibson refers to anthropological ideas about sexual signalling in primates to explain the importance of the reddening of the skin, and also relates it to mirroring the blush as an expression of shame and humiliation.⁷⁰ He argues further that the bent-over position and the movement of the buttocks engendered by the application of the rod or lash re-enacts rear-entry primate copulation, with the rod representing the penis. Steven Marcus, in his analysis of sexual beating in Victorian pornography in *The Other Victorians*, argues that this focus on the reddened skin of the buttocks is a displacement of genital sexuality, and the beating scenario itself is a displacement of a repressed homoeroticism.⁷¹ Though these arguments may be persuasive, they are not entirely convincing when applied to this earlier material. There are more culturally specific and simple explanations for this focus on the reddening of the skin that fit both the context of the text and early modern understandings of the body, and that are therefore more convincing. First, as we have seen in a previous chapter, the raising of heat in order to increase sexual desire and to produce orgasm, and hence conception, is understood to be a vital component of the sexual encounter. Beating, as will be discussed more fully later on, was understood to raise heat, and the growing redness of the skin is a visual indicator of the body’s raised heat.⁷² Secondly, in these seventeenth-century texts the emphasis given to the changing skin colour does not draw attention *away* from the genitals, displacing attention to the surrounding area. Rather it draws attention *back* to the primary focus of the text: the exposure of the genitals to the view of the active flagellant, and the enhancement of that view by enlarging the area of redness from just the vulva to the entire surrounding flesh. The author of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* very neatly tells us this in a double entendre when Sempronio leads her daughter, Ottavia, to the room in the house in which she is to have her first experience of flagellation. She sets the scene for Tullia: ‘As soon as we had entered the back apartment of our house, from which apartment thou knowest there is a view of the garden, my mother shut the door: and smiling handed me the ball of cords to undo.’⁷³ From ‘the back apartment’, that is, the buttocks or anus, the ‘garden’, that is, the vagina, can be seen. And the redness

⁶⁹ Bloch, *Sexual Life*, 276.

⁷⁰ Gibson, *The English Vice*, 295–308.

⁷¹ Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth Century England* (London, 1966; Corgi edn., 1969), 260.

⁷² I am grateful to Jonathan Barry for discussion of this point.

⁷³ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 145.

that is produced on the skin that has been flogged mirrors the red colour of the female genitalia. Ottavia employs the image of the butcher's stall graphically to describe the redness of the buttocks, both in terms of the raised colour and in the suggestion of flayed and bloody flesh. She tells Tullia, 'In short, he gave the unfortunate woman such a mangling that her torn and welted buttocks, so white a little before, now seemed to curse the butcher's stall.'⁷⁴ The red colour is given greater prominence by its contrast with the previously white skin and emphasizes one particular characteristic of the genitals, the difference of skin colour, which marks them out as different from other body parts. The cut and slashed flesh now also mirrors and multiplies the vulva, in the same way as in contemporary jokes it is referred to as a 'cut purse' or as just a 'cut'.⁷⁵

The linking of voyeuristic activity and participating in whipping for sexual pleasure is also brought to our attention by Lawrence Stone in his discussion of the Norwich Consistory Court case from 1707, although without suggesting that the one is a necessary component of the other.⁷⁶ Stone argues that the uncovering of the female genitals to view was a 'common game' of this group of people in Norwich, and it was alleged that 'the said Samuel Self would often take up his wife's cloaths and expose her nakedness to this deponent and to others that happen'd to be there, as was sometimes Mr Brady, Mr Morris and Dr Taylor, and upon such occasion's has said that here Atmeare look, you shall see my wife's thing . . .'.⁷⁷ In addition, there were almost always observers to the acts of smacking or whipping that took place in the Selfs' house. It was alleged that one afternoon in Sarah Self's bedroom 'Samuel Self laid Jane Morris upon the bed and turned up her coats and whipped her on her bare arse with a good large rod of birch or ling', in the presence of Jane's husband, Robert Morris, John Atmeare, and Sarah Wells.⁷⁸ The participants in this actual occurrence of flagellation thus seemed to take pleasure in the exposure of the female genitalia to view, as well as in the viewing of naked flesh as it was being beaten. Stone also links this practice with pornography, as he argues that the idea for it may well have come from pornographic books that Self may have stocked in his Norwich bookshop. However, there is no evidence that this was in fact the case, and it begs the question why it was only flagellation, rather than other activities, such as tribadism or anal sex or mutual masturbation, that was selected for practice.

However, this association of flagellation with voyeuristic pleasure did not take place in a private, aberrant sexual scenario, which only became revealed through

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 148. ⁷⁵ See Ch. 6.

⁷⁶ Lawrence Stone, 'Libertine Sexuality in Post-Restoration England: Group Sex and Flagellation among the Middling Sort in Norwich in 1706–07', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 2/4 (1992), 511–26.

⁷⁷ DN/DEP/54/58b: depositions Norwich Consistory Court, Self *v.* Self his wife 1707/8. See Stone, 'Libertine Sexuality', 517.

⁷⁸ Stone, 'Libertine Sexuality', 518.

courtroom drama such as Stone describes. Rather, there was a public, social context that may have contributed, however tangentially, to comprehension of the practice as potentially pleasurable for some, whether giving or receiving. Whipping or beating was used for punishment in the seventeenth century, not only in the household and schools, but also for adults who broke the law. It was a punishment for both men and women for sexual misdemeanours, though these tended to be a small proportion of offences for which whipping was ordered, vagrancy being more common.⁷⁹ Whipping was a punishment that could be ordered both for women who bore children out of wedlock and for the men who sired them: for example, in 1630 in south Lancashire, and in 1638, Sir Robert Heath, the assize judge of the western circuit, ordered the whipping of both mothers and fathers of bastard children.⁸⁰ Such punishment was not uniformly applied throughout the country, and there could be variation according to both location and gender: in Lancashire there were fewer whippings after 1619, when women were more commonly incarcerated in houses of correction, and they were discontinued after 1629, while in Somerset whippings continued as the most usual punishment for women—fathers frequently escaped corporal punishment—much later into the century.⁸¹

Whipping was, like the pillory, a public ritual of shame.⁸² If it took place as part of a public carting, the offender, male or female, whose upper body would be stripped, could expect to be exposed to the view of many people along the often lengthy route.⁸³ While nakedness could have many different meanings depending on context, the exposure of the naked body here was intended to increase the shame and humiliation of the punishment.⁸⁴ The length of such a route is suggested by Pimpinello in *A Dialogue between Mistris Macquerella, a Suburb Bawd, Ms Scolopendra, a Noted Curtezan, and Mr Pimpinello an Usher, &c.*, when he says he could 'receive the Lash from Charing-Crosse to White-Chapell'.⁸⁵ Martin Ingram and Paul Griffiths both also demonstrate how such lengthy routes passed through the busiest locations in order to ensure as much exposure and humiliation as possible (see also Figure 4).⁸⁶ However, Griffiths notes that, in Norwich during the later seventeenth century, there was a shift

⁷⁹ See Griffiths, 'Bodies and Souls in Norwich', and Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*.

⁸⁰ Keith, Wrightson, 'The Nadir of English Illegitimacy in the Seventeenth Century', in Peter, Laslett, Karla Oosterveen, and Richard M. Smith, (eds.), *Bastardy and its Comparative History* (London, 1980), 176–91, at 180; Steve, Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, 1550–1640* (Basingstoke, 2000; paperback edn., 2002), 186.

⁸¹ Walter J. King, 'Punishment for Bastardy in Early Seventeenth-Century England', *Albion*, 10/2 (1978), 130–51, at 141–6; Hindle, *The State and Social Change*, 186.

⁸² J. A. Sharpe, *Judicial Punishment in England* (London, 1990), 21–3. ⁸³ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁸⁴ For a discussion of the meanings of exposure of the body, see Gowing, *Common Bodies*, 34–40.

⁸⁵ Mistress Macquerella [pseud.], *A Dialogue between Mistris Macquerella, a Suburb Bawd, Ms Scolopendra, a Noted Curtezan, and Mr Pimpinello an Usher, &c. Pittifully Bemoaning the Tenour of the Act (now in Force) against Adultery and Fornication* (London, 1650), 5.

⁸⁶ Ingram, 'Shame and Pain', 40; Griffiths, 'Bodies and Souls in Norwich'.

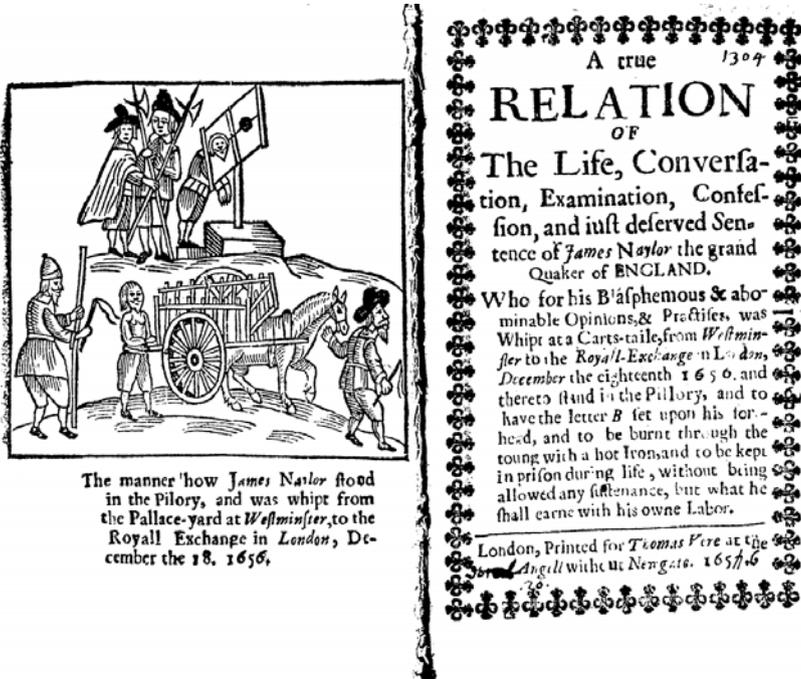


Fig. 4. Frontispiece to *A True Relation of the Life, Conversation, and Just Deserved Sentence of James Naylor the Grand Quaker of England* (1656), BL E.1645.(4). By permission of the British Library. Image published with permission of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

from outdoor locations for the administration of the lash to internal locations, particularly bridewells. And by 1630 there were over seventy bridewells scattered throughout England in both rural and urban locations.⁸⁷ Those whippings that did take place out of doors after 1660 (at least in Norwich) were not in the main for offences of a sexual nature.⁸⁸

Prostitutes, bawds, and other sexual offenders (in addition to vagrants, beggars, and other petty offenders, male and female) would be whipped as part of their punishment in the relative privacy of the bridewells, as the correction of sexual immorality was a focus of their reforming intention, particularly in urban

⁸⁷ Joanna, Innes, 'Prisons for the Poor: English Bridewells, 1555–1800', in Francis Snyder and Douglas Hay (eds.), *Labour, Law and Crime: An Historical Perspective* (London and New York, 1987), 42–122, at 62.

⁸⁸ Griffiths, 'Bodies and Souls in Norwich', 105. Though it remains to be seen whether or not this was a pattern repeated throughout the country at this time, the removal of flogging from public viewing was complete by the late nineteenth century. See J. A. Sharpe, 'Civility, Civilizing Processes, and the End of Public Punishment in England', in Peter, Burke, Brian Harrison, and Paul Slack (eds.), *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Sir Keith Thomas* (Oxford, 2000), 215–30, at 228.

locations where prostitution contributed to perceptions of disorderly streets.⁸⁹ Some texts suggest that those responsible for administering the punishment in Bridewell took pleasure in their work, whether it was ‘a publick whipping, or a private one in Bridewel, where Sir William knocks, and keeps time with the Lash’.⁹⁰ However, a whipping in Bridewell was not entirely hidden away from other eyes, as other publications from the period represent it as a spectacle for the visitor to enjoy. The seventeenth-century public would be accustomed, therefore, to watching the whipping of naked flesh and possibly enjoying the spectacle too, although this might be to a greater or lesser extent dependent on where one lived, and on which part of the century one lived through, with punishments generally declining in the mid part of the century. The public nature of these punishments for what could often be sexual offences might mean that a link could have been forged in the public mind between whipping and sex.

This culture of corporal punishment, which was prevalent through every stage of a person’s life—from childhood, through school, work, apprenticeship, adulthood, marriage, and back to correction of one’s own children—meant that many people could have been aware of its potential pleasures, although clearly it was for many a painful, humiliating, and unpleasant experience.⁹¹ These circumstances thus provided a cultural framework in which scenes of flagellation for sexual pleasure may have been seen neither as unusual nor as reprehensible (it did, after all, involve punishment). Whereas other sexual activities, such as male homosexual sexual acts, are condemned in the strongest terms and characterized as ‘unnatural’ in these texts, flagellation escapes any explicit criticism.⁹² It is noticeable by its absence from Richard Capel’s *Tentations: Their Nature, Danger, Cure* (1633), in which other varieties of sexual activity, such as bestiality, sodomy, masturbation, fornication, adultery, and excessive lust in marriage,

⁸⁹ Innes, ‘Prisons for the Poor’, 58–9, 69.

⁹⁰ Philo-Puttanus, *The Whores Rhetorick*, 37. See also, *Good Sir W—— Knock. The Whores Lamentation for the Death of Sir W.T.* (1693), and *An Elegy, on the Death of Sir William Turner, Knight, and Alderman of the City of London, and President of Bridewell and Bethlem Hospitals, who Departed this Life on Thursday, the 9th of February, about a Eleven of the Clock in the Forenoon* (London, 1693).

⁹¹ The number of lashes would usually be limited, but for some the shame and humiliation were felt for a long time after the physical scars had healed. See Ingram, ‘Shame and Pain’, and Robert Shoemaker, ‘Streets of Shame? The Crowd and Public Punishments in London, 1700–1820’, in Devereaux and Griffiths (eds.), *Penal Practice*, 232–57. See also John Demos, ‘Shame and Guilt in Early New England’, in Carol Z. Stearns and Peter N. Stearns (eds.), *Emotion and Social Change: Toward a New Psychohistory* (New York and London, 1988), 69–85, esp. 71–7.

⁹² Flagellation is included in a list of activities described as a ‘Complication of Vices’, which the ‘mean and pitiful’ may practise, in *The Comforts of Whoreing, and the Vanity of Chastity; Or, The Unreasonableness of Love* (London, 1694), 12; and Richard Head, in *The Canting Academy; Or Villanies Discovered. Wherein Is Shewn the Mysterious and Villanous Practices of that wicked Crew, Commonly Known by the Names of Hectors, Trapanners, Giltts, &c. with Several New Catches and Songs: Also a Compleat Canting-Dictionary, both of Old Words, and such as are Now Most in Use* (2nd edn., London 1674), 124, lists the ‘Flogging-Cully’ among the ‘wicked’. But these both occur in passages that are describing the wickedness of whores, rather than specific criticisms of a particular sexual practice.

receive unequivocal condemnation. Part of the joke may well have been that such a punishment could bring sexual pleasure, when intended to be punishment for the pursuit of sexual pleasure.

Thompson's and Hobby's view of this literature as depicting passive, 'masochistic' women who are abused by active, sadistic, and sexually aggressive men ignores this cultural context, and is not borne out by a closer analysis of the scenes themselves. It is not only that men as well as women are beaten, but also that women beat other women. There are few representations of men beating other men, but these are not entirely absent: in Catholic religious houses monks beat other monks, and, as we have seen, in the comic poems about Dr Gill he is represented as indiscriminate in his choice of victim. This reversal of gendered stereotypes is immediately apparent in our story from *Poor Robin's Intelligence*, where the old woman, on being pursued for the retrieval of the young men's clothes, turns and begins to flog them with a 'lusty Rod'. The post-Freudian reader cannot help but interpret this as a phallic symbol in which roles are symbolically reversed, and the woman takes the male part with its accompanying strength and power.⁹³ But would this have been a seventeenth-century reader response?

There was much debate in prescriptive literature about the lawfulness of beating one's wife, but beating was not entirely a male prerogative. The hierarchical structure of the household allowed for the head of the household to discipline all those beneath him, including wife, children, and servants. The wife might also, therefore, discipline those beneath her: children and servants, male and female (although there was some ambivalence about a woman beating her male servants). The image of the old woman turning on her pursuers and beating them might also evoke the idea of the husband-beating scold, a target of popular 'skimmington' rituals that must have been a source of pleasure and humour for those taking part or observing, if not for those shamed and humiliated by them. Although there is, therefore, the implication of a reversal of norms, this active female beater corresponds to the majority of such representations in the texts in which descriptions of sexual beating occur. While condemning those who use such means to allow them to pursue 'ungovernable Lusts', Meibomius allows that whipping is a lawful remedy for the *man* who 'perceives his Loins and Sides languid' so that he is unable to discharge the marital debt.⁹⁴ So, too, in Millot's *The School of Venus*. When Susanne tells Fanchon about flagellation as a sexual practice, she mentions only men: 'They're those people who you have to beat in order to get them interested. They strip naked in a large room and the girls take rods and beat them on the belly and all over until they see their yards growing erect. Then they throw down the rods, as if all this was nothing, to run the yards

⁹³ It has already been noted that the whip or stick is generally interpreted as a phallic symbol, which in its backward and forwards beating movement mimics the action of the penis in intercourse. See Gibson, *The English Vice*, 296–8.

⁹⁴ Meibomius, *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging*, 52.

Fig. 5. An illustration from Part 3 of *The English Rogue* (1665), BL C.107.e.93. By permission of the British Library.



into their own bellies and so take their pleasure.⁹⁵ The ‘Flogging-Cully’ was a well-known variety of client for the prostitute.⁹⁶ He is listed in *The Wandring-Whore*, as ‘another who has brought rods in his pockets for that purpose, will needs be whip’t to raise lechery and cause a standing P——’.⁹⁷ The list of prostitutes given at the end of each instalment of this work includes in Number 3 among the list of ‘Common Whores, Night-walkers, Pick-pockets, Wanderers and Shop-Lifters and Whippers’, the name of ‘*Johanna White, a buttock-whore*’, presumably in reference to the particular service she will provide.⁹⁸ The author of *The London Spy* (1698) also refers to flogging cullies: ‘This *Unnatural Beast* gives Money to those *Strumpets* which you see, and they down with his Breeches and Scourge his Privities till they have laid his *Leachery*.’⁹⁹ The ‘Flogging-Cully’ is thus defined as a man who must be whipped to gain an erection, rather than as a man who desires to whip a woman for his pleasure (see Figure 5).¹⁰⁰

The client who desires to whip a prostitute for his pleasure is mentioned only briefly in *The Wandring Whore*, where a prostitute is named who will allow herself to be whipped by clients: ‘Betty Lawrence . . . will serve the Cure, suffering you to whip the skin off her buttocks, as Wats the Hosier (besides

⁹⁵ Millot and L’Ange, *The School of Venus*, 128–9.

⁹⁶ Head, *The Canting Academy*, 124.

⁹⁷ Garfield, *The Wandring Whore*, 3 (1660), 9.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹⁹ E. Ward, *The London Spy* (London, 1698), pt. 2.

¹⁰⁰ See Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery*, i. 513, where the ‘flogging cully’ is defined as a ‘whore’s client who desires whipping’.

two others) did . . .'.¹⁰¹ The use of the word 'suffering' suggests that it is an act that she will endure, or allow, for the sake of the client's pleasure.¹⁰² Betty Lawrence and her speciality is mentioned also in another 1660 pamphlet, *A Strange and True Conference between Two Notorious Bawds, Damarose Page and Pris. Fotheringham, during their Imprisonment and Lying together in Newgate*, where she is referred to as one 'who loves whipping so well'.¹⁰³ This may have been a sexual preference that the prostitute might agree to serve, having become accustomed to it if she had previously been punished for carrying on her trade by a carting or a whipping at Bridewell. It is suggested in another text that this would be the service offered by a prostitute at the lowest end of the market: 'Others so despicably Indigent, (the more's the pity;) that Jilting, Lying, Swearing, Thieving, Flogging; and downright Whoreing; all this Complication of Vices will scarce afford them Maintenance.'¹⁰⁴ The implication is that men desire to be whipped to enable them to engage in sexual intercourse, whereas women 'suffer', or permit, it when a man requests it. Or permission is not requested at all, and the whipping is forced upon them for the man's pleasure, as in the case of Whipping Tom, who assaulted his victim by whipping 'her backside' before he would 'have thrust something else into another place, had not the Watchmen come happily to her assistance'.¹⁰⁵

Gender is clearly important in the construction of these narratives of sexual flagellation. Although one author argues in his marriage manual that 'a mans nature skorneth to be beaten of a woman' as it upset the gender hierarchy, men in this literature are portrayed as being beaten to erection only by women.¹⁰⁶ Meibomius' treatise on the use of flogging discusses flagellation as a sexual practice of men that is administered by women. He mentions women only for their active part in his examples, but suggests neither that they may be the recipient themselves, nor that they might take pleasure in being the active partner. So too in the drama, the prostitutes who perform this service for the men do not take any pleasure in being the active partner. In fact, in both *The Virtuoso* and *Venice Preserv'd*, she seems to be reluctant to do it at all. In *The Virtuoso* Snarl must insist: 'Nay, prethee do not frown, by the Mass thou shalt do't now.' Mrs Figgup then responds: 'I wonder that should please you so much, that pleases me so little?', and rather gracelessly gives in to his demand and tells him where to find the rods: 'Well: look under the Carpet then if I

¹⁰¹ Garfield, *The Wandring Whore 2* (1660), 3.

¹⁰² The verb 'to suffer' from the Latin *suffere* means to bear, to endure, to allow.

¹⁰³ Megg Spenser (pseud.), *A Strange and True Conference between Two Notorious Bawds, Damarose Page and Pris. Fotheringham, during their Imprisonment and Lying together in Newgate; with the Newest Orders and Customs of the Half-Crown Chuck-Office, and the Officers thereunto Belonging. With the Practice of the Prick-Office* (London, 1660), 8.

¹⁰⁴ *The Comforts of Whoreing*, 12.

¹⁰⁵ *The Tryal, Examination and Conviction, of Thomas Wallis*.

¹⁰⁶ Smith, *A Preparative to Mariage*, 97.

must.¹⁰⁷ This reluctance but compliance matches Fanny's attitude in the mid-eighteenth century, but contrasts with the representations of Victorian pornography, in which the women are portrayed as positively revelling in their active infliction of the rod or lash.¹⁰⁸

In these seventeenth-century texts a man's desire to be whipped is generally understood in terms of the physical need to produce an erection, and not in psychological terms as a desire to be dominated.¹⁰⁹ Meibomius' analysis of the practice offers a predominantly physiological explanation for the phenomenon in men, with reference to many medical authorities to support his argument. He offers us this example from his own experience:

I subjoin a new and late Instance, which happen'd in this City of Lubeck, where I now reside: A Citizen of Lubeck, a Cheesemonger by Trade, living in the Millers-Street, was cited before the Magistrates, among other Crimes, for Adultery; and the Fact being proved, he was banished. A Courtesan with whom this Fellow had often a Affair, confessed before the Deputies of the Senate, that he could never have a forcible erection, and perform the Duty of a Man, 'till she had whipped him on the Back with Rods; and that when the Business was over, that he could not be brought to a Repetition, unless excited by a second flogging.¹¹⁰

There is no hint of condemnation for such men, rather the attitude seems to be one of pity: 'But such people are not nearly as bad as those who are stolid and unfeeling in love, whom one slaps to get them interested—it's better to face the other extreme of misfortune than that. . . . they can't really be cured in any way at all, and there's no help for them.'¹¹¹ Similarly, the attitude expressed in *The Wandring-Whore* is one of puzzlement at such a preference, 'which has no understanding at all, and would quickly cool my courage'.¹¹² Rather than being condemned as 'unnatural', or scorned, as are old impotent men, such men are to be pitied. In the Norwich case, while it seems to have been Jane Morris who was most frequently whipped or birched, the whipping does not seem to have been inflicted only on a woman. Robert Morris deposed that Sarah Self and Sara Wells (an unmarried young woman who was a house guest at the time) also beat John Atmeare, with whom it was alleged that Sara Self had committed adultery. He deposed 'that sometime in September last he heard the articulate Sara Wells check the articulate Sara Self with pulling the bed clothes off John Atmeare, when he was in naked bed, and whipping him and the same time the said Sara

¹⁰⁷ Shadwell, *The Virtuoso*, Act III, Scene vii, l. 46.

¹⁰⁸ See Gibson, *The English Vice*, 277.

¹⁰⁹ The exception to this generalisation is Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*, where Antonio is portrayed as wishing to be dominated and treated harshly by a cruel mistress.

¹¹⁰ Meibomius, *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging*, 11. It is interesting that the man is said to be a cheesemonger and notorious adulterer, as cheese has a long history of association with the female genitals and sex. I am very grateful to Caroline Oates for drawing my attention to the sexual connotations of cheese as well as many more sexual motifs from folklore.

¹¹¹ Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 128.

¹¹² Garfield, *The Wandring Whore*, 3 (1660), 9.

Self check'd the articulate Wells for her whipping of the said Atmeare, and also for laying alone with the said Atmeare . . .'.¹¹³

But why are these men not portrayed with the same contempt as is shown towards old men whose penises are not fully functional?¹¹⁴ Unlike the old, impotent, man who must needs resort to endless 'toyings' with a woman to arouse his wilting ardour, and who will then have great difficulty in achieving ejaculation, the man who must be whipped to gain his erection can successfully conclude sexual intercourse given the correct stimulation. As we have seen in the previous chapter, a man's control of his sexual function is an important signifier of his manhood.¹¹⁵ Although he may be pitied for having to resort to such a method, he does achieve his aim. But, even more importantly, once he has achieved his erection, he can be relied on to produce copious quantities of ejaculate. As Susanne in *The School of Venus* points out in response to Fanchon's question as to whether such men are able to achieve orgasm: 'Of course they can, much more than the others. Afterwards it's impossible to restrain them.'¹¹⁶ Virility requires an easy achievement of orgasm, and preferably the ejaculation of copious 'floods' of seminal fluid to ensure conception. There is, however, a slight tongue-in-cheek element to the explanation of the importance of flogging to counteract impotence in a man and frigidity in a woman so that children can be conceived within marriage, as few of the sexual encounters described following such precoital stimulation actually take place between a husband and wife. A further element to the 'joke' in these texts is that the prescriptive element that seems to be the message is constantly undermined by the subsequent practical description. This is another way in which the apparent difference between continental and English texts is further diminished. As we have seen, part of the joke in the English text with which the chapter begins is that the pornographic fantasy is subverted by the detail of the description: young virgin metamorphoses into lustful old crone in the space of half a dozen words.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ DN/DEP/54/58b, depositions Norwich Consistory Court, *Self v. Self his wife* 1707/8.

¹¹⁴ The exception, again, is Antonio in *Venice Preserv'd*, but the contempt expressed by Aquilina focuses on his age, rather than his sexual preference:

The worst thing an old man can be's a lover,
A mere memento mori to poor woman.
I never lay by his decrepit side,
But all that night I pondered on my grave.

(Act 11, ll.21–2)

¹¹⁵ Bray, 'To Be a Man in Early Modern Society', and Brown, "'Changed . . . into the fashion of Man'".

¹¹⁶ Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 129.

¹¹⁷ This also contrasts with eighteenth-century erotica, from which Harvey tells us old female bodies are absent. Karen Harvey, 'Representations of Bodies and Sexual Difference in Eighteenth Century English Erotica', Ph.D thesis (Royal Holloway, University of London, 1999), 161.

Despite the expression of pity for men who need to be whipped to achieve erection, there seems to be no suggestion of shame attached to this desire in the seventeenth century. But by the time Cleland published *Fanny Hill* in the mid-eighteenth century (1749), the desire for flagellation has become something that must be hidden from the eyes of others, as it now seems to be a shameful desire. In *Fanny Hill* Mrs Cole ensures that privacy and secrecy are observed for Mr Barville and Fanny so that they are 'preserved safe from the ridicule that otherwise vulgarly attended it'.¹¹⁸ Perhaps this sense of ridicule has much to do with the fact that in the preceding seventeenth-century literature sexual flagellation is treated humorously, arousing laughter as much as eroticism. More recently it has been argued, in relation to the decline in the use of public displays of humiliation such as public cartings and whippings for misdemeanours, that in the eighteenth century shame was no longer something that was understood to be public in nature. Rather, it was something that became interiorized, particularly as, in rapidly growing urban centres such as London with a rapidly shifting population, it was less likely that there was a sense of belonging to a community in which one's reputation or credit was critical and before whom one could be shamed (although this shift might have been slower to occur in smaller, rural communities).¹¹⁹ We can then argue that *Fanny Hill* reflects the beginnings of this shift in sensibilities, marking a defining moment in the history of mentalities.

The 'Flogging-Cully', as we have seen, is a man who wishes to be flogged, not one who desires to flog another. Although there are also descriptions of women being beaten by men, particularly in humorous English texts such as *The Presbyterian Lash* and *Whipping Tom Brought to Light, and Exposed to View*, it is significant that in the two French texts, *Venus in the Cloister* and *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, it is more usual for the beating or flogging to be administered to a woman by a woman. In *Venus in the Cloister* Alicia's father is instructed by the priest to beat his daughter, after showing her an example by beating himself. But at this moment Alicia's aunt enters the scene and tells him that 'it was not usual for Men to act after this Manner, and that for her Part, it was a great Honour for her to put herself into the Room of another, to execute the Orders of good Father Theodore'.¹²⁰ So also in Tullia's story about Leonora, it is not the husband who administers his wife's flogging, but rather her mother. In these narratives the husband does not beat the wife, the wife does not beat the husband, and a father

¹¹⁸ Cleland, *Fanny Hill*, 174.

¹¹⁹ See Shoemaker, 'Streets of Shame?', and Demos, 'Shame and Guilt in New England'. For population influxes in expanding urban areas in the period, see Peter Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, ii. 1540–1840 (Cambridge, 2000). For a discussion of shame in the Renaissance, see Ewan Fernie, *Shame in Shakespeare* (London and New York, 2002), who argues: 'The new power of shame in the Renaissance is also a consequence of the second salient feature of the age: enhanced self-awareness' (p. 54).

¹²⁰ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 152–3.

does not beat a daughter. It is a mother, or an aunt in the absence of a mother, who always administers the lash. Why is this role almost always attributed to a mother figure?

In Victorian flagellation pornography Gibson argues that the female figure wielding the lash is always a maternal figure, one who would have been responsible for dominating and punishing the child during the early years of child-rearing. Gibson espouses the Freudian view that the physical punishment is interpreted as an expression of love, and that behind the female figure is a male figure, the father, by whom the child wishes to be beaten/loved.¹²¹ But these seventeenth-century representations were created in a body-centric culture in which the psychological always has a physiological or other explanation. Foyster has argued that in the early modern period there was no concept of early childhood experiences having any effect on subsequent psychological development.¹²² Similarly, Michael MacDonald has argued that psychological disturbance was not usually attributed by parents to children, or to those who took their own lives.¹²³ Medical and scientific diagnoses concerning the imbalance of the humours also had to compete with popular belief in the power of the devil and witchcraft as a cause of bizarre physical and mental symptoms.¹²⁴ This latter belief also suggests an explanation for the suspicion of witchcraft that is attached to the woman in the story at the beginning of this chapter.

In the pornographic narrative at this time it is women who are represented as having responsibility for the sexual education of other women. In narratives about prostitutes, it is usually the older, more experienced, bawd who either entices or tricks a young woman into becoming a prostitute, or who promotes and facilitates her 'career' if approached by an already willing girl.¹²⁵ The mother's, or older woman's, role throughout these texts is represented as being to take care of her daughter's physical well-being, which is characterized as not only to ensure a sufficient standard of economic welfare for her, but also to ensure her sexual health and future pleasure.¹²⁶ The introduction to sexual knowledge, which prepares the young girl for her future sexual life, thus includes an introduction to a sexual technique that will increase her pleasure and ensure her complete erotic gratification. It is therefore appropriate in this context that it is the mother, or

¹²¹ See Gibson, *The English Vice*, 281–95; Freud, "A Child is Being Beaten", 186–91.

¹²² See Elizabeth A. Foyster, 'Silent Witnesses? Children and the Breakdown of Domestic and Social Order in Early Modern England', in Anthony Fletcher and Stephen Hussey (eds.), *Childhood in Question: Children, Parents and the State* (Manchester and New York, 1999), 57–73.

¹²³ MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*. See also Roy Porter, *Mind Forged Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London, 1987), 47.

¹²⁴ See George Rosen, *Madness in Society: Chapters in the Historical Sociology of Mental Illness* (London, 1968), 147; and A.L. Rowse, *Simon Forman: Sex and Society in Shakespeare's Age* (London, 1974), 210.

¹²⁵ See, e.g., the many stories in John Dunton's *The Night-Walker*. Also *The Crafty Whore and The Practical Part of Love*.

¹²⁶ Mother Creswell in *The Whores Rhetoric* specifically makes the point that her concern is for Dorothea's welfare, both physical and economic.

the older woman, who administers the lash, and not the man. Just as the older woman often plays an active physical part in the young woman's instruction by viewing and naming the sexual parts of the body, and demonstrating through touch and manipulation how they function and bring pleasure, so she takes the part of the active flagellant to demonstrate how this may also act on the body to bring sexual pleasure. In the same way as the girl should allow the man to be the judge of whether she is feeling pain or pleasure when she cries out during sexual intercourse, so she must allow the older woman to be the judge of how much pain she may bear during flagellation and to trust that it will result in pleasure: 'Thereupon he began to rouse my sensation by light lashes without hurting me. "Could you bear harder ones, daughter?" he inquired. "To be sure she could," replied my mother.'¹²⁷ Ottavia's mother demonstrates her solicitude for her daughter as they return home, both by reassuring her that the pain will not last, and by arranging for her husband to come to her so that she will have first-hand experience of the enhanced pleasures of sexual intercourse following flagellation:

We were now drawing nigh the threshold, when my mother said to me: "How art thou, daughter?" "I am suffering, mother," I replied. "In a moment I shall so contrive that a delicious flood of voluptuousness will succeed the pain. I, too, feel my buttocks and thighs as if pismires were running over them; dost thou not likewise experience something like a burning tetter-itching?" "Exactly," said I, "there are countless itchy twitchings under my skin; they resemble rather a blunt prurient distemper than stings; I am quite on fire with them." "All these ailments, let them be whatever they may," said she, "will be soon turned into an inexhaustible source of pleasure."¹²⁸

However ironically given its context, this advice reflects contemporary understandings about the nature of pain and suffering, and their meanings. The experience of pain could be transformed by the hope or belief that something good would follow from it and hence it could be suffered joyfully, or at least with resignation.¹²⁹ This was particularly the case for women in childbirth, who were encouraged 'to pray for the fortitude to endure the pain and the humility to accept suffering willingly', for 'all pain and suffering, of which the trials and tribulations of childbearing women were but a subset, were reminders of the fallen and sinful state of mankind, and all Christians were judged according to how patiently and willingly they accepted their particular cross'.¹³⁰ In a judicial

¹²⁷ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 149.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹²⁹ See Roselyne Rey, *The History of Pain*, trans. Louise Elliott Wallace, J. A. Cadden, and S. W. Cadden (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1995), 77–8. See also Lyndal Roper's discussion of cultural attitudes to pain in *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London and New York, 1994), 203–4, and especially Esther Cohen, 'The Animated Pain of the Body', *American Historical Review*, 105/1 (Feb. 2000), 36–68; Ariel Glucklich, *Sacred Pain: Hurting the Body for the Sake of the Soul* (Oxford, 2001), ch. 4; Robert Mills, *Suspended Animation: Pain, Pleasure and Punishment in Medieval Culture* (London, 2005), ch. 5.

¹³⁰ Crowther-Heyck, "'Be Fruitful and Multiply'", 926–8.

context, pain was a means to the extraction of truth through torture of the body; here the truth of the body is that pain can be pleasure. It is the body itself that generates and experiences the ensuing physical, sexual pleasure, not the mental or psychological experience of submission to another's domination that brings gratification.

In the wider social context, it might also be seen as appropriate that it is a woman who beats another woman, rather than a man, though, as we have seen, a woman beating a man could be problematic, as it upset the gender hierarchy. Although it was lawful for a man to beat his wife as 'reasonable' chastisement, many of those who wrote prescriptive texts about the appropriate behaviours for men and women in marriage, and who discussed the question, argued against it.¹³¹ In *A Preparative to Mariage*, Henry Smith suggested that a man would be mad to strike his wife, as it would be like striking himself.¹³² Smith further argued that, though parents might correct their children and servants, there ought to be a gender division, so 'that the man should correct his men, and the woman her maides'.¹³³ Smith did not think it appropriate that a man should chastise a girl, as 'a maides nature is corrupted with the stripes of a man'.¹³⁴ This suggests that there was an awareness of the possible sexual effect of beating, and provides a context in which the whipping of a young girl by a man might not be considered appropriate. Smith's prescription that it is inappropriate for a man to beat a young woman because of its potentially corrupting effect seems to be reflected in Kirkman's *The Presbyterian Lash*. The maid's mother appears to object to his behaviour towards her daughter on the grounds that she is now too old to be chastised in such a way: 'an uncivil fellow as he was, to go to take up my Girls Petticoats, and at that age too, when she was as able to bear Children as his mother.'¹³⁵ As his maid is at the age of sexual maturity, Noctroffe's motive can only have been sexual.

These seventeenth-century texts are frequently sexually prescriptive, admonishing the young woman to sexual obedience to a husband in the same way as general prescriptive literature advised that a woman's first duty to a husband or

¹³¹ See T.E., *The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights: Or, The Lawes Provision for Woemen* (London, 1632), 128; William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties Eight Treatises* (London, 1622); William Whately, *A Bride-Bush: Or, A Direction for Married Persons* (London, 1619); and Smith, *A Preparative to Mariage*. One notable exception to those who wrote condemning wife-beating was Moses à Vauts, who argued in *The Husband's Authority Unvail'd; wherein it is Moderately Discussed whether it be Fit or Lawfull for a Good Man, to Beat his Bad Wife* (London, 1650) that a husband was 'allowed a moderate Correction' (p. 73). Prescriptions against wife-beating, however, did not mean that men did not beat their wives, or feel justified in doing so. See Susan Dwyer, Amussen, "'Being Stirred to Much Unquietness": Violence and Domestic Violence in Early Modern England', *Journal of Women's History*, 6/2 (Summer, 1994); Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford, 1996), esp. ch. 6; and Leah Leneman, "'A Tyrant and Tormentor": Violence against Wives in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Scotland', *Continuity and Change*, 12/1 (May 1997), 31–54.

¹³² Smith, *A Preparative to marriage*, 73.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Kirkman, *The Presbyterian Lash*, 10.

father was obedience. Though the women in these texts are shown as submitting to the floggings that are inflicted on them, we should not interpret this passive submission as masochism. The women are not represented as submitting to gain sexual pleasure from the submission itself (as Antonio is in *Venice Preserv'd*); rather they do so because they are admonished to be obedient to a parent or guardian. The young woman is taught from her earliest sexual instruction that passivity and receptivity are central to her sexuality and that these must be core aspects of her future sexual behaviour: 'In short, her body should no longer be her own, and she should be incapable of refusing him anything he may care to ask for.'¹³⁶ So, in *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* in the passage where Sempronio sends her lover's wife, Giulia, to her aunt Teresia to be whipped to teach her chastity, Giulia submits to prove her obedience and chastity.

After long chatting, she asked Giulia whether she would be willing to prove to her that she was virtuous, truly virtuous. Giulia said she would. 'Then,' replied Teresia, 'thou wilt macerate thy body by fasting these three days, and thou wilt let thyself be lashed by me.' . . . Therefore she was whipped on the first day, but very lightly; on the second, very hard; on the third, not quite so hard; being thus corrected, she was sent home at sun-set.¹³⁷

On her return, her husband, Giocondo, makes love to her, and the pleasure of their love-making overcomes the pain she has suffered: 'He laid her upon her back in bed, and, by means of three complete coitions, he effaced from her mind the remembrance of the three cruel days and of the long suffering.'¹³⁸ Similarly in the previous scenes it is obedience that is stressed as being of the utmost importance for Ottavia.¹³⁹ This representation of female obedience, or complicity, in their punishment is not only about representing a practice that was known to be sexually stimulating, and emphasizing by the subsequent descriptions of sexual intercourse how well it works to heighten sexual pleasure. It also continues the role of this literature as satire. By reiterating contemporary prescriptive literature's insistence on female obedience to whatever a parent, a guardian, a priest, a husband, or a lover might require of her, this pornographic literature takes female obedience to an extreme, showing how society is then complicit in the sexual debauching of young women. Rather than being entirely a fantasy of female compliance with male sexual rapacity, it could be read as an ironic criticism of a gender hierarchy that ostensibly advocates that women should suspend all personal agency in favour of unquestioning obedience.

The concluding part of the story from *Poor Robin's Intelligence* refers again to an important aspect of these flagellation scenes, one that has already been discussed to a certain extent: the somatic basis of particular behaviours and its mechanical rather than psychological remedy. Sexual lust is caused by heat

¹³⁶ Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 167.

¹³⁷ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 205.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 150–1.

or ‘Inflammations’ and can be remedied by cooling, such as may be provided by dousing in the cold water of the river, or by other methods, such as cooling genital baths and bloodletting, which was thought to drain blood away from the overheated sexual parts, and in men to reduce the amount of blood available for creating sperm.¹⁴⁰ In the same way, in reverse, flagellation increases heat and therefore raises the sexual temperature, increasing both sexual desire and the probability of releasing seed, in both males and females, for conception. As we have seen, Meibomius’ 1639 text gives an explication of sexual flagellation that is overwhelmingly concerned with contemporary medical theorizing about how the sexual body functions.¹⁴¹ He gives only cursory attention to a possibly behavioural explanation for the desire to be whipped for sexual pleasure. The term ‘somasochistic’ to describe the behaviours described in these seventeenth-century texts should be used, therefore, with caution, if at all. Sadism and masochism are terms that are applied in the twenty-first century to the practitioners of sexual flagellation, and that are inherently value-laden. To use these terms in discussing the portrayal of flagellation in these seventeenth-century texts is to place emphasis on a psychological dimension that was clearly absent for contemporary readers. I have argued in Chapter 2 that we can identify a hierarchy of pleasure in the representation of sexual activity, with the supreme pleasure consisting in penile penetration with ejaculation. Flagellation fits into this hierarchy as precoital stimulation that ensures female receptivity before penetration; as a variety of female masturbation when practised by nuns in the convent; and as a technique to produce erection and copious ejaculation in the man. For a woman, flagellation will enhance her sexual arousal and bring the possibility of multiple orgasms during a single act of coitus, so enabling complete erotic gratification by a single male lover and encouraging conception. For the man it is a practice that enables him to continue to be in control of his sexual function, and so to retain his manhood, when otherwise he might be impotent. For both sexes, then, flagellation precipitates orgasm, thus enabling conception. Whether early modern men and women translated this theory into practice is impossible to ascertain, as there is little evidence of actual practice. Whipping as part of sexual activity seems to have been mentioned in only a single case in the period, in the prosecution for libel and adultery at Norwich Consistory Court in 1707 previously discussed, where it was alleged that Samuel Self ‘oftentimes turn’d up the garments of the said Jane the wife of Robert Marris & lewdly & immodestly whip’d her bare arse for which he had huge rods purposely provided’.¹⁴² However, the allegations do not mention whether

¹⁴⁰ An explanation of such methods can be found in Robert V. Schnucker, ‘Elizabethan Birth Control and Puritan Attitudes’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 4 (Spring 1975), 655–67.

¹⁴¹ Gibson describes *De flagrorum usu* as ‘a serious attempt to establish as a fact that flogging can indeed act as a stimulus to erection in the “victim” and to essay an explanation of such a weird phenomenon’ (Gibson, *The English Vice*, 1).

¹⁴² DN/CON59, Libel: Self *v.* Self 13 Jan. 1707. Allegation of Sarah Self–16 Dec 1707.

or not these episodes were immediately followed by the acts of adultery of which Samuel Self was accused, so we cannot know whether or not they were intended as 'foreplay' or for pleasure in themselves.

The pleasure of flagellation for a woman is described to her in the same terms as is the loss of her virginity. In the same way as the loss of virginity is represented as initially bringing pain that is a passing necessary stage before the experience of sexual pleasure, so too flagellation is represented as a preparation for a much greater pleasure to come. Towards the beginning of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, on the day of Ottavia's marriage, when she makes love with her husband for the first time, her mother tells her: 'Be not daunted, Daughter, it will be so much the more pleasant to you in time'.¹⁴³ More fulsomely later, before she experiences flagellation, her mother tells her: 'The transports of joy which succeed this momentary suffering and spring up within the breast, thou thyself wilt feel, nor can I express them in words'.¹⁴⁴ The description of the pleasure that follows flagellation closely resembles the description of the pleasure of intercourse that follows loss of virginity. Tullia describes the pleasure she felt at her second coition: 'After a while I felt no Pain, but in its Place, a sweet Tickling, and in the End, a Seizure in every Joint and Limb, which made me languishing lay my Head on one Side, and in Sighs and short Breathing, express the inconceivable Pleasure of all my Senses'.¹⁴⁵ Using similar language, Ottavia describes the sensations she had following her whipping: 'my inflamed buttocks were scalding me, whilst some titillation or other was soothing the pain'.¹⁴⁶ Flagellation is thus constructed as being for women a pain that, like the loss of virginity, if endured, will lead on to greater pleasure, including the pleasure of conceiving a child. The use of flagellation to bring on female orgasm meant that it was also understood to be a means of ensuring conception. Following the Galenic–Hippocratic model of conception, where heat builds up to produce orgasm, an inability to orgasm during heterosexual penetrative intercourse would be ascribed to insufficient heat on the woman's part, rather than to any sexual inadequacy on the part of her male partner. Flagellation, by increasing heat in the appropriate body parts, could raise the sexual temperature, making the woman both receptive and orgasmic.

Although Meibomius in *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging* sought only to explain why men might employ flogging to stimulate their sexual appetite, in the 1718 English edition the text is prefaced with a letter dated 24 October 1669, from Thomas Bartholin to Meibomius' son Henry 'On the Medicinal Use of Rods'.¹⁴⁷ In this letter Bartholin addresses this lacuna and argues that Women 'are rais'd and inflam'd by Strokes to a more easy Conception'.¹⁴⁸ He uses the example of Roman women who offered their hands to be whipped to promote

¹⁴³ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 30.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 189.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 152.

¹⁴⁷ Meibomius, *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging*, preface.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

conception to explain how this happens: 'For the Blood growing warm in the Hand from the Strokes receiv'd, runs back to the Heart, and from thence by the Arteries to the Womb, which being thus inflam'd is excited to Lust, and dispos'd for Conception.'¹⁴⁹ This understanding of the female role in reproduction is one that is repeated in *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*. Tullia tells Ottavia about how flagellation was prescribed for a woman who remained childless despite her husband's best endeavours to get her with child:

Our friend, the Duchess Leonora, so illustrious on account of her noble origin, so conspicuous for her beauty and so remarkable for the gifts of mind and body, owes her fecundity to these lashings. Her husband, the Duke, was mad in love with his young wife; yet she would not bear him a child, and this was breaking his heart. . . . At last, in conformity to the advice of an Arab, Leonora was scourged, as thou, by her mother's hand. She had until then received no pleasure from Venus; but exactly at that very moment, on the Duke's letting his catapult fly at her, she was extremely excited. In a few days after her loins were again stimulated by stripes and her buttocks and thighs set on fire for Venus; at this time she was very near fainting under her husband; out of sheer voluptuousness she melted away into a prodigious flood. In fine, at the end of a short time, by undergoing the same kind of incentive, it was with great pleasure she received her husband and the mettlesome blows of the stiff tail. She became big with child and bore it in her womb.¹⁵⁰

The raising of the woman's heat through flagellation means that her pleasure becomes more intense. When this raised female heat is then met by the man's greater heat, it further inflames her, so that, when he raises her heat even more by the emission of semen at ejaculation, orgasm and conception are certain. Again, we see in this story the mother's role in her daughter's sexual education, as it is she who whips her daughter rather than the husband his wife. This association of flagellation with raising heat to produce and increase pleasure is also alluded to in *The Presbyterian Lash*, as we have seen, where the characters speculate about how it occurred: 'it may be the poor Whores breech was so cold that she could not bear it out stoutly against a bench or bed side, and therefore he was resolved to warme it.'¹⁵¹

The aim of flagellation for sexual purposes is thus enhanced pleasure, not pain or humiliation. The pain is to be endured in the certainty of great 'voluptuousness' to come. This aim is frequently reiterated in *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*. When Ottavia's mother tells Ottavia that it is now her turn to be whipped, she begins with a question: "'Dost thou think thou hast courage enough for that sport?'" she asked "For it is sport and not suffering."¹⁵² While the priest is whipping Ottavia, her mother encourages her, saying: 'the harder the correction thou wilt submit to, the greater the voluptuousness thou wilt

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁵⁰ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 193–4.

¹⁵¹ Kirkman, *The Presbyterian Lash*, 4.

¹⁵² Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 148.

see thyself filled with.¹⁵³ It is at this point, the issue of pleasure, that somatic and psychoanalytic explanations converge. Contemporary seventeenth-century analyses describe sexual flagellation as being about pleasure—the achievement and sustaining of erection to orgasm, promotion of orgasm in women to release the seed for conception—just as psychoanalytic accounts also stress that sadomasochistic acts are about pleasure. The ‘masochist’ who desires to be beaten or whipped lusts not after pain but pleasure. The pain is the means to pleasure.¹⁵⁴

I have argued that seventeenth-century pornography does not offer the reader a ‘polymorphously perverse’ representation of a wide variety of sexual acts for the entertainment of contemporary readers. Rather, it is restricted to specific areas that were culturally dictated. Flagellation is thus constructed in these texts as a sexual practice that is neither condemned nor pathologized, but is rather one that can be condoned for its efficacious effect in situations where the desired outcome—erection, ejaculation, orgasm, conception—cannot ordinarily be achieved. It is not, except in the convent, an activity that replaces heterosexual penetrative intercourse, but rather one that enables and enhances it. Neither is it an activity that is practised by the characters as a necessary component of *every* sexual act, except for those men who need it to achieve erection in order then to engage in heterosexual penetrative intercourse.¹⁵⁵ For the women in these texts it is a practice that they learn, through the instruction and example of another woman, can be used on occasion to heighten their pleasure and ensure conception. As Tullia says in response to Ottavia’s descriptions: ‘Indeed I have never tried it; but I wish to try it and that on to-morrow night.’¹⁵⁶ It is not until later, into the eighteenth century, that we encounter a literature in which men and women, like Mr Barville in *Fanny Hill*, seem to be taking part in flagellation as a predominant sexual preference, and about which they may feel a sense of shame.¹⁵⁷ The humour of these earlier seventeenth-century representations may also have contributed to this later eighteenth-century sense of the shameful nature of a desire for flagellation, and in its turn why such a desire could no longer be regarded as funny, because shameful. Although at this time the connection between a desire or preference for flagellation with school discipline practices is only one of several connections—Catholicism, witchcraft, and sexual immorality—it does suggest that later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century pornographic flogging narratives had their roots in the seventeenth century, with

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁵⁴ See Gaylyn Studlar, *In The Realm of Pleasure: Von Sternberg, Dietrich, and the Masochistic Aesthetic* (New York, 1988), 16–34.

¹⁵⁵ In psychoanalytic terms, paraphilias such as sadomasochism are considered problematic generally only if they take the place of heterosexual genital sexual relations and are a feature of every sexual encounter.

¹⁵⁶ Churier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 195.

¹⁵⁷ See Bloch, *Sexual Life*, 293. Among other examples, he quotes from a description of a club for female flagellants that appeared in the *Bon Ton Magazine* of Dec. 1792.

the focus of the 'fantasy' changing over time. Flagellation narratives were no longer understood as a phenomenon that had its roots in religious practice and ancient stereotypes of deviance, but rather became more narrowly focused on the educational aspect. This may have reflected changing mentalities as overt hostility to religious unorthodoxy abated after the 1689 Toleration Act (though it clearly did not disappear), and as corporal punishments moved out of the public environment. But these explanations do not tell the whole story, and draw attention away from any understanding of the pleasure and popularity of these texts. The narratives are erotic, focusing on the pleasure of gazing at and describing the body, and especially the genitals as they are uncovered to view. They are also extremely humorous, employing a wide variety of comic techniques to incite laughter and amusement at what might seem to a modern reader to be an unlikely subject for a joke.

4

‘An Extraordinary Satisfaction’: Imagining Homosexuality

One of the major narratives of women’s history, and the history of female sexuality, is that the sexual love of one woman for another is something that has been ‘hidden from history’.¹ To date, the lesbian in early modern history has been recovered, and reconstructed, through medical and legal discourses or through homoerotic interpretations of the poetry and prose of female writers.² Seventeenth-century pornographic writing is, however, a surviving textual source in which descriptions and discussion of homosexual sexual intercourse are neither hidden nor disguised. Pornography’s representation of homosexual acts, and especially of lesbian sexual encounters, has generally not been analysed to any great extent to reveal early modern understanding of the meaning of such acts. Criticism of pornography’s use of lesbian sex has meant that such scenes are almost automatically assessed as inauthentic and hence dismissed as of little value or interest: it is assumed that descriptions of lesbian sex are merely a trope of pornography, there ‘for’ male rather than female pleasure. Historians of female homosexuality such as Emma Donoghue, Lillian Faderman, and Ros Ballaster, who have discussed several of these texts, have tended to regard their descriptions of lesbian sexual intercourse as subsumed to the requirements of male pleasure. The scenes of sexual action between women are regarded as confused and illogical, serving as mere foreplay to the ‘real’ business of heterosexual sexual intercourse that follows, and reflecting the ignorance of male authors.³

¹ On lesbian visibility, see Patricia Simons, ‘Lesbian (In)Visibility in Italian Renaissance Culture: Diana and Other Cases of *donna con donna*’, in Whitney Davis (ed.), *Gay and Lesbian Studies in Art History* (New York, 1994), 81–122.

² See, e.g., Katharine Park, ‘The Rediscovery of the Clitoris: French Medicine and the Tribade, 1570–1620’, in Hillman and Mazzio (eds.), *The Body in Parts*, 170–93; Emma Donoghue, ‘Imagined More than Women: Lesbians as Hermaphrodites, 1671–1766’, *Women’s History Review*, 2/2 (1993), 199–214; Patricia Crawford and Sara Mendelson, ‘Sexual Identities in Early Modern England: The Marriage of Two Women in 1680’, *Gender & History*, 7/3 (Nov. 1995), 362–77; and Judith C. Brown, ‘Lesbian Sexuality in Medieval and Early Modern Europe’, in Martin Baum Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey Jr. (eds.), *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (Harmondsworth, 1989), 67–75, at 70. See also Judith C. Brown, *Immodest Acts: The Life of a Lesbian Nun in Renaissance Italy* (New York and Oxford, 1986).

³ Ballaster, ‘“The Vices of Old Rome Revived”’; Donoghue, *Passions between Women*; Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*.

James Grantham Turner is a notable exception here, noting that, although the *Tribadicon* dialogue in *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* is constructed within a heterosexual model, anticipating ‘the conventions of later pornography by presenting women’s copulation as a scene to be viewed and interrupted by a male, who literally projects or “flings himself” into the active role’, it is not the whole story and does not remain ‘fixed in the hierarchy of values below heterosexual consummation’.⁴ He does, however, also note the ambivalence that runs beneath these representations in the way that understanding of sexual intercourse between women expressed by the female characters is always alternating between opposing viewpoints, sometimes representing it as insufficient a substitute for sex with men, and sometimes as surpassing heterosexual sexual intercourse.⁵

The ‘lesbian’ sex scene *is*, of course, a trope of the pornographic narrative. However, this does not mean that it should be disregarded. Rather we should pay close attention to its particular historical and social context to understand what meanings it may have had to seventeenth-century, rather than to twenty-first-century, readers. In this chapter I analyse these seventeenth-century pornographic representations of predominantly female homosexual sexual acts to show that they do, in fact, have much to tell us about early modern ideas about same-sex sexual acts, however confused, illogical, ambiguous, or ambivalent they may be. The very ambiguity of such scenes allows a space in the text for the reader, whether male or female, to take up a range of desiring positions and shifting gender identifications in relation to the text. As Paul Hammond has pointed out: ‘it was the capacity of writers and readers to refuse definition that created and protected the textual spaces in which homoerotic pleasure became possible.’⁶ There is thus a homoeroticism, both male and female, that is embedded in these texts, and that undermines the feminist contention that pornographic representations of homosexual acts between women are further evidence of misogyny, as they are there only ‘for’ men.⁷ This is not to suggest, however, that this pornographic literature reveals just what early modern women did in bed with each other, but rather what some early modern authors thought it was *likely* that they did, or that their readers, whether male or female, would find sufficiently convincing to find it arousing.

