Abstract and Keywords

This essay offers a critical overview of recent and current debates on the cultural significance of erotic, obscene, and pornographic writing from the long eighteenth century. The period 1660-1800 saw a new emphasis on interiority and the individual, a restructuring of sexual and gender categories, and an increasing division between public and private. Narratives of sexual education and danger were a vehicle through which authors and readers could engage with these broad cultural changes; they also contributed to a view of sexuality as the inmost truth of the self. This essay’s first part addresses theoretical debates over the nature of pornography and its relation to such categories as the erotic and obscene, while the second offers a history of the making of a pornographic canon, overlapping with the canons of amatory fiction and the novel. It reads this history in light of censorial anxieties over the dangers of private reading, especially for women; the threat of foreign contamination of English culture; and the use of voyeurism to penetrate the boundary separating private from public.

Keywords: pornography, obscenity, sexuality, censorship, public/private divide, canon formation, amatory fiction, the novel, voyeurism, readers and reading practices

1. Introduction

Writing to his fellow cleric Parson Oliver at the height of the Pamela craze in 1741, Henry Fielding’s Parson Tickletext sings the praises of Richardson’s novel in terms that equate the text to its heroine’s body. “The Thought,” he pronounces, “is every where exactly cloathed by the Expression; and becomes its Dress as roundly and as close as Pamela her Country Habit.” Not seeming to notice his own bawdy double-entendre, he warms to his theme, imagining Pamela not in her country dress but out of it, “casting off the Pride of Ornament” so that, like the virgin text, she “displays” her “modest Beauty… without any Covering.” As unadorned as its enticingly unclothed heroine, Richardson’s “little Book,” stripped of all covering, “presents Images to the Reader, which the coldest Zealot cannot read without Emotion.” The precise nature of Parson Tickletext’s “Emotion” becomes
clearer when he reports that, whenever he reads the book, “it takes Possession all Night of the Fancy,” and exclaims, “Oh! I feel an Emotion even while I am relating this: Me-thinks I see Pamela at this Instant, with all the Pride of Ornament cast off.” If any doubt remains, his fantasy of the novel causing a surge in the rate of procreation among its readers—which induces him to “feel another Emotion”—makes it obvious that “emotion” stands euphemistically for “erection” (or “ejaculation”), and that the great merit of novel and heroine alike is their power of sexual arousal.

If the parson’s unwitting double meanings undercut his moral claims and betray a secretly licentious spirit, Fielding’s ironies go beyond questions of individual character, or even such age-old satirical targets as the clergy’s hypocrisy and lust, for much of his absurd, laudatory verbiage is lifted verbatim (or nearly so) from material that Richardson himself appended to the second edition of Pamela, notably two commendatory letters from the author and entrepreneur Aaron Hill. What is striking is how little Fielding needed to alter his source material to turn it against its original purpose of praising Richardson for his literary excellence and, especially, his “moral, prudential, religious, satirical, and cautionary, Lessons.” Lurking inside Hill’s windy encomia, Fielding realized, was a vein of prurient fascination with Pamela’s dress and undress, her “Witchcraft” and “Want of Drapery,” which ran counter to the work’s ostensible moral aims and signaled that its effect on readers might be less to teach virtue than to elicit sexual fantasies. The irony at the root of Tickletext’s letter is that a book whose title page announced its intention “to cultivate the Principles of Virtue and Religion in the Minds of the Youth of Both Sexes” could be consumed as pornographic.

Among the ranks of the “Antipamelists” who denounced Richardson’s instant bestseller almost from the moment it appeared, some, like the anonymous author of Pamela Censured, portrayed Richardson as a knowing, if covert, purveyor of smut; but what matters in the back and forth of condemnation and praise that the novel triggered may not be so much the intentions of its author as those of its readers. The name Tickletext suggests a reader “tickled” or aroused by texts, and by extension one who reads in search of such arousal. Pamela, in this light, can be viewed not as a pornographic production but as a text that allows for what Michael Gamer calls “pornographic receptions,” which may run counter to an author’s explicit aims, no matter how emphatically those are asserted in the text or its apparatus. So while Pamela’s title page insists that the work “is entirely divested of all those Images, which, in too many Pieces calculated for Amusement only, tend to inflame the Minds they should instruct,” Richardson’s narrative, and even his purpose of moral teaching, required that he represent sexual danger and desire vividly enough to give Pamela’s struggles with Mr. B (and with herself) dramatic and ethical force. Such vivid representations may indeed “inflame,” especially when readers resist or reject the author’s palpable moral designs. The text of Pamela is animated, even constituted, by conflict: between author and reader, pornography and moralism, Mr. B’s reading of Pamela and Pamela’s writing of herself. It is this animating structure of opposition and struggle that links Richardson’s novel most provocingly with pornography—understood here not
as a fixed category or genre but a site of contestation, or as, in Walter Kendrick’s phrase, “an argument, not a thing.”

Setting off the word in quotation marks to underline its discursive constructedness and variability, Kendrick argues that from the first appearance of the term in the nineteenth century “‘pornography’ named a battlefield, a place where no assertion could be made without at once summoning up its denial, where no one could distinguish value from danger because they were the same.” The most visible of the battles fought over this contested term typically follow in the wake of a work’s publication or public display: struggles between authors and censors, puritans and libertines, anticensorship and antipornography activists. But they might also, crucially, be fought within the pornographic text itself, which is most often structured in terms of antitheses or conflicts: between innocence (virginity) and experience, visible and hidden, female and male, active and passive, discourse and silence, authority and liberation. The pornographic text may pose as antipornographic—as warning, denunciation, or lesson. But the antipornographic text may equally pose as pornography, as with Daniel Defoe’s *Conjugal Lewdness; Or, Matrimonial Whoredom* (1727), whose title promises all the scenes of immorality it condemns. In fact, like *Pamela, Conjugal Lewdness* problematizes this very opposition between pornographic and antipornographic, as Defoe worries over the moralist’s need to expose “the nauseous and offensive Things” he would denounce. Insofar as it is defined by its testing, or even violation, of cultural limits—taboos, norms of decency, legal strictures—pornography foregrounds transgression and defiance. The result has been its adoption, at certain historical moments, as a vehicle for social and political critique (as, for example, in France in the 1780s and 1790s), but also its frequent use as a vehicle of debasement and violence, especially against women. Yet even in the latter instance, as with the work of Sade, the pornographic text, precisely because of its tendency to dehumanize and defile, “render[s] explicit the nature of social relations” in its period, as Angela Carter has put it, and “form[s] a critique of those relations, even if that is not and never has been the intention of the pornographer.”

