Handmade and Homemade: Vernacular Expressions of American Sexual History

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A WOODEN CARVING FROM A Maine logging camp features a naked woman nuzzling into a large, upward-pointing index finger attached to a hand.[1] The figure stands on a pile of books, raising herself up to better grasp the finger the way one might grasp a lover, pulling it between her legs and breasts. In essence, the woman fingers herself while proving that books are clearly good for masturbation. The artist who carved the figure merged two equally effective jokes: one visual and one in words. That's not bad for a bit of sly humor from a backwoods logging camp. The piece, carved and painted in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, treats digital stimulation with a mocking humor that is at odds with most published records on the practice; exposés, medical investigations, and pornographic novels published in the nineteenth century tend to treat sex with great seriousness.[2] In contrast, this object displays an

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[1] See Lisa Sigel, "Flagrant Delights," *Antiques Magazine*, July/August 2014, 104–11; phone interview with the collector who chose to remain anonymous, 30 April 2014.

[2] For example, materials as diverse as *Aristotle's Master-piece* (1690), *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948), *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* (1836), and *The Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748–49) share a seriousness in their treatment of sexuality despite their different genres. Aristotle, [pseud.], *Aristotle's Masterpiece* (London: F. L. for J. How, 1690); Alfred Kinsey, Wardell Pomeroy, and Clyde Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: W. B. Sanders Company, 1948); John Cleland, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (London: Printed for G. Fenton in the Strand, 1749). For discussions of these works, see Gaëton Brulotte and John Phillips, *Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Roy Porter and Lesley Hall, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual*

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emotional register ignored in more traditional sources for the history of sexuality.

I want to suggest that if we recognize the diversity of pornographic expressions—from commercial products to local and homemade objects like the one carved in the backwoods of Maine—then we can begin to sketch out the hidden corners of the American pornographic tradition and their influence on the history of sexuality. While it is true, as Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz explains, that the destruction of erotic materials has contributed to a "deficit or silence that has distorted our understanding of the past," she and other historians have focused on the large-scale destruction of commercial pornography by antivice crusaders and have overlooked handmade and homemade objects that those crusaders never found.[3] These objects reveal the continued existence of a robust, noisy, vernacular tradition that has been frequently overlooked.

The historiography on pornography has been shaped by a number of errors and omissions. Although many scholars recognize the way that new technologies have created a body of amateur pornography—inexpensive video cameras and computers have allowed people to generate, upload, and exchange masses of pornographic materials worldwide—historians have not entered into the discussion of amateur works.[4] In fact, historians have only relatively recently turned from the examination of censorship and obscenity to the examination of pornography; what they have found has not been well integrated into current understandings of the genre or the broader understanding the history of sexuality.[5] Further compound-

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Knowledge in Britain, 1650–1950 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Rereading Sex: Battles over Sexual Knowledge and Suppression in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003); John D'Emilio and Estelle Freeman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

[3] Through their exploration of obscenity records, Horowitz and others have enriched our understanding of the multivalent conversation about sexuality in the past, but we still know too little about the variety of depictions of explicit sexual acts. As Horowitz suggests, we have to document explicit materials in order to see what health reformers, free lovers, and antiobscenity organizers were speaking out against (*Rereading Sex*, 10).

[4] Historians' oversight stands in contrast to scholars focused on more recent amateur photography and film. See, for example, Jonathan Coopersmith, "Do-It-Yourself Pornography: The Democratization of Pornography," in *PrOnnovation? Pornography and Technological Innovation*, ed. Johannes Grenzfurthner, Gunther Friesinger, and Daniel Fabry (Vienna: Re/Search Publications, 2009), 48–55; Minette Hillyer, "Sex in the Suburban: Porn, Home Movies and the Live Action Performance of Love in *Pam and Tommy Lee: Hardcore and Uncensored*," in *Porn Studies*, ed. Linda Williams (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 50–76; Zabet Patterson, "Going On-Line: Consuming Pornography in the Digital Age," in Williams, *Porn Studies*, 104–23; and Susanna Paasonen, "Labors of Love: Netporn, Web 2.0 and the Meanings of Amateurism," *New Media & Society* 12, no. 8 (2010): 1297–1312.

[5] The history of censorship has long overshadowed the history of pornography. Walter Kendrick's *The Secret Museum*, first published in 1987, functioned as a transition by looking at the history of censorship and pornography in relation to each other. Since then, any

ing the confusion, historians have not clearly differentiated demand from supply and have instead assumed that the pornography people bought was the pornography they wanted.[6] But without letters, memoirs, autobiographies, and other documents, how can historians detail reader demand in the past?[7] Gaps in the archival record make it impossible for scholars to answer basic questions about the history of pornography users. Who read pornography? Were they male or female, rich or poor? How did they read? Did they identify with the male characters, the female characters, or both? Did individuals choose pornographic materials to meet their fancy, or did they make do with what they found? Did the motifs in what they found shape their desires, or did the motifs articulate desires that already existed? How did readers understand the materials? Did they treat them as fictions, or did they milk them for sexual know-how? If we can answer these questions, we can more fully understand the history of people's sexual fantasies.

To approach the issue of demand, this article begins an exploration of the history of homemade and handmade pornography, a vernacular culture that has not been examined by scholars who look instead at the history of commercial pornography or the sociology of more current amateur

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number of scholars have worked on the history of pornography. However, rather than engaging the wide range of scholarship, scholars working on issues of sexuality tend to genuflect to Lynn Hunt's edited volume *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500–1800* (New York: Zone Books, 1996) to provide a history of pornography despite the volume's chronological focus between 1500 and 1800. Scholars working on topics ranging from twentieth-century American film, to colonial Indian sexuality, to ancient Rome use that volume as the "historical" background for pornography.

[6] A dearth of records has made it difficult for historians to track demand for pornography. According to Elizabeth Haven Hawley, "The apparent silence within the historical record about how publishers of indecent books did business in nineteenth-century America is formidable" ("American Publishers of Indecent Books, 1840–1890" [PhD diss., Georgia Institute of Technology, 2005], 3). Scholars have tried to track production practices through police records and catalogs. See, for example, Collette Colligan, *A Publisher's Paradise: Expatriate Literary Culture in Paris, 1890–1960* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014). Others have gleaned consumer reactions from the relationship between pornography and the broader culture, for example, Elizabeth Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Laura Kipnis, *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America* (New York: Grove Press, 1996). But few historians approach the study of pornography as a business. Two exceptions include Joseph W. Slade, "Pornography in the Late Nineties," *Wide Angle* 19, no. 3 (1997): 1–12; and Klara Arnberg, "Under the Counter, under the Radar? The Business and Regulation of the Pornographic Press in Sweden 1950–1971," *Enterprise & Society* 13, no. 2 (2012): 350–77.

[7] There are very few studies that document how people read pornography. Chapter 3 of Clarissa Smith's *One for the Girls! The Pleasures and Practices of Reading Women's Porn* (Bristol, UK: Intellect Books, 2007) provides an exception. Feona Attwood, Clarissa Smith, and Martin Barker have been conducting an online survey about how everyday people use pornography in the Porn Research Project (pornresearch.org). In *Making Modern Love: Sexual Narratives and Identities in Interwar Britain* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012), I have tried to create a model of reading for materials about sexuality.

pornography produced with Polaroids, video cameras, and computers. The methodological payoff of this move is profound, because these objects allow us to consider the desires of their creators, rather than the domain of the marketplace. Because there is no intermediary between the creator and the object, amateur materials provide a more unmediated view of personal sexual desire—complete with all its contradictions, variances, infelicities, and questionable tastes. Handmade and homemade objects show what people wanted to see by providing a shortcut around the commercial market. The examination of these materials shows us the ways that people told stories about sexuality in their own idiom.