The chapter will focus on exploring primarily the representation of sexual acts between women that appear in a variety of texts throughout the seventeenth century, with briefer discussion of the representation of male homosexual sexual intercourse. Although homosexual acts between men are discussed in some of these texts, such acts are not described in any detail until their appearance in trial reports at the very end of the century, and generally they are condemned

⁴ Turner, *Schooling Sex*, 195. ⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Paul Hammond, ‘Friends or Lovers? Sensitivity to Homosexual Implications in Adaptations of Shakespeare, 1640–1701’, in Cedric C. Brown, and Arthur F. Marotti (eds.), *Texts and Cultural Change in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke and London, 1997), ch. 10, 225–47, at 226.

⁷ The possibilities for shifting identifications are discussed in more detail in Ch. 5 on voyeurism.

unequivocally.⁸ In this respect we can trace a change over time: it was not until the very end of the century that explicit descriptions of homosexual acts between men appeared in print. This becomes apparent through a reading of trial reports for sodomy, and most particularly in the reporting of the trial of the Earl of Castlehaven for rape and sodomy. The trial itself took place early in the century, in 1631, and was reported and written about both at the time and in the years following. But it is not until publications dating from 1699 onwards that there is any explicit description of the sodomitical acts for which the Earl was accused, convicted, and executed, so that Cleland's explicit narration of the male homosexual act in the mid-eighteenth century in *Fanny Hill* was not a novelty.⁹ The Castlehaven trial also highlights that, like flagellation, sodomy was an act that was associated with Catholicism. This link was also made explicitly in other texts where sodomy was an act attributed to Catholic foreigners, particularly Italians.¹⁰

Furthermore, again as with flagellation, the description of homosexual acts should not be interpreted as evidence of a polymorphously perverse literature that caters to all tastes, offering a variety of pleasures to the early modern libertine. The discussions about, and descriptions of, same-sex sexual acts in these texts take place in particular contexts and repeat specific ideas, including didactic moralizing, indicating what might be acceptable sexual behaviour (and what it was acceptable to describe at any time) and what was not. Here, in the imaginative construction of homosexual sexual encounters, we find that the issue of fertility and conception is again central: sodomy was defined as anal penetration of a man by another man or of a woman by a man, but could also include other acts such as bestiality (male and female), all of which were against nature, precluding any possibility of reproduction. The issue of conception, as we have seen, is at the heart of textual discussions about the lawfulness of anal intercourse. There is no corresponding condemnation of sexual acts between women, even though they must also preclude any possibility of conception. Early

⁸ The exception to the rule is again Rochester in *Sodom*. However, despite frequent reference to buggery and other sexual acts between men, all action takes place off- rather than on-stage.

⁹ This point is made also by Herrup. She states: 'Sodomy became the narrative's pivot in the 1690s, not the 1630s' (Cynthia B. Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law, and the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven* (New York and Oxford, 1999), p. xv). For a discussion of the sodomy scene in *Fanny Hill*, see Kevin, Kopelson, 'Seeing Sodomy: *Fanny Hill's* Blinding Vision', in Claude J. Summers (ed.), *Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment England: Literary Representations in Historical Context* (New York, London, and Norwood (Aus.), 1992), 173–84.

¹⁰ In *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* it is associated with Italians; in *Venus in the Cloister* with Jesuits. Buggery was often referred to in legal judgments as a crime that was Italian in nature. See John, Lord Fortescue, *Reports of Select Cases in all the Courts of Westminster-Hall* (1748), 94: 'Buggery is an Italian Word, and comes from *Bugeriare* to commit unnatural Sin. See *Torriano's* Dictionary, much like our Indictment, which expresses it by, "Crimen inter Christianos non Nominandum, & contra ordinationem Creatoris & Naturae ordinem." See also Herrup's discussion of the Castlehaven case; Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder*. This connection is one that is also made in eighteenth-century erotica. See Harvey, *Reading Sex*, 140.

modern understanding of the nature of conception and the respective male and female roles in reproduction meant that equivalent weight was not given to the 'spending' of female seed outside heterosexual penetrative intercourse.

Psychoanalytic theory offers an interpretation of pornographic fantasies of lesbian sex that suggests that they are a way of negotiating anxiety and guilt arising from the formative experiences of early childhood sexuality.¹¹ The popularity of scenes of woman-on-woman sex in pornography, whether visual or literary, is accounted for by suggesting that they somehow reassure and relieve male anxiety about sexual contact between women from which man is excluded: 'The titillation which the male voyeur derives from the prospect of lesbian sex seems generally to be prodded by some anxiety that the women are lost to him—but the pornographer knows finally to alleviate that anxiety by assuring his reader that all Sapphos are ultimately conquered by Phaons, and thus creates "a happy ending", not necessarily for his female character, but for his male reader.'¹² But I have argued that this was a body-centric culture in which particular behaviours were given physical rather than psychological meanings.¹³ Psychoanalysis provides a framework for attempting to understand the phenomenon, but is often applied in an ahistorical fashion that ignores both the specific contemporary cultural context and the actual construction of these early modern narratives.

The depiction of the use of a dildo in pornographic descriptions of female love-making is understood as working to reassure the male reader/viewer that he is, in fact, essential—the penis is indispensable to sexual intercourse.¹⁴ There is a further presumption here that representations of sex between women in which a penis substitute is used makes that sex an inauthentic expression of 'lesbian' desire, marking it as only for men. Feminist anti-pornography campaigners would argue that it is yet another example of the exploitation of female sexuality for male pleasure. In this vein Dworkin argues that the portrayal of lesbians and of lesbian sexual contact in pornography is yet another means of asserting male power over women, as the women are there for the man's pleasure, not their own.¹⁵ This 'heterosexualizing' of the representation of lesbian love-making works to erase and deny homosexual desire, marking such representations both as inauthentic and as having no validity for a possible female reader.¹⁶ However, this interpretation is disputed by lesbian writers such as Pat Califia, who refuse to

¹¹ See, e.g., Peter Benson, 'Between Women: Lesbianism in Pornography', *Textual Practice*, 7/1 (Spring 1993), 412–27.

¹² Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, 41.

¹³ See also Duden, *The Woman beneath the Skin*.

¹⁴ Sheila Jeffreys, *Anticlimax: A Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution* (London, 1990), 111–12.

¹⁵ Dworkin, *Pornography*, 47.

¹⁶ See John Stoltenberg, 'Pornography, Homophobia and Male Supremacy', in Catherie Itzin (ed.), *Pornography: Women, Violence and Civil Liberties, A Radical New View* (Oxford, 1992; paperback edn., 1993), 145–65, at 155. See also Lisa Henderson, 'Lesbian Pornography: Cultural

accept that the use of a dildo in lesbian sexual intercourse renders that intercourse somehow automatically inauthentic. Califa rejects any such prescription or policing of sexual desire.¹⁷

But do these twentieth- and twenty-first-century interpretations of the representation of same-sex sex in pornography hold true for early modern representations? While representations of human sexual activity are ubiquitous in human history, the nature of those representations have changed over space and time. Not only do knowledge and understanding of the body and sexuality change, but technological innovation constantly offers new and different possibilities to the human imagination that challenge both social and cultural taboos, and legal restrictions on what is acceptable at any given time or place. As we have seen, the seventeenth-century classics of literary pornography, *The School of Venus*, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, and *Venus in the Cloister*, developed out of the genre of pornography as a variety of literature that recounts the lives of prostitutes as told in the form of a dialogue between whores, going back at least as far as Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, and owing a large debt to Aretino and his contemporaries in the Renaissance.¹⁸ Other seventeenth-century pornographic works in English clearly reveal this literary heritage, either by reusing a title, being a loosely translated or adapted version of an earlier work, or by continuing the format of a dialogue between whores, where an older woman initiates a younger woman into the tricks of the trade.¹⁹ Seventeenth-century pornographic literature clearly owes a large debt to the world of classical literature, and the educated reader would recognize references to, among others, Virgil, Ovid, Juvenal, Martial, and Petronius.²⁰ This literary context thus suggests the inclusion of scenes of sexual encounters between women, at the same time as the use of the genre of the instructional dialogue between women offers the possibility of physical as well as verbal exploration and instruction. Christopher Rivers has also argued that the convent novel 'necessarily introduces the possibility of lesbianism, thereby providing the possibility of that *nec plus ultra* of scenes for the heterosexual male

Transgression and Sexual Demystification', in Sally Munt (ed.), *New Lesbian Criticism: Literary and Cultural Readings* (Hemel Hempstead, 1992), 173–91, esp. 174–6.

¹⁷ See Henderson, 'Lesbian Pornography', 173–91.

¹⁸ See Foxon, *Libertine Literature*; Kearney, *A History of Erotic Literature*; Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*. An English translation of Lucian's *Dialogues* was published in 1685, but it was available before this date in the original Greek.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Garfield, *The Wandring Whore; The Crafty Whore; Mistress Macquerella* (pseud.), *A Dialogue between Mistris Macquerella, a Suburb Bawd, Ms Scolopendra, a noted Curtezian, and Mr Pimpinello an Usher, &c.; The Whores Rhetorick; The Practical Part of Love*.

²⁰ Charles Cotton's *Erotopolis*, for example, is strewn liberally with classical references as well as taking Petronius' *Satyricon* as the starting point for the second part of his text and appropriating his characters Eumolpus and Encolpius for his exploration of a thinly disguised London world of prostitutes, thieves, and other disreputable characters. Cotton borrows liberally from a variety of sources, not only classical. Educated readers would also pick up on the reference to Juvenal from the *Sixth Satire* in the use of the name Tullia for one of Chorier's characters and hence the implication of homosexual sexual preference.

voyeur, that of two women making love'.²¹ The representation of sexual acts between women in seventeenth-century pornography would thus seem to have respectable precedents (and the use of classical allusions together with Latin and Greek phrases lends the literature itself a cloak of respectability).²²

The questions of readership and authorial intention also influence any reading of pornography. Although we cannot be certain who the expected audience for this literature might have been, and our expectation must be that its readership was predominantly male, we should not ignore the possibility of a female readership, however small, which might take pleasure not only in the representation of the female body as well as the male, but also in the representation of women desiring and pleasuring other women.²³ This is not the only aspect of the homoeroticism of these texts that has been ignored. The male homoeroticism that is implicit in the descriptions of the male body and genitalia that are frequently the focus of the text has similarly received little attention. Moreover, although these particular texts have been attributed to male authors, they all speak through female voices (or are 'ventriloquized' in current literary parlance) and declare themselves aimed at a female readership, thus problematizing any categorical gendering of authorial voice.²⁴ We should not dismiss these texts as inauthentic expressions of female desire simply because they were written by men.²⁵

Ascribing the contradictions and ambiguities presented by these early modern texts to the 'masculinist pornographic representations of "lesbian" sexual encounters' is a small step towards the conclusion that, 'if any women wrote lesbian sex literature during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, it has been lost to posterity. Had such literature existed, the descriptions of lesbian love-making would certainly have been different from the ones that are extant'.²⁶ Rather than viewing these textual inconsistencies as a consequence of profound

²¹ Rivers, 'Safe Sex', 392.

²² In her essay 'Humanism, Politics and Pornography in Renaissance Italy', Margaret Jacobs quotes the 1563 *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, which allowed that 'ancient books written by the heathens may by reason of their elegance and quality of style be permitted, but by no means read to children.' Thus, by appealing to the classical heritage, authors implied they were writing in a tradition that was acknowledged to be respectable and permitted. In Hunt (ed.), *The Invention of Pornography*, 55. See also Burke, 'Heu domine'.

²³ On this point, see Valerie, Traub, 'Desire and the Differences it Makes', in Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London and New York, 1992), and Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters*.

²⁴ The title of Chorier's *Dialogues* attributed the text to the Spanish Aloisia, translated into Latin by Joannes Meursius. *Venus in the Cloister* and *The School of Venus* were printed without authorial attribution, but Michel Millot and Jean L'Ange were prosecuted and sentenced to death for publishing *The School of Venus*. The stated authorial intention of aiming at a female readership should not be taken at face value: it can be interpreted as part of the general satire on female sexual depravity.

²⁵ On the gendering of the authorial voice, see, e.g., Diane Purkiss, 'Material Girls: The Seventeenth-Century Woman Debate', in Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (eds.), *Women, Texts & Histories 1575–1760* (London and New York, 1992), 69–101, and Kahn, *Narrative Transvestism*.

²⁶ Ballaster, "'The Vices of Old Rome Revived'", 21; Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, 31.

male ignorance of what women ‘really’ do in bed together, we could perhaps read them as evidence of competing and sometimes contradictory cultural understandings. On the one hand, there are the learned discourses of classical literature, medicine, law, and religious teaching, and, on the other, there is general ‘knowledge’ accrued through the dissemination of gossip, popular literature, and perhaps even personal observation of women within one’s own social circle or community. About the former we have knowledge deriving from a quantity of surviving textual evidence. About the latter we have fragments, such as ballads or the series of pamphlets that appeared in Paris in the 1660s purveying gossip about the sexual proclivities of Queen Christina of Sweden, and referring to her as a tribade.²⁷ We should not forget that these are works of the imagination, and that they are not attempting to document accurately the sexual practices of either men or women: they are an imaginative creation of possible sexual scenarios intended to entertain and arouse the reader. If we simply dismiss them as unrealistic, or view them in a utilitarian fashion as serving some psychologically reassuring purpose for a male audience, we lose the sense of their eroticism and of their appeal to the early modern reader.

In ‘The Perversion of “Lesbian” Desire’ Valerie Traub argues that in early modern literature there are two dominant modes of representation of erotic desire between women: ‘the chaste female friend and the “masculinized” tribade’.²⁸ The tribade in particular is representative of how erotic contact between women in this period, and in a phallogocentric culture, was imagined: she was thought to possess an enlarged clitoris with which she was able to pleasure both herself and her female partner. For example, in Helkiah Crooke’s *Microcosmographia: Or, The Whole Body of Man* (1615), as in other early modern texts, tribady is directly connected with the enlarged clitoris:

and although for the most part it [the clitoris] hath but a small production hidden under the *Nymphes* and hard to be felt but with curiosity, yet sometimes it groweth to such a length that it hangeth without the cleft like a mans member, especially when it is fretted with the touch of the cloaths, and so strutteth and groweth to a rigiditie as doth the yarde of a man. And this part it is which those wicked women doe abuse called *Tribades* (often mentioned by many authours, and in some states worthily punished) to their mutuall and unnaturall lusts.²⁹

²⁷ Quoted in Sarah Waters, ‘“A Girton Girl on a Throne”: Queen Christina and Versions of Lesbianism, 1906–1933’, *Feminist Review*, 46 (Spring 1994), 41–60.

²⁸ Valerie, Traub, ‘The Perversion of “Lesbian” Desire’, *History Workshop Journal*, 41 (1996), 23–49, at 23. Traub has since modified and extended her discussion of representations of female same-sex relations in her enormously wide-ranging and excellent book *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2002).

²⁹ Helkiah Crooke, *Microcosmographia: Or, The Whole Body of Man* (1615), 238. For a discussion of the enlarged clitoris and tribades, see also Theresa Braunschneider, ‘The Macroclitoride, the Tribade and the Woman: Configuring Gender and Sexuality in English Anatomical Discourse’, *Textual Practice*, 13/3 (1999), 509–32.

In this construction of female desire, the ‘feminine’ half of the lesbian couple—what Traub refers to as the ‘femme’—is hidden from view, for, ‘despite the depiction of “feminine” dyads in Renaissance drama, and the perceived necessity of a “feminine” partner to complete a tribadic pair, neither dramatic texts nor other historical documents record such a woman’s anatomy, erotic behavior, or explicit intentionality’.³⁰ However, Traub’s analysis ignores the representation of women in erotic literature who engage in sexual acts with each other, and who, while discussing tribadism, do not themselves either embody the culturally imagined figure of the tribade or identify themselves as such.³¹ Although references are made to tribades and enlarged clitorises (the dialogue in Chorier’s text is entitled *Tribadicon*), the actual depiction of same-sex sexual encounters in this literature is of two young women, both ‘feminine’ and beautiful, neither having any anatomical peculiarities or abnormalities, engaging in mutual erotic stimulation, which is satisfactory to the extent that it culminates in orgasm for at least one of the women involved. This is shown clearly in all the sexual encounters that take place in *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* between Tullia and Ottavia (‘thou art over exciting me to pleasure; I feel on the point of melting unless thou stoppest’).³² The mutuality of these encounters is also highlighted in an engraving from an edition of c.1690 in the positioning of the figures (facing each other and legs crossed) and the feminine symbolism of furniture and drapery (see Figure 6; also my discussion of this image in Chapter 7).

But neither do these representations conform entirely to that of ‘the chaste female friend’ whose ‘chastity and innocence generally were regarded as unimpeachable, and her affection for women was judged a temporary, natural phase’, which would be superseded, and eclipsed, by the penetrative intercourse of marriage.³³ In this model, sexual relations between women were characterized as less specific, less ‘wanton’, less directed towards the goal of sexual climax than an expression of heartfelt love: ‘Kisses and caresses, rather than penetration, were the forms of intimacy associated with her, and they were imagined to be experienced under the covers of a shared bed or under the shade of a pastoral bower.’³⁴ There are many representations in these texts of mutual female sexual stimulation, from kissing and caressing to flagellation, which acknowledge a range of possibilities for female same-sex sexual pleasure, and which do not correspond to Traub’s account of early modern desire between women. Although it is sexual pleasure that usually excludes the penis or a penis substitute, it does not always exclude penetration, and it is almost always concluded by orgasm for at least one of the

³⁰ Traub, ‘The Perversion of “Lesbian” Desire’, 24.

³¹ These representations, however, most of which occur after mid-century, do fit Traub’s thesis that there was a shift towards the end of the seventeenth century towards absorbing the ‘abnormal’ behaviours associated with the tribade into the figure of the ‘chaste friend’ or ‘femme’. See *Renaissance of Lesbianism*, ch. 6.

³² Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 84.

³³ Traub, *Renaissance of Lesbianism*, 231.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

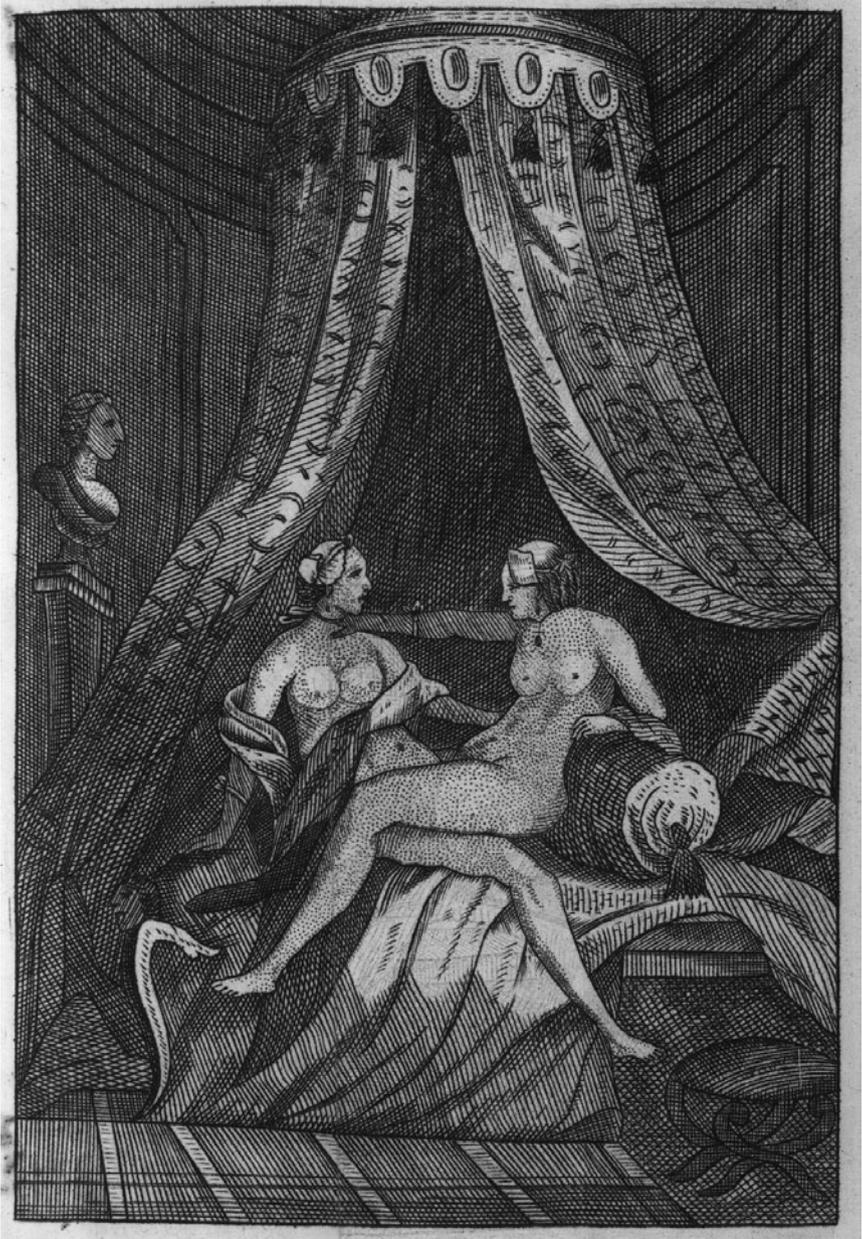


Fig. 6. An illustration (one of 32 plates, number 24), from a Latin edition of Chorier's *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* (c.1690) BL: PC.30.i.10. By permission of the British Library.

women. It is also suggested that, despite the supervention of marriage following an initiation into the delights of sexual pleasure by an older relation or friend, who is not embodied as a tribadic figure, such pleasures between women may persist and continue to be pursued.³⁵ Many of the descriptions in this literature suggest the giving of pleasure to one woman by another through kissing and manual stimulation alone. In *Venus in the Cloister* Agnes begs Angelica: 'Take away your Hand, I beseech you, from that Place, if you would not blow up a Fire not easily to be extinguished.'³⁶ Touching and caressing, without the presence of a penis substitute, are fully satisfactory and bring on female orgasm, indicated by female ejaculation: 'Of course I have finished the job; and, love has, with wild impetuosity, cast the Venereal sap from out the dark well in my bark into thy virginal skiff.'³⁷

There is the suggestion in one scene in *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* that penetration takes place using a finger ('Put it between my thighs, and with thy open palm occupy mons Veneris; reach the seat of intestine war; thrust thy finger into it; be to me as a true husband'), but it is not this action that is used to bring on Tullia's orgasm. It is the action of rubbing one pubis against another.³⁸ Sexual satisfaction—orgasm—is thus represented as being procured for a woman *without* the act of penetration, but just through rubbing. This representation echoes contemporary medical knowledge of female sexual response: people were clearly aware that rubbing of the clitoris alone, without penetration, could bring on female orgasm. Such knowledge is made apparent in those midwifery and medical textbooks that prescribe that a midwife should rub the female genitals of a woman to bring on her orgasm as a cure for gynaecological problems caused by the retention of seed.³⁹ There is no suggestion in these pornographic texts that a woman penetrates another woman with either an enlarged clitoris, or with a dildo. Despite the many protestations of inadequacy because of the lack of a male sexual organ, there is virtually no description of, or allusion to, the use of a dildo for *mutual* sexual pleasuring. There is, in fact, no description of a woman *using* such a device for her own pleasure. The women only *discuss* the existence of such items and the pleasure that they may bring. Although stories are narrated about women who are reputed to have used one, none of the female characters in any of these texts is described as possessing or using one herself.⁴⁰

In *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* Tullia suggests to Ottavia that such an implement is a common possession of women for use in the privacy of the bedchamber:

The Milesian women were wont to make themselves leather mentules eight inches long and broad in proportion. Aristophanes informs us that the women of his time were wont

³⁵ Both Tullia and Ottavia in Chorier's *Dialogues* express this desire.

³⁶ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 22.

³⁷ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 21.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

³⁹ See, e.g., Culpeper et al. *The Practice of Physick*, 419–20.

⁴⁰ The exception to this rule is Rochester's *Sodom*.

to use them. Even nowadays among Italian, especially Spanish as also Asiatic women, this tool plays a considerable role in the female boudoir, as being their most precious piece of furniture: it is held in the highest esteem.⁴¹

This instruction comes at a point in the text when Tullia and Ottavia are discussing how sexual activities between women may not rival those between men and women, and is therefore the only comment that might suggest, however indirectly, that a woman may use a dildo with another woman. But the text itself explains that it is an object for private use by a woman alone, despite the context of sexual contact between women. And the attribution of use to women of other countries, or in the past, serves to distance such use from the women here described.

Venus in the Cloister also avoids any suggestion that a nun may use a penis substitute in any other way than for her own solitary pleasure, although such items are said to be ubiquitous in convent life. Agnes describes to Angelica how her first visitor (whom Angelica has sent to instruct Agnes in her temporary absence) tells her about the use of a certain implement used throughout a religious order: 'He showed me a certain Instrument of Glass, which he had of her I have been telling you of; and he assured me, that she told him there were above fifty of them in their House, and that every one, from the Abbess down to the last Profest, handled them oftener than their Beads.'⁴² There is, however, no suggestion here that the nuns use these items on each other. In fact, *Venus in the Cloister* suggests that the object to which the nuns resort most often for sexual stimulation is the discipline. As we have seen in the previous chapter, flagellation is a way of achieving sexual pleasure through both looking at the naked female body and seeing it become aroused by the application of the lash, and of producing sexual pleasure by whipping oneself.

Given that it seems to be generally 'understood' today that lesbian sex scenes must necessarily introduce a penis substitute in order that such scenes be fully satisfactory and reassuring for the (male) reader, why is the use of a dildo so conspicuously absent from these early modern descriptions? In *Desire and Anxiety*, Traub again argues that male imagination of female eroticism necessarily included the use of a penis substitute; hence trials of women for sodomy or tribadism arose as a result of the use of an object or enlarged clitoris for penetration. In France a woman who took 'the man's part' in this way would be prosecuted for sodomy, and, as Traub emphasizes, 'neither a Frenchwoman's *desire* for another woman, nor any nonpenetrative acts she might commit were crimes, but the prosthetic supplementation of her body was grounds for execution'.⁴³ Perhaps the reason

⁴¹ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 25–6.

⁴² Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 54–5.

⁴³ Traub, *Desire and Anxiety*, 153. See also Stephen Greenblatt, 'Fiction and Friction', in Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, and David E. Wellbery (eds.), *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought* (Stanford, Calif., 1986), 30–52, and Judith C. Brown, 'Lesbian Sexuality in Medieval and Early Modern Europe', 67–75.

these French texts do not represent women using prosthetic devices or dildoes on each other is precisely because such actions were a capital offence on the Continent. However, such prosecution and punishment can be interpreted more as a punishment for the fraudulent taking-on of the role and privileges of a man than as a judgment that it was particularly delinquent behaviour to penetrate a woman with anything other than a real penis.⁴⁴ Alternatively, the literature may serve to highlight the gap between elite legal and medical discourses and a contemporary understanding of erotic love between women as expressed through the literary imagination.

In other English seventeenth-century pornographic literature it is rare to find any suggestion that women use dildoes to play the man's part in sexual intercourse with another woman. Women are described as using a dildo for personal pleasure or to avoid pregnancy, and, more usually, as illustration of the voracious sexual appetite of women. In *The Practical Part of Love* the author tells us: 'But to proceed, she now freely enjoy'd her pleasure, without the fear of being gotten with child, as do those Ladies, that finding they can no longer live, then while they appease their lecherous itch, by artificial Dildo's at the Change, do prevent that mischief that may ensue by natural ones.'⁴⁵ In a poem entitled 'Dildoïdes', attributed to Samuel Butler, dildoes are described as used either by women alone, or by women with *men* when necessary. A man might provide a dildo to prevent daughters or servants from engaging in sexual intercourse with men, or to supplement his own penile insufficiency:

Are you afraid, lest merry griggs
Will wear false pricks like periwigs;
And being but to small ones born,
Will great ones have of wax and horn.⁴⁶

There is, of course, an exception to this general absence of a seventeenth-century representation of the use of the dildo between women in a work of pornography: Rochester's farce *Sodom*. As we have seen in an earlier chapter, the plot turns on a reversal of sexual norms where the King decrees that henceforth buggery is to be the preferred form of sexual intercourse.⁴⁷ It might be expected, therefore, that Rochester would depict women turning to each other for sexual gratification. But this is not the case. There is one scene in which a lady-in-waiting uses a dildo on the Queen in order to satisfy her sexual needs. The other ladies-in-waiting do not engage in mutual sexual pleasuring, nor do women in

⁴⁴ See, e.g., Brigitte Eriksson, 'A Lesbian Execution in Germany, 1721, The Trial Records', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 6/1–2 (Fall/Winter, 1980/1).

⁴⁵ *The Practical Part of Love*, 22.

⁴⁶ Samuel Butler, *Dildoïdes* (1672), repr. in Colette Saint Germain (ed.), *The Giant Book of Erotica* (London, 1993), 182–6. See also 'The Maids Complaint for want of a Dil doul', in *The Pepys Ballads: Facsimile*, ed. W. G. Day (Cambridge, 1987), iv. 50.

⁴⁷ Rochester, *Sodom*, Act I, scene i, ll. 67–70, 131.

the kingdom at large. Rather, they resort to dildoes for their own use, comically bemoaning the fact that they are insufficient for the purpose:

These dildos are not worth a fart.
They are not stiff. The muzzle is too small.
Nor long enough.⁴⁸

Here the action is performed by the lady-in-waiting as a representation more of power and hierarchy than of an alternative scene of desire: she serves the Queen; the Queen does not serve herself. As Emma Donoghue has commented, 'there is no sense of erotic tension between maid and mistress'.⁴⁹ Neither do women all over the realm resort to each other for their sexual satisfaction; rather it is reported that they are resorting to dildoes or bestiality. One woman uses first a dog and then attempts to have sex with a horse, but, the horse preferring to mate with his 'lady mare', she is forced to wander the land being 'content with what comes next to hand'.⁵⁰ On hearing this sad story, the King takes pity on her and grants that she may be satisfied by the services of his elephant: 'Industrious cunts should never pintle want | She shall be mistress to my elephant.'⁵¹ Rochester's brief representation of a sexual act between women using a dildo is thus perfunctory and rather part of a progressive build-up of a comic scenario in which the voracious sexuality of women and the inadequacy of satisfying it are sent up in extreme satirical form: the reader imagines the giant size of an elephant's penis, presumably by analogy with its trunk.

In popular literature, such as ballads or cheap pamphlets, which reported on the unmasking of cross-dressed women, the potential for sexual titillation is fully exploited as the audience is invited to imagine the ensuing sexual scenarios to which it may have given rise. Here we do find the exploitation of the idea that such women who dressed as men might also have supplemented their bodies so that they could play the man's sexual, as well as his social, part. For example, in the ballad 'Comical News from Bloomsbury' (c.1690), although the ostensible motive for the false marriage between the two women was to obtain money by deception, the sexual deception that prolonged the marriage beyond the point of necessity is not glossed over, but rather exploited for both its comic and its sexually titillating potential:

The Portion was paid, but the cream of the Jest,
was what they did when they were bedded.

The Bridegroom had prudently got a Sheep's gut
blow'd up very stiff, as a Bladder;
But what he did with it, or whether 'twas put
I'll leave you good Folks to consider:
The innocent Bride no difference knew,

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Act 11, ll. 3–4, 148.

⁴⁹ Donoghue, *Passions between Women*, 207.

⁵⁰ Rochester, *Sodom*, Act III, ll. 142, 145.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Act III, ll. 147–8, 145.

and seem'd to be greatly delighted;
 But Lasses I'll warrant there's none among you
 that would be so cleverly cheated.⁵²

The joke also turns on the mixing-up of bodily functions so that orgasm is imagined as a fart or as urination.⁵³ Such stories, while circulating ideas about women having sexual relations with other women in a popular forum, also seem to maintain a rigidly heterosexual context in which a sexual act cannot be imagined without a penis or penis-like implement. But perhaps it is the masquerade that allows this imagined scene of prosthetic supplementation. The woman is pretending to be a man, so is imagined to take the act to its logical conclusion: the willing bride would expect a penis to be present. When the literature is presenting a fantasy in which the women are *not* pretending to be men, where they are described usually engaging in sexual acts with husbands and lovers, then it is perhaps inconceivable that they should be described as anything other than 'normal' women who learn about sex from each other, not only through conversation but also through mutual physical exploration.

Alongside these ballads that tell tales of cross-dressing women, who only sometimes take the impersonation as far as sexual imitation, there are others that tell how men cross-dress as women with the intention of gaining sexual access to women. But these cross-dressing men are not represented as doing so to appeal sexually to men, or to encourage the imagining of what they might do when 'bedded' with another man. Much work has been done in recent years to investigate and elucidate the phenomenon of women who cross-dressed in the early modern period, and to analyse the phenomenon of transvestism in general.⁵⁴ We do not, however, find similar accounts of male cross-dressing

⁵² 'Comical News from Bloomsbury. The Female Captain: Or, The Counterfit Bridegroom' (London, c.1690), in *The Pepys Ballads*, ed. Day, v. 424. There are also numerous ballads about cross-dressing women that do not have any hint of sexual motivation, unless it is to follow a male husband or lover to war. See, e.g., 'The Maiden-Warrior: Or, The Damsels Resolution to Fight in Field, by the side of Jockey her Entire Love', in *The Pepys Ballads*, ed. Day, iii. 308; 'The Woman Warrior' (c.1685), in *ibid.*, iii. 309; 'The Valliant Damsel; Giving an Account of a Maid at Westminster, who put her self in Mans Apparel, and Listed her self for a Soldier for the Wars of Flanders' (1692), in *ibid.* v., 137. There are also many ballads that tell of the adventures of women who dressed as men to pursue criminal careers: 'The Female Frolick: Or, An Account of a young Gentlewoman, who went upon the Road to Rob in Man's Cloaths, well Mounted on a Mare, &c' (c. 1685), in *The Pepys Ballads*, ed. Day, iii. 246; 'The Valiant Dairy-Maid; Or, Three Taylors well Fitted', in *ibid.*, iv. 283. See also *The Life and Death of Mrs Mary Frith. Commonly Called Mal Cutpurse. Exactly Collected and now Published for the Delight and Recreation of all Merry Disposed Persons* (1662), repr. in Janet Todd and Elizabeth Spearing (eds.), *Counterfeit Ladies: The Life and Death of Mal Cutpurse, the Case of Mary Carleton* (London, 1994); and *The Whole Life and Death of Long Meg of Westminster*, repr. in Charles Mish (ed.), *Short Fiction of the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1963).

⁵³ For a fuller discussion of this aspect of the sexual joke, see Ch. 6 on the comic and the erotic.

⁵⁴ See, especially, Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke and London, 1989), and Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York and London, 1992; paperback edn., London, 1993).

in this period, apart from the phenomenon of boy actors taking the female parts on the English stage before the Restoration, or in Renaissance plays that deal with subjects from classical mythology, such as Jupiter's seduction of Calisto in the guise of a nymph.⁵⁵ References to men who not only cross-dressed, but who did so for specifically sexual purposes, are few and far between, so any discussion of whether such behaviour was evidence of homosexual or heterosexual sexual activity is necessarily limited.⁵⁶ However, that said, it appears to be clearly the case that popular accounts in this period of men who dressed as women are represented as doing so with a single motive: to share a woman's bed and thence to engage in sexual intercourse with her. This is, of course, the motivation behind Jupiter's assumption of female dress when he infiltrates Diana's followers.

The assumption on which these tales of cross-dressing men rely is that it was usual for young women to engage in sexual activities with other young women, especially while sharing a bed.⁵⁷ There is a further assumption that the introduction of a dildo in such a scenario might not have been so unusual, as the female impersonator attempts to pass off his penis as a dildo. This representation suggests that a certain degree of sexual contact between women was understood, or imagined, as commonplace.⁵⁸ This is perhaps a direct extension of the fact that this was a culture in which it could be recommended that a woman rub the genitals of another to bring on her orgasm as a remedy for a gynaecological problem.⁵⁹ It also suggests that intimate touching between women was not taboo,

⁵⁵ See Stephen Orgel, 'Nobody's Perfect: Or, Why did the English Stage Take Boys for Women?', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 88/1 (Winter 1989), 7–29, and Phyllis Rackin, 'Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage', *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 102/1 (Jan. 1987), 29–41; Traub, *Renaissance of Lesbianism*.

⁵⁶ The one exception I have found is for the medieval period. See Ruth Mazo Karras and David Lorenzo Boyd, "'Ut cum muliere': A Male Transvestite Prostitute in Fourteenth-Century London", in Louise Fradenburg, and Carla Freccero (eds.), *Premodern Sexualities* (New York and London, 1996), 101–16.

⁵⁷ For a speculative discussion of the possible extent of these possibilities see Margaret R. Hunt, 'The Sapphic Strain: English Lesbians in the Long Eighteenth Century', in Judith M. Bennett and Amy M. Froide, *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250–1800* (Philadelphia, 1999), 270–96. But see also the discussion of emotional and physical closeness between female friends in Laura Gowing, 'The Politics of Women's Friendship in Early Modern England', in Gowing et al. (eds.), *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe*, 131–49.

⁵⁸ A more explicit example appears in the mid-eighteenth century in *A Spy on Mother Midnight: Or, The Templar Metamorphos'd. Being a Lying-in Conversation. With a Curious Adventure. In a Letter from a Young Gentleman in the Country, to his Friend in Town* (1748). The man who is impersonating a woman offers to masturbate another with a dildo and enters her room for that purpose. I am grateful to Karen Harvey for this reference. Paradoxically, putting on female clothes confirms the maleness of the body beneath, as it produces erection.

⁵⁹ See Culpeper et al., *The Practice of Physick*, 419–20. For a discussion of the Renaissance controversy over the appropriateness of this remedy, see Winfried Schleiner, *Medical Ethics in the Renaissance* (Washington, 1995), 113–29. Traub makes these points also in *Renaissance of Lesbianism* through her analysis of literary sources such as plays and poetry rather than popular literature such as ballads. Elizabeth Wahl also examines the poetry and prose of court writers, but not the popular literature of ballads and pamphlets; Elizabeth Wahl, *Invisible Relations: Representations*

and that in fact there were circumstances in which it was not only condoned, but recommended. In a society in which beds were shared, so that there was considerable physical intimacy between people of the same sex, perhaps it was tacitly understood that there would be a certain amount of sexual contact between women, as Bray argues was the case between men in this period.⁶⁰ That this was indeed the case is suggested by the popular literature in which cross-dressed men engage in sexual play with women. This is the scenario presented in 'Sport upon Sport: Or, The Man in the S[mock]':

A Lusty Lad there was of late,
that did himself disguise Sir,
Known by the Name of bonny Kate,
this trick he did devise Sir:
To lye with melting Maids all night . . .⁶¹

'Melting' was a euphemism for orgasm, suggesting that this was what happened when women shared a bed.⁶² In this guise he is able to engage in female verbal and physical conversation in bed: the talk proceeds to kisses and then to further sexual activity when he reveals his true sex:

These two together lay in Bed,
and talkt of womens blushes,
Talkt of each others maiden-heads,
and talkt of empty kisses:
Which fir'd the Youth that he began,
himself for to discover,
He told her that he was a man,
and was her onely Lover.⁶³

A similar story is told in 'The Male and Female Husband'. The young man in this ballad has been brought up as a girl and his true sex is discovered when he 'with the maid some [frollick] spent'.⁶⁴ That the reason men disguised themselves in women's clothing was to gain sexual access to women is a theme that is to be found in erotic literature well into the eighteenth century.⁶⁵ It also underpins much satirical writing on men acting metaphorically 'in women's clothes' as midwives.⁶⁶ Such ballads hence disseminated, in a widely available

of Female Intimacy in the Age of Enlightenment (Stanford, Calif., 1999). See also Harriette Andreadis, *Sappho in Early Modern England: Female Same-Sex Literary Erotics 1550–1714* (Chicago, 2001).

⁶⁰ Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London, 1982).

⁶¹ 'Sport upon Sport: Or, The Man in the S——', in *Pepys Ballads*, ed. Day, iii., 208.

⁶² Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy* (London, 1947; 3rd edn., 1968; repr. 1993), 148.

⁶³ 'Sport upon Sport', 208.

⁶⁴ 'The Male and Female Husband', in *The Roxburghe Ballads*, ed. J. Woodfall Ebsworth (Hertford, 1896), p. viii, pt. 2, 444.

⁶⁵ See *A Spy on Mother Midnight* (1748).

⁶⁶ See, e.g., Philalethes (pseud.), *An Answer to Doctor Chamberlaines Scandalous and Faske [sic] Papers*, which mocks Culpeper and his work on midwifery.

and popular genre, the implication, or tacit understanding, that sexual contact between women who shared a bed was quite usual, but without 'naming' such behaviour as either transgressive or tribadic.⁶⁷

Thus, despite analysis, from psychoanalysis to historiography, that argues that a penis substitute *must* be included in descriptions of sexual intercourse between women, this is clearly generally not the case during the seventeenth century. However, the male body *is* insinuated into the acts of female love-making represented in this literature, despite its physical absence. In descriptions of sexual acts between women in *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* a man is always metaphorically or imaginatively present: Tullia tells Ottavia after achieving orgasm through rubbing pubis against pubis: 'I have been to thee a husband, my spouse! my wife!'⁶⁸ In a later scene that repeats similar action but that inserts a means of penetration, a finger, the sexual act is constructed again around heterosexual intercourse. Tullia begs Ottavia to 'thrust thy finger into it; be to me as a true husband' and at the moment of orgasm cries out the name of her male lover, 'I am spilling, I am spilling. . . O Lampridio! . . . Ottavia! . . . Ah! ah!'⁶⁹

The author achieves a wonderful ambiguity in this scene: the sexual act that takes place between the two women is described as unsatisfactory, lacking the male body ('Would that I could serve thee as Caviceo serves me! But what is the shadow compared to the substance?'), while at the same time it concludes with complete sexual gratification, as Tullia achieves orgasm, indicated by female ejaculation ('I am spilling'). The reader can be reassured that it all takes place in the context of heterosexual sex ('be to me as a true husband'): Tullia's orgasm, while brought on by the physical presence and actions of Ottavia, is imagined as being in the presence of the male lover ('O Lampridio!'). But at the same time the reader can also understand that two women can satisfy each other sexually. If 'writing about women making love is a man's way of indirectly inserting himself into the act that excludes him', the author of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* constructed the sexual act between these two women in such a way that, while technically absent in terms of his bodily presence, the male is never imaginatively, or textually absent, at any point in this narrative.⁷⁰ This technique allows the author to create a text that offers a multiplicity of object choice for identification to the reader, and that blurs any clear distinction between homosexuality and heterosexuality. Seventeenth-century readers thus are offered a range of desiring positions that allow them to engage imaginatively with the text in a variety of ways.

The homoeroticism that infuses these texts is not only present in the scenes that describe sexual contact between women. The pleasures of voyeurism are made explicit in this literature, and it is women who are most often described as spying on a sexual encounter, whether of a solitary nature or involving two or more persons. Although frequently it is the viewing of a male body, the gazing

⁶⁷ See Andreadis, *Sappho*, 13–14.

⁶⁸ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 20.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁷⁰ Rivers, 'Safe Sex', 395.

upon a male genital organ that excites the female watcher, or watchers, the female body is also laid open to view with its beauty and its signs of sexual arousal. As Agnes tells us explicitly in *Venus in the Cloister*: 'it is in this that I should have placed my Pleasure, to have considered her thus naked, and curiously to have observed all the Transports which Love would have caused in the Moment she was vanquished.'⁷¹ It might be expected, as Christopher Rivers has pointed out, that a text such as *Venus in the Cloister*, which describes the sexual activity within a convent, includes sexual scenes between women, as the majority of the characters are inevitably women.⁷² However, the convent is *not* represented as a female-only space, but is rather teeming with men in one guise or another.⁷³ The breaking-through the physical boundaries of the convent walls by men metaphorically mirrors the penetration of the physical boundaries of the female bodies enclosed within them. In fact, the female voyeur is frequently watching a man who is gazing at another nun, thus revealing both male and female bodies to the view of the reader.

It is in these scenes where voyeur is piled upon voyeur that the potential homoeroticism of the text is most apparent. Scopophilia is made the central and most important sexual pleasure of the text, reflecting the pleasure of the reader.⁷⁴ But the author does not stop at describing the pleasures of sight for the protagonists. He also emphasizes the point by describing the pleasures of those looking at the primary scene, *and* the pleasure of those watching their pleasure. Voyeuristic pleasure is extended and increased by also describing the pleasure of seeing the pleasure of looking. The description of the nuns in *Venus in the Cloister* experiencing 'an extraordinary Satisfaction' as they gaze upon the naked body of one of their Sisters suggests the achievement of orgasm from watching alone.⁷⁵ But what is it that produces this sexual satisfaction? Is it the pleasure of gazing at the female body, suggesting homosexual desire; or is it the pleasure derived from watching the man handle and expose the woman to view, as they imaginatively put themselves into his position, thus again suggesting homosexual desire; or is it the pleasure of imaginatively placing themselves into the woman's position, being gazed upon naked and touched by a man with 'the Transports of a furious Lover', suggesting heterosexual desire? The text plays with this ambiguity, suggesting many possibilities to the reader. It is only later on in the text that the women's desiring viewpoint is clarified as a homosexual stance: 'They embraced *Virginia* with whom they fell in Love, and said, in leaving her, that they would supply the Place of the good Father, and contract a strict Friendship with her.'⁷⁶ This representation of female homosexual desire is also echoed by the desiring

⁷¹ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 110.

⁷² Rivers, 'Safe Sex', 392.

⁷³ Men were not completely absent from convents in the period, although theoretically permission was to be granted first. See Mary Laven, *Virgins of Venice: Enclosed Lives and Broken Vows in the Renaissance Convent* (London, 2002; paperback edn., 2003), ch. 5.

⁷⁴ See Ch. 5 for a fuller discussion of voyeurism and scopophilia.

⁷⁵ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 41.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

gaze of the female narrator and that of the woman to whom this narration is directed. While it is unclear whether the focus of the female narrator's desire is the woman she is with or the heterosexual sexual encounter she describes (the context of this story is to show the possibilities of heterosexual sexual contact within the female space of the convent), it is clearer where the interest of her listener is focused. Agnes responds that the description is so vivid she can 'see' the woman. Thus the suggestion here is predominantly of female homosexual desire—of heterosexual desire mediated through the lens of female desire for another woman.

Despite the overt condemnation of male homosexual behaviour that appears in these texts, there is also a male homoeroticism that infuses the writing through the frequent and extensive descriptions of the male body and genitalia that are often the focus of the text. These descriptions stress the beauty of the male body and the way that just the sight of the male genitals is sufficient to produce sexual arousal and desire. In *The School of Venus* the question is asked: 'what greater happiness is there than to see a little length of limp flesh hanging at the base of your lover's belly—a thing which we take in our hands and which gradually grows stiff and becomes so large that you can hardly get your hand round it. The skin of it is so delicate that it almost makes you swoon with delight just to touch it.'⁷⁷ This focus on the beauty of, and delight in, the penis is repeated throughout these texts. If we assume that the audience for this material was primarily male, we must then ask ourselves why there is so much attention paid to the male body, and specifically to the male genitals.⁷⁸ Although sex is explicitly defined as being the meeting of the male and female genitals, and complete sexual pleasure is constructed for both sexes as consisting in penetration with simultaneous orgasm, the texts offer other sorts of pleasure to the reader. This literature, by its very nature, is intended to bring pleasure to the reader. The discussions of pleasure in the text—how to bring pleasure, how to enhance pleasure, what pleasure consists of for both sexes, and who experiences most pleasure during sexual activity—underlines an implicit assumption that the text itself brings (sexual) pleasure. The act of reading becomes a sexual act itself. We cannot know whether authors intended their texts to bring narcissistic or homoerotic pleasure (or both) to the male reader in their focus on erotic descriptions of male bodies. Thomas Laqueur argues that *all* sex in the early modern period may be understood as homoerotic, as it is the rubbing-together of like body parts, whether male penis and female vagina, or female pudenda against female pudenda.⁷⁹ The understanding that male and female bodies are commensurable appears frequently in this seventeenth-century sexual literature, although equally

⁷⁷ Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 151. ⁷⁸ See Ch. 1 on readership.

⁷⁹ Thomas W. Laqueur, 'Amor veneris, vel dulcedo appeletur', in Michel Feher, Ramona Naddaff, and Nadia Tazi (eds.), *Fragments for a History of the Human Body, Part Three* (New York, 1989), 90–131, esp. 118–19.

there are moments when it is simultaneously erased.⁸⁰ But we must assume that it was intended that the male reader, as well as any female readers, would find these, often prolonged, descriptions pleasurable.⁸¹

Apart from Rochester's *Sodom*, the one type of literature that does describe sexual acts between men is that of court reports for criminal trials for sodomy, where there can be found a more or less explicit description of what one man has allegedly done with another. Peter Wagner includes this genre as a variety of erotic literature, as he argues that these trial reports were increasingly exploited as a source of pornographic material during the eighteenth century.⁸² However, whereas sensational murder trials received extensive coverage in ballads and chapbooks with much tabloid-style loitering over gory or lascivious details, we do not find the same sort of writing in those seventeenth-century publications that reported the trials for sodomy.⁸³ The two publications, dated 1641, about the trial of John Atherton, Bishop of Waterford, contain no details of the acts of which he was accused that might be mined for prurient purposes.⁸⁴ It is only at the very end of the seventeenth century that Wagner's argument that the intention of such publications was to provide salacious material to the public

⁸⁰ In *The School of Venus* (p. 87), for example, the male and female genitals are described thus: 'Underneath, running the length of the tool, is a duct which looks swollen like a large vein. This leads to the head of the instrument, where there's a little opening running lengthwise, as if it was an incision made by a lancet. This is made in the same way as the opening of the cunny. As for the girl, I have no idea how she is constructed, except that she's said to have an instrument somewhere inside her which is just like the boy's.' However, see Ch. 6 for discussion of both commensurability and other ways that the female genitals are imagined.

⁸¹ As far as it is possible to be sure when unlicensed or illicit publications are concerned, the authorship of these texts is exclusively male. It is impossible to prove that women did not write such publications, but it is extremely unlikely that this was so. See Ch. 1 on readers and authors. See Laqueur, 'Amor veneris', 118–19. The understanding that male and female bodies are commensurable appears frequently in this seventeenth-century sexual literature. See, e.g. *The School of Venus*, 87.

⁸² Wagner, *Eros Revived*, 113–32. See also Peter Wagner, 'The Pornographer in the Courtroom: Trial Reports about Cases of Sexual Crimes and Delinquencies as a Genre of Eighteenth-Century Erotica', in Paul-Gabriel Boucé (ed.), *Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester, 1982), 120–40.

⁸³ See Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550–1700* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1994); Joseph H. Marshburn, *Murder and Witchcraft in England 1550–1640 as Recounted in Pamphlets, Ballads, Broad-sides and Plays* (Norman, Okla., 1971); Joseph H. Marshburn and Alan R. Velie (eds.), *Blood and Knavery: A Collection of English Renaissance Pamphlets and Ballads of Crime and Sin* (Rutherford, NJ, 1973); and Victor E. Neuburg, *Popular Literature: A History and Guide from the Beginning of Printing to the Year 1897* (Harmondsworth, 1977).

⁸⁴ See Nicholas Bernard, *The Penitent Death of a Woeful Sinner. Or, The Penitent Death of John Atherton Executed at Dublin the 5. of December. 1640* (Dublin, 1641), and *The Life and Death of John Atherton Lord Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, within the Kingdome of Ireland, Borne neare Bridgewater in Somersetsshire. Who for Incest, Buggery, and Many Other Enormous Crimes, after having Lived a Vicious Life, Dyed a Shamefull Death, and was on the Fifth of December Last Past, Hanged on the Gallows Greene at Dublin, and his Man John Childe being his Proctor, with whom he had Committed the Buggery, was Hanged in March Following at Bandon Bridges, Condemned thereunto at the Assises Holden at Corke* (1641).

becomes more obvious, suggesting that there was a distinct change over time in respect of this particular pornographic genre.⁸⁵

The publication in 1699 of a report of the trial of the Earl of Castlehaven (which actually took place in 1631) appears to have been prompted by the trial for sodomy in 1698 of Captain Rigby. Despite the legal language and phraseology, it is full of detailed description of what took place, revealed particularly in the reporting of the Countess's evidence. For example: 'He made Skipwith come naked into our Chamber and Bed; and took delight in calling up his Servants to shew their Nudities, and forc'd me to look upon them, and to commend those that had the longest.'⁸⁶ And she continues: 'He delighted to see the Act done, and made Antill come into the Bed to us, and lie with me in such a manner, as he might see it. . . .'⁸⁷ Such details, though surrounded by much dry and stilted legal circumlocutions, cannot but have been a source of titillating entertainment for the reader. Similarly the depositions of the three servants repeat and embellish the evidence of those who have gone before, including description of the Earl of Castlehaven's homosexual acts with his servants: 'The Lord Audley also us'd my Body as a Woman, but never Pierc'd it, only spent his Seed betwixt my Thighs'; 'My Lord made me lye with him at Fount-hill and Salisbury, and once spent his Seed, but did not penetrate my Body, and I understood he had often done the like with others.'⁸⁸ This contrasts sharply with another report of the trial printed twenty years earlier in 1679, in which this aspect of the indictment appears in a mixture of English and Latin, hiding any detail behind legal terminology and language:

Now as to that sin which should not be named amongst Christians, and a strange sin in this Land, brought hither by strangers, I will scarce name it, the Law of *England* saies, that Knowledge is a Burden, and I think it is in this particular, *Crimen est bestiale contra naturam*, It is *Crimen Sodomiticum sine penetratione cum faemina*; It is *Masculus cum Masculo*, and therefore Penetration is not lawful to make it Sodomy; *Cubitus immunditus* supplies the Penetration; *Voluntas solum requiretur, non Copulatio*; so that the law of *England* makes distinction of degrees of this filthy sin, *non est species Lurieae, sed Bestialitatis, quia non sequitur Conceptio*.⁸⁹

The opening sentence makes it clear that the act is not to be described, and its concluding clause disassociates it from English practice, linking it directly with

⁸⁵ *The Tryal and Condemnation of Mervin, Lord Audley Earl of Castle-Haven. At Westminster, April the 5th 1631. For Abetting a Rape upon his Countess, Committing Sodomy with his Servants, and Commanding and Countenancing the Debauching his Daughter* (1699). See the preface: 'This Sin being now Translated from the Sodomitical Original, or from the Turkish and Italian Copies into English; not only is the Infamous Example of that Monster Ri-by, and other Notorious Sodomites. . . .'. See also *The Case of Sodomy, in the Tryal of Mervin Lord Audley, Earl of Castlehaven, for Committing a Rape. And Sodomy with Two of his Servants, viz. (Laurence Fitz Patrick and Thomas Brodway) who was Try'd and Condemn'd by his Peers on the 25th of April, and Beheaded on Tower-Hill, May 14th, 1631* (1708).

⁸⁶ *The Tryal and Condemnation of Mervin*, 15–16.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 17–19.

⁸⁹ *The Trial of the Lord Audley, Earl of Castlehaven, for Inhumanely Causing his Own Wife to be Ravished, and for Buggery* (1679), 4–5.

foreigners. The trial took place in 1631 and afforded plenty of opportunity for description and discussion of the sexual acts—rape and sodomy—that formed the basis of the trial at the time. It was obviously also a source of continuing interest and fascination, prompting further publications throughout this and later centuries.⁹⁰ However, it is not until the end of the century and the publication of 1699 that there is any explicit detail about the homosexual acts for which the Earl and his servants were tried and executed, suggesting that it was not acceptable to be explicit about homosexual acts between men until the early eighteenth century.⁹¹

In eighteenth-century trial reports for sodomy there is much more detail about what actually occurred between the men involved than the seventeenth-century euphemism ‘us’d my Body as a Woman’. In the report of Captain Rigby’s 1698 trial published in 1718, the eighteenth-century reader receives a blow-by-blow account of what happened during the encounter: ‘on Saturday the 5th of November last, William Minton standing in St. James’s Park to see the Fire-works, Captain Rigby stood by him, and took him by the Hand, and squeez’d it; put his Privy Members erected into Minton’s Hand, kiss’d him, and put his Tongue into his Mouth . . .’.⁹² The reader is left in no doubt as to what exactly took place between the two men. These reports are now as explicit describing sexual acts between men as the pornographic literature published in the seventeenth century is in describing heterosexual sexual encounters.⁹³ Julie Peakman in *Mighty Lewd Books* dismisses these kinds of reports as ‘merely newsworthy titillation’ and argues that they did not have ‘any immediate and profound effect on the development of pornographic fiction at the end of the eighteenth century’.⁹⁴ However, I would argue that, although one cannot prove any direct transmission from one kind of publication to another, it is highly likely that these kinds of reports *did* have an effect on the development of the pornographic text in the eighteenth century. By their publication, they created a climate in which such descriptions could be read as erotic (whether or not they were aimed at a heterosexual audience rather than at homosexual readers).

