1999

The Representation of Female Desire in Early Modern Pornographic Texts, 1660-1745

Manuela Moura˜o
Old Dominion University, mmourao@odu.edu

Original Publication Citation

Mourao, M. (1999). The representation of female desire in early modern pornographic texts, 1660-1745. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society, 24*(3), 573. doi: 10.1086/495366

The Representation of Female Desire in Early Modern Pornographic Texts, 1660–1745

Feminist scholars of the early modern era have already remarked the lack of critical attention to the literary pornography that appeared in Europe after the middle of the seventeenth century.[1] Literary historians have considered all manner of texts in their studies of the shift in constructions of male and female subjectivities during this time, but, despite the common argument that this shift happened in the context of a historical transformation of sexual identity, they have remained largely unconcerned with the pornographic discourse emerging at the same time (Orr 1992, 196). Feminist analyses of pornography, conversely, have remained largely ahistorical. Directed almost exclusively at recent examples and often done in psychoanalytic terms, such analyses tend to constitute pornography as a monolith and to "produce transhistorical and universalizing accounts of its ideological functions" (Orr 1992, 197).[2] Given that most feminist critics also assume that pornographic representations directly affect sexual identity and behavior, bringing early modern pornographic texts into the current de-

[1] Catherine Itzin, following the legal distinction between erotica and pornography, defines erotica as "sex and sexually explicit material which is non-objectifying, non-violent, and non-subordinating" and pornography as "sexualized and sexually explicit dominance, subordination and violence" (1992, 18). This distinction is generally upheld by antipornography activists; however, anti-antipornography (or "sex-positive") critics point out that it remains problematic because it rests on subjective interpretations of what constitute "acceptable" sexually explicit images (erotica) and "unacceptable" ones (pornography). In addition, issues of context and intention are often brought to bear on the distinction, further complicating attempts at unequivocal differentiation (see, e.g., Assiter 1989, 97). For the purposes of this analysis, and given the fact that "sexual explicitness for the purpose of arousal" is a common element in the definition of both terms, I use the term *pornography* to encompass all explicit sexual representations that are objectifying and aim to be sexually arousing.

[2] Joan Hoff assesses the limitations of the "histories" written in the 1960s and explores possible reasons for the lack of systematic work on pornography "as a historical and cultural phenomenon" (1989, 18). Since her assessment, some important progress has been made in that direction. The recent collection edited by Lynn Hunt (1993c), e.g., is a substantial historical study of the genre, essential for subsequent feminist arguments about pornography.

[*Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1999, vol. 24, no. 3]

bate on pornography would enable historical understandings of the genre and its role in the constitution of female and male sexual subjectivities.[3]

At present, the debate remains stalled and highly polarized, largely around the issue of whether pornography is innately misogynistic and necessarily fosters violence toward women.[4] Thus, if early modern pornographic texts can be shown to offer historical grounds for the argument that pornography is not inherently oppressive to women, their analysis may prove vital to the current debate. The most recent historical work stresses that from early on, pornography worked as political and social criticism as well as titillation,[5] and current feminist pro-sex interventions recognize that this is still one of its potential uses: they see pornography as an essential arena for changing sexual culture and as a site of the battle for sexual equality.[6] If early modern pornography is shown to challenge and revise conventional patriarchal definitions of women's sexuality, then it can offer a specific historical model for rejecting the role of powerless victim that current feminist antipornography critiques repeatedly assign to

[3] The power of pornography to affect the construction of the self can either reinforce or challenge and offer alternatives to the prevailing order. Anti-antipornography critics have often debated whether pornography shapes our perceptions of reality. Andrew Ross, e.g., suggests that it does not, because it is closely connected with fantasy (1989). But others have looked favorably at what they see as pornography's potential for a so-called education of desire. Ross discusses Richard Dyer's 1985 essay "Male Gay Porn: Coming to Terms" in this context.

[4] Itzin 1992 offers the most recent overview of the debate; her selected bibliography is an excellent source for further research. Other key texts that illustrate the feminist antipornography argument are Holbrook 1975; Lederer 1980; Dworkin 1981; Griffin 1981; Barry 1984; Brownmiller 1985; Kappeler 1986; Diamond 1988; Dworkin and MacKinnon 1988. For examples of the anti-antipornography or "pro-sex" position, see Carter 1978; English 1980 (20, 22, 43–44, 48–50); Snitow, Stansell, and Thompson 1983; Rubin 1984; Vance 1984b; Burstyn 1985; Rich 1986; Ellis et al. 1988; Assiter 1989; Williams 1989; Butler 1990a; Pollis and Vance 1990; Henderson 1992; Assiter and Avedon 1993.

[5] Paula Findlen, e.g., maintains that "the erotic and obscene writings of the sixteenth century set the stage for the more widespread diffusion of pornography in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by charting the terrain in which pornography was formulated, and by setting the parameters of its subject and the techniques of its presentation. Voyeuristic, subversive, and highly philosophical, pornography quickly became the preferred medium through which to vent one's outrage about the ills of society while, at the same time, making a tidy profit" (1993, 108). For a similar argument, see Foxon 1965; Thompson 1979; McCalman 1988; DeJean 1993; Hunt 1993c; Jacob 1993; Trumbach 1993; Weil 1993.

[6] The central tenets of the pro-sex position are that women have the power to own their sexual selves and that pornography has much subversive potential. These are attractive ideas for women who believe that the equation of sex with violence is reductive and detrimental to female sexual liberation and that it is possible to change a repressive, sex-negative social climate. See, e.g., Hollibaugh 1984; Vance 1984a; Snitow 1988.

women. At the crux of these arguments is the issue of female sexual objectification. By analyzing the process through which female *and male* sexual objectification is constructed in early modern pornographic texts, I argue that, although sexual objectification is an inherent feature of these works (as it always is in pornography), specific representational practices and rhetorical devices combine to create a voyeuristic reading experience in which both sexual objectification and sexual subjectivity are interchangeably gendered.

Early modern pornographic texts

As Emma Donaghue points out, during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, "Britain and France shared a market for erotica; first published in one country, texts were sometimes translated and published in the other within weeks" (1993, 183). These texts represent the beginnings of the form as we know it today,[7] but, more so than many of the twentieth-century examples of pornography, I argue, these early modern texts challenge traditionally accepted views of how pornography represents female and male sexuality. Early modern pornographers, Lynn Hunt stresses, "were not intentionally feminists *avant la lettre*, but their portrayal of women, at least until the 1790s, often valorized female sexual activity and determination much more than did the prevailing medical texts" (1993a, 44). Similarly, Rachel Weil argues that the location of power in these texts is represented as "uncertain: elusive and unstable" (1993, 148–49); thus, they question the phallocentric binary opposition that continues to control most of the discourse on sex. In so doing, they also suggest that the position maintained by antipornography feminists—that the genre is dangerous to women—needs to be complicated. In these texts sex is not violent and sexual pleasure does not depend on degrading images of women. Repeatedly, female desire is validated, and, interestingly, men are not represented as the only intended consumers of sex, which suggests that recent antipornography critiques have blamed the genre itself for what is in fact a result of the late twentieth-century historical and cultural circumstances determining its production. The ambiguity of early modern pornography suggests that the genre does not, in fact, necessarily endorse misogynistic attitudes.

[7] See Loth 1961 and Hunt 1993a, 10. In Loth's account, early modern pornographic literature appeared because of "a purification of literature in general," which created the need for a specific kind of literature "solely for the purpose of arousing readers" (103–4), an observation that reiterates the connection between obscenity and subversiveness.

Relatively few examples of early pornographic texts are available to us today; most have been destroyed and copies of extant ones are rare. David Foxon's bibliographic study (1965) of pornographic works published in France and England between 1660 and 1745 includes, as far as can be ascertained, all that is available today.[8] He refers to Samuel Pepys's *Diary* for a record of *L'Escole des filles,* a "lewd book" that Pepys read and then destroyed, and to legal records of arrests and indictments in order to compile a list of the titles that were circulating. Of particular interest as evidence of pornography's subversive potential are *La Puttana errante* (1642), published in England as *The Wandering Whore; L'Escole des filles* (1655), first printed in English in 1688 and again in 1744;[9] Nicolas Chorier's *Satyra sotadica* (1660), published in French in 1688 as *L'Académie des dames* and in English as *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid;*[10] and *Vénus dans le cloître; ou, La Religieuse en chemise* (1683), usually attributed to Jean Barrin and translated into English as *Venus in the Cloister; or, the Nun in Her Smock.*[11] Ferrante Pallavicino's *La Retorica delle putanae,* well known in England as *The Whores Rhetoric* (1683), is also of interest.[12] As Foxon

[8] See also *The Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature,* a three-volume annotated bibliography by Pisanus Fraxi (pseudonym for Henry Spencer Ashby) first published between 1877 and 1885 (Fraxi 1962). Kearney 1981 is also of enormous interest in this regard.

[9] The only eighteenth-century copies of these two works that I could gain access to were the British Library's *Le Cabinet d'amour et de Vénus* (Cologne), which contains editions of both *L'Escole des filles* and *La putain errante,* a French version of the Italian text *La Puttana errante: Overo dialogo di Madalena e Giulia.* It gives no publication date, but the British Library catalog suggests 1750.