To demonstrate the benefits of this methodological approach, this article focuses on the period between the 1830s and 1930s, the period hardest hit by the policies of Anthony Comstock and his successor at the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, John Saxton Sumner, who censored pornography and purged the historical record by destroying books, illustrations, photographs, pamphlets, rubber goods, sets of lead type, plates, and even business records.[8] Judges refused to allow obscenity, including the title of obscene works, to be read into the record. As Elizabeth Haven Hawley states, "Writing a cohesive narrative with so much of the historical record unrecorded or destroyed seemed an impossible task."[9] There is, however, an available body of evidence that has gone underutilized, perhaps because each example is so singular and idiosyncratic. Using handmade and homemade objects as an historical source can radically shift our understanding of people's sexual desires. In order to tell stories about sex, people altered coins and metal objects, carved objects out of wood and bone, handwrote stories in cursive and block letters, typed original and carbon-copied short stories, drew, illustrated and painted pictures, and altered dolls and other everyday objects. People produced an infinite array of pornographic objects, including poems and stories, sculptures and sex toys, metal disks and homemade movies. Alexander Halavais suggests that amateur materials might be called "small pornographies" to differentiate them from commercialized materials, while Blaise Cronin and Betsy Stirratt describe them as "inventive, whimsical, improvised, homespun, lampooning, crass, ludic, and touching in more or less equal measure."[10]

[8] For discussions of Anthony Comstock and censorship, see Nicola Beisel, *Imperiled Innocents: Anthony Comstock and Family Reproduction in Victorian America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), particularly chap. 3; and Paul S. Boyer, *Purity in Print: Book Censorship in America* (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1968), 1–11. Elizabeth Haven Hawley mentions the confiscation and subsequent destruction of business records ("American Publishers," 417). For discussions of Sumner, see Jay A. Gertzman, *Bookleggers and Smuthounds: The Trade in Erotica, 1920–1940* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 103–33.

[9] Hawley, "American Publishers," 138, 10.

[10] Alexander C. Halavais, "Small Pornographies," *ACM SIGGROUP Bulletin*, special issue on virtual communities, 25, no. 2 (2005): 19–22. See also Blaise Cronin and Betsy

The materials for this study come from private collectors, from art and ephemera dealers, and from museums and archives, particularly from the Kinsey Institute for Sex Research.[11] The Kinsey Institute's collection is particularly rich in found and seized objects. Alfred Kinsey sought to collect as many materials documenting human sexuality as possible, soliciting contributions and interviews from a wide range of associates. With the publication of his volume *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and its companion volume, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953), and the acclaim that followed the 24 August 1953 cover of *Time* magazine, law enforcement agents, prison wardens, and other individuals saw a value in material artifacts about sexuality and shipped them to the institute, where they have been cataloged and archived.[12] The range of objects in the handmade and homemade category has produced an eclectic cataloging system in the various archives that house these objects. While older sculptures, paintings, and objects were often placed into the folk art category, more recent productions have been categorized as outsider art. Paper materials are more likely to be found in archives, while erotic objects get categorized as *realia*, objects that are not books, papers, or sound recordings, when placed in libraries and museums.[13]

Although the examination of homemade and handmade pornography addresses the methodological issues concerning demand by letting us see what people made rather than what they purchased, the focus on these homemade materials brings another set of methodological problems, because no claims can be made about representativeness, and little information about provenance is available. In general, historians of pornography avoid making claims about representativeness, because centuries of obscenity

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Stirratt, "Everyday Erotica," in *Private Eyes: Amateur Art from the Kinsey Collection*, ed. Gary Millius, Blaise Cronin, and Betsy Stirratt (Bloomington, IN: Kinsey Institute for Sex Research, 2010), 5.

[11] I have also interviewed antiques dealers, including Carl Hammer, Steve Powers, Patrick Bell, and Arthur Liverant. I have spoken at length with Mark Lee Rotenberg, who collects and sells antique erotica; with Jim Linderman, who has published a number of books on related topics and has created a series of well-regarded blogs; with Ivan Stormgart, the proprietor of Alta-Glamour; and with a collector who chooses to remain anonymous. I visited the Museum of Sex in New York, Intuit Gallery in Chicago, and Mystic Seaport in Connecticut.

[12] For an introduction to Alfred Kinsey's work and the experience of the archives, see James Jones, *Alfred C. Kinsey: A Public/Private Life* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997); and Karen Winkler, "Sex Research and the Body of Knowledge: Let's Talk about Sex," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 3/4 (2005): 285–313.

[13] I do not try to define the words "pornography," "erotic," and "obscenity" in this article because of the implications that definitions carry. As Thomas Waugh has argued, attempts to define pornography, obscenity, and erotica "are based in class or gender bias, or else in the historical myopia of homophobia, cultural snobbery, political instrumentality, or personality (my erotica is your pornography)" (*Hard to Imagine* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1996], 8). Clarissa Smith also underlines political implications of such definitions (*One for the Girls!*, 15).

prosecutions and the subsequent destruction of materials make it impossible to come to any conclusions about the quantity of any given form of pornographic output. More artifacts may have been destroyed in America than saved, and few records document the facts of the destruction.[14] While police reports and obscenity campaigns document the commercial trade and the range of materials it produced,[15] handmade and homemade objects were created outside of the market and remained hidden away. If the history of pornography can be considered a secret history, then homemade and handmade objects exist in the shadows of the secret.[16] Because of the secrecy, we often lack even the most basic information about author, place and date of creation, provenance, ownership, and purchase price. Each is an artistic object—a piece of individual craftsmanship—but as a group they are artistic products shorn of their context. They are objects that neither historians nor art historians have embraced. Outsiders like Milton Simpson in *Folk Erotica*, Nancy Bruning Levine in *Hardcore Crafts*, and the writers in *Raw Erotica* have documented the existence of such objects but have not contextualized or historicized them. Art historians have considered the works of a few individual artists like Henry Darger and Dwight Mackintosh but debate whether their works should be considered pornographic.[17] Despite the methodological difficulties, the wide dispersal and

[14] Donna Dennis discusses the extent of the destruction using antivice organizations annual reports. She notes the "staggering" amount of destruction as compared with the "scarcity" of materials that remain. The destruction was tallied in poundage rather than piece. For example, the 1900 report, which tallied over twenty-five years of destruction, noted that 78,608 pounds of books and sheet stock were destroyed, as well as hundreds of thousands of images, thousands of photographic plates, and tens of thousands of pounds of stereotype plates. See Donna Dennis, *Licentious Gotham: Erotic Publishing and Its Prosecution in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 275–76. For a history of obscenity prosecutions in the United States, see Beisel, *Imperiled Innocents*; Boyer, *Purity in Print*; Edward de Grazia, *Girls Lean Back Everywhere: The Law of Obscenity and the Assault on Genius* (New York: Random House, 1992); and Whitney Strub, *Perversion for Profit: The Politics of Pornography and the Rise of the New Right* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

[15] See Patricia Cline Cohen, Timothy Gilfoyle, and Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *The Flash Press: Sporting Male Weeklies in 1840s New York* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Donna Dennis, "Obscenity Regulation, New York City, and the Creation of American Erotica, 1820–1880" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2005); Hawley, "American Publishers"; and Gertzman, *Bookleggers and Smuthounds*, 37.

[16] For example, Walter Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1987). A TV miniseries entitled *Pornography: The Secret History of Civilization* (Chris Rodley, Dev Varma, Kate Williams, directors, UK Channel Four, 1999) capitalizes on the language.

[17] *In the Realms of the Unreal: The Mystery of Henry Darger*, DVD, Jessica Yu, writer, producer, director, New York, Diorama Films, 2004; Jim Elledge, *Henry Darger, Throwaway Boy: The Tragic Life of an Outsider Artist* (New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2013); Michael Bonesteel, *Henry Darger: Art and Selected Writings* (New York: Rizzoli, 2000); John MacGregor, *Dwight Mackintosh: The Boy Who Time Forgot* (Oakland, CA: Creative Growth Art Center, 1992).

ubiquity of homemade and handmade pornography calls for a mapping that recognizes singularity. In all their incoherent, libidinal, confusing strangeness, these objects remain an act of individual testimony that can be entered into the historical record.