⁹⁰ See Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder*, esp. ch. 5.

⁹¹ Those who attempted to print Rochester’s *Sodom* were prosecuted even as late as 1689, when Joseph Streater and Benjamin Crayle were fined for so doing. See Thomas, *A Long Time Burning*, 23–4.

⁹² *The Tryal of Captain Rigby for Sodomy* (1698), in *A Compleat Collection of Remarkable Tryals of the Most Notorious Malefactors, at the Sessions-House in the Old Bailey, for Near Fifty Years Past. Vol. I* (1718), 236–42, at 237.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 239–40. Such explicit description also appears in the report of the trial of several men for sodomy that took place in 1707. See *An Account of the Tryal Examination and Conviction of Several Notorious Persons Call’d Sodomites, at Guild-Hall on Monday the 20th of October, 1707. With a List of the Names of those that were Try’d & Convicted* (1707), and *Select Trials for Murders, Robberies, Rapes, Sodomy, Coining, Frauds, and Other Offences. At the Sessions-House in the Old-Bailey. Vol. III. From April, 1726, to May, 1732. I. Margaret Clap, for Keeping a Sodomitical House* (1762; repr. Penzance, 1973).

⁹⁴ Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*, 3.

Furthermore, even if their ostensible intention was to serve a moral reforming purpose by highlighting the heinousness of the crime and hence to deter others, it had nevertheless now become acceptable for these descriptions to be in the public domain. To incorporate such explicit description of homosexual sex between men into the pornographic text, as in Cleland's *Fanny Hill*, was therefore now possible and acceptable where it had not been earlier in the seventeenth century.

In the most explicit seventeenth-century pornographic texts, apart from Rochester's *Sodom*, sexual acts between men are not described at all. *The School of Venus* and the English fragment *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid. Tullia and Octavia* both make no mention at all of sexual acts between men. *Venus in the Cloister* does refer to pederasty in the context of satire directed at the Jesuits, but not otherwise.⁹⁵ There is a great deal of *discussion* of sexual contact between men in the first six dialogues of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigee*, but no *description*, even where group sex is portrayed.⁹⁶ The texts generally either attribute such acts to a morally corrupt Catholic priesthood or repeat the early modern legal description that it is an act that is 'that Detestable, and Abominable, Sodomitical Sin called Buggery, (not to be named among Christians,)' and 'contrary to Nature'.⁹⁷ Moreover, Chorier's text comments on male homosexual behaviour in the context, not of sexual acts between women, which might be thought to provide an appropriate context, but rather at the point in the text where there is a description of anal sex between a woman and a man. This context supports historians' contention that male homosexuality in the early modern period was generally thought of as a specific sexual act that any man might commit, and not as a behaviour that was characteristic of a certain type of male person.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ The Jesuits are said to have composed the rule for their order, excluding a female order, with the express intention of allowing themselves sexual contact with youths: 'For neither St Ignatius nor St Bruno ever composed any Rules for our Sex. O that Spaniard, saith he, has very well provided for that, he did it on purpose that his Followers might rove with Impunity amongst them all, besides following his Fancy, which was a little upon the Pederaste, he put them into Employments, where amongst the Youth they find those Satisfaction which they prefer to all the Diversions they might have with others' (*Venus in the Cloister*, 67).

⁹⁶ Roger Thompson, in *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 33, states that in this text 'there is relatively little male homosexuality'. While there are discussions of male homosexuality in the first six dialogues, there is, in fact, no representation of male homosexual sexual acts at all.

⁹⁷ *The Tryal and Condemnation of Mervin*, 7. See also Fortescue, *Reports of Select Cases* (1748), 91–6. Anal penetration and how it should be treated in law, not only when it takes place between two men, but also by a man upon a woman, is discussed: it is judged to be equally unlawful, irrespective of the sex of the participants. See also Alan Stewart, 'A Society of Sodomites: Religion and Homosexuality in Renaissance England', in Gowing *et al.* (eds.), *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe*.

⁹⁸ That it is the act of penetration that is the crucial defining act is confirmed in Coke's *The Second Part of the Institutes of the Lawes of England* (1642), in which it is explicitly stated that, in order for sodomy (or buggery) to take place, there must be penetration. In other texts the act of anal penetration of a woman is discussed in the same context as sodomitical acts between men. See, e.g.,

In this scene the woman (Tullia) has anal sex with two men in turn, during an episode where she engages in sex with four men (a Frenchman, a German, and two Florentines) at a house to which upper-class women may go to satisfy their sexual needs. Significantly, although the woman is engaging in sexual activity with four men, there is no suggestion or description of any sexual activity between the five characters as a group, which might require there to be sexual contact between men. There is description of the two Italian men collaborating with each other to facilitate intercourse with the woman, but there is no mutual sexual stimulation. They facilitate the act of intercourse for the other by holding the woman in the desired position. Apart from these two, the men do not perform in front of each other. They retire to a couch behind a curtain when it is their turn.⁹⁹ The scene is thus constructed in such a way that the only sexual activity that takes place, whether it is direct in terms of sexual intercourse or indirect as voyeurism, is heterosexual in nature.

This passage, as previously discussed in Chapter 2, is the sole occasion of anal sex described in any of these works apart from Rochester's *Sodom*, and it is accompanied by very specific comments that indicate when it is acceptable and when not, together with language that reveals a deep ambivalence towards it.¹⁰⁰ This ambivalence is also reflected in the fact that the nationality of the two men who engage in anal intercourse is Italian. Thus again, as with flagellation, sodomy is associated with Catholic foreigners—and the fact that these particular foreigners are Italian encourages an association with Papism.¹⁰¹ However, unlike flagellation, whose association with Catholic foreigners was something that changed over time, this characterizing of sodomy as a foreign perversion was one that continued to be made in eighteenth-century erotica.¹⁰²

The ambivalence is signalled in the first suggestion that something sexually unusual will take place: 'The two Florentines will come together to you; they will also, I think, couple with you at the same time: for they deem us fools, us Frenchmen and Germans, because we loathe to know where true voluptuousness is situated.'¹⁰³ The use of the word 'loathe' indicates that it is to be a sexual act that may be seen as depraved, while 'true voluptuousness' suggests that it is also

Richard Capel, *Tentations: Their Nature, Danger, Cure* (4th edn., 1650), 213–14. In Rochester's *Sodom*, a late-seventeenth-century text that does describe sexual acts between men, it is again anal penetration that is described as taking place: 'When last, good sir, your pleasure did vouchsafe | To let poor Tooly's hand your pintle chafe, | You gently moved it to my arse—when lo! | Arse did the deed which light hand could not do' (Rochester, *Sodom*, Act I, Scene i, ll. 46–9; *Complete Poems and Plays*, ed. Lyons, 130).

⁹⁹ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 227.

¹⁰⁰ I have only found one report of a trial of a man for sodomy with a young girl, and this in the eighteenth century. See Fortescue, *Reports of Select Cases*, 91–6. The legal judgment in this case was that it was equally as heinous a crime as sodomy between two men and should be punished in the same way.

¹⁰¹ Buggery was often referred to in legal judgments as a crime that was Italian in nature. See Fortescue, *Reports of Select Cases*, 94.

¹⁰² See Harvey, *Reading Sex*, 140.

¹⁰³ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 230.

an act that is hugely pleasurable. This contradiction is put more explicitly later as the specific act is articulated: 'Then, they draw lots between them to see who will be the first to have the glory of digging the best bit of her: such is their expression. The licentiousness of a degrading pleasure exceeds, in the eyes of scurvy frouzy Sodomites, all the sweetness of true glory.'¹⁰⁴ The juxtaposition of language such as 'glory' with 'scurvy', and the phrase 'degrading pleasure' underline the ambivalence inherent in reminding the reader that the act is forbidden, but at the same time portraying such forbidden sexual acts for the pleasure and excitement of the reader—and in a way that conveys that such an act is (or may be) enormously pleasurable. It also emphasizes the transgression of the reader in vicariously enjoying a forbidden pleasure.

The representation of this act is enclosed within a strict moral framework that emphasizes that it is a forbidden act, but at the same time finds a way in which the act can be justified and held to be both moral and desirable. The justification for the act taking place between a man and a woman, as we have seen, is that it can be allowable only if ejaculation does not take place within the anus. Ejaculation must occur only in the vagina, because sexual activity is for the purposes of procreation.¹⁰⁵ The wrongness of the act is always defined in terms of its opposition to reproduction: lawful intercourse must have the possibility of conception. Part of the justification for anal intercourse between a man and a woman is therefore that it may be used as a form of 'foreplay', which must be succeeded by penetration of, and ejaculation into, the vagina once the man has excited himself to the point of orgasm by the close friction afforded by insertion of the penis into the anus.

This representation of anal sexual intercourse and the surrounding discussion that places it within both a distinctive moral framework and a particular construction of male sexuality suggests a further dimension to the understanding of male homosexual acts in the early modern period. Most scholarship on the subject has focused on the issues of the prevalence of such activities between men as an extension of expressions of friendship, or on the establishment of a modern understanding of a homosexual identity and its expression in male homosexual subcultures.¹⁰⁶ Other work has placed the acts of sodomy and buggery in the

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁰⁶ See, e.g., Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, and 'Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England', in Jonathan Goldberg (ed.), *Queering the Renaissance* (Durham, NC, and London, 1994), 40–61; Randolph Trumbach, 'The Birth of the Queen: Sodomy and the Emergence of Gender Equality in Modern Culture, 1660–1750', in Duberman *et al.*, (eds.), *Hidden from History*, 129–40; Randolph Trumbach, 'Sodomitical Subcultures, Sodomitical Roles, and the Gender Revolution of the Eighteenth Century: The Recent Historiography', in R. P. Maccubbin (ed.), *'Tis Nature's Fault: Unauthorized Sexuality during the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1987), 109–21; Stephen O. Murray, 'Homosexual Acts and Selves in Early Modern Europe', in Kent Gerard and Gert Hekma (eds.), *The Pursuit of Sodomy: Male Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment England* (New York and London, 1989), 457–77; Theo van der Meer, 'Sodomy and the Pursuit of a Third Sex in the Early Modern Period', in Gilbert Herdt (ed.),

context of religion, class, and politics to show how early modern England was relatively tolerant of homosexual acts, and that other offending behaviour was required before there was a prosecution.¹⁰⁷ Although there has been some analysis of erotic literature in the eighteenth century that discusses the representation of sodomy and how this may contribute to an understanding of attitudes towards homosexuality in that period, seventeenth-century pornography has not been examined as a source that may shed further light on our understanding of homosexual acts between men in the early modern period.¹⁰⁸ What we find here is a representation of male sexuality that understands it as prey to lust and licentiousness, and that therefore seeks out the route to the greatest sexual pleasure, wherever it may be found: 'All men without distinction are influenced by the same passions, being all of the same matter and constructed alike. They are all equally inclined to licentiousness. Now, they give the name of pleasure to that peevish and vehement cupidity they have, not so much for the sake of imparting the supreme joy into another's body and spirits, as of receiving it from another's person'.¹⁰⁹ This equation of male lust with the committing of sodomitical acts is one that reflects contemporary legal and medical discourse, and that also appears in other genres, for example, in a poem published following the sodomy trials in 1707, 'The Women-Hater's Lamentation': 'Nature they lay aside | to gratifie their Lust . . .'.¹¹⁰ A man is thus likely to seek to penetrate the anus rather than the vagina as it affords him a closer conjunction, and especially when a woman's body has been stretched by childbirth, while excessive lust may lead to indiscriminate choice of sexual partner.

The justification of anal sexual intercourse between men and women is, however, tempered by the suggestion that it is also the cause of dreadful disease and problems with the control of the bowel. And this is put in such terms as to offer a highly deterrent effect:

Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History (New York, 1994), 137–212; and G. S. Rousseau, 'The Pursuit of Homosexuality', in Rousseau, *Perilous Enlightenment: Pre- and Post-Modern Discourses, Sexual, Historical* (Manchester and New York, 1991), 2–43.

¹⁰⁷ See B. R. Burg, 'Ho Hum, Another Work of the Devil: Buggery and Sodomy in Early Stuart England', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 6/1–2 (Fall–Winter 1980/1), 69–78; Caroline Bingham, 'Seventeenth Century Attitudes towards Deviant Sex', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 1 (1971), 447–72; Cynthia Herrup, 'The Patriarch at Home: The Trial of the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven for Rape and Sodomy', *History Workshop Journal*, 41 (1996), 1–18; and Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder*. Sodomy signals a general disorderliness and lack of control.

¹⁰⁸ See Donald H. Mengay, 'The Sodomitical Muse: Fanny Hill and the Rhetoric of Crossdressing', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 23/1–2 (1992), 185–98.

¹⁰⁹ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigee*, 275.

¹¹⁰ *The Women-Hater's Lamentation: Or A New Copy of Verses on the Fatal End of Mr Grant, a Woollen-Draper, and Two Others that Cut their Throats or Hang'd themselves in the Counter; with the Discovery of near Hundred more that are Accused for Unnatural Dispising the Fair Sex, and Intriguing with one Another* (1707), repr. in Randolph Trumbach (ed.), *Sodomy Trials: Seven Documents* (New York and London, 1986).

The case would be a far more serious one, if a girl or a boy were to undergo violence against Nature. Then the most poignant pains seize the oppressed one, and oftentimes, when too thick a spear cleaves him, there result from this abuse most foul diseases which all the skill of Æsculapius would not cure. It happens that, once the strings of the muscles are broken, the excrements run out even in spite of people. What is more disgusting than that?¹¹¹

Despite these strong moral arguments and depiction of the disgusting results of such acts, there is implicit within the text the idea that it is natural for a man to seek out such a form of intercourse, driven by a desire for pleasure or by ungovernable lust.

These discussions about the unlawfulness of sexual intercourse between men take place entirely within the context of representation of anal intercourse between a man and a woman, thus constructing male homosexual behaviour in terms of an act of penetrative intercourse: it is to do with putting a penis into a male anus. The desire for such a sexual conjunction is constructed entirely in terms of pleasure rather than of specific object desire. In effect, any man may take part in a homosexual act, because his sexual nature (rather than his sexual identity) inclines him in that direction, even while society orders that it is 'unlawful' and wrong. There is a tension between the 'natural' male sexuality that seeks out pleasure and satisfaction of lust, and the 'unnatural' use of a bodily orifice that is not designed for procreation and that is therefore sterile.

In these discussions and descriptions of anal sex, which give rise to debate about the unlawfulness of sexual acts between men, there is no inclusion, nor any mention of the possibility, of same-sex sexual activity between women. Despite the fact that, in French law, sexual acts between women were defined as sodomy, the discussion of sodomy in Chorier's text is confined to anal penetration with a penis of a man or of a woman by a man.¹¹² By this absence we may infer that sexual acts between women were not imagined, or thought of, in the same way. The defining action in these definitions of sodomy is penetration with a penis, so perhaps it is not surprising that the discussion does not encompass sexual acts between women. But, if anal sex was condemned because it precluded the possibility of conception, why is it that sexual acts between women, which are also necessarily sterile, do not receive the same condemnation? In *Rare Verities* lawful intercourse is defined as 'a conjunction of male and female, by fitness of instruments, with an ejection of seed to beget their likeness'.¹¹³ While women

¹¹¹ Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 288.

¹¹² The 1533 English law against buggery did not mention women, neither does Coke in his *Institutes of the Laws of England*, where it is defined as 'a detestable and abominable sin, amongst Christians not to be named, committed by carnall knowledge against the ordinance of the creator, and order of nature, by mankind with mankind, or with brute beast or by womankind with brute beast' (1642 edn., pt. 3), 58. English law is silent about the possibility of sex between women. For a short review of lesbian historiography, see Rictor Norton, *The Myth of the Modern Homosexual: Queer History and the Search for Cultural Unity* (London and Washington, 1997).

¹¹³ Sinibaldi, *Rare Verities*, 3.

are represented in erotic literature as also having an 'ejection of seed' in the same way as men, reflecting the understanding of the female reproductive function described in medical and midwifery texts, it was the male sperm that was believed to be the active force in conception. As Tullia puts it in *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*: 'I am indebted to this dew for my little daughter. . . the human race is indebted to it for its existence.'¹¹⁴ This understanding of the male as the active, and most important, principle in the act of conception is reflected in the agricultural metaphors repeatedly used in the literature, pornographic and medical, of this period. As we have seen, Jane Sharp describes it thus: 'Man in the act of procreation is the agent and tiller and sower of the Ground, Woman is the Patient or Ground to be tilled, who brings Seed also as well as the Man to sow the ground with.'¹¹⁵ Therefore, when two men have sexual intercourse together, the active, creative seed is wasted, excluding the possibility of conception. However, as the male seed is not involved in sexual contact between women, although there is still no possibility of conception, the seed is not regarded as wasted in the same way: it is not the wasting of seed that has the possibility of creating new life. This differentiation is also reflected in Sinibaldus' reference to the requiring of an 'active and passive faculty' in copulation. Sexual intercourse between men involves the conjunction of two 'active' faculties, one of whom takes the 'passive' part. A man acts, therefore, against nature when he is the passive partner as well as in denying the possibility of procreation. However, two 'passive' faculties, two women, by definition cannot act upon each other. If there is no male 'instrument', there can be no active penetration of the female 'instrument', followed by ejaculation of male seed to produce conception. The phallo-centrism of early modern representations of sexual desire is thus based on a logical progression of ideas deriving from contemporary understanding of the physical body.

Seventeenth-century pornography thus has much to offer as a source for interpreting early modern understanding of homosexual sexual behaviour and should not be dismissed as mere 'titillation' for the male reader. It offers extensive discussion and description of such acts, which support some of the current historiography of homosexuality arising from analysis of other sources, but contradict others, such as Traub's account of early modern lesbian desire. Contemporary understanding of the relative importance of male and female seed in conception meant that, whereas male homosexual acts were unequivocally condemned and thought of as 'against nature', there was no corresponding unambiguous condemnation of sexual contact between women. The implicit homoeroticism of these texts also allows a variety of desiring positions for the reader, male or female, blurring any categorical marking of the texts as specifically

¹¹⁴ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 39. This passage suggests an Aristotelian view of conception, in which the male sperm is the active, formative seed.

¹¹⁵ Sharp, *The Midwives Book*, 33.

'for' either sex, and therefore undermining further any assumption that this pornography can be seen as reflecting and reinforcing a timeless misogynous discourse. Rather than viewing these texts as inconsistent and illogical, reflecting the ignorance of male authors (as Faderman and Ballaster have done), we can look at them as expressive of competing cultural discourses and/or as leaving space in the text for a multiplicity of identifications and pleasures for a variety of readers. Given that these are works of imagination, and the scenes described are fantasies of sexual encounters, they will never tell us what early modern women themselves thought about sexual desire between women. But they do suggest that the culture was not limited to interpreting sexual acts between women as resulting from either a physical abnormality or a desire to live as a man, contradicting the picture painted by early modern legal and medical discourses. Ahistoricizing ideas about the fantasy of lesbian sex working to alleviate male psychosexual anxieties offer another means of comprehending why pornography includes these scenes, but they ignore the cultural specificity of the texts, relying on assumptions about (male) authorial intention and an assumed male readership. Perhaps sex with another woman as a prelude to the heterosexual sexual intercourse of marriage was not so unusual, or inauthentic, that early modern women (and men) could not recognize and enjoy such representations whether they were accurate or not. The fact that Culpeper voices reservations about midwives rubbing a woman's genitals argues that this was a culture in which one woman touching another's 'privy parts' was recognized as sexual rather than medical and was neither unimaginable, unnameable, nor an unusual occurrence after all.

5

‘Erotopolis’: Voyeurism and the Illusion of Privacy

As is clear from the discussion of pornography, of what constitutes pornography and what distinguishes it from other kinds of representation, at the beginning of this book, there is much debate but little agreement. In this chapter I want to argue that a major constituent of any idea of the pornographic is the notion of the private, and specifically that it rests upon the idea that, while, on the one hand, bodies and sex are regarded as a legitimate public concern (the need to regulate and control them), their representation brings out into public view the specificity of the sexual body in action that is understood as requiring privacy, and that *should* take place out of sight. It is partly this constituent component that allows commentators both ancient and modern to regard the descriptions of bodies and sex in medical literature as pornographic: they bring descriptions of the sexual body into public space, opening them indiscriminately to the gaze of many, rather than reserving them to the realm of the private and personal. This was particularly a concern when medical books began to be written in, or translated into, the vernacular. In such texts the reader is cast as voyeur, observing what should not be observed, and this gives rise to the possibility of an experience of sexual pleasure through others, but without either the consent or the knowledge of those others. Part of the frisson of pornography, then, is the pleasure and shock of seeing something that ‘should’ remain hidden and private. Thus pornography requires an idea of the private so that it can be disrupted, and it is in this disrupted space that pleasure emerges. It is this understanding that both permeates reactions to early modern sexual representations, allowing contemporary understandings of the pornographic to encompass a wide range of material, and also gives rise to an aspect of this literature that is so pervasive that Robert Darnton identified it as *the* defining characteristic of pornography: voyeurism.¹ In both the narratives and the illustrations to these texts the reader is invited in not just to observe the sexual scenarios they describe or represent, but also to observe the pleasure of others who are described watching the action within the text. Looking at the sexual body and watching the sexual body in action is thus constructed as central to sexual pleasure, both as a sexual pleasure in itself

¹ Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers*, 72–3.

and as one that is an incitement to sexual action for the voyeur. These texts then legitimize both the pleasure of the reader in reading about sex, by acknowledging and stressing the pleasure of looking, *and* the incitement to sexual action that they may provide, as the reader is provoked, like Pepys, to masturbation, or to sexual intercourse, in the same way as are the voyeurs within the texts.

Voyeurism is an integral part of the pornographic. The representation of the voyeur within the text itself allows the narrator to describe to another sexual scenes that have been observed either deliberately or by chance, and mirrors the reader as voyeur enjoying the sexual content of the text. I have argued that a focus on the importance of looking at the sexual body in order to inspire desire, and as a means of knowing the body, can be detected in almost every work of every type, and in every theme from comedy and fertility to sexual flagellation and homosexuality. The theme of voyeurism presents much slapstick humour, as characters hide themselves in unlikely places or are unexpectedly revealed, but also much deliberate comic exploitation of illusions of privacy, as couples engage in sexual intercourse by subterfuge in very public places. Intimately bound up with the idea of voyeurism is that of privacy. Seventeenth-century pornographic literature plays with the ideas of privacy and publicity. In a society in which there was in actuality very little privacy, and where sexual acts often took place in public spaces, pornography offers the *illusion* of a private sexual world that we are not meant to see—but that is held up for us to see. The idea of a public/private split, of a private existence, allows a certain kind of literature to evolve. It is a literature that *plays* with the idea that sexual life takes place in private, and its emergence into the public sphere produces an erotic charge. It also plays with the notion of privacy itself and how it might be understood, so that, in a world of illicit sex, privacy is aligned with secrecy and hiding rather than with a specific place or category of spaces.

There has been much debate about whether or not there existed a concept of privacy in the early modern period, and when exactly such a concept emerged. In this chronology the eighteenth century is again the period generally credited with witnessing the significant shift from a culture in which there was little differentiation between public and private spheres to one in which a private life was both actively cultivated and significantly differentiated from 'public' life.² This account has been supported in recent years by feminist scholarship that has focused on the 'public' role of women in political life through their position at court and the power of patronage, and the participation of working women in the marketplace, in social welfare and relief.³ Despite a rhetoric that strongly argued

² See Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby (eds.), *A History of Private Life* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1989). For more recent debate on the issue, see Dario Castiglione and Lesley Sharpe (eds.), *Shifting the Boundaries: Transformation of the Languages of Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter, 1995).

³ See, e.g., Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Women in Politics', in Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge (eds.), *A History of Women: Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes* (Cambridge, Mass.,

that women's place was at home, within doors, in a private, domestic sphere, it has been amply demonstrated that early modern women participated in the public realms of politics, law, religion, and economic life.⁴ Amanda Vickery has argued that the organizing categories of public and private and separate spheres provide a useful framework for examining the lives of men and women, but have distinct shortcomings, not least because understanding what is meant by 'public' or 'private' at any time is open to misunderstanding.⁵ While it cannot be denied that women were generally excluded from the institutions of early modern power and economic life—as were most men—this did not prevent them from playing their part in a myriad of different ways in what can be seen as public life. However, the presence of large numbers of early modern women in public spaces and places of work, not to mention a public discursive presence of women as both subjects and authors of printed material, do not automatically argue for the collapse of any distinction between the public and the private. Neither does the presence of one sex in a space that is deemed more appropriate to the other necessarily contradict a rhetoric that identified one sphere as being more appropriate to one sex than the other. Space is clearly gendered: not only were women excluded from certain institutions and places, but they also created their own spaces—private and public—in which they pursued their own concerns, and areas of expertise, for example, in the rituals surrounding childbirth.⁶ However, more recently, it has been argued that earlier definitions of privacy, which relied on the separation of domestic life from political or economic life, and which looked at the evidence of use of domestic interiors, should be challenged. A concept of privacy did exist in the early modern period,

and London, 1993), 167–83; Sharon Kettering, 'The Patronage Power of Early Modern French Noblewomen', *Historical Journal*, 32/4 (1989), 817–41; Diane Willen, 'Women in the Public Sphere in Early Modern England: The Case of the Urban Working Poor', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 19/4 (Winter 1988), 559–75.

⁴ For an exposition of women's participation in politics and the law, see, e.g., Zemon Davis, 'Women in Politics'; Arlette Farge, 'Protesters Plain to See', in Zemon Davis and Farge (eds.), *A History of Women*, 489–505; Kettering, 'Patronage Power'. For their participation in religious movements, see, e.g., Keith Thomas, 'Women and the Civil War Sects', *Past & Present*, 13 (1955), 42–62; Diane Willen, 'Women and Religion in Early Modern England', in Sherrin Marshall (ed.), *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe: Public and Private Worlds* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1989), 140–65; Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England 1500–1750* (London and New York, 1993). On economic life and work, see Lindsey Charles and Lorna Duffin (eds.), *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial England* (London, 1985); Judith M. Bennett, 'Review Essay—"History that Stands Still": Women's Work in the European Past', *Feminist Studies*, 14/2 (Summer 1988), 269–83; and P. Earle, 'The Female Labour Market in London in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 42/3 (Aug. 1989), 328–52.

⁵ Amanda Vickery, 'Historiographical Review: Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal*, 36/2 (1993), 383–414. See also Linda K. Kerber, 'Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History', *Journal of American History*, 75 (1988), 9–39.

⁶ See, e.g., the discussion on the use of space in Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550–1720* (Oxford, 1998), 205–12.

but it was based upon different notions of what was private and what was public, and had more to do with concealment and preservation of reputation than with separation of 'private' affairs from 'public' business.⁷

The seventeenth century saw a rapid expansion in urban development and the growth of towns.⁸ London, in particular, had to cope with a big increase in its population during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, growing from around 200,000 in 1600 to about half a million by 1700, more than doubling during the seventeenth-century alone.⁹ This increase was due to migration from the countryside into the metropolis rather than to a rising birth rate or falling death rate, and the service sector grew correspondingly rapidly in the period.¹⁰ There was, therefore, a growing pressure on both domestic and public space, as both housing and street life became more crowded. The boundaries of the city pushed outwards towards the suburbs, and houses grew taller as living space within the city pushed upwards to make as much use as possible of the space available. In these cramped and overcrowded conditions privacy must have been very hard to come by, but this does not mean that it was neither desired nor sought.¹¹ These pornographic narratives represent a world in which the private spaces of others are constantly breached to expose publicly the sexual activity taking place within, both to others in the narratives, and to the reader. This does not mean that the public/private distinction collapses, as all that is private is made public.¹² Rather, it demonstrates both the contemporary understanding of a public/private distinction, and the requirement of this literature for a private world that can then be spied upon. Whether pornography is, or is not, at this time a variety of literature that is primarily read, or used, in private, it is a literature that requires the idea of the private and that expects that sexual pleasure, at least in part, derives from the vicarious and voyeuristic illusion of looking in on a private world.¹³

⁷ See Linda A. Pollock, 'Living on the Stage of the World: The Concept of Privacy among the Elite of Early Modern England', in Adrian Wilson (ed.), *Rethinking Social History: English Society 1570–1920 and its Interpretation* (Manchester and New York, 1993), 78–96.

⁸ See Jonathan Barry (ed.), *The Tudor and Stuart Town 1530–1688: A Reader in English Urban History* (London and New York, 1990); Peter Borsary, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town 1660–1770* (Oxford, 1989); Peter Clark (ed.), *The Early Modern Town: A Reader* (London, 1976); Peter Clark and Paul Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500–1700* (London, Oxford, and New York, 1976).

⁹ Paul Griffiths and Mark S. R. Jenner (eds.), *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London* (Manchester and New York, 2000), 2. See also Vanessa Harding, 'The Population of London, 1550–1700: A Review of the Published Evidence', *London Journal*, 15/2 (1990), 111–28, and Penelope Corfield, 'Urban Development in England and Wales in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in Barry (ed.), *The Tudor and Stuart Town*, 35–62, at 39.

¹⁰ Clark and Slack, *English Towns in Transition*, 'London', 62–81.

¹¹ See Pollock, 'Living on the Stage', 82.

¹² Martin Ingram argues that spying upon others was a deliberate act with legal purposes. See Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, 245.

¹³ Goulemot argues: 'The contradiction inherent in publicizing private and intimate behavior is even more striking in pornography than in autobiography, because reading pornography is by nature furtive and individual.' But this assumes a practice of reading that is entirely personal and private,

In this context two early seventeenth-century developments are worth mentioning briefly, both of which highlight an emerging interest in playing with illusion, in the public display of the private, and in the idea of hiding and revealing. The cabinet of curiosities, the early precursor to the museum, appeared in the sixteenth century and was used to display collections of unusual, rare, and curious objects. In the early seventeenth century cabinets were produced that incorporated in their design pictorial representations, and these included perspective or mirror anamorphoses. In a perspective anamorphosis the viewer sees the distorted picture regain its correct proportions when it is regarded from the appropriate aspect. The mirror anamorphosis can be perceived correctly only with the aid of either a cylindrical or a conical mirror. The first known representation of this type of anamorphosis is an engraving dated c.1625.¹⁴ These new techniques were employed to create cabinets incorporating allegorical images, which were generally representations of classical narratives on the theme of metamorphosis. Some cabinets also incorporated anamorphoses that were erotic in nature, retaining the classical literary theme, but representing a sexual encounter, often to do with Venus, the goddess of love. A good example from the mid-seventeenth century, which can be seen in the National Gallery in London, is Samuel van Hooogstraaten's cabinet, dating c.1655–60, 'A Peepshow with Views of the Interior of a Dutch House'. Through two peepholes in the sides two different views of the interior of the house can be seen. On the top of the cabinet is an anamorphic painting of a naked Venus in bed with Cupid.¹⁵ Using this technique, images were produced that could be spied upon to reveal a scene of erotic delight for the viewer, who either knew where and how to look, or who took time and effort to examine the cabinet closely, reproducing the voyeuristic impulse to look.¹⁶ Pictures of this nature are referred to in *The Whores Rhetorick*, bringing new techniques of erotic representation and pornography together in a shared representation of the secrets of sex.

while at this time it is possible that pornographic texts were also consumed in public spaces in a continuation of an oral culture in which texts would be read aloud in a group setting. Jean-Marie Goulemot, 'Literary Practices: Publishing the Private', in Roger Chartier (ed.), *A History of Private Life: Passions of the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1986; repr. 1989), 362–95.

¹⁴ The technique of distortion known as anamorphosis seems to have been popular in the sixteenth century and can be found in a number of paintings. Holbein used it to conceal a skull in his painting *The Ambassadors*, dated 1533. William Scrots employed it in a portrait of the young Edward VI in 1546. See Susan Foister, Ashok Roy, and Martin Wyld, *Holbein's Ambassadors* (London, 1997). The principles of the mirror anamorphosis were first described in a 1630 publication, *Perspective cylindrique et conique*, by the French mathematician Sieur de Vaulezard. See Hans-Olof Boström, 'Philipp Hainhofer and Gustavus Adolphus's Kunstschränk in Uppsala', in Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor (eds.), *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Oxford, 1985), 90–101.

¹⁵ See Neil MacLaren, *The Dutch School 1600–1900*, rev. and expanded by Christopher Brown (London, 1991), 203–6, and plates 176(a–i); also Christopher Baker and Tom Henry, *The National Gallery Complete Illustrated Catalogue* (London, 1995), 321.

¹⁶ It should be noted here that Hooogstraaten's interior reveals scenes of an orderly Dutch household to the viewer who peeps into the cabinet, rather than scenes of an erotic nature.

A further scientific development from the same period is the invention of the telescope during the first decade of the seventeenth century, which allowed distant objects, or indeed people, to be spied on from afar.¹⁷ Significantly, a telescope is included in a collection of objects in a cabinet of curiosities dating from 1617. Furthermore, the term ‘cabinet of curiosities’ has erotic resonance in itself: ‘cabinet’ becomes a metaphor for the female sexual parts, as most obviously presented in the subtitle to *Rare Verities—The Cabinet of Venus Unlocked, and her Secrets Laid Open*; while ‘curious’ is synonymous with the sexual as signalled in ‘curious Discourses’ and ‘curious Collection’, suggesting the assembly and display of erotic secrets.¹⁸ Advertisements for seventeenth-century pornographic texts such as *The School of Venus* continued to deploy the word ‘curious’ in descriptions of the accompanying prints well into the eighteenth century.¹⁹ The early seventeenth-century manufacturers—and purchasers—of these cabinets demonstrate an interest in ideas about hiding and revealing, in publicly exposing the private, and in seeing without being seen, employing new scientific techniques whose relevance and application to the erotic were immediately apprehended and applied. These ideas, and their erotic potential, receive further exploration in the pornographic literature of the period.

Historians have seen the seventeenth century as bordering a shift from a more communal, ‘public’ style of living to a more private, confined, inward-looking sensibility, discernible from the eighteenth century. The religious revolutions that fostered the requirement for personal, private religious experience and individual spiritual development in turn encouraged the growth of a more interior, individual sense of self. The development of Cartesian philosophy emphasized the primacy of the self-determining individual. Out of these conceptions of the individual came the notion of a private existence, and with it a desire for personal privacy.²⁰ In this private life of the individual, the pleasures of reading pornography, and of masturbation (which is seen as necessarily accompanying such reading), are part and parcel of an interior life that is hidden from others and that yet gives the individual the illusion of looking in on another’s private moment. The reading of pornography requires, as Goulemot says, ‘an attentiveness to the self and to the autarchy of pleasure’.²¹

¹⁷ See Albert van Helden, ‘The Invention of the Telescope’, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 67/4 (1977). Also Henry King, *The History of the Telescope* (London, 1955).

¹⁸ See Ch. 1 for the titles advertised in Hicks’s *Oxford Drollery* in 1679 –e.g. ‘Rome Exactly Described, or a Relation of the Present State of that Court . . . in Two Curious Discourses . . .’. This advertisement also lists a version of *Rare Verities* (1658) as ‘Venus Cabinet Unlocked, and Natures Chief Miracles Laid Open, being a Curious Collection out of the Two Eminent Physicians Levinus Lemnius and Sinibaldus, made English by R. Miller M.D.’.

¹⁹ See Foxon, *Libertine Literature*, 3.

²⁰ See Roy Porter (ed.), *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present* (London and New York, 1997); Greenblatt, ‘Fiction and Friction’; and Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body*.

²¹ Goulemot, *Forbidden Texts*, 57.

In the later seventeenth century such a congruence of privacy and the pornographic is exemplified by the figure of Samuel Pepys, who embodies this new private self in multiple ways. In an act of private self-reflection he records his purchase and subsequent private reading of the French 'mighty lewd book' *The School of Venus*, together with the (sexual) effect it has on him, his reflection on that reading and accompanying behaviour (masturbation to orgasm and ejaculation), and the ensuing action he took to prevent discovery of what had taken place in private (the burning of the book).²² It is impossible to know how typical a reader Pepys may have been, given that his diary is a rare extant recording of the reading of pornographic material from this time. In a period when literacy levels were still low, and when many books and pamphlets were consumed in 'public', being read out to others by someone who was able to read, it is possible to speculate that such an example of private consumption and pleasure may have been untypical, despite Goulemot's assertion that 'there is nothing less suited to the practice of reading out loud than the erotic novel, a genre that demands solitude and silence'.²³ There is indirect evidence that suggests that such books were not always read alone, in private. Emma Donoghue has argued that women became acquainted with such works through being read to, and in Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds* there is a reference to 'two young wenches, the eldest not above twelve, reading the beastly, bawdy translated book called *the Schoole of Women*', indicating shared reading.²⁴

The concept of privacy at this time is a complex and shifting one. Houses, especially in the cramped and crowded confines of the city, were fragile and closely crammed together in narrow streets and alleys, where thin walls or partitions, open doors and windows, and holes in walls, doors and ceilings allowed others to hear and to see what might take place in supposedly private space. Laura Gowing in her essay on 'Women and Social Space, 1560–1640' illustrates how the closely packed houses of London allowed neighbours to testify in court about overheard conversations and disputes, such as Agnes Franklin in 1615, who, together with a group of other women gathered in an upstairs room of her house, overheard the minister Henry Smith call Eleanor Hedge a whore: she was standing inside her house overlooking his yard, where he was standing looking

²² Pepys, *Diary*, ix. 21, 57–9, entries for 13 Jan., 8 and 9 Feb. 1668. Numerous scholars have examined or used this particular passage from Pepys's diary. For a particularly interesting and thorough discussion in relation to the issue of privacy and sexuality, see James Grantham Turner, 'Pepys and the Private Parts of Monarchy', in MacLean (ed.), *Culture and Society in the Stuart Restoration*, 95–110.

²³ Goulemot, *Forbidden Texts*, 125. On literacy and reading, see, e.g., Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*; Spufford, *Small Books* and 'First Steps in Literacy'; Barry, 'Literacy and Literature in Popular Culture', 69–94.

²⁴ Donoghue, *Passions between Women*, 10–24; Ravenscroft, *The London Cuckolds*, 2; also cited in Foxon, *Libertine Literature*, 6. The reference is to Chorier's *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*: the French version, *L'Académie des dames*, was translated into English as *The School of Women*.

in at her.²⁵ Commercial and living spaces were not necessarily separated, or were at least in such close proximity that there was no clear distinction between them. What took place indoors was subject to legitimate scrutiny by neighbours and the community, whether it might be the regulation of domestic violence or of sexual behaviour. However, there were clearly boundaries: neighbours would not necessarily intervene in domestic disputes unless requested, and eavesdropping was prosecuted.²⁶ Through the diaries of Pepys we can glimpse these contradictions, ambiguities, and ambivalences of everyday life. On the one hand, we read how Pepys privately read *The School of Venus*, but recorded this reading in code to try and ensure the privacy of the actions that he revealed in his diary; on the other, he recorded sexually stimulating himself in a great crowd of people in the Queen's Chapel on Christmas Eve.²⁷ Whether this episode is fact or fantasy, there is clearly an eroticism in the idea of the pursuit of private sexual pleasure in a public place—and a sacred place at a sacred time—and in relation to a public figure, the Queen (Pepys records on a previous occasion 'sporting in my fancy with the Queen').²⁸ The relation of the sexual to the private is thus ambiguous and had shifting meaning for both early modern men and women.

In London and other cities, houses and shops were spaces whose areas of public access and private use did not have firm boundaries and were permeable. Servants and apprentices were extra members of a household with access to both 'private' house space and 'public' shop or workshop space. Moreover, the availability of lodging houses that catered to both a static and a longer-term permanent residential population meant that 'private' spaces were compromised and more open to the comings and goings of others. Not even bedchambers were 'private' from others who lived and worked in the household such as apprentices and servants, who might see nothing odd about being asked into what today we would consider to be a private space. The relation of stories of seduction involving both mistress with manservant and master with maidservant are commonplace in this literature, where a servant is unsuspectingly called into a bedchamber for an ostensibly legitimate purpose. For example, in Dunton's *The Night-Walker*, the story is told of a mistress who

took an opportunity when every body was from home but she and I, on a certain Holiday, to call me up to her Bedchamber, where I found her sate on her Bed-side, and ordering me to shut the Door, she call'd me to sit down by her, and help her to *read a Letter*, which as soon as I had done, she catch'd me round the Neck all of a sudden, and *kissing*

²⁵ Cited in Laura Gowing, "The Freedom of the Streets": Women and Social Space, 1560–1640', in Griffiths and Jenner (eds.), *Londinopolis*, 136.

²⁶ See Amussen, "Being Stirred to Much Unquietness"; Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, esp. ch. 6; and Leneman, "A Tyrant and Tormentor".

²⁷ Pepys, *Diary*, ed. Latham and Matthews, viii. 588, entry for 24 Dec. 1667. This is not the only occasion that Pepys recorded sexual thoughts and actions in church. See, e.g., the entries for 18 Aug. 1667 and 3 May 1668.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, iv. 232, entry for 15 July 1663.

me with extraordinary Passion, utter'd many soft expressions, telling me how tenderly she lov'd me, &c.²⁹

The text thus plays with the reader's suspicion of what is likely to ensue (seduction in a private, sexualized space), while presenting the naïve, unsuspecting attitude of the character in the narrative, who is not suspicious at having access to areas of the 'private' household. Bernard Capp's work on the poet Michael Drayton and the world of the seventeenth-century lodging house reveals how little privacy was either available, or indeed respected, in seventeenth-century dwellings. We hear how conversations and quarrels were not only overheard, but also, on occasions, deliberately eavesdropped upon.³⁰ Both servants and other lodgers would be privy to whatever went on in the house. We can see this lack of privacy in other cases about sexual behaviour that came to court, providing a rich source of sexual titillation for those who were able to read court reports, or who heard them read aloud. For example, the odd cases of bestiality that are reported from this period (1677, 1682, and 1704) all rely on the testimony of witnesses who claimed to have seen the events take place.³¹ In the later case the witness claims to have seen the act through a crack in the ceiling:

The Evidence against her was a Girl, who lived in a Room one pair of Stairs in the same House where the Prisoner liv'd, who deposed, That there being a Hole in the Floor, and the Cieling broken through, whereby she could see into the Prisoner's Room, at Night about 8 or 9 a Clock, she being above Stairs, and there being a Light in the Prisoner's Room, she saw the Prisoner sitting in a Chair by the Fire-side, leaning backwards; and that she took the Dog to her, who she said acted to her as with a Bitch.³²

In his work on peasants and illicit sex in Somerset, Quaife suggests that policing the sexual conduct of others by following and spying on them was a quite usual event.³³ If people suspected that illicit sex was taking place, they

²⁹ Dunton, *The Night-Walker* (Nov. 1696), 19.

³⁰ Bernard Capp, 'The Poet and the Bawdy Court: Michael Drayton and the Lodging-House World in Early Stuart London', *Seventeenth Century*, 10/1 (Spring 1995), 27–37, 33. See also Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, esp. 187–92; David Underdown, *Fire from Heaven: Life in an English Town in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1992), 65–71; and Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*.

³¹ *News from Tybourn: Being an Account of the Confession and Execution of the Woman Condemned for Committing that Horrid Sin of Buggery with a Dog, which was also Hanged on a Tree by her* (London, 1677); *The Tryal, &c. of Mary Price* (1704), in *A Compleat Collection of Remarkable Tryals*, ii (London, 1718), 94–5; *Ravillac Redivivus . . . To which is Annexed, an Account of the Tryal of that Most Wicked Pharisee Major Thomas Weir, who was Executed for Adultery, Incest and Bestiality* (London, 1682). The witness in this case was not believed and the Major escaped punishment at the time that the incident originally took place. See also *The Quakers Shaken, Or, A Warning against Quaking* (London, 1655), which includes 'A Relation of a Horrid Buggery Committed by Hugh Bisbrown, a Quaker, with a Mare' (pp. 20–1). The story is supported by two witnesses, who claim to have seen the act taking place in the summer of 1653.

³² *The Tryal, &c. of Mary Price*, 94–5.

³³ Quaife, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives*. Again, see also Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, and Underdown, *Fire from Heaven*.

would not hesitate to go and look for themselves, or even to go and fetch others as additional witnesses to sexual conduct. For example:

One householder left two visitors alone in his hall chamber while he did some shopping. Returning, perhaps earlier than expected, he sensed something was amiss, grabbed the first person who passed his door, and pulled her into his entry. From there both could see 'Joan Hix lying upon a form on her back with her clothes cast up being all naked unto her girdle and . . . John Eddicot the elder lying along upon his belly on her between her legs with his breeches down'.³⁴

Spying on others engaged in sexual intercourse, it is suggested, was an entirely normal mode of conduct, especially in the policing of the sexual conduct of the community. It was through such behaviour that unlawful intercourse was apprehended.

Thus we also find a preoccupation with futile efforts to safeguard 'private' spaces so that the acts within them could remain private, unseen, and unapprehended. The literature about Dona Britanica Hollandia, the famous bawd of the South Bank near Blackfriars bridge, whose house became synonymous with a brothel in the seventeenth century as Holland's Leaguer, describes how she searched for a house that she could defend (and did) against any attack, whether it was apprentices on their habitual Shrove Tuesday rampage against bawdy houses, or the law come to arrest her for running a disorderly house.³⁵ The frontispiece (see Figure 7) to Nicholas Goodman's *Hollands Leaguer* (1632), shows the formidable defences of the house surrounded by a moat, safeguarding the amorous activities of those within.³⁶ In the same way as in *Venus in the Cloister* the physical boundaries of the convent are penetrated, metaphorically echoing the penetration of the female bodies within, the description of this house becomes a metaphor for the female sexual body, which can be penetrated by those who are allowed across the bridge: 'she must have many *Meanders*, and many passages, many holes, and many hides, *deeds of darknesse* doe ever require many darke corners'.³⁷ The private house itself, however well guarded and detached from others, is still not safe from the gaze of others, as its interior spaces are not yet clearly defined; dark spaces must yet be sought out to ensure privacy and secrecy for illicit sex.

While not showing naked bodies or the sexual act, the picture is full of sexual suggestion and erotic implication. The geese on the river symbolize the prostitutes within the house, recalling 'Winchester geese', or prostitutes plying their trade in the borough of Southwark on land held by the Bishop of Winchester.³⁸ A woman displayed in all her finery, including a splendid feather on her cap, stands displaying herself in front of the house. In an arbour in the garden a couple sit

³⁴ Quaife, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives*, 52.

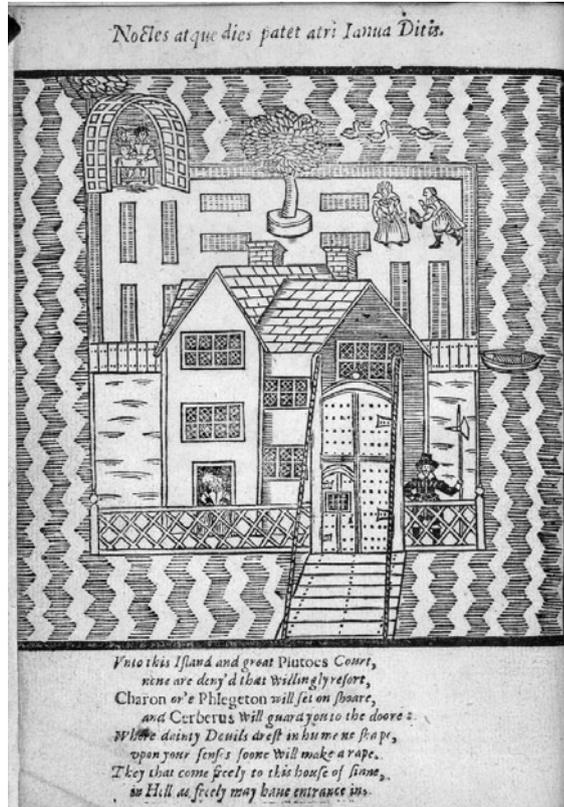
³⁵ See Nickie Roberts, *Whores in History: Prostitution in Western Society* (London, 1992), 125, and Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 73.

³⁶ Goodman, *Hollands Leaguer*, frontispiece.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, sig. D.

³⁸ See Richards, *Sex, Dissidence and Damnation*, 121.

Fig. 7. Frontispiece to Nicholas Goodman's *Hollands Leaguer: Or An Historical Discourse of the Life and Actions of Dona Britanica Hollandia the Arch Mistris of the Wicked Women of Eutopia* (1632), BL G.3282. By permission of the British Library.



together, the woman sitting close, facing the man, her legs beneath his as they would be in the act of sexual intercourse. A wine cup is placed on the table in front of the man, both the necessary prelude to sexual activity in a bawdy house and the cup a symbol of the vagina. Another couple are standing in the garden, the man clearly making some sort of advance towards the woman, with his hat doffed. A tree thrusts itself upwards, with dense rich foliage spreading out at the top, in the exact centre of the garden (a common metaphor for the vagina in both pornographic and medical books), suggesting the erect, ejaculating penis. At the bottom right of the picture, the man who stands upright and alert guarding the bridge and the entrance to the house, carries a pike that also stands rigidly upright, pointing towards the empty boat, moored to one side. Both again, obvious metaphors for penis and vagina.

Pornography naturalizes the desire to look and to watch, and works upon the assumption that looking at, or reading about, not only the body, but more particularly the body's sexual parts and the body in sexual motion, is inherently sexually arousing for the viewer or reader. The act of voyeurism that is represented

by the reader reading the pornographic or erotic text, and by the description of sometimes layer upon layer of watchers within the text itself, thus becomes an entirely normal and natural phenomenon: it is a quite usual part of sexual life. Although I argue that this is a body-centric culture in which physical rather than psychological explanations for physical phenomena are given, and that we must pay attention to these contemporary understandings if we are to understand the material, the scopophilia that is so deeply embedded in these texts (literary and pictorial) is another point at which seventeenth-century understanding of desire and modern Freudian psychoanalytic theory converge. Freud argues that, like touching, 'visual impressions remain the most frequent pathway along which libidinal excitation is aroused', and 'it is usual for most normal people to linger to some extent over the intermediate sexual aim of a looking that has a sexual tinge to it'.³⁹ This is an idea frequently voiced by characters in the pornography of this period, and often quite lyrically, as does Susanne in *The School of Venus*: 'How enjoyable, too, to see oneself naked before the eyes of a lover and, what's more, to cause astonishment and confusion by a sight that should later on cause nothing but delight.'⁴⁰ The pleasure of looking and its role in the excitation of physical desire are reflected also in the characters' discussion of erotic pictures, and the description of their reaction to looking upon such pictures: 'These obscene Images do produce marvellous effects towards the propagation of Love, they insinuate at every pore of the Eye an extravagant desire to gratifie the sensitive appetite, they spur Men on by an irresistable impulse toward the venereal Bed.'⁴¹

These elements are all combined in the frontispiece to the 1718 edition of Meibomius' *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs* (see Figure 3), in which there is an erotic picture hung upon the wall beside the bed, a woman sitting upon the bed with her clothing loosened, watching a man, presumably her lover, being birched to provoke his desire. The man is turned towards the woman on the bed, so that he is watching her watching him, and there are also two figures at the window looking in at the scene. The perspective of the viewer of this engraving allows him or her to see all: the participants in the sexual drama unfolding, the erotic painting on the wall, and the voyeurs at the window. The uncovering of the body, and especially the sexual parts of the body, has a purpose beyond the mere facilitating of access for penetrative sexual intercourse. Knowledge of the sexual body derives not only from the experience of intimate contact with another body, but also from the viewing of that body. Intimately bound up with the desire for sexual contact with another body is the desire to look upon the body in order to desire it.⁴²

³⁹ Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', 69.

⁴⁰ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 106.

⁴¹ Philo-Puttanus, *The Whores Rhetorick*, 170. See Ch. 7 for a discussion of images.

⁴² 'The progressive concealment of the body which goes along with civilization keeps sexual curiosity awake. This curiosity seeks to complete the sexual object by revealing its hidden parts'; Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', 69.

As the genre of pornographic literature developed over time, it became a convention that part of a young girl's initiation into sexual knowledge was the arousal of her desire for the full physical experience of heterosexual intercourse by watching another couple in such enjoyment. In *The School of Venus*, for example, this desire is aroused in the young, inexperienced, innocent girl through the description by the older, experienced young woman of all the varieties of sexual practice that a couple may engage in together. Fanchon tells Susanne: 'You know, love, I think I should rather like to try this thing, in the way you've just described. I'm quite sure I should get the greatest possible enjoyment out of it.'⁴³ Fanchon's response both legitimizes and reflects the expected reaction of the reader, whose desire is also likely to be provoked by the narrative. By the time Cleland published *Fanny Hill* in 1749, it had become a staple of Fanny's sexual initiation that she is shown a place from which she can watch others in the act of love, which leads to her sexual arousal and the desire for personal sexual experience.⁴⁴

In psychoanalytic theory voyeurism and exhibitionism are two sides of the same coin: the active and passive forms of scopophilia, the drive to look.⁴⁵ In thinking about pornography it is almost always voyeurism that is the subject of any analysis, as the act of reading or looking at a pornographic image is seen as inherently a voyeuristic act. And, given that the consumer of pornography is usually constructed as male, the act of voyeurism, as the active component of scopophilia, conforms to the general association of voyeurism with masculinity. This interpretation has given rise to work on the gaze in film theory and, most particularly, to Laura Mulvey's seminal work on the encoding of the gaze as male.⁴⁶ However, what we find in seventeenth-century pornographic literature is a split where the *assumed* reader is frequently constructed by the author as female, but the *actual* reader is more likely to have been male.⁴⁷ Similarly, within the texts themselves, the watcher who describes the action for the reader is usually female. This complicates the production of desire and fantasy, if, as Goulemot suggests, 'this witness is the very figure by which the reader's own desire is written into the text'.⁴⁸ If the reader is indeed male, his desire is written through a woman: the active desiring position in the text is female.

But not only does Mulvey's account (and feminist criticism of pornography as a male genre) erase any possibility of an active female desiring position; it also ignores representation of the male body as an object of erotic desire.⁴⁹ Both

⁴³ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 86.

⁴⁴ Cleland, *Fanny Hill*, 35–8.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Grosz, 'voyeurism/exhibitionism/the gaze', in Elizabeth Wright (ed.), *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary* (Oxford, 1992), 447–50.

⁴⁶ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16/3 (Autumn 1975), 6–18.

⁴⁷ E.g., *The Whores Rhetorick*, *The School of Venus*, and *Venus in the Cloister* are all dedicated to women. *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigee* purports to be written by a young woman.

⁴⁸ Goulemot, *Forbidden Texts*, 49.

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment (eds.), *The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture* (London, 1988); Mary Ann Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator', *Screen*, 23/3–4 (Sept.–Oct. 1982), 74–87, and Doane, 'Masquerade

these omissions are of great relevance to the works discussed here. As we have seen in Chapter 2, a significant aspect of the three most explicit works of sexual literature in circulation in the seventeenth century, and to a lesser extent in other works that do not contain such detailed descriptions of the sexual body, is the focus on the male characters not only as desiring and active subjects but also as the passive focus of female desire and the female gaze. This characteristic of these works suggests the further problematizing of an analysis that structures the female protagonist(s) as objectified, passive, and masochistic, as we encounter a very explicitly active female gaze.⁵⁰

There are two other issues here that work to undermine a modern feminist interpretation of pornography that constructs it as the extreme example of an active male/passive female gaze: the format of a large number of these seventeenth-century texts, and the construction of early modern women as innately more lustful than men. The format employed in this early erotic literature is, more often than not, that of two women (who are often but not always prostitutes) talking together, describing what they see, or have seen, both as actors in a sexual drama, or as hidden viewers of scenes of sexual encounters.⁵¹ This convention of necessity puts the feminine viewpoint in the active position.⁵² Modern feminist interpretations of the representation of women in pornography as always eager and willing for sex imagine an ahistorical misogyny in which women have no agency and are complicit in their sexual exploitation by an aggressive male sexual rapaciousness. However, this interpretation ignores other more historically and culturally specific explanations, such as the early modern construction of woman as the most sexually appetitive of the sexes. In a world in which women are understood to be the more easily provoked to lust and lechery, and to be more demanding sexually, it would be seen as entirely 'natural' that a woman would be drawn to watch scenes of sexual activity.⁵³ Or, indeed, that she would actively seek them out, as does the nun in *Venus in the Cloister* who makes a hole through which she may spy upon the sexual activity of another nun and the male religious who visits her.⁵⁴ As the more lustful, women are more likely to be concerned with not only 'the conversation of the sexes' but also the conversation of sex.