[10] Also known as *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* or *Aloisa,* Chorier's text appeared first in Latin in 1660. In addition to other translations and adaptations, Foxon notes three printed English versions: *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid* (1688), *The School of Love* (1707), and *Aretinus Redivivus* (1745). An abridged version appeared in 1740, also entitled *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid.* According to Foxon, *Aretinus Redivivus* is the only literal translation of the French version. In it, besides discussing sex, "the women engage in erotic action together" and also with men (Foxon 1965, 294). The 1707 edition, a free adaptation, includes a section on female masturbation techniques—an important element that helps reinforce my argument that these texts offer a vision of female sexuality that challenges the socially accepted (and acceptable) one.

[11] Until recently, copies of neither the 1683 translation, advertised in the *Term Catalogue* for Easter 1683, nor the two editions published by Curll in 1724 and 1725 had been traced (Foxon 1965, 44). However, a 1683 translation, *Venus in the Cloister,* quite distinct from Curll's eighteenth-century version, has now shown up in the Bodleian Library at Oxford.

[12] Other titles are worth mentioning here: *The School of Venus: Or the Lady's Miscellany* (1739); *Vénus la populaire: ou Apologie des maisons de joye* (1727); *Venus Unmasked: Or an Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of the Passion of Love* (1759); *The Battles of Venus* (1760); and "An Essay on Woman" (1763), of which no copies are known to have survived. With the exception of "An Essay on Woman," they are not pornographic, in the sense that they do not

remarks, these works mark both the emergence of the genre as a specialized business and its movement underground.[13] Their subversive qualities made them potentially dangerous to the established order; they were censored because they challenged it. Often, their representations of female sexuality constituted part of this challenge. For while they exhibit the ideological contradictions present in most pornography, their rhetorical features create an ambivalence that preempts the unitary aim (women's sexual exploitation) seen by contemporary antipornography critiques as inherent in the genre. Even though the women in these texts are persuaded to make themselves sexually available for male desire, they also explicitly seek their own pleasure. The men, in turn, are anxious to fulfill the women's expectations.

As recent studies of seventeenth-century women writers Aphra Behn and Mary Delariviere Manley have shown, the rhetorical ambivalence of such works is enhanced by the fact that they are dialogues between women. Orr suggests that Behn and Manley "may have deliberately and critically capitalized on [their] capacity" to project an ambivalent, "self-divided subject" (1992, 201). Their use of the "lewd woman's" voice "deliberately exploited the fetishised commodity status of the female performer or writer, capitalizing on the supposed handicap of a whorish identity" (199).[14] Because of the conventional association of women's speech and writing with prostitution, the voices of the experienced women in each of

include sexually explicit material, but all have suggestive titles that allude to pornographic works and would, no doubt, have interested the audience for pornography. *The Nightly Sports of Venus,* in particular, is explicitly connected to the pornographic tradition by its advertisement, at the end of the narrative, of several popular pornographic titles of the time: "Good Heaven, said Mrs. Merrytail, rubbing her eyes to prevent her from sleeping, what would I give for any one of the following delightful books, that I have heard so much talk about, to divert me this evening. The Philosophical Theresa—The Academy of Ladies—The Ecclesiastical Laurels—The Woman of Pleasure—Themidore Frutillon—Don B.—The Enchanting Rochester's Poems—or the Ode to Priapus. Now, Madam, if you, or your Abigail can but find out where this charming Pamphlet was baught [*sic*], it is a thousand to one but you hit upon the very place to meet with them" (32). *Vénus la populaire* and *Venus Unmasked,* whose titles also suggest a connection with pornography, are actually tracts about women and sex. Their interest lies in the way they highlight the contrast between the treatment of women in pornography and in "serious" literature.

[13] Foxon's interest in these works is related to their problems with the law. He establishes that a pornographic work was first successfully prosecuted in 1725, when Edmund Curll was convicted of obscenity for printing *Venus in the Cloister.* The work thus documents an important evolution in the status of literary pornography, providing evidence that the radical potential of pornographic texts was being recognized. Before that time, only works that challenged the ruling political and religious ideas had been banned.

[14] See also Gardiner 1989; Ballaster 1992; Warner 1992.

the dialogues are immediately connected with sexual transgression. They can speak and be constituted as subjects *because* they are sexually transgressive.[15] When they speak, they "enjoy independence, determination and control" (Hunt 1993b, 334) and offer a positive picture of female sexual desire that challenges established norms for female sexual conduct. Because, as Orr points out, "transgressive feminine sexuality poses a threat to a unified masculine identity" (1992, 202), the dialogues have the potential both to challenge a male reader's sexual identity and to open up space for a liberating redefinition of female sexuality. These pornographic texts challenge masculine identity, then, by presenting and promoting the notion of women as subjects of desire. They directly question many current assumptions about the genre and bring to the recent pornography debates a necessary and provocative historical perspective.

Along with the satire, the most prevalent type of pornographic writing in the early modern period was the explanatory text. The dialogues I analyze, *L'Escole des filles* and Chorier's *Satyra sotadica,* belong to this category.[16] These very popular works exhibit features common to the rest of early modern literary pornography—specifically, a dialogue between women, a focus on female sexual initiation, an open concern with female pleasure, a "sapphic" undertone to many of the encounters between women, a defense of female deceit as a legitimate and transgressive strategy, and a rhetorical juxtaposition of conflicting discourses. Because they practice these common conventions and because they were so popular, these works are an ideal site for pursuing general conclusions about pornographic literature at the beginning of the development of its modern form.

[15] Margaret Jacob's comment on the female voices in narrative pornography describes a situation analogous to that in these pornographic dialogues: "The woman narrator and the female body simultaneously come into their own. Through narration, these female voices move the text along just as their bodies are compelled by their desires. Their power as narrators resides in the ability to arouse; also empowered is the literary genre itself, and, perhaps in the process, all the new fictional literature of which pornography was but a part" (1993, 165).

[16] I worked with the most reliable modern editions available: Pascal Pia's 1959 edition of *L'Escole des filles, ou La Philosophie des dames: Divisée en deux dialogues* and a 1959 edition of *Des Secrets de l'amour et Venus: Satire sotadique de Luisa Sigea de Tolede.* The latter includes, at the end, an annotated bibliography of all of the editions that precede it. Pia notes that Dutch editions of both works circulated in all of the European cities with prosperous book markets (1959, xl).

L'Escole des filles

L'Escole des filles is probably the best-known example of explanatory pornography, as evidenced by how often it is mentioned in writings of the time.[17] Ruth Larson has examined the extent to which it invoked the traditional topos of feminine education and participated in the seventeenth-century debate known as the *querelle des femmes*. Parodying the debate, it proposed "a blatantly sexual curriculum for young girls in place of the religious or moral education promoted by religious pedagogues" (1993, 504). She concludes that the text's subversive quality comes mainly from its use of the shock value of sexual explicitness to question the lack of female sexual education and advocate recognition of women's desires.[18]

Joan DeJean argues that the work is "completely without philosophical implications" and "unrelieved by any signs of what modern readers would understand as truly threatening forms of . . . subversion" (1993, 116), but she underestimates the philosophical basis of the text's representation of female desire, which might be read as subversive by contemporary and modern readers alike. The formal juxtaposition of the openly salacious or titillating with the ultimately serious results in a discursive and tonal tension or ambiguity, evidence of the text's main subversive impulse and the crux of its positive potential.[19] Such tension is evident from the very beginning of *L'Escole des filles*. For example, the juxtaposition of the exhaustive table of contents, which enumerates in explicit detail the materials covered, with the dedication, which calls the work "A letter of invitation to young ladies" (Épistre invitatoire aux filles) and states that it is intended to teach women all that they need to know to please their husbands (pour contenter vos maris), combines the instructional with the salacious. The rhetorical implications of this structure are important, for the serious, quasi-scientific nature of the work and its "vulgar" pornographic characteristics debunk one another.[20] In the table of contents, the language itself signals both this

[17] Foxon 1965 notes the existence of another version of *L'Escole des filles* and maintains that *The School of Venus, or the Ladies Delight Reduced to the Rules of Practice* (1688) is a translation of the original edition. He also mentions that there are two other similarly titled but distinct works in English: *The School of Venus; or, Cupid Restored to Sight* (1715) and *The School of Venus; or, The Lady's Miscellany* (second edition 1739).

[18] For related studies of the ingénue in seventeenth-century French literature, see Knutson 1976; Gutwirth 1982; and Johnson 1982, all cited by Larson (1993, 505).

[19] DeJean is right, however, in noting the lack of blasphemy, corruption, or perversion—elements that become commonplace in subsequent pornography.