This article will examine American nineteenth- and early twentieth-century homemade and handmade pornographic artifacts. To understand how homemade and handmade pornography differed from its commercial cousin, I briefly review the circulation of contemporaneous commercial pornography. In the eighteenth century, American commercial pornography followed European trends, and there was little distinction between literature documenting sex for scientific purposes, for sexual pleasure, or for philosophical considerations of corruption, religion, and liberty.[18] Colonial Americans imported popular medical volumes like *Aristotle's Master-piece* and *Onania* from England. These tracts were then copied and reprinted by American printers. By the nineteenth century, imported and reprinted versions of European classics like *The Lustful Turk* and *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* were circulating in Boston and New York.[19] In 1842 Congress passed the first law banning the importation of obscenity, inadvertently helping to establish an obscene publishing industry.[20] By the mid-nineteenth century, American publishers had developed their own sexual print culture. As Patricia Cline Cohen, Timothy Gilfoyle, and Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz have demonstrated, by the 1840s sporting or flash culture began to generate racy publications. The development of an ephemeral press devoted to sensation and sporting culture offered popular opportunities for titillation and for men from a variety of classes to commodify and exploit women.[21] The flash press remained suggestive rather than explicit, but pornographic books and prints continued to circulate in limited quantities for gentlemen in the know. These were accompanied by woodcut prints, lithographs, paintings, pamphlets, and other obscene articles sold by peddlers, hawkers, and bookstore owners. When obscenity prosecutions rose in the 1850s, the trials increased publicity for erotic wares. The Civil War extended the demand and opportunity for commercial sexual culture as men, separated

[18] Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); Hunt, *The Invention of Pornography*; Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Lynn Hunt, ed., *Eroticism and the Body Politic* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-revolutionary France* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995).

[19] Hawley, "American Publishers," 16–17.

[20] Hawley, "American Publishers," 122.

[21] Cohen, Gilfoyle, and Horowitz, *The Flash Press*; Timothy Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790–1920* (New York: Norton, 1992); Amy Gilman Srebnick, *The Mysterious Death of Mary Rogers: Sex and Culture in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 53, 191; Horowitz, *Rereading Sex*, chaps. 6 and 8.

from their families, became ready buyers of sexual materials.[22] A more hard-core pornographic press also developed by the time of the Civil War, though historians have yet to identify the first American pornographic novel. American commercial pornography was well established by the end of the nineteenth century, but pornographic publications were still only being produced in print runs of three digits, and they remained numerically marginal compared with other forms of commercial culture like ladies' magazines, regional newspapers, and postcards depicting exotic locales.[23]

The history of American pornography can be deepened by incorporating the variety of pornographic artifacts that people made for themselves: coins, sculpture, scrimshaw, and pamphlets—artifacts ubiquitous in early American history, though not often considered pornographic. The consideration of these materials moves the center of the pornographic imagination from its European roots and emerging cosmopolitan centers toward a vernacular tradition that skews toward the "making classes" rather than the "buying classes." Though city dwellers might have had greater access to commercial products, homemade and handmade forms of pornography hint at the existence of local articulations.

The existence of coins, altered in pornographic ways, shows how people could envision sexuality in state-sanctioned artifacts that circulated widely. According to Andrew Burnett, retired deputy director of the British Museum, coins are an important historical source because of their durability, quantity, wide circulation, datability, and designs.[24] According to William Monter, "Coins offer an unusually clear and precise form of evidence about claims to sovereignty, since minting them was an essential and deeply cherished monopoly of legitimate rulers."[25]

One set of coins that might be used to explore the connection between erotic meanings and politics is a collection of thirteen copper liberty

[22] D'Emilio and Freeman, *Intimate Matters*, 131.

[23] For example, *Godey's Lady's Book* had a circulation of 150,000 by the Civil War. See Joseph Michael Summers, "Godey's Lady's Book: Sarah Hale and the Construction of Sentimental Nationalism," *College Literature* 37, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 43–61, 44. As the population of the United States doubled between 1870 and 1900, the number of daily newspapers quadrupled, while the number of copies that sold increased sixfold. See Michael Emery and Edwin Emery, *The Press and America*, 9th ed. (Needham Heights, MA: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 157. In comparison, the semierotic book *Venus in Boston*, published by William Berry, was produced in a run of 849 copies of 1,000, according to H. S. Ashbee. See Pisanus Fraxi [Henry Spenser Ashbee], *Catena Librorum Tacendorum* (1885; reprint, New York: Documentary Books, 1962), 201. In England, where catalogs, bibliographies, and copies remain extant, bibliographers have shown that more explicit pornographic books were printed in even smaller print runs. See Peter Mendes, *Clandestine Erotic Fiction in English, 1800–1930* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993).

[24] Andrew Burnett, *Coins* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 7.

[25] William Monter, "Gendered Sovereignty: Numismatics and Female Monarchs in Europe, 1300–1800," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 41, no. 4 (Spring 2011): 533–64, 533–34.

head pennies produced between 1812 and 1849.[26] These coins feature the female embodiment of the classical symbol, Liberty, on one side, surrounded by a spray of stars, one for each of the thirteen original colonies. On the reverse, a banner proclaiming the United States of America encloses a garland and the simple caption "ONE CENT." The liberty pennies in the collection at the Kinsey Institute have been meticulously transformed, however, as the E in "CENT" has been carefully filed and reworked into a U so that the caption reads "ONE CUNT." These coins lack context and provenance; arriving by donation generations after their original production, they are separated from the details that document their circulation. Without this context, we cannot know who handled these coins; when, where, or how they were reworked; or how someone arrived at the idea. These coins therefore tell us little about the circulation of pornographic artifacts in American culture. What can be said, however, is that someone cared enough about articulating "cunt" to sacrifice effort, ingenuity, and hard currency to the reworking of these pennies. It is easy to imagine the creative moment in which someone—a blacksmith, a jewelry maker, a group of journeymen at a foundry—might have seen the linguistic possibilities that the coins presented. It is also easy to see the coins as an expression of desperation; who but the deeply lonely or the most committed to shocking would bother to invest time, energy, and capital in such productions?

The reworking of "CENT" to "CUNT" in the coins suggests the desire to see the word written and expressed in public—an articulation of a profound desire. Perhaps one person found this articulation so compelling that he or she remade currency coined for thirty-seven years, but more likely, people across the early Republic saw the same opportunity to make "CENT" into "CUNT." The possibility of a shared impulse suggests a way of wanting to see the world and break down linguistic restrictions against profanity and vulgarisms. In the American context, part of establishing sovereignty after the Revolution was the development of a new coinage based upon new symbols. Robert Garson argues that a distinctly American currency allowed the population to reorient itself to a new national authority: "The pictorial images and the promises of negotiability conveyed on coins, banknotes and other financial instruments were repetitively encountered on a daily basis. They were visual reminders of the connection between finance, stability and national authority."[27]

The establishment of a currency had practical and metaphorical implications for the early Republic. William Hunting Howell suggests that

[26] "A collection of thirteen U.S. coins dating from 1812 to 1849 that have been altered to read 'one cunt' instead of 'one cent,'" Altered Currency, Novelties, [18——?], Kinsey Institute for Sex Research, hereafter cited as Kinsey Institute.

[27] Robert Garson, "Counting Money: The US Dollar and American Nationhood, 1781–1820," *Journal of American Studies* 35, no. 1 (2001): 21–46, 22.

we consider pennies in early America as "far more than stamped pieces of copper, they pointedly link the virtues of replication (and the replication of virtue) with decimal math and the mass production of specie."[28] According to Howell, the establishment of a base ten currency encouraged commerce even while allowing common citizens armed only with basic math skills to understand the financial decisions of state. A base ten coinage guaranteed a financial stability in making contracts and political stability in affairs of state. For Benjamin Franklin, coins could be part of making a national character: "By seeing it every time one receives a Piece of Money, might make an Impression upon the Mind, especially of young Persons, and tend to regulate the Conduct."[29] The question of who or what would be stamped onto coins entered into national debate. Congress decided against gracing the coins with presidents in favor of impressions of Liberty. With the establishment of the liberty coins, Americans received a mechanized lesson on national virtue with each economic transaction. A ONE-CUNT coin, then, would remake national virtue into national vice, as vulgar desire, a parody of Liberty, and sophomoric hijinks replaced high-minded values. The debasement of specie in this arrangement debased the state. Lady Liberty in the remade copper coins becomes a rather tawdry Venus, transformed by hand into a pocket-sized joke.