Reconsidered: Further Thoughts on the Female Spectator', *Discourse*, 11/1 (Fall–Winter, 1988–9), 42–54; E. Ann Kaplan, 'Is the Gaze Male?', in Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (eds.), *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York, 1983), 309–27.

⁵⁰ See also Mourão's analysis of Chorier in Mourão, 'The Representation of Female Desire', 593–5.

⁵¹ See Wagner, *Eros Revived*, esp. 201–69.

⁵² The convention of representation of prostitutes and their lives offers an acceptable, or at least understandable, means of talking about sexual matters. The discussion of sex is appropriate to those whose business it is.

⁵³ Pornography in this period makes frequent references to female historical and fictional characters, such as Messalina, who personified excessive female lust. See, e.g., Head, *The Canting Academy* (1674), 165–6; Dunton, *The Night-Walker* (Feb. 1697), 9–10; *The Comforts of Whoreing*, 12; *The Practical Part of Love*, 71.

⁵⁴ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 37–42.

It was a common preoccupation of early modern discourse that when women come together they talk of sex.⁵⁵ Thus the most usual format for pornographic literature at this time is that of the whore dialogue, where two (or more) women who are usually prostitutes discuss sexual matters.

The position of the female figure as voyeur within these texts (and as a 'natural' voyeur, who both seeks opportunities to watch and takes opportunities serendipitously encountered) offers the possibility of an active, desiring female gaze, which may have given legitimacy to women readers of the literature, however few in numbers: a woman may both watch and desire.⁵⁶ For those women who may have read these texts, there is therefore the possibility of many different identifications and desiring positions, both active and passive, as characters engaged in the action of the narrative, as exhibitionist, or as voyeur. This multiplicity of viewpoints and possible identifications is particularly remarkable in the French work *Venus in the Cloister*, where frequently viewer is piled upon viewer, so that not only do the characters engaged in sexual action gaze upon each other, but they in turn are watched by others who are spying on their encounter. These spies are in their turn seen, and watched, by yet another character (or characters), who describes the scene she has viewed to another. This in turn allows the reader to peep in at the action. This version of the convent novel allows the description of a scenario where, because of the physical obstacles to close contact necessitated by the rules of the convent, the main component of the sexual action is looking rather than touching. The characters expose their sexual parts to each other, and their pleasure consists in gazing upon each other's 'privy parts'.

Thus scopophilia is straightaway made the central and most important sexual pleasure of the text, reflecting the pleasure of the reader. But the author does not stop at describing the pleasures of sight for the protagonists, he also emphasizes the point by describing the pleasure of those watching this primary scene, and that of those watching these watchers, and so on. Thus voyeuristic pleasure is extended and increased by describing the pleasure of seeing the pleasure of looking:

This was the fatal Moment to them both, and what our Spies desired, who contemplated with an extraordinary Satisfaction the most beautiful Parts of the naked Body of their Companion, which the Father discovered to their View, and handled with the Transports of a furious Lover. One while they admired one Part, then another, according as the officious Father turned and changed the Situation of his Paramour; so that while he considered her before, he exposed her Posteriors to their View, for her Petticoats on both Sides were taken up as high as her Girdle.⁵⁷

The description of the female watchers experiencing 'an extraordinary Satisfaction' as they gazed upon the naked body of one of their Sisters suggests

⁵⁵ Linda Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Woman-kind, 1540–1620* (Urbana, Ill., and Chicago, 1984), 236. In *The Practical Part of Love* there is a scene in which a group of young women get together in the evenings to talk about their sweethearts and to tell each other bawdy stories, one of which is later related, (pp. 58–67).

⁵⁶ See Ch. 1 on readership.

⁵⁷ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 41–2.

the achievement of orgasm from watching alone. As we saw in the previous chapter, the text suggests many possible identifications and desiring viewpoints to the reader, mixing up heterosexual and homosexual positions and filtering the reader's response through the lens of female desire for another woman. Unlike Dunton's *The Night-Walker*, which structures a narrative very much from the male viewpoint, even when giving a female voice within the text, *Venus in the Cloister* offers a much more complex and shifting view to the reader. These are not narratives that necessarily construct the female part as a passive recipient of male sexual desire, either in the sense of being victims of a predatory male sexuality, or of being the object only of a *male* desire. There is space in these texts for women as active desiring subjects who desire both men and other women, but also as the objects of male *and* female desire. Similarly, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the text offers a space for male homoerotic desire. The descriptions of voyeuristic pleasure in these texts thus offer a complex and shifting set of identifications to the reader complicating any straightforward reading of the text based on gendered assumptions.

There is no suggestion in this literature that this kind of voyeurism is in any way pathologized at this time. Rather, the viewing of sexual encounters and the sexual parts is presented as a part of everyday life, which is reflected in the casual way that others overhear and spy on encounters taking place elsewhere, or are described as being in the room when sexual intercourse takes place. In *The Crafty Whore* Thais narrates a story:

It was my hap to be in the roome in which they were to be in action, but I could not choose but smile at a jeast she put upon him: It was thus, just as he had planted his peece to shoot her between wind and water, it seems she had seen some defect, whereupon said she, poepe Mr Gunner your Linstock is too short, and therefore I feare you will hardly give fire without burning your fingers.⁵⁸

The presence of another watching the action also gives the opportunity for the later relation of the story to another, and to turn it into a comic event. It is rare that we find group sex or the orgy described, but rather a world in which it is not unusual for there to be other people present when sexual activity took place.⁵⁹ Sometimes these other characters are merely present in the room and take no part or interest in the action; sometimes they just watch; sometimes they physically engage with what is taking place and lend a helping hand, or keep watch for others who may come and discover what is taking place. In an engraving from a Latin edition of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* dated c.1690 (see Figure 8), those

⁵⁸ *The Crafty Whore*, 83.

⁵⁹ Chorier's *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* seems to be the sole pornographic text from this period in which there are instances of both group sexual intercourse and serial intercourse by a group of men who take it in turns to have sex with the woman, although there are occasional humorous stories that include a man with two or more prostitutes. See, e.g., Spenser, *A Strange and True Conference between Two Notorious Bawds*, 5. There are illustrations of such scenes in the Latin edition of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* dated c.1690 from which some of the illustrations in this chapter have been taken.



Fig. 8. Engraving (plate number 5) from a Latin edition of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* (c.1690), BL PC.30.i.10. By permission of the British Library.

present either point out the action to a companion, just look, give a helping push to the couple on the swing, or drink a toast to them. As we have seen in a previous chapter, Lawrence Stone has argued that the reading of pornography may have influenced the behaviour of a group of people in Norwich in the early eighteenth century, whose group sexual activities included voyeurism, exhibiting the ‘privy parts’, and acts of sexual intercourse between couples in the same room.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Stone argues that contemporary pornography may have influenced their actions because their choice of sexual activities reflected the sexual behaviour described in early pornographic texts—group sex and flagellation—and specifically omitted sexual acts against which there were

The short tale narrated by Thais in *The Crafty Whore* quoted above illustrates how authors used the figure of the voyeur, not just as the means of presenting a story, but also for humorous effect, as they turn it into a joke or comic tale. This technique is used frequently in other similar prostitutional texts such as *The Wandring Whore* and *A Strange and True Conference between Two Notorious Bawds*. In *The Wandring Whore* the characters relate stories about the sexual encounters they have seen, such as this told by Francion:

I remember how *Jone Harman* a running baud, and *Nan. Robinson* a common whore, served a Sea Captain as he walked through Pye-corner neer Smith-field . . . they got him into a pimping-house . . . drinking Sack very merrily and feeling the whores whibb-bobs one after the other, till they drove a bargain to play at heave-and-shove, as if't had been on ship-board, the running baud standing Centinel and door-keeper to secure them in their sporting from apprehension and interruption; whereupon he unhasp't his breeches, took up her petticoates, smock and all, falling on to board this pinnace, which the baud seeing in their postures of naked legs and bare breeches, she cover'd them over with her apron, pretending an act of modesty . . .⁶¹

The author here plays with the idea of privacy, with two characters attempting to ensure the privacy of those engaging in sexual intercourse by standing guard at the door, but their presence draws attention to the fact that privacy does not necessarily mean being alone and unseen. The attempt to conceal the sexual parts and the sex act at the end of the story paradoxically reveals and allows explicit description of that which the author suggests ought to remain hidden.

But the most notable, and comic, instance of public sex occurs in *The School of Venus*, when Fanchon describes how she and Robinet complete an act of sexual intercourse while in a room full of people, as she sits upon his knee, with the providential assistance of a hole which has been accidentally burnt in her petticoat:

He found that the place where a hole was needed was just where the fire had burnt the petticoat, for which my mother had scolded me so severely. He whispered this to me at once and, without wasting a minute, he lifted my shift and pushed his weapon through the hole so that it slid right between my thighs. I sat on his lap as best I could and arranged myself so that it entered half way. We remained like this for a long time without going further because he did not dare to excite me too vigorously. Nevertheless, helping himself as best he could and always pressing forward against me with his rump, he ensured that those around us saw nothing of what he was doing to me.⁶²

strict moral prescriptions: "There is no oral or anal sex, no lesbianism, no male homosexuality." However, although there is very little description of male homosexual acts in seventeenth-century pornography, and very little of what might be interpreted as oral sex, there is plenty of description of female homosexual acts from touching and kissing to sexual intercourse that results in orgasm, and some anal sex between men and women, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Stone, "Libertine Sexuality in Post-Restoration England".

⁶¹ Garfield, *The Wandring Whore*, 3 (1660), 6.

⁶² Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 136.

The joke here must be a tease on the part of the author: is it at all realistic that a young, unmarried girl of 16, closely chaperoned in company, could be penetrated by a lover through a providential hole burnt in her petticoat, in a room full of people, without anybody being aware of it? Just as the characters in the book see how far they can go in public in the pursuit of their mutual, secret, sexual pleasure, so the author pushes the boundaries of illusion as far as he can, teasing the reader to suspend belief in pursuit of erotic pleasure. But the text also places the reader in the position of privileged voyeur, able to see without being seen to see, and hence in possession both of a secret and of a secret pleasure.

A similar ruse is described in *The Wandring Whore*: 'I knew a person of great beauty and quality, who whilst she was playing a game at Whisk or Pickquet with her husband, a Gentleman got her upon his knee, and plaid a game at Tick-tack, on one side of the table before her husbands face, without being discovered.'⁶³ While the text ostensibly has the cuckolded husband as the butt of the joke, it also plays with the reader, who is put in the position of privileged viewer (or voyeur) and allowed to 'see' the deception while simultaneously being asked to believe that no one else in the scene is able to detect what is happening. But was the narrator of this story present at the event and hence saw it too, or did she only learn of it afterwards, having been let in on the secret by the 'person of great beauty and quality'? Here privacy in early modern England is aligned with secrecy rather than with space. The joke may also be that in a society in which, as Gowing points out, 'the word "private" was frequently associated with illicit sex; locking a door was good ground for suspicion', illicit sex paradoxically might have been less likely to have been suspected when it took place in public.⁶⁴ Private in this case equals suspicious. This might be one possible inference from the illustration in Figure 9: is the person sitting at the table oblivious that the couple at the end of the table are engaged in sexual intercourse, or deliberately paying it no attention as it is of no interest, perhaps because he had himself procured the encounter?

Private spaces are thus both private and public, and not only in the sense that what may be thought of as a private space may be open to public view. A private space may also be one that is open to public use. These texts offer up numerous examples of such public use of private spaces, as well as the use of public spaces for private purposes. A private house might afford secrecy for assignations, but it is also open and public as various different people come and go at will, using the private entrances and exits. For example, in *The Night-Walker* we find described 'a Musick House in M—— Fields' [Moorfields], which had '*private Rooms and back Doors in abundance*, which led into Arbors and Gardens, and that they

⁶³ Garfield, *The Wandring Whore*, 1 (1660), 13. As this text was published five years later than *The School of Venus* originally appeared (in French), it is possible that the scene was suggested by a reading of the earlier publication.

⁶⁴ Gowing, 'The Freedom of the Streets', 134.



Fig. 9. Engraving (plate number 31) from a Latin edition of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* (c.1690), BL PC.30.i.10. By permission of the British Library.

not only kept Women on purpose for the Entertainment of their loose Guests, but that some Citizens Wives and Daughters had their certain hours of coming thither by those private Passages to meet their Gallants'.⁶⁵ Dunton's narratives, and others of a similar nature, are deeply voyeuristic in nature.⁶⁶ Despite their

⁶⁵ Dunton, *The Night-Walker* (Dec. 1696), 6.

⁶⁶ Several texts take the form of a walk or ramble through the streets or a particular part of the country through which the nature of the inhabitants, usually sexual, is discovered and described. See,

overt moralizing tone and stated intention of moral reformation, they clearly provide a source of sexual titillation through the detailed publicizing of the private intrigues of prostitutes, young men and women, and adulterous husbands and wives.⁶⁷

Similarly outside locations are also scenes for assignations in privacy: 'My *Next Ramble*, was two nights after, to *Cupids Garden* beyond the River, where I heard such Amorous, or rather Lustful Assignations, were very frequent, especially by wantons of both Sexes from this side, because, there they are less liable to be seen by those that know them . . .'.⁶⁸ London's parks were a notorious site for sexual assignations, as most notably described by Rochester in 'A Ramble in St James's Park':

Unto this all-sin-sheltering grove
Whores of the bulk and the alcove,
Great ladies, chamber-maids, and drudges,
The rag-picker and heiress trudges;
Car-men, divines, great lords, and tailors,
Prentices, pimps, poets, and jailers,
Footmen, fine fops, do here arrive,
And here promiscuously they swive.⁶⁹

Such spaces, of course, are open to observation, however well hidden among trees, rocks or bushes the characters may believe themselves to be.

The observation of sexual acts in semi-public places, such as rooms in taverns, is frequently described (and is seen represented in Figures 8 and 9). The narrator in *The Night-Walker* tells us that 'it was observed by some Persons in a neighbouring Room, that each of the Villains committed the Act of Uncleanness with her twice'.⁷⁰ Taverns are a temporary space of comfort and seeming privacy: 'we pick'd her up, and took her to a Tavern, not far off, which she her self directed us to, we

e.g., Humphry Mill, *A Nights Search Discovering the Nature, and Condition of Night-Walkers with their Associates* (London, 1640); Careless, *The Floating Island; Flos ingenii vel evacuatio discriptionis. Being an Exact Description of Epsam, and Epsam Wells* (London, 1674); A Frolick to Horn-Fair. *With a Walk from Cuckold's-Point thro' Deptford and Greenwich* (London, 1700); *A Mornings Ramble: Or, Islington Wells Burtlesq* (London, 1684); Ward, *The London Spy*. We might include here also the genre of travel narrative in which descriptions of the marriage and sexual habits of foreign peoples are included. As we have seen in chapter two, the format of such narratives was exploited for erotic purposes in such works as Charles Cotton, *Erotopolis* and Henry Neville [attrib] *The Isle of Pines, Or, A Late Discovery of a Fourth Island near Tera Australis, Incognita by Henry Cornelius Van Sloetten* (London, 1668).

⁶⁷ See Dabhoiwala, 'Prostitution and Police in London', app. B, 246–59.

⁶⁸ This probably refers to Vauxhall (or New Spring) Gardens, which were a notorious meeting place and haunt of prostitutes. The gardens opened in 1660, and by 1668 Pepys records in his diary how the arbours are used for sexual encounters. See Bloch, *Sexual Life in England*, 140–4; also Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London, 1994), 173–5; Dunton, *The Night-Walker* (Dec. 1696), 8.

⁶⁹ Swive means fuck. John Wilmot Earl of Rochester, 'A Ramble in St James's Park', in *Rochester: Complete Poems and Plays*, ed. Lyons 46–7; first published in *Poems* (1680).

were conducted by the Drawer up a back pair of stairs into a well-furnished Bed-Chamber, with a Fire, as if purposely prepared.⁷¹ It probably was purposely prepared: private rooms could be provided by most of these establishments, and licence-holders were often complicit in such use, either because it was good for business, or because they were involved in the sexual trading that took place on their premises, such as, for example, ‘Susanna Church of St Giles, who would provide anyone with “beds to Lye together in, she knowing they are not men with their wives”’.⁷² Similarly in the provinces, alehouse-keepers were presented for ‘harbouring of lewd company’.⁷³ Privacy here is very precariously ensured by the actions of others: ‘the Drawer had lockt the Door, by her private order, for fear of Interruption.’⁷⁴ Though rooms may be entered for privacy, that privacy is precarious and insecure, with others able to come and go, to watch or to apprehend. In *A Dialogue between Mistris Macquerella, a Suburb Bawd, Ms Scolopendra, a Noted Curtezan, and Mr Pimpinello an Usher, &c.*, for example, the characters detail the great lengths to which they must go to avoid detection: ‘every door must have its Guardian . . . the parties entred into the Chamber of Delight lock the door; and lest any peep through the key-hole, some other door near that (being likewise lock’d) shall give it a broad side.’⁷⁵

The tavern emerges as one of the spaces most frequented by prostitutes, procurers, and others involved in the sale of sex in the city. If a man, or men, is picked up in the street, he will usually be taken to a tavern to buy drink before the sexual act takes place, whether that act subsequently takes place in the tavern itself, out in the street, or in a nearby house or lodging. In Cranley’s *The Converted Courtezan, Or, The Reformed Whore* the narrator discovers Amanda’s true ‘disposition’ by spying on her from ‘a secret place’ in a tavern, where in the company of others she behaves with ‘much rude, and unseemly behaviour’ before returning to her lodgings in the company of one of the men.⁷⁶ From records of prosecutions, these representations can be seen to be grounded firmly in reality, but, while it is interesting that they may be in some measure ‘truthful’, and that we can therefore read such texts as (to a degree) accurate representations of early modern life, it is what they tell us about how early modern people (or, at least, a large number of early modern authors) thought about and conceptualized the spaces they inhabited and made use of that is of greater significance.

⁷⁰ Dunton, *The Night-Walker* (Nov. 1696), 23.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* (Dec. 1696), 19.

⁷² Cited in Faramerz Dabhoiwala, ‘The Pattern of Sexual Immorality in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century London’, in Griffiths and Jenner (eds.), *Londinopolis*, 86–106, at 93.

⁷³ Cited in Keith Wrightson, ‘Alehouses, Order and Reformation in Rural England, 1590–1660’, in Eileen Yeo and Stephen Yeo (eds.), *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590–1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure* (Brighton, 1981), 1–27, at 9.

⁷⁴ Dunton, *The Night-Walker* (Dec. 1696), 19.

⁷⁵ *A Dialogue between Mistris Macquerella, a Suburb Bawd, Ms Scolopendra, a Noted Curtezan, and Mr Pimpinello an Usher, &c.*, 5.

⁷⁶ Cranley, *The Converted Courtezan*, 19–20.

Peter Clark in his history of the English alehouse suggests that the closing of the Southwark stews in 1546 and the general suppression of bordellos may have given rise to the development of the link between the alehouse and prostitution, as many brothels now doubled as victualling houses.⁷⁷ He goes on to argue that the reverse occurred in the 1670s, as the tavern's business as a brothel gave way to establishments that concentrated on that trade alone, though also serving drink to clients. That such establishments were carrying on this trade in drink and sex by the 1660s can be seen in the diary of Samuel Pepys, where he records the rioting of the apprentices and their attacks on bawdy houses: 'Some blood hath been spilt, but a great many houses pulled down; and among others, the Duke of York was mighty merry at that of Damaris Page's, the great bawd of the seamen. And the Duke of York complained merrily that he hath lost two tenants by their houses being pulled down, who paid him for their wine licences 15*l.* a year.'⁷⁸ If this change did indeed occur, then it has implications for the representation of illicit sexual activity in this pornographic literature: it places such activity increasingly in a private rather than a public context. The literature that then 'reveals' such activity offers to the reader a peep in at a closed, private sexual world, breaching its privacy, and thus generating an erotic charge.

Much of this literature, both pre- and post-1670, describes sexual activities taking place in a variety of locations, whether the street, the tavern, the lodging house or the bawdy house.⁷⁹ But, in other works, there can be found much more emphasis on the private dwelling as the site of sexual encounter. A cornerstone of Mother Creswell's advice to Dorothea in *The Whores Rhetorick* is that a whore should keep her own house, both for her own safety and convenience, and for the maximizing of trade. It will also give her greater privacy and discretion, so that she can keep up the pretence of being a respectable woman:

The most convenient habitation for a Trading Lady, is in a small convenient House of her own, rather than in Lodgings. . . . If she lyes at a place of any credit, it will be expected she should observe some reasonable hours; then her secret intrigues will be more liable to discovery, when pryed into by a whole Family, than if communicated to one or two Maids, that depend on her self, and are her own Creatures.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ See Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200–1830* (London and New York, 1983), 148–51.

⁷⁸ Since 1661 the Duke had enjoyed all the profits from the sale of licences for the retailing of wines. Pepys, *Diary*, ed. Latham and Matthews, ix. 132, entry for 25 Mar. 1668. These riots gave rise to the publication in 1668 of several mock-petitions, satirizing prostitutes, both common and high-born. See *The Whores Petition to the London Prentices; The Prentices Answer to the Whores Petition; The Citizens Reply to the Whores Petition, and Prentices Answer; The Poor-Whores Petition; The Gracious Answer of the Most Illustrious Lady of Pleasure, The Countess of Castlem—To the Poor-Whores Petition* (1668). See also Dabhoiwala, 'The Pattern of Sexual Immorality'.

⁷⁹ See, e.g., *The Ape-Gentle-woman, Or The Character of an Exchange-Wench* (London, 1675), *The Character of a Town-Misse* (London, 1675), and Francis Kirkman, *The English Rogue Continued in the Life of Meriton Latroon, and Other Extravagants. . . . The Second Part* (London, 1668; repr. 1680).

Here again, secrecy is the cornerstone of privacy. The reader is let into the secret along with the maids, becoming in effect another of the whore's 'Creatures' and being drawn vicariously into an illicit world of danger, intrigue, and criminality, engendering a frisson of fear tempered with excitement that may enhance the sexual pleasure incited by the text.

The most marked move away from the public world of the street or tavern is to be found in the three seventeenth-century French texts that are also the most sexually explicit: *The School of Venus*, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigee*, and *Venus in the Cloister*. More specifically, these three texts have all moved away from the characterization of the women relating, or discussing the contents of, the text as prostitutes, though they retain the form of the whore dialogue. No longer is there an older more experienced whore instructing and initiating the younger into the arts of the trade; rather there is a slightly older young woman instructing and initiating another young girl into the mysteries of the sexual life. This shift is important both in terms of the nature of the genre itself, and also in spatial terms. The action shifts from the street, the tavern, the lodging house, and the bawdy house to the differently characterized spaces of the respectable, enclosed house and garden, and the convent. By replacing the female characters who would usually be whores with respectable middle- and upper-class women, the authors specifically satirize religious morality and bourgeois respectability. But, at the same time, these more obviously private worlds perhaps allow a greater freedom for the author to be more sexually explicit, at the same time as the clear breaching of these private locations (especially the closed world of the convent) engenders a greater eroticism, as the sense of privacy—and perhaps safety—is revealed as an illusion (and Mary Laven has demonstrated that convents were in fact open to outsiders, including men, who entered for various purposes with or without the appropriate permissions⁸¹). The penetration of the physical barriers of the house or convent mirrors the penetration of the female bodies within. The houses have back doors, private stairways, and alternative entrances and exits to rooms through which characters may come and go secretly. There are curtains and wall hangings that partition rooms, alcoves, and privately enclosed garden 'rooms' where characters may hide themselves, either to watch others, or to engage in secret encounters themselves.⁸² Finally, there are keyholes, cracks in walls and ceilings, or windows through which others may spy upon the action taking place within.

⁸⁰ Philo-Puttanus, *The Whores Rhetorick*, 73–4.

⁸¹ See Laven, *Virgins of Venice*, ch. 5.

⁸² See Annik Pardailhé-Galabrun, *The Birth of Intimacy: Privacy and Domestic Life in Early Modern Paris* (Philadelphia, 1991; first published in French as *La Naissance de l'intime* (Paris, 1988)), 73–4, for a close discussion of the arrangement of domestic space in households in Paris. The bed was most often a space closed off by curtains, while there was a singular lack of privacy in the overcrowded cramped conditions lived in by the majority of the poorer population, who lived in single rooms. Though most often located in a bed chamber, the bed could also be found in other rooms of the house, including kitchens, corridors, or under the stairs. Beds could be quite sumptuous and afford privacy in themselves by way of the sometimes thick and heavy curtains, which would hang from posts and poles around the bed.

In addition to these visual breaches of 'privacy', there are auditory breaches, where private actions become public knowledge through the overhearing of voices, moans, groans, cries, and screams of pleasure or of pain. Authors play on these ideas to tease and amuse the reader with the clever use of double entendre.

However, revelation of the private event, and/or the private parts, through the figure of the voyeur is not the only technique the author employs to arouse erotic pleasure through the text. I have argued that it is usually the idea of voyeurism that springs to mind when analysing the erotic text, as the act of reading or viewing the pornographic image is regarded as an inherently voyeuristic act. So far I have shown how various seventeenth-century authors employed this technique to engender both eroticism and humour. But the opposite side of the scopophilic coin—exhibitionism—also plays a part in these texts. Just as reading the text can be seen as an inherently voyeuristic act, so it can be argued that writing the text is inherently an exhibitionist act, as its purpose is revelation. Use of the figure of the voyeur suggests that the revelation of the sexual body and of the body engaged in sexual intercourse is almost always indirect, mediated through the gaze of another. But these texts also play with the deliberate display of the body, often as a source of comic entertainment. Not only is it pleasurable to look at the naked body, but also it is funny, rather than pathological or shocking, deliberately to display it to view.

Psychoanalysis encodes this half of the scopophilic drive as passive, and therefore associates it with the feminine, although in therapeutic practice it is predominantly a male activity directed towards women and one that generally springs from an aggressive motivation.⁸³ However, in this seventeenth-century pornographic literature there is to be found a quite complex set of ideas around exhibiting the body that does not fit neatly into any theoretical formulation, and that is also clearly gendered. As we have seen in a previous chapter, the acts of sexual flagellation that are described in various different types of text are most often attributed to women in both the active and passive roles.⁸⁴ One of the most important characteristics of this variety of sexual activity is the opportunity it affords both for uncovering the body and for allowing gazing upon the body. For both participants, pleasure derives not only from the act of flagellation itself, but also from the display of the naked body that is to be flogged. Just as the flimsiness and overcrowding common to most seventeenth-century housing, and the reliance upon witness testimony for the proof of fornication and adultery, as for other sexual crimes such as sodomy and bestiality, constructed a social and cultural milieu in which sexual acts were more likely to be seen or overheard by others, so the very public nature of punishment for some sexual crimes—the carting and flogging of the semi-naked body—encouraged an association of sex not only with whipping, but also with exposure of the body.

⁸³ See Grosz, 'voyeurism/exhibitionism/the gaze', 447–50.

⁸⁴ See Ch. 3 on flagellation.

Bloch describes exhibitionism as 'a very widespread sexual perversity in England', occurring particularly in the eighteenth century with the appearance of a special class of prostitutes known as 'posture girls', who specialized in the exhibiting of their sexual parts.⁸⁵ Wagner suggests that the popularity of 'postures' derived from the sixteenth-century engravings that became known as 'Aretine's Postures'.⁸⁶ In these seventeenth-century texts '*Peter Aretine's postures curiously painted*' are often described hanging in private rooms and bawdy houses for the delectation of clients.⁸⁷ However, 'posture girls' were not only an eighteenth-century phenomenon. They were clearly in evidence in the latter half of the seventeenth century: there are references to a prostitute known as 'Posture Moll' in *The London-Bawd* (1711, but thought to be first published in the 1690s) and in *A Catalogue of Jilts* (1691), where she is listed among the twenty-two names.⁸⁸ A close reading of numerous seventeenth-century texts reveals many instances of the deliberate exposure of the female genitals, either because it was demanded of a prostitute by a client, or because it was the particular whim of the prostitute concerned. In *The Wandering Whore*, within the first few pages we hear about

Priss Fotheringhams Chuck-office, where upon sight thereof, French Dollars, Spanish Pistols, English Half-crowns are as plentifully pour'd in, as the Rhenish wine was into the Dutch wenches two holes till she roar'd again, as she was showing tricks upon her head with naked buttocks and spread leggs in a round ring, like those at wrestling neer the Half-crown-chuck-office, call'd *Jack-a-newberries six wind-mills*.⁸⁹

This trick of standing on her head with her legs apart, so that clients could throw money into her vagina, seems to have been a notorious practice to which other authors frequently made reference.⁹⁰ Although Priss Fotheringham's practice was by far the most well known, the revealing of the genitals to excite a client seems

⁸⁵ Bloch, *Sexual Life in England*, 377. See also Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, 22, for a description of 'Posture Nan'.

⁸⁶ Wagner, *Eros Revived*, 264–7.

⁸⁷ Garfield, *The Wandering Whore*, 2 (1660), 13. A reference to 'Aretine' in a text generally serves as shorthand to suggest sexually explicit material and would signify the sexual nature of a text to the reader. Texts that were pseudonymously attributed to 'Aretine' or 'Aretin' would again alert the reader to the likely nature of its contents, such as, for example, *Strange & True Neues from Jack-a-Newberries Six Windmills* and *The Sixth Part of the Wandering-Whore Revived in a Dialogue between Magdalena, a Crafty Bawd, &c.* (London, 1663).

⁸⁸ *The London-Bawd: With her Character and Life. Discovering the Various and Subtile Intrigues of Lewd Women* (4th edn., 1711), 149. There is no earlier edition extant, but Roger Thompson dates this work as originating in the 1690s. *A Catalogue of Jilts, Cracks, Prostitutes, Night walkers, Whores, She-Friends, King Women and Others of the Linnen-Lifting Tribe, who are to be Seen Every Night in the Cloysters in Smithfield from Eight to Eleven during the Time of the Fair* (1691). Cited in Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 61.

⁸⁹ Garfield, *The Wandering Whore*, 1 (1660), 6.

⁹⁰ See *A Strange and True Conference between Two Notorious Bawds, Strange & True Neues from Jack-a-Newberries Six Windmills*, and *The Sixth Part of the Wandering-Whore*.

to have been a standard practice. In *The Wandring Whore* readers are directed to 'the Coopers daughters in *Katherine-wheel Ally* in *Bishopsgate-street*, they cure the *Priapismus*, *Satyriasis*, and *Standing-Ague* infallibly, with an *Universal Medicine*, dancing *Bob in-jo*, stark naked into the bargain', and 'not forgetting that *Ursula* had half a crown for showing her *Twit-twat*'.⁹¹

More explicitly, in Cotton's *Erotopolis*, in a passage that is clearly derived from *Fifteen Real Comforts of Matrimony* published in the previous year, there is a description of a man who pays specifically to see a woman lift up her clothes to expose her genitals:

In a short while betaking her self to the Chimny, she stood bolt upright, and having the Signal given, (as they draw the Curtain up from before the Scenes of a Theater) she drew the Curtain gently up that was before it, and showed the Prospect of a very fair Garden-plot of Maiden-hair, not green as in other Countries, but growing like a kind of black Fern, or rather a spot of Ground looking like a sieve of black Cherries, covered over with the tops of russet Fennel. . . . Then he pleased his aged Eyes with beholding the whole, commending what he thought fit to be commended, and reading a Lecture of *Betty-land* Husbandry, over every part, till satiated with the Prospect and his Discourse, the Curtain again was let down, and the Syren sent away for more Enchanting Liquor to requite her kindness. . . .⁹²

This passage suggests that the man's desire just to gaze at the woman (prostitute) is a result of his sexual inadequacy: he is old (he has 'aged Eyes') and obviously impotent, as the woman leaves in search of that 'more Enchanting Liquor', which is semen, which may be discharged by a man who is able to perform the act to its satisfactory conclusion. It is not the woman's sexual behaviour, displaying her sexual parts, that is represented as problematic here, but rather the man's, in his inability successfully to engage in penetrative heterosexual sexual intercourse with ejaculation.

In *The Practical Part of Love* a dance named after the heroine, Gillian, is described in which 'all the obscenities that come not under the rigour of Law are exercised, as women riding bare-ars'd on mens necks, and Lipfrog with their Coats tuckt above the middle'.⁹³ Dancing was, of course, associated with sexual looseness and lascivious behaviour by puritanism (Figure 10 illustrates such an imagined scene), and the two were brought together to encourage condemnation of nonconformist religious sects such as Adamites and Ranters in the 1640s and 1650s (see Figure 11). How common exhibitionism of this kind might have been in reality is very difficult to ascertain. Quaife argues that such public exposure of the genitals by women was rare. He cites two cases in which a man deliberately exposes a woman's genitals, and another in which a woman both exposes and touches the genitals of a female relative in order to try and solicit men for her.

⁹¹ Garfield, *The Wandring Whore*, 2 (1660), 6, 12.

⁹² *Fifteen Real Comforts of Matrimony*, 46–7; Cotton, *Erotopolis* (1684), 98–100.

⁹³ *The Practical Part of Love*, 58.

In all these incidents the exposure was against the women's will.⁹⁴ In his article on flagellation in post-Restoration England, Lawrence Stone argues that the uncovering of the female genitals to view was a 'common game' among a small group of people in Norwich, but again here it is a man who lifts their clothes and it is not clear whether or not the women consent: 'While sitting in the kitchen, Samuel Self several times lifted up his wife's clothes in the presence of Atmeare and the maid Susan Warwick, and sometimes also of Morris and other male friends.'⁹⁵ Laura Gowing in *Common Bodies* demonstrates that, when women did expose themselves intentionally, their contemporaries interpreted it as lewd and immodest.⁹⁶ However, the exposure of the female genitals was a common subject of sexual jokes, especially as maintaining modesty was precarious at a time when English women did not yet routinely wear any undergarment other than a smock.⁹⁷ Such exposure of the genitals would also have been familiar to a seventeenth-century audience through folklore. Exposing the vulva or vagina was thought to ward off demons.⁹⁸ To a seventeenth-century audience, then, the exposure of the female genitalia to the view of the reader of the pornographic text would carry a greater resonance than just display for erotic titillation. Neither would it have been seen as a necessarily passive behaviour that objectified women. It could be read at the time as a very positive act of female sexual and magical power, or as shocking in its deliberate flouting of the conventions of modesty, in making public what ought to be kept secret and private.

Another way in which this literature can be read as 'exhibitionist', or as displaying the sexual body, is the use of the text for advertisement. Many of the prostitutional texts may be read as thinly disguised advertisements for the location of prostitutes in London. Some not only include the place, but also the particular services offered by specific prostitutes within those areas, as we saw in Chapter 2 on flagellation: '*Betty Lawrence* . . . will serve the Cure, suffering you to whip the skin off her buttocks, as *Wats* the Hosier (besides two others) did onely paying her Crowns apiece for her patience and punishment.'⁹⁹ The listing of street names and districts of London leads the reader through a sexualized topography of London in a more explicit version than that offered by Cotton's journey through the haunts of prostitutes in *Erotopolis*:

If you fancy variety of faces, Mounsieur *Francion*, visit the Cherery-garden, Hatton-wall, Blomesbury, Drury-lane, Dog and Bitch yard, Fleet-lane, Turn-ball-street, Rosemary-lane,

⁹⁴ Quaife, *Wanton Wenches and Iwayward Wives*, 167–8, at 149.

⁹⁵ Stone, 'Libertine Sexuality in Post-Restoration England', 517.

⁹⁶ Gowing, *Common Bodies*, 35–40.

⁹⁷ The exposure of the female genitals in sexual jokes is discussed in Ch. 6.

⁹⁸ See Luisa Accati, 'The Spirit of Fornication: Virtue of the Soul and Virtue of the Body in Friuli, 1600–1800', in Muir and Ruggiero (eds.), *Sex and Gender in Historical Perspective* 110–40, and Laura Stark-Arola, 'Lempi, Fire and Female Väki: An Exploration into Dynamistic Relationships in Finnish–Karelian Magic and Folk Belief', *Elektroloristi*, 1/4 (1997). I am grateful to Caroline Oates for this reference, and to Paul Auchterlonie at Exeter University Library for locating it for me.

⁹⁹ Garfield, *The Wandring Whore*, 2 (1660), 3.



Fig. 10. Engraving (plate number 30) from a Latin edition of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* (c.1690), BL: PC.30.i.10. By permission of the British Library.

long Acre, Lincolns-in-fields, Spittle-fields, Wheeler-street, Mobb-lane, Smock-ally, the Row at the six Windmills, petticoat-lane, Dunnings-ally, Long-ally, More-fields, Cheap-side, Cornhill, Leaden-hall-street, &c.¹⁰⁰

The mock *Poor-Whores Petition to . . . the Countess of Castlemayne* (1668) ends with a list of signatories headed by the notorious Madam Cresswell and Damaris Page, on behalf of their 'Sisters and Fellow-Sufferers (in this day of our Calamity)

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

The Ranters Ranting^s

Fig. 11. Title page of *The Ranters Ranting* (1650), BL E.618.(8). By permission of the British Library. Image published with permission of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

WITH

The apprehending, examinations, and confession of *John Collins* *1. Shakespear, Tho. Wiberrow,* and five more which are to answer the next Sessions. And severall songs or catches, which weresung at their meetings. Also their severall kinds of mirth, and dancing. Their blasphemous opinions. Their belief concerning heaven and hell. And the reason why one of the same opinion cut off the heads of his own mother and brother. Set forth for the further discovery of this ungodly crew.



*D*escrib: 2 LONDON
Printed by B. Alsop, 1650

in dog and Bitch Yard, Lukerners Lane, Saffron-Hill, Moor-fields, Chiswell-street, Rosemary-Lane, Nightingale-Lane, Ratcliffe-High-way, Well-Close, Church-Lane, East-Smithfield, &c.'.¹⁰¹ *The Wandering Whore* had not only included references to specific whores but also concluded each part with 'A List of all the Crafty Bawds, Common Whores, Decoys, Hectors, and Trapanners, about London'.¹⁰²

In the same vein, there were also published c. 1680 and 1690 catalogues of ladies for sale by auction. These 'lists' achieved large-scale publication and popularity later on in the eighteenth century, with *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies* (1788–93) being the most well known, and achieving a large circulation.¹⁰³ These have generally been taken to be genuine lists of prostitutes.¹⁰⁴ Whether

¹⁰¹ *The Poor-Whores Petition.* ¹⁰² Garfield, *The Wandering Whore*, 1 (1660), 15.

¹⁰³ *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies; Or Man of Pleasure's Kalendar, for the Year 1788* (1788, 1789, 1790, and 1793). See Bloch, *Sexual Life in England*, 156–7.

¹⁰⁴ See Bloch, *Sexual Life in England*, 156–7; and Porter, *London*, 171–2. For a fuller treatment, see Elizabeth Campbell Denlinger, 'The Garment and the Man: Masculine Desire in *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies*, 1764–1793', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 11/3 (July 2002), 357–94.

real or imaginary, these lists and pamphlets provide a guide for the reader to the likely location of London prostitutes:

A bonny buxom Widow in the Strand, living at the Sign of the Black Bull with the Golden Cod

A young termagant Widow of twenty two, at the Sign of the Reynard in Fleet-street

A rich Quaker's Daughter, not many doors from the Golden Hart within Aldgate

A Cutler's Daughter in Cheapside

and so on and on.¹⁰⁵ They are certainly real to the extent that the street names are real London streets and alleys.¹⁰⁶ But it is clear that the intention is to amuse and entertain the reader, as the entries are ironic and full of double entendres and sexual innuendo. For example, 'the Black Bull with the Golden Cod' suggests both male virility and financial generosity; the young widow would be understood as longing for sexual satisfaction now she is without the services of a husband; the 'Sign of the Reynard' recalls the folklore association of the fox tail with the erotic; unorthodox religious groups such as the Quakers were synonymous with sexual licence; cut in 'Cutler's Daughter' (see Chapter 6) suggests the vagina, and 'Cheapside' suggests that she will not charge much for her sexual favours. But it becomes clear also, once all the street names mentioned in a wide variety of texts have been listed and compared with contemporary maps, that almost the whole of London had become a sexualized space.¹⁰⁷ This may well mean that it was possible to find prostitutes operating in most areas of the city and its environs, for, as Dabhoiwala demonstrates, prostitutes were drawn from all ranks and sections of society and 'were part of wider metropolitan communities'. But it fits also into a common trope in which the city is represented as a place of seduction, moral laxity, and vice, with the city itself seen as a wanton whore.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *Characters of Several Ingenious Designing Gentlewomen, Who have Lately Put in to the Ladies Invention. Which is Intended to be Drawn as soon as Full. Numb. 2* (n.d., c.1680s), and *A Continuation of a Catalogue of Ladies, to be Set up by Auction, on Monday the 6th of this Instant July. Numb. 2.* (n.d., c.1680s). See also *Characters of Gentlemen that have Put in to the Ladies Invention. Numb. 1* (n.d., c.1680s) and *Characters of Several Ingenious Designing Gentlemen, who have Lately Put in to the Ladies Invention. Numb. 1* (n.d., c.1680s).

¹⁰⁶ T. Porter, *The Newest & Exactest Mapp of the Most Famous Citties London and Westminster with their Suburbs* (London, 1654).

¹⁰⁷ There is a huge literature on the sexualization of space and the city, from which the following is a necessarily limited selection: David Bell and Gill Valentine (eds.), *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities* (London and New York, 1995); Beatriz Colomina (ed.), *Sexuality & Space* (Princeton, 1992); Gowing, 'The Freedom of the Streets'; Phil Hubbard, 'Sexuality, Immorality and the City: Red-Light Districts and the Marginalisation of Female Street Prostitutes', *Gender, Place and Culture*, 5/1 (1998), 55–72; Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge, 1994); Gillian Rose, *Feminism & Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Cambridge, 1993).

¹⁰⁸ See Lawrence Manley, 'From Matron to Monster: Tudor-Stuart London and the Languages of Urban Description', in Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier (eds.), *The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture* (Chicago and London, 1988), 347–74; Arthur J. Weitzman, 'Eighteenth-Century London: Urban Paradise or Fallen city?', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36 (1975), 469–80; Dabhoiwala, 'The Pattern of Sexual Immorality', 101.

The deliberate acts of female exhibition are represented either as a means of exciting desire in a male lover or client, or as a replacement for the act of intercourse when a man is old and impotent. We have seen in Chapter 2, however, that men also deliberately expose and display their genitals to women to excite female sexual desire. In the three French texts *The School of Venus*, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, and *Venus in the Cloister* there is as much, if not more, attention paid to exposure and description of the male body. The display of the penis to the young woman is an integral part of a man's arousal of a woman, to the extent that, in these texts, the sight of the penis alone is sufficient to excite the desire of the woman with whom he is engaging in sexual activity: 'After that he said, "I want you to see it," and with that he made me draw it out through his flies. I was amazed at the shape and size of it, for it's quite different when it's stiff to when it's slack and soft.'¹⁰⁹ This display of the male organ to a woman as a preliminary to intercourse, to excite her interest, is something that Quaife describes as being quite common in cases of illicit sex in Somerset during this period.¹¹⁰

However, description of the exhibition of the male genitals is not confined to the bedroom and to seduction of the young woman. There is also description of a much more 'public' kind of exhibition. The street offers a site for public display *par excellence*, especially as, without the modern convenience of the private water closet and hidden sewage system, people would relieve themselves in the street or other public spaces. The pornography of this period picks up on and makes use of such public displays, sexualizing the act of excretion in the same way as sexual jokes in which bodily functions and fluids are mixed up, so that urinating can be imagined as ejaculation.¹¹¹ For example, in *The School of Venus*, Susanne asks Fanchon directly whether or not she has ever seen a man urinating in the street, offering an opportunity for description of the penis at the same time as teasing the reader who has already, at this point, read an enormous amount of description of the male body including the male sexual organs: 'Once I saw a man in the street doing just that against a wall and holding something in his hand which I couldn't quite make out. When he noticed me coming along, he turned and showed me something like a white sausage. It was so long that I was surprised at not having anything like it myself.'¹¹² Such deliberate display of the male organ also allows the author to emphasize the important characteristic of size. The final comment of the story then invites the reader to imagine the penis in conjunction with the female sexual organs, so that the act of urination can be imagined as the emission of semen. This mixing-up of bodily functions and jokes about genitals will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter.

¹⁰⁹ Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 114.

¹¹⁰ Quaife, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives*, 167–8, at 165–6.

¹¹¹ See Chs. 2 and 6 on metaphors for the body and sexual jokes.

This seventeenth-century pornographic literature thus both relies upon and plays with the idea of a public/private split to develop a specific technique for writing the erotic. Not only are the characters within the texts represented as deriving their sexual arousal from the watching of others engaged in sexual activity, or listening to the description of another's sexual encounter, but this both legitimizes and reflects the expected response of the reader. Increasingly in eighteenth-century pornography, or erotica, the spatial locations for sexual encounters became more specialized and specific, in contrast with this seventeenth-century literature, where the spatial quality of the location is less important.¹¹³ Of more significance are the evident concepts of public and private spaces that permeate these texts, and the understanding that an erotic charge can be generated by the slippage between the two. The argument that this period marks a shift towards a greater desire for personal privacy, and hence a clearer distinction between the public and the private, has implications for the representation of sex and voyeurism. Mulvey's argument that the gaze is male clearly does not hold for this literature, where the voyeur is usually (though not always) represented as female, even though the actual reader is more likely to have been male. Mediating the male gaze through the female figure suggests that we need to think differently about the idea of voyeurism and how it is gendered, and how it works in pornography, at this time. In a world in which there was in practice little privacy, where private rooms did indeed have '*back Doors in abundance*' through which others might peep or come and go at will, the fantasy of the illusion of sexual privacy as represented in the pornographic narrative seems to have been a compelling one. It was one with which a variety of authors played when imagining sex for the entertainment of their readers throughout the seventeenth century.

¹¹² Millot and L'Ange, *The School of Venus*, 81–2.

¹¹³ See Harvey, *Reading Sex*, 146–74.

6

‘Unexpected Bed Fellows’: The Comic and the Erotic

I have argued in earlier chapters that ‘getting the joke’ in past narratives will help the modern historian to ‘get’ an understanding of early modern sexual cultures.¹ This chapter will focus specifically on the use of sexual humour in seventeenth-century pornographic texts, and argues that, to understand fully these seventeenth-century narratives, and their representations of the sexual body and sexuality, we must literally get to grips with the joke. Sexual humour is not confined to what we may term the subgenre of pornography of sexual jokes: it permeates the entire corpus of texts, whichever end of the market they were produced for, from *Venus in the Cloister* and *The School of Venus* to news-sheets, chapbooks, pamphlets, and ballads. A short excerpt from a seventeenth-century ballad entitled ‘The Country Lawyer’s Maid Joan’ demonstrates neatly the centrality of humour to the sexual narrative in this period:

At length came lusty Mark
A country lawyer’s clerk
And tickled her in the dark
He lit on the very vein
The place of her grief and pain
And caused her to laugh amain
And merrily did reply
‘O this is the death I die’.²

The evocation of Joan’s orgasm (‘O this is the death I die’) vividly illustrates that this was a culture in which humour and sex were regarded as fundamentally entwined, as sex can be imagined as tickling that ‘caused her to laugh amain’.

The most immediately distinctive feature of seventeenth-century pornography, whatever its particular format or purpose, is this—from a modern perspective—unexpectedly pervasively humorous character. Despite the persistence of a strand of ‘saucy’ or ‘bawdy’ humour, often characterized as quintessentially English, to be found today, for example, in a particular kind of seaside postcard or

¹ With reference to Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, esp. 75–104.

² ‘The Country Lawyer’s Maid Joan’, *The Roxburghe Ballads*, ed. W. Chappell (14 vols.; London, 1869–95), iii. 585–7.

the *Carry On* film, modern pornography does not widely employ comedy as part of its erotic repertoire.³ This particular aspect of early modern pornography has been problematic for historians and other critics who have attempted to engage with early modern pornographic texts. Although much humour—today and in the past—revolves around sexual material, there seems to be a general consensus that sexual *arousal* and humour are incompatible. As the *raison d'être* of pornography is taken to be the arousal of sexual feelings or desire, it is, as a consequence, assumed to be a kind of representation in which humour and laughter therefore can have no place. This may be true if sexual arousal is measured solely by the maintenance of penile erection, as Thompson seems to do when commenting on sexual humour in chapbooks: 'One can imagine Pepys sniggering over some of the sexual innuendo, but hardly ejaculating as he confessed to doing when he read *L'Escholle des filles*.'⁴ Thompson's comment also ignores the extent to which *L'Escholle des filles*, or *The School of Venus*, deploys humour in its descriptions of and allusions to the body and sex: it is highly likely that Pepys also 'sniggered' over the funnier passages, some of which are remarkably similar (as we shall see) to passages in other more obviously humorous English publications, such as *The Wandring Whore*. This measurement of sexual arousal by maintenance of male sexual excitement is also implicitly one in which it is assumed that the reader or audience is male only, evading any recognition of a possible female readership (which we have seen in Chapter 1 was likely to have existed, however limited in numbers) or any analysis of a female response to sexual humour. More recent work, however, has paid attention to both women's participation in popular humour and their responses to it, though paying attention to women's resistance to and rebuttal of patriarchal control, rather than to their possibilities for sexual pleasure.⁵ The arousal of laughter, though, may well enhance general feelings of sexual pleasure (as it most certainly did for the Country Lawyer's Maid Joan), and make the body more disposed to be aroused sexually, as the feelings of psychological and physical pleasure that the enjoyment of humour engenders predispose the reader, whether male or female, to be susceptible to the sexual content of the text. Neither should we forget that this was a society in which, as we have seen in the discussion of flagellation in Chapter 3, somatic rather than psychological explanations held currency, so that the release of laughter might be regarded as akin to the relief of sexual climax.⁶ Jokes often work through the unexpected and surprising juxtaposition of ideas, or where one thing stands in for another. Where the point of the joke is sexual, it precipitates the imagining of the sexual

³ I do not wish to suggest that *all* modern pornography eschews the comic: this is clearly not the case. But it is not a characteristic of mainstream pornographic production. See Fenton Bailey, 'Video', in Tang, *Pornography*, esp. 154–5.

⁴ Thompson, 'Popular Reading and Humour', 670 n. 38.

⁵ See Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep*.

⁶ For a discussion of the somatic explanation of laughter, see Brown's reading of Laurent Joubert's 1579 *Treatise on Laughter* in her *Better a Shrew than a Sheep*, 28–9.

parts of the body, or the sexual act, engendering a sexual response in the reader or listener.⁷ This literature reflects a society and a culture in which the physical states of laughter and sexual arousal, far from being seen as incompatible, are, as illustrated by the ballad 'The Country Lawyer's maid Joan', interdependent. The oppositional relationship between comedy and pornography posited in the historiography to date simply does not hold true for the pornographic literature of the seventeenth century.⁸

Writing about sexual literature in *English Sexualities 1700–1800*, Tim Hitchcock specifically makes this distinction: 'only pornography abandoned humour in favour of a voyeuristic and clinical view of sexuality.'⁹ These remarks echo the conclusions of Steven Marcus in *The Other Victorians*. Marcus states: 'The literature of sex, in all its branches, is not a particularly joyful or happy literature. It is on the whole rather grim and sad; even at its most intense moments there is something defeated in it. Something in the nature of its subject, one may reflect, dictates this prevailing tone.'¹⁰ Similarly, in his study of Renaissance erotica, *Festum Voluptatis*, David O. Frantz constantly places the huge comic element of the Renaissance literature he discusses in opposition to its function as pornography. In his discussion of Thomas Nashe's *Choise of Valentines* he tells us: 'Nashe's *Choise of Valentines* is surely meant to be comic, but it is meant to be pornographic as well . . .'.¹¹ He goes on to say that Nashe's treatment of his protagonist as highly comic 'detracts from the salacious effect of the poetry'.¹² While discussing Nashe's debt to classical literature, Frantz tells us that Ovid's poem *Amores*, III. vi, 'is far more comic than pornographic'.¹³ Despite the accumulating evidence that for early modern readers and writers the comic and the pornographic were not placed in opposition to each other, but were rather part and parcel of the same kind of writing, Frantz maintains the modern view that the comic detracts from the pornographic and therefore mitigates its effect. However, the origins of comedy have been located in ancient fertility rituals, with the word itself deriving from the Greek *Komos*, a festive procession.¹⁴ This early association of sex with laughter and festivity is one that has continued through sexual writings from the classical world, in the writings of Juvenal and Martial, for example, and that

⁷ A reaction of disgust or revulsion would be regarded as simply a repression of the sexual feelings aroused.

⁸ Nor for the eighteenth century, as exemplified by *Fanny Hill* at least.

⁹ Hitchcock, *English Sexualities*, 22–3.

¹⁰ Marcus, *The Other Victorians*, 164. See also Leonard Feinberg, *The Secret of Humor* (Amsterdam, 1978), 95.

¹¹ Frantz, *Festum Voluptatis*, 191.

¹² *Ibid.*, 197.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹⁴ See Allan Rodway, *English Comedy: Its Role and Nature from Chaucer to the Present Day* (London, 1975), 17; Frances Gray, *Women and Laughter* (Basingstoke and London, 1994), 29–30; and Henri Bergson, *Laughter, with an Appendix: The Meanings of Comedy by Wylie Sypher* (New York, 1956; first published 1900, originating in a lecture entitled *Le Rire: De quoi rit-on? pourquoi rit-on?* (1884)). The comic emerged as an expression of the triumph of life over death, an assertion of the vitality of the material body and the victory of life through rebirth. The issue of fertility is discussed in Ch 2.

persists in subsequent pornography during the Renaissance, including in the work of Aretino, regarded as a byword for the obscene in early modern England. The origins of much seventeenth-century pornographic writing in this earlier classical and Renaissance literature can, as we have seen, be traced quite clearly.¹⁵ But, more importantly, these earlier works of literary pornography offer a model for the writing of early modern sexual literature that does not isolate the sexual from all other matters, and, most particularly, does not separate it from the comic.¹⁶

Pornography has been criticized as a genre that is inherently repetitious, has little literary merit, and is therefore generally tedious. Goulemot exemplifies this interpretation, arguing: 'Since the description of sexual activity in these works is made up of repeated sequences and stock figures, pornography quickly grows boring. Nobody can fail to be aware of this fact, whether they have only an inkling of it, or whether they have experienced it for themselves.'¹⁷ However, the criticism of pornography as a literary form which soon becomes boring as it is inherently limited in subject matter ignores both historical context and the evidence of specific texts. Whereas modern pornography, whether literary or visual, has generally become restricted to the representation of images of the sexual body and the sexual body engaged in sexual acts, the pornography of the seventeenth century suffered no such limitation. These texts, like many other texts of this period, did not restrict themselves simply to repeated descriptions of the sexual act, but interspersed other sorts of material such as philosophical discussion or, indeed, comic narrative, with the sexual content.¹⁸ But seventeenth-century pornographic texts do not become boring simply because they do not limit themselves to repetitive descriptions and discussions of sex alone. They offer a range of strategies for engaging the reader, one of which is clearly humour. This analysis ignores also the response of the reader, who presumably did not find the texts boring and tedious, or there would have been no market for this material, as it would not have produced the desired response, arousal and boredom being mutually exclusive states.¹⁹ To ignore the humorous character of seventeenth-century pornography is not only to lose part of its sophistication and complexity, but, more importantly, to ignore one of the primary ways in which

¹⁵ Interestingly, Bakhtin argues that 'in the antique world there could be no sharp distinction between official and folk culture, as later appeared in the Middle Ages' (Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Moscow, 1965; trans. Hélène Iswolsky, 1968; paper back edn., Bloomington, 1984), 121).

¹⁶ The integration of the obscene with festivity can also be seen at this time in charivari and the 'skimmington'.

¹⁷ Goulemot, *Forbidden Texts*, viii.

¹⁸ It has been widely acknowledged that it is very difficult to define a pornographic genre at this time precisely because texts do not fall neatly into clearly bounded categories. See, for example, the works by Thompson, Foxon, and Frantz, which struggle with the issue of definitions, and Kraakman, 'Pornography in Western European Culture'.