[20] Genuine sex manuals of the early modern period were few. Stone 1977 mentions two popular ones: Ovid's *The Art of Love* and *Aristotle's Masterpiece of the Secrets of Generation* (not by Aristotle). The vague and imprecise nature of these and other similar texts made them

ambiguity of intent and the related contradiction in the ideologies behind the work. A small sample will suffice for illustration:

- How men talk about girls during their absence.
- How the boy inserts his yard in her cunny and the pleasure which the girl receives from this.
- A discussion of mounting and the various ways of riding, as well as others which can be imagined.
- Conditions essential for conception to take place, adapted from the most learned theories of medical men. Pregnancy easy to avoid. An exhortation to girls to go ahead and enjoy themselves.
- Other things necessary for pregnancy to occur. Remedies against these.
- Definition of love.
- Moral and social reflection on this century's malice and ignorance in openly condemning the pleasures of love, while secretly approving them . . .
- Whether the man or the woman derives most pleasure from intercourse.
- Why it is wrong to toy with girls. (70–80)[21]

(- En quels termes les hommes parlent des filles en leur absence.
- Comment fait le garçon pour pousser le vit dans le con, et du plaisir que la fille en reçoit.
- Qu'est-ce que foutre, et les diverses façons de chevaucher, et de celles qu'on peut s'imaginer d'avantage.
- Circonstance nécessaire pour engrosser, tirée de la plus subtil doctrine des médecins, facile à éviter, avec une exhortation aux filles à passer par dessus et à se bien divertir.
- Autres particularités pour engrosser et les remèdes de contraire ou contre icelles.
- Definition de l'amour.
- Réflexion morale et civile sur la malice et l'ignorance de ce siècle, qui condamne les plaisirs d'amour ouvertement, et les approuve en secret . . .

---

useless for readers seeking specific technical advice on foreplay or intercourse. As Stone notes, those in search of such information had to resort to pornographic texts in French or, later, in English (495). As the following analysis demonstrates, *L'Escole des filles* thoroughly fulfills this much-needed didactic role; nevertheless, at the time there remained a certain difficulty in absolutely separating medical literature from pornography, as the confusion was purposely fostered for legal and commercial reasons. Porter 1988 discusses a few specific texts that "explored the undertones of medicine as a comprehensive double entendre or euphemism for sexual activity" (208, see also nn. 18 and 19).

[21] Unless otherwise noted, English citations from *L'Escole* are from Donald Thomas's translation, *The School of Venus* (1971).

I Qui prend plus de plaisir à chevaucher de l'homme ou de la femme.
I Qu'il fait mauvais se jouer aux filles & pourquoy. [lii–lx])

The juxtaposition of words such as "con," "vit," "foutre," and "chevaucher" with "doctrine des médecins," "definition de l'amour," and "réflexion morale et civile" blurs the distinction between erotic and didactic discourses. On the one hand, the topics of the dialogues testify to the didactic nature of the book and to the social criticism it implies; on the other hand, the rhetoric appeals to prurient interest, employing vulgar rather than scientific terminology.

The dedication's allusion to the dangers of female ignorance furthers the ambiguity, as it tries both to convince women to make themselves sexually available to men and to warn them of the danger of sexual exploitation, implying that if women do not know about sex, they are vulnerable to men's sexual will and may unknowingly make themselves available. Likewise, the irony of the author's insistence that knowledge of these subjects is essential for women and not meant to corrupt them—"I should like to think as well, my beauties, that in this School you will select only such instruction as is appropriate to you" (67) (aussi je veux croire, mes belles, qu'en ceste Escole vous prendrez seulement les choses qui vous sont propres [xlvii])—both titillates (the tone of "mes belles" suggests the likelihood that women readers will indeed be corrupted) and promises practical advice for preserving female virtue.

Such ambiguity effectively challenges late twentieth-century assumptions about the way pornography represents women, including the notion that the representation of female desire from a male perspective necessarily constitutes the female as object. The tension between the didactic frame and the pornographic text of the dialogues underlines the fact that there is no positive proof that pornography was originally a genre by men for men. As Hunt puts it, "the gendering of porn is still up for debate" (1993b, 344, n. 42).[22] Before the actual dialogues begin, a plot summary does present them as being in the service of male desire, explaining that Robinet has fallen in love with Fanchon, a young virgin who is too innocent to understand what he means by his assiduous visits. He asks Susanne, Fanchon's cousin and an experienced woman, to tell her what sex is and persuade her to have sex with him. Within the dialogues themselves, however, the concern with female pleasure repeatedly takes precedence over male satisfaction.

[22] Hunt maintains, however, that "the social context for the consumption of pornography was most often a masculine one . . . even though pornographic prints seemed to have been aimed at women and men alike" (1993a, 41). See also Goulemot 1991.

In the first dialogue, before Fanchon has any sexual experience, Susanne explains the pleasures of love and attempts to persuade her to try it. The text's ploys for arousing the reader notwithstanding, the dialogue truly is didactic, making this work a veritable manual of sex education. The author takes no knowledge for granted and has Susanne describe and name everything in detail: male and female sexual organs (37, 38), copulation (38, 39), and orgasm (44, 45). Most importantly, as the work unfolds it becomes increasingly clear that, despite the framing situation, the women characters are openly concerned with their sexual pleasure and are not passive objects of male desire. Susanne continually represents sex to Fanchon as something intended to please women especially; men, she suggests, are simply the instruments of that pleasure:

> The gentlemen are handsome, married, or at any rate of an age to be married, eager to please women. Paris is full of them. The ladies are either married women or widows who are still good-looking and generally of some standing in society. It's to their homes that the gentlemen come to give them this pleasure. (87) (Les messieurs, ce sont des personnes bien faits, mariés ou d'âge pour l'être, qui cherchent à donner le plaisir aux femmes, & Paris en est tout plein; & les dames sont les femmes mariées ou veuves, qui sont encore belles, & la plupart de grande condition, à qui ces messieurs viennent donner ce plaisir chez elles. [36])

It should be reiterated that this focus on women's pleasure is a pervasive convention of the pornographic literature of the time, and readers of the genre would have encountered it repeatedly.[23] Based on the belief that pornography "recommends certain [i.e., misogynistic] forms of human behavior" (Miller 1986, 328), present-day antipornography critics would probably argue that this emphasis on women's pleasure was merely a rhetorical strategy meant to persuade women to accept men's sexual advances or a device for arousing male readers. However, based on the same assumption, one might just as well argue that it influenced the attitudes of readers of both sexes in a positive way, creating high expectations for women and, for men, a desire to please.

More importantly, in *L'Escole des filles* the valorization of female pleasure is accompanied by a representation of women as sexual subjects. The women characters are far from passive or overwhelmed by male power: even though Robinet asks Susanne to prepare Fanchon for him, the older

[23] *Venus in the Cloister, The Wandering Whore,* and *The Whores Rhetoric* all contain specific scenes that stress the rights of women to seek sexual satisfaction.

woman, who knows her own pleasure, seizes the opportunity to make the younger one aware of hers as well. This discrepancy is discursively enacted, furthering the rhetorical ambivalence of the text. For example, the passage in which Susanne tells Fanchon that she should look for beauty in her lovers actually inverts the notion of the woman as the sexual object: "the girl herself receives just as much pleasure when all the most desirable qualities are united in the man who caresses her. . . . A man's beauty consists in having a good figure and in his physical strength. . . . I should like the man to be . . . thin rather than fat, dark, his hair long to give him elegance, with locks reaching to his shoulders" (176) (le plaisir n'est pas moindre pur la fille quand toutes les qualitez requises se rencontrent en celuy qui la caresse. . . . La beauté de l'homme consiste en la belle taille et en la force du corps. . . . Je veux pourtant qu'il soit . . . un peu plus maigre que gras, son poil soit noir et vif, ses cheveux longs pour la bonne grâce, et bouclez sur les espaules [159–60]). The subversive potential of these representations of the women characters as subjects actively pursuing sexual satisfaction is undeniable. And, despite the moments when the penis is glorified and represented as the main source of pleasure for both women and men, there are several instances in which Robinet accommodates his desire to Fanchon's. Moreover, although heterosexual sex is always central, the text presents masturbation as an alternative for women who wish to experience sexual enjoyment without male intervention. When Fanchon asks what such women can do, Susanne describes different masturbatory methods, concluding that sex is natural and women must be satisfied, even without men (123–25).

The work's critique of sexism and double standards is quite explicit and increases its polemic defense of women as erotic agents. Fanchon questions Susanne about the dangers of sex, especially pregnancy and the social ostracism faced by women who have lost their virginity. Susanne's answer denounces the double standard and urges women to rebel against it and to seek their pleasure; to lose one's virginity before marriage, she says, is no more than "a tiny peccadillo created by the jealousy of the male sex because they want their women to belong only to them" (98) (une petite pecatule que la jalousie des hommes a introduite au monde, à cause qu'ils veulent des femmes qui ne soient qu'à eux seuls [54]). In any case, Fanchon should ignore the prejudice because it is possible to hide from husbands that one has had sex before and, at any rate, they do it too: "men do it . . . but in the case of women they've made it a question of honor, in order to keep us in continual subjection to men" (99) ([ils] font tout de même . . . mais pour les femmes ils y ont attaché un certain point d'honneur, afin de les tenir tout court en crainte devant eux [54]). As the first dialogue

unfolds, Susanne continues to assert her subjectivity: she narrates the details of a night with her lover, describing to Fanchon several ways to have sex and offering profuse details testifying to her delight. By the end of the dialogue, Fanchon is convinced that sex is "a difficult art to learn" (un art dificile à apprendre [75]), but she is also eager to try it and decides to have sex with Robinet, the man whom she prefers among all her male acquaintances.