This chapter’s title, “Literature and Pornography, 1660–1800,” sets the limits of the topic it aims to address but also implicitly poses some fundamental questions. What is the relationship between the two key terms (the connecting and might suggest either affinity or antithesis)? And why this specific period? In part, the choice of dates is just pragmatic, bundling together (as do many literature anthologies and courses) the Restoration and eighteenth century, and enabling an overview that runs from Rochester’s obscenity, and Wycherley’s lewd comedy, through the amatory-seduction fiction of the early 1700s to midcentury, to the lurid, transgressive Gothic vein of the fin de siècle. More broadly, the “long eighteenth century” is often if contentiously portrayed as the period when the essential features of “modernity” were consolidated—the most salient of which, for this chapter, were the redefinition and reorganization of sexual and gender categories, a new emphasis on interiority and the individual subject, and new understandings of the division between public and private experience. Just as such literary critics as Ian Watt, J. Paul Hunter, Nancy Armstrong, and Michael McKeon have linked the emergence and development of the novel to this sort of wider cultural change, so pornography has often been ar-
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gued to be one of the typical or defining genres of modernity, coming into distinct being only toward the later part of this period. My aim in this chapter is not to dispute that claim but to reflect on it in light of the continuities between earlier and later forms of erotic, obscene, or pornographic writing.

A related argument to that of pornography’s essential modernity is the claim that over this period it is constituted in opposition to such respectable categories as “literature” or “the novel”: it is the abject or degraded “other” against which these newly dominant categories are measured. Against this, such scholars as Jean Marie Goulemot and Thomas Laqueur have argued not only that pornography is a kind of literature but that in the eighteenth century it “represented in its purest form the power of literature to arouse the imagination and make itself felt on the body.” Of course the gulf between these two positions is in part a function of the slipperiness of the term itself. What is pornography? What is its relationship not just to “literature” but to such terms as bawdy, obscene, erotic, and the like? There is often a kind of circularity to these debates, in that the terms are defined to fit the ideological or critical position being advanced, and this problem is compounded by the fact that before 1800 the word pornography did not exist. Its etymological derivation from the ancient Greek words pornē (prostitute) and graphē (writing or visual mark) gives the term an air of antiquity, but apart from a single usage of the compound pornographoi (to mean painters of prostitutes) by Athenaeus in the second century CE, the word is unknown before its reinvention by the French author Rétif de la Bretonne for the title of his 1769 treatise on prostitution, Le Pornographe. In its now principal sense of any sexually explicit writing or art, pornographique was first used in French in 1806, and pornography in English in 1842.

Given those dates, it could be (and has been) argued that to write on literature and pornography before 1800 is anachronistic, and that other terms should be used: protopornography, for instance. This is a fair position, but the question of anachronism is not straightforward, and historians commonly use terms of analysis not available (or not used with the same meaning) in earlier times: gender, for example, or sexuality, or indeed literature, which only assumed its prevalent current range of meanings in the same period as did pornography itself. Because the word’s usage is so complex and fraught, this chapter begins with an overview of terms and definitions before engaging with some key issues in the history of obscene or erotic writing in the period. It focuses especially on pornography’s entanglement with the emerging form of the novel as a genre whose “modernity” is powerfully affiliated with ancient forms, and whose narrative innovations exploited the possibilities of new publishing technologies and readerships to shape a nascent and still precarious sense of the private realm as the locus of intimacy, within which a modern, contested, “pornographic” model of sexuality would come to be articulated. If my examples are drawn primarily from English texts, it must be stressed that many of these were translations or imitations of French or Italian originals and that these literatures were very much in dialogue—albeit often antagonistic or mocking dialogue—throughout the period studied here. But even when texts were translated, they were of-
Many of the confusions that have bedeviled discussions of pornographic and related forms of writing arise from the varied grounds on which key terms are defined. The criteria that scholars have used to distinguish among *pornographic, obscene, erotic, bawdy, lewd, indecent* and their ilk are of several kinds:

- Authorial intention (to degrade, offend, arouse, amuse, etc.)
- Content (sexual, but including other elements: violence, comedy, romance, etc.)
- Tone (sentimental, grotesque, humorous, salacious, etc.)
- Style or mode of representation (realistic, suggestive, explicit, metaphorical, etc.)
- Reader response (arousal, laughter, shock, disgust, etc.)
- Political or censorial response (prosecution, prohibition, bonfires, indifference, etc.)

Typically, critics’ working definitions mix different kinds of criteria. Peter Wagner, for instance, defines *bawdy, obscene,* and *erotic* as denoting respectively “the humorous treatment of sex” [content and tone]; “a description whose effect is shocking or disgusting” [reader response]; and “writing about sex within the context of love and affection” [content, tone, and authorial intent]. More often, *erotic* is used as an umbrella term to refer to “any text, regardless of genre or literary quality, that deals in a fundamental way with human physical sexual activity,” as Ian Moulton defines what he calls “erotic writing,” although other critics prefer the word *erotica* for this overarching class. The cultural historian Karen Harvey, meanwhile, uses *erotica* to name a specific genre within the larger field of writing on sexuality, with its own stylistic register and history, which she differentiates on the one hand from pornography and on the other from romantic and amatory fiction. These semantic variations can lead, as Sarah Toulalan has shown, to confusion; a text may fit into several categories at once, or never quite into any. But this terminological disorder is also useful, for it reminds us that there were no neat boundaries separating the types of sexual or erotic writing in the period and that all these texts, like the fictions that later came to be called novels, were miscellaneous, hybrid creations.