¹⁹ For an interesting theoretical discussion of boredom, in which boredom and desire can be seen as mutually exclusive states, see Adam Phillips, 'On Being Bored', in Phillips, *On Kissing, Tickling, and Being Bored: Psychoanalytic Essays on the Unexamined Life* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), 71–82.

sex was imagined in the period and in which it brought erotic pleasure to the reader.²⁰ The prevalence of sexual humour in pornographic or sexual literature, whether consumed by an elite court readership, an educated ‘middling sort’, or a semi-literate ‘popular’ audience, also serves to support recent scholarship on popular culture, which has challenged earlier arguments for a growing and clear split between elite and popular cultures at this time.²¹ Martin Ingram in particular demonstrates how a ‘popular’ cultural form, charivari, traditionally interpreted as a form of plebeian culture, was not in fact separated either from elite patronage or from representation in elite cultural forms.²² Similarly, the enmeshing of both high and low society in carnival and riot performed on the streets of London is extensively anatomized by James Grantham Turner in *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London*, where ‘it became increasingly difficult to demarcate the boundaries of high and low status in representation, to separate “popular” libertinism from aristocratic excess’.²³

Theoretical thinking about pornography and comedy has followed a similar path whereby both are usually defined as belonging to ‘low’ art. Comedy is placed in opposition to the high art of tragedy, where catharsis produces resolution and renewal, while the physically cathartic effect of the laughter produced by comedy gives a temporary release from physical tension and the realities of life.²⁴ Similarly, pornography is placed in opposition to erotica, where erotica provides an uplifting and enhancing experience of the emotional and intellectual passion of love, while pornography provides masturbatory relief from the physical tensions of bodily lust.²⁵ In this oppositional relationship, the pleasures of both comedy and pornography are located in the physical body, providing relief and release. In a Western culture in which things of the body are placed in a binary oppositional relationship to things of the mind, in which the mind occupies a higher plane, it is not surprising that these two artistic or literary forms have been consigned to the lower end of the scale.²⁶ The most influential exponent of the argument for

²⁰ The term reader also encompasses ‘readers by proxy’ — that is, those who were read to.

²¹ See Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978); also ‘Revolution in Popular Culture’, in Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (eds.), *Revolution in History* (Cambridge, 1986), 206–25; Harris (ed.), *Popular Culture in England*; Barry Reay (ed.), *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (London and Sydney, 1985).

²² Martin, Ingram, ‘Ridings, Rough Music and the “Reform of Popular Culture” in Early Modern England’, *Past & Present*, 105 (Nov. 1984), 79–113.

²³ Turner, *Libertines and Radicals*, 150.

²⁴ See Rodway, *English Comedy*.

²⁵ See, e.g., Gloria Steinem, ‘Erotica and Pornography: A Clear and Present Difference’, in Lederer, (ed.), *Take back the Night*, 35–9 (first published in *Ms* magazine); the collection of essays in Hughes (ed.) *Perspectives on Pornography*; Alan Bold, *The Sexual Dimension in Literature* (London, 1982); and Webb, *The Erotic Arts*. Karen Harvey’s definition of erotica is the exception to this rule and emphasizes that she does not regard it as ‘a more pleasant version of pornography’. See Harvey, *Reading Sex*, 21.

²⁶ Peter Webb, for example, as discussed in the Introduction, goes to great pains to define the difference between pornographic and erotic representations of sex, concluding: ‘The difference between eroticism and pornography is the difference between celebratory and masturbatory sex’ (Webb, *The Erotic Arts*, 2). On dualism and the mind/body split, see, e.g., Richard Tarnas, *The Passion*

a split between high literary culture and the low form of materially based comic humour is Mikhail Bakhtin.²⁷ He argues that both the comic and the obscene work to defile and debase the 'high', which comprises the abstract and spiritual, by interpolating the material world of the body, thus reducing and diminishing it. This argument, however, offers an account of cultural production that ignores two important aspects of early modern pornography. First, whether or not it was considered to be a 'low' form of artistic production, it was a highly literate and sophisticated kind of writing (whatever the level of audience it was aimed at), especially in its use of language and references, both classical and cultural, and was produced by the same high culture that produced 'decent' art and literature.²⁸ Secondly, the humour in these texts is not just about mocking and debasing or defiling: it is also pleasurable, intellectually engaging, and erotic. Furthermore, this pornography reflects a culture that had a materially different understanding of the body.²⁹ For example, modern understandings of scatological humour emerging from psychoanalytical and anthropological analyses suggest that we interpret this early modern material as being about defilement and degradation. However, it is more appropriate to situate this humour within the contemporary understanding of the body as based upon an economy of fungible fluids in which the balance of the four humours (blood, yellow and black bile, and phlegm) was crucial, not only to its physical appearance, but also to its temperament and the sorts of disorders to which it was likely to be predisposed. The free flow of fluids through the body and regular evacuations, induced by purging if necessary, were considered to be essential to its health and regulation.³⁰ In this economy of fluids, everything was interrelated: both seed and breast milk were formed from blood, which also nourished the infant in the womb. The body's excretions can, therefore, all stand in for one another, so that humour about breaking wind, defecation, and urination can also be about sex and sexual fluids. Moreover, while today scatological humour carries overtones of dirt and disgust, the positive association of excretion and purging with health in Renaissance medicine suggests that this may not have been a response shared by an early modern audience.³¹ Such jokes are not therefore necessarily about degrading sex by associating it with excreta, but rather yet another way of talking about and understanding sex in the early modern period.

of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that Have Shaped our World View (US edn., 1991; repr. London, 1996), esp. 138–48; also Rosalie Osmond, *Mutual Accusation: Seventeenth-Century Body and Soul Dialogues in their Literary and Theological Context* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London, 1990).

²⁷ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world*, see esp. introduction and ch. 1.

²⁸ On pornographic and erotic artistic production, see Stewart, *Engraven Desire*, 318–19.

²⁹ See especially on this point, Duden, *The Woman beneath the Skin*.

³⁰ See, e.g., Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination*, esp. ch. 3, 'Fungible Fluids, Heat and Concoction', and Laqueur, *Making Sex*, esp. ch. 2.

³¹ See also Mark Jenner's discussion of smell in the period in his 'Civilization and Deodorization? Smell in Early Modern English Culture', in Burke, Harrison, and Slack (eds.), *Civil Histories*, 127–44.

In this period—the seventeenth century—literary pornography was primarily produced both by and for (but not necessarily only consumed by) an elite educated section of society. Many of the texts from both the Renaissance and the seventeenth century were produced by highly educated and sophisticated authors for an audience of the same social and educational standing. These authors employed textual strategies that could be appreciated fully only by those who had extensive learning. For example, complete enjoyment of a text such as Chorier's *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* required the ability to understand Latin and a knowledge of classical history and literature. Although versions of this text were soon printed (and possibly also circulating in manuscript) in both French and English, the allusions and subtleties of the text would have been clear only if a reader had been educated in the classics.³² But it was not only those texts that were clearly aimed at the top end of the market for pornography (socially, materially, and educationally) that demanded a learned audience (though clearly they could be enjoyed without full understanding by the less educated). Works that were aimed at a broader readership, which might include the socially elevated as well as middling and meaner sorts, were still written by the educated, and contained Latin and Greek words, phrases, and allusions, some of which might be translated, hence bringing classical and Renaissance learning and references, however circumscribed, within the orbit of those without such extensive learning.³³ Periodicals such as *Mercurius Fumigosus, Or The Smoking Nocturnall*, which appeared weekly in the 1640s and 1650s, combined scurrilous gossip, pornographically entertaining stories, and scatological jokes with clever wordplay, political and religious satire, and spurious news in a short pamphlet that could have been enjoyed by all levels of society. Others in a similar vein, such as *Mercurius Democritus, Or, A True and Perfect Nocturnall, Mercurius Phreneticus Communicating Intelligence as well Forraign as Domestick, to all the Mad-men, Moon-men, Phrenetick-men, Phanatick, Melancholy, Mastfull, Merry People of Great Britain*, and *Mercurius Jocosus, Or The Merrie Mercurie*, reproduced this formula during the Civil War years to produce regular publications of what we might think of as similar to today's tabloid journalism: they combined gossip, soft pornography, and humour with news items, political commentary (in publications originating from both royalist and republican supporters), and opinion. The numerous religious sects that sprang up at this time were a prime target for sexual satire in these weekly publications, in a similar way to the mocking of religious hypocrisy we find today in 'naughty vicar' stories in the tabloid press.³⁴ This is a typical snippet from June

³² Foxon has traced a manuscript translation of the fourth dialogue that is dated 1676. See Foxon, *Libertine Literature*, 40.

³³ See discussion in Ch. 1.

³⁴ Other publications also exemplified this theme, such as *The New Westminster Wedding: Or, The Rampant Vicar. Being a Full Relation of the Late Marriage of J_____ P_____ Clerk, to Eliz. Hook, Spinster; the Ceremony Performed by a Reverend Jolly Dutch-man* (London, 1693).

1644: 'Foure Sisters of the *New Rante*, for want of Dipping had this week their Maiden-heads miraculously melted within them, but whether by the ardeny of Brother P.—s *Love-Dart*, the spirit, or the *Hott Weather*, will not be known yet this three-Quarter of a year.'³⁵ Ranters are linked to Baptists through their practice of 'dipping', and both were thus suggested to be sexually incontinent. 'Melting' was a common term for orgasm, and its experience by the four women through sexual intercourse with a male member of the sect is made doubly plain through the coy suggestion of protecting his anonymity by indicating only the first letter of his name, but which is clearly intended to encourage the reader to substitute 'Prick', as it is immediately followed by the synonym '*Love-Dart*'. The item confirms this reading by concluding that all will be revealed in nine months' time, that is, with the possible (probable) appearance of offspring following the usual length of a pregnancy. The clever use of extended metaphor, puns, irony, and double entendre for comedy and sexual titillation offers the reader both an intellectual enjoyment of the text as well as a physical enjoyment through laughter and erotic arousal. The pleasure of the text is at the same time an intellectual *and* an erotic pleasure: the one is not separated from the other. These items, which were cheaply produced and sold, were read, or enjoyed, by people at all social levels, whether readers or listeners, educated or lacking in formal schooling.

It is also unhelpful to differentiate between the types of text in order to interpret them and their use of humour: the sexual humour that pervades these pornographic texts is of a similar kind, whatever the nature of the text produced or the possible composition of its audience. Whether a text is a pamphlet, ballad, or joke accessible to a larger audience composed of people from all levels of society, literate or not, or an expensive item, imported and translated, or originating in English, and enjoying limited circulation only to those who could afford to purchase it, the nature of the humour is highly literate, playing with language, metaphor, allusion, and both literary and cultural references. From a study of themes across a broad range of publications, it is possible to show how ideas, concepts, knowledge, and understandings were common to all and were not just restricted to elite readerships. Moreover, the two markets enjoyed a degree of crossover: for example, sexual jokes could be related by word of mouth at all levels of society, and became expensive consumer items purchased by a wealthy, leisured class only when bound into jest-book collections.³⁶ Jest books were enormously popular, and some would go through many editions, or would be offered with new additions. Many jokes would be recirculated through different collections, thus ensuring a wider audience, and attesting to

³⁵ *Mercurius Fumigosus*, (14–21 June 1644), 19.

³⁶ Collections such as *Merry Drollery. Or, A Collection of Joviall Poems, Merry Songs, witty Drolleries. Intermixed with Pleasant Catches* (London, 1661) were clearly aimed at a more educated kind of audience given the liberal use of classical allusions. The use of Latin within the texts, on the title pages, and occasionally within the title suggests an educated readership.

the popularity of particular old chestnuts.³⁷ While I would not categorize these books as pornography *per se* (the sexual and scatological jokes often comprise only a fraction of the whole text), they illustrate and confirm how the pornographic and the erotic had a place in mainstream publications. The pornographic was at this time not regarded as a 'low' and shameful variety of joke (or other sort of publication) that should be separated into a discrete 'under-the-counter' type of publication, but was as worthy of inclusion and circulation, and was as entertaining, as other varieties of joke. This also holds true for manuscript publications, where erotic jokes and stories can be found bound with other kinds of manuscripts and included in commonplace books.³⁸ Pamela Allen Brown also notes that Le Strange's *Merry Passages* gathers together over 600 jests, including sexual jokes, many contributed by women.³⁹ Similarly, ballads and broadsheets were consumed by elite and non-elite audiences alike. Obscene or bawdy ballads were listened to or sung in both high and low society. Pepys, for example, records how he entertains company with a ballad that is undoubtedly bawdy in content.⁴⁰ Such humour was also not the province of men alone, but was equally available to both men and women, whether in public spaces such as the coffee house, the tavern, the marketplace, and the streets, or in private gatherings in a domestic setting. Contrary to traditional histories, which present alehouses as sites of male culture, Pamela Allen Brown, in her discussion of jesting culture in early modern England, has argued convincingly that they were patronized not only by men but also by women, who were not only present in their capacity as alewives and serving wenches.⁴¹ Helen Berry has argued that it was 'not unusual to see women in a coffee house, whether on fleeting errands, or going about their regular business', although it is unlikely that they participated in coffee-house culture in the same way as men, whatever their social status.⁴²

Space does not permit a complete analysis of all the different subjects of humour contained in this large body of material, especially as in many texts the comic narratives and jokes are piled up one after the other in ingeniously entertaining fashion. This chapter therefore discusses only a small number of predominant themes to try to tease out how these particular themes may have worked to bring erotic pleasure to the reader of the pornographic text.⁴³ Most of

³⁷ There are numerous collections of drolleries, most of which contain poems and songs of an erotic nature, some more sexually explicit than others. Some repeat jokes that appear in the jest collections but now in poetical form, such as 'A Song on a Lady and her Chamber-Maid', in William Hicks, *Grammatical Drollery* (London, 1682), 38.

³⁸ See Moulton, *Before Pornography*, 35–64.

³⁹ See Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep*, 20–1.

⁴⁰ Pepys, *Diary*, ed. Latham and Matthews, vi. 1–2, entry for 2 Jan., 1665.

⁴¹ See Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep*, 71–6. See also Wrightson, 'Alehouses, Order and Reformation in Rural England, 1590–1660', 1–27, and Clark, *The English Alehouse*.

⁴² Helen, Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture in Late-Stuart England: The Cultural World of the Athenian Mercury* (Aldershot, 2003), 56–8.

⁴³ The most notable omission is any discussion of the prostitute as a subject of humour, given that a large number of texts discussed here as pornography deal with prostitutes in one way or

the themes discussed here (and others that are not, such as flagellation humour) have been touched on in previous chapters and in different contexts, illustrating throughout this book how humour was a ubiquitous element of the early modern pornographic narrative. The particular comic themes discussed in this chapter are (very briefly) politics, religion and language, cuckoldry, exposure of the genitals, urination, and defecation. These subjects and how they are represented are very different from modern pornographic representations. They are based both on a different understanding of the body and on a different social and cultural landscape, and their complexity resists simple interpretations about misogyny or functionality that are suggested by psychoanalytical or feminist perspectives on sexual humour.⁴⁴

Both anthropological and psychoanalytical theory identify hostility and aggression as at the root of much humour.⁴⁵ In the same vein, some feminist theorists have located pornography on a continuum of violence against women in a direct extension of misogynist, sexist humour.⁴⁶ Although some of this sexual humour clearly has a hostile intent, not least when it is written as satire in which political and religious bodies or groups are targeted for attack, it should not always be read as expressive of aggression or hostility (and when it is, it is not always misogynist). Freud suggests that 'smut' is 'originally directed towards women and may be equated with attempts at seduction', so that the active joker is always defined as male. The underlying tendency of the sexual joke is aggression or hostility towards the woman. A sexual joke forces a woman to imagine her own sexual organs or herself engaged in a sexual act, and makes clear that the teller of the joke is doing likewise, which can only produce two possible reactions: sexual excitement or shame and embarrassment, which is itself a repressed admission of a sexual reaction. Humour as the expression of a hostile intent, and humour as a means of exposure, are both present in this early modern material. But the sexual humour is not always aimed against women, even when they may be the

another. The reason for this omission is that the prostitute is not presented generally as a figure of fun *per se*, and this is not a book about prostitutes. For a discussion of the representation of the prostitute in pornographic literature, see, for example, Mowry, *The Bawdy Politic*, and Brooke Ann Barker, 'The Representation of Prostitutes in Eighteenth-Century British Literature', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Chapel Hill, NC, 1991). As the narrator or protagonist in many of these texts, the prostitute presents comic scenarios and tales in which various themes can be traced. But, far from being a comic figure in these narratives, she is frequently presented as physically foul and decrepit, the bearer of disease and ruin, and as representative of women's weaker, baser nature in the same way as other stereotypes of female disorderliness such as the witch, the adulterous wife, and the scold.

⁴⁴ I concur with Brown in questioning the usefulness of psychoanalysis as a tool for understanding and interpreting early modern humour. Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep*, 28–9.

⁴⁵ Jacob Levine (ed.) *Motivation in Humor* (New York, 1969); Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (trans. and ed. James Strachey), in Angela Richards (ed.), *The Penguin Freud Library*, vi (1905; paperback edn., Harmondsworth, 1991). See also Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg, (eds.), *A Cultural History of Humour from Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge, 1997); and Bergson, *Laughter*.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Frances Gray's discussion of Sarah Daniels's play *Masterpieces*, in Gray, *Women and Laughter*, 34–5. See also Dworkin, *Pornography*.

ostensible target. Although much pornographic political satire seems to be aimed at female targets—for example, the King's mistresses, particularly the Catholic Duchess of Portsmouth and Lady Castlemaine—they are frequently the means by which the King can be criticized indirectly. There has been much work since the 1990s on the function of pornography at this time as political satire, originally focusing particularly on its role in the French Revolution.⁴⁷ More recently attention has turned to analysis of English pornography and its role in English political culture in the period, where Melissa M. Mowry's *The Bawdy Politic in Stuart England, 1660–1714* and James Grantham Turner's *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London* are of particular note, demonstrating how pornographic texts aimed sexual satire at shifting political targets throughout the century.⁴⁸ Pornography was deployed across the political spectrum as a means of discrediting and mocking both the monarchy and other political groups, and particularly, as Turner demonstrates, sexualizing women's political participation in order to undermine it.⁴⁹ Through 'porno-political' writing, as with prostitutional literature, we can detect considerable continuity in pornographic representation throughout the seventeenth century.⁵⁰ The satires on the parliament of women that appeared during the Civil War years, for example, resurfaced later in the 1680s. A significant amount of this material was directed at the monarchy after the Restoration both directly and indirectly through works attacking the King's mistresses. But political pornography did not suddenly appear with the Restoration; it continued an already entrenched mode of political satire.⁵¹ Rochester succinctly summed up the criticism of the King as not in complete command of his country or his policies when he wrote 'His sceptre and his p____ k are of a length, | And she may sway the one who plays with t'other.'⁵² The attacks on the King's mistresses were differentiated in terms of how much political influence

⁴⁷ Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers*; Hunt (ed.), *Eroticism and the Body Politic*; Hunt (ed.), *The Invention of Pornography*.

⁴⁸ See also Weil, 'Sometimes a Scepter is Only a Scepter'.

⁴⁹ See the series of pamphlets on a parliament of women or ladies from the 1640s, and again in 1684; e.g., Henry Neville, *The Ladies Parliament* (London, 1647); *A Parliament of Ladies: With their Laues Newly Enacted* (London, 1647). See also the satire on the puritan Act instituting the death penalty for adultery, *A Dialogue between Mistris Macquerella, a Suburb Bawd, Ms Scolopendra, a Noted Curtezian, and Mr Pimpinello an Usher, &c.* For a detailed discussion of the origins of this Act, see Keith Thomas, 'The Puritans and Adultery: The Act of 1650 Reconsidered', in Donald Pennington and Keith Thomas (eds.), *Puritans and Revolutionaries: Essays in Seventeenth-Century History Presented to Christopher Hill* (Oxford, 1978; paperback edn., 1982), 257–82.

⁵⁰ For a discussion of such publications during the Civil War years, see Susan Wiseman, '“Adam, the Father of all Flesh”: Porno-Political Rhetoric and Political Theory in and After the English Civil War', *Prose Studies*, 14/3 (Dec. 1991), 134–57 (special issue on *Pamphlet Wars: Prose in the English Revolution*, ed. James Holstun), and Turner, *Libertines and Radicals*, ch. 3.

⁵¹ For earlier sexual satire about Leveller women, see, e.g., Ann. Hughes, 'Gender and Politics in Leveller Literature', in Susan D. Amussen and Mark A. Kishlansky, (eds.), *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester and New York, 1995), 162–88, esp. 175–6.

⁵² *The Earl of Rochester's Verses for Which he was Banished* (1675), in George de F. Lord (ed.), *Poems on Affairs of State: Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660–1714, i. 1660–1678* (New Haven and London, 1963), 424.

they were thought to attempt to wield, and by religion. The most scathing invective was aimed at Lady Castlemaine, later Duchess of Cleveland, seen particularly in a series of mock-petitions addressed to her and purportedly from the whores of London following the attacks on bawdy houses in 1668, and at the French Catholic Duchess of Portsmouth in publications such as the obscene poetry in *The Duchess of Portsmouth's Garland* (1682).⁵³ This difference is made explicit in a poem about Nell Gwyn where her sexual dexterity is deployed to achieve mastery over the King's sexual realm only, unlike his other mistresses:

She hath got a trick to handle his p____,
But never lays hands on his sceptre.
All matters of state from her soul she does hate,
And leave to the politic bitches.⁵⁴

Anecdotally, Nell herself acknowledged and made use of this critical difference when threatened by a crowd objecting to French Catholic influence on the monarch through his French mistress, by declaring herself 'the protestant whore'.⁵⁵ But, while political criticism is a valid explanation for the motivation behind the production of such material, it ignores other significant aspects of this literature. First there is a whole subgenre of pornographic literature that describes the lives of whores and that includes writing about the King's 'whores' and other noblewomen at this time. Those women who can be identified as 'prostituting' themselves through open adultery or fornication as a mistress of the King might legitimately be termed 'whore'.⁵⁶ These political satires can be seen as fitting into and continuing this pornographic subgenre. As with most of this literature, some is more explicit than others. In its etymological sense, pornography is the writing (or depiction) of or about whores, taking as its subject matter those whose lives revolve around the sale of sex.⁵⁷ Most of these texts include some statement of the insatiability of women and their 'natural' desire for sex, which implies—if not overtly states—that all women are whores. These ideas are also comically expressed in works such as *The Virgins Complaint for the Losse of their Sweet-Hearts* (1642) and *The Mid-Wives Just Petition*, which appeared during the Civil War, bemoaning the loss of physical satisfaction with the removal of virile young men to the war, and the consequent lack of trade

⁵³ On the political significance of these petitions, see Mowry, *The Bawdy Politic*, esp. ch. 3. See also Turner, *Libertines and Radicals*, esp. ch. 5. There are also a number of letters purportedly from one of the King's mistresses to another, such as *A Letter from the Dutch. of Portsmouth to Madame Gwyn, on her Landing in France* (London, 1682).

⁵⁴ 'Nell Gwynne' (1669), in Lord (ed.), *Poems on Affairs of State*, 420.

⁵⁵ See Turner's discussion of this alleged incident in *Libertines and Radicals*, 16 n. 19, 278.

⁵⁶ For a discussion of the language of insult, see Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, esp. ch. 3, 'The Language of Insult'.

⁵⁷ For a discussion of the term 'pornographos', see Madeleine M. Henry, 'The Edible Woman: Athenaeus's Concept of the Pornographic', in Richlin (ed.), *Pornography and Representation in Greece & Rome*, 250–68.

for the midwives of England.⁵⁸ Secondly, looking at this material solely in terms of its political relevance—or indeed as expressions of misogyny—ignores its eroticism and its humour.⁵⁹ Political and religious pornography can be read as much for the sexual content as for its political or religious commentary. Just as sex is another way of discussing politics or religion, so politics and religion are another means of talking about sex. And they are, perhaps, vehicles that can be used to legitimize their sexual content in the same way that authors validated their work by claiming that their intention was to reform, through exposure to public shame, those whose lewd and lascivious behaviour they described in such titillating detail.

The centrality of the body and its sexual function to the political world is made devastatingly clear in Rochester's satire *Sodom*. As we have seen in a previous chapter, the play is a sustained political satire that does not just criticize the King and the court for sexual excess, but also expresses concerns about royal authority and legitimacy, specifically as a result of anxiety about the succession.⁶⁰ In the absence of a legitimate son and heir there was considerable anxiety about the prospect of the return of a Catholic monarch, as Charles II's Catholic brother, James, the Duke of York, would succeed to the throne should, as seemed increasingly likely, Charles die without legitimate male issue. *Sodom* thus dramatizes the cataclysmic consequences of sexual sterility, infertility, and the sexual excess that might bring about this condition.⁶¹ *Sodom* is entitled *The Farce of Sodom*, indicating that its author intended it to be comic (and to convey the idea that a nation conducting itself in such a way is clearly farcical). That this aim to amuse is not considered to be alien to any intention of sexual stimulation is highlighted in the two extant prologues to the play, which state its intention to arouse a sexual response from the audience: 'Our scenes are drawn to th' life in every shape: | They'll make all pricks to stand, cunts to gape.'⁶² Of course, this stated expectation itself may be intended to be satirical, given that the focus of the play is on unconventional means of sexual gratification. But, like other

⁵⁸ *The Virgins Complaint for the Losse of their Sweet-Hearts, by these Present Wars, and their Owne Long Solitude and Keeping their Virginities against their Wills: Presented in the Names and Behalfes of all the Damsels both of Country and City, January 29. by Sundry Virgins of the City of London* (London, 1642); *The Mid-Wives Just Petition*.

⁵⁹ For Pepys, Lady Castlemaine appears to have had particular significance in the stimulation of erotic fantasy. See Turner, 'Pepys and the Private Parts of Monarchy', 101–3. See, e.g., *A Letter from the Dutch. of Portsmouth to Madame Gwyn and Madam Gwins Answer to the Dutches of Portsmouths Letter*. Also the ballad, 'A Pleasant Dialogue betwixt Two Wanton Ladies of Pleasure'.

⁶⁰ See Harold Weber, 'Carolinean Sexuality and the Restoration Stage: Reconstructing the Royal Phallus in *Sodom*', in J. Douglas Canfield and Deborah C. Payne, (eds.), *Cultural Readings of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century English Theater* (Athens, Ga., and London, 1995), 67–88.

⁶¹ It was thought at this time that prostitutes tended not to become pregnant because their excessive sexual activity led to too great 'slipperiness' or excessive wetness of the womb, which inhibited conception. See, e.g., *The Problems of Aristotle, with Other Philosophers, and Physicians*, sig. D9.

⁶² Rochester, *Sodom, First Prologue*, 318–20, at 319, ll. 50–1.

works of pornography from this period that continually play with the idea of the voyeur and the presupposition that the contemplation of another's private sexual moment is sexually stimulating, *Sodom* too expects that the watching of the sexual 'play' and the listening to sexual wordplay will produce sexual feelings in its audience. Rochester also turns the joke on himself by recounting his own (alleged) sexual response to the writing of the play as part of his address to the audience:

The author's prick was so unruly grown
 Whilst writing this, he could not keep it down.
 But thinking on the postures of the play,
 Was forced at last to take his strength away
 And make him sick, by frigging till he spews,
 A sweet revenge, 'cause he disturbs his Muse.⁶³

Rochester here makes himself both author and object of the drama, utilizing his own body to illustrate the waste of seed engendered by excessive focus on the sexual, and how it saps creativity and productivity in a parody of illness that reflects contemporary medical concerns that immoderate ejaculation 'weakens a man and spends his spirits', rendering both man and seed inadequate for reproduction.⁶⁴

In much of this sexual literature from the seventeenth century, the primary characters are women. The woman is not a passive bystander but rather an actively engaged protagonist as both narrator and character in the story. As several of these texts are dialogues between whores, there is an underlying assumption that sexual talk is both 'natural' and unembarrassing for such women. Furthermore, contemporary ideas about the innate lustfulness of women and assumptions that when women get together they talk about sex undermine any notion that sex talk is something that is done *by* men *to* women.⁶⁵ Neither are women always the butt of any sexual joke or sexually comic scenario: in cuckold jokes especially, it is almost always the man who is the target of the humour, and who is portrayed as stupid, ineffectual, and frequently impotent.⁶⁶ Pamela Allen Brown has also thoroughly demonstrated that, in the jesting literature of early modern England,

⁶³ Rochester, 319, ll. 54–9. *Sodom* is generally described as a 'closet drama', designed to be read rather than acted, and it is hard to imagine how, even in the sexually permissive atmosphere of the Restoration court, it could ever have been legitimately staged. Ros Ballaster describes it as a 'comic closet drama' (Ballaster, 'John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester', 211).

⁶⁴ Levinus Lemnius, *The Secret Miracles of Nature* (London, 1658), 12.

⁶⁵ Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance*, 236.

⁶⁶ Pamela Allen Brown shows how women could enjoy cuckold jokes as, rather than being portrayed entirely negatively, in many cuckold narratives they act as directors of the action. Brown also resists a psychoanalytical interpretation of jokes in the early modern period. See Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep*, esp. ch. 3. For the representation of the cuckold in Restoration literature, see Lemuel N. Norrell, 'The Cuckold in Restoration Comedy', Ph.D. thesis (Florida State University, 1962), esp. ch. 6 on the comic role of the cuckold; David M. Turner, *Fashioning Adultery: Gender, Sex and Civility in England, 1660–1740* (Cambridge, 2002), esp. ch. 3. For a specific discussion of cuckoldry and its relation to male honour, see also Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England* ch. 4, 'Lost Manhood'.

women were not always the victims of misogynist attack, but rather occupied a range of positions, including cleverly turning the tables on their male tormentors as well as both starting and finishing 'on top'.⁶⁷ This aspect of seventeenth-century pornography and its sexual humour also serves to undermine modern feminist interpretations of pornography as inherently anti-woman.

The two main aspects of the use of language in the pornographic or erotic text of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that are usually discussed are the use of military metaphors for the sexual act and the extended topographical metaphor in which the body is represented as landscape.⁶⁸ While the metaphor of the body as landscape has a very long history and is clearly a very ancient literary convention, Charles Cotton's *Erotopolis* is usually cited as the earliest extant example of the extended topographical metaphor as sexual narrative that gave rise to a highly popular subgenre of erotic fiction in the eighteenth century, exemplified by works such as Thomas Stretser's *Arbor vitae: Or, The Natural History of the Tree of Life*. Some aspects of this extended sexual metaphor are, however, to be found in a slightly earlier work of the seventeenth century, *The Floating Island*, published ten years earlier than Cotton's, in 1673, by Richard Head, writing under the pseudonym Franck Careless.⁶⁹ But the extended metaphor most frequently used for both humorous and sexual effect in the seventeenth century is that of religious observance. In chapter one of *Fashioning Adultery*, David Turner explores the language of marital infidelity, arguing that 'the terminology of vice diversified over this period under the impetus of developing ideas of social refinement.'⁷⁰ Turner shows how the language of condemnation of sexual transgression changed to incorporate the language of politeness through analysis of a variety of texts including sermons, and prescriptive and popular literature. However, in pornographic and erotic texts of the seventeenth century it can be seen that there was a remarkable continuity in the use of a particular kind of language for the discussion of sex. While ministers fulminated in sermons

⁶⁷ Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep*, intro. See also Sharon Achinstein, 'Women on Top in the Pamphlet Literature of the English Revolution', *Women's Studies*, 24/1–2 (1994), 131–63.

⁶⁸ On the military metaphor for sexual conquest, see Turner, *Fashioning Adultery*, 39. Turner provides an excellent dissection of the language of sex in ch. 1, 'Language, Sex and Civility'. On the body and landscape, see Harvey, *Reading Sex*; Julie Peakman, 'Medicine, the Body and the Botanical Metaphor in Erotica', in Kurt Bayertz and Roy Porter (eds.), *From Physico-Theology to Bio-Technology: Essays in the Social and Cultural History of Biosciences: A Festschrift for Mikuláš Teich* (Amsterdam, 1998), 197–223; Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*; Bridget Orr, 'Whores' Rhetoric and the Maps of Love: Constructing the Feminine in Restoration Erotica', in Brant and Purkiss (eds.), *Women, Texts and Histories*, 195–216.

⁶⁹ Franck Careless (pseud. Richard Head), *The Floating Island* Cotton's later work bears other similarities to Head's text, especially the journey through the areas of prostitution in London. Cotton seems to have been an inveterate 'borrower': his *Scarronides, or, Virgile Travestie. A Mock-Poem on the First and Fourth Books of Virgil's Aeneid in English Burlesque* (London, 1664 acknowledges its debt to Paul Scarron's *Virgile travestie* (1653) in its title, but there is no acknowledgement of other debts, such as the copying into *Erotopolis* of two passages from *Fifteen Real Comforts of Matrimony*, usually attributed to Aphra Behn.

⁷⁰ Turner, *Fashioning Adultery*, 21.

against the use of licentious language, authors thoroughly mined the language of religion and the construction of language itself for sexual and comic effect. The wide variety of language, allusion, and metaphor employed by these texts is an inspired means of evoking variety in the face of a limited number of positions or actions available for description. But the use of this sexualized language in the erotic text, like 'wanton talk', is also at the same time both an intellectual and a sexual pleasure. Sex talk is itself a variety of sex, or, as Frappier-Mazur puts it, 'unlike other words, the obscene word not only represents, but is, the thing itself'.⁷¹ Turner has pointed out how seventeenth-century commentators also made this association, arguing that the one would inevitably lead to the other being a 'Pander or Bawd unto Uncleanesse'.⁷² Part of the joke here surely must be that pornography demonstrated that it did not need to use licentious or lewd language to tempt its audience to 'Uncleanesse': it could use any language it wished, and especially religious language, to achieve the same effect.

Although women who spoke out publicly on religious matters were invariably mocked and satirized in sexual terms, this kind of satire was confined neither to women nor to the unorthodox Protestant sects.⁷³ During the 1640s and 1650s Ranters, Adamites, and the Family of Love are the targets of particularly explicit sexual satire in short pamphlets such as *A Description of the Sect Called the Family of Love* (1641), *A Nest of Serpents Discovered. Or, A Knot of Old Heretiques Revived, Called the Adamites* (1641), *The Ranters Declaration* (1650), and *The Ranters Religion* (1650).⁷⁴ Many of the texts satirizing Ranters and Adamites include a woodcut frontispiece and occasionally additional textual illustration. These pictures are particularly explicit, depicting both naked men and women, the men clearly in a state of sexual excitation (these illustrations will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7). During the 1670s and early 1680s at the time of the

⁷¹ See Lucienne Frappier-Mazur, 'Truth and the Obscene Word in Eighteenth-Century French Pornography', in Hunt (ed.), *The Invention of Pornography*, 203–21, at 221. On sex talk, the sexual imagination, and the Restoration Court, see Turner, 'Pepys and the Private Parts of Monarchy', 101, 105. On the use of sexual curse words in pornography, see Lisa Z. Sigel, 'Name your Pleasure: The Transformation of Sexual Language in Nineteenth-Century British Pornography', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 9/4 (Oct. 2000), 395–419.

⁷² George Webbe, *The Arraignment of an Unruly Tongue* (London, 1619), cited in Turner, *Fashioning Adultery*, 25.

⁷³ Crawford, *Women and Religion in England*, esp. ch. 6, 'Radical Religion: Separatists and Sectaries 1558–1660'.

⁷⁴ *A Description of the Sect Called the Family of Love: With their Common Place of Residence. Being Discovered by one Mrs Susanna Snow, of Pirford near Chertsey, in the County of Surrey, who was Vainly Led away for a Time, through their Base Allurements, and at Length Fell Mad, till by a Great Miracle Shewn from God, she was Delivered* (London, 1641); *A Nest of Serpents Discovered. Or, A Knot of Old Heretiques Revived, Called the Adamites. Wherein their Originall, Increase, and Severall Ridiculous Tenets are Plainly Layd Open* (London, 1641). There are a large number of pamphlets about the Ranters in addition to *The Ranters Declaration* (London, 1650) and *The Ranters Religion* (London, 1650). For example, *The Arraignment and Tryall with A Declaration of the Ranters* (London, 1650); *Strange News from Newgate and the Old-Baily* (London, 1650); *The Ranters Ranting* (London 1650), *The Joviall Crew, Or, The Devill Turn'd Ranter: Being a Character of the Roaring Ranters of these Times* (London, 1650); *The Ranters Bible* (London, 1650), and *The Wilshire Rant* (London, 1652).

'Popish Plot' scare and anxiety about the likely return of a Catholic monarch to England's throne, there was an outpouring of anti-Catholic propaganda, which also deployed pornographic sexual satire, as has been discussed in Chapter 3 on sexual flagellation.⁷⁵ In the mid- and later part of the century Quakers were targeted, with the fundamental Quaker idea of the Inner Light lending itself to much wordplay on the word *light*, sexual slang for a sexually loose person or behaviour.⁷⁶ In *The Quakers Art of Courtship* (1689), the author describes how 'sometimes Friends have been so *Light-headed* (especially after some Creature-refreshment) that they have not been able to stand alone without the help of some fellow Creature'.⁷⁷ The double entendres are not restricted to the play on *light*, but also imply the participation in sexual intercourse, suggesting that after one sexual engagement ('some Creature-refreshment') the male members of the sect are unable to become erect again ('stand alone') without the aid of a female member. The narrative is thus at the same time humorous, sexually explicit, and titillating, couched in language whose double meanings would be instantly recognizable to a seventeenth-century audience entirely familiar with sexual satire as a means of discrediting religious dissidence. In a similar vein in *The Secret Sinners: Or, A Most Pleasant Dialogue between a Quaker and his Maid, and his Wife Sarah* (c.1675), the Quaker instructs his maid: 'Thou canst not Err, therefore prepare thy Vessel to receive the motions that approach unto thy Tabernacle.'⁷⁸ Here Quakers have attributed to them an erroneous doctrine—antinomianism—usually associated with Ranters: that, because Christ atoned for all mankind's sins when he was crucified, everyone was saved and hence was free from all moral, legal, and social restraints on behaviour. Antinomian doctrine thus lends itself to religious sexual satire as a justification for adultery and fornication that mocks dissenting sects while also providing sexually explicit and entertaining narrative.

An even more sustained employment of the same technique appears in *Naked Truth*, which extends to sixty-seven pages of dialogue between two characters named Terpole and Mimologue that defines and describes the meanings of

⁷⁵ See, e.g., *The Jesuits Morals. Collected by a Doctor of the Colledge of Sorbon in Paris. Who Hath Faithfully Extracted them out of the Jesuits own Books, which are Printed by the Permission and Approbation of the Superiours of their Society* (London, 1670). Others are discussed in Chapter 3 on flagellation. In this atmosphere of fervent anti-Catholicism, Henry Rhodes was able to publish *Venus in the Cloister* in 1683 without difficulty, while Edmund Curl was prosecuted for doing so forty years later, despite one judge reading it as anti-Catholic propaganda. See Wagner, 'Anticatholic Erotica in Eighteenth-Century England'; Thomas, *A Long Time Burning*, 80–2.

⁷⁶ See Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery*, and James T. Henke, *Renaissance Dramatic Bawdy (Exclusive of Shakespeare): An Annotated Glossary and Critical Essays* (2 vols.; Salzburg, 1974; updated and republished as *Courtesans and Cuckolds: A Glossary of Renaissance Dramatic Bawdy (Exclusive of Shakespeare)* (New York and London, 1979)).

⁷⁷ *The Quakers Art of Courtship: Or, The Yea-and-Nay Academy of Complements. Calculated for the Meridian of the Bull-and-Mouth; and may Indifferently Serve the Brethren of the Wind-Mill Order, for Noddification in any Part of Will-a-Wisp Land. By the Author of Teagueland Jest* (London, 1689), 9.

⁷⁸ *The Secret Sinners: Or, A Most Pleasant Dialogue between a Quaker and his Maid, and his Wife Sarah* (c.1675), in *Samuel Pepys' Penny Merriments*, ed. Roger Thompson (London, 1976), 147–52, at 148.

different terms. For example, in an extended discussion of the term *lying*, the double entendres fly thick and fast, implying sexual incontinence and illegitimacy, linking them to indiscriminate association with other dissenting religious groups:

But (Beloved) that you may be *edified* by what I have said, I come in the last place to shew you, that *lying* is a very *edifying* thing, it tends very much to edification, for by that means the Sisters being *wrought upon* will greatly *encrease* and multiply, and they being extraordinarily *plumpt up* before, it is a *pregnant* argument of their *thriving* condition, and that in due time they will bring forth a blessed *seed*, but the *issue* is uncertain, because no body knowes, whether the *cun-junction* [was] between them and their *husbands*, or some *benevolent* Quakers or fifth Monarchy men . . .⁷⁹

Typography is employed here to give emphasis to the key words and phrases and to highlight them to the reader. Pamela Allen Brown has pointed out that the printers of jest books also used such typographic cues, so that those repeating the jokes to others might know where to lay particular stress or to highlight the punchline. Such use of typography could also perhaps increase the accessibility of these texts to those with less perfect reading skills.⁸⁰ Paying attention to the stressed words alone would convey the sense of the passage, as well as transforming them into alternative 'obscene' words and phrases, so that they carried no less a freight of sexual meaning than more direct, specifically sexual terminology. The deliberate hyphenation and spelling of 'cun-junction' here also allows the author to insert the obscene word into the passage while not actually doing so. By the early eighteenth century Quakers seem to be losing the association with sexual looseness that this short passage continued to make in the 1670s. In *A Comical New Dialogue between Mr G——ff, a Pious Dissenting Parson, and a Female-Quaker, (a Goldsmith's Wife) near Cheapside; whom the Reverend Preacher Pick'd up* (1706), the Quaker woman is described as 'an honest civil Woman', while the dissenting preacher is characterized as lecherous and dishonest, suggesting that by this time Quakers were becoming more tolerated and accepted in communities, perhaps as a result of the 1689 Toleration Act, the greater formalization of their organization, and the imposition of more strict discipline on their members.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Don Francisco Baltheo de Montalvan, *Naked Truth or a Plain Discovery of the Intrigues of Amorous Fops, and Humours of Several Other Whimsical Persons in a Pleasant and Profitable Dialogue between a Precious Saint-Like Sister Called Terpole and Mimologue a Scoffing Buffoon*, (trans. W.H.; London, 1673), 60–1. The title of this work would have resonance for a literate audience well versed in both religious works and more popular literature, recalling pamphlets from the Civil War years on sects such as Adamites and Ranters. See, for various examples, David Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissension* (Oxford, 2000), 271–6.

⁸⁰ Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep*, 22.

⁸¹ Crawford, *Women and Religion*, 193. *A Comical New Dialogue between Mr. G——ff, a Pious Dissenting Parson, and a Female-Quaker (A Goldsmith's Wife) near Cheapside; whom the Reverend Preacher Pick'd up. With the Discourse that Pass'd between them, and the Treatment he gave her. Also, how He was Apprehended for the same, and Carried before a Justice of Peace: And Sent to Wood-Street-Compter on Wednesday Night Last* (London, 1706), 2. Though the narrative characterizes the Quaker woman as honest, it relies on the assumption that she could be approached for sex.

This pleasure in language and how it can be used for both sexual and comic effects is particularly overt in *The Practical Part of Love* and *Grammatical Drollery*, where the rules of Latin grammar are anatomized, exploiting the potential for sexual innuendo, and amusing any classically educated readers.⁸² For example, from *Grammatical Drollery*, the third verse of 'My Mistris Understands all the Cases':

Next, I call her Genitive,
'Cause she's for Procreation;
And she does use a Lenitive,
As a help to Generation.
Nay, she's for getting all she can
From every stout begetting man,
The best in all the Nation.⁸³

The author of *The Practical Part of Love* exploits the possibilities of grammatical explication more fully:

A Noun Substantive standeth by it self, till it requireth another thing to be joyn'd with it to shew its power and effect, and doth decline; as Vir a Man, Priapus a thing called by that name. A Noun Adjective cannot stand long by its self, because its property is to fall, and earnestly desireth other things to be joyned with it; as Faemina, a woman, and it is declined with three Articles, &c.⁸⁴

Roger Thompson argues that these 'authors have lavished enormous ingenuity in the search for telling metaphors, puns and clever indirection. This very indirection, though it should not be exaggerated, seems to represent pretty strong taboos against open sexual discussion and description, a prurient shamefacedness.'⁸⁵ However, this exploitation and enjoyment of language and metaphor rather suggest the opposite: that the discussion of sexual matters was not hidden away behind metaphor in shame, but that it was the occasion for a joyful relishing of the pleasures both of language and of sex. Just as the mouth is a familiar metaphor for the female sexual parts in the period, so the tongue, or language, speaks sex. Language and sex are not restricted only to the spoken word, however. The printed word also embodies sex, as the pages of the book transmute into the labia, within whose leaves or lips can be found 'the deep mysteries and secrets of Nature'.⁸⁶ Metaphor does not here conceal: it reveals and provides many different ways of talking about sexual matters. The indirectness of the language, the exaggerated and prevalent use of sexual innuendo and double entendre, are

⁸² Bakhtin points out that the grammatical parody and the parody of official Latin forms were popular in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and particularly in erotic terms. *Rabelais and his world*, esp. 13–21.

⁸³ Hicks, *Grammatical Drollery*, 59.

⁸⁴ *The Practical Part of Love*, 26–7.

⁸⁵ Thompson, 'Popular Reading and Humour', 665.

⁸⁶ *The Practical Part of Love*, 35. See Turner, *Libertines and Radicals*, for a discussion of the 'two-leaved book', 126.

both part of the comedy and part of the sex. The very piling of euphemism upon euphemism, extending the description and prolonging the action, is in itself a way of being very forcibly direct, and leaving no room for misunderstanding. Although the above example from *The Practical Part of Love* may be particularly appealing, and funny, to those who learned Latin, the language itself does not require knowledge of Latin grammar for the reader or listener to understand the sexual message and to appreciate the innuendo and double entendres. The metaphors are not so obscure that their meaning is opaque.

In seventeenth-century society, where women were regarded as the most lustful of the sexes, less rational and hence more subject to their desires, it was then a logical development that women's pursuit of sexual satisfaction was represented as leading to the inevitable sexual betrayal of husbands and lovers. One of the most prevalent comic themes, in a wide variety of literature, at this time is that of cuckoldry.⁸⁷ It is, therefore, not surprising that this subject also appears in pornographic literature. The symbol of the cuckold's horns becomes shorthand for illicit sex as much as it stands for the humiliation of a cheated husband. The standard interpretation of comic material relating to cuckoldry is that the joke performs a social as well as an individual psychological purpose.⁸⁸ It has a functional purpose, both enforcing the moral norms of the community but also protecting economic lives through inheritance. Female adultery not only flouted contemporary ideals of chastity, but also threatened the stability both of the individual household and of the wider community. It simultaneously destabilized the continuity of the marital relationship and ruptured legitimate lines of inheritance of blood, land, and property by possibly introducing another man's offspring into the household. The wider stability of the community was also threatened by any resulting gossip and dissension among neighbours and by the possible financial burden placed on the parish should the cuckolded husband throw his wife and any illegitimate offspring out of the marital home. In a patriarchal society where prescriptive literature ruled that man was the head that should rule the woman as body, and where such metaphors also characterized the monarchical state, disruption to one threatened disruption to the other. A man who was ineffectual in governing his wife was as a consequence unsuitable for wider governance of local or national political bodies. But, more broadly, in political discourse where the family is a microcosm of the state, the usurpation of the husband's authority in the family presaged the overthrow of the state.⁸⁹ Humour is thus both socially conditioned in terms of what it is that a particular

⁸⁷ See Keith Thomas, 'The Place of Laughter in Tudor and Stuart England', *Times Literary Supplement* (21 Jan. 1977), 77–81; Spufford, *Small Books*. For an exploration of this theme specifically in relation to Restoration drama, see Norrell, 'The Cuckold in Restoration Comedy'; as a theme in ballads in relation to male honour, see Foyster, *Manhood*, esp. 104–7. See also Turner, *Fashioning Adultery*.

⁸⁸ Bergson, *Laughter*, 65; Bakhtin, *Rabelais*; Ingram, 'Ridings', 166–97.

⁸⁹ See Turner, *Fashioning Adultery*, ch 2.

society laughs at—what it is socially acceptable to joke about—and in terms of what relief obtained from humour benefits society as a whole (instead of just the individual psychological relief of expressing the repressed).⁹⁰ Cuckold humour thus has a ‘containing function . . . which provides a safety valve for otherwise intolerable fears’, allowing society to come to terms with what it cannot be certain of controlling (female sexuality).⁹¹ The carnival, in which the world is ‘turned upside down’ for a period of time, and the ‘skimmington’, in which a cuckolded or wife-beaten husband is ritually shamed and humiliated by part of the community, are interpreted as serving this purpose.⁹² However, this sort of analysis again ignores not only the comic element of these scenes, but also the sexual. They are not merely functional, but also highly entertaining and erotic, emphasizing the prevalence of the sexual, and encouraging and inciting sexual thoughts and feelings through humour in ritual ingredients such as the cross-dressing of male participants, the symbolic parading of horns or antlers symbolizing the cuckold, and even, on at least one occasion, the display of a picture of the female genitals, as well as the singing or reciting of obscene mocking rhymes or proclamations.⁹³ Neither was the use of sexual symbols restricted to the shaming of the cuckolded husband; women too might attempt to shame and humiliate adulterous husbands and their mistresses in this way. Bassett Stone presented Alice Clinton with ‘a piece of black cloth [in] the form of a womans privities’ in the marketplace after her husband, Emmanuel Stone, told her that he had ‘handled her [Alice’s] privy parts’.⁹⁴

Many of these cuckold narratives are by no means explicit in their description of sexual misdemeanours and often carry an overtly moral message about the wrongness of adultery and fornication. The modern reader might thus hesitate to describe these texts as pornographic. However, it is a variety of literature in which the performance of the sexual act is the central issue, and hence instigates the *imagining* of and fantasizing about sexual activity and/or the sexual body by the reader. A moralizing literature can at the same time operate as a literature

⁹⁰ There are, for example, no jokes about menstruation, the oral stimulation of the male genitals, or homosexual sexual acts between men (thus supporting the argument in Chapter 4 that it was unacceptable to describe male homosexual contact at this time). Such jokes may exist, or have existed, but I did not find any in the jest books studied here. Some subjects, such as same-sex sexual contact between women, are dealt with humorously in other kinds of text, such as ballads and chapbooks.

⁹¹ Alison Sinclair, *The Deceived Husband: A Kleinian Approach to Infidelity* (Oxford, 1993), 28. See also Felicity Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women 1660–1750* (Lexington, 1984). Nussbaum argues (p. 20) that satire ‘helps men to survive their fears, to remain potent when threatened with impotence, both real and imagined’.

⁹² E. P. Thompson, however, notes that the skimmington could be mounted as an elaborate community joke. Thompson also notes that obscenity is part of the ‘vocabulary’ of rough music. E. P. Thompson, ‘Rough Music Reconsidered’, *Folklore*, 103/1 (1992), 3–26, at 7, 17.

⁹³ See Ingram, ‘Ridings’, 166–86. Ingram argues that as well as the functional purpose of reinforcing communal norms, the form of these popular events also has to do with the crossing of boundaries, the expression of hostility, festive celebration of rites of passage, and penal practices.

⁹⁴ Cited in Gowing, *Common Bodies*, 26.

of licence, describing and publicizing the behaviour that it purports to wish to suppress. As Leonard Barkan points out in his discussion of ancient sculpture and Renaissance narratives, hiding 'generate[s] and focus[es] the desire that they seek to repress'.⁹⁵ For example, the comprehensive treatise on cuckolding that is both serious and entertaining entitled *The Horn Exalted or Roome for Cuckolds* (1660) is introduced by a prefatory poem that provides the usual justification of a reforming intention, by admonishing the reader to

Read, and beware how that ye firke,
Least the repentance stool o'th Kirk,
Prove the reward of your queint [cunt] wirke.⁹⁶

But not all this literature either moralizes, or relies on the implicit or euphemism. Some texts are quite explicit, especially the subgenre of works variously entitled *Fifteen Real Comforts of Matrimony* and *The Fifteen Comforts of Rash and Inconsiderate Marriage* (1694).⁹⁷ Others use double entendre and commonly used sexual language to make the meaning clear: 'He rubbing his Eyes, and speedily understanding her Meaning by her Gaping, laid her down with a Finger and a Thumb, upon a Lolling Convenience, in Order to Oblige her . . .'.⁹⁸ The ubiquitous association of women's speech with sex, of the mouth with the vagina, here allows the author to play on this understanding (expressed more directly by Rochester when he wrote that *Sodom* would cause 'cunts to gape'), to imply manual stimulation of the female genitals followed by sexual intercourse.

These cuckold jokes and stories turn on the ignorance, and the innocence, of the deceived husband, who is always the last to know of his wife's infidelity (even if it is frequent and repeated with seemingly large numbers of different men). They are often, though, interpreted as anti-women, as they highlight women's lascivious nature, their ability to lie, their innate deceitfulness, craftiness, unreliability, shamelessness, lack of modesty and chastity, and so on. But, even

⁹⁵ Leonard Barkan, 'The Beholder's Tale: Ancient Sculpture, Renaissance Narratives', *Representations*, 44 (Fall 1993), 133–66, at 150.

⁹⁶ G. Rogers, *The Horn Exalted or Roome for Cuckolds. Being a Treatise concerning the Reason and Original of the Word Cuckold, and why such are Said to Wear Horns. Very Proper for these Times, when Men are Butting, and Pushing, and Goring, and Horning one another* (London, 1660). 'Queint' is an old English spelling of 'cunt'.

⁹⁷ *Fifteen Real Comforts of Matrimony*, attributed to Aphra Behn, as is also A. Marsh, *The Ten Pleasures of Marriage and the Second Part The Confession of the New Married Couple* (London, 1682; repr. 1922); *The Fifteen Comforts of Rash and Inconsiderate Marriage. Or, Select Animadversions upon the Miscarriages of a Wedded State. Done out of French. The Fourth Edition, with the Addition of Three Comforts* (London, 1694). The genre continued into the early eighteenth century with the publication of: *The Fifteen Comforts of Matrimony. Or, A Looking-Glass for all those who have Enter'd in that Holy and Comfortable State. Wherein are Sum'd up all those Blessings that Attend a Married Life* (London, 1706); *The Fifteen Comforts of Cuckoldom. Written by a Noted Cuckold in the New-Exchange in the Strand* (London, 1706); *The Fifteen Plagues of a Maiden-Head* (London, 1707); and *The Maids Vindication: Or, The Fifteen Comforts of Living a Single Life. Being an Answer to the Fifteen Plagues of a Maiden-Head* (London, 1707).

⁹⁸ *A Frolick to Horn-Fair*, 5.

though this may be the case, it cannot be ignored that the joke is invariably on the man, the deceived husband, who is generally portrayed as foolish, stupid, easily deceived, and frequently impotent or at least sexually inadequate.⁹⁹ The female voices in the 'Fifteen Comforts' texts dwell mockingly on the man's inability to perform his sexual function to her satisfaction, so a young woman who marries an impotent old man has justification for cuckolding him: 'Her amorous fires kindled by the Embers of his drooping years, grow violent, and prey upon her lusty blood. And is it not time to call out for help, when hardly the spout in a Whales neck will serve to send forth streams sufficient to quench her inward fires?'¹⁰⁰ While the subtext of these jokes is always that women are sexually voracious, and it is implied that a man is hardly sufficient for the job (what man could ejaculate as much as a whale's spout shoots forth?), so that men are foolish to think that they will remain chaste, the implication is still that it is up to the man to keep his wife satisfied so that she does not need to look elsewhere.¹⁰¹ Thus in sexual jokes, just as in prose pornography, women are always eager for sex and promiscuous, even in old age:

An old Woman, of Fourscore, having marry'd a lusty Fellow of five and twenty; and he using her scurvily, which made her crawl to a Justice's, to make her Complaint, and get a Warrant, in order to Bind him over to his Good behaviour: Where she was reproved, for being so foolish to marry in her Old Age, when she ought to have minded better things, as having one Foot in the Grave. What! *reply'd she, very angrily,* wou'd you have me turn Where?¹⁰²

This contrasts forcibly with the representation of old men as dried up and impotent and who 'when their other Tackle fails' em, love to fornicate with their eyes'.¹⁰³ Cuckold jokes can be read as, on the one hand, taking men to task for failing to satisfy their wives, and warning of the consequences of relinquishing patriarchal control, and, on the other, as reassuring that this lack of control is to be understood as impossible in the face of women's capacity for sexual pleasure, which not even a whale (or an elephant), let alone a mere man, would be able to contain.

Continuing the functional interpretation of cuckold humour, but also incorporating psychoanalytic theory, it is frequently asserted that such jokes allow the expression of repressed desires, fears, and anxieties. While noting that the prevailing concerns of the large amount of comic material on the cuckold to be found

⁹⁹ Brown's analysis confirms that much more attention is paid to the cuckold than to the woman who has made him one. See Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep*, 91–8.