Women's understanding and pursuit of their own sexual pleasure remains the focus into the second dialogue. Here, however, it is Fanchon's sexual subjectivity that emerges, as she tells of her experiences with Robinet. At one point, she describes an instance of hasty sex during which she asserted her desire: "he finished before I did, and as he wanted to withdraw, I stopped him and asked him to wait until I was done"[24] (il eut plustost fait que moy, et comme il voulut se retirer, je le retins et le priay d'attendre que j'eusse fait aussi [101–2]). The rest of her narrative repeatedly emphasizes her "si grand plaisir" as well (129). The remainder of the second dialogue continues to juxtapose the salacious with the philosophical and political: descriptions of masturbation and different techniques for kissing and a sexually suggestive summary are designed to maintain a degree of arousal in the reader, at the same time that a philosophical discussion of the nature of men and women, love, and social attitudes toward sex and pregnancy asks readers to question some of the views of women and sex that perpetuate masculine hegemony.[25] *L'Escole des filles* is thus as much sex manual and social commentary as it is pornography, since the passages specifically intended to cause sexual arousal also undermine readers' identification with attitudes that deny women sexual subjectivity.

Indeed, the preface represents sex as a skill to be learned. The author urges married ladies to read on because many of them know so little about sex that they still experience it as disagreeable:

> There are always some of you who bring dishonor on your sex, and it is a shame to see such beautiful creatures, tall and well-shaped as they are, nonetheless, as a result of bad teaching . . . lying stock-still in bed under the most stimulating stroking, responding coldly to the warmest caresses, and lacking the courage to say what they feel. The problem is that they did not have the theory before the practice. (116)

[24] My translation; this passage is not included in Thomas's translation of *The School of Venus*.

[25] In the introduction to his English translation of the work, Thomas stresses the "great degree of philosophizing about love" in the French original, adding that this disappeared from the eighteenth-century English adaptation (1971, 20).

> (Mais il y en a toujours quelques-unes entre vous qui font déshonneur à leur sexe, et c'est une honte de les voir ainsi belles, grandes, et si bien formées qu'elles sont, néanmoins, pour avoir ésté mal instruites . . . se tenir immobiles au lict comme des souches aux plus vifs attouchements, ne respondre que froidement aux plus chaudes caresses qui leur sont faites, et n'avoir pas l'esprit de dire seulement ce qu'elles sentent. La faute vient sans doute de ce qu'elles n'ont pas eu la théorie avant la pratique. [57])

Much like the dialogue itself, this preface both offers a critique of the way women learn about sex—or, rather, do not learn about it—and argues that women's ignorance of their sexuality stands in the way of their pleasure and prevents them from becoming full sexual subjects. The intended audience is, ostensibly, female, and even though there is no documentation of a protofeminist reception of this work (or others of its kind), there is evidence that some women did find and read the book, despite the stigma attached to pornography and the secrecy around its trade.[26]

The dedication of the book to women younger and older is relevant in two ways. First, in explicitly addressing women, it figures them as potential sexual subjects, recognizing the possibility of female agency and desire. Second, for a male audience, it may have a didactic rhetorical function: without directly criticizing them, it alerts men to the need to consider women's pleasure in matters of sex.[27] From a feminist point of view, the explicit address of women not only raises men's consciousness of women's sexual needs but also posits the very existence of female desire.[28] *L'Escole*

[26] In *Passions between Women*, Emma Donaghue stresses that "it has often been assumed on slim evidence that women did not read erotica" (14) and argues persuasively that women likely did read these texts. More concrete evidence to support this hypothesis can be found in Pia's introduction to the 1959 edition of *L'Escole des filles*, where he notes that the book was in fact read by ladies of the French court: "The ladies in waiting of Mme. la Dauphine passed *L'Escole des filles* among themselves, to the displeasure of their governess, the marquise de Montchevreuil, who was afraid of being blamed for the shamelessness of her pupils" (my translation) (Les demoiselles d'honneur de Mme. la Dauphine se passaient *L'Escole des filles* de main en main, au mécontentement de leur gouvernante, la marquise de Montchevreuil, qui redoutait de s'entendre reprocher le dévergondage de ses pupilles [xli]).

[27] Juliet Flemming argues that the practice of addressing a text specifically to women both strengthens the male homosocial bond and signals displaced "print anxiety" (1993, 165). Although her argument does not consider the works discussed here, it offers evidence of the prevalence of this type of rhetorical posture in the early modern period.

[28] The connections between the representation of sex in these works and the actual sexual practices of readers cannot be fully determined, but it is probable that the texts exerted some influence. Lawrence Stone (1992) looks to the pornographic books in circulation, including the ones I analyze here, for evidence of the specific sexual practices of the subjects of his case

des filles thus connects sexual energy to a critique of traditional gender expectations in a way that denaturalizes notions of women as sexually passive, combats the ignorance in which they are kept, and attacks sexual codes that would repress their pleasure, while at the same time arousing the reader. The formal juxtaposition of issues of particular importance to women, such as pregnancy and sexual double standards, with arousing images and appeals to male and female readers' sexual imagination, suggests with remarkable clarity the rhetorical complexity of the feminine in such pornography.

Recent theory stresses the significance of such complexity. Noting that the term "female" has become as unstable and unfixed as the term "women," Judith Butler points out that sex, as much as gender, is always already interpreted by culture (1990b, 8). Reading *L'Escole des filles* with this insight in mind illuminates the need to go beyond a foundational, not to mention binary, notion of sex to expose the instability of the text's notion of woman, as well as the way it facilitates a reading practice that seizes the subversive potential of the "incoherences" of the representations.

Satyra sotadica

The other classic of the genre, Nicolas Chorier's *Satyra sotadica* (1660), offers even greater complexity in its treatment of the feminine.[29] Like *L'Escole des filles* and a number of other pornographic texts of the time, Chorier's work tells a story of female sexual awakening in the form of a dialogue in which an older, more experienced woman teaches a younger one about sex.[30] Initially, the situation is fairly similar to that in *L'Escole des filles:* Ottavia is engaged to be married and knows nothing about sex. Her married

---

study. The main sexual practices of the group Stone analyzes are flagellation and voyeurism, which are both present in *Venus in the Cloister* and *The School of Venus*. "Thanks to the distribution of pornographic works," he writes, "there was widespread knowledge that some men and women found sexual stimulation in whipping and being whipped" (522–23). His inference that what his subjects "did not do" was also influenced by pornography is less convincing: he claims that they did not engage in anal sex or in lesbian sex; however, there are scenes of lesbian sex in *Venus in the Cloister, L'Escole des filles,* and *The Dialogues,* and anal sex is discussed in the *Dialogues,* albeit negatively.

[29] While there were several translations and adaptations of the Latin text, the only extant English edition is the 1740 one, which has been severely abridged and "made much more innocent" (Foxon 1965, 41; Donaghue 1993, 198). French editions are by far the most accurate and the most numerous, and for this essay, I used a 1959 edition. For detailed bibliographic information on Chorier, see André Berry's bibliography in this edition (1959, 2:235–44).

[30] Other instances of this mode can be found in *Venus in the Cloister, The Wandering Whore,* and *The Whores Rhetoric.*

cousin Tullia instructs her in every detail, from the size and position of the sexual organs to the experiences of defloration and orgasm (1:25–36). Here again, the focus on female pleasure is pronounced. For example, when Tullia narrates the events of her wedding night, she mentions the concern of her husband, Callias, for her pleasure: "Didst thou partake of my pleasure?" (64) (Est-ce que tu as partagé ma volupté? [1:55]), he asks her.[31] When she denies having had any pleasure, he attempts different ways to please her until she reaches orgasm: "I feel . . . alas! what is this that I feel, dear Callias?" (65) (Et moi je sens . . . ah mais! qu'est-ce que je sens donc, mon Callias? [1:55]). Given the connection between the explicit representation of a sexual practice and its legitimation (see, e.g., Foucault 1978, 49; de Lauretis 1994, 75), these kinds of representations of women's assertion of pleasure are important to the construction of a discourse on sex that does accord subjectivity to women. Following Tullia's example, Ottavia, on her own wedding night, eventually asserts her desire and takes the initiative (1:94). When, after having an orgasm, she appears embarrassed for openly showing pleasure, her husband reassures her: "Thou art swimming up to thy navel in pleasure. Good, my pleasure, good, I say. . . . I am exceedingly glad that thou art filled to overflowing with these joys. Speak frankly" (112–13) (Tu nages à plein ventre dans la volupté. Tant mieux, mon amour, tans mieux. . . . Je trouve une joie violente à savoir que ces joies t'ont outre-comblée. Parle librement [1:95]). If Teresa de Lauretis is right that "sexuality is produced, rather than repressed, by the proliferation of discourses about it" (1994, 75), then these pornographic texts reveal much about women and sex in the early modern period. I argue here that the *Satyra sotadica*'s discursive enactment of female desire and pleasure both represents and contributes to a construction of early modern sexuality and gender that—antipornography arguments notwithstanding—seems to have plenty of room for women as sexual subjects.