As to pornography, critics tend to follow one of two approaches, the first emphasizing authorial intent and the second prosecutorial response, although in practice the two often overlap. Lynn Hunt, for example, posits that pornography is “the explicit depiction of sexual organs and sexual practices with the aim of arousing sexual feelings,” but she also notes that it “has always been defined in part by the efforts undertaken to regulate it”; it is the conflict between these aims (arousal and regulation) that any theory of the pornographic has to negotiate. Nor is either side of this conflict as simple as it appears. Whose arousal, for instance? Roger Thompson identifies the pornographic as “writing or
representation intended to arouse lust, create sexual fantasies or feed auto-erotic desires. The pornographer aims for erection (at least) in the pornophile." \(^{25}\) Such a definition presumes not only that the reader is, indeed must be, male, but that he is a "pornophile," an identifiable species, an habitual "lover" of pornography. But can the desires or aims of readers and authors be reduced so starkly to the one bodily fact of "erection (at least)?" We will return to the question of the possible sex(es) of readers, but for a start we need to be less certain that we already know who wrote and who read the pornographic and less certain why. Many scholars would resist any definition that rests on authorial intention as either theoretically naïve or undecidably speculative,\(^{26}\) and it is true that we can only infer intention through the close analysis of texts. But intention does matter to reading—on what other basis can we make sense of irony or satire, or even follow an argument? The problem with most intentionalist definitions of pornography is that the intention prof­fered, arousal, is too single and simple, too taken for granted, too prim. Like sermons, love letters, or satires, pornographic texts have designs on their readers. Those designs pertain to sex, but may not be straightforward. Thompson’s remark that one of their aims is to "create sexual fantasies" might be set against Laqueur’s claim that pornography em­bodies “the power of literature to arouse the imagination and make itself felt on the body,” or James Grantham Turner’s, that the danger and interest of early modern erotic texts “lies in their capacity to confuse boundaries, to introduce foreign bodies, to asso­ciate polymorphous language and sexual practice” in ways that disrupt both moral and lit­erary conventions.\(^{27}\) Eliciting fantasies, confusing boundaries, acting on the imagination, pornography has effects that may not stop at the text or even the reader’s body but ex­tend into the domestic and public realms—and which may not be wholly liberating or be­nign.\(^{28}\)

It is the allegedly damaging public effects of pornography that have always provided the basis for its legal or censorial regulation, and in Britain during the long eighteenth century these were the subject of fierce but strangely intermittent debate. In fact the action­able category from the later seventeenth century onward was the “obscene” rather than the "pornographic," but neither the meaning of obsceneity nor the grounds for legal action against it were ever regarded as self-evident. Strictly speaking, there was no law against obscenity in Britain before the passage of the Obscene Publications Act of 1857; instead, the “legal control of literary expression,” as Alec Craig has written, was “effected through the operation of the law of libel.”\(^{29}\) Libels could be held to be blasphemous, seditious, defamatory, or obscene; but why a work judged obscene should therefore be judged libelous posed a problem for writers on the law. In the 1708 trial of James Read and Angell Carter for publishing The Fifteen Plagues of a Maiden-head, for example, Justice John Powell ruled that the court of Queen’s Bench had no authority to punish: “This is for printing bawdy stuff, that reflects on no person: and a libel must be against some particu­lar person or persons, or against the government.” While he accepted that Fifteen Plagues was “stuff not fit to be mentioned publicly” and that “it tends to the corruption of manners,” Powell concluded that this was still “not sufficient for us to punish.”\(^{30}\) Twenty years later, however, the Attorney General, Sir Philip Yorke, countered this in his prosecu­tion of the shady bookseller Edmund Curll for having published two lewd texts: Venus in
the Cloister and A Treatise of the Use of Flogging. Yorke successfully argued “that this is an offence at common law, as it tends to corrupt the morals of the king’s subjects, and is against the peace of the king.” Proceeding from the premise that “government is no more than public order which is morality,” he claimed that if a publication “is destructive of morality in general; if it does, or may, affect all the king’s subjects, it then is an offence of a public nature”; and in the end the judges upheld Yorke’s claim in their verdict against Curll. Yet if this provided the basis for the regulation of obscene publications ever after, it did so at the cost of ensuring that debates over what should or should not be considered obscene would never end. It took the court three years from the time of Curll’s arrest to hand down its sentence against him, partly because one of the original judges not only rejected Yorke’s argument, but was not convinced that Venus was obscene at all, later writing, “I thought it rather to be published on Purpose to expose the Romish Priests, the Father Confessors, and Popish Religion.” As a piece of anti-Catholic propaganda, Venus could be read as upholding rather than undermining “the peace of the king,” its scenes of sex in a convent acting to boost the cause of the Protestant Hanoverian monarchy against the threat of a pro-Catholic, arguably libertine, Stuart restoration. Later critics have been as divided as the original panel of judges. Alexander Pettit has argued that Venus, unlike Curll’s other lewd books, was singled out for prosecution because it indulges in representations of socially deviant forms of sex—particularly sex between women—without punishing the characters or subjecting them to male control. Paul Baines and Pat Rogers, however, have used a range of manuscript and archival sources to show that the sentence against Curll had little to do with Venus itself (which, as Curll pointed out in court, had been published in 1683 in a different translation without attracting legal notice) but was politically motivated. Tellingly, in the aftermath of Curll’s conviction, he continued to advertise Venus for at least a further ten years, and it remained widely available thereafter despite its condemnation. In this case, regulation had the effect of publicizing, even immortalizing, the obscene text—a kind of censorial irony that would be repeated many times over the ensuing centuries.

Histories of the pornographic or obscene often focus on the history of their censorship: Since both are terms of legal proscription (they name what the law condemns), it is reasonable to argue that they are no more than legal or censorial constructs, terms of regulatory power. Yet if such an argument is useful for insisting that definitions of the pornographic are culturally and politically determined—that they vary from one period or social milieu to another—it risks losing sight of the continuities of content and form that allow us to think about pornography as a kind of cultural production with its own history, intertwined with, but conceptually distinct from, that of its regulation. As Karen Harvey suggests, it is ultimately content and techniques or modes of representation that best enable us to define the erotic, obscene, pornographic, and so on in relation to one another. Although it is important to guard against the idea that these are stable or wholly distinct categories (any more than “novel” and “romance” are stable or distinct), some lines can be drawn.
If we map the overall field of writing about sex—sexualized bodies, sexual desire, sexual acts, and the like—the humorously coarse or bawdy remains, in effect, just inside a culture’s or a reading community’s boundaries of the acceptable, while the lewd, dirty, or indecent (also often but not always comic) are on or just outside those boundaries. The obscene, as its common use in law suggests, is definitely beyond the pale; while it might or might not shock and disgust, it does violate taboos. Indeed this is its meaning under law: The obscene is a violation, whether in terms of subject (sodomy, masturbation, incest, etc.) or stylistic register (such as its flaunting of rude words). The border between erotic and pornographic has proven harder to police. One conventional approach has been to distinguish between the erotic (or “erotica”) as good (loving, romantic, gentle, soft core, feminist) and the pornographic as bad (rough, exploitative, violent, hard core, masculinist). But as Linda Williams and others have contended, the terms in which this dichotomy is articulated are simplistic and reductive, obscuring the ways in which seeming opposites actually overlap and interact or even change places, so that gentleness can be a form of violence, the hard core an expression of love, masculine and feminine reversible terms. Romance, moreover, can certainly be a part of pornography, as with Fanny and Charles in Cleland’s Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure (1748–1749), or the nuns Agnes and Angelica in Venus in the Cloister.