The coins might have been erotic to those who reworked them, or they might have merely provided some satisfaction to the producer in their power to shock. Either way, the effort that went into their transformation suggests a desire for the explicit articulation of sexuality. ONE-CUNT coins suggest a desire for straight talk and debased naming that spoke to base sexual urges.

Although the simplicity of these coins might suggest simpler sexual times when even dirty words had the power to excite, when put in the context of other debased coins, ONE-CUNT coins speak less to simplicity than to widespread metalworking abilities. Two other pennies from the Kinsey Institute provide examples of the ways that nineteenth-century Americans altered coins even more extensively.[30] The flying eagle penny (produced between 1856 and 1858) provided one individual with the basic template for the creation of a winged phallus—an image from rather esoteric works of the classical world that therefore reveals its creator's deep familiarity with the classics.[31] While standard in Greco-Roman pottery, the winged

[28] William Hunting Howell, "A More Perfect Copy: David Rittenhouse and Reproduction of Virtue," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 64, no. 4 (2007): 757–90, 779.

[29] Quoted in Benjamin H. Irvin, "Benjamin Franklin's 'Enriching Virtues,'" *Common-Place* 6, no. 3 (2006), http://www.common-place.org/vol-06//no-03/irvin/.

[30] "A One Cent Coin, 185?," Altered Currency, Novelties, Kinsey Institute; "A one cent liberty coin, 1930," Altered Currency, Novelties, Kinsey Institute.

[31] Catherine Johns, *Sex or Symbol? Erotic Images of Greece and Rome* (New York: Routledge, 1982), 15–17.

phallus had come to be seen as obscene by the nineteenth century.[32] The transformation of the eagle into a phallus in this mid-nineteenth-century penny shows an attention to the similarity of the two forms, an ability to visualize the phallus beneath the shape of the eagle in flight, and metal-working skills far more advanced than the ability to change one letter. By the twentieth century, the coins were also being reworked with paint. A one-cent coin from 1930 still has the banner "IN GOD WE TRUST," but someone has created a female vulva with carefully etched pubic hair in the center of the coin. The vaginal opening has been enameled red. Thus, the slogan of religious unity linked the enameled vulva with base currency, giving the slogan its own irreligious slant. These examples suggest that currency allowed individuals a canvas for revealing the obscene hidden in everyday objects.

Many scholars who have investigated prostitution and sexual commerce have documented the relationship between sexuality and money, but there are even deeper etymological links. As Will Fisher argues, in the early modern period, the term "queer" applied equally to counterfeit coins and sexual practices; the terminology for false coins and socially unacceptable coitus overlapped. Working from numismatic terminology, Fisher suggests that "copper pieces" and "sexual pieces" were mutually constituted through linguistics, particularly since copper was Venus's metal, the linguistic basis for the term "venery."[33] Copper pennies like those at the Kinsey demonstrate that currency might be debased both sexually and financially.

While pennies entailed a minimal financial sacrifice, one artist's use of an 1877 silver liberty trade dollar shows a more serious commitment to erotic reworkings. While the original coin featured Liberty seated on a rock and holding aloft the torch of liberty, in its altered state Lady Liberty sits on a chamber pot.[34] An additional figure has joined Liberty and reaches toward her breast. In place of the liberty torch, she holds his erect penis. Thus, Lady Liberty masturbates a man while shitting on the pot. In this coin, any high-minded sentiments of state are deflated with ribald and scatological associations.

Other national currencies were similarly debased. A 1756 French ecu with the profile of Louis XV has almost been worn smooth over the years. The reverse features the shield of France, the crown, and two crossed olive branches. On the obverse, five nude figures are etched onto the metal within the outline of the king's profile.[35] A seated man or boy masturbates. He is

[32] For a discussion of winged phalluses, see Johns, *Sex or Symbol*, 68–72.

[33] Will Fisher, "Queer Money," *ELH: English Literary History* 66, no. 1 (1999): 1–23, 3.

[34] "American silver dollar inscribed 420 grains, 900 Fine. Trade dollar, 1877," Altered Currency, Novelties, Kinsey Institute.

[35] "French Ecu, inscribed BENEDITUM 1756 SIT," Altered Currency, Novelties, Kinsey Institute.

flanked by two nude women, and at his feet another couple is copulating. The lettering "Rande Joyeuse" completes the picture. This image can easily be read as a critique of the monarchy and a misuse of the throne, joining the flood of pornographic materials that used sexuality as a political weapon in old regime France. However, a French five-franc piece produced generations later similarly debased the symbols of the state. Issued by the République Française in 1875, one side of the coin is festooned with garlands, while on the obverse, under the banner reading "Liberté Egalité Fraternité," Liberty and Equality flank Hercules, who generations earlier had symbolized royalty before the French Revolution only to be reworked into a mythical colossus throughout the nineteenth century.[36] As Lynn Hunt demonstrates, Hercules was not a figure of the people but rather an "artist-intellectual-politician's image of the people for the people's edification. In the Third Republic, Hercules, like the goddess of Liberty who preceded him, was a classical figure, whose meaning was most available to the educated."[37] While Hercules stood triumphant on the coins of the Third Republic, on this altered coin he stands resplendent, masturbated by the twin symbols of republicanism, Liberty and Equality, who flank him. With Liberty and Equality joining hands over his now erect penis, the bare-chested Hercules becomes a reconfigured hero, less a classical hero and more a people's hero, reproduced for subversive purposes.

Both devalued as specie and displaying sullied ideas, these altered coins provided new renditions of national currency. The existence of altered coins shows that individuals were willing to sacrifice time and assets to remake these materials. These coins demonstrate that people made obscene goods from materials at hand. Coins, though subject to periodic currency shortages, making them hard to come by, still circulated, making them tempting templates for alteration. Beneath a surface of slogans and sanctity, people saw other possibilities, and they used metalworking skills to bring those hidden vulgarisms to light. Though the alteration of coinage might seem to fit into the categories of oddities and souvenirs when sold and archived, these coins have lasted for centuries and traveled far and wide, testifying to the enduring visions of their makers. While these little coins might be the single markers of people's ideas about the relationship between state symbols and sexuality, that they remain intact sometimes centuries later while other sorts of artifacts were destroyed testifies to the durability of the media and the endurance of their makers' debased visions.

Almost as durable as coinage, scrimshaw offered a canvas for the articulation of folk culture during the nineteenth-century boom in the

[36] "French Five Franc piece, 1875," Altered Currency, Novelties, Kinsey Institute.

[37] Lynn Hunt, "Hercules and the Radical Image in the French Revolution," *Representations*, no. 2 (1983): 95–117, 111.

whaling industry.[38] Generally considered a folk art, it differed from other folk traditions in that it was not associated with peasant culture or the reproduction of standard motifs. Instead, scrimshaw built upon international, rather than regional, traditions, and its artists searched out novelty and innovation. Though practiced by sailors worldwide, the majority of artifacts reside in American institutions, making scrimshaw seem like the prototypical American folk custom.[39] By the 1790s the whaling industry had expanded to include both Atlantic and Pacific waters, and the hunger for oil, baleen, and ambergris sent sailors on multiyear voyages.[40] Sailors used bones, tusks, horns, and teeth to carve, incise, etch, and color scenes and images. Periods at sea that lasted for years gave men long stretches to practice the craft and fashion objects both for utility and to pass the time; the making mattered as much as the object being made. Richard C. Malley, author of *Graven by the Fisherman Themselves*, argues that the contextual origins define carved sea ivory as scrimshaw.[41] Scrimshanders would pass objects on to loved ones as gifts and mementos. They also used bone to fashion useful objects like kitchen tools and stays for corsets. Sailors replicated women's fashion plates, patriotic themes, town scenes, and foreign ports on scrimshaw.[42] They also created erotic and pornographic scrimshaw objects.[43]

One mid-nineteenth-century scrimshawed tooth from the Kinsey collection features two separate illustrations. On one side, a jaunty sailor in dress whites and a neckerchief talks to a woman who leans against a shingled building. The scene looks like any other etching of a couple's courtship. On the reverse of the tooth, a man mounts a woman in bed. She lies on her

[38] For overviews of scrimshaw, see E. Norman Flayderman, *Scrimshaw and Scrimshanders: Whales and Whalemen* (New Milford, CT: N. Flayderman & Co., Inc., 1972); Stuart M. Frank, *Ingenious Contrivances, Curiously Carved: Scrimshaw in the New Bedford Whaling Museum* (Boston: David R. Godine, 2012).