¹⁰⁰ *Fifteen Real Comforts of Matrimony*, 45. The importance of large amounts of seminal fluid to a man's virility is discussed in more detail in Chs. 2 and 3.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Rochester's similar reference to an elephant in *Sodom* mentioned in Ch. 2.

¹⁰² J.S., *England's Merry Jester: Or, Court, City and Country Jest, New, and Suitable to the Humours of the Times; Witty and Familiar, for the Encrease of Merriment, and Improvement of Friendly Conversation, as they are Used among the Wits of the Age* (London, 1693), 89.

¹⁰³ *Fifteen Real Comforts of Matrimony*, 46. Old male bodies in eighteenth-century erotica are also, as here, characterized by lack of vigour and virility. Harvey, *Reading Sex*, 138–9.

in the eighteenth century had its roots in classical literature, and could be found 'almost *ad nauseam*' in Restoration comedy, Peter Wagner nevertheless offers the explanation that the popularity of cuckoldry as a theme in erotic literature reveals deep anxieties in the *eighteenth-century* male psyche (while noting that it thus cannot be attributed 'solely to social circumstances and sexual relations in the eighteenth century').¹⁰⁴ Psychoanalytic explication thus offers an ahistorical model that accounts for the long history of the cuckold joke in West European society and culture, and that is related to fears about male sexual inadequacy (especially in view of the voraciousness of the female sexual appetite) and the necessity of maintaining control over women in a patriarchal and patrilineal society.¹⁰⁵ It has been argued for the seventeenth century that male anxiety would be engendered by the dishonour that a wife's lack of chastity entailed. Not only was a man's inadequacy in governing his family exposed by a wife's adultery, but his masculinity was threatened by the imputation of sexual inadequacy in obviously being unable to satisfy his wife sexually.¹⁰⁶ And I have argued in Chapter 2 that issues to do with fertility, and hence of inheritance, were of great concern to early modern society, so that a threat of this nature would again be a source of anxiety. Such an argument has the virtue of historicizing cuckoldry and accounting for the popularity of this specific kind of humour in the early modern period. However, it ignores the eroticism of this literature and its appeal as both sexual stimulation and humorous entertainment. The jokes and stories offer the opportunity for descriptions of sexual activity and sexual body parts entwined with farcical scenarios where husbands are duped and humiliated and lovers are exposed both literally and figuratively.

Comedy is theorized further as a means by which that which is normally unmentionable (or, in psychoanalytic terms, the repressed) can be put into

¹⁰⁴ Wagner, *Eros Revived*, 143–4.

¹⁰⁵ Cuckold jokes appear in both English and continental material and are not solely a feature of English pornographic writing. However, the comic figure of the husband as the 'cuckold' is not a feature of the two French texts *The School of Venus* and *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*. While adultery is a topic of these two texts and receives considerable attention, the husband is not portrayed as foolishly deceived nor as sexually inadequate. There is in these French texts an equality of deception that undermines the institution of marriage and bourgeois pretensions to respectability. The hypocrisy of a society in which the concern for outward appearance disguises a real disregard for sexual morality is here the target of satire. See, e.g., Millot, *The School of Venus*, 82; Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 23, 136. For a Kleinian reading of cuckold narratives, see Sinclair, *The Deceived Husband*.

¹⁰⁶ See Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*. But see also Faramerz Dabhoiwala, 'The Construction of Honour, Reputation and Status in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England', *TRHS*, 6th ser., 6 (1996), 201–13, at 204. Similarly, the impact on female honour of a woman's sexual promiscuity or looseness would be variable depending on social status. For example, though notorious as the King's mistress, the Countess of Castlemaine's social position and prominence provided a degree of immunity against the consequences of her behaviour that would not have been available to women much lower down the social scale. See Turner, 'Pepys and the Private Parts of Monarchy'. On female honour, see also Herrup, "'To Pluck Bright Honour from the Pale faced Moon": Gender and Honour in the Castleharen Story', and Laura Gowing, 'Women, Status and the Popular Culture of Dishonour', *TRHS*, 6th ser., 6 (1996), 137–59 and 225–34.

words and brought into the open.¹⁰⁷ The exposure of the body, which is usually clothed with the private parts particularly hidden from sight, is one of the most obvious functions of the pornographic text, whether pictorial or literary.¹⁰⁸ In these seventeenth-century texts humour is clearly as, if not more, popular a technique as straight description for exposing and portraying the body, and especially the sexual parts of the body. There are numerous jokes about the accidental, or deliberate, exposure of the genitals. Most, but not all, of these portray the exposure of the female genitals. There is also a gendered difference in the representation of the genitals in this humour. Jokes or humorous stories that refer to the male genitalia do not generally make them the object of derision, but rather tend to emphasize their (prodigious) size, and frequently end by turning the attention of the listener around to imagining the female genitals. Jokes and stories that expose the female genitalia, however, are more complex, and unravelling them often lays bare many layers of meaning. Contemporary terms for the female sexual parts such as ‘cut’, ‘cut purse’, and ‘commodity’ are played with to suggest many different ways of imagining them, as both presence and absence, and as simultaneously the same as men’s parts but different. They also lend themselves to intimations of female sexual promiscuity and disorderliness through their other meanings—‘cutpurse’ being a common term for thief and ‘commodity’ indicating an article for sale. The following joke, which is repeated in several jest books with only minor differences, also appears as a short story in one of the longer prose narratives:

A young married woman in Cheapside, in the morning being abed, her Husband being underneath in the shop, whilst he was selling his trinkets below, she was playing her tricks above, for she try’d to put her heel over her neck; which being done, she could not get it back again, but with striving tumbled off the bed: Her Husband hearing a great noise above, sent up his man, a raw Country Boy, to see what was the matter: Who came down and told his Master, that his Mistriss was bewicht, or turn’d into an Owl; and that she had fallen off the bed, and *with her fall had got a great gash in her shoulder*.¹⁰⁹

This joke works on several levels at once. The punchline, indicated by the italicized text, suggests that the young married woman is cuckolding her husband

¹⁰⁷ Paul Kline has remarked: ‘The joke, like the dream, makes possible the satisfaction of an instinct, sex or aggression, that would otherwise be banned. The barrier is repression’. ‘The Psychoanalytic Theory of Humour and Laughter’, in Antony J. Chapman and Hugh C. Foot (eds.), *It’s a Funny Thing, Humour* (Oxford, 1977), 7–12, at 9.

¹⁰⁸ For a fascinating analysis of the interconnection of the nude body with the clothed body in Western art, see Anne Hollander, *Seeing through Clothes* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1975), esp. ch. 2, ‘Nudity’. See also my discussion in Ch. 7.

¹⁰⁹ Captain William Hicks, *Oxford Jests. Refined and Enlarged; Being a Collection of Witty Jests, Merry Tales, Pleasant Joques* (London, 1684), 60. This joke is repeated in other collections, for example, *Coffee-House Jests. Refined and Enlarged* (4th edn., London, 1686)—perhaps not surprisingly, as the author is Hicks—and Richard Head, *Nugae venales: Or A Complaisant Companion: Being New Jests, Domestick and Foreign; Bulls, Rhodomontado’s, Pleasant Novels and Miscellanies* (3rd edn., London, 1686), 127.

(she has 'fallen'), already implied at the beginning of the joke when she is described as 'playing her tricks above'. The putting of a heel behind her neck followed by 'striving', which results in a fall off the bed, also suggests gymnastic and strenuous sexual intercourse. The double meaning of 'fall' implies a sexual transgression, and the context suggests that she is probably committing adultery with the 'raw Country Boy', who could be so naive as not to understand what he is seeing—and doing—or who could be using his expected country-boy ignorance to deceive the husband by pretending that he does not comprehend what he has seen. The joke also suggests that woman is a castrated man, as he mistakes the female anatomical sexual part for a 'great gash' in the same way as other jokes refer to it as a 'cut purse', or as just a 'cut'. Ian Moulton, for example, cites a joke that was included in a woman's manuscript that also plays on the word 'cut' for the female sexual part: 'a gentlewoman one a time seeing one want a knife she sayd cut my finger he replied you would say finger my cut.'¹¹⁰

The narrator tells a very similar story about the maid in *The Crafty Whore*, in which

there was a Jack-Tumbler (as they call him) which shew'd a great many Hocus tricks, as those also of activity and agillity of body, which so delighted her as that comming home she was continually talking of what she had seen. Being in bed with me, she began in her sleep to mumble something, and then would tumble up and down: at length she had got her legge over her shoulder, and in striving to reduce it, she fell over the bed on the flore: at which suddain noise I awoke, but found my girle missing, neither knew I where to grope for her being it was midnight. Whereupon I lighted a candle, and comming up to looke for her (good God never so scar'd was I in my life) I found her trust up as round as a foot-ball, looking through her legges, as if her head had been plac'd where her —— should have been.¹¹¹

This version has no implication of adultery or fornication, though there is the slight implication of manual sexual stimulation between women sharing a bed, in the note that 'neither knew I where to grope for her being it was midnight'. This version more clearly places the head in proximity to the female sexual organs, suggesting the appearance of a sheela-na-gig, a carving in which the large head with bulging eyes appears beside the gaping vulva that can be found on the doors and walls of medieval churches, possibly representing a warning against temptation to sexual sin.¹¹² Michael Camille in *Gothic Art* argues that the misericords in medieval churches, in which mouth is joined to anus, link the functions of eating and excreting, 'suggesting the cycle of replenishment of the earth, and the carnivalesque body' as well as the possibility of warding off evil.¹¹³ The exposure of the female genitals as a means of warding off demons

¹¹⁰ Cited in Moulton, *Before Pornography*, 57.

¹¹¹ *The Crafty Whore*, 77–8.

¹¹² Bakhtin describes the grotesque movements of the body as exemplified in circus performance as representing the inversion of the body, and hence the replacement of the higher part of the body (and all its faculties) with the lower, and mimicking childbirth. *Rabelais and his world*, 352–4.

¹¹³ Camille, *Gothic Art*, 151.

would have been a familiar idea through folklore in the seventeenth century, and this is perhaps one implication in the first version of the joke in which the naive country boy suggests that the young woman has been bewitched.¹¹⁴ The face next to the genitals also works as an image of childbirth, with the head emerging from the body, suggesting that it is a symbol of fertility and generation.¹¹⁵ Those scenes that suggest childbirth therefore may further reinforce the message that sex is about reproduction *and* pleasure. Tumblers are also elsewhere linked with prostitution, with tumbling operating as a metaphor for sexual intercourse. This linkage is made explicitly in an edition of *Mercurius Democritus, Or, A True and Perfect Nocturnall, Communicating Wonderful News out of the World in the Moon*, from July 1652: 'This last week hath discovered a new Sect called *Tumblers*, two-legg'd creatures that have mouthes below their *navells*, long *beards*, and goggle eyes, that exercise on their *backs* in many obscure *Alleys*.'¹¹⁶ This item not only makes all the associations discussed above, juxtaposing body parts and exposing and describing female genitals, but also adds into the mix the association of illicit and illegitimate sexual practice with unorthodox religious practice in the description of tumblers as comprising a 'new Sect'.

Not all exposure of the genitals is inadvertent. In some English texts the exposing of the female genitals is done on purpose by the women involved, who are at the same time behaving in a deliberately comic fashion. For example, the legendary Pris Fotheringham and her institution of the 'Chuck-office' is sent up in *Strange & True Newes from Jack-a-Newberries Six Windmills*, which is a spoof book of guild regulations for prostitutes, and whose pseudonymous author (Peter Aretine) and extended title alludes to *The Crafty Whore*, an English adaptation of Aretino's *Ragionamenti*, which had been published two years earlier in 1658.¹¹⁷ The Six Windmills was a public house and brothel, earlier known as the Jack-a-Newberry, which was run by a Pris Fotheringham, whose party-piece was apparently to stand on her head with her legs spread so that clients might throw half-crowns into her 'chuck-office', or vagina. This trick is written in titillating detail into the conditions of association:

¹¹⁴ See Accati, 'The Spirit of Fornication'. For a brief outline of some sexual motifs in folklore, see, e.g., Catherine Grisé, 'The *Conte-en-vers*: Expanding Stith Thompson's X-File of Obscene Motifs', *Folklore*, 108 (1997), 35–44.

¹¹⁵ Bakhtin argues that the contact of the upper and lower body, the head and the genitals, is about symbolizing fertility. See *Rabelais and his World*, 308–9. However, there is an incredible physicality to these texts that argues against a symbolic interpretation, and for a literal 'in your face' expression of physical sexuality.

¹¹⁶ *Mercurius Democritus, Or, A True and Perfect Nocturnall, Communicating Wonderful News out of the World in the Moon* (From Wednesday 14 July to Wednesday 21 July 1652), Number 16, 123.

¹¹⁷ Aretine, (pseud), *Strange & True Newes from Jack-a-Newberries Six Windmills*. Untranslated copies of the *Ragionamenti* had been printed in England since the late sixteenth century, and, according to Thompson, the Latin edition was commonly available. Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 72 and 94 n.39. See also Foxon, *Libertine Literature*, 25–7.

Ordered at a full meeting that one of the Society do stand upon their heads (as the Governess may do and did too) with all their cloathes and smock about their ears bare breeches to the cold wall (like Monsters) leggs spread at large with the door of their Chuck office open, because that fashion was lately invented by Mrs *Fotheringham* for her Cully-Rumpers to chuck half crown's in.¹¹⁸

Here the vagina is imagined literally as a 'purse' into which money may be thrown, emphasizing the financial exchange inherent in the prostitudinal relationship, where coins stand in for the male member, and bringing to mind the women's cries at the fair of 'no money, no cony'. The frequently used image of the female genitalia as a 'cut purse' lends itself to the association of prostitution with theft and disorderliness, implying that the sexual exchange is also one that is an unfair exchange, perhaps overpriced for the value of the 'commodity', another common metaphor for the vagina.

There are fewer sexual jokes about the exposure of the male genitals, and, significantly, it is never the penis that is the object of derision, but rather the joke becomes the opportunity to emphasize again its prodigious size. This is particularly notable in the culmination to a long-running comic narrative in *Venus in the Cloister* about the Abbess's search of the convent for a man who has gained access to its innermost recesses in the disguise of a woman. She finally discovers him when she inspects the genitals of all the women in the convent to see that they are all clearly female. This inspection, as the Abbess places her face in close proximity to the assembled nuns' genitalia, excites him and causes his penis to spring erect, breaking free of the cloth that has tied it down and knocking her spectacles from her face. This farcical scene serves to humiliate the Abbess, highlighting the prodigious size of the man's penis and his virility in so easily achieving such a strong erection, at the same time as providing sexual titillation in the suggestion of the potential for oral sex when her face is placed in front of his (and the other nuns') genitals: 'This good Lady, who knew long since how men were made, made no Doubt now, but that Marina was one, and putting her Hand upon that, which gave such a terrible Stroke, she was so surprized, that instead of a Man, she concluded he was at least a Man and an half.'¹¹⁹ In this early modern literature the penis is not represented in the symbolic sense that psychoanalysis has suggested, as the phallus, rather it is imagined in its physical reality, and with a degree of playfulness and pleasure that subverts any interpretation of such humour as clearly misogynist in intention.

¹¹⁸ Aretine (pseud), *Strange & True Newes from Jack-a-Newberries Six Windmills*, 2.

¹¹⁹ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 181. This suggestion of oral sex is made more blatantly obvious in a later nineteenth century drawing of this scene, Thomas Rowlandson's *Les Lunettes* (c.1810), where the penis is placed directly in front of the Abbess's open mouth. See Bradford K. Mudge, *The Whore's Story: Women, Pornography and the British Novel 1684–1830* (Oxford, 2000), ix. Mudge notes that this story was originally entitled *Les Lunettes* and was published by Jean de la Fontaine in 1674. Barrin incorporated it into his 1683 text, borrowing from de la Fontaine in the same way as he did from Choriér's flagellation narrative.

Not only do these 'penis jokes' resist placing the penis as the butt of the joke, rather allowing a positive focus that emphasizes its size, vigour, and power; they also resist clear classification as jokes *about* the penis by frequently turning attention around onto the female genitals. This avoidance of humour directed at the male genitalia is maintained in later eighteenth-century erotica.¹²⁰ In the jest books printed in the seventeenth century in England there appeared a recurring joke (suggesting its popularity) that turns on the assumption that the man has enormous genitalia: 'A lady found fault with a Gentleman dancing; saying, that he straddled too much: Madam (said he) if you had that betwixt your Leggs that I have betwixt mine, you would straddle much wider.'¹²¹ Initially it appears the joke is about the man having such a large penis and testicles that he has trouble accommodating them between his legs, but it actually turns on the exposure of the woman with the suggestion that she would equally have difficulty lodging them between her thighs in the act of intercourse. We, the listeners (or readers), are thus led to imagine the woman in the act of sex with a man with huge genitalia. Similarly in a joke that turns on the exposure of a young man's testicles through a hole in his breeches, the exposure is again turned so that it is the woman's genitals that we imagine, rather than the man's: 'A Lass espying a Young-man's testicles hang out of his Breeches, that were broken in the seat, ask'd him with a seeming or real ignorance what it was? it is my Purse, quoth he; thy Purse, quoth she, then I am sure my Purse is cut.'¹²² The joke not only invites the listener to imagine the girl's genitals as well as the boy's testicles, but also implies that she has lost her maidenhead, both in the literal description of the 'cut' and in the implication of theft in 'cut purse'.¹²³ Such sexual jokes seem to conform very neatly to the Freudian interpretation of sexual humour whereby the woman is the object of the joke, forced to imagine her own sexual organs or herself engaged in a sexual act, while making it clear that the teller of the joke is doing likewise. However, this interpretation is not the whole story. In the joke, it is the woman who invokes her own sexual parts by remarking on the young man's split breeches, and who draws attention to her own genitalia in order to imply that he has been emasculated by his sartorial simulation of the female genitalia. The joke relies on contemporary understandings about male and female bodies that play on sameness and difference, and that are reflected in language, so that 'purse' may refer to both scrotum and vagina, 'cut' to both the slit in the boy's breeches and to the vaginal slit. Simultaneously, though, sameness is erased: instead of the homology of penis and vagina (or penis and clitoris), the image of the 'cut purse' imagines absence rather than presence, a scrotum without testicles, genitals minus a penis, in one of the multiple ways that bodies, sex, and gender could be understood in the period.¹²⁴ The use

¹²⁰ See Harvey, *Reading Sex*, 130.

¹²¹ Head, *Nugae venales*, 48.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 14.

¹²³ The image also suggests menstruation, as a cut bleeds.

¹²⁴ See Gowing, *Common Bodies*, 20–9.

of 'cut' to signal the female genitals is also yet another way of teasing the reader with the implication of the obscene word, as it is just one letter away from 'cunt'.

Gershon Legman, in his extensive analysis of sexual humour in the *Rationale of the Dirty Joke*, invokes psychoanalysis and male castration anxieties to explain the many jokes that are to be found mocking ignorance of the appearance of the female genitals, especially where, as in the joke above, their appearance is likened to a cut, a physical wound on the body from which the male genitals have been removed. The use of the verb 'cut' and the description of the female genitals as having the appearance of a wound from which the penis is clearly absent do imply that a woman is a castrated man. But is 'castration anxiety' a valid explanation for a society in which one of the major ways that male and female bodies were understood was that men and women did not have different sexual organs, but rather the same organs only differently configured? Men's greater heat thrust their genital organs outwards from the body, but the penis remained inverted within the female body because of her greater coolness.¹²⁵ It was thought possible that women could become men, that their inverted sexual organs could thrust themselves outwards in certain conditions, and stories circulated in which such transformations were described as having taken place, usually as a result of some unusual exertion that raised female body heat.¹²⁶ There is also at least one literal story, narrated in a humorous vein, about castration, in Garfield's *The Wandring Whore*, the conclusion to which is the death of the castrated man.¹²⁷ The inclusion of this story in a work of pornography, and told as a funny story, seems very odd to modern eyes, especially as its effect must be rather more unarousing than arousing, and it subverts any anxiety theory.¹²⁸ Such jokes, when placed in cultural context, defy easy explanations. Early modern men may well have suffered from castration anxiety, literally enunciated in the language of sex that terms the vagina a 'cut'. However, showing and revealing the sexual body are the subject matter of pornography, and, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, seventeenth-century pornography displays a preoccupation with ideas about hiding and revealing, showing and telling, and the eroticism that this engenders. In a culture in which the female genitals are understood as inverted, and so hidden, within the body, there seems to be a concomitant desire to reveal and expose what is hidden, in the same way as modern pornography strives to reveal climax through the 'money shot'.¹²⁹ In this subgenre of sexual jokes, what is hidden is revealed either accidentally

¹²⁵ See, e.g., Sharp, *The Midwives Book*, 37.

¹²⁶ There were known instances in which it was alleged that a woman had changed into a man and which would have been known through the publication of trial records, pamphlets, and ballads. See, e.g., Greenblatt, 'Fiction and Friction'; and Brown, 'Changed . . . into the Fashion of Man'.

¹²⁷ Garfield, *The Wandring Whore*, 4 (1660), 6–7.

¹²⁸ Castration is also a theme or motif in folklore. See Gris , 'The *Conte-en-vers*', 40.

¹²⁹ See Williams, *Hard Core*.

or deliberately, and comparisons invoked that vividly bring not only the idea of the genitals to mind, but also various different aspects of their appearance, smell, taste, texture, colour, formation, so that they are imagined not only as an absence but also, like Bassett Stone's cloth replica and contemporary flower metaphors, in their material reality. However metaphorical, elliptical, or disguised such evocations may appear, there is no evading their meaning. The conjunction of all these aspects of the female genitalia are brought together and linked to scatological humour in jokes about oral stimulation of the female genitals and urination. However, as we have seen in the discussion of the joke above, these jokes play on ideas of sameness and difference between male and female genitalia, so that evocation of the one invariably simultaneously imagines the other.

The following joke, in this case taken from *Oxford Jest*s (1684), but which is repeated from jest book to jest book, attesting to its popularity, plays particularly upon sexual similarity in order to suggest gender ambiguity, and hence, while again impelling the listener to imagine the female genitals and the woman in a sexual act, simultaneously throws the joke back on the man by hinting that his desire is perverse, so forcing him by her wit to retract his insult: 'One following a young Maid, he liked her very well behind, but looking in her face, found she had a very large nose: well, says he, if I had liked you before, as well as I did behind, I would have kiss'd you; Pray Sir, says she, kiss where you like. But it is your nose that I dislike: why *in that place that I appointed you to kiss, I have never a nose, kiss there.*'¹³⁰ This jest operates on several levels at once, again playing on the oft-invoked analogy of mouth and vulva, but also on the traditional analogy of nose and penis, where the size of the nose is indicative of the size of the penis, and hence by extension of the size of the clitoris, as male and female genitalia are understood to be homologous.¹³¹ Although at first sight this joke does not appear to be particularly explicit in that it does not openly name or describe the genitals, it is highly explicit by analogy. Observing that the woman has a large nose, and hence by analogy an enlarged clitoris, suggests that there may be some ambiguity as to her sex, giving rise to his reluctance to kiss her that goes beyond any disfigurement of her facial beauty. The woman then wittily ripostes on both levels at once, suggesting that, if he is reluctant to kiss her mouth/vulva because her nose/clitoris is too big, then he may kiss her anus if he prefers, 'kiss where you like', implying where he had first liked her, from behind. He is then forced to deny both her humiliating implication that his desire is to kiss her tail, and that his desire is in any way perverse: he has a desire neither for oral sex nor for a person who may be of the opposite gender to what he expected,

¹³⁰ Hicks, *Oxford Jest*s, 27, joke no. 114.

¹³¹ See Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, 316–17. Moulton cites an erotic verse from a woman's manuscript miscellany that also makes this analogy: the woman in the poem spots a Gentleman with a very large nose and so desires to have him, 'But finding short where she expected long, | She sigh'd & said, O nose thou'st done me wrong' (cited in Moulton, *Before Pornography*, 61).

but that she hints was his real desire, as he liked her only from behind. Her response to his denial is finally to best him by unequivocally stating both her sex and her sexual chastity, and to reinforce her implication that his desire is for an unlawful and unnatural form of intercourse: 'I have never a nose', meaning that she is a woman because she has never possessed a penis, and that she is a virgin, because neither has she ever had a nose/penis 'in that place that I appointed you to kiss'. The implication that the place she has appointed him to kiss is her tail further suggests that she has never been anally penetrated either. She finishes by effectively telling him to 'fuck off', by inviting him to 'kiss there' or 'kiss my tail'. The joke operates at yet another level, through the analogy of mouth with vulva, to suggest also that women naturally speak of sex. If the vulva is a kind of mouth, what it speaks of is sex, and by extension woman's inherently sexual nature is revealed every time she opens her mouth; but she comes out on top by refuting the slur on her chastity. The joke also implies that women want oral sex, and that this is humiliating to men, as suggested in the phrase 'kiss there'. That oral sex is humiliating to men is one of the implications of the jokes in which a youth or a man is induced to kiss a woman's anus or vulva thinking that it is her mouth.¹³²

Scatology and oral sex are brought together in those jokes in which, as in Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*, an unsuspecting young man is tricked into kissing a young woman's anus rather than the mouth he expects to encounter. The joke is sometimes further enhanced by the suggestion of the presence of a stool, or the expulsion (either deliberate or accidental) of intestinal gas at the critical moment.¹³³ Descriptions of oral sex are notable for their general absence from seventeenth-century pornographic literature, arguing that it was a taboo practice at this time, as Lawrence Stone has suggested.¹³⁴ Stone found only one reference to oral sexual practice in the many hundreds of accounts of foreplay and sexual congress in trials for separation on the grounds of adultery during the eighteenth century. In the first six dialogues of Chorier's *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, and in Rochester's *Sodom*, there are references to kissing the genitals, but neither of these incidents amounts to description of oral sex as a practice, although the seventh dialogue does include such scenes, and a Latin edition of Chorier's full text (c.1690) includes illustrations of oral sex (see Figure 12; cf. Figures 14 and 15).¹³⁵ Familiarity with this kind of joke may have served to enhance such humorous stories as that narrated in the ballad 'Comical News from Bloomsbury' (c.1690), in which the disguised woman's ejaculation can be imagined as urination or a fart, and which was discussed previously in

¹³² This is a subject for joking that goes back at least to Chaucer's *The Miller's Tale*, suggesting that it is a joke with a long history.

¹³³ See, e.g., joke 24 in J.S., *England's Merry Jester*, 19–20.

¹³⁴ See Stone, 'Libertine Sexuality in Post-Restoration England', 512.

¹³⁵ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, 127; Rochester, *Sodom*, stage direction at the beginning of Act II. See Turner, *Schooling Sex*, for a discussion of Chorier's seventh dialogue and oral sex.

Chapter 4 in the context of the representation of sex between women.¹³⁶ The woman who disguises herself as a man marries the young woman to gain her dowry, but, rather than sexually disappoint her bride, makes use of a prosthesis to continue the deception by consummating the marriage as expected on the wedding day. It is a situation that is exploited for its comic potential, with plenty of suggestion as to what was done, and sexual titillation at the bride's evident sexual satisfaction:

The Portion was paid, but the cream of the Jest,
 was what they did when they were bedded.
 The Bridegroom had prudently got a Sheep's gut
 blow'd up very stiff, as a Bladder;
 But what he did with it, or whether 'twas put
 I'll leave you good Folks to consider:
 The innocent Bride no difference knew,
 and seem'd to be greatly delighted;
 But Lasses I'll warrant there's none among you
 that would be so cleverly cheated.¹³⁷

The mixing-up of bodily functions appears here in the implied analogy of breaking wind and urination with ejaculation in the description of the 'Sheep's gut | blow'd up very stiff, as a Bladder'. The joke is that the young woman has been either farted or urinated into to simulate male ejaculation, and has been deceived into believing that the evacuation either of wind or of urine, or indeed of both, is the satisfactory climax to intercourse.

A psychoanalytic view locates the pleasure in this kind of humour as stemming from an incomplete sexual development, where the sexual focus has been arrested at an earlier stage of development in which the excretory function is dominant.

¹³⁶ While there may be no jokes about homosexual sexual acts between either men or women in jest-book collections or chapbooks, there are humorous ballads and pamphlets about marriages between two women that dwell on how the 'wife' is kept ignorant of the real sex of her 'husband', or discovers her error through lack of satisfaction in the marital bed. See, e.g., *The Counterfeit Bridegroom: Being a Comical and Pleasant Relation of a Young Woman in the Borough of Southwark, who being in Wants of a Husband, by a Strange Mistake, Married a Young Woman in Man's Apparel, who having got her Portion of 200l. Left her in the Lurch: With the Comical Particulars of their Courtship, Marriage, and two Nights Disappointment in Bed, and the Manner how it was Discover'd* (n.d., c.1690s). See *Samuel Pepys' Penny Merriments*, ed. Thompson, intro.; and Thompson, 'Popular Reading', 665.

¹³⁷ *Comical News from Bloomsbury. The Female Captain: Or, The Counterfit Bridegroom: Giving a Full and True Relation how one Madam Mary Plunket, alias, Williams; a Young Woman of Eighteen Years of Age, who put on Man's Apparel, assum'd the Name of Capt. Charles Fairfax, set up for a Young Heir, Courted a young Gentlewoman of Bloomsbury, and by the Consent of her Friends [in hopes of gain] was Married to her by a Jacobite Parson; they being at the Charge of the Wedding Cloaths, Ring, Dinner, &c. Of her Living with the Young Woman a whole Month Undiscovered, using a Strange Instrument for Generation, with the Strange Manner of the Discovery by an Old Woman of the Pretended Captain's Acquaintance; how being Taken up for a Cheat, and Committed to the New Prison at Clearken-well, where she now Remains* (c.1690), in *The Pepys Ballads: Facsimile*, ed. W. G. Day, v (Cambridge, 1987), 424.

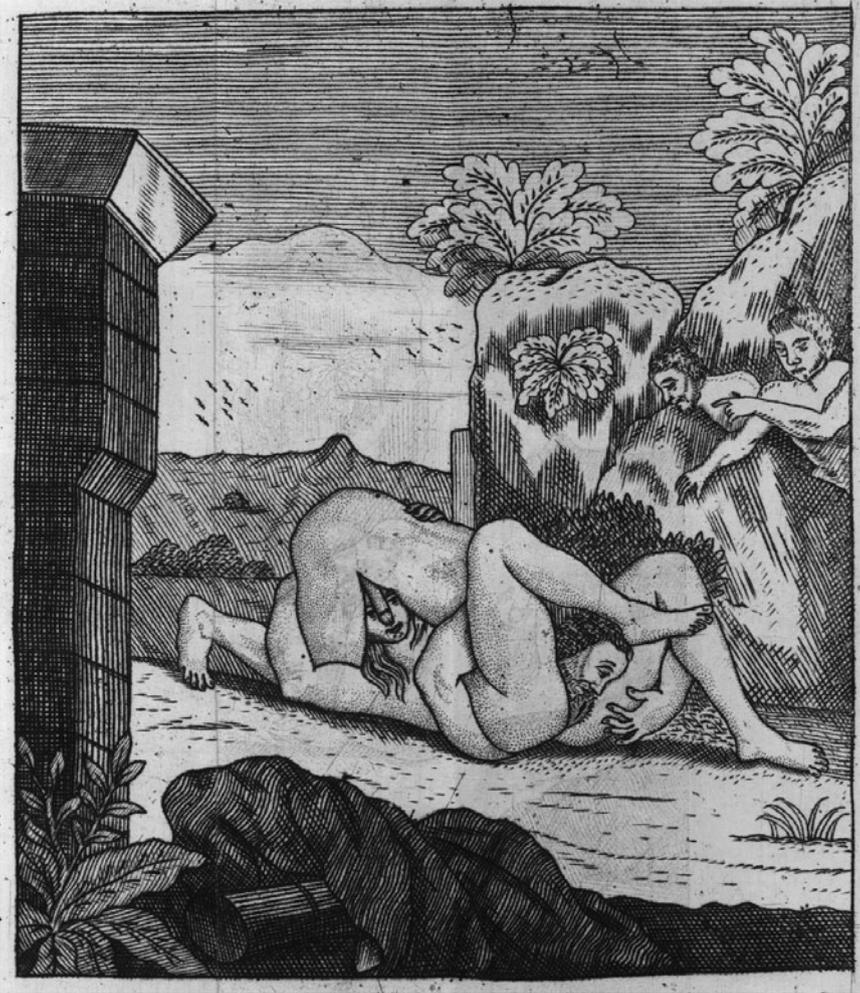


Fig. 12. Engraving (plate number 28) from a Latin edition of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* (c.1690) BL: PC.30.i.10. By permission of the British Library.

Given that this type of humour is evidently widespread at this time, it seems a little simplistic to suggest that early modern men and women all suffered from arrested sexual development. Keith Thomas suggests, in 'The Place of Laughter in Tudor and Stuart England', that not only is it likely that the kind of diet enjoyed by the populace at this time contributed to a general problem with flatulence, but that such humour also offered a means of deflating pretentiousness and of reducing all to a common physicality. 'Windy meats' or beans and pulses were also understood as foods that might increase sexual desire, so the association of flatulence with

sexual activity is perhaps not unexpected in this period. This pleasure in laughing at flatulence is not restricted to jokes collected in jest books, but also appears in works that betray the author's extensive learning. Such 'low', bodily humour is thus clearly not the sole province of the tavern or the marketplace, where jokes might be exchanged in the course of daily business, but also enjoyed huge popularity with educated and elite audiences who both collected such jokes and had them published in jest books, and also produced such material themselves. Charles Cotton, the author of *Erotopolis*, also deployed his considerable knowledge of the classics by parodying Virgil (taken from Paul Scarron's work of the same name published in France in 1653) in *Scarronnides, Or, Virgile Travestie. A Mock-Poem on the First and Fourth Books of Virgil's Aeneid in English Burlesque* (1664), in which a storm of farts replaces the conventional variety.¹³⁸ The popularity of this work can be seen in the fact that by 1715 it was into its tenth edition. Bakhtin argues that Scarron selects and stresses the 'trivial material bodily images' to 'degrade the high images of the *Aeneid*', and notes that the laughter is indirect, since, in order to enjoy the parody, one must be familiar with the original work.¹³⁹ This is a form of humorous writing that is then marketed for an elite audience, one that has the education and the leisure time not only to be familiar with Virgil, so that the extent and the cleverness of the parody can be fully recognized and enjoyed, but also to be able to read Scarron's, or Cotton's work sending it up. The scatological humour that proliferated during the Rump Parliament, while clearly produced by those who were both educationally and politically literate, could be enjoyed by both the politically enfranchised classes and by others lower down the social scale, as enjoyment of such humour cut across all classes.¹⁴⁰ In works such as these, we can see clearly how differentiating between 'high' and 'low' cultures does not work: it is the same culture producing and consuming both.

Today it is theorized that the enjoyment of scatological humour depends to a degree on the idea that it is inappropriate, that it is revealing something that should be hidden from view and on which there are clear social and cultural taboos.¹⁴¹ However, the products of the body and the processes of their evacuation, whether urine, faeces, or intestinal gas, were not so hidden and sanitized in the seventeenth

¹³⁸ Cotton was proficient in both French and Latin, and also translated Montaigne's *Essays*.

¹³⁹ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, 304–5.

¹⁴⁰ See, e.g., *The Famous Tragedie of the Life and Death of Mrs Rump. Shewing How She was Brought to Bed of a Monster with her Terrible Pangs, Bitter Teeming, Hard Labour, and Lamentable Travell from Portsmouth to Westminster, and the Great Misery she hath Endured by her Ugly, Deformed, Ill-Shapen, Base-Begotten Brat or Imp of Reformation . . .* (London, 1660); *Rump: Or An Exact Collection of the Choycest Poems and Songs, Relating to the Late Times. By the Most Eminent Wits, from Anno 1639 to Anno 1661* (London, 1662). For an extensive discussion of these publications, see Mark S.R. Jenner, 'The Roasting of the Rump: Scatology and the Body Politic in Restoration England', *Past & Present*, 177 (Nov. 2002), 84–120.

¹⁴¹ See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London, 1966); J. B. Loudon, 'On Body Products', in John Blacking (ed.), *The Anthropology of the Body* (London, New York, and San Francisco, 1977), 161–78; and Feinberg, *The Secret of Humor*, esp. ch. 6, 'Scatological Humor: Aggression against Propriety', 119 onwards.

century as they are today, or even as they were in late-nineteenth-century Vienna.¹⁴² The state of management of the disposal of human waste was not yet fully developed in the seventeenth century, so that men, women, and children still urinated and defecated in the open streets, as well as in chamber pots or close-stools (a seat over a box enclosing the pot) within doors. Waste was collected from the streets and from cesspits within houses and taken away by cart.¹⁴³ But, even when these functions did take place within the greater privacy of the house, they were still not entirely hidden away from the view of others, with no room in the house yet dedicated solely for this use. While some at this time may have been careless about their bodily functions, others seem to have been developing a sense of shame and embarrassment. Despite the availability of the close-stool and the common use of chamber pots in houses, not everyone seems to have been bothered about making use of these items, as indicated by the diary of Anthony à Wood, where he recorded in 1665 the behaviour of the court of Charles II, who had moved to Oxford to avoid the plague in London: 'Though they were neat and gay in their apparell, yet they were very nasty and beastly, leaving at their departure their excrements in every corner, in chimneys, studies, colehouses, cellers.'¹⁴⁴ In contrast, Pepys recorded how, having received word that Lady Sandwich had called, he discovered her in the dining room using the chamber pot: 'news comes that my Lady Sandwich was come to see us; so I went out, and running up (her friend however before me) I perceive by my dear lady's blushing that in my dining room she was doing something upon the pott; which I also was ashamed of and so fell to some discourse, but without much pleasure, through very pity to my Lady.'¹⁴⁵ This short extract from Pepys's diary suggests that, at least in some of the higher ranks of society, the lack of shame and embarrassment that had hitherto attended the relieving of the body's excretory functions was beginning to become a thing of the past. It is not yet a matter for hiding away in a separate area of the house and to which one retreats for privacy, but neither is it something about which one feels completely at ease: Pepys attempted to hide both his own and Lady Sandwich's shame and embarrassment by continuing a conversation as if nothing untoward was going on. Here we can see the beginnings of the shift in sensibilities that saw the internalization of feelings of shame and a desire for

¹⁴² Bryson notes that there does not appear to be any indication in conduct books of 'a rising level of inhibition over exposure of the privy parts' and the relief of excretion during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1998), 101.

¹⁴³ Andrew Wear, 'The History of Personal Hygiene', in W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter (eds.), *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine*, ii (London and New York, 1993; repr. 1994), 1283–308, at 1300–2; Lawrence Wright, *Clean & Decent: The Fascinating History of the Bathroom and the Water-Closet* (London, 1960; repr. Harmondsworth, 2000). See also Keith Thomas, 'Cleanliness and Godliness in Early Modern England', in A. Fletcher and P. Roberts (eds.), *Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1994), 56–83.

¹⁴⁴ Cited in Wright, *Clean & Decent*, 76.

¹⁴⁵ Pepys, *Diary*, ed. Latham and Matthews, v. 129, entry for 21 Apr. 1664.

privacy for what were increasingly coming to be regarded as private acts, which appears to have taken firmer root by the mid-eighteenth century, as we saw when examining the practice of sexual flagellation in the period in a previous chapter.¹⁴⁶

Pornography, however, makes use of the exposure of the sexual organs during the excretory function as another means of describing and exhibiting them to the reader. Moreover, while today we make a clear distinction between the excretory functions and the sexual or reproductive function, so that any linking of the two serves to render the sexual dirty by association, there was no such clear differentiation in the early modern period. Thus it is that farting or urination can be imagined as ejaculation: all three physical functions involve the expelling of a material product from the body. The consumption of 'windy meats' might also help stimulate erection, while urination also occurs through the same organ in men that serves the reproductive function, and that for women is so closely located that little difference may be perceived. In Chorier's *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigee*, in a scene in which the childhood sexual experimentation of Ottavia's mother, Sempronia, is described, both Giocondo and Sempronia refer to their ejaculation at orgasm as urination: 'I am making my water. And I too, replied Sempronia. . . . As for thee, said she, I feel that thou hast really pissed inside of me.'¹⁴⁷ While this story attempts to represent sexuality from the point of view of inexperienced adolescence and hence suggests that this mixing-up of bodily functions is to do with childish lack of knowledge about sexual function, it nevertheless fits into this early modern somatic schema whereby bodily fluids can transform one into another. Similarly, in a story about the Abbess and two lobsters in *Venus in the Cloister*, although the description is ostensibly about urination, the whole story can be understood as a description of intercourse, and the liquid expelled from the Abbess's body can be read as female ejaculate:

Sometime after our Abbess had a strong Propensity to piss, and being half asleep, and without going out of Bed, took up the Urinal: But alas! she thought she should have died of the Fright! This wicked Lobster, which found himself bedewed with a Shower a little too hot, launched himself up towards that Place where he imagined it came, and took such strict hold of it with one of his Claws, that he left those Marks, which will remain four or five Days at least.¹⁴⁸

The 'Shower a little too hot' is reminiscent of descriptions of prostitutes with the pox 'burning' their unsuspecting clients, thus implying the sexual promiscuity of the Abbess. The vagina and the urethra through which urine is evacuated are imagined as being the same place, so that launching himself at the Abbess's vulva, which he then 'took strict hold of', suggests intercourse, and the leaving of marks 'which will remain four or five Days at least' implies that it is extremely

¹⁴⁶ See Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, and Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (New York, 1978).

¹⁴⁷ Chorier, *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigee*, 124.

¹⁴⁸ Barrin, *Venus in the Cloister*, 94.

vigorous, rough sex.¹⁴⁹ The scene may also suggest the punishment of sexual sin, recalling paintings in which women consigned to hell for sexual transgressions were represented as having their genitals mutilated or tortured by demons.¹⁵⁰ Jokes from the period about coopers hooping leaky barrels also play on this conflation of urination and ejaculation, of excretion and sex, where 'hooping the barrel' was a common metaphor for sex.¹⁵¹

Gail Kern Paster in *The Body Embarrassed* discusses at length the associations between women, sexual incontinence, and urination. However, the leakiness of the body is not all about hatred and disgust of the female body: it is not only women's bodies that are leaky. Men also are represented in these texts as unable to control their body functions, as having to urinate or defecate in the street and inadvertently breaking wind. Men also ejaculate without control, threatening their self-mastery.¹⁵² Urination particularly gives occasion for the description of the penis, as we saw in the previous chapter when Fanchon in *The School of Venus* describes how a man urinating in the street turned when he saw her approaching to show her 'something like a white sausage' that was 'so long' that she 'was surprised at not having anything like it myself'.¹⁵³ This short aside employs humorous, titillating detail to evoke the physical reality of the penis while also suggesting the naivety of girlish innocence, as she likens the penis to a common foodstuff, thus also hinting at fellatio, as the penis is represented as something that she might put in her mouth and enjoy 'eating'. This again, then, is not a joke aimed at the penis, whose size (and delicious nature) are again emphasized ('it was so long'); rather it turns the imagination back to the woman's body, where her genitals are imagined, in the same way as in the 'cut-purse' jokes, as a mysterious absence rather than the usual homology of male and female sexual parts ('I was surprised at not having anything like it myself'). Hence humour about the products of the body and the body's functions is about how the body was understood in terms of an economy of fluids, and how in both male and female bodies one function can stand in for another so that sex and excretion are inevitably and intimately entwined.¹⁵⁴

The sexual and the humorous are thus inseparable in pornographic writing of the seventeenth century, whether consumed by an elite court readership, an educated 'middling sort', or a semi-literate 'popular' audience, which argues against any clear differentiation between elite and popular cultures at this time, and particularly in relation to how sex was represented at all levels of society. While functional and psychoanalytical analyses of sexual humour and satire both

¹⁴⁹ This story also recalls a popular bawdy song entitled 'The Sea Crab', in which a crab in a chamber pot takes hold of a woman's genitals when she urinates in it. Quoted in Sigel, 'Name your Pleasure', 397.

¹⁵⁰ Such as in Giotto's *The Last Judgement*. See Tang, *Pornography*, 55.

¹⁵¹ See Gowing's discussion of jokes about leaky women in *Common Bodies*, 22–4.

¹⁵² See Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1996), 50.

¹⁵³ Millot, and L'Ange *The School of Venus*, 81–2.

¹⁵⁴ See Laqueur, *Making Sex*.

offer useful ways of interpreting this material, they are both clearly limited. Functionalist approaches are unable to account for the pleasure of the text, and at the same time ignore its function as erotica. The text both is sexual fantasy and produces sexual pleasure through sex talk, imagining the sexual body and the sexual act in a myriad different ways that obviate the allegedly repetitive, and hence ultimately tedious, nature of pornography. Psychoanalytic explanations of these texts also obscure the fact that the body that is exposed by this humour is an early modern body of which contemporary readers had a different understanding, so that jokes are not always what they may initially seem. Ideas about sameness and difference between male and female bodies reflected in language and metaphor allow multilayered meanings so that jests that may appear on one level to conform to the Freudian interpretation that makes women the butt of the joke can be read the other way around. Thus much of the humour, and indeed the pornography, may appear quite extraordinarily odd and alien to a modern reader, engendering considerable difficulties with categorization. This serves to underscore the observation that pornography in this period was not a discrete, clearly defined genre. Rather the pornographic enters into many kinds of text, reflecting a culture in which the bodies and sex were not regarded as discrete entities, separate from religion, politics, or domestic life.

‘The Naked Truth’: Images of Bodies and Sex

Seventeenth-century pornographic and erotic writing, like other kinds of publication, included illustrations, either as a frontispiece alone or within the text itself. Such illustrations, like the texts themselves, were rarely explicit; we do not often find pictures that display entirely naked bodies, or bodies engaged in sexual intercourse. Rather these illustrations made use of visual metaphors and symbols that conveyed the sexual message with remarkable clarity in a similar way to the use of metaphor and simile within the text. The kinds of illustrations employed also depended upon the nature of the printed material, whether it was a cheap, single-sheet item or small pamphlet using woodcuts, or a longer, more substantial, expensively bound book containing engravings that could be selected by the individual purchaser. But nakedness did not necessarily mean completely without clothing, so seemingly more modest depictions, where bodies are clothed but the clothing is in disarray, may have been regarded by a seventeenth-century readership as equally immodest and quite as arousing, especially in a period when it was rare to remove all one’s clothes. The circulation in the 1640s and early 1650s of cheap printed items that carried images of both nudity and of sexual arousal, represented by the erect penis, were then exceptional, and probably shocking, to a public unused to seeing such representations. These images carried an explicit message about religious unorthodoxy but could also have been arousing to the viewer whatever their avowed intention; a satirical or reforming intention does not necessarily preclude a sexual response to the sexual subject matter. As we have seen in a previous chapter, seventeenth-century authors placed scopophilia at the heart of the pleasure of the text, and this is reflected not only in illustrations, where the pleasure of the reader observing the erotic action is pictured by the ubiquitous presence of another, or others, within the picture, both hidden and visible to the participants, who also gaze upon the sexual spectacle, but also in the authors’ knowing discussions of the power of images to arouse the viewer, whether male or female.¹

Early picture books had been available since the fifteenth century, originally as small booklets (block books) containing woodcut pictures, then with short

¹ Where there are no other people present, the position of the voyeur may be supplied by substitutes such as sculptures, animals, birds, or pictures on the wall.

captions added, sometimes by hand.² Initially the topics were religious and intended for moral and religious instruction, and were cheap enough to be reasonably widely available. These early pictures are the same as those that were included in the first printed books. The history of the print and that of the book illustration share an initial history: prints that were used in books were also sold as separate independent items, and prints produced independently could be bound into books to illustrate them.³ An independent trade in prints also grew in England in the seventeenth century.⁴ In houses, like books, prints could be taken out for private perusal when desired, and were very likely kept in cabinets among a book collection. However, they might also be openly displayed in frames on walls in all parts of a house as well as on walls in inns and taverns. Very little is known about the subject matter of the particular prints and pictures selected for display on walls, though the subject matter of those purchased at auctions included ‘unspecified “drolls”, “amorous pieces”, and “smutty pieces”’.⁵

Book illustration developed in different styles in different places, influenced by local artists who produced designs for local printers or engravers (artists might also be engravers), and its purpose was ‘to make graphic and visible what people of the time constantly heard evoked’.⁶ The techniques of copperplate engraving had been perfected by the end of the fifteenth century, but woodcuts were still preferred because both text and illustration could be printed together more cheaply, while the engraving had still to be printed separately. Copper engravings increasingly came to be used from the end of the sixteenth century as they gave a more accurate and less crude illustration, and were also a means of reproducing paintings. However, they made books more expensive, and so illustrations were frequently reduced to a frontispiece only, or to a small number of plates that were not embedded in the text. More copies of a wood block image could be produced.⁷ Images illustrating the text of the printed matter discussed in this book thus vary widely in style and sophistication depending on the sort of text

² David Bland, *The Illustration of Books* (3rd edn., London, 1962). Associated with the development of block books is the manufacture of playing cards, which could be illustrated in numerous ways, including political and sexual satire in the seventeenth century in England. See David Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip: Narrative Strips and Picture Stories in the European Broadsheet from c. 1450 to 1825* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, and London, 1973).

³ Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450–1800*, trans. David Gerard (London, 1976; first published as *L’Apparition du livre*, (France, 1958)), 45–9; Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 17.

⁴ John, Barnard, ‘Introduction’, in Barnard and McKenzie (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Book*, 25, 4.

⁵ Peter Parshall, ‘Prints as Objects of Consumption in Early Modern Europe’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 28/1 (Winter 1998), 19–36, at 20, 24; Carol Gibson-Wood, ‘Picture Consumption in London at the End of the Seventeenth Century’, *Art Bulletin*, 84/3 (Sept. 2002), 491–500, at 492–4.

⁶ Febvre and Martin, *The Coming of the Book*, 97.

⁷ See Tessa Watt’s discussion of the woodcut picture trade in Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, 141–50.

they accompanied and whether it was a cheap broadsheet ballad, pamphlet, or news-sheet reproduced in large numbers, or a book purchased and bound to the buyer's specification. There is, therefore, also likely to be a variation in the function that the illustration was expected to perform.

In *Image and Text*, Edward Hodnett argues that 'the primary function of the illustration of literature is to realize significant aspects of the text, and it must be judged first of all as it succeeds in this function. Skilful technique, novel effects, and decorative charm are positive but secondary considerations. Otherwise we are judging images as though the text does not exist.'⁸ Traditional histories of book illustration tend to focus primarily on developments in technique, and consider the images only as indicative of the level of skill of the woodcutters or engravers working in the period, paying little attention to the content of the books themselves, or to how the illustrations contribute to their meanings or impact.⁹ My intention is not to analyse the images that accompany some of these texts in terms of the skill, or lack thereof, of the artist (there will be no discussion of how technically accurate or skilful the engraver or woodcutter might be judged—the illustrations are often judged to be 'crude' in all senses of the word), but rather to consider what they may reveal about how early modern people thought about representing sex and the sexual body in pictures that were intended to accompany text (there will be no discussion of standalone works of art that might be discussed as erotica or pornography). These images have been either specifically created or selected to accompany, or preface (as the frontispiece), the text, and therefore have a relationship to the text that may be very obvious. But, equally, the relationship may not be so clear, as woodcuts or engravings might be produced separately from the text, and selected to accompany any number of different publications, at different times, for which the various printers deemed them appropriate. Neither was it always the printer who selected the pictures to accompany the text: purchasers might themselves select the images they wished to be bound into their copy of a book, and make it a more or less expensive item depending on how many they chose, whether they were engravings or woodcuts, whether the book contained several different works compiled into one edition, and finally what type of binding (cheap or expensive) they selected.¹⁰ As we have seen, Pepys chose a cheap binding for his copy of *The School of Venus* in 1668, as he did not intend to retain it in his collection of books.

A Latin version of Chorier's *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* dated c.1690 that has a leather cover contains a frontispiece and thirty-one further plates (engravings) bound into the book at the end of the text, which seem to be unique to this edition, and most of which are unrelated to the text beyond the fact that they

⁸ Edward, Hodnett, *Image and Text: Studies in the Illustration of English literature* (London, 1982), 13.

⁹ See, e.g., Bland, *The Illustration of Books*.

¹⁰ Stewart, *Engraven Desire*, 317. For a discussion of Renaissance prints, see, e.g., Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*, ch. 4.

are explicit depictions of a variety of sexual acts.¹¹ In this case the realization of 'significant aspects of the text' seems to be limited to emphasizing and enlarging the pornographic function of the text, offering other, new, sexual scenarios to the reader, rather than using them actually to illustrate episodes within the narrative. For example, the frontispiece (see Figure 13) shows women entering what appears to be a shop selling highly realistic dildoes of varying sizes, a scene that does not take place in the narrative. Plate 1 (see Figure 14) depicts one woman with several men at the same time: within the narrative Tullia describes her visit to what appears to be a brothel catering for high-class Roman women, when her husband is seriously ill and unable to satisfy her, and she engages in sex with four men. However, the acts of intercourse take place sequentially rather than simultaneously (with four men, not five), and inside rather than outside, so this image is clearly not an accurate representation of the text. If the images were intended to illustrate scenes described within the text, we might also expect them to be arranged in the order in which they occur, but they are not arranged to correspond to the narrative sequence. Nor are all significant episodes from the dialogues represented: there is, for example, no representation of flagellation, a theme that is developed in more than one scene in the book. We might infer from this omission that this was perhaps one variety of sexual activity that held no interest or pleasure for this particular buyer, who therefore did not select an image of this kind for the book. The bookseller, of course, may simply not have had such an engraving available at the time the book was purchased, or perhaps neither purchaser nor seller was aware that the book included scenes of sexual flagellation for which an illustration might be required.

Moreover, it is remarkable here that one engraving that does have a clear relationship to the text, plate 24 depicting two young women seated naked together upon a bed clearly in conversation (see Figure 6) and hence related to the dialogue entitled 'Tribadicon', is the only engraving of the set that has no explicit representation of a sexual act or of the sexual organs (though the breasts are revealed). Here sex is suggested but not shown: the crossed legs are a signifier of sexual intercourse, but the women are talking rather than engaging in the sexual acts that the text describes taking place. The picture is full of visual metaphors for the female form (curving swathes of material, the womblike enclosure of the canopy over the bed, the curved rather than upright design of bed and table) rather than the more usual mix of vaginal and phallic symbols, and the mirrored positioning of the two women emphasizes that this is an encounter of like with like, rather than the conjunction of complementary physiques.

¹¹ It is not known if this is one of many similar editions, or if it was a unique copy for which the illustrations were chosen by the purchaser, nor who owned it, nor where it was purchased. I have included it for discussion as illustrative of the type of prints that might be included with a book of this nature, and that were available to the English purchaser, whether in England or on the Continent.

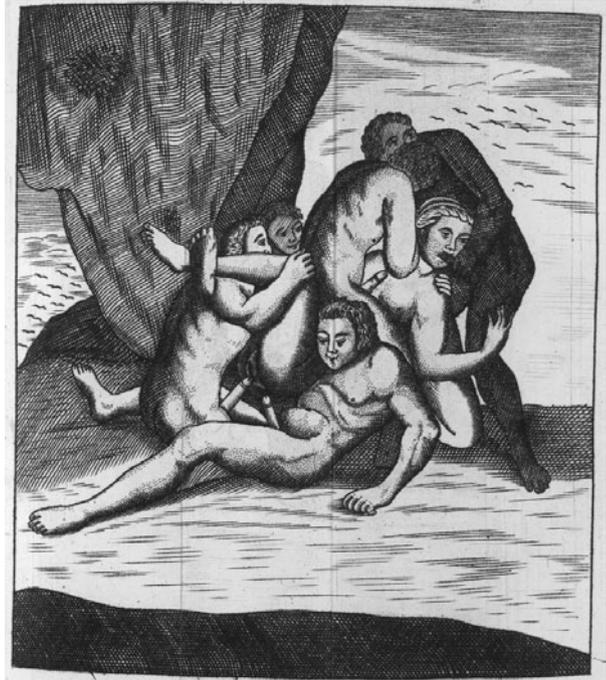
Fig. 13. The frontispiece to a Latin edition of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* (c.1690), BL PC.30.i.10. By permission of the British Library.