Set against the value-laden terms of much earlier work in the field, Harvey’s criteria for differentiating erotic and pornographic are more productive. Erotic texts, she writes, “depicted sex, bodies and desire through illusions of concealment and distance”: Instead of explicit, literal description, they deploy “metaphor and suggestion,” and rather than openly depicting sexual acts, they veil or pass over them. Pornography, by contrast, involves “the explicit depiction of sexual action.” Harvey’s distinction is germane to her analysis of a predominantly male, homosocial cultural sphere in which the erotic served as a mark of civility, sociability, and wit as against the solitary, private sites in which pornography was consumed; but two of her principal examples show how tricky the distinction is to sustain. In the first, she offers a passage from Cleland’s Memoirs to illustrate the explicitness of the pornographic, in contrast to the figural veiling of the erotic in A Voyage to Lethe (1741). Yet while Cleland’s novel is, without question, overtly sexual, its most striking and often-noted stylistic feature is its profusely metaphorical and periphrastic style. Indeed one passage, in which Fanny Hill tells of her sexual encounter with a sailor by means of a series of nautical metaphors, could have been modeled on the passage Harvey cites from the Voyage, in which the narrator struggles to “heave” his “Main-Mast” into the “Socket” of his ship, the “Charming Sally.” In a second example of this pornographic/erotic distinction, Harvey cites the records of a Scottish men’s club, the Beggar’s Benison, to illustrate the sociable character of eighteenth-century erotic culture, as opposed to the solitude of pornographic reading. Sociability was indeed central to the club’s mission, and “amorous” and “lecherous” texts were read aloud and toasted—including the pornographic Fanny Hill. But among the other practices recorded were the rubbing together of the members’ erect penises, group masturbation onto a ceremonial platter, and close inspection of the genitals of a woman hired to pose naked for one session. Indeed at the meeting where “Fanny Hill was read,” it was noted of the members
that “all frigged.” It would be hard to imagine a more hard core, sexually explicit set of actions than this, however mediated by ritual: the bodies present are insistently, obscenely displayed.

As these examples suggest, the terms erotic and pornographic, whether applied to texts or to practices of reading—and whether differentiated on the basis of language (figural vs. literal) or context (sociable/solitary, visible/hidden, public/private)—are difficult to keep from bleeding into each other. Harvey, in fact, points out that the distinction is essentially unreal and that “the perceived “realistic” and “explicit” qualities of early modern pornography were an illusion, just as erotica manufactured the illusion that sexual activity was not being described.” Both forms are literary fabrications; in both, the imaginary “presence” of the sexual is created out of language, which is always, necessarily, figural. Writing some years earlier, Armando Marchi raised a similar set of issues in arguing for a distinction between eroticism—in which “the author euphemistically replaces terms describing sexual activities or the sex organs either by non-expression (suppression or omission) or by using expressions which tone down his meaning”—and obscenity, which “consists either in avoiding euphemistic replacement, or in employing it in such a way as to emphasize even more the term replaced.” But how do we decide if a euphemism, whether Parson Tickletext’s “emotion” or Fanny Hill’s “pleasure-thirsty channel,” is masking or emphasizing the absent term? There is no obscene word in Cleland’s novel, but the sexual meaning is in no way “toned down,” so the illusion of concealment only accentuates the obscene or pornographic content. Indeed, concealment and omission often have this effect. Marchi allows that “eroticism consists in leaving something unsaid, more or less explicitly, so that the reader’s active participation is required,” and this extra degree of readerly engagement only adds to a text’s affective, libidinal charge.

Faced with these slippages of meaning, we might opt for a more open-ended model of classification: a continuum of “eroto-pornographic” writing that can be more or less obscene, more or less metaphorical, more or less hard core. The advantage of such a polythetic class, to use Rodney Needham’s term for “classes composed by sporadic or family resemblances,” is that it allows for multiple, variable, contesting receptions and uses of specific works. A text like Cleland’s Memoirs might be read aloud at a men’s club to reinforce bonds of sociability, or in private to elicit fantasy or orgasm, or among friends as a vehicle for learning about the secrets of adult sexuality, or in the parlor as a satire of romance clichés—or, by turns, as a mix of all these ways of reading. Adapting Linda Williams, we might view the erotic side of eroto-pornographic as emphasizing desire, the pornographic as emphasizing satisfaction; further, in keeping with its double etymology, pornography emphasizes the visual or graphic depiction (graphē) of sex as a kind of transaction, like that between prostitute (pornē) and client. This, in turn, recalls Harvey’s idea, that action is integral to the pornographic, “in which the description of the sexual act”—not just a verbal image of the body or its sexual organs—“was placed at the centre
of the narrative. Pornography is a narrative mode, though a paradoxical one, as the repetitiveness of its sexual descriptions can pull against the end-oriented momentum typical of most narratives. The eroto-pornographic text is composed of scenes adding up to a story, and each sexual scene is charged with its own narrative dynamic of desire and satisfaction (or failure to be satisfied). In the sense I am giving it, then, pornographic is a narrower term than obscene (the violation of taboos) or erotic (the expression of desire), although they are among its ingredients.

3. The Making of a Pornographic Canon

In what has become the best-known anecdote in the history of reading, the diarist Samuel Pepys stopped one day “at Martins my bookseller” and noticed a book he thought his French-born wife might enjoy, “called L’escholle de Filles; but when I came to look into it, it is the most bawdy, lewd book that ever I saw, rather worse then putana errante—so that I was ashamed of reading in it.” Not so ashamed, however, that he did not return to buy the “idle, roguish” book three weeks later—but “in plain binding... because I resolve, as soon as I have read it, to burn it, that it may not stand in the list of books, nor among them, to disgrace them if it should be found.” The next evening, after an afternoon of drinking and singing with friends, he withdrew to his chamber, “where I did read through L’escholle des Filles; a lewd book, but what doth me no wrong to read for information sake (but it did hazer my prick para stand all the while, and una vez to decharger); and after I had done it, I burned it, that it might not be among my books to my shame.”