[39] Janet West, "Scrimshaw and the Identification of Sea Mammal Products," *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 2 (March 1991): 39–79, 39.

[40] Margaret Lentz Vose, "Identification of the Origins and Sources of Selected Scrimshaw Motifs in 18th and 19th Century Contemporary Culture" (PhD diss., NYU, 1992).

[41] Outside of the context, the object, even if carved on sea ivory, would not be scrimshaw. Interview, Richard C. Malley, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, CT, June 17, 2016. See also Malley, *Graven by the Fishermen Themselves* (Mystic, CT: Mystic, 1983).

[42] Scrimshaw objects, whether pornographic or not, were rarely signed. See Richard C. Malley, "Graven by the Fishermen Themselves: Scrimshaw in Mystic Seaport Museum," *Log of the Mystic Seaport* 35, no. 1 (1983): 16–21, 17.

[43] Stuart M. Frank, senior curator emeritus of the New Bedford Whaling Museum, director of the Scrimshaw Forensics Laboratory, and executive director emeritus of the Kendall Whaling Museum, cautions that most of the pornographic scrimshaw objects in circulation are fakes, having been produced during the 1960s and 1970s. These objects circulate as bogus representations of the whaler's craft. Email correspondence with the author, May 20, 2016. However, three well-authenticated erotic and pornographic objects have been archived at Mystic Seaport, including one from the period between 1835 and 1845, one dated 1879, and one from the 1880s to 1890s.

back while he half kneels on top of her. The position allows the viewer to see his swollen testicles and his penis as it enters her. An oil lamp rests on the bedside table, while an embroidery of "Home Sweet Home" decorates the walls. A fine wooden bed, a bolster pillow, beadboard, and trim complete the homey scene.[44] The image transforms a prim New England courtship into an amatory celebration. It also provides an alternate inflection for the embroidered commonplace: the carefully wrought representation of an embroidered panel suggests an alternate reading of the sweetness of home, transforming it from a place into a sexual act.

Another scrimshaw object dated to the 1880s or 1890s and made from a walrus tusk illustrates a series of sexual scenes, which are separated by decorative motifs of acorns and leaves that wind their way around the images. One scene documents a woman squatting over a chamber pot. The artist carved her squarely facing the viewer so that her face, breasts, and vulva are rendered in symmetry. A single drop of liquid falls from her vagina into the pot below. In her hand, she holds an erect penis—visible by the red-tinted head—which she aims toward her vaginal opening. Her hair spills around her shoulders, and her bare breasts are rendered in a naive style in simple blackened lines. The image is both scatological and erotic, a combination that commonly appeared in nineteenth-century published pornography. In another scene on the tusk, a man and woman copulate facing each other, their arms and legs in a tangle. On the tusk's reverse, a man with an erect penis sits in a chair as he reaches for a woman with exposed labia and bared breasts. The coloration of the tip of his penis matches the reddened lips of her labia. Period touches include muttonchop sleeves on the woman's gown, dancing slippers, and fancy garters. Another scene on the same tusk features a very well dressed woman drawing up her voluminous gown to touch herself. The fan in her other hand, the delicate necklace around her neck, and her artfully done hair make this look like a fashion plate except for the single touch of red on her labia, which draws the viewer's attention to the erotic impact of the scene. In this and other scenes on this artifact, the fascination with female anatomy is augmented with a fascination with feminine adornment. While male bodies are also present, the focus remains on femininity as begowned and accessorized.[45] Despite the naïveté of the expression, the artist transmits his sexual desires for women in all their fripperies.

Sailors graced everyday objects carved from whalebone and sea ivory with erotic motifs. One small carving, which Milton Simpson describes as possibly functioning as a toothpick, shows a woman pulling up her clothes to reveal her sexual organs. Her generous *breasts spill over the neck of her gown, and her waist seems corseted. Large eyes, a small smile, and pulled-back hair provide a youthful appearance, but the close alignment

[44] "Scrimshaw, n.p. [19——?]," ISR 630R A75.1, Kinsey Institute.

[45] Milton Simpson, *Folk Erotica: Celebrating Centuries of Erotic Americana* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 36–37.

Typesetter: Delete the highlighted asterisk above; mistaken fragment left over from copyediting.

of her features gives them a cat-like cast and suggests the artist's inexperience as a sculptor. The artist's limited skill is revealed in the paw-like hands that hold up the folds of her gown. The simplicity of the hands contrasts with the careful detail paid to the figure's pubic hair, which is carefully carved line after line and from whose nest protrudes a distended labia with a carefully carved slit. The carving, which is about two and a half inches long and was produced circa 1850, could have easily fit into a pocket. Another carved whalebone object circa 1850 shows a female torso riding a pie crimper like a unicycle. The gentle swelling of each of her breasts is topped with a small distended nipple. The artist gave the figure a well-defined waist and generous hips and abdomen. Incongruously, a forked object emerges from the region where we would expect a vagina, so that the torso seems to be penetrated by the handle of an enormous fork.[46]

We do not know where many of these objects were created, and the fact that sailors made such objects on whaling vessels during multiyear voyages means that there might be no single place of creation. Nonetheless, these objects displace the location of pornographic production from urban to oceanic. Scrimshaw objects demonstrate that the production and circulation of pornography occurred not only in larger, libertine centers but also on the edges of settlements onboard ships that were largely but not exclusively male. These objects demonstrate the efforts of whalers and sailors to describe sexuality using the materials around them. While the published pornography of the day could only reach elite audiences, these objects emerged from among the working classes and only became collectable objects among the elite in the twentieth century.[47]

Wood carvings were even more common than scrimshaw in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They range from curiosities to everyday objects—from the subtly suggestive to the explicitly erotic. A hand-carved cane produced in New England and dated to the 1880s features a woman doing a headstand. She rests her head on the shaft of the cane and tips her bent legs into the air so that they form the handle of the cane. The cane's maker skillfully depicted gravity working on her exposed breasts and the ways that the posture would create folds in her stomach and hips. The cane has been delicately painted, though much of the color has worn away over the years. Her posture exposes her naked buttocks and vulva; the cane's user would have his hand nestled against her naked slit.[48] Another carved cane

[46] Simpson, *Folk Erotica*, 30.

[47] For example, major collectors of pornography include H. S. Ashbee and George Mountbatten, 2nd Marquess of Milford Haven. Collectors have meticulously kept track of ownership of such volumes. See, for example, the attention given to a volume owned by the Duke of York in Mendes, *Clandestine Erotic Fiction*, 43n10.

[48] Cane, private collection, undated. This cane has been featured in Simpson, *Folk Erotica*, 40, and now belongs in a private collection in Pennsylvania. See Sigel, "Flagrant Delights," 104–11; phone interview with the collector, 30 April 2014.

from a decade or two later features a penis as the handle. The five-and-one-quarter-inch penis-shaped handle has just the smallest bulge at the base that hints at tightened testicles.[49] Anyone using the cane would have to tightly grip the shaft of the penis, right beneath the carved head, while the meat of the hand and thumb would press into the base and touch the testicles. This average-sized penis carving would fit comfortably in an average-sized hand. Would grasping the cane be autoerotic, homoerotic, libertine, or deviant? Who knows how users felt when grasping the penis cane, but given that antimasturbation medical rhetoric continued to circulate in America between 1890 and 1910 when someone made the cane, the creation of an object meant to be held and squeezed seems quite subversive.[50]

The nineteenth-century production of useable pornographic artifacts was augmented by any number of small figures whose sole purpose seems to be surprise. Small artifacts hid representations of sex beneath a respectable veneer so that it would pop out when the viewer pulled back a lid. For example, a small handmade box has a hand-painted chicken attached to the lid. When the lid is pulled back along the tracks, a handmade rooster springs out of the box on a wire and mounts the chicken. The box has been painted and ornamented with endpaper, making it appear to be a cherished object holding a treasured piece of jewelry. By heightening expectations in this way, the box's appearance makes the rooster's leap all the more abrupt and startling.[51] Another carved wooden object features a man in a barrel. When the barrel is lifted, the man's erect penis pops up. Created from three separate pieces of wood, the small artifact has been carved, joined, painted, and then colored with marker.[52] A third small folk-art piece shows a cut-out figure made of two pieces of tin joined with a hinge at the shoulder. The figure of a balding man drinks from a bottle with one hand, while the other hand gives a thumbs-up sign at his waist. When the two parts move along the hinge, the man drinks more deeply, and his erect penis slides out from behind his thumbs-up sign.[53] This accounting of small American hand-crafted objects would be incomplete without mention of the popular motif of dead men in coffins. Complementing the popularity of memento mori (artistic reminders of the inevitability of death) in nineteenth-century European and American society, American pornographic coffin figurines featured corpses with erections that pop out unexpectedly when the coffin lid is moved.[54] Often rough-hewn and unpainted, the coffins contain poorly wrought figures with less attention given to providing features than

[49] Simpson, *Folk Erotica*, 41.