Historical context helps explain the centrality of the figuration of female pleasure as a natural and necessary component of sex. It was in the late eighteenth century that women's sexual organs were seen to have their own function and specificity: "The hierarchical model that held sway from ancient times until the eighteenth century . . . interpreted the female body as merely an inferior and inverted version of the male body, all of the women's reproductive organs simply underdeveloped homologues of male organs" (Gallagher and Laqueur 1987, viii). As a result, it was assumed that

[31] Unless otherwise noted, English translations are from *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, literally translated from the Latin of Nicolas Chorier by an unidentified translator (Chorier 1951). Sentences identified as my translations do not appear in this English version.

"female orgasm, just like male orgasm, was necessary for generation and that orgasm derived from pleasurable stimulation" (viii). By the late eighteenth century, theories of spontaneous ovulation had definitively done away with "the old physiology of pleasure" (Laqueur 1987, 27) and thus with the valuation of female orgasm; Chorier's text, however, written in 1660, reflects the earlier thinking. A particularly revealing instance of this valuation occurs during Tullia's wedding night: having had sex several times and moving from experiencing only pain to feeling "an extremely intense tickling, such as I had never imagined" (my translation) (un très vif chatouillement, tel que je n'en avais jamais imaginé [1:59]), Tullia unequivocally achieves orgasm: "At that moment a delicious shower poured into me, and at the same time I felt myself melting likewise . . . with so great and so incredible a pleasure" (65) (Enfin, je me sentis inondée de semence jusqu'au fond de la poche, en même temps que je rendais je ne sais quoi, qui me procurait le chatouillement le plus délicieux [1:59]). Excitedly, her husband observes, "this time, with no doubt whatsoever, my dear soul, you have conceived" (my translation) (cette fois, sans aucun doute, ma chère âme, tu as conçu [1:60]).

Although Chorier's text undeniably has misogynist elements, the rhetorical construction of female sexual subjectivity ultimately helps to mitigate the underlying misogyny. The preponderant phallocentrism is hard to miss. Lise Leibacher-Ouvrard, for example, has noted "the anxious phallocentrism of the sometimes violent pleasures the text describes" (le phallocentrisme anxieux des voluptés parfois violentes qu[e le texte] décrit [1992, 267]). However, the text follows libertine principles and represents everyone as deceitful, life as a process of dissimulation, and "honesty [as] a strategy" (Torquato Accetto, quoted by Leibacher-Ouvrard 1992, 271).[32] It rhetorically encourages readers to question its own representations and thus destabilizes its surface phallocentrism. Leibacher-Ouvrard herself suggests that the principle of simulation destabilizes the ostensible meanings both of the violence of feminine sexual initiation—"the very violence of the girls' apprenticeship of love looks, *a posteriori,* like an amusing simulation" (la violence même de l'apprentissage des filles à l'amour prend, *a posteriori* l'aspect d'une simulation ludique)—and of virginity itself: "virgins are not absolutely pure and know how to simulate prudery" (les vierges ne sont pas absolument pures et savent "simuler la pudeur" [273]).

Four rhetorical elements are central to the text's construction of gendered subjectivity and its disruption of readers' conventional identification processes: assertion of pleasure, transgressive sexuality, voyeurism, and

[32] The deceit trope is also central to *Venus in the Cloister* and *The Whores Rhetoric.*

transgender identification. These elements contribute to a textual destabilization of the equation of male with subject and female with object. By extension, any regulatory perspectives or interpretations that readers bring to the text are challenged, as is the larger binary frame that typically foregrounds even homosexual discourses on sex/gender.[33]

In the first four dialogues of the *Satyra sotadica,* the assertion of pleasure is centered in women's acquisition of sexual experience. As Roger Thompson stresses, descriptions of defloration are central, and male sexual pleasure is equated with assaulting and conquering.[34] But far from representing male sexual pleasure as dominant, the text systematically explores the pleasure of the women. At the very beginning, Tullia, the experienced woman, introduces Ottavia to sex: by staging a scene of seduction, she prepares the younger woman to attain her sexuality. Tullia first plays the role of subject, seducing Ottavia herself: "How I should like ye would grant me the power of playing the role of Caviceo" (15) (Comme je voudrais que vous me permissiez de remplir l'office de Caviceo [1:12]). And although Ottavia declares, "I am well aware that no pleasure can accrue to thee from a maiden as I am, nor to me from thee either" (16) (d'une vierge comme moi on ne peut tirer aucune volupté, et . . . je n'en puis prendre davantage de toi [1:14]), her words contradict the situation that the text depicts. Only a moment later, in a discursive acknowledgment of her desire for Tullia, Ottavia tells her: "I should like thou wert Caviceo. How gladly would I then lay before thee all the fineries of my person" (18–19) (Lorsque je te voi si jeune et si savante, je voudrais que tu fusses Caviceo. Avec quel plaisir je te livrerais les trésors de ma beauté [1:16]). She ends up confessing her desire: "thy garden is setting mine on fire" (20) (ton jardin met le feu au mien [1:17]). By trying to reconcile the characters' assertions that women can give no pleasure to women (a notion that would prevent male anxiety) with a representation of their sexual pleasure together (a situation designed to promote readers' arousal), this scene, like most other early modern scenes of sex between women, both represents female sexual transgression and seeks to repress it. The irony that results signals, even as it tries to suppress, the possibility of female homosexuality. Ultimately, it is a crucial example of how the text betrays its ideological underpinnings.

Even more significantly, though, lesbianism, in this dialogue, suggests

[33] See Butler 1990b, 19 and de Lauretis 1994, 139 for discussions of this notion.

[34] Thompson, who has interpreted early modern pornographic texts as showing an "underlying contempt for women" (1979, 12), calls the *Satyra sotadica* "anti-feminist" because, he maintains, it emphasizes male brutality. He cites the size of the penises and the frequency of scenes of defloration as examples (33).

the "figuration of a female desiring subjectivity" (de Lauretis 1994, xvii) that seems to be extendable to a heterosexual erotics as well.[35] Indeed, de Lauretis's appropriation of Freudian sexuality for her model of lesbian desire suggests that it may also be possible to recast traditional accounts of female (hetero)sexuality in a way that acknowledges female desire. In fact, de Lauretis writes, "perverse desire might be usefully considered in relation to male homosexuality or even to forms of sexuality that appear to be heterosexual but are not so in the normative or reproductive way" (xiv). I contend, then, that the dialogues' representations of multiple forms of sexuality that are neither normative nor reproductive allow readers to begin to imagine a model of female desire. When, for example, in dialogue five Tullia instructs Ottavia on how to seek pleasures other than the ones her husband can provide, her enunciation of female desire contributes to the production of a larger discourse of female sexual subjectivity: "We are all, good and bad alike, lured unto pleasure by the same sentiment" (134) (Toutes tant que nous sommes, nous aspirons, d'un même désir, à la volupté [1:113]). Tullia speaks here of all women, and her movement from the particular to the general lends her contentions theoretical—rather than merely descriptive—force.

In dialogues five and six, the rhetorical attempt to reconcile the figuration of female sexual transgression with what Butler has termed the "binary regulation of sexuality" (1990b, 19) all but collapses. As women's assertions of their pleasure become more openly connected with representations of their sexuality as transgressive, the model of female desire that emerges directly challenges regulatory representational and reading practices.[36] Indeed, Tullia's and Ottavia's desire for each other is increasingly affirmed. Despite Ottavia's earlier protests that no pleasure could come of

[35] De Lauretis speculates that "the seductiveness of lesbianism for feminism lies in the former's figuration of a female desiring subjectivity to which all women may accede by virtue of their 'homosexual' relation to the mother" (1994, xvii). I use the term "lesbian" for these encounters despite the anachronism, following Emma Donaghue (1993) and Carolyn Woodward (1993), who defines as lesbian "any desire for intimate connection between women" (845). While I am aware of critiques of feminists' excessive reliances on "lesbianism," I believe there are grounds for interpreting the "sapphic" undertones of these scenes as potentially subversive—even if they turn out to be instances of what de Lauretis has called "the representation of desire heterosexually conceived, even as it is attributed to a woman for another" (1994, 110). Indeed, although I would not argue that Chorier's *Dialogues* "represent a homosexual-lesbian desire" (de Lauretis 1994, 110), Donaghue analyzes specific scenes of this work in her study of the literary representation of lesbianism in the period.