The episode falls at or near the beginning of every account of the reception of pornography in early modern England, not only for being the most candid and exact record of one reader’s bodily response to reading a lewd book but for conveying so precisely the uneasy excitement of engaging with a text both shaming and irresistible, whose novelty and foreignness made it a harbinger of the modern emergence, or reemergence, of the pornographic.

Pepys’s encounter with L’École des filles in February 1668 was recorded in his standard cryptic shorthand, although as Turner notes, the book’s title is fully written out in long-hand, as is the curious word decharger (ejaculate), which suggests that Pepys was highlighting as much as concealing his orgasmic response to the “roguish” text. This text, notably, was a foreign import: The early modern history of pornography is, from an English perspective, that of the infiltration of English literary culture and English bookshops by Italian and French works, at first in the original and soon after in translation. The text’s exotic novelty is signaled by Pepys’s lapse into polyglossia—“it did hazer my prick para stand... and una vez to decharger”—at the moments of arousal and climax, and by his reference to the Italian Puttana errante (wandering whore) as his previous benchmark of lewdness. The pornographic book is a foreign invader, brought into the private space of Pepys’s house from the sociable, largely masculine milieu of the bookshop and consumed by him in solitude. But Pepys, with his French wife, knowledge of languages, and position on the Navy Board, was a person of cosmopolitan tastes, and his reading of L’École in private is continuous with his sociable carousing earlier. In fact, they are threaded into the
same sentence—“We sang till almost night, and drank my good store of wine; and then they parted and I to my chamber, where I did read...”—as if the two moments were parts of a single narrative of sensuous enjoyment. So while this episode unfolds through a succession of antithetical terms (hidden/visible, foreign/English, public/private, sociable/solitary), it presents those terms not as either/or but as both/and. Pepys meets the foreign text in a London bookshop; solitary reading follows from sociable exchange (not just with his male friends but with his wife, for whom the book was first meant as a gift); a work suppressed when published in France is soon openly for sale in a shop on the Strand.

The availability of this French text in an English shop suggests that Continental and English literary cultures, erotic and otherwise, were closely connected throughout this period, but that language difference, at least from the point of view of censorial authority, made all the difference. While an educated reader like Pepys could read *L’École des filles* in the original, most English readers could not, which is not only why there was a market for translations but also why the authorities left the French text alone: Its readership was limited to a linguistic elite. No matter how obscene, the writings of such classical authors as Petronius and Catullus never troubled the censor as long as they were left in Latin; indeed, they formed part of the education of gentlemen. It was the fact of their greater availability to less privileged readers—women, tradesmen, apprentices, servants—that made lewd books in English a threat to the “public order which is morality,” as Yorke put it in the Curll case. So when a group of works translated (often freely) from Italian and French began to appear in the 1680s, the agents of the law took action against the offending booksellers.

The lapse of the Licensing Act between May 1679 and June 1685, as Thomas Keymer has noted, coincided with the publication of a spate of pornographic translations. The first was a hard-core English version of the text that so excited Pepys, titled *The School of Venus* (1680), followed by *The Whore’s Rhetorick* (1683), adapted from Ferrante Pallavicino’s 1642 *Retorica delle puttane*. These were soon joined by *Venus in the Cloyster, or the Nun in Her Smock* (1683), from Jean Barrin’s *Vénus dans le cloître* (also 1683; a 1725 version by Robert Samber led to Curll’s trial for obscene libel, described above), and *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid* (1684), adapted by William Cademan from a French version (*L’Académie des dames*, 1680) of Nicolas Chorier’s Latin original, *Satyra sotadica* (*Sotadic or Obscene Satire*) of 1660. The complicated history of these works’ publication, translation, and prosecution attests both to the moral threat they were thought to pose and their international, multigenerational reach: These became the core texts of a pornographic canon that remained stable well into the eighteenth century across western Europe. And they all, in turn, owe their form and much of their content to Pietro Aretino’s *Ragionamenti* (Dialogues), published in two parts in Italian in 1534 and 1536.

It was the three dialogues of the first part that established the pattern for the pornographic canon. Over three days, two courtesans, one older and one younger, discuss the three modes of life open to women—nun, wife, whore—in order to determine which is best. It comes as no surprise that they choose a whore’s life over the others, nor that the
group most in danger of sexual violence and depravity are nuns. Aretino mines a vein of anticlerical and antimonastic satire that would run through much eroto-pornographic writing, from *Venus in the Cloister* to Denis Diderot’s *La Religieuse* and Matthew Lewis’s Gothic shocker *The Monk* (1796), but it was the structure of an educational dialogue between an older and a younger woman that would have the greatest impact on Aretino’s seventeenth-century successors.\(^{56}\) Although the genre he originated came to be called the “whore dialogue”—accurately enough for the *Ragionamenti* and the anonymous *Puttana errante* that Pepys knew—the most important dialogues of the later pornographic canon are not between prostitutes but between outwardly respectable women conversing in a domestic setting (*L’École des filles, Satyra sotadica*) or, as in *Vénus dans le cloître*, in a convent. What is most striking, and most pornographic, about such dialogues is that they are both instructive and seductive: In teaching her younger friend the mysteries of sexuality, the older also elicits a sexual response, in which she fully shares. In *The School of Venus*, for example (the 1680 translation of *L’École des filles*), Frances instructs her sixteen-year-old cousin Katy on “all the pleasures of love” in order to prepare her for sex with her suitor, Roger; then, in a second dialogue, she listens to Katy’s account of her sexual initiation, which leads to further lessons.\(^{57}\) In response to one of Frances’s stories, Katy tells her, “Your very bare narration is enough to make one’s Cunt stand a tip toe,” while earlier, listening to Katy’s report of her first sexual experience, Frances exclaims, “This Relation makes me mad for Fucking.” So arousing, in fact, is their conversation that after Frances has described “Tongue kissing” as “a true resemblance and representation of the Prick entering into the Cunt,” Katy begs her, “Enough, enough of this Cousin, or else you’ll make me spend [come].”\(^{58}\)