[50] Jean Stengers and Anne Van Neck, *Masturbation: The History of the Great Terror* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 138.

[51] [Novelty moveable figures], [19——?], ISR 759, Kinsey Institute.

[52] [Man in a barrel], [19——?], ISR 480, Kinsey Institute.

[53] [Folk art], [19——?], ISR 1525, Kinsey Institute.

[54] [Coffin figure], held in the collection of Mark Rotenberg, Milford, NJ, viewed 13 July 2015; Simpson, *Folk Erotica*, 39.

genitals. These nineteenth-century hand-carved figures combine sex and death in ways meant to surprise.

Scrimshaw, carved, and surprise objects are evidence of how embedded sexuality was in everyday life. These objects illustrate sly and surprising forms of sexual expression, where sexual gestures stand right behind propriety and where erections pop up in staid places. They imagine nudity beneath any range of clothes, and they depict women as glorified in rich gowns, stockings, and shoes and as nude and dripping. Depicting male, female, and even animals' anatomy as sexual, they illustrate nudity, self-fondling, and penetration. They place desire in the kitchen, in the barnyard, and in the coffin. They make home into a sexual embrace. While their creators might be accused of adopting a leering attitude toward sexuality, these objects do not look like the slick leer of the sporting man. Instead, the objects appear amateurish and defined by their primitivism; problems with angularity and proportion suggest a grasping toward the embodiment of ideas rather than a sense of control over the medium and representation. These objects are gestures of individual desire rather than representations of the connoisseur's choice from a range of options. At the time these amateur objects were being produced, amazingly well-wrought material objects like snuff boxes whose lids contained miniature paintings of erotic scenes, erotic paintings hidden beneath the gilded fore-edge of books, and erotic bronzes were being produced for the rich in cities like London and New York.[55] Handmade and homemade objects were not made for sale, at least not in the nineteenth century. Instead, they spoke to less cosmopolitan desires, and they contained less sophisticated cosmologies. In communities where neighbors made each other's coffins, an erotic memento mori might lighten the seriousness of death. A barnyard scene like the cock mounting the hen or two dogs copulating stood as a reminder of the porous divide between animals and humans and between public and private. These objects represent both male and female sexuality in complicated ways—both clothed and unclothed, erotic and awkward—that counter any ideas that pornography commodifies only women's sexuality. They suggest the contours of male sexuality: physically, as in the carving of the phallic cane, and metaphorically in the carvings depicting male desire, as in the scrimshaw of coitus as "home sweet home." These objects show that for men, female bodies had a complicated erotic allure, and behaviors not generally associated with sexual responses—like urinating over a chamber pot—could evoke desire.

[55] Though no one has written on fore-edge erotica, these materials circulated among the wealthy. I saw one example in an antique bookstore in London in 1993. Steve Powers, a New Jersey antiques dealer, is an authority on erotic snuffboxes, and his collection illustrates the fineness of the medium. E-mail with images embedded, Steve Powers to Lisa Sigel, 7 May 2014. Donna Dennis mentions erotic snuffboxes and music boxes that circulated in Boston in the 1840s ("Obscenity Regulation," 42).

Nineteenth-century material artifacts like erotic scrimshaw and reworked coins testify to the durability of the raw materials. As these objects demonstrate, people invested time, assets, and skill for the pleasure of executing an idea. In contrast, paper goods took fewer skills and assets, particularly as paper grew less expensive, literacy rates rose, and more people had access to paper goods for inspiration and modeling. However, erotic pamphlets are ephemeral, and few examples of early pamphlets have been archived. The rarity of these objects makes each one particularly valuable. Paper goods offer an even wider idea of vernacular sexual culture because of the very limited set of skills necessary to make them.

Homemade pornographic pamphlets fall somewhere between the earlier tradition of pamphlets and what came to be considered zines. Sexuality was well represented in the pamphlets of eighteenth-century England and America; the very term "pamphlet" implied obscene and libelous materials made about the monarchy or state. Pamphlets allowed agitators to intercede in the political world by popularizing their ideas of reform and revolution, and they had a central place both in the American Revolution and in the Glorious Revolution that preceded it.[56] Though the political importance of the pamphlet continued well into the nineteenth century, the magazine (the pamphlet's more commercial cousin), with its new emphasis on fashion, fiction, and family life, began to dominate. Growing literacy rates, cheap paper stock, specialized content, and advantageous postal rates made magazines accessible to mass audiences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the 1930s zines emerged as a way to differentiate one's writings from commercial media even while following their pattern. First organized as fan fiction and then developing a countercultural response to industrial society, zines allowed individuals to write, narrate, draw, and craft their own stories.[57]

Obscene homemade and handmade pamphlets might be thought of as early zines. Stephen Duncombe has described zines as "scruffy, homemade little pamphlets. Little publications filled with rantings of high weirdness and exploding with chaotic design."[58] Similarly, the handmade pornographic pamphlets of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were made meaningful through their hand production, their materiality, and their individuality, all of which countered industrialized consumer culture. As Alison

[56] See, for example, Jason Peacey, "The Print Culture of Parliament, 1600–1800," *Parliamentary History* 26, pt. 1 (2007): 1–16; and Eric Slauter, "Reading and Radicalization: Print, Politics, and the American Revolution," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 8, no. 1 (2010): 5–40.

[57] Francesca Coppa, "A Brief History of Media Fanzine," in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays*, ed. Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse Jefferson (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006), 41–59, 42.

[58] Quoted in Alison Piepmeier, "Why Zines Matter: Materiality and the Creation of Embodied Community," *American Periodicals: A Journal of History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 18, no. 2 (2008): 213–38, 214.

Piepmeier argues, amateurishness defined these objects, and their creators took great pleasure in their creation. Unlike books, pamphlets, and magazines that demonstrate professionalism in writing, binding, and distribution, these objects register a "care that is invested in the material."[59] Like zines, obscene pamphlets resisted industrialization and allowed individuals who would have otherwise had no voice register their stories in intimate ways. Both in content and in form, pornographic pamphlets, like zines, celebrate the singular.

"A Pretty Girl's Companion and Guide to Loves [*sic*] Sweetest Delights," a homemade pamphlet produced at the end of the nineteenth century, exemplifies this form of individual free expression.[60] It details a cookbook of sexual desires that indicated an expansive sense of sexuality, including instructions for "back-skuttling" in a rush, "fucking a boy in the ass-hole," sucking men off, "jerking off," cunnilingus, bestiality, the "safe" periods for intercourse (recommending that girls are "safe" fifteen days after their flowers), and making a candle into a dildo. We also learn the history of the author's penis, and we are provided with various angle drawings of the penis, information of how to make a penis hard, and descriptions of various venereal diseases of the penis. The pamphlet resolutely sexualizes the world: homemade gravy becomes an aid to training a lap dog to lick a young girl's genitals, and a pretty girl's brother becomes the inevitable victim of male advances. The range of sexual pleasures undercuts any ideas of a pinched and sanctimonious sense of sexual opportunities. The writer details how he fellated men as a youth and his enjoyment of sucking both men and women. Sexuality pervades his life and colors everything in the pamphlet. Everyone—men, women, and dogs—becomes a possible sexual partner.