As most of the other engravings represent sexual acts that were considered to be transgressive in the period (rear-entry intercourse, some of which may be intended to show anal penetration; oral stimulation of the male and female genitals (see Figures 14 and 15 for example); masturbation; intercourse standing up or with the woman on top; and group sex that includes simultaneous vaginal, oral, and anal penetration), it seems unlikely that any scruple about depicting transgression has held the engraver in check. The crime of sodomy, for example, encompassed not only sexual intercourse between people of the same sex but also anal penetration of a woman by a man, which we can see about to take place in Figure 14. The display of the breasts could have other connotations rather than the sexual in this period: as we saw in Chapter 2, the uncovered breast might be used to represent immorality, or might merely reflect the contemporary fashion for *décolleté*, but was usually associated with 'generative warmth' or maternity.¹² The relative modesty of this scene compared to all the other engravings begs the question why it is not equally explicit. Perhaps it was, quite simply, a transgression too far actually to picture two women engaged in a sexual act together, or even displaying their genitals as part of the sexual action when there was not a man present, and when it was not intended as a moral message against

¹² Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, 94. See also McShane Jones, 'Revealing Mary', 40–6

Fig. 14. Illustration (plate 1) from a Latin edition of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* (c.1690), BL PC.30.i.10. By permission of the British Library.



the vice of sodomy.¹³ Alternatively, when, as we have seen, these texts give as much (or more) focus to the male body as to the female, and when sex was imagined as almost exclusively entwined with its reproductive function, it could not be represented when the reproductive aspect was not a possibility. Although within the narrative the sex between the two women is represented as satisfactory to the extent that it culminates in orgasm, it is *imagined* within the context of a heterosexual encounter. This image then may fulfil its function of realizing a significant aspect of the text by what it leaves out, by what is absent: the genitals or organs of generation and their conjunction.

This image in this particular collection also, then, returns us to the question of how we define pornography in this period. The image conforms to Philip Stewart's differentiation of erotica from pornography in that it represents bodies either before or after intercourse, but not during, and neither does it explicitly reveal the genitals.¹⁴ However, it does depict sexual transgression with its suggestion of sex between women—a suggestion that is confirmed through its context as illustration to a text that does describe such sexual intercourse explicitly. Furthermore, its context, situated among thirty-one other engravings

¹³ See Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, 91, for representations of same-sex sex in a religious context.

¹⁴ Stewart, *Engraven Desire*.

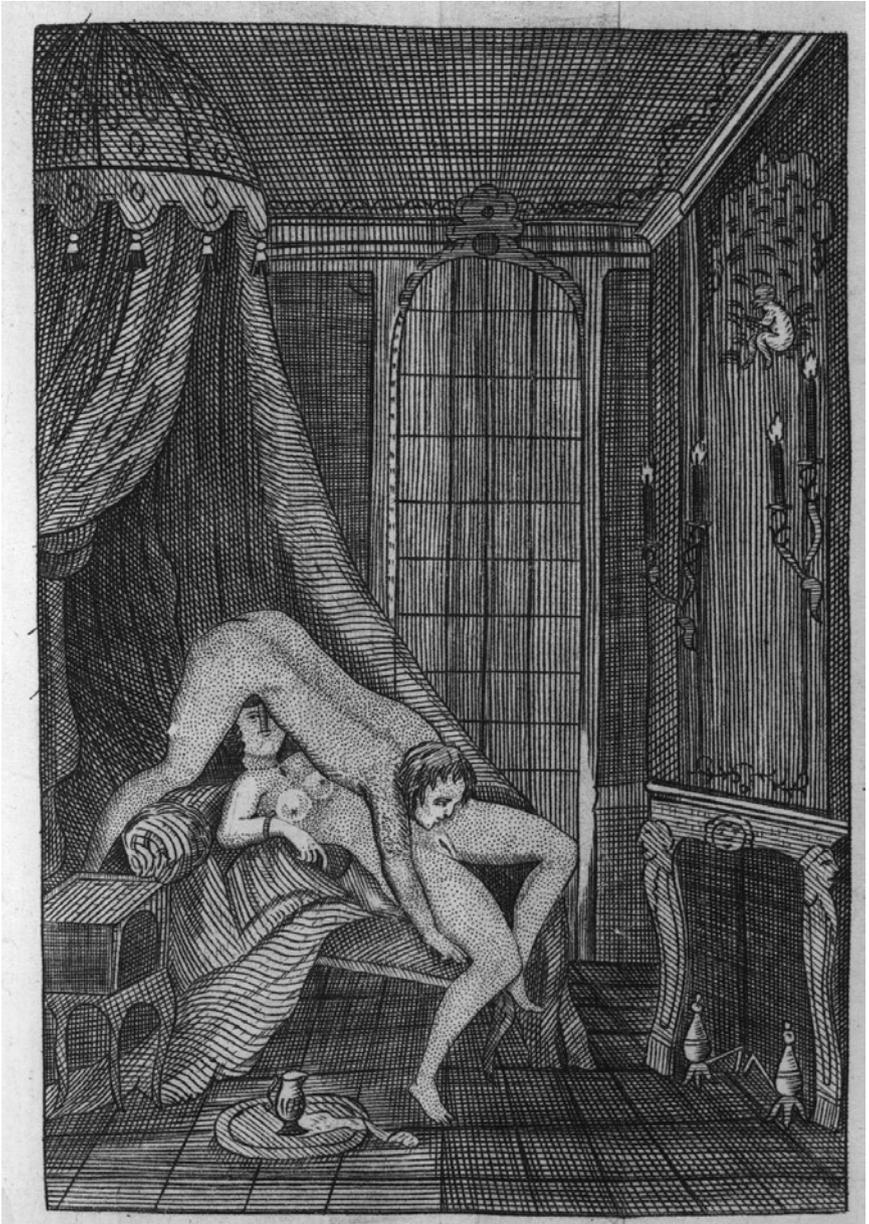


Fig. 15. Engraving (plate number 26) from a Latin edition of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* (c.1690), BL PC.30.i.10. By permission of the British Library.

of explicitly depicted sexual scenarios and appended to the accompanying text, makes its implicit meanings explicit, with the absence of displayed genitalia and sexual activity highlighting the absence of generative function. As Hodnett further observed: 'In realising a passage in literature the image is not always the visual equivalent of the text. It is an image which realizes both the sense and the emotional effect of the text.'¹⁵ In the case of these thirty-one engravings, which would have been individually selected by the purchaser of the book and which were bound all together into the back of the book rather than interspersed throughout the text where relevant, it seems likely that they were not selected as accurate representations of episodes within the text that could be regarded alongside the appropriate sections of the text as a visual representation of the scenes described. Rather, these images might be enjoyed separately from the text on their own terms as erotica or pornography, as well as serving as a kind of mnemonic device for recalling certain passages to which they may have a passing resemblance. In this way, both text and image might develop a deeper resonance with the reader. A further way in which this specific book could have had deeper resonance for its reader might be in its bringing to mind the *Sonnetti lussuriosi* composed by Pietro Aretino to accompany the engravings known as *I modi* that were executed by Marcantonio Raimondi from drawings by Guilio Romano in Rome in the 1520s. These scandalous drawings and their accompanying verses became identified with Aretino, whose name subsequently became a byword for the obscene, as we have seen in the use of references to 'Aretine' in this English material. An English gentleman travelling to the Continent was likely to have included the acquisition of a copy of 'the postures' to complete his education.¹⁶ Here, over a hundred years later, extended prose rather than poetry is accompanied by representations not only of a variety of different postures that might be adopted during intercourse, but also of further, selective, variations on the sexual act. However, this particular book, which contains all seven dialogues in Latin and these thirty-two engravings, is clearly an item purchased by a particular customer for personal enjoyment (though it could have been loaned to or shared with others in the same personal and social circle) and was not available more widely to readers, and especially to those much lower down the social scale who would have been able neither to afford to purchase it, nor to be able to read it.¹⁷ This was an expensive item available only through purchasing power and educational attainment (it is leather bound, which in itself made it an expensive, luxury purchase, and entirely in Latin) to a social and financial elite.¹⁸ Were such explicit images available more widely in the marketplace for print in England

¹⁵ Hodnett, *Image and Text*, 15.

¹⁶ Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*, 80.

¹⁷ The book itself may have been one of an unknown number of a particular edition that could have been purchased by others, with or without their own selection of illustrations. See Ch. 1 on literacy and readers.

¹⁸ Miriam J. Foot, 'Bookbinding', in Barnard and McKenzie (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Book*, 620–31, at 622.

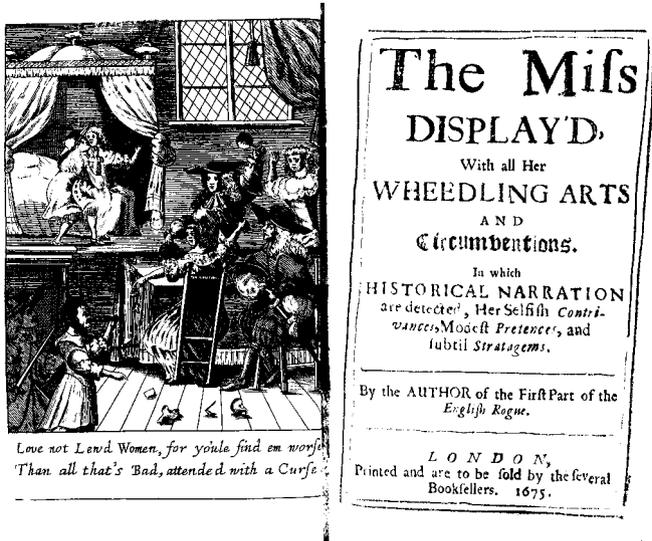


Fig. 16. Frontispiece to Richard Head's *The Miss Display'd* (1675). By permission of The Governing Body of Christ Church, Oxford, OS 2.35 (Wing H1264). Image published with permission of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

during the seventeenth century, and what sort of reaction were they expected or intended to elicit?

Many printed publications included a frontispiece, and sometimes further illustrations within the body of the text, of men and women embracing, whether standing up, lying or sitting down, but they are invariably fully clothed (see Figures 16 and 17). Sometimes the man is shown touching the woman's breast, sexualizing the image more explicitly, so that a benign interpretation is obviated (see Figure 17). The male hand on the breast was frequently used in allegorical paintings depicting the five senses to indicate touch, and a moral message might also be injected by representing the woman with her hand in the man's pocket to symbolize his lust and her venality.¹⁹ In Figure 17, the frontispiece to *The London Jilt*, this message is conveyed by the older woman sitting at the table counting money, clearly a bawd profiting from the younger whore's debauchery. Sex is hence clearly referenced but not represented in actuality and neither is the body shown unclothed, either partially or fully, in readiness for sex. In some images the women's fashionable décolleté may be extremely low, so that her breasts are almost fully visible, or her partner may be seen to be lifting her skirt so that part of her lower leg can be seen (see Figure 18, frontispiece to *The Crafty Whore*), but complete nudity, including the display of the sexual organs, was

¹⁹ See Yalom, *A History of the Breast*, esp. 87–8.

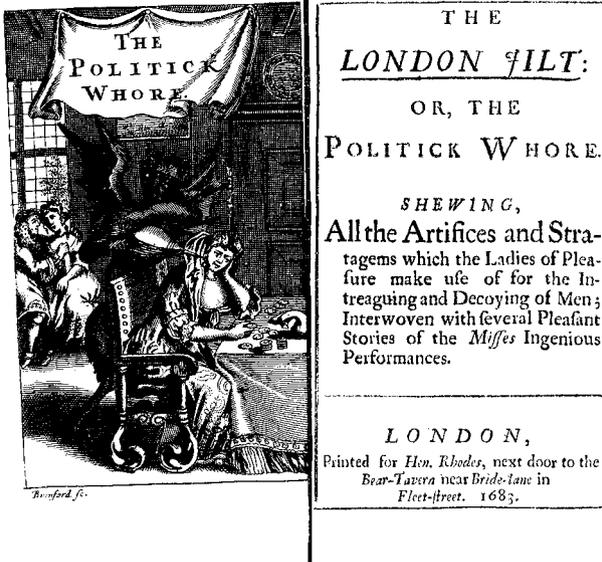


Fig. 17. Frontispiece to Alexander Oldy's *The London Jilt: Or, The Politick Whore* (London, 1683). Courtesy of Houghton Library, Harvard College Library (EC65.A100.68312). Image published with permission of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.



Fig. 18. Frontispiece to *The Crafty Whore* (1662), BL: E.1927.(1). By permission of the British Library. Image published with permission of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

unusual in English printed matter throughout the seventeenth century. Partial nudity occasionally occurs in illustrations, but is usually context specific and bears a direct relationship with the text in this case. For example, as we have seen in Chapter 3 in images illustrating texts about flagellation, the buttocks may be revealed, as in the picture from part three of *The English Rogue* (see Figure 5) or the upper body, as in the frontispiece of the pamphlet entitled *A True Relation of the Life, Conversation, Examination, Confession and Just Deserved Sentence of James Naylor the Grand Quaker of England* (1656) (see Figure 4), which depicts Naylor suffering the punishment of a whipping at the cart's tail and his sentence to the pillory for entering Bristol riding on a donkey in emulation of Jesus entering Jerusalem as a sign of the Second Coming of Christ.²⁰ This relative modesty is something that changes later in the eighteenth century, when many erotic publications included not only illustrations that are allusive in nature, especially in the use of landscape, but also those that reveal the sexual organs.²¹ Later eighteenth-century (1766) illustrations to Cleland's *Fanny Hill*, for example, depict not only Mr Barville's buttocks as he is whipped by Fanny, but also his resulting erection, whereas the early eighteenth-century frontispiece to Curll's edition of Meibomius' *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs*, as we have seen, like the seventeenth-century pictures, still shows only the buttocks.²²

The exception to this general rule is a number of pamphlets that were printed during the early 1640s and 1650s in England satirizing nonconformist religious sects, particularly Adamites and Ranters, which have been briefly mentioned in previous chapters, and which deployed explicit woodcut illustrations depicting male and female nudity, including display of the male genitals that are clearly in a state of sexual arousal (see Figure 19 from *A New Sect of Religion Descried, Call'd Adamites* (1641)). These illustrations, usually printed as the frontispiece to the pamphlet, appear to be unique to this moment: there are no extant similar prints in English publications either before or later in the seventeenth century. Nor did they set a precedent for subsequent publications: anti-sect literature printed in the later seventeenth century deploys images that conform to the more modest nature of the frontispieces discussed above, such as Figure 20 illustrating *The Quakers Art of Courtship*. Here the resemblance of the image to those that appeared on printed matter about whores served by association to reinforce the message that doctrinal error inevitably leads to moral error and the sins of adultery and fornication. Nonconformist women are guilty of whoring, while the men, both adherents of the sect and preachers, commit the sins of lust and concupiscence. The movement from being doctrinally sound, and hence

²⁰ He was also sentenced to be branded and bored through the tongue followed by indefinite incarceration and hard labour. B. Reay, 'Quakerism and Society', in J.F. McGregor and B. Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984), 141–64, at 158–9.

²¹ See Harvey, *Reading Sex*, and Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*.

²² Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books*, 162.

A new Sect of Religion Descryed, called ADAMITES:

Deriving their Religion from our Father *Adam*,

Wherein they hold themselves to be blamelesse at the last day,
though they sinne never so egregiously, for they challenge Salvation, as
they doe, from the innocencie of their second A D A M.
This was first disclofed by a Brother of the same Sect, to the Author, who went
along with this Brother, and saw all these Passages following.

By *Samoth Yarb, Bachelor in Arts.*



Fig. 19. Title page of Samoth Yarb, *A New Sect of Religion Descryed, Call'd Adamites* (London, 1641). Courtesy of Houghton Library, Harvard College Library (EC65.B7395.641n). Image published with permission of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

correspondingly modest and chaste, to unorthodoxy and consequently corrupt and debauched is signalled not only by the shift in setting (the couple have moved sideways from being seated at the table to being seated upon the bed, the lighted candle upon the table has been replaced by drink, and music has displaced the word), but also particularly by the transformation of the woman's clothing and pose. Her hair has been released from her bonnet's demure confinement, the collar or shawl that modestly concealed her bosom has been removed to reveal a full décolleté, to which she draws attention by placing her hand on her breast as if to offer it up to her seducer, and the skirt of her gown, which was previously decorously pulled in to swathe closely her legs, which were neatly placed together and crossed at the ankles, now falls loosely about her, allowing her legs to be parted beneath it so that her seduction is complete, as indicated by the insinuation of the minister's feet and legs between hers. In these images, clothing rather than nudity is the visual indicator of a change in moral status, from a body closed, confined, and chaste to a body that speaks of sex, displaying its openness and availability. These pictures are the visual correspondent of earlier texts such as John Williams's *A Sermon of apparell* (1619) or *Hic mulier* (1620), in which the association of clothing with morality was spelt out.

We can see a similar use of clothing in disarray to indicate the sexual act in images such as *The Teares of Ireland* (Irish Rebellion, 1641), where the rape of



Fig. 20. Frontispiece to *The Quakers Art of Courtship* (1689), BL C118.a.9. By permission of the British Library.

the 14-year-old daughter of Arthur Robinson is indicated not by a depiction of the act of rape itself, but rather by her skirts lifted to the knee, exposing her naked legs and bare feet.²³ In court cases for prosecution of adultery and fornication, and also for rape, testimony by witnesses about the state of a woman's clothing is an important part of proving that untoward sexual activity has taken part. For example, in a case from Earls Colne in 1621, the adultery of Isabel Collin with Robert Carter, a witness deposed that 'the said Isabel had her ruff beaten down behind and bruised flat whereby this deponent did suspect that there had been some ill act passed between them . . .'.²⁴ In cases for rape, particularly of young children, the sexual assault comes to light when evidence of unusual staining, 'some Symptoms on the Childs Shirt', appears on the child's clothing, so that adults become suspicious and question the child.²⁵ For example, the rape of Elizabeth Nichols aged 7 or 8 in 1684 is discovered when her aunt borrows an unwashed smock for her own daughter to wear, 'who having a Child of her own Sick, on whom she was unwilling to put clean Linen, went to borrow Elizabeth Nichols foul Shift, and by it found some Man had been dealing with her, asked her how she came to be in that Condition'.²⁶ Clothing that does not appear as it ought is the sign of unlawful sexual activity throughout the seventeenth century, in both prosecutions for unlawful sex and in its representation.

The anti-sectarian pamphlets from the 1640s and 1650s are remarkably different in their deployment of more obviously pornographic images to convey their message. The relationship of text to image is also not one of verisimilitude, with textual description not faithfully reproduced in visual representation. The text itself of these pamphlets did not always contain obviously pornographic descriptions of the alleged sexual misdemeanours of these sects, but did nevertheless include these explicit illustrations. Although few of the texts discussed in this book as pornography included illustrations, apart from the ballads, which were frequently illustrated with woodcuts, this particular group of texts, produced at this particular time, did use them both as frontispieces and sometimes also as further illustration within the text. These pictures, therefore, are significant for the fact of their inclusion in printed matter. But they are also significant because of the nature of the particular images that were reproduced, usually as the frontispiece, and therefore the first thing that the purchaser or reader would see. Where other texts have included a frontispiece, they have usually utilized,

²³ See in Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip*, 126.

²⁴ *The Records of Earls Colne; Records of Plenary or Instance Jurisdiction, Archdeacons Depositions* (ERO/D/ABD2), 1 Feb. 1621, document 702318; <http://linux02.lib.cam.ac.uk/earlscolne/instance/702318.htm>

²⁵ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org 21 May 2005), Jan. 1699, trial of William Pheasant (t16990113-1).

²⁶ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org 21 May 2005), Oct. 1684, trial of Thomas Benson (t16841008-12).

Fig. 21. Title page of *The Brothers of the Blade Answerable to the Sisters of the Scaberd* (1641), BL:E.238(5). By permission of the British Library. Image published with permission of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.



as we have seen, in Philip Stewart's term, a 'decent' image: one that is allusive rather than explicit.²⁷

The illustrations from the title pages of *The Brothers of the Blade: Answerable to the Sisters of the Scaberd* (1641) and *The Sisters of the Scabards Holiday* (1641), like the representation of the rape of Arthur Robinson's daughter also in 1641, are representative of these more usual allusive and 'decent' images (see Figures 21 and 22). These all appeared in the same year (1641) as the first of these explicit images seems to have been published. In both pictures, the characters are clothed. In the illustration to *The Brothers of the Blade*, a man and a woman are seated, embracing, on a bed, with the man's hat strategically placed in his lap suggesting the bulge of a possible erection beneath, and the hat itself representing the enclosing vagina. This idea is reinforced by the upright position of what appears

²⁷ Stewart, *Engraven Desire*.

8

The Sisters of the Scabards HOLIDAY:

OR,
A Dialogue between two reverent and very
vertuous Matrons, Mrs. *Bloomesbury*, and Mrs.
Long-Acre her neare Neighbour.

Wherein is Discourfed how terrible, and costly the *Civill Law*
was to their Profession; and how they congatulate
the welcome Alteration.



PRINTED, 1641

Fig. 22. Title page of *The Sisters of the Scabards Holiday* (1641), BL E.168.(8). By permission of the British Library. Image published with permission of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

to be the handle of a sword to the left of the picture, along the same plane (reflecting the 'blade' of the title, which again metaphorically suggests the penis), tucked down into the side of the bedhead. This sword/penis is also strategically placed directly above, and pointing down into, the chamber pot, which is in turn a visual metaphor for the vagina (and suggesting the 'scabard' of the title, which encases the sword). The soft, curving swathe of material entwined around the hard, upright bedpost also suggests the physical entwining of the male and female bodies in the act of love. So, although there are many visual cues in the picture to evoke the idea of sexual intercourse between the man and the woman, the sexual act is not actually depicted, and both the man and the woman are fully clothed, with the woman's body half-turned away from the man who is embracing her. This was an image that was used many times to illustrate a variety of printed matter, frequently ballads. For example it reappears as an illustration to two single-sheet ballads entitled 'Watten Towns-End; Or, A Nosegay of Pleasure which Grew in the Garden of Venus' (undated) and 'Sport upon Sport: Or, The

Man in the S[mock]' (1685). In both these publications the visual metaphors suggesting the sexual organs, the hat and the sword, have been removed from the image. This could represent a degree of censorship, or it could just be a case of simplification of the image for a smaller publication to enable a higher print run at a cheaper cost. However, familiarity with the more detailed image and its multiple signifiers of sexuality may in these cases have leant a greater depth of implication to the text.

The nature of this frontispiece also reflects the nature and content of the text, both in the way that it uses visual metaphors to suggest sex and the double entendres with which the text is littered throughout, which are also employed in the pamphlet's extended title: 'A Dialogue betweene two Hot-spurres of the Times, *Serjeant slice-man, alias SMELL-SMOCK of Coney-Court in Chick-Lane,* and Corporall DAM-MEE of *Bell-alley* neare *Pick-hatch*. At their first meeting in the walkes in *Moorefieldes*, upon the Returne of the one from the Leaguer in the *Low-Countries*, and the late coming of the other from the Campe in the *North*, at the disbanding of the Army.' This extended title refers to real places such as Moorefields, where an early modern person might expect to encounter a proliferation of whores plying their trade, or where women might be accosted while going about their legitimate business, and Bell Alley, which was notorious for religious radicalism (hence associating religious unorthodoxy with sexual immorality).²⁸ '*Bell-alley*' can also be read as yet another metaphor for the penetrated vagina (the clapper in the bell). The title mixes these real locations with imaginary streets and alleys whose names suggest that they too are the haunts of loose women: from the explicit '*Coney-Court*', which was pronounced to rhyme with 'cunny' and was a familiar popular metaphor for the female sexual parts widely repeated in jokes from the period, to the perhaps less obvious '*Pick-hatch*', which is suggestive of penetration of the female parts and the again familiar sexual metaphor of the key in the lock. The 'Leaguer in the *Low-Countries*' refers, of course, to the notorious Holland's Leaguer brothel discussed in a previous chapter and the '*Low-Countries*' is a neat double entendre playing on its use as an alternative term for Holland and its obvious reference to the lower, genital area of the body. Like many of the texts discussed that dwell on the lives and haunts of prostitutes, this pamphlet also evokes London as an entirely sexualized space, haunted by those selling and buying sex. Alongside this title text, the image of an interior, a bedchamber, where it is implied that sex is about to take place, extends this impression, bringing the outside inside, highlighting the connection of private deeds with public spaces, of secrecy with public discourse.

Similarly, in the picture illustrating *The Sisters of the Scabards Holiday* (figure 22), a dialogue between prostitutes, there is no explicit depiction of sexual activity.

²⁸ See Gowing, 'The Freedom of the Streets', 144. I am grateful to Ann Hughes for pointing out the significance of Bell Alley.

Sexual looseness is suggested by the dancing women and confirmed by the title's reference to their 'Profession' (and again by the references to two notorious places in London, Bloomsbury and Long Acre, where women commonly plied their trade as prostitutes), and by the apparent half-nakedness of the woman they are dancing around. In the left foreground a young man appears to be holding a round bowl and a cylindrical implement like a pestle and mortar (with which he may be beating time for the dance), which again, like the chamber pot and the sword, suggest the penis and vagina. The 'Scabard' of both titles was slang for both the vagina and for a 'scabbed person'—that is, a person who is likely to be suffering from venereal disease—as well as literally being the sheath for a sword, underlining and providing yet another allusion to the sexual act without actually showing it.²⁹ These images, and the text of the publications' titles that accompanied them, were as explicit to the reader as the metaphors and similes heaped up one after the other within the texts, making their sexual intent plain. Such publications, while not explicitly either depicting or describing sexual acts or bodies, made it plain that they nevertheless dealt with sexual matters. This was a period that thrived on the use of allegory and symbol in all areas of cultural life, and, as Sheila Lambert pointed out in her essay on control of the press before 1640, 'the symbols were meant to illuminate, not to deceive'.³⁰ This was a style of writing that would be as explicit to seventeenth-century readers as would the use of more direct language.

The difference between these illustrations and those employed in the anti-sect pamphlets published in the decade between 1641 and 1651 (the date of the last publication located containing such an image) could not be more marked. Nakedness is prevalent. Not only are naked female bodies depicted, but also, and more obviously, naked men.³¹ The men are noteworthy for the prominent display of male sexual excitement made visible through penile erection. Although the women in these pictures are also naked, we see only female naked breasts and buttocks: the female genital area either is not delineated clearly, or, more usually, is covered by a hand, a raised leg, or a tress of hair. In the frontispiece to *A New Sect of Religion Descryed, called Adamites* a tress of the woman's long hair curves in front of her body, simultaneously concealing her pudenda and suggesting the pubic hair beneath (see Figure 19). Of the three women pictured facing front in Figure 23, *The Adamites Sermon* (1641), two have placed a hand in their lap, covering their genital area, while the men do not cover themselves, and the branch

²⁹ See Henke, *Renaissance Dramatic Bawdy*, ii. 262.

³⁰ Lambert, 'State Control of the Press', 5.

³¹ The discussion of the nude body in art has been conditioned by Kenneth Clark's discussion of the nude in western art in *The Nude: A Study of Ideal Art* (London, 1956), and then popularized more widely by John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London, 1972), where the nude is associated with ideal beauty represented in high art forms, while the naked is regarded as the more realistic representation of the body unadorned and revealed with all its blemishes and imperfections. I have used the description 'naked' here, not to subscribe to this distinction in any way, but rather because it is the term that would have been used in seventeenth-century references to the body unclothed.

The Adamites Sermon:

Containing their manner of Preaching, Expounding, and Prophe-
sying : As it was delivered in *Marie-bone*

Park, by *Obadiah Cauchman*, a grave Weaver,
dwelling in *Southwark*, who with his oompanie
were taken and discovered by the Con-
stable and other Officers of that place; by the
means of a womans husband who dog-
ged them thither.

PRINTED

BY

W. B. G.

And some part likewise by meanes of a Gentlewoman,
a widow, which is a Ministers daughter in the Citie of
London, who was almost perswaded to become one of their
Societie, if her father had not dissuaded her from it.

Also a Dialogue between an Adamite and a Brownist,
concerning their Religion, &c.



Printed for *Francis Coules*, in the Year 1641.

Fig. 23. Title page of *The Adamites Sermon* (1641).

Courtesy of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (262.8 C83a.) Image

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that the preacher is standing behind is strategically placed to be suggestive, at first glance, of an enormous erection, though on closer inspection his flaccid penis is visible beneath it. These images thus reverse the usual treatment (by hiding them from view) of the female genitals in seventeenth-century pornographic writing of all types where there is both explicit and more allusive reference. The display of the male genitalia, and generally the erect male genitalia, seems to take centre stage in these particular publications at this time. This treatment anticipates the appearance of the male genitals in explicit French pornography that appeared after mid-century and where, as I have discussed in Chapter 2, there is considerable focus on the male genitalia.

David Cressy discusses a number of these pamphlets in his essay 'The Adamites Exposed' in *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England*. Cressy attributes the publication of these images to the lapse of censorship, noting that there was 'no known antecedent in English popular print' for such an image.³²

³² Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions*, 263.

It is highly likely that publishers were making the most of the disruption to the regulation of the press caused by the abolition of the Star Chamber in 1640, and the subsequent difficulty of enforcing the regulations imposed in 1643 and 1647 as the Civil War continued, to print material that might otherwise never have been permitted to appear, although Sheila Lambert has argued that censorship was not as strictly applied as had previously been assumed.³³ However, this material is quite singular and seems to have been printed only during a time period of around a decade: from 1641 to 1651. The breakdown of order in both Church and State that occurred during the 1640s meant that radical, separatist, nonconformist ideas proliferated. Reflecting the inability of Parliament to agree on how the Laudian Anglican church should be remodelled, and the patchy enforcement of conformity not only in different parts of the country, but also from one parish to another, a wide range of ideas and opinions about both doctrine and church structures developed outside the chamber.³⁴ The relaxation of censorship and the availability of cheap print provided a climate in which these ideas could be spread widely through the printed word, as well as by word of mouth and through itinerant preachers. Combined with the rapid descent into civil war, and what must have seemed like a breakdown in the cornerstone of social stability as men left their families to fight on one side or the other, and friends and neighbours, and even families themselves, were riven by ideological difference as parents and children, husbands and wives, siblings and wider kin held opposing views and even fought against each other, the growth of dissenting sects must have seemed to threaten the dissolution of Church and State into anarchy, despite their relatively small numbers.³⁵ The lapse in censorship must have been a factor in their publication, though the fact that the printers identified themselves on most of these pamphlets suggests that they were *not* at all worried about the consequences of publishing such material.³⁶ As has been noted previously, authors throughout the period frequently justified the sexual content of their works by arguing that they did not intend to be obscene, but rather were motivated by a desire for reformation. The producers of these pamphlets clearly had a strong reformist intention, satirizing the errors of the sects in order to ridicule and discredit their message.³⁷

The subject of all these pamphlets are unorthodox religious groups, particularly Adamites, Ranters, Shakers, and Quakers, and the images are used to illustrate different pamphlets almost indiscriminately: the sects are all, in effect, tarred

³³ Lambert, 'State Control of the Press'.

³⁴ John, Morrill, 'The Church in England, 1642–9', in John Morrill (ed.), *Reactions to the English Civil War 1642–1649* (London and Basingstoke, 1982), 89–114. See also John Spurr, *English Puritanism 1603–1689* (Basingstoke, 1998).

³⁵ John Morrill estimated their numbers at no more than around 5% of the population between 1643 and 1654. Morrill, 'The Church in England', 90.

³⁶ For a discussion of secrecy in writing during the Civil War years, see Lois Potter, *Secret Rites and Secret Writing: Royalist Literature 1641–1660* (Cambridge, 1989).

³⁷ For another discussion of these pamphlets, see Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies*, ch. 6.

Fig. 24. Title page of *The Ranters Religion* (1650), BL E.619.(8). By permission of the British Library. Image published with permission of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

The Ranters Religion.⁸

K O R,

A faithfull and infallible Narrative of their damnable and diabolical opinions, with their detestable lives & actions.

With a true discovery of some of their late prodigious pranks, and unparalleled deportments, with a paper of most blasphemous Verbes found in one of their pockets, against the Majesty of Almighty God, and the most sacred Scriptures, rendred *verbatim*.

published by Authority.



London, Printed for R. H. 1650.

with the same brush, whatever the specific nature of their beliefs, and whether or not they existed in reality as an organized body.³⁸ It has been argued that there is little historical evidence that the Adamites and the Ranters actually existed in any organized fashion, and that they were created discursively in the pamphlets satirizing them. Adamites and Ranters are linked visually by two pamphlets: *The Ranters Religion* uses exactly the same image that prefaces the anti-Adamite pamphlet *A Nest of Serpents* (see Figure 24 and cf. figure 2). Kristen Poole suggests that they were ‘most likely, fictional constructs designed for an audience eager to consume prurient “information” about radical sects’.³⁹ Printers and authors clearly felt that they were justified in using the shock of the display of the naked body, and the naked male sexually excited body in particular, to carry their message. It is likely that the impetus for their publication was ended with the hardening of attitudes towards irreligion and blasphemy beginning with the passing of the 1648 Blasphemy Ordinance. In 1650 Parliament ordered that Abiezer Coppe’s notorious Ranter pamphlet *A Fiery Flying Roll* should be burned, and the second Blasphemy Act was passed in August of that year,

³⁸ See J.C. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians* (Cambridge, 1986), and Davis, ‘Fear, Myth and Furore’; Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions*; Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies*, 177–82.

³⁹ Kristen, Poole, *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton: Figures of Nonconformity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000), 155.

Fig. 25. Title page of *The Ranters Declaration* (1650), BL E.620.(2). By permission of the British Library. Image published with permission of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

The Ranters Declaration,²

WITH

Their new Oath and Protestation; their strange Votes, and a new way to get money; their Proclamation and Summons; their new way of Ranting, never before heard of; their dancing of the *Hay* naked, at the white *Lyon* in Peacock-lane; their mad Dream, and Dr. *Pockridge* his Speech, with their Trial, Examination, and Answers: the coming in of 3000. their Prayer and Recantation, to be in all Cities and Market-towns read and published; the mad-Ranters further Resolution; their Christmas Carol, and blaspheming Song; their two pretended-aborominable Keys to enter Heaven, and the worshipping of his little-majesty the late Bishop of *Casterbury*; A new and further Discovery of his black Art, with the Names of those that are possessed by the Devil, having strange and hideous cries heard within them, to the great admiration of all those that shall read and peruse this ensuing Subject.

Licensed according to order, and published by M. Stubbs, a late fellow-Ranter



Imprinted at London, by J. C. MDCL. 1650

ordering the imprisonment of those who argued that immoral activities could be sinless, among other unacceptable doctrines.⁴⁰ Jacob Bauhumley, the author of *The Light and Dark Sides of God* (1650), was punished more severely: not only was he dismissed from the army, but his book was also burnt and his tongue bored through with a red hot iron. Hostility towards and prosecution of Quakers continued throughout the 1650s.⁴¹

As anti-sectarian propaganda, the same tools are employed against all: suggestions of witchcraft, unlawful and libertine sexual practices, indulgence in other pleasures of the flesh such as eating, drinking, dancing, and enjoyment of music go hand in hand with erroneous belief, including perversion of biblical quotations, such as 'Increase multiply' (see Figure 25 from *The Ranters Declaration*) to condone indiscriminate sexual expression.⁴² Some images also include visual

⁴⁰ John, Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558–1689* (Harlow, 2000); Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1978); Thomas N. Corns, 'Radical Pamphleteering', in N. H. Keeble, *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2001), 71–86.

⁴¹ B. Reay, 'Quakerism and Society', in McGregor and Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, 141–64. See also Nigel Smith (ed.), *A Collection of Rantes Writings from the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1983).

⁴² For example, on Quakerism and witchcraft see Peter Elmer, "'Saints or Sorcerers': Quakerism, Demonology and the Decline of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century England', in Jonathan Barry,

Fig. 26. Title page of *The Declaration of John Robins, the False Prophet, otherwise Called the Shakers God* (1651), BL E.629.(13). By permission of the British Library. Image published with permission of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

THE DECLARATION⁴³ OF

JOHN ROBINS, the false Prophet, otherw^e called the *Shakers God*, and *John Beck*, and *John King*, the two false Disciples, with the rest of their Fellow-Creatures now prisoners in the New-prison at *Charlenswell*: Delivered to divers of the Gentry and Citizens, who on *Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday* laste were thereto to dispute with them: With the Citizens Preparats to the said *John Robins*, concerning his Opinion and Judgements, and his Answer therunto: Together with his Prophecie of what is to come to pass this year, 1651. & the strange things revealed to him: his Religion, Principles, and Creed: as also his blasphe-mous Tenents, in attributing an inspiration from the Holy Ghost: with the manner of their Diet, and his Woe pronounced concerning all those that followe him. By C. H. in Prison.



London, Printed by R. Wood, 1651. Jun^o 2. 1651.

references to other illustrations, allowing a pamphlet to add in further suggestion of aberration, political as well as religious and sexual, to those already explicitly depicted and described. In Figure 25 the text links Ranting to witchcraft, while the four pictures link the various themes, including a reference to the celebration of Christmas (represented here by naked dancers), which to Puritan minds was an excuse for debauchery thus justifying its abolition by Parliament. Dancing was considered to allow unseemly contact between the sexes, which would lead to adultery and fornication. The same pictures are used on an anti-Shaker pamphlet of 1651 entitled *The Declaration of John Robins, the False Prophet, Otherwise Called the Shakers God* (see Figure 26), with the words altered to reflect the change of target. In the top right picture, there is a headless cloaked man, which, as well as again suggesting the supernatural, may be a reference to an earlier pamphlet, *A Declaration of a Strange and Wonderfull Monster* (1645). This described the birth of a child without a head to a Royalist ‘Popish Gentlewoman’, who declared that she ‘had wished rather to bear a Childe without a head then a Roundhead’ (see Figure 27).⁴³ This picture is used again in 1652 to illustrate *The*

Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (eds.), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge, 1996), 145–79.

⁴³ *A Declaration, of a Strange and Wonderfull Monster: Born in Kirkham Parish in Lancashire (the Childe of Mrs Haughton, a Popish Gentlewoman) the Face of it upon the Breast, and without a Head*

Fig. 27. Title page of *A Declaration of a Strange and Wonderful Monster* (1645), BL E.325.(20). By permission of the British Library. Image published with permission of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

A DECLARATION,²⁰ Of a strange and Wonderful MONSTER :

Born in KIRKHAM Parish in LANCASHIRE (the Childe of Mrs. *Haughton*, a Popish Gentlewoman) the face of it upon the breast, and without a head (after the mother had withd rather to bear a Childe without a head then a Roundhead) and had curft the

PARLIAMNET.

Attested by Mr. FLEETWOOD, Minister of the same Parish, under his own hand ; and Mrs. *Garraker* the Mid-wife, and divers other eye-witnelis : Whole testimony was brought up by a Member of the Houle of Common.

Appointed to be printed according to Order : And desired to be published in all the Countie, Cities, Townes, and Parishes in England : Being the same Copies that were presented to the Parliament.



mark 3

London, Printed by Iam. Coe, 1645.

Ranters Monster: Being a True Relation of one Mary Adams, living at Tillingham in Essex, who Named her self the Virgin Mary, Blasphemously Affirming, That she was Conceived with Child by the Holy Ghost . . ., bringing all the previous associations of this image to a different publication.

Such representations of headless monsters had deeper political and religious implications. Analogies for the state that placed the king as the head of the body politic were common in contemporary political theory and would have been familiar to all. In his speech to Parliament on 21 March 1610, James I asserted that ‘kings are compared to the head of this microcosm of the body of man . . . the head hath the power of directing all the members of the body to that use which the judgement in the head thinks most convenient. It may apply sharp cures or cut off corrupt members, let blood in what proportion it thinks fit and as the body may spare . . .’⁴⁴ This was an argument that gave weight and impetus to Charles I’s execution in 1649, where it could be argued that his

(*after the Mother had Wished Rather to Bear a Childe without a Head then a Roundhead*) and had Curst the Parliamnet [sic] (London, 1646, crossed out, 1645 added in manuscript). This reflects a popular belief that the thoughts and behaviour of the pregnant woman could influence the appearance of the offspring to which she gave birth. See also Ottavia Niccoli, ‘“Menstruum Quasi Monstruum”’: Monstrous Births and Menstrual Taboo in the Sixteenth Century’, in Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (eds.), *Sex and Gender in Historical Perspective* (Baltimore and London, 1990), 1–25.

⁴⁴ James I, *Workes* (1616), 529–31.

behaviour and actions corrupted the body politic, justifying those who called for the removal of the head of state, whether through his deposition from the throne or through the ultimate resolution of decapitation. Subsequent references to headless people in cheap pamphlets could be used in pro-Royalist propaganda depicting the body without a head, or the state without a king, as a monstrosity.⁴⁵ On the other side of the political divide, it could be deployed as shorthand to link nonconformist views with an anti-Parliamentarian and pro-Royalist political stance (the Shaker preacher is telling the crowd, including the headless body, 'I will deliver you', suggesting that he would restore the head—the monarch—to the body or state). These pamphlets also had religious connotations, referring to disputation over baptismal practices, where making the sign of the cross over a baby's head during baptism was regarded as being too Catholic. In the same way, reports were circulated of women giving birth to headless babies having asserted that they would rather have a baby with no head than one whose head would be signed with the sign of the cross.⁴⁶

Themes presented visually in the pictures on these pamphlets also reappear in textual descriptions in yet other pamphlets. The repeated visual reference to witchcraft through the witch's kiss appears elsewhere in description of the practices of men and women at Ranter meetings: 'one of them lets fall his breeches, and turning his shirt aside, another of the company runs and kisses, saying, they must all do the like, for it was their fellow creature.'⁴⁷ These pamphlets, through the visual representation of moral and sexual licence, mocked and condemned the espousal of nonconformist ideas, indiscriminately attributing the embracing of antinomianism—the belief that, since Christ atoned for the sins of mankind on the cross, all humankind now lived in a state of grace and might therefore by extension consider themselves to be free from moral, legal, and social restraints on behaviour—to all these sects, whether or not this was what they actually believed, or how they behaved in actuality. The greeting of 'fellow creature' mocked the doctrine attributed to Ranters that, as God was in every creature, those who acknowledged this could not therefore sin, and might as a consequence flout contemporary moral boundaries, particularly regarding sexual behaviour. Sexual incontinence, blasphemy, witchcraft, heresy, and other religious unorthodoxy are all linked together with political propaganda during a period of civil and political upheaval, dissension, and instability. The political link with religious dissidence is also clearly made later in the century, at another moment of religious and political instability and anxiety: the succession of Charles II's Catholic brother James to the throne. In *The Parliament of Women*, whose title harks back to the

⁴⁵ See Diane Purkiss's discussion of this pamphlet in her *Literature, Gender and Politics during the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 2005), 171–3.

⁴⁶ For a fuller discussion of this issue, see Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies*, 158–61.

⁴⁷ *The Routing of the Ranters. Being a Full Relation of their Uncivil Carriages, and Blasphemous Words and Actions at their Mad Meetings, their Several Kind of Musick, Dances, and Ryotings, and their Belief and Opinions concerning Heaven and Hell* (London, 1650), 4.



Fig. 28. Title page of *The Parliament of Women* (1656), BL E.1636.(2). By permission of the British Library. Image published with permission of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

numerous satirical pamphlets published in the late 1640s and 1650s on the same subject (see Figure 28), the women discuss which religion is most appropriate for them to follow—that is, which would allow the most sexual licence to satisfy insatiable female desires. Some support the Ranters, for ‘They are a jolly sort of People indeed, they meet together Male and Female, Higgledy Piggledy, put out the Candles, put off their Cloaths and play at catch that catch can bravely without fear or Wit—there’s some Sport in this sort of Devotion Ladies—and I believe it would suit very well with our Form of Government’.⁴⁸ Others argue for and against ‘Papism’, to which, as we have seen in a previous chapter, all sorts of sexual debauchery was routinely attributed, particularly through the alleged sexual licence of monks and nuns (see Figure 29).⁴⁹ But the most striking aspects of these images are the nakedness of the characters, and the depiction of penile erection. It is these two aspects particularly, as we have seen, that would ensure that these images were characterized as ‘indecent’ or pornographic, and that were highly unusual in English print culture. Furthermore, such images of male sexual excitement were unusual in other contexts: from the Counter-Reformation on,

⁴⁸ *The Parliament of Women*, 104–5.

⁴⁹ For a discussion of these pamphlets, see Turner, *Libertines and Radicals*, ch. 3.



Fig. 29. Engraving (plate number 21) from a Latin edition of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* (c.1690), BL PC.30.i.10. By permission of the British Library.

nudity was covered up in both painting and sculpture.⁵⁰ We might think in this context of Michaelangelo's *David*, to which was added, in the sixteenth century, a figleaf to cover his genitalia, which was not removed until the twentieth

⁵⁰ See, e.g., Margaret Walters, *The Nude Male: A New Perspective* (London, 1978; paperback edn., Harmondsworth, 1979). But see also Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (Chicago and London, 1983; 2nd edn., 1996). Steinberg examines how the genitals of Christ are both uncovered to view and drawn attention to in Renaissance art, and what this signifies.

century. Despite our perceived increased liberalism today, there is still a taboo on the public revelation of the male genitalia, whether flaccid or erect, apart from in specialist 'hard-core' pornography. The only other pornographic book from the seventeenth century in which we encounter images of erect penises (and the display of the vulva in pictures of women with their legs apart, so that their genitalia can be clearly viewed) is the much later c.1690 edition of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* discussed at the beginning of this chapter, and which would have had a very limited circulation because of its expense and the fact that it would have been produced to the buyer's specification. The place of publication is not indicated on this text, and it is not clear whether a complete edition of the book with all seven dialogues and containing such illustrations was available for purchase in England at the time. The Latin text could be purchased in London by 1677, if not earlier.⁵¹ The earliest record of an English version of *The Dialogues* is a manuscript translation of one dialogue dated 1676, followed by the mention of the shorter English partial adaptation entitled *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid* in the prosecution of the printers Joseph Streater and Benjamin Crayle in 1688.⁵² The fining of the same printers for attempting to publish Rochester's *Sodom* in 1689 suggests that such an explicit work may not have been allowed, but there was also a large market for unlicensed printed works.⁵³ As I have already suggested, these later images would have been regarded as highly transgressive, as they are mostly illustrative of those sexual positions and conjunctions that didactic works said should not take place.⁵⁴ There are only three pictures out of thirty-two, less than 10 per cent, that illustrate the conventional, approved, position for intercourse with the woman lying on her back, the man on top (and, in two of these, the woman is reclining rather than lying, and the man is kneeling rather than extended on top of her).⁵⁵ However, none of the images in these publications from the 1640s and 1650s explicitly pictures the act of sexual intercourse, nor when intercourse is suggested does the image contain nudity (see Figures 25 and 26, for example). Unrestrained sexuality is clearly a part of these images, but it is the body naked that is displayed to view rather than the naked body engaged in sexual intercourse: this is implied but never shown. These images of erect penises are then unusual at this time in publications, whether specialist or popular. So why do they appear in these particular publications, at this particular time, and what might they mean?

⁵¹ See Foxon, *Libertine Literature*, 9.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 40. ⁵³ See Rochester, ed. Lyons, 312–14, and Robertson, *Obscenity*, 19.

⁵⁴ As, e.g., in Sinibaldus, *Rare Verities* (1658).

⁵⁵ Bette Talvacchia in *Taking Positions* has analysed the multiple ways in which the *I modi*, more popularly known as Aretino's 'postures', contravene Church teaching on sexual engagement, and it is clear that these plates are as, if not more transgressive, representing not only prohibited positions but also acts such as sodomy and oral sex, the use of dildoes and group sex.

It has been suggested that in medieval and early Renaissance religious paintings and sculptures the damned are represented with large, protruding genitals in order to emphasize their sexuality, and to highlight the cause of their sin. The saved are represented clothed or with infantilized genitalia. Michael Camille argues that these negative representations, as they appear sculpted inside and on churches and cathedrals throughout Western Europe, are not intended, as a kind of erotica, to arouse. Rather, they are a reminder of the lower, bestial side of human nature and the horror of the flesh: a warning that desire can lead to damnation.⁵⁶ Weir and Jerman also emphasize that such figures are not intended as erotica (though this does not necessarily mean that they might not be enjoyed as such).⁵⁷ They further point out that the majority of these carvings portray 'downward-pointing phalluses of large size', rather than 'erect ithyphallic organs'. They conclude that these figures are representative of lust and concupiscence and that they may be intended to represent Jews, symbolic of the damned and embodying unbridled sexuality.⁵⁸ Cressy argues that in the illustration to *A Nest of Serpents*, and in the image illustrating *A New Sect of Religion Descryed, called Adamites* (Figures 2 and 19), 'the penis rampant implies unbridled lust', so serving the same function as the exaggerated male genitalia of medieval iconography.⁵⁹ In "'Magnetic Figures": Polemical Prints of the English Revolution', Tamsyn Williams suggests that the intention behind the display of these naked, sexualized figures was to ridicule those represented, to shame and embarrass them, to expose their vices and so to discourage others from following their example.⁶⁰ Williams also points out that these images were 'designed to appeal to the widest possible popular audience' and that their context was therefore important for giving them meaning.⁶¹

That these images were popular and effective can perhaps be inferred from the fact that they were recycled and reused in different publications, in a similar way to the use of intertextual references in other pornographic writing. Just as similar language, metaphors, and allusions were employed together with references to other titles to create a sense of familiarity for the reader, to add depth and resonance to a text, and also to alert the reader to the existence of other, similar, works that might be enjoyed, so the repeated use of the same images in turn gives the reader a sense of recognition and familiarity, adding a wider context to the image than that suggested by the particular publication in hand. For example, as we have seen, the illustration on the cover of the 1641 anti-Adamite publication *A Nest of Serpents Discovered* appears in 1650 on the cover of the

⁵⁶ Camille, *Gothic Art*, esp. 151–61, and Camille, *Image on the Edge*.

⁵⁷ Anthony Weir and James Jerman, *Images of Lust: Sexual Carvings on Medieval Churches* (London, 1986), 99.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 93–9.

⁵⁹ Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions*, 263.

⁶⁰ Tamsyn, Williams, "'Magnetic Figures": Polemical Prints of the English Revolution', in Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (eds.), *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture c.1540–1660* (London, 1990), 86–110, at 87. See also Achinstein, 'Women on Top'.

⁶¹ Williams, "'Magnetic Figures"', 87.

anti-Ranter pamphlet *The Ranters Religion*. The illustration has been slightly altered in the 1650 publication: the words ‘Downe lust’ spoken by the woman whipping the man in the foreground of the picture have been removed, and the text ‘Behold these are Ranters’ has been added on the right of the picture (see Figures 2 and 24). Similarly, the four separate images (see Figure 11) that make up the single woodcut frontispiece to *The Ranters Ranting*, printed by Bernard Alsop in 1650, are reused as textual illustrations in another pamphlet printed by Alsop the same year, *Strange Neues from Newgate and the Old-Baily: Or, The Proofs, Examinations, Declarations, Indictments, Conviction, and Confessions of I. Collins, and T. Reeve, Two of the Ranters Taken in More-lane, at the Generall Sessions of Goal-Delivery*, which has a different frontispiece. Recycling images representing the sexual sin of Adamites in a publication about Ranters, or using an image representing prostitutes (from *The Sisters of the Scabards Holiday*, see Figure 22) to illustrate a pamphlet about women preachers (*A Discoverie of Six Women-Preachers, in Middlesex, Kent, Cambridgeshire, and Salisbury* (1641)) enlarges the frame of reference to encompass all unorthodox religious and sexual expression. Where an image such as this one representing prostitutes is used to illustrate a text to which it has no obvious relationship—it does not picture any part of the text about the women preachers—it clearly has a satirical function, expressing in the image the spirit of the text, its intention or message, rather than its actual content. In an era of low literacy, such use of images was invaluable for carrying the message of the printed word (in this case, that religious unorthodoxy invariably leads to sexual looseness) and could also operate as shorthand invoking a raft of contemporary ideas (the analogy of mouth with vagina; women’s public speaking is akin to a lack of female sexual chastity; women speaking always speak of sex) to a far wider audience than that of the literate, reading public.

Although Tamsyn Williams refers in her essay to the characteristic of male nudity in her discussion of these images, she does not deal with this aspect in any detail, and, to a certain extent, diverts attention away from the representation of the penis by focusing on other, less controversial, body parts: ‘Whether pictured in a room or in a park, the emphasis is always on bare buttocks and bosoms. The aim was to show the Adamites, in the most entertaining way, to be sensual, animal and subhuman.’⁶² But the emphasis in these images is clearly on penises rather than on buttocks and bosoms; and on the erect ‘ithyphallic’ penis, rather than on the ‘downward-pointing mega-phallic’ penis of medieval religious iconography. This emphasis is almost comically highlighted in *The Adamites Sermon*, where, as previously noted, the branch that the preacher is positioned behind may serve as a visual metaphor for the ejaculating penis (see Figure 23). Although some seventeenth-century readers may have been familiar with explicit imagery through church carvings, and in the higher echelons of society with ‘Aretine’s postures’, the depiction of the erect penis on a cheap, widely distributed pamphlet must

⁶² Ibid., 101.

have been shocking to a reading public unused to seeing such pictures in general circulation.⁶³ Such pamphlets would have had a likely print run of between 250 and 1,000 copies; would have been priced as cheaply as around 1*d*; would have been widely available in London through booksellers, hawkers, taverns, and coffee houses; and could have reached audiences in the provinces through chapmen and women, carriers to provincial booksellers and the postal service.⁶⁴ The irrelevance of the requirement for even a basic literacy to the understanding (and enjoyment) of these images may have meant that they achieved greater circulation than usual, as anyone could 'read' a picture, young and old, men and women, the literate and the illiterate. So what meanings did nakedness, and particularly revelation of the genitals, carry in early modern England?

It is generally remarked that nakedness represented shame, recalling the moment in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve became aware that they were naked, and tried to hide themselves from the sight of God. Men and women were rarely completely naked. Even during intercourse it was unusual to take off all one's clothing; skirts and smocks might be lifted and breeches undone to allow penetration, but not fully removed. Court records of prosecutions for adultery, fornication, or lewd behaviour, and for rape, indicate that people rarely removed, or had removed, all their clothing for sex. For example, in one of several depositions involving Isabel Collin's adultery at Earls Colne, mentioned previously, witnesses described how they saw 'the said Isabel upon the floor and her clothes up to her belly and his breeches down before and his shirt turned up on the right side of her so that they saw her naked thighs . . .'.⁶⁵ Such descriptions are ubiquitous in early modern court records. Moreover, clothing generally exposed little of the body: necklines plummeted during the seventeenth century to the point post-Restoration where a fashionable *décolleté* might acceptably expose most of the bosom including the nipples, as can be seen in contemporary prints and portraits.⁶⁶ But the rest of the body was covered to the ankle with long voluminous skirts, and the more modest, or those moving in less fashionable circles, were more likely to cover up with a higher-necked smock underneath and a lace collar and a shawl. The length of the leg of men's breeches also descended during the century, but to cover the previously exposed Elizabethan thigh, leaving the male leg now visible only from the knee downwards. Underneath the outer garments both men and women wore only a smock, a loose chemise that covered the body from the neckline to the knee. Nakedness did not necessarily mean

⁶³ The location and purchase of a copy of Aretino were apparently an established part of the young gentleman's European tour. See Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*, 4.

⁶⁴ See Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641–1649* (Oxford, 1996), 233–40.

⁶⁵ The Records of Earls Colne (ERO D/ABD1), Friday 24 Nov. 1620, document 70084. <http://linux02.lib.cam.ac.uk/earlscolne/instance/700084.htm>

⁶⁶ See Catharine MacLeod and Julia Marciari Alexander, (eds.), *Painted Ladies: Women at the Court of Charles II* (London and New Haven, 2001).

completely unclothed, as the smock was so identified with the body and a state of undress that to be clothed only in this garment was to be considered as if naked.⁶⁷ For men, to be naked might also mean to be unarmed, that is, without a sword. 'Going naked as a sign' was an expression used by Quakers as they bore witness to the truth of God's word vouchsafed to them, but this did not mean stripping completely to the skin, but rather removing the outer layers of clothing.⁶⁸ Laura Gowing has argued that, 'for women, whatever else nakedness meant, it always meant immodesty'.⁶⁹ Only prostitutes and loose women deliberately exposed their bodies, and generally did so as an invitation to sexual intercourse, although inadvertent revelation was a constant hazard for women and, as discussed in the previous chapter, the subject of many a jest. Clothing in disarray, or with certain items removed, could also then be regarded as indecent nakedness, suggesting that the images of sexual encounter discussed above, where the participants are not entirely without clothes, might have been regarded as more indecent or obscene than a modern perspective would suspect.⁷⁰

Nakedness was also associated with the truth, and the phrase 'the naked truth' was pervasive in early modern discourse.⁷¹ Adamites, Ranters, and Quakers were credited with embodying a literal interpretation of this understanding by attempting to recreate the innocence of prelapsarian man through worshipping entirely naked. But the depiction of nudity in these pamphlets was intended to ridicule and hence to discredit the sects and their doctrinal errors by associating their lack of clothing not with perfection and sinlessness but with immorality and sinfulness, in the same way as later texts, such as Baltheo de Montalvan's *Naked Truth or a Plain Discovery of the Intrigues of Amorous Fops, and Humours of Several Other Whimsical Persons in a Pleasant and Profitable Dialogue between a Precious Saint-Like Sister called Terpole and Mimologos a Scoffing Buffoon*, did in extended prose. The idea of the 'naked truth' is here satirically turned on its head: the truth is that the sects espouse not truth but lies, nakedness is not sinless but sinful, and the adult naked body can never be innocent or pure as its truth is that it always speaks of sex, as manifested by the erect penis demonstrating the inevitable evidence of desire. These images bear comparison with analyses of modern pornography, particularly film, where it is argued that the erect and ejaculating penis makes sexual excitement and sexual climax visible in the way that the female body cannot.⁷² The truth is that the naked body is, or should be, shameful, so that nakedness whether in the disarray of clothing or in complete

⁶⁷ Hollander, *Seeing through Clothes*, 159.