These moments are characteristic of eroto-pornographic writing in their self-reflexivity: the text signals its power to arouse desire, and even to make the reader come, by demonstrating such responses to sexual narratives within the text. In an ironic preface, Priapus (the phallic god of male potency) forbids anyone to “Read or hear Read the Precepts of Love, Explained in a Book called the School of VENUS, without spending or at least not having some incitements of Nature which tend to fucking.”\(^{59}\) The language used here is rawer than in most other eighteenth-century pornographic texts, but in all of them, reading or listening to lewd narratives is depicted as one of the most powerful means of sexual arousal. At the same time, telling or writing sexual stories is a strategy of seduction. That Frances has erotic designs on Katy is no secret: When the latter airily notes, “Look here, I believe few Wenches have handsomer Thighs than I, for they are White, Smooth and Plump,” Frances replies, “I know it, for I have often seen and handled them before now, when we lay together.” But Frances’s design in the dialogue is not so much to “handle” Katy’s flesh as to arouse her imagination so that Katy, once initiated into the arcana of eros, will return to Frances with her own inflaming narrative. The aim of the dialogue is, at first, to prepare Katy for sex; but for Frances, and certainly for the reader, the point of Katy’s sexual experience is the converse: to furnish her with material for a further sto-
As so often in the pornographic canon, those seen telling and listening to sexual stories are women, and often the dialogues’ imagined readers are women too. Virtually all the authors whose identities are known, however, were male; and the scant known evidence of who actually read eroto-pornographic texts tends to identify men like Pepys as their main consumers. There has been much debate as to whether, and in what contexts, women read pornography in this or later periods, but the evidence is too meager to yield any clear answers. Women were certainly the principal authors and readers of the amatory fiction that played a key part in the emergence and development of the novel in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and whose focus on what Ros Ballaster calls “the combined pleasures and ravages of seduction” allow it to be regarded as a kind of “pornography for women.” In their various roles as wives, daughters, widows, and servants, women would have had access to whatever reading matter could be found inside the house, and unless all the male readers of hard-core erotica followed Pepys’s lead and burned their books after reading them, it must have been in reach of many literate women, whose numbers were steadily on the rise. But whether or not female readers formed a significant part of the audience for eroto-pornographic works, they were central to its imaginative preoccupations. Questions of women’s pleasure and women’s knowledge, as Turner and Williams in different ways argue, have always been integral to pornography, and in the early modern period those questions were raised most vividly in stories of secret conversations between women, as in the Ragionamenti and its successors, or by way of the figure of the solitary female reader.

Between the founding Italian whore dialogues (Aretino’s Ragionamenti, and the Puttana errante of ca. 1650), and their principal French descendants, the scene of conversation changed from brothel to private family home, and the speakers were no longer whores but ladies. (Part of the satirical point of the later Vénus dans le cloître, as in Aretino, is that the convent in which it is set is more like a brothel than a respectable home.) This move to the domestic interior, and the corresponding shift from public women to private, reflects the increasing emphasis, in literature of the period, on private experience and on sexuality as the secret, defining truth of the private self. Eroto-pornographic writing makes the hidden realm of the sexual visible: visible, first, to the young tutee within the dialogic text; but also visible, by extension, to the reader. For a male reader, the hidden realm might be that of female pleasure and desire; for a respectable female reader, that of whorish, unrestrained sexual license or perversion (whatever is viewed as socially irregular). For readers of either sex, the secret realm might be that of same-sex desire, as in Antonio Rocco’s homoerotic Italian dialogue L’Alcibiade fanciullo a scola (Alcibiades as a Schoolboy, 1651) or (between women) the Satyra sotadica and Venus in the Cloister. And just as sexual knowledge and experience were increasingly portrayed as belonging to a hidden or private domain, so the voyeuristic penetration of the boundaries separating private from public, the invisible from the visible, became one of the key plot devices of erotopornographic narrative.

Voyeurism as an epistemological strategy, a way of knowing, is always messily entangled with secret looking or spying as strategies of pleasure. As Turner writes, the aim of voyeurism “is rarely just to enjoy physical pleasure without detection, but to bring knowl-
edge back through the aperture and ‘publish’ it in a form that captures some of the original secretive thrill.”  

Sarah Toulalan has similarly argued that “in a world in which there was in actuality very little privacy… 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 result 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.” The thrill or charge first of seeing what we are not meant to see, and then of broadcasting it for all the world to witness, is memorably captured in a passage late in Cleland’s *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, the first important English contribution to the pornographic canon, and a crucial work for moving decisively away from the dialogue form, or that of anticlerical satire, into the modern domain of the novel. In this episode, Fanny Hill, the novel’s protagonist-narrator, spies on two lads in the room next to hers in a public house, through a peephole she has made high in the movable wall panel separating her room from theirs. At first they merely romp “in frolic, and innocent play,” but in short order the older kisses, then undresses the younger, and Fanny watches in horrified fascination as they have sex, gluing her eye to the peephole “purely that I might gather more facts, and certainty against them”—her aim being to denounce them to the authorities for the capital offense of sodomy. But while Fanny presents her surveillance as if policing, not pleasure, is its only point, her detailed, lubricious account suggests a strong current of erotic investment in the scene, with its “soft murmur’d complaints” and its culminating “long-breath’d kiss.”  

Fanny’s plan to expose the sexual criminals is thwarted when she trips on a nail and knocks herself unconscious, allowing them to escape; but in writing it into her memoirs she is able both to announce her outrage to the world and to luxuriate again in the erotic sensations the scene provokes.