The pamphlet demonstrates how the author saw his world as rife with an erotic subtext deserving of detailed explication. It offers every evidence of careful and loving creation. The writer ruled the paper by hand and then wrote, inked, and colored each of the twenty-eight pages. The back-slanted block letters on the cover suggest that the script might not have been second nature to the writer; instead, the lettering shows the author's desire to embellish his creation. The writer clearly gave a great deal of thought to how to illustrate the booklet: drawings expose as much sexual activity as possible in a single frame. The approach creates problems with perspective, scale,

[59] Piepmeier, "Why Zines Matter," 235.

[60] "A Pretty Girl's Companion and Guide to Loves [*sic*] Sweetest Delights," manuscript, n.d., Kinsey Institute. Though "A Pretty Girl's Companion" was neither published nor dated, its illustrations featured the waistcoats, striped stockings, spectacles, and facial hair popular during the late nineteenth century. Further, an embedded reference to Kahn's Museum at the corner of Broadway and Waverly Place dates it after 1874. Kahn's Museum operated for decades in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a museum of semilicit thrills linking medicine with houses of horror and sensation. See "Dr. Kahn's Museum of Anatomy, Science and Art: 294 Broadway, above Houston Street, New York City: Gotham's greatest attraction, open day and evening from 9 A.M. . . . only to men," New York, [1880].

and chronology. In an illustration titled "Sucking his sweethearts cunt," the writer tried to illustrate cunnilingus, but the attempt to capture the act in its entirety creates a distorted representation of a "man and girl" (to use the writer's terminology).[61] The girl lies on her stomach with her rump in the air and the man reclining beside her. The man looks over his shoulder to consider her labia. The awkwardness of the pose is compounded by problems in scale. Her rump stands as high as his head; her torso appears twice as long as his, and his legs seems dwarfishly short and fat. The coloration of flesh tones is a sickly pinkish-brown. All of these attributes suggest primitive techniques and a lack of formal training. Nonetheless, as an illustration of cunnilingus, the image emphasizes what the author thought mattered: the woman's labia, the tongue that connected with it, the woman's dangling breasts, and the man's erect penis. Head and labia are on the same plane, and sexual organs are fully exposed to view. The distortions in anatomy and perspective serve to emphasize rather than obscure the writer's ideas about sex. The mechanics of the booklet thus suggest that this work came from a dedicated amateur who spent hours contemplating and then executing the panels.

Supposedly written as an educational guidebook for girls, the pamphlet loses track of its purpose and descends into an everyman's guide to forbidden knowledge. It begins with a clear imaginary reader, the young girl of its title. The implied reader receives direct advice from the writer. The writer explains how you, meaning the "young girl," can maximize pleasure by giving directions: "You throw your legs over his shoulders," and "you can reach down."[62] However, by the fourth page, the pamphlet loses track of who the reader is supposed to be and shifts its audience from a young girl to an implied male reader. The author gives advice on how to seduce boys: "Show any boy a few pictures and as you feel his cock you get him so hot he will suck your cock and let him do anything to you."[63] The shift in implied reader suggests how the author sees himself. In some places he wants to use his supposed experience and knowledge as a platform for teaching girls how to see, understand, and treat men; in these moments, he puts himself in the position of sexual tutor, engaged in a mutually beneficial relationship in which he exchanges wise counsel for the pleasures of sexual pedagogy. In other places, he is a man among men, exchanging knowledge and information about acts and positions, and he writes as an authority on matters of sexual health, illness, pleasure, and opportunity. Indeed, the author might never have cut a dildo from a candle and almost surely did not experience the pleasures of having both a cock and a cunt, as he describes the experience in the first person. Nonetheless, the writing of this pamphlet demonstrates how much he wanted

[61] "A Pretty Girl's Companion," 13.
[62] "A Pretty Girl's Companion," 1.
[63] "A Pretty Girl's Companion," 4.

to imagine lecturing those around him, both male and female, on sexual opportunity. The writer positions himself as the sage who provides free access to sexual knowledge.

While this pamphlet shows a certain familiarity with the world of commercialized sexuality, it seems as if the writer developed much of his material from his own imaginings. From the amateurish quality of his drawings to his directions for making dildos from candles (where published materials hailed leather and rubber wear as the preferred materials of choice),[64] this pamphlet illustrated this particular writer's conception and vision of sexuality. An amateur effort, the pamphlet demonstrated a vernacular, rather than a commercial, vision of sex. The desire for sexual variation (oral sex, anal sex, vaginal sex), for an expansive sex culture (men, women, dogs), for the circulation of information (how-to points, information about disease and conception) illustrates the man's vision of a sexual good life. This pamphlet demonstrates the writer's breadth of desire and his urge to articulate his own sexual stories, rather than just wanting straight sex. The author throws himself into the breach by detailing the acts that he felt were required of a sexually fulfilling life. A longing for self-expression colors every page of the pamphlet. In the absence of commercial pornography and information that could fulfill his needs, the writer willed this pamphlet into existence. Even more, however, this pamphlet reads like the articulation of a vernacular sexual tradition that envisioned a vibrant sexual world antagonistic to propriety and at war with all tenets of social control. This pamphlet wages a one-man war against a society that emphasized self-control and moderation.

This single pamphlet joins thousands of typed and handwritten pamphlets produced mostly in the first half of the twentieth century, suggesting that the pleasure in making DIY pornography had become popular. The BEM collection, named after the initials of the anonymous donor, was donated to Kinsey Institute in the 1960s.[65] BEM had specialized in collecting

[64] "A Pretty Girl's Companion," 19. On the popularity of the leather dildo, see Edward Kelly, "A New Image for the Naughty Dildo?," *Journal of Popular Culture* 7, no. 4 (1974): 804–9, 804. Descriptions of dildos are littered throughout pornography; for example, *The Pearl* (1879; reprint, New York: Grove Press, 1968), has numerous references to dildos, such as on page 279. The politics and history of dildos make fascinating reading; see, for example, Patricia Simons, *The Sex of Men in Premodern Europe: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Heather Findlay, "Freud's 'Fetishism' and the Lesbian Dildo Debates," *Feminist Studies* 18, no. 3 (1992): 563–79.

[65] According to Paul James Cross, staff member at the British Library, two men decided to dump their erotica collections as a result of the Profumo affair: David Mountbatten, 3rd Marquess of Milford Haven, who inherited a collection from his father, George Mountbatten, and Beecher Moore, an American expatriate. Moore decided to donate his materials to the British Museum. "The manuscripts were offered to the Department of Manuscripts, who declined them, and these together with the typescripts and illustrated materials were passed to the Sex Research Institute at Bloomington, Indiana, where they were received on 2 July, 1964" (Cross, "The Private Case: A History," in *The Library of the British Museum*, ed. P. R. Harris [London: British Library, 1991], 218).

handmade pamphlets of American and British origin, although some documents were typed on New Zealand military and intelligence stationery. The diversity of origin shows the wide circulation of documents across borders and boundaries,[66] while the creation of a thousand such pamphlets mostly from the early twentieth century suggests the widespread desire to author materials about sex. The existence of the BEM as a single large collection also demonstrates that acquiring and curating materials had its own appeal. The collection has been divided by types of bindings and themes into series like the Black Binding Series, the Red Binding Series, the Beige Humiliation Series, and the Wallpaper Series.

Handwritten and typed, the materials in the BEM collection run from a single page of much-edited poetry, in which the author was trying to work out the meaning and rhythm of erotic verse, to carbon-copied stories dozens of pages long that might have been produced on commission. Some of these materials remind us that hand copying remained a method of replication; one file of miscellaneous poetry, for example, includes a typed version of "'The Enchantment' by Lord Byron" on three A4 carbon-copy sheets held together by a straight pin, along with a two-page excerpt of Robert Burns's "The Merry Muses of Caledonia, 1768," erotic texts that remained rare and quite expensive.[67] In other words, the fact that the documents in these files are typed speaks to the technological limitations of replication in this era.