[36] This rhetorical progression can be found in other early modern pornographic works as well: both *Venus in the Cloister* and *The Wandering Whore* contain analogous scenes. Apparently, such complex representations of lesbian sex were typical of the genre at the time.

sex between women, and despite Tullia's praise of heterosexual intercourse, as the story develops and they repeatedly have sex with each other, they always have orgasms. Moreover, it becomes increasingly apparent that Tullia truly prefers women, that Ottavia enjoys sex with Tullia as well, and that both seek sexual pleasure regardless of its source. This kind of "sapphism" was far more transgressive and threatening to patriarchy than isolated homosexual acts (Trumbach 1991a).[37] Thus, even though the women are depicted as heterosexuals engaging in lesbian acts (as are most "lesbian" scenes in twentieth-century heterosexual pornography), the "sapphic" nature of the sex scenes—underscoring the plural manifestations of female desire and indeed figuring female desire at all—threatens male sexual hegemony. The result is an ambiguity that suffuses the subsequent scenes of heterosexual initiation and facilitates a questioning of the gender binary.[38]

Even though female sexual transgression is coupled, in these last two dialogues, with an undercurrent of misogyny that, it might be argued, threatens the emergence of female sexual subjectivity, the representations of women's sexual assertiveness and transgression suggest that the women may have been dissimulating to serve their own desires. For example, in the group sex scenes, in which Tullia and Ottavia engage with multiple male partners, the women are presented, initially, as victims: they protest that they are ashamed, that they do not have the strength to resist, and that they are overwhelmed. That they ultimately let themselves be persuaded appears to invite readers to adopt the (stereotypical) male belief that women enjoy being forced into sex. However, both in the case of Tullia's experience with four men in Rome and in the case of Ottavia's experience with Tullia's lover and his male friend, readers know that the women have arranged the encounters in advance and have specifically anticipated the pleasures of transgressive, adulterous sex with multiple partners. Tullia, in a clear case of gender-role reversal, asks a friend, Dame Orsini, to set up her encounters through a procuress. Knowing this, rather

[37] As in his earlier study of male sodomites (1989), Randolph Trumbach (1991a) studies the evidence for an early modern notion of the sapphist. He maintains that if women "enacted their sodomitical desires within the rules of patriarchal domination" (114), they were not seen as threats to the gender status quo. Since historical evidence shows that most women who had sex with women also had sex with men, penetration of a female by another female was the main measure of the transgression; however, preference for women to the exclusion of men was also likely to cause consternation.

[38] Even in contemporary pornography, of course, lesbian scenes are not exclusively material for men's arousal. See, e.g., Williams 1989, esp. 256. While I agree with Lillian Faderman's argument that the explicit treatment of lesbianism in eighteenth-century literature was meant to arouse male readers (1981, 38–46), I believe that it betrayed more anxiety about both women's and men's sexuality than she suggests.

than seeing the women as sexual victims or passive objects, readers are likely to attribute the women's protestations to the conventional roles that they are expected to play: the women enact virtue because "honourable is what honourable seems" (262) (ce qui est honnête, c'est ce qui semble l'être [2:52]). They need merely *appear* honorable. In the end, the text emphasizes the two women's thorough enjoyment of their power over the men: as Tullia tells Ottavia, "every woman with a judicious mind should hold for certain that she was born for her husband's pleasure, and that all other men were born for hers" (137) (toute femme dont le coeur est bien placé doit tenir pour certain qu'elle a été créée pour les plaisirs de son mari, et que les autres hommes ont été créés pour les siens [1:115]). In the explicit, transgressive, non-normative female sexual practices that it depicts, the text continues to challenge the regulatory binary model of sexuality.

The *Dialogues* also invoke interrelated representations of voyeurism and cross-gender identification in its construction of female sexual subjectivity. Laura Mulvey has theorized the gaze as always male and female cross-gender identification as always having negative consequences for women, a view that other feminists have since complicated.[39] De Lauretis, most notably, has explored the kinds of identification available to women spectators as well as the importance of narrative and narrativity to the effort to shift the terms of representation (1984; 1987, 107–25, esp. 113 and 109; 1994). Mary Ann Doane too has insisted on the need to focus analyses on the "representation of spectatorship" (1989, 142–47) and to attend to "the instability of the woman's position as spectator" (1987, 19). I draw on the work of these critics to help clarify the functions of voyeurism and identification in the narrative of the *Dialogues*. I argue that the text's representations of desire challenge the idea that agency and the gaze are neces-

[39] Mulvey uses Freud's analysis of the structures of looking to uncover the phallocentric premises of the pleasure afforded by the conventional cinematic situation (1975). Her later work concentrates on the female spectator but, because she still maintains that "in-built patterns of pleasure and identification impose masculinity as point of view" (1989, 29), she analyzes and describes the process of identification of only the female spectator who accepts masculinization. Based on Freud's claim that femininity emerges "out of a crucial period of parallel development between the sexes," she argues that the female spectator can identify with the male cinematic subject, accepting "masculinization" and refusing the model of "correct" femininity, because of that early "active" (and for Freud "masculine" or "phallic") phase in which the female child identifies with the masculine (30). This identification is sometimes paralleled, she claims, by a similar process for the female protagonist, in which the narrative structure demands a trans-sexual identification that is never without negative consequences. The narrative drama, in this view, always dooms the female protagonist's resistance to "correct" femininity. As a result, "the female spectator's fantasy of masculinisation [is] at cross-purposes with itself, restless in its transvestite clothes" (Mulvey 1989, 36–37).

sarily male, facilitate the process of male trans-sex identification, and emphasize the emergence of a specifically female sexual subjectivity.

The text of the *Dialogues* typically translates its outspoken concern with female pleasure into a construction of the pleasure of looking that is much more often female than male. For example, in dialogue two, Ottavia lies undressed in Tullia's bed while Tullia looks closely at her body, touching it and voicing her pleasure at seeing its secrets displayed (12–13). In dialogue three, the two women gaze on one another's bodies. First, Tullia asks for the pleasure of looking at Ottavia: "I long to thoroughly scrutinize these things with steadfast gaze" (33) (Allons, je brule de plonger mes regards curieux dans toutes ces belles choses [28]), she says. Then, she offers Ottavia the pleasure of looking at her—a pleasure that she can share: "Here it is, inspect, view, explore. . . . Examine everything closely. It will be of use to thee as well as a pleasure for me" (35–36) (La voici, regarde, examine, explore. . . . Regarde tout minutieusement. Cela te sera bien utile, à moi bien doux [30]). As Linda Williams has argued, when the woman looks, she expresses desires of her own (1984, 83).

In these two instances, both scopophilia and exhibitionism are pleasures specifically attributed to women, and the reader/spectator has only a woman subject of desire with whom to identify. When Tullia's position as the subject of desire is reversed and she becomes the object of Ottavia's gaze, there is no male occupying the classically masculine, active subject position available for reader identification. Thus, although the text depicts a scenario of desire, the "phantasy of 'action'" (Mulvey 1989, 37) does not require women to undergo trans-sex identification and suggests that the reader is being addressed as simultaneously female and a desiring subject.[40]

One could object that, in displaying the women's bodies to the reader's gaze, the text does not destabilize the equation of active with male and therefore does not actually address the reader as female. However, because the narrative process constantly facilitates identification with Tullia or Ottavia, and because their positions shift between active and passive, subject and object, at the very least it complicates the sexual and gender binarism that equates male/female biological sex with masculine/feminine and active/passive positions. In the first dialogue, for example, Ottavia narrates her fiancé's frustrated attempt at having sex with her. Because Tullia's voyeuristic pleasure is ostensibly presented without narrative mediation (that is, in her own voice), identification with an active figure entails

[40] I do not mean lesbian desire per se, despite the textual representation of desire between women. See de Lauretis 1994 (113–17) for an important distinction between heterosexual and homosexual representations of homosexuality.

identification with a woman. As Ottavia describes how Caviceo handled her body, the active pleasure more immediately represented is not Caviceo's but Tullia's. Even for readers who identify with Ottavia's passive, conventionally feminine figure, the process entails pleasure. The text therefore accomplishes what could be called a disruption of male heterosexual hegemony (Butler 1990b, 17).

Similarly, the scenes of heterosexual marital sex (mostly scenes of defloration in which pleasure is associated with the active, the dominant, and certainly the phallic) suggest this sort of complication of the sexual and gender binary as well. The collusion of the narrative content and the textual figuration of a woman voyeur has a peculiar effect on the process of identification and destabilizes the binaries. In dialogue four, when Tullia narrates the events of her wedding night, she becomes what Mulvey would call an erotic object on two levels: first for Ottavia, who is the diegetic voyeur, and for the reader, who is also a voyeur (and thus potentially identifies with the watching woman in the text). Ottavia, as a female voyeur, proceeds from scopophilia to narcissism. Indeed, on a second level her pleasure comes from what Mulvey terms "the identification of the ego with the object" and from her "fascination with and recognition of her like" (Mulvey 1975, 10). It is obvious that she not only desires but also identifies with Tullia when she describes her response to Tullia's narrative: "Thou killest me with this conversation. Behold me dying in the anticipation of so much pleasure" (65) (Tu m'assassines avec un tel récit. Dans l'attente d'un plaisir si grand, je me sens mourir [1:55–56]). The scenario problematizes the conventional notions of sex, gender, and desire since both figures available for reader identification are women and there is no exclusive or stable correspondence between female biological sex and a passive feminine gender position.[41]

Within the *Dialogues,* this trope recurs at another point in the narrative, when Tullia describes how her husband Callias puts on a performance specifically for the benefit of her mother and her friend Pomponia, thus becoming an object of their gaze: Callias "called back Pomponia as she was going downstairs. 'I wish thou thyself to be a witness.' . . . And, while she was standing looking on, he jumped upon me" (69) (appelle Pomponia qui s'éloignait. "Je veux, petite soeur . . . que tu sois toi-même témoin." . . . Devant elle il sauta sur moi [1:59]). Because Pomponia had been to Tullia what Tullia is now to Ottavia—teacher and lover—the scene sug-

[41] Significantly, similar issues of female voyeurism are present in *Venus in the Cloister* and *The Wandering Whore,* and these conclusions may be extended to a larger body of early modern pornography.

gests that one of the active pleasures being represented is hers, as she watches her former lover and Callias together. In this instance there are two active positions available for readers to identify with, one of them the woman voyeur. Because, as Mulvey contends, "the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification" (1975, 11), and because Callias, as much as Ottavia, is the object of Pomponia's gaze, the text's construction of gender is substantially ambiguous and renders a regulatory reading somewhat tricky.