⁶⁸ Gowing, *Common Bodies*, 34.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 35–6.

⁷⁰ For a substantial and wide-ranging discussion of the meanings of clothing and nakedness in the period, see Judy Kronenfeld, *King Lear and the Naked Truth: Rethinking the Language of Religion and Resistance* (Durham, NC, and London, 1998), esp. chs. 1, 4.

⁷¹ See Poole, *Radical Religion*, and Kronenfeld, *King Lear and the Naked Truth*.

⁷² See Linda Williams, 'Pornographies on/scene or Different stokes for different folks', in Lynne Segal, and Mary McIntosh (eds.), *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate* (London, 1992; New Brunswick, 1993), 233–65.

nudity should both be avoided. What these images, then, depict is not shame, but shamelessness. This shamelessness is also reflected in the libertine sexual behaviour that is attributed to them. Nakedness is clearly and deliberately linked to lust and promiscuity:

Thus marching naked Sister, with a Brother,
For want of Clothes they cover one another
In some dark Grange thus meet they, where 'tis fit
That they the deeds of darkness should commit.⁷³

Such men and women have no shame about their nakedness, nor about their 'lewd' behaviour. This is what is so erroneous in their behaviour: they *ought* to feel shame, but clearly do not. The display of the erect penis, or 'the penis rampant' as Cressy terms it, thus also represents lack of an appropriate shame and humility. Although relatively small in number, at a time of instability and uncertainty during civil war, the sects' apparent disregard for the basic, fundamental moral boundaries that underpinned early modern society must have seemed hugely threatening. As I have argued throughout this book, sexuality at this time was inseparably intertwined with reproduction, and hence family continuity and inheritance. To undermine this through an indiscriminate and promiscuous attitude towards sexual expression was to undermine further the stability and continuity of society itself.

It was a staple ingredient of writing about sexual morality or activity, whether pornographic or otherwise, in the early modern period, that women were the more lustful of the sexes, the more susceptible to their desires and the less able to control them. Women's 'weakness' and 'frailty' also made them more susceptible to error, more likely to go astray and to be persuaded by erroneous argument. Their participation in unorthodox religious groups, and in unlawful sexual behaviour, was thus to a degree understandable, and perhaps to be expected.⁷⁴ It may, then, have been considered a more serious problem that men not only participated in such activities, but led and inspired them. Men, in particular, needed to be convinced of their error, and might perhaps be restored to the right and godly path if criticism of their error was extreme, and perhaps also shocking, to ensure that the attraction of their message was successfully countered by those who wished so to do.⁷⁵ As Tamsyn Williams points out, the idea 'that all dissidents indulged in immoral sexual behaviour was a commonplace of literary polemic'.⁷⁶ It may have been that authors and printers of anti-sect publications deployed images that were eye-catching, memorable,

⁷³ *Bloudy Newse from the North, and the Ranting Adamites Declaration concerning the King of Scotland, with their New League, Covenant, and Protestation* (London, 1650), 6.

⁷⁴ See Crawford, *Women and Religion*, 129–30.

⁷⁵ Crawford notes that contemporary opinion held that men might be more easily convinced of their errors than women. See *ibid.*, 120.

⁷⁶ Williams, "'Magnetic Figures'", 100.

shocking, and shameful to arrest people's attention, and to make them think. What could be more shocking than the publication of pictures of naked men in a state of flagrant sexual excitation in conjunction with a text spelling out just how erroneous were the beliefs that such men held?⁷⁷ The rampant penis thus stands not only for unbridled lust but also for a catalogue of error both religious and sexual (and political), which is fundamentally anti-social and destabilizing, and which could be applied to all those who were perceived to pose a threat to the established order, whatever their particular professed religious identity.⁷⁸ The author of *Ranters of Both Sexes, Male and Female* (1651) bundles together all the following as in error: 'Adamites, Novatians, Annabaptists, Brownists, Nicholaitans, and counterfiet Catholiques, Arminians, Antinomians, Neutralists, Familists, Lutherans, Independents, Round-heads, Dippers, Seekers, Shakers, Ranters, with many others not worth the naming: these are all professors to be Protestants, every one pretending to be in the right, and not any of them but are contrary one to another . . .'.⁷⁹

In Chapter 3 the issue of shame was discussed in relation to the desire to be whipped for sexual pleasure, and I argued there that it was not until later in the eighteenth century that such a desire began to be internalized as a shameful desire, as demonstrated by the disparity between seventeenth-century representations of sexual flagellation and later eighteenth-century representations, in particular, the scene in Cleland's *Fanny Hill* when Fanny whips Mr Barville. The experience of shame in early modern England was something that was prompted and imposed from outside through punishment rituals of exposure, both of the body and of the sin. In these pamphlets we can see the same idea at work: the bodies of those in doctrinal and moral error are stripped naked and exposed to the gaze not only of their wider communities, but also, through the distribution of cheap print, much further afield to communities throughout England, so that they might be shamed into reformation. Not only was the stripping of the body a part of other public punishments such as a whipping at the cart's tail or the public whipping post, but it could also constitute a punishment in itself: 'A Barking man and a West Ham woman charged with incontinence in 1565 were assigned penance in Romford market on a November day "stripped out of their clothes for an hour and a half"'.⁸⁰ The authors and printers of these pamphlets were concerned to halt the spread of antinomian and other heretical opinions that were anathema to Calvinist theology, and hence employed not only the traditional discourse

⁷⁷ See Steinberg's discussion of the erection motif, *The Sexuality of Christ*, 298–325. The adult erection is suggested by drapery rather than directly depicted. Steinberg argues that it is a signifier for incarnation and the resurrection.

⁷⁸ See Davis, 'Fear, Myth and Furor', and Nicholas McDowell, 'A Ranter Reconsidered: Abiezer Coppe and Civil War Stereotypes', *Seventeenth Century*, 12/2 (Autumn 1997), 173–205.

⁷⁹ *Ranters of Both Sexes, Male and Female* (London, 1651), 4.

⁸⁰ Ewan Fernie, *Shame in Shakespeare* (London and New York, 2002), 60. The example is from Emmison, *Elizabethan Life*, 286.

of sexual licence to discredit them but also the traditional ritual of shame through exposure of the naked body to public view in order to do so, before the Blasphemy Act of 1650 enabled their prosecution. Pornographic representation of the body is here then deployed for what was clearly intended to be a reforming purpose. Intention, however, cannot determine response, and it is also possible that the authors and printers deliberately used these images as a means of ensuring a wider circulation, appealing to a public taste for titillating text and image.

Were these images likely to produce arousal rather than revulsion in those who saw them? David Freedberg in *The Power of Images* has elucidated the contemporary perception of the power of sight to arouse, citing evidence of both male and female arousal by images.⁸¹ But modern theories about gendered responses to pornography frequently make a distinction based on pictorial and literary representations. It is theorized that women do not respond to the overtly sexual, explicit representations of pictorial pornography, but rather prefer the more veiled, implicit, 'softer' representations of literary pornography, of which the romantic novel as 'pornography for women' is the most fashionable example.⁸² Much analysis revolves around this central tenet, which is rarely challenged and is frequently taken as a historical given, particularly as men are more often the purchasers and possessors of art.⁸³ This distinction also generally ignores the extent to which women's response to sexual representation may have been historically conditioned by the restrictions placed on their access to it. Concerns about the threat to female modesty that the viewing of sexual material was perceived to pose—and that paradoxically acknowledges that women are likely to be aroused by it, and possibly also moved to act upon it by seeking out sexual pleasure—meant that women's perusal of erotic texts and pictures was policed and hence likely to be attended by secrecy and shame. Discovery might elicit punishment that could also involve public shame: when a copy of *The School of Venus* was discovered in the possession of one of the maids of honour at the French Court causing a scandal, they were all punished by losing their positions.⁸⁴ As previously discussed in Chapter 1 on readers, when Pepys came across this work, he meant to buy it for his wife to translate until he realized the nature of its content. His own reading was attended by secrecy and a certain degree of shame, as he recorded burning the book after he had himself read it, not

⁸¹ David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago and London, 1989). See esp. ch. 12, 'Arousal by Image'.

⁸² E.g. Ann Barr Snitow, 'Mass Market Romance: Pornography for Women is Different', *Radical History Review*, 20 (Spring/Summer 1979), 141–61; Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1984); Helen Carr (ed.), *From My Guy to Sci-Fi: Genre and Women's Writing in the Postmodern World* (London, 1989); Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women* (New York, 1990).

⁸³ Freedberg, *The Power of Images*.

⁸⁴ Turner, *Schooling Sex*, 112. See also Kendrick, *The Secret Museum*, for later nineteenth-century attitudes and restrictions.

wishing it to be found in his collection of books. Pepys, as we have seen, provides rare evidence of male response to such reading (arousal and masturbation to orgasm), but the evidence of female readers or ownership is more scant and anecdotal.

The assumption that pornography is by men for men also automatically excludes women from the category of those who may possess or enjoy such material. While erotic images of women may be intended primarily for—and in this period, commissioned by—heterosexual men, this cannot preclude women's enjoyment of them, whether through a desiring position or through identification. Moreover, representations of heterosexual sex are 'not only about women nor should they be presumed to be only for men'.⁸⁵ The images discussed above, including both male and female bodies, but mostly picturing male sexual excitement, complicate any assumption of who they were intended for, as does the medium in which they were printed, which would have been available to both men and women at most levels of society, both literate and illiterate. We might also ask the question whether this distinction between male and female patterns of arousal is sustainable when discussing a period in which fewer women than men were able to read, and in which a number of pornographic texts were written in other languages, such as French or Latin, accessible only to an educated, usually male, elite. As already noted, pictorial representations such as these woodcuts were accessible to both literate and illiterate, whether male or female. Anecdotal evidence, albeit from a slightly earlier period, suggests that women at this time *did* respond sexually to images: Vasari in his *Lives of the Artists* relates how a painting of St Sebastian by Fra Bartolomeo had to be removed from a church in Florence when women confessed that, while looking at it, they had 'sinned through the captivating and sensuous resemblance of a living figure given to it'.⁸⁶ The authors of seventeenth-century pornographic texts also had something to say about the enjoyment and effect of looking at pictures representing naked bodies and the act of sexual intercourse. As we have seen, a reference to 'Aretino' or 'Aretine's postures' was shorthand for suggesting the pornographic or obscene, and several authors identified themselves pseudonymously as 'Peter Aretine' to signal the nature of their work to the reader. In *The Whores Rhetorick* Mother Cresswell advises Dorothea that she should not be 'unprovided of lascivious Pictures, obscene Images and Representations to raise her own and her Lovers joys'.⁸⁷ She makes no distinction here between the effect such pictures will have on a man or a woman. But she goes on to tell Dorothea that such pictures are in fact essential to a woman selling sex to any man who can afford her

⁸⁵ Linda Williams, 'Corporealized Observers: Visual Pornographies and the "Carnal Density of Vision"', in Patrice Petro, *Fugitive Images: From Photography to Video* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1995), 3–41, at 23.

⁸⁶ Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists Volume II* (1550), trans. George Bull (paperback edn. Harmondsworth, 1987), pt. 3, 123.

⁸⁷ Philo-Puttanus, *The Whores Rhetorick*, 166.

price. When engaged in sexual intercourse with a man who is either unattractive in his person or in what he requires, she will need the aid of a picture to engender desire and the required appearance of enjoyment in order to satisfy her customer:

When you are detained in ugly, sordid, or ungrateful embraces; it would be difficult without the artificial aid of a picture to counterfeit those ecstasies which every comer may expect for his money. Therefore on these occasions you must frame in your mind the Idea of some comely Youth who pleases you best, whose shadow will create a greater gust than could be raised by a nauseous though real enjoyment. The Picture of this charming Boy may very fitly be placed near your bed, to imprint the fancy deeper in your imagination, and enable you to fall into those sweet transports, which do singularly gratifie the enjoyers heart.⁸⁸

Similarly, in *The Yellow Book* (1656), Mrs *Wanton* is described as having nothing in her chamber ‘but four or five naked Pictures’ in addition to some books, a musical instrument, ‘three great looking-glasses’, and the means of enhancing her appearance.⁸⁹ Pictures, more generally, were thought to arouse erotic feelings and lust in both men *and* women. These were essential items, along with ‘lewd’ and ‘bawdy’ books, for bawdy houses or ‘Love’s Academy’, where, in addition to ‘Aretine’s postures’, representations of classical lovers lying naked together, such as Mars and Venus, would be suitable for display.⁹⁰ Whether or not the intention behind these pamphlets was to ridicule and reform, those who read them would be aware from the contemporary understanding of the power of images that they might also produce ‘sweet transports’ in the eye of the beholder.

The images that illustrate these seventeenth-century texts function both to enhance the message of the text for those who are able to read, and as a shorthand for conveying the substance of its message to those who could not, at the same time as it was understood that they had the power to arouse as much as sight of the body itself. The illustrations accompanying these seventeenth-century texts thus encompass many of the issues discussed throughout this book: the importance of reproduction and fertility to sexuality and hence to social stability and continuity; the experience of shame and how this impacts upon representation of the sexual body; the significance of looking to desire and sexual arousal for both men and women; and, especially, the very different contemporary understanding of the body that informs all these descriptions. But, more significantly, the pictures

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 166–7.

⁸⁹ *The Yellow Book: Or A Serious Letter Sent by a Private Christian to the Lady Consideration, The First Day of May, 1656. Which she is Desired to Communicate in Hide-Park to the Gallants of the Times a Little after Sun-Set* (London, 1656), 7–8.

⁹⁰ See *The Practical Part of Love*, 38–48. For a discussion of the use of pictorial representation in a late-seventeenth-century text, see James Grantham Turner, ‘Pictorial Prostitution: Visual Culture, Vigilantism, and “Pornography” in Dunton’s *Night-Walker*’, *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 28 (1999), 55–84.

and the images they contain, and the texts themselves in which the power and function of images are discussed, both call into question our modern gendered notions about who is susceptible to arousal by image, suggesting that this is not an innate difference between men and women, their sexuality, and especially, their responses to pornography, and hence the imagining of sex.

Conclusion

Despite the difficulties of categorization which use of the term ‘pornography’ entails with regard to seventeenth-century texts, it nevertheless provides a useful, and illuminating, means of defining and discussing a wide variety of sources that can be analysed to enhance our understanding of early modern bodies and sexual cultures. It is a term that can be used to embrace a wide range of disparate texts, however little relation they may apparently seem to have to each other. While it may seem perverse to categorize medical and midwifery texts or travel narratives and joke books as pornography, it can be seen that all these kinds of text share a reflexivity and a common cultural context, which meant that ‘pornographic writing’ was a widespread feature of a large range of texts, even when this was not their ostensible primary purpose. It can also be seen that contemporary authors themselves grouped all these different kinds of text into the same category of books about sex which could be used both for education and for stimulation; they might be informative but they were also arousing. Thus some texts can be seen as more ‘pornographic’ than others, but no text, whatever its nature or origin, was entirely ‘pornographic’ in the modern sense that it contained only explicit representations of the sexual body and acts of sexual intercourse. Furthermore, to attempt to differentiate between ‘erotica’ and ‘pornography’ in the seventeenth century only unnecessarily complicates and confuses an already problematic category, at the same time as it entrenches a distinction that early modern authors and readers did not themselves define. Not only were there different understandings about explicitness, using different ways of writing, or of pictorial representation, which today we might interpret as shrouding meaning, but which then were rather about illuminating it; texts (and pictures) might also deploy both direct and indirect styles of description simultaneously.

Pornography in the early modern period is different from that of the twenty-first century: it is rooted in different contemporary understandings of bodies, and hence demonstrates a preoccupation with issues that we would not expect to find in modern pornography, such as fertility and reproduction and their social and economic consequences in terms of political stability and inheritance. It reflects and comments on contemporary people and events, not necessarily accurately—after all, this is predominantly fiction, not reportage—but using them as a springboard for the imaginative reconstruction of events and dialogue for particular purposes, including sexual fantasy. These texts also share the

characteristics of other contemporary writing, as can be seen particularly in the similarity of descriptions of sexual body parts that can be found in medical and midwifery texts. It is such crossing-over of styles of writing, of description and use of metaphor, that help explain how seventeenth-century midwifery and medical books, including works on venereal disease, could be read as pornography, and why some authors, such as Culpeper, were derided for writing obscene and licentious material when they produced these kinds of books. These styles of writing, which are highly metaphorical and symbolic, and which make extensive use of allusion as well as wordplay, also offer a wide variety of ways of talking about sex that were familiar and explicit to early modern readers. Neither does this literature restrict itself to the sole aim of sexual arousal: it offers also stimulation of the intellect and of the reader's sense of humour.

Although any potential readership may have been only a small proportion of the population as a whole because of restricted literacy, in practice some texts would have been available to a much wider audience (to what Chartier has termed 'communities of readers') through the persistence of oral culture throughout the seventeenth century, and the practice of reading aloud. The availability of reading matter such as cheap pamphlets and news-sheets or ballads in coffee houses and taverns, as well as through a network of chapmen and women in the streets and marketplaces, also meant that these sorts of texts could reach a wide variety of people, both men and women, from different classes of society, and from a range of age groups. The potential audience for such works would also, to a certain extent, be dictated by the nature of the written object itself. A work in Latin such as Chorier's *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* would be restricted to a predominantly (if not exclusively) male readership from the upper echelons of society, who had both the education and the disposable income to purchase such an expensive item. However, it could become available to a wider audience, both male and female, on translation into English, though most likely still restricted in circulation to a degree by cost. However, English versions were often adaptations rather than exact translations, and, as in the case of *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid*, which presented only part of Chorier's much longer original work, were cheaper and hence purchasable by a broader section of early modern English society. Many books that included Latin or Greek quotations, hence impacting on a particular work's accessibility, also included English translations of the quotations, so that such books (and the sexual content of these books) were not restricted entirely to an educated elite. Similarly, although manuscript publication may have restricted access to some items to a particular section of society, or set of readers, it did not necessarily do so, nor did it ensure escape from regulation. It was not then necessarily a preferred means of publication for texts of a sexual nature in this period, as can be seen from this discussion of a wide range of printed matter.

Although it is likely that the majority of readers were male, reflecting higher rates of literacy, especially at the more expensive end of the market, and for those

texts that included Latin and Greek phrases and allusions, we should not ignore the probability of a female readership, however small or indirect. Moreover, images illustrating a text could be 'read', and enjoyed, by all, male and female, young and old, educated and uneducated. In this period the erotic content of pictures was not constructed as a variety of sexual stimulation that was aimed particularly at a male audience because men were thought to be more susceptible and receptive to visual representations of the sexual than were women. Early modern authors who commented on pictorial representations of bodies and sex understood that women were just as likely to be aroused by them as were men; women might choose to look upon such representations precisely in order to stimulate sexual feelings and desire. In pornographic writing the reading of books dealing with sexual matters is also represented as eminently suitable for women as they are both educational and likely to arouse sexual feelings (to which women were thought to be particularly susceptible). In the same way as prescriptive literature for women recommended suitable reading that would encourage the virtues of modesty, piety, chastity, and obedience, so pornographic literature sometimes represented itself as a kind of sexual prescriptive literature with its own set of recommended reading. But such representations are not unproblematic, as they attempt to characterize both women's reading and the reading of pornography in particular ways.

This seventeenth-century material is both similar to pornography in other periods (earlier and later) *and* at the same time substantially different from modern pornography. Its origins in classical and Renaissance works can be traced, as can the way in which it serves as a precursor to much later eighteenth-century writing. But it is also uniquely of its time. It demonstrates concerns that were particular to the period in which it was created and interconnects with other contemporary genres, developments, and events. The focus on the issues of fertility and reproduction that we see in these works is rooted in both contemporary understanding of the sexual body and its experience of sexual pleasure, and in what we might today think of as more abstract theoretical thinking about the political body. The stability of the family and the state turned on the crucial ability to reproduce the next generation. Sexual behaviour impacted on this ability: sexual promiscuity in women could result in lack of fertility because of an excessive 'slipperiness' of the womb and competing male seed, as well as undermining legitimate lines of inheritance. For men, promiscuity meant a squandering of energy and seed in inappropriate conjunctions, either with loose women outside the marital bed, or in sodomitical encounters engendered by excess of lust and lack of self-restraint. Ancient tropes about man as tiller of female soil were not deployed merely because they were common metaphors for the sexual act: they represent an act in which the outcome of that act was crucial to its meaning and its pleasure. Heterosexual sexual intercourse and its 'natural' end, reproduction, were crucial for legitimacy, stability, and rule. Sex is not just sex. It is reproduction, land, inheritance, *and* social, economic, and political

stability. As a result, we find these concerns running through representations of sexual activity in a variety of circumstances and themes, including flagellation narratives, representations and discussion of homosexual sexual behaviour, and comedy.

Flagellation for sexual purposes was condoned rather than pathologized at this time, because it was understood as inciting erection in men and enhancing sexual responsiveness in women, hence increasing the possibility of orgasm and promoting the possibility of conception. Male homosexuality was unequivocally condemned as 'unnatural' and sterile, and explicit description of such acts was avoided. But it can be seen through an examination of trial reports and related literature that there was a major change over time in relation to this theme. There was no explicit description of male homosexual sexual acts until the very end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, despite opportunities for such description presented by the trial of the Earl of Castlehaven in 1631, which gave rise to continuing interest throughout the century. Such acts were also usually represented as the province of foreigners, usually Italian, and hence associated with Catholicism and Papism. Although it is impossible to prove any direct transmission from one kind of publication to another, it is highly likely that these kinds of explicit trial reports had an effect on the subsequent development of the pornographic text in the eighteenth century, which began to include explicit description of sexual acts between men (as in Cleland's *Fanny Hill*, for example). The publication of these reports created a climate in which such descriptions may well have been read for erotic stimulation (whatever the sexual preference of their readers), as they often gave detailed accounts of the sexual encounters for which those standing trial were being prosecuted. Even if their ostensible intention was to reform through highlighting the heinousness of these crimes, and hence to deter others from committing them, they brought description of homosexual sexual acts into the public domain. In this respect they may well have enabled writers of other sorts of literature to do likewise. It had now become acceptable to incorporate explicit description of homosexual sex between men into the pornographic text in a way that had not been possible earlier in the seventeenth century. This is not, then, a pornography that deliberately transgressed widely held sexual prohibitions, but one that, on the whole, reinforced such boundaries. It may well be that it was this element of reinforcing moral boundaries that meant that there were very few prosecutions of authors or printers and booksellers in the seventeenth century, with greater concern shown at this time for the regulation of political and religious material than it was for sexual matter. The availability of all these different texts, despite occasional prosecutions, also argues for a general lack of concern with their regulation. In England, at this time, the market for pornographic representation was not one that can be described as 'underground'.

Sexual acts between women were, however, described in detail, contradicting the historiography of lesbianism, which argues that the sexual desire of one

woman for another was something that was both unnameable and unimaginable, and which was 'hidden from history'. Modern feminist analyses of the lesbian scene in pornography, which regard it as 'compulsory titillation' for the male reader, have meant that these early modern representations have been generally disregarded. However, a close reading reveals a more complex picture than such a view may lead us to expect. Both contemporary social structures and the early modern understanding of the respective male and female roles in conception play a part in these representations. Sexual acts between women were understood as being of a different nature from those between men, with no equivalent wasting of potentially fertile seed on an inappropriate, and hence unnatural, object: the female seed emitted at orgasm was not regarded as the active seed that carried the possibility of creating new life. The issue of fertility is therefore at the heart of all these representations.

Neither should we view this seventeenth-century pornography as continuing or exemplifying a tradition of anti-woman discourse in which pornographic representations of women can be only demeaning and derogatory. The female body is not the sole focus of these texts. There is at least as great a concentration on the male body in these texts, both as an active participant in the sexual act *and* as the object of extensive description, usually by women. Moreover, women are most often the protagonists, as those who relate the sexual narrative and as characters within that narrative. In this literature the gaze is most emphatically *not* male. Women are frequently hidden as voyeurs and represented as taking great delight in looking upon both male and female bodies in the act of love or exposure of the sexual parts of the body. Moreover, they also leave space in the text for a multiplicity of identifications and pleasures for a variety of readers. There is an implicit homoeroticism embedded in these texts, particularly conveyed through the evocation of the pleasure of voyeurs, both male and female, which allows the reader to adopt a variety of desiring positions, hence blurring any assumption that these texts are intended 'for' one sex or the other. This then further undermines the notion that this pornography can be regarded as reflecting and reinforcing a timeless misogynous discourse. And nor are women automatically objectified by the exposure of their bodies to view. The exposure of the female genitals was a common subject of sexual jokes that would also have been familiar to a seventeenth-century audience through folklore: exposing the vulva or vagina was thought to ward off demons. To a seventeenth-century audience, then, the exposure of the female genitalia to the view of the reader of the pornographic text would carry a greater resonance than just display for erotic titillation. It would not have been seen as a necessarily passive behaviour that objectifies women, but could have been read at the time as a very positive act of female sexual and magical power. These texts also play with the deliberate display of the body, often as a source of comic entertainment. Not only is it pleasurable to look at the naked body, but it also may be funny, rather than pathological or shocking, deliberately to display it to the view of others. Similarly,

flagellation narratives are not just about exposing hypocrisy or attacking religious nonconformity. They are also about exposing bodies to view for sexual pleasure: the narratives are erotic, focusing on the pleasure of gazing at and describing the body, and especially the genitals, as they are uncovered for this purpose. The transformation of the appearance of the body, the reddening of the cut and flayed flesh, as it is whipped also provides pleasure. It makes visible the raised body heat caused by whipping, and hence its susceptibility to sexual pleasure, orgasm, and the resulting possibility of conception. It also highlights in women the sexual parts of the body, replicating and enlarging the appearance of the genitals. The pleasure in words and their double/sexual meanings is played on here visually, as it is elsewhere textually, in the early modern use of 'cut' for 'cunt'.

Humour, then, is yet another means of exposure, and a wide variety of comic techniques is employed by authors to incite laughter and sexual titillation. 'Getting the joke' in the seventeenth-century pornographic narrative is an important means to understanding early modern attitudes towards bodies, sex, and sexuality. The prevalence of humour in this material suggests that it was a preferred way of talking about, or imagining, sexual matters, and that it was one that was understood and enjoyed by people at all levels of society. There was no split here between 'high' and 'low' cultures. And part of the joke is that the pornographic fantasy is frequently subverted by the detail of the description. For example, young virgin metamorphoses into lustful old crone in the space of half a dozen words, or modest and obedient daughter becomes debauched and sexually experienced, undermining the respectability of marriage and the valorization of chastity. This sexual humour also highlights how differently early modern bodies were understood. As becomes clear in examining the flagellation narrative, there was little comprehension of psychological factors that might influence or impact on behaviour. Rather, strange or aberrant behaviour was ascribed to the supernatural, or to purely somatic causes resulting from an imbalance of the humours. The body operated on an economy of fungible fluids. Thus, scatological humour can be read not as the return of the repressed or as about the transgression of taboos, or as degradation and defilement, but rather as the mixing-up of bodily functions and fluids where one can stand in for another. Urination, breaking wind, and defecation could be understood as synonymous with ejaculation, so that sex and excretion are inevitably, and intimately, entwined. Neither is the leakiness of the body all about hatred and disgust of the female body: it is not only women's bodies that are leaky. Men are also represented in these texts as having to urinate or defecate in the street and as inadvertently breaking wind. Men also ejaculate without control. Furthermore, pornography makes use of the exposure of the sexual organs during the excretory function as another means of describing and exhibiting them to the reader. We can also see here in representations of the excretory functions, as in representations of flagellation, the beginnings of the shift in sensibilities that saw the internalization of feelings of shame and a desire for privacy for what

were increasingly coming to be regarded as activities that should take place in private rather than in public. The humour embedded in seventeenth-century representations may also have contributed to the later eighteenth-century sense of shame, particularly with regard to the desire for flagellation. It also suggests, in its turn, why such a desire could no longer be regarded as funny, because it was now felt to be shameful. This internalized eighteenth-century sense of shame may also have been a function of a movement away from the public imposition of corporal punishments intended to shame and humiliate miscreants before their communities, to the more private environs of the prison or bridewell.

Similarly, any such characterization of women as passive and masochistic because they allow themselves to be whipped or beaten for sexual pleasure ignores the fact that, though they do submit to their physical chastisement, they do so in the expectation of enjoying a greater pleasure in consequence. The women are not represented as submitting to gain sexual pleasure from the submission itself (as Antonio is in *Venice Preserv'd*); rather they do so because they are admonished to be obedient to a parent or guardian. Neither should we read this representation of female obedience as merely a device of a male author to show women as complicit in their punishment or degradation. It can also be read as satire. By reiterating contemporary prescriptive literature's insistence on female obedience to whatever a parent, a guardian, a priest, a husband, or a lover might require of her, this pornographic literature takes female obedience to an extreme, showing how society is then complicit in the sexual debauching of young women. Rather than being entirely a fantasy of female compliance with male sexual rapacity, it can be read as a satirical criticism of a gender hierarchy that ostensibly advocates that women should suspend all personal agency in favour of unquestioning obedience.

Seventeenth-century pornography, then, does not demonstrate a timeless, libertine 'polymorphously perverse' attitude to the sexual body, but rather is concerned to a certain extent to reinforce moral boundaries. The sexual is not split off from the social, nor from the political or the economic. This material does not describe the libertine expression of unfettered sexual desire, where all sex is good and there are no limits. The range of sexual activities, and the characters shown as enjoying them, are clearly circumscribed. Both explicit and implicit statements in the text give the reader clear messages about what is acceptable sexual behaviour and what is not: there is little oral or anal sex, and there is no discussion or representation of sexual acts between adults and children (except in the court records of rape cases). Functional explanations of what this literature is doing (that it is about how to ensure conception or cure impotence, that it extends and reinforces anti-Catholic prejudice, or that it allows indirect criticism of the monarchy through attacks on the King's mistresses, for example) lose the imaginative and playful quality of the material, its eroticism, and at the same time ignore its function as fantasy. Psychoanalytic explanations of these texts also obscure the fact that the bodies that they expose were early modern bodies about

which contemporary readers had a different understanding. These texts should thus be interpreted and made sense of through early modern comprehension of bodies and how they work, rather than through the lens of modern psychology. Thus much of the humour, and indeed the pornography, may appear quite extraordinarily odd to a modern reader, engendering considerable difficulties with categorization (and perhaps with understanding why they may have been found pleasurable and arousing). This serves to emphasize that pornography in this period was not a separate, clearly defined genre. Rather, the pornographic entered into many kinds of writing, reflecting a culture in which the bodily and the sexual were not discrete entities, disconnected from religion, politics, economics, or domestic life. The literature is about bodies, pleasure, and the sexual imagination as much as it is about religion, politics, punishment, or fertility. Imagining sex in early modern England was, then, a very different experience from how we imagine, and understand, sex today.

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- A Continuation of a Catalogue of Ladies, to be set up by Auction, on Monday the 6th of this Instant July. Numb. 2* (n.d., c.1680s)
- Cotton, Charles, *The Genuine Works Of Charles Cotton, Esq; Containing I. Scarrönnides, or Virgil Travestie. II. Lucian Burlesqued, or the Scoffer Scott. III. The Wonders of the Peake. IV. The Planters Manual* (1715)
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- The Counterfeit Bridegroom: Being a Comical and Pleasant Relation of a young Woman in the Borough of Southwark, who being in wants of a Husband, by a strange mistake, married a young Woman in Man's Apparel, who having got her Portion of 200l. left her in the lurch: With the Comical particulars of their Courtship, Marriage, and two Nights Disappointment in Bed, and the manner how it was discover'd* (n.d., c.1690s)
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- Cranley, Thomas, *The Converted Courtezan, Or, The Reformed Whore. Being a true Relation of a penitent Sinner, shadowed under the name of Amanda* (1639)
- Cresswell, Madam, and Page, Damaris [attrib.], *The Poor-Whores Petition. To the most Splendid, Illustrious, Serene and Eminent Lady of Pleasure, the Countess of Castlemayne, &c. The Humble Petition of the undone company of poore distressed whores, bawds, pimps and panders &c* (1668)
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- A Declaration, Of a strange and Wonderfull Monster: Born in Kirkham Parish in Lancashire (the Childe of Mrs. Haughton, a Popish Gentlewoman) the face of it upon the breast, and without a head (after the mother had wished rather to bear a Childe without a head then a Roundhead) and had curst the Parliament* (1645)
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- The Dutchess of Portsmouths Farewel: The Dutchess holds a Dialogue, Yea, doth relate the wretched state, and talks with Madam Gwin; that now she liveth in* (1685)
- Ebsworth, J. Woodfall (ed.), *The Roxburge Ballads*, (Hertford, 1896)
- An Elegy, On the Death of Sir William Turner, Knight, and Alderman of the City of London, and President of Bridwell and Bethlem Hospitals, Who Departed this Life on Thursday, the 9th of February, about a Eleven of the Clock in the Forenoon* (1693)
- I.F., *A New Proclamation: Or A Warning Peece Against All Blasphemers, Ranters, Quakers, and Shakers; both Men and Women: Who goe up and down teaching, That imbracing ungodlinesse, and worldly lusts, they should live unsoberly, unrighteously, ungodly* (1653)
- The Famous Tragedie Of the Life and Death of Mrs. Rump. Shewing How She was brought to Bed of a Monster With her terrible Pangs, bitter Teeming, hard Labour, and lamentable Travell from Portsmouth to Westminster, and the great misery she hath endured by her ugly, deformed, ill-shapen, base-begotten Brat or Imp of Reformation . . .* (1660)
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- Ferrand, Jacques, *Erotomania Or A Treatise Discoursing of the Essence, Causes, Symptomes, Prognosticks, and Cure of Love. Or Erotique Melancholy* (Oxford, 1640)
- Fifteen Real Comforts Of Matrimony. Being In requital of the late Fifteen Sham-Comforts. With Satyirical Reflections on Whoring, And the Debauchery of this Age. Written by a Person of Quality of the Female Sex* (1683)
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- A Frolick To Horn-Fair. With a Walk from Cuckold's-Point Thro' Deptford and Greenwich* (1700)
- Garfield, John, *The Wandring Whore. A Dialogue Between Magdalena a Crafty Bawd, Julietta an Exquisite Whore, Francion a Lascivious Gallant, and Gusman a Pimping Hector. Discovering their diabolical Practises at the Chuck-Office. With a List of all the Crafty Bawds, Common Whores, Decoys, Hectors, and Trapanners, and their usual Meetings. Publisht to destroy those poysonous Vermines, which live upon the ruine and destruction of many Families, by a late Convert amongst them* (1660–1, Nos. 1–4; facsimile edition, Exeter, 1977)
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- The Gracious Answer of the most Illustrious Lady Of Pleasure, The countess of Castlem— To The Poor-Whores Petition* (1668)
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- Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies; Or Man of Pleasure's Kalendar, for the Year 1788* (1788, 1789, 1790 and 1793)
- Head, Richard, *The English Rogue Described in the Life Of Meriton Latroon, A Witty Extravagant Comprehending the Most Eminent Cheats Of Both Sexes* (1680, first published 1665).
- Head, Richard, *The Canting Academy; Or Villanies Discovered. Wherein Is Shewn The Mysterious and Villanous Practices Of that wicked Crew, commonly known by the Names of Hectors, Trapanners, Gilt, &c. With several New Catches And Songs: Also A Compleat Canting-Dictionary, both of old Words, and such as are now most in use* (1674; 2nd edn.)
- Head, Richard, *The Miss Display'd, With all Her Wheedling Arts And Circumventions* (1675)
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- Hicks, Captain William, *Oxford Jest. Refined and Enlarged; Being A Collection of Witty Jest, Merry Tales, Pleasant Joques* (1684)
- Hicks, Captain William, *Coffee-house Jest* (1686, 4th edn.)
- Hickes, W., *Oxford Drollery: Being New Poems, And Songs. The first Part, composed by W. Hickes. The Second and Third Parts being upon several occasions, made by the most Eminent and Ingenious Wits of the said University. And Collected by the same Author* (Oxford, 1679)
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- H. L., *Gratiae Ludentes. Jest From The Universitie* (1628)
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- The Ladies, A Second Time, Assembled In Parliament. A Continuation of the Parliament of Ladies* (1647)
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- Lemnius, Laevinus, *The Secret Miracles Of Nature: In Four Books. Learnedly and Moderately treating of Generation, and the Parts thereof* (1658)
- Leti, Gregorio, *Il Putanismo Di Roma, Or the History of the Whores And Whoredom of the Popes, Cardinals And Clergy of Rome. Discovered by a Conclave of Ladies convened for the Election of a new Pope. Written in Italian by the Author of Cardinalism and Nepotismo. And now made English by I.D.* (1670)
- A Letter From the Dutch. of Portsmouth to Madame Gwyn, On Her Landing in France* (1682)
- A Letter From The Lady Creswell To Madam C. the Midwife, On The Publishing her late Vindication, &c* (1680)
- The Life And Death Of John Atherton Lord Bishop Of Waterford And Lysmore, within the Kingdome of Ireland, borne neare Bridgewater in Somersetshire. Who for Incest, Buggery, and many other enormous crimes, after having lived a vicious life, dyed a shamefull death, and was on the fifth of December last past, hanged on the Gallows Greene at Dublin, and his man John Childe being his Proctor, with whom he had committed the buggery, was hangd in March following at Bandon Bridges, condemned thereunto at the Assises holden at Corke* (1641)
- The Life And Death Of Mrs. Mary Frith. Commonly Called Mal Cutpurse. Exactly Collected and now Published for the Delight and Recreation of all Merry disposed Persons* (1662) reprinted in Todd, Janet and Spearing Elizabeth (eds.), *Counterfeit Ladies: The Life and Death of Mal Cutpurse, The Case of Mary Carleton*, (London, 1994)
- Lithgow, William, *The Tottall Discourse, Of the Rare Adventures, and painefull Peregrinations of long nineteene Yeares Travayles, from Scotland, to the most Famous Kingdomes in Europe, Asia, and Affrica* (1632)
- The London-Bawd: With Her Character And Life. Discovering the Various and Subtile Intrigues OF Lewd Women* (1711, 4th Edn)
- Lord, George de F. (ed.), *Poems On Affairs of State: Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660–1714, Volume 1: 1660–1678*, (New Haven and London, 1963)
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- Macquerella, Mistress (pseud.), *A Dialogue Between Mistris Macquerella, a Suburb Bawd, Ms Scolopendra, a noted Curtezan, and Mr Pimpinello an Usher, &c. Pittifully bemoaning the tenour of the Act (now in force) against Adultery and Fornication* (1650)
- Madam Guins Answer to the Dutches Of Portsmouths Letter* (1682)
- The Maids Vindication: Or, The Fifteen Comforts of living a Single Life. Being an Answer to the Fifteen Plagues of a Maiden-head* (1707)
- The Man in the Moon. Discovering a World of Knavery Under the Sunne. Both in the Parliament, the Counsell of State, the Army, the City, and the Country. With other Intelligence from England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1649-50)
- Mars and Venus: Or, The Amorous Combatants* (n.d., C17th.)
- Marsh, A., *The Ten Pleasures Of Marriage And The Second Part The Confession Of The New Married Couple Attributed To Aphra Behn* (1682; 1922 reprint)
- Match me these two: Or The Conviction And Arraignment Of Britannicus and Lilburne. With An Answer to a Pamphlet, entituled, The Parliament of Ladies* (1647).
- Marten, John, *A Treatise Of all the Degrees and Symptoms Of The Venereal Disease, In both Sexes* (1708; 6th edn.)

- Marten, John, *Gonosologium Novum: Or, A New System Of all the Secret Infirmities and Diseases, Natural, Accidental, and Venereal in Men and Women, That Defile and Ruin the Healths of themselves and their Posterity, obstruct Conjugal Delectancy and Pregnancy, with their various Methods of Cure* (1709)
- Meibomius, John Henry, *A Treatise Of the Use of Flogging In Venereal Affairs: Also Of the Office of the Loins and Reins* (1718)
- Mengel, Elias F., Jr. (ed.), *Poems on Affairs of State: Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660–1714, Volume 2: 1678–1681*, (New Haven and London, 1965)
- Mennis, Sir John and Smith, James, *Musarum Deliciae: Or, The Muses Recreation. Conteinng severall select Pieces of sportive Wit* (1655/6)
- Mercurius Democritus, *Or, A True And Perfect Nocturnall, Communicating many strange Wonders, Out of the World in the Moon, The Antipodes, Maggy-land, Tenebris, Fary-land, Green-land, and other adjacent Countries. Published for the right understanding of all the Mad-merry People of Great-Bedlam* (1653)
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- Merry Drollery Compleat: *Or, A Collection Of Jovial Poems, Merry Songs, Witty Drolleries, Intermixed with Pleasant Catches. The First Part* (1691)
- The Merry Dutch Miller: And New Invented Windmill* (1672)
- Messenger, Peter, *The Tryals of such Persons as under the Notion of London-Apprentices were Tumultuously Assembled in Moore-Fields, and other Places, on Easter Holidays last, under Colour of pulling down Bawdy-houses* (1668)
- The Mid-wives just Petition: Or, A complaint of divers good Gentlewomen of that faculty. Shewing to the whole Christian world their just cause of their sufferings in these distracted Times, for their want of Trading. Which said complaint they tendered to the House on Monday last, being the 23. of Jan. 1643* (1643)
- The Mid-wives just Complaint And, Divers other wel-affected Gentlewomen both in city and Country: Shewing to the whole Christian-world, the just cause of their long-sufferings in these Distracted Times, for want of Trading, and their great fear of the continuance of it* (1646)
- Mill, Humphry, *A Nights Search discovering the Nature, and condition of Night-Walkers with their Associates. As also, The Life and Death of many of them. Together with Divers fearfull and strange Accidents, occasioned by such ill livers* (1640)
- Millot, Michel and L'Ange, Jean (attrib.), *The School of Venus: or, the Ladies Delight reduced into rules of practice* (1655; trans. with an introduction by Donald Thomas, 1972)
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- Misopapas, Philanax (pseud.), *Rome's Rarities; Or The Pope's Cabinet Unlock'd, And Exposed to View. Being A true and Faithful Account of the Blasphemy, Treason, Massacres, Murders, Lechery, Whoredom, Buggery, Sodomy, Debauchery, Pious Frauds, &c. of the Romish Church, from the Pope himself to the Priest, or inferiour Clergy* (1684)

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- du Moulin, Pierre, *The Monk's Hood Pull'd Off; Or, The Capucin Fryar Described. In Two Parts. Translated out of French* (1671)
- Nashe, Thomas, *The Choice of Valentines (or the Merry Ballad of Nash his Dildo)*, (undated) in McKerrow, Ronald B. (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Nashe, Vols 1–5*, (Oxford, 1958)
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- Neville, Henry, [attrib.], *The Isle of Pines, Or, A late Discovery of a fourth Island near Terra Australis, Incognita By Henry Cornelius Van Sloetten* (1668)
- Neville, Henry, *The Isle of Pines* (1668, 1768 reprint)
- Neville, Henry, *The Ladies Parliament* (1647)
- The New Anti-Roman Pacquet: Or Memoirs Of Popes and Popery Since the Tenth Century* (1680; periodical, various dates July-November)
- A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels: Consisting Of the most Esteemed Relations, which have been hitherto published in any Language, Vol. I* (1745, 4 Volumes),
- The New Westminster Wedding: Or, The Rampant Vicar. Being a full Relation of the late Marriage of J—P—Clerk, to Eliz. Hook, Spinster; The Ceremony performed by a Reverend Jolly Dutch-man* (1693)
- Newes from the New Exchange, Or The Commonwealth Of Ladies, Drawn to the Life, in their severall Characters and Concernments* (1649/1650)
- News from Covent-Garden: Or, The Town-Gallants Vindication. Being The Debates and Result of a famous Club of Wits, and Men of Humours and Intrigues, assembled for the Damning of the late Character* (1675)
- News From Tybourn: Being An Account of the Confession and Execution of the Woman condemned for committing that horrid sin of Buggery with a Dog, which was also hanged on a Tree by her. With The Confessions and last dying Expressions of two other Malefactors who suffered with her* (1677)
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- The Night-walkers Declaration: Or, the Distressed Whores Advice To all their Sisters In City and Country* (1676)
- Now Or Never: Or, A New Parliament of Women Assembled And met together neer the Popes-Head in Moor-Fields, on the Back-side of All-such; adjoining upon Shoreditch. With Their Declaration, Articles, Rules, Laws, Orders, and Proposals, to all London-Prentices, Young-men, Batchelours, and others . . .* (1656)
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- The Parliament Of Women: Or, A Compleat History Of the Proceedings and Debates, Of a particular Junto, of Ladies and Gentlewomen, With a design to alter the Government of the World. By way of Satyr* (1684)
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- The Quakers Art of Courtship: Or, The Yea-and-Nay Academy Of Complements. Calculated for the Meridian of the Bull-and-Mouth; And May indifferently serve the Brethren of the Wind-mill Order, for Noddification in any Part of Will-a-Wisp Land. By the Author of Teagueland Jest* (1689)
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- The Qualifications of Persons, declared Capable by the Rump, Parliament to Elect, or be Elected, Members to supply their House* (1660)
- Questions And Answers Concerning the Two Religions, viz. That of the Church of England, And the Other of the Church of Rome* (1688)
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- Ranters of both Sexes, Male and Female: Being Thirteen or more, taken and imprisoned in the Gate-house at Westminster, and in the New-prison at Clerken Well* (1651)
- The Ranters Principles & Deceits discovered and declared against, denied and disowned by us whom the world calls Quakers* (1655)
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- Salgado, James, *Symbiosis, Or The Intimate Converse Of Pope and Devil Attended by A Cardinal And Buffoon. To which Is annexed the Pourtrait of each, with a brief Explication thereof* (1681)
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Index

- abstention, 73
abortion, 73–4
Alsop, B., 262
Alsop, J. C., 41, 90
Ames, R., 29
anal sex, 83, 84, 113, 134, 155, 156, 157
L'Ange, J., 24
anti-masturbation literature, 67
antinomian doctrine, 210, 257
Aretino, 25, 37, 40
Ariès, P., 104–5
Aristotle, 18, 67
Atherton, J., 151
auto-eroticism, 82
- Bakhtin, M., 199
Ballaster, R., 33, 132
Barkan, L., 215
Barlow, T., 56
Barrin, J., 25, 39
Bauthumley, J., 254
Behn, A., 57
Berry, H., 202
bestiality, 87, 116, 134, 144, 169, 185
birth control, 91
Bloch, I., 93, 111–2, 186
Bray A., 80
brothels, 21
Brown, P. A., 202, 207, 211
- Califa, P., 135–6
Camille, M., 2, 219, 261
Cannon, J., 53, 65
Capel, R., 116
Capp, B., 169
Careless, F., 208
censorship, 31, 44
chap-books (news-sheets), 43, 60
charivari, 198
Charles I, 256
Charles II, 87, 88, 99, 229, 257
Chorier, N., 24, 50, 57, 59, 100, 154, 200, 230, 235, 272
Clark, P., 183
Cleland, J., 1, 96, 122, 134, 243, 266, 274
clitoris, 82, 139, 141
clitoral stimulation, 81
coffee-house culture, 61, 202
coitus interruptus, 73
- Collins, I., 263
contraception, 62, 73–4
copper-plate engraving, 234
Cotton, C., 40, 49, 88, 90, 208, 228
Craig, A., 4
Cranley, T., 29
Crayle, B., 24, 42–3, 47, 260
Cressy, D., 251, 261
Crofton, Z., 107
Crowch, E., 40
cuckoldry, 203, 213–4
Curll, E., 43, 50, 99
- Darnton, R., 10, 52, 96, 161
dissenters (religious), 37, 42
 Adamites, 41, 43, 49, 209, 243, 252–3, 262
 Catholics, 96, 97–8
 Family of Love, 209
 Quakers, 41, 49, 210, 252, 254–5, 264
 Ranters, 41, 43, 49, 209, 243, 252–3, 255, 257, 258
 Shakers, 41, 49, 252
 witchcraft, 97, 123, 254, 257
 women *and*, 243
Deacon, I., 40
dildo, 72, 77, 135, 136, 141–6, 236
Dolan, F., 99
Donoghue, E., 33, 132, 167
Dunton, J., 28, 29, 47, 49, 50, 168, 176, 180
Drayton, M., 169
Dworkin, A., 5, 135
- ejaculation
 female, 77, 225
 male, 66, 73, 76, 84
 premature, 80–1
Erotica, 10
 as distinct from pornography, 23
erotic poems, 53
L'Estrange, Sir Nicholas, 53
- Faderman, L., 33, 132
fellatio, 231
flagellation, 32, 34, 65, 92–131, 122, 128, 142, 155, 185, 236, 243, 266, 274, 276
 with fox-tail, 93
 and anti-clericalism, 101
 and public schools, 102, 105
fore-play, 71, 78, 85, 128, 132, 156

- Foster, Thomas A., 80
 Fox, T., 40, 57
 Foxon, D., 23, 42, 43
 Foyster, E., 79, 123
 Franco, N., 19
 Frantz, D. O., 2, 196
 Frappier-Mazur, L., 209
 Freedberg, D., 267
 French Revolution, 204
 Freud, S., 172, 203

 Garfield, J., 42
 gender, 119, 126, 267
 genitals, 14, 66, 77, 203
 Goodman, N., 37, 170
 Goulemot, J. M., 7, 166, 167, 173, 197
 Gowing, L., 74, 167, 179, 188, 264
 Griffiths, P., 29, 114

 Hammond, P., 133
 Harvey, K., 10, 11
 Head, R., 49, 208
 Sir Robert Heath, 114
 Heydon, J., 17
 Hicks, W., 40
 Hills, D. F., 8
 Hitchcock, T., 66, 67, 78, 196
 Hobby, E., 5, 117
 Hodnett, E., 235, 240
 Hollandia, D. B., 170
 homoeroticism, 133, 137, 148, 150, 159
 homosexuality, 32, 33, 36, 65, 274
 Hoogstraaten, S. van, 165
 Horton, G., 41
 humoural pathology, 75, 199
 Hunt, L., 3, 4, 56

 impotency, 78, 79, 80, 91
 and male honour, 79
 infanticide, 73
 Ingram, M., 114, 198

 James I, 87, 256, 257
 Jerman, J., 261
 Johns, A., 46
 Johnson, A., 48

 Kearney, P. J., 4, 23
 Kirkman, F., 101, 106, 125
 Krakman, D., 16
 Kubek, E. B., 10

 Lambert, S., 250, 252
 Laqueur, T., 150
 Lawrence, B., 119

 Leach, F., 48
 Legman, G., 223
 lesbian culture, 33, 132, 274
 literacy levels, 57, 262
 Love, H., 44

 Macdonald, M., 123
 McCalman, L., 3
 McKenzie, D. F., 44, 46
 Marcus, S., 112, 196
 Marten, J., 44
 Marvick, E. W., 105
 menstrual periods, 74
 Meursius, J., 50
 midwifery, 18, 72
 Miller, Dr. R., 40
 Millot, M., 24, 117
 Mills, H., 47
 mirror anamorphosis, 165
 Mohr, M., 11
 Montalvan, B. de, 50, 264
 Morris, R., 120
 Moulton, I., 2, 11, 12, 22, 53, 219
 mouth-vagina analogies, 68, 212, 224
 Mowry, M. M., 3, 204
 Mulvey, L., 173

 Nashe, T., 53
 Neville, H., 88
 Nussbaum, F., 89

 orgasm, 64, 66, 72, 75–7, 106, 128, 139, 141,
 148, 176, 238
 and conception, 64
 as fart *or* urination, 145, 192, 203, 225–6,
 276
 Otway, T., 102

 Pallavicino, F., 25, 42, 46
 Palmer, T., 40
 Paper industry, 51
 Passinger, T., 40
 Paster, G. K., 231
 Peakman, J., 5, 11, 92, 94–5, 153
 Pearsall, R., 93
 penis, 68, 69, 70, 77, 221, 224, 231
 Pepys, E., 28
 Pepys, S., 18, 24, 27, 28, 29, 43, 51, 53, 56,
 58, 59, 83, 162, 167, 168, 183, 195, 202,
 229, 235, 267–8
 Pines, G., 88
 Piot, L., 24
 Plomer, H., 39
 Poole, K., 253
 population, 32, 51, 63

- Pornography
and female readership, 31–32
in feminist analysis, 5, 26, 34, 135, 162, 174, 275
and fertility, 32, 33, 64, 73, 162, 217, 275
 functionalist approaches to, 232, 277
in Greece and Rome, 2
as high and low art, 7, 34, 276
 historical specificity of, 9
as humour, 36, 47, 71, 78, 92, 2, 106–7, 121, 130, 162, 199, 209, 277
as ideology, 36
 licensing of, 42, 43
as libertine philosophy, 3
as male fantasy, 30
and masturbation, 53, 65, 71, 166, 198
and metaphors, 13, 35–6
as misogyny, 5, 22, 30, 160, 203
as moral reformation, 29, 55
and patriarchy, 30, 34, 195
 price of, 50
and privacy, 161–93
and psychoanalytical theory, 27, 34, 95, 135, 173, 185, 199, 203, 208, 217, 223, 226, 232, 277
for physical pleasure, 5
as political satire, 3, 204
as pseudo-medical literature, 10, 72
and reproduction, 32
as satire, 37
as sexual education, 21, 54, 129, 173
as sexual fiction, 9
and social class, 51–2, 198–200
in the Twenty-First Century, 2, 62
on the internet, 2
as violence against women, 5
- pornographic industry, 38
 privacy, 34
 prostitional literature, 49
- rape, 153, 246
 Raimondi, M., 240
 Ravenscroft, E., 18, 25, 54, 57, 167
 Rhodes, H., 39, 43, 47, 99
 Rivers, C., 33, 136, 149
 Robertson, G., 4
 Robinson, T., 100
 Romano, G., 240
- Sadler, J., 104
 sadomasochism, 32, 94, 126–7
and feminists, 94
 Scarron, P., 24
 scatological humour, 224, 225, 228
- Scopophilia, 149, 172, 173, 175
 Secretain, F., 76
 semen, 74, 187
 large quantity of, 74–5
 sexual jokes, 53
 Sharp, J., 13, 65, 159
 skimmington, 214
 Smith, H., 125
 sodomy, 116, 151, 153, 155, 156–7, 185, 237
 Spufford, M., 53, 58
 Stewart, A., 105
 Stewart, P., 9, 11, 238
 Stone, L., 103–4, 113, 114, 177, 188, 225
 Streater, J., 24, 42–3, 48, 260
 Stretser, T., 49, 208
 Stoller, R. J., 30
- Talvacchia, B., 2, 15
 Taylor, J., 37
 Tebeaux, E., 60
 telescope, 166
 testicles, 68, 72, 222
 Thomas, D., 4
 Thomas, K., 227
 Thomason, G., 45, 56
 Thompson, R., 1, 4, 8, 16, 23, 50, 56, 117, 195, 212
 Traub, V., 138
 tribadism, 113, 139, 148
 tribadicon, 236
 Turner, J. G., 3, 4, 10, 20, 23, 48, 73, 133, 198, 204
 Turner, D., 208
- vagina, 85, 214, 218, 219, 223
 vaginal penetration, 82
 Veniero, L., 19
 venereal disease, 15
 Vickery, A., 163
 voyeurism, 10, 33–4, 111, 148, 155, 164, 172, 176, 178
and masculinity, 173
- Wagner, P., 6, 23, 39, 63, 92, 151, 186, 217
 Wallis, T., 108
 Webb, P., 8
 Weir, A., 261
 Wickins, J., 42–3, 48
 Wigenton, E., 104
 Willet, D., 27–28, 58
 Williams, J., 244
 Williams, T., 261, 262, 265
 Wood, Anthony à, 56, 229
 woodblock images, 234