The secret knowledge Cleland brought to light in this passage proved too dangerous for the law to tolerate. After he and his publisher, Ralph Griffiths, were arrested for obscenity, the paragraphs detailing the young men’s liaison were cut from the book, not to be restored until the Oxford and Penguin editions of 1985. Cleland and Griffiths were never put on trial, despite repeated calls from the secretary of state, so it may be that the removal of this episode answered the censors’ demands. But what in their eyes was dangerous about such a scene? Yorke’s reply in the Curll case was that “it tends to corrupt the morals of the king’s subjects, and is against the peace of the king”; but the answer fails to tell us how such corruption works. A fuller response comes in the indictment of John Purser, for printing Thomas Cannon’s *Ancient and Modern Pederasty Investigated and Exemplify’d* (1749), a paean to male same-sex desire masquerading as an attack. The attorney general, Dudley Ryder, asserts that Cannon’s text aims to “Debauch Poison and Infect the Minds of all the Youth of this Kingdom and to Raise Excite and Create in the Minds of all the said Youth most Shocking and Abominable Ideas and Sentiments.” The act of reading not only instills illicit desires but draws readers “into the Love and Practice of that unnatural detestable and odious crime of Sodomy.” The danger of the text consists in its power to undo the reader’s self-control, so that arousal impels him (for in this case the threat is to young men) to “practice” the crimes it discloses. Reading imperils the integrity of the self.
The dangers of reading were the object of a massive body of commentary in the period. Women in particular, and the young of either sex, were regarded as especially vulnerable to the seductions of fiction. Consumed alone and in private, not only outright pornography but even works that warned against immorality could release the desiring imagination and elicit fantasy. New print technologies and systems for distributing printed texts—along with increasing rates of literacy among such social groups as women, the middle classes, and young city dwellers—led to the emergence of new reading audiences and, of course, new forms of writing to entertain and instruct. Although older forms of reading aloud and in public (or in domestic groups) persisted, reading practices were shifting toward the private, solitary, and silent, as exemplified in Pepys’s furtive reading of L’École des filles. Whether or not the content of a book read in secret could be considered pornographic, the relationship between reader and text was itself erotic: intimate, passionate, enthralled. Privacy not only let readers like Pepys look into works that would shame them if exposed to public view but also facilitated “pornographic receptions,” as we have seen, even of morally earnest novels like Pamela.

Hence, especially from the 1720s on, the widespread “cultural project,” as Laqueur has called it, of regulating the act of reading as well as the content read. The campaign was carried out on two fronts: censorship and legal sanctions on the one hand and exemplary warnings within literary texts of the dangers of reading on the other. So, in Delarivier Manley’s amatory novel The New Atalantis (1709), the innocent but naïve Charlot is groomed for the life of a courtesan by an unscrupulous would-be lover who sets her a program of reading other amatory fiction, to which of course she succumbs. So Richardson explicitly frames Pamela as a critique of, and rebuke to, the amatory novels of Manley and Eliza Haywood, only to find himself denounced in turn for the inflaming effects of his amatory scenes. So Cleland, in his translation of the Italian medical case history of Catterina Vizzani, a cross-dressing “Lesbian” seducer who gained a reputation as a lady’s man by way of a homemade leather dildo, calls for suppressing “those scandalous and flagitious Books... calculated to inflame the Passions [and] to banish all Sense of Shame.” Given his own track record, Cleland’s censorial call may strike us as either a joke or an act of gross hypocrisy, but it typifies the ways in which authors positioned their work in oppositional or dialogic relation to other authors and texts or played on conflicts within their own texts between representation and censure. Cleland’s remark aims to distance his book, which exposes vice, from others that inflame it; but it also makes a mockery of the distinction, since to expose is to proffer, or even to pander.

If the self-consciously canon-creating novel of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding defined itself in opposition (satirical or moralizing) to romance, to the amatory fiction of Behn, Manley, and Haywood, and to all eroto-pornographic writing, it did so most pointedly when it emulated those abject precursors most closely. So Defoe lingers over the scenes detailing Roxana’s sexual debasement of her loving maidservant Amy (Roxana, 1725); Richardson details every twist and turn of Lovelace’s baroquely conceived rape/seduction fantasies (Clarissa, 1747–1748); and Fielding teasingly insinuates incestuous ties between his heroes and their lovers before rescuing them by means of the flagrant plot twists of romance (Joseph Andrews, 1742; Tom Jones, 1748–1749). This tension between
opposition and imitation, representation and reproof, is virtually a defining structural principle of the genre and pervades the theoretical commentaries that authors of the period made on the new form. No surprise that a seasoned professional like Haywood would respond to Pamela’s runaway success with a satirical comeback, her own Anti-Pamela of 1742. Indeed this “anti” move is common within the eroto-pornographic corpus as well. So the young Agnes in Venus in the Cloister denounces The School of Venus for its crudity, and the author of Satyra Sotadica for the “unknown dishes... he cooks up to debauch us!” even as she is being debauched by her intercourse with the sly Angelica. A century later, Rétif de la Bretonne, the father of the word pornography, billed his own pornographic extravaganza, the Anti-Justine, as an antidote to Sade’s outrageous Justine. Cleland and Cannon, enemies in life, joined in using the device of moral condemnation to authorize the most “inflaming” depictions of same-sex love in eighteenth-century fiction. Just as obscenity trials and public bonfires made the texts they aimed to suppress more famous and, at least to some readers, more desirable, so the anti-immorality stance, whether feigned or sincere, only draws attention to the immoral excess it deplores. Both strategies, by lingering over sex, contribute to what Turner calls the “erotocentric redefinition of the human being,” which infused the literature of this period and underlay the explosion of sexual and sexological discourses at the end of the next century.

Bibliography


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Notes:


(2) Fielding, Shamela, 311.


(4) Aaron Hill, Letter “To the Editor of Pamela,” in Fielding, Shamela, 359.

(5) Aaron Hill, in Fielding, Shamela, 359, 361.


(7) Samuel Johnson’s definition of “tickle”: “to affect with a prurient sensation by light touches.”


(10) Daniel Defoe, Conjugal Lewdness; or, Matrimonial Whoredom [1727], facsimile ed. with introduction by Maximillian E. Novak (Gainesville, FL: Scholars’ Facsimiles, 1967), 7.

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(18) See e.g. Moulton, Before Pornography, 8–15; Mudge, Whore’s Story, 27–30 and “How to Do,” ¶ 11–12.


(20) See Wagner, Eros, 5. These definitions are based on Roger Thompson, Unfit for Modest Ears (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1979), ix, except that Thompson consistently foregrounds authorial intent, so that “obscene” means “intended to shock or disgust”; bawdy, “intended to provoke amusement about sex,” and so on (emphasis added).


(22) Karen Harvey, Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), esp. 12–34.

(23) On debates over definitions, see Toulalan, Imagining, esp. 1–23.


(25) Thompson, Unfit, ix.

(26) See, for example, Turner, Schooling, 6; Harvey, Reading, 20; Wagner, Eros, 7.

(27) For Laqueur, see above, n. 16; Turner, Schooling, 6. It should be noted that Turner’s focus is on the 16th and 17th centuries, and that he regards “pornography” as an anachronism for that period.