Other writers typed stories onto carbon paper that ran to dozens or even hundreds of pages.[68] Stories included plots driven by the desire to sexually humiliate and dominate women and men, bestiality, rape and torture, and even sexual murder.[69] The relative slickness of these productions showed itself in the very fine typing skills and the ability to sustain a single plot for an extended space. An examination of pamphlets, like coins, shows the ways that people saw sexuality around them.[70] They formulated complex

[66] This collection was anonymously donated in the mid-1960s. The catalog states that many of the materials in the collection were produced in the 1940s, but the bindings, content, and paper date some of the materials earlier.

[67] "'The Enchantment' by Lord Byron," Miscellaneous Poetry Series, BEM Erotic Manuscript Collection, Kinsey Institute; "The Merry Muses of Caledonia, 1768," Miscellaneous Poetry Series, BEM Erotic Manuscript Collection, Kinsey Institute.

[68] Harmon Jenkinsop, "The footman and the lady," Thread Bound Series, BEM Erotic Manuscript Collection, Kinsey Institute.

[69] See the following examples from the BEM Erotic Manuscript Collection, Kinsey Institute: "French Maid," Beige Humiliation Series; Erlon Mareston, "Animal Lovers," Beige/Blue Series; "Rape Is the Penalty for Beauty," 1963, 3, Rape and Torture Series; and Jean de Pavanne, "Crimson Passion."

[70] Some documents in the collection detail the erotics of office work and suggest the extent of boredom that might have inspired such productions. "The New Girl: An Office Idyll" is part of the Top-Bound Series, BEM Erotic Manuscript Collection, Kinsey Institute. It is wrapped in brown paper and joined with a single brass fastener. The poem was typed on paper with a side heading that reads "New Zealand Military Forces. War Diary or Intel-

sexual stories and envisioned a world replete with opportunities for sexual stimulation. All sorts of people were sexualized in these stories; the sexual gaze was turned on country girls, honeymooners, international drug dealers, secretaries, bosses, executives, old men, young men, servants, the rich, and the poor. Rather than depicting sexual desire as a simple desire for coitus, these pamphlets detailed the gamut of sexual desires, from sexual tomfoolery, to the creation of mutual pleasure, to sexual coercion and violence. The vernacular tradition acknowledged a wide range of impulses and an even wider range of sexual acts.

Whereas etching and stamping coins entailed metalworking skills and equipment, the creation of pornographic pamphlets demanded little more than a fervent imagination. A few sheets of paper and a couple of crayons was all it took to create a homemade, hand-illustrated pamphlet. The typewriter (and carbon paper that accompanied it) made the production of pamphlets faster still. The expansion of literacy and office skills gave authors the ability to detail their desires. While some writers referred to published pornography and racy literature, others showed little awareness of mechanically produced materials. The diversity of amateur experience found itself reflected in the wide range of ideas, skills, and knowledge about sexual culture in these materials.

The continued production of pamphlets and other forms of handmade and homemade objects well into the twentieth century suggests a longing that ran outside and alongside the growth of the pornography industry. Even during the years that saw the expansion of the commercial products, first with pulp magazines and then with blue movies, people created their own pornographic materials. Rather than merely consuming culture, some people responded to the growth of consumer culture by creating their own, building an assemblage of mediums and idioms and creating their own narratives of sexuality. Individuals illustrated, ornamented, stitched, and glued together materials; they combined colloquial expressions and local knowledge about bodies, fertility, pleasures, and disease with existing genres like how-to stories and office romances. Homemade and handmade pamphlets and other pornographic objects let people pitch their voices into the din. The hand work in the typed, hand-lettered, and hand-drawn pamphlets shows the care given to both the physical form of the object and the ideas that the form embodied. Whether callow or skilled, individuals gave care to storytelling. The creators of these works illustrated and explained that their ideas mattered and that they were agents of their own desires. In their insistence on individuality and the irreducibility of desires, these objects evinced a radical nonconformity. That radicalism might look

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ligence Summary. (Erase heading not required.) Summary of Events and Information. War. Form N.Z.—375. (In pads of 100.)." The rhyme scheme and the simple story of boss and secretary suggest that the emotion, art, and erudition were less important than the subversive act of typing pornography at the office as a way to combat boredom.

inchoate compared with the more formal radicalism of Enlightenment pornographers and their contributions to anticlerical and antimonarchical agitation,[71] but handmade and homemade pornography existed as a sort of democratic sexual expression that refused quiescence. Rather than relying upon commercial interests to generate sexual narratives or fitting individual desire into preexisting stories, the authors of these pamphlets plotted out their own stories of sexual desire.

When taken into consideration with other pornographic artifacts, like scrimshaw, carvings, and coins, pornographic pamphlets suggest that the impulse toward making pornography embraced whatever medium was available. Indeed, I could have continued the exploration of handmade pornography into other sorts of objects and into the twentieth century. Erotic paintings, glass objects, early photography, altered photographs . . . the taxonomy of homemade objects could continue. A glance on today's eBay offerings reveals hand-altered obscene coins from Weimar Germany and Byzantium; tomorrow's cache will no doubt feature even more distant places. Each of these objects tells us something about the people who created them, including information about their desires and demands. Each etched and stamped coin, each illustration, each handwritten story, each hand-lettered and hand-drawn pamphlet demonstrates an individual act of investment into the articulation of sexual energy. People who would never have had the chance to create high art or to publish fine literature created their own pornography and used it to articulate their own sexual stories. Besides their creators' ingenuity, these objects demonstrate attempts to fulfill needs not catered to in commercially available products; people filled their own needs in surprisingly painstaking ways.

Certainly, the border between commercial and vernacular culture remained porous, allowing ideas to circulate in both directions. However, the continued existence of handmade and homemade pornography suggests a genre robust enough to maintain itself in the face of commercialization. The vernacular could absorb the commercial and continue to operate. It could make use of coins and manufactured paper, it could build upon ideas of female fripperies from fashion books and then rework them in pornographic ways. Homemade and handmade materials proliferated despite the growth of consumer culture; despite the availability of "readers," cheap books that republished excerpts of pornographic novels; despite the development of early pornographic comic books called "8 pagers"; and despite stag collections in red light districts. Though industrial manufacture no doubt affected desires, it could not entirely define them.

[71] See, for example, Darnton, *The Literary Underground*, 207–8; McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, chap. 10. See also Lynn Hunt, introduction to Hunt, *Eroticism*, 1–13; Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers*, 21.

Adding homemade and handmade objects to our source base allows us to understand the history of pornography more completely by expanding the range of artifacts to consider. As historian after historian has stated, obscenity prosecutions in nineteenth-century America were so effective that we now suffer from a dearth of objects to study. Alongside the growth of a commercial market, however, ran a tradition of homemade artifacts. Commercialization neither won nor lost; in fact, it was not a marketplace battle at all, because the two realms overlapped in the nineteenth century, and both continued to exist into the twentieth. As the exploration of handmade objects dislocates the narrative of consumerist sexuality, so too it relocates the site of sexual articulation. From where did pornography emerge? Commercial pornography emerged from commercial centers like London, Paris, Amsterdam, New York, and Boston; noncommercial pornography seems less cosmopolitan in origin. Pornography from logging camps, from shipboard, and from rural communities shifts the site of erotic longings from the parlor to the barnyard and the kitchen. If commercial pornography depicted cosmopolitan pleasures, noncommercial pornography spoke of other sorts of sexual pleasures, like a good joke, an easy feel, an erotic sight, and a quick poke. People illustrated a nasty, hairy, libidinal sexuality that laughed and orgasmed and saw sexual potential in any range of partners. These objects show that people saw the world around them as highly sexualized and that they conceived of sexuality as both rampant and creative. These materials also speak to the cosmology of their creators, showing how they thought about the world of sex: people wrote about fucking boys and sucking off men as one of any number of available pleasures. They drew female bodies as lush and distorted and men's bodies as awkward and erect. They saw gazing at a woman's form as pleasure; they saw rape and coercion as pleasure; they saw a woman on a chamber pot as pleasure; they saw crudely made memento mori as pleasure.

If handmade and homemade pornography can be seen as documents of demand, as I have argued, then nineteenth-century Americans wanted pornography to consider sexuality firmly