In dialogue five, when Ottavia narrates the events of her wedding night, a similar process has Tullia fantasizing the pleasure of looking even as she listens: "What sweeter lot can be mine than that of becoming a partaker of the pleasures with which thou art englutted? Thou wilt by this description of thine infuse a part of these raptures into my soul, without in the least lessening thy overmeasure of them" (82) (Que pourrait-il y avoir de plus doux pour moi, que de participer ainsi aux plaisirs dont tu as été comblée? Le récit que tu vas me faire m'en procurera de semblables, en imagination, sans t'en ôter une parcelle des tiennes [1:70]). As it figures the gaze, the text again gestures toward a woman subject. At a later moment in the dialogue, as Ottavia recounts how her mother rushed into the bedroom and saw the size of Callias's penis and then watched its effect on her daughter's genitals, that figuration is literalized (1:84, 99).

The rest of dialogue five and the whole of dialogue six describe adulterous heterosexual group sex and other transgressive models of sexuality. Here, as in the earlier examples, readers know beforehand that the women have arranged the encounters in order to test their sexual prowess and "really taste all the goods of Venus" (219) (triompher de tous les hasards de Vénus [2:10]). The men, then, are ultimately represented as objects of female desire. While Ottavia is having sex with the men, she voices her pleasure and asserts her desire; Tullia, in turn, stimulates the men, helps Ottavia into different positions, and stages her own fantasies by directing the whole scene. Again, the active figures available for reader identification are the women.

This figuration of the women's pleasure as active betrays the anxiety about male homosexuality described by historians of the early modern period. In his extensive work on the history of sodomitical groups in early modern Western society, Trumbach maintains that it is possible to speak of male anxiety about homosexuality as early as the seventeenth century (1985). There was, he points out, no "approved homosexual role" in the period, and male homosexuality was stigmatized from early on, despite evidence that the persecution of sodomites varied in intensity at different periods (115). Paul Hammond concurs with Trumbach, arguing that

during the Renaissance sodomy was "one of a series of crimes against nature and God, against the social and divine orders. These were crimes of which anyone was capable if sufficiently dissolute: they were signs not of a specific sexual preference or orientation, but of wickedness" (1996, 6). However, "in the period between the later seventeenth century and the early nineteenth, a marked shift occurred in the way such desire was represented. A homosexual subculture emerged in London and some other cities" (88). The *Dialogues'* blatant condemnation of male homosexuality—"he who seeks Venus in a boy offers violence to his own natural propensity" (287) (l'homme qui cherche son plaisir avec un garçon fait violence à la propension naturelle [2:72])—their refusal to represent it, and even Tullia's explanation of the reasons for its existence—that women, whose vaginas are too wide, drive men to seek anal sex—narratively mirror this anxiety. With women available in these scenes as active figures for identification, the text encourages, or at least allows, male readers to undergo a trans-sex identification process and thus remain in an active position when confronted with objectified male characters.[42] More importantly, this particular narrative grammar reveals how strongly the *Dialogues* challenge gender conventions. Even as the text maintains the man-woman binary, it destabilizes its fixed correspondence with active and passive positions. Indeed, in its anxiety about male homosexuality and its attempt to provide an alternative to positions that would seem to require male homosexual identification, the text reveals what it is trying to suppress: the lurking "third illegitimate gender, namely the adult passive transvestite effeminate male or molly who was supposed to desire men exclusively" (Trumbach 1991a, 112).

Ultimately, because Chorier's *Dialogues* repeatedly figure women as voyeurs, and because this uncommon representation coincides with a depiction of women as sexual subjects and with the exaltation of female desire, the text presents a substantial challenge to male sexual hegemony. Given

[42] Butler stresses that "pornographic representations do not supply a single point of identification for their viewers." As a result, she maintains, there is always a "possibility of cross-identification [that] spells a kind of gender trouble" (1990, 114). Trumbach takes issue with historians who claim that earlier patterns of libertinism and debauchery, which allowed males to identify as heterosexual even if they engaged in sodomitical practices, were still valid in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. "In the modern pattern," he argues, "men conceived first of all that they were male . . . and did not know what it was like to desire men." Thus, he concludes, "adult men could not tolerate a charge that they were sodomites" (1985, 118). In a later essay he reiterates that in the early modern period "sexual passivity at any stage of life would permanently deprive a male of masculine status and cause him profound anxiety as well" (1991b, 191). The fear of sodomy, he concludes, was a strong issue for men, particularly because "men's relations with each other [involved] questions of power" (203).

the additional attempt, and failure, to suppress both female and male homosexuality, the *Dialogues* exemplify some of the ways that pornographic discourses can be used to shift the focus from heterosexual male pleasure and to challenge patriarchal principles of female sexual objectification. The presence of male desire in the narrative does not preclude a focus on the satisfaction of female desire. With Tullia and Ottavia at the center, pleasure is represented as interchangeably active or passive but, above all, as *female*. This simultaneous figuration of woman as both subject and object destabilizes the phallocentric structures of the traditional (male) gaze. That this challenge is posed by an early modern text, moreover, problematizes the ahistorical view that phallocentrism is innate or essential to the gaze and suggests the value of further (and more historical) consideration of pro-sex feminists' arguments that appropriating pornography can be a means of radically transforming patriarchal notions of female desire.

The evidence here indeed foregrounds several differences between early modern and current pornography that may explain why a discourse that was potentially empowering for women has become one that is repeatedly decried as mostly violent, demeaning, and dangerous for them. This shift may be at least partially attributable to the loss of the "explicitly subversive qualities" of pornography, which "began to lose political connotations" after the 1790s (Hunt 1993a, 9), as well as to the disappearance of the female narrator. "As the female narrator is effaced," Hunt argues, "so too is the ambiguity about the function of the representation of women. In novels without a female narrator, it is clear that the female bodies in the text are there to be read about, viewed and enjoyed by men" (334). More positively, though, these examples of early modern pornography are a clear indication of the current opportunity for a feminist recuperation for women readers and viewers of a form typically produced by and for men—as some women producers of pornography and erotica have already begun to demonstrate.[43] Indeed, many recent examples of the genre that were

[43] There are now several publications and video and film productions by women, for women, that have been called "feminist" erotica/pornography. Because they try to represent female desire, these texts have begun to change the face of porn. For example, a company called Fatale makes safe-sex lesbian movies; Lisa Palac is producing a series of erotic CDs for Time Warner; and Femme Productions, founded by Candida Royalle, produces pornography from a woman's point of view. Literature is also following suit with magazines such as *Future Sex,* founded by Lily Burana, and collections of erotica by Susie Bright, Michele Slung, and Lonnie Barbach—all successful and intent on contemplating and validating female desire. Since, as Linda Williams notes, "the traditional forms of the genre have handled the question of female desire and pleasure in ways that seem to foreclose the possibility of its representation altogether, the very fact that a group of women hardcore pornographers is posing these questions makes them worthy of serious examination" (1989, 248).

conceived and produced as empowering for women exhibit the kinds of rhetorical features stressed in this analysis. Candida Royalle's films, for instance, demonstrate that, by fostering ambivalence at the semantic level and addressing a female audience, women can make pornography an empowering genre in which the feminine can be constructed as an unstable sign, nonconformable to patriarchal definitions.[44] Tracing positive images of female sexuality in pornography—early modern and late twentieth-century alike—provides evidence to refute antipornography arguments, since what typically bothers "anti-pornography feminists is the nature of the sexual representations themselves" (Williams 1989, 14). A historical consideration of pornography suggests that, rather than fighting for legal action against the genre, women can and should appropriate, deconstruct, and change it.

Department of English
Old Dominion University

References

Assiter, Alison. 1989. *Pornography, Feminism, and the Individual.* Winchester, Mass.: Pluto.

Assiter, Alison, and Carol Avedon, eds. 1993. *Bad Girls and Dirty Pictures.* Boulder, Colo.: Pluto.

Ballaster, Ros. 1992. "Romancing the Novel: Gender and Genre in Early Theories of Narrative." In *Living by the Pen,* ed. Dale Spender, 188–200. New York: Teacher's College Press.

Barry, Kathleen. 1984. *Female Sexual Slavery.* New York: Avon.

Berry, André. 1959. Preface to *Des Secrets de l'amour et Venus: Satire sotadique de Luisa Sigea,* by Nicolas Chorier, ix–xxxi. Paris: Cercle du Livre Précieux.

Brownmiller, Susan. 1985. *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Burstyn, V., ed. 1985. *Women against Censorship.* Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre.

Butler, Judith. 1990a. "The Force of Fantasy: Feminism, Mapplethorpe, and Discursive Excess." *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 2(2):105–25.

———. 1990b. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York: Routledge.

Carter, Angela. 1978. *The Sadian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography.* New York: Pantheon.

Chorier, Nicolas. 1951. *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea,* trans. anon. from the Latin. Paris: Librarie "Astra."

[44] For a summary and an interpretation of some of these films, see Williams 1989.