(28) For example, it has long been argued that the consumption of pornography can lead to sexual violence—that, in Robin Morgan’s influential formulation, “Pornography is the theory, and rape the practice.” The malign or antiliberal effects of pornography could also include a deadening of imagination and empathy by the reiteration of manufactured images of sex. These arguments have been made with special urgency with regard to photographic, film, video, and online forms of pornography, and the first often overlaps with critiques of the porn industry for its coercive or abusive practices. For a discussion of these issues from the perspective of what is generally called “anticensorship” (as opposed to “antipornography”) feminism, see Linda Williams, Hard Core: Power, Pleasure,
and the “Frenzy of the Visible” (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), esp. 9–30 (the Morgan quotation is on 16).


(32) Quoted in Foxon, Libertine, 15.

(33) John, Lord Fortescue, Reports of Select Cases (London, 1748), quoted in Thomas, Long Time, 82.


(36) For a critique of the position (which she attributes to Walter Kendrick) that “pornography is simply whatever representations a particular dominant class or group does not want in the hands of another, less dominant class or group” (12)—that “the various attempts to censor pornography, whatever it is, are its history” (14)—see Williams, Hard Core, 11–16.

(37) Harvey, Reading, 20–34


(39) See Williams, Hard Core, 265–279.

(40) Harvey, Reading, 20, 21; emphasis in original. As Harvey writes in another passage, “in eighteenth-century England it meant one thing to read an erotic poem with some claims to refinement, and quite another to read a pornographic novel in which people fucked” (19).

(41) Harvey, Reading, 24; John Cleland, Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure [1748-49], ed. Peter Sabor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 140–141; [Anon.], A Voyage to Lethe; by Capt. Samuel Cock [London, 1741], 13; facsimile in Alexander Pettit and Patrick Sped-

(43) “Frigged” here presumably means masturbated, but could also mean to have sex (with another person), which would suggest an all-male orgy.

(44) Harvey, Reading, 24.


(46) Cleland, Memoirs, 82.


(50) See Williams, Hard Core, 277.

(51) Harvey, Reading, 28.

(52) The Diary of Samuel Pepys, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, vol. IX (London: HarperCollins, 1971), 21–22, 57–59. Many critics have commented on this episode, but the most detailed reading is in Turner, Schooling, 1–6 and 226–239. The French text of L’École des filles, probably written by either Michel Millot or Jean L’Ange (who jointly arranged its printing), was published in 1655, but almost immediately confiscated and burned; see Foxon, Libertine, 30–34.

(53) Foxon (9) does record one case from 1677, in which a bookseller had his shop closed down for “several hours” for stocking some foreign-language pornographic texts (including the French École des filles), which, as the bookseller’s brother in law wrote in a letter, “he did not conceive in any way prohibited in England.” Despite the closing, there is no
record to my knowledge of any further legal action, and the letter’s author protests that even the shop closing was “illegal, unjustifiable and uncivil”—supporting the conclusion that works not in English were not ordinarily subject to legal regulation. On the history of the prosecution of booksellers and authors for obscene libel and related charges, see Foxon, Libertine, 7‒18 and Thomas, Long Time, 15‒33, 74‒91.


(55) For help with the complex textual and legal history of these works, see Foxon, Libertine, and Thompson, Unfit, esp. 21‒39. The full title of Satyra sotadica is Aloisiae Sigeae Toletanae Satyra Sotadica de arcanis Amoris et Veneris (Luisa Sigea of Toledo’s Sotadic Satire on the Secrets of Love and Venery); it claimed to have been translated from a Spanish original into Latin by Ioannes or Johannis Meursius. All this was an elaborate fiction to conceal the identity of its real author, Nicolas Chorier. In the eighteenth century the work was generally known as Johannis Meursius elegantiae Latini sermonis (Johannis Meursius’s elegant Latin sermon), or simply as “Meursius.”

(56) On Aretino and the Ragionamenti, see Moulton, Before Pornography, esp. 127‒136. Diderot’s La Religieuse (The Nun) was conceived and partially written in 1760, completed and published in the manuscript subscription journal the Correspondance littéraire in 1780‒1782 and published in book form in 1796, twelve years after Diderot’s death.


(58) School, 28, 44‒45, 50.

(59) School, 4.

(60) Peakman argues that the English audience for erotica, broadly construed, “extended to include women and the lower orders” in this period, and that “women were involved in the publishing, selling and writing of erotica,” although much of her argument is necessarily conjectural: see Mighty Lewd Books, 25‒28, 33‒39, 44. Harvey, by contrast, after sifting “the evidence of the content of erotic texts, the production and distribution of the books, the visible authors, and the evidence of actual readers,” concludes that the audience was almost exclusively male: see Reading, 35‒77 (at 77). For an excellent overview of questions of readership, see Toulalan, Imagining, 52‒61.

(61) Ros Ballaster, Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740 (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1992), 33, 34. The phrase “pornography for women” is borrowed from Ann Snitow, and Ballaster takes pains to distinguish between “the primarily anatomical, procreative and instructional emphasis” of “male-centred pornography” and “the erotic-pathetic drive of the seduction and betrayal narratives” of Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Eliza Haywood, the principal writers of amatory fiction from the 1680s to 1730s.

(62) Williams, Hard Core, esp. 30‒32 and 265‒279; Turner, Schooling, 1‒27 and passim.
On the relationship between sexuality and the privacy of the individual or self, see McKeon, *Secret History*, 269–319.


Toulalan, *Imagining*, 162; see 161–193 for a full discussion of issues of privacy in early modern pornography.

Cleland, *Memoirs*, 157–159. For an extended reading of this scene, including its relation to eyewitness testimony in sodomy trials of the period, see Gladfelder, *Fanny Hill*, 67–79.

Cannon was meant to be tried at the same time as Purser, but had fled the country; the charges against him were later dropped. For a full account, and a transcript of the Purser indictment, which contains much of the original pamphlet, see Gladfelder, “In Search of Lost Texts: Thomas Cannon’s *Ancient and Modern Pederasty Investigated and Exemplify’d*,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 31:1 (2007), 22–61.

Quoted in Gladfelder, “In Seach,” 39–40.

On eighteenth-century expressions of anxiety as to the dangers of solitary reading, especially for women, see Harvey, *Reading*, esp. 44–50, 56–60; and Laqueur, *Solitary*, 302–358.