———. [1660] 1959. *Des Secrets de l'amour et Venus: Satire sotadique de Luisa Sigea.* 2 vols. Préface d'André Berry. Paris: Cercle du Livre Précieux.

de Lauretis, Teresa. 1984. *Alice Doesn't.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

———. 1987. "Strategies of Coherence: Narrative Cinema, Feminist Poetics, and Yvonne Rainer." In her *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction,* 107–25. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

———. 1994. *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

DeJean, Joan. 1993. "The Politics of Pornography: *L'Escole des filles.*" In Hunt 1993c, 109–23.

Diamond, Irene. 1988. "Pornography and Repression: A Reconsideration." In *Women, Sex, and Sexuality,* ed. Catharine R. Stimpson, 129–44. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Doane, Mary Ann. 1987. *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

———. 1989. "Responses." *Camera Obscura* 20–21: 142–47.

Donaghue, Emma. 1993. *Passions between Women: British Lesbian Culture, 1668–1801.* New York: Harper Collins.

Dworkin, Andrea. 1981. *Pornography: Men Possessing Women.* London: Women's Press.

Dworkin, Andrea, and Catharine A. MacKinnon. 1988. *Pornography and Civil Rights: A New Day for Women's Equality.* Available from Organizing against Pornography, P.O. Box 3000–76, Minneapolis, MN 55403.

Dyer, Richard. 1985. "Male Gay Porn: Coming to Terms." *Jump Cut* 30 (March): 27–29.

Ellis, Kate, Beth Jaker, Nan D. Hunter, Barbara O'Dair, and Abby Tallmer, eds. 1988. *Caught Looking: Feminism, Pornography, and Censorship.* Seattle: Real Comet.

English, Dierdre. 1980. "The Politics of Porn: Can Feminists Walk the Line?" *Mother Jones* 5 (April): 20, 22, 43–44, 48–50.

Faderman, Lillian. 1981. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present.* New York: William Morrow.

Findlen, Paula. 1993. "Humanism, Politics and Pornography in Renaissance Italy." In Hunt 1993c, 49–108.

Fleming, Juliet. 1993. "The Ladies' Man and the Age of Elizabeth." In *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images,* ed. James Turner, 158–81. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1978. *The History of Sexuality.* Vol. 1. New York: Random House.

Foxon, David. 1965. *Libertine Literature in England, 1660–1745.* New York: University Books.

Fraxi, Pisanus. [1877–1885] 1962. *The Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature.* 3 vols. New York: Documentary Books.

Gallagher, Catherine, and Thomas Laqueur. 1987. Introduction to *The Making of*

the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gardiner, Judith Kegan. 1989. "The First English Novel: Aphra Behn's *Love Letters,* the Canon, and Women's Tastes." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 8(2): 201–22.

Goulemot, Jean Marie. 1991. *Ces livres qu'on ne lit que d'une main: Lecture et lecteurs de livres pornographiques au XVIII^e siècle.* Aix-en-Provence: Alinéa.

Griffin, Susan. 1981. *Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge against Nature.* New York: Women's Press.

Gutwirth, Marcel. 1982. "Molière and the Woman Question: *Les Précieuses ridicules, L'Escole des femmes, Les Femmes savantes.*" *Theatre Journal* 34 (October): 345–59.

Hammond, Paul. 1996. *Love between Men in English Literature.* New York: St. Martin's.

Henderson, Lisa. 1992. "Lesbian Pornography: Cultural Transgression and Sexual Demystification." In *New Lesbian Criticism: Literary and Cultural Readings,* ed. Sally Munt, 173–91. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hoff, Joan. 1989. "Why Is There No History of Pornography?" In *For Adult Users Only: The Dilemma of Violent Pornography,* ed. Susan Gubar and Joan Hoff, 17–46. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Holbrook, David. 1975. *The Case against Pornography.* La Salle, Ill.: Library Press.

Hollibaugh, Amber. 1984. "Desire for the Future: Radical Hope in Passion and Pleasure." In Vance 1984b, 401–10.

Hunt, Lynn. 1993a. Introduction to Hunt 1993c, 9–45.

———. 1993b. "Pornography and the French Revolution." In Hunt 1993c, 301–39.

———, ed. 1993c. *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500–1800.* New York: Zone.

Itzin, Catherine. 1992. *Pornography: Women, Violence, and Civil Liberties.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Jacob, Margaret C. 1993. "The Materialist World of Pornography." In Hunt 1993c, 157–202.

Johnson, Barbara. 1982. "Teaching Ignorance: *L'Escole des femmes.*" In "The Pedagogical Imperative: Teaching as a Literary Genre," ed. Barbara Johnson, special issue of *Yale French Studies* 63(1):165–82.

Kappeler, Susanne. 1986. *The Pornography of Representation.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kearney, P. J. 1981. *The Private Case: An Annotated Bibliography of the Private Case Erotica Collection in the British (Museum) Library.* London: Jay Landsman.

Knutson, Harold C. 1976. *Molière: An Archetypal Approach.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Laqueur, Thomas. 1987. "Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology." In *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century,* ed. Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur, 1–41. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Larson, Ruth. 1993. "The Iconography of Feminine Sexual Education in the 17th Century: Molière, Scarron, Chaveau." *Papers on French 17th Century Literature* 20:499–516.

Lederer, Laura. 1980. *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography.* New York: Morrow.

Leibacher-Ouvrard, Lise. 1992. "Sexe, Simulacre et 'Libertinage Honnête': La *Satyre sotadique* (1658/1678) de Nicolas Chorier." *Romanic Review* 83(3): 267–80.

Loth, David. 1961. *The Erotic in Literature.* New York: Julian Messner.

McCalman, Iain. 1988. *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries, and Pornographers in London, 1795–1840.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Miller, Richard B. 1986. "Violent Pornography: Mimetic Nihilism and the Eclipse of Differences." *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 69 (Fall): 326–46.

Mulvey, Laura. 1975. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16 (Autumn): 6–18.

———. 1989. "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' Inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)." In her *Visual and Other Pleasures,* 29–43. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.

Orr, Bridget. 1992. "Whores' Rhetoric and the Maps of Love: Constructing the Feminine in Restoration Erotica." In *Women, Texts, and Histories, 1575–1760,* ed. Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss, 195–216. New York: Routledge.

Pia, Pascal, ed. 1959. *L'Escole des filles, ou La Philosophie des dames: Divisée en deux dialogues.* Paris: Cercle du Livre Précieux.

Pollis, Carol A., and Carole S. Vance, eds. 1990. "Feminist Perspectives on Sexuality," special issue of *Journal of Sex Research,* vol. 27, no. 1.

Porter, Roy. 1988. "A Touch of Danger: The Man-midwife as Sexual Predator." In *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment,* ed. G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, 206–31. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Rich, Ruby. 1986. "Feminism and Sexuality in the 1980s." *Feminist Studies* 12(3): 525–61.

Ross, Andrew. 1989. *No Respect.* New York: Routledge.

Rubin, Gayle. 1984. "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality." In Vance 1984b, 267–319.

Snitow, Ann. 1988. "The Politics of the Antipornography Movement." In Ellis et al. 1988, 10–17.

Snitow, Ann, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds. 1983. *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality.* New York: Monthly Review Press.

Stone, Lawrence. 1977. *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500–1800.* New York: Harper & Row.

———. 1992. "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):511–26.

Thomas, Donald, trans. 1971. *The School of Venus.* New York: American Library.

Thompson, Roger. 1979. *Unfit for Modest Ears.* Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Trumbach, Randolph. 1985. "Sodomitical Subcultures, Sodomitical Roles, and the Gender Revolution of the Eighteenth Century: The Recent Historiography." *Eighteenth-Century Life* 9(3):109–21.

———. 1989. "The Birth of the Queen: Sodomy and the Emergence of Gender Equality in Modern Culture, 1660–1750." In *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past,* ed. Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., 129–40. New York: New American Library.

———. 1991a. "London Sapphists: From Three Sexes to Four Genders in the Making of Modern Culture." In *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity,* ed. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub, 112–41. New York: Routledge.

———. 1991b. "Sex, Gender, and Sexual Identity in Modern Culture: Male Sodomy and Female Prostitution in Enlightenment London." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1:186–203.

———. 1993. "Erotic Phantasy and Male Libertinism in Enlightenment England." In Hunt 1993c, 253–82.

Vance, Carole S. 1984a. "Pleasure and Danger: Toward a Politics of Sexuality." In Vance 1984b, 1–27.

———. 1984b. *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality.* Boston: Routledge.

Warner, William. 1992. "The Elevation of the Novel in England: Hegemony and Literary History." *ELH* 59(3):577–96.

Weil, Rachel. 1993. "Sometimes a Scepter Is Only a Scepter: Pornography and Politics in Restoration England." In Hunt 1993c, 124–56.

Williams, Linda. 1984. "When the Woman Looks." In *Re-Vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism,* ed. Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellencamp, and Linda Williams, 83–99. Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America and the American Film Institute.

———. 1989. *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the Frenzy of the Visible.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Woodward, Carolyn. 1993. "My Heart So Wrapt: Lesbian Disruptions in Eighteenth-Century British Fiction." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 18(4):838–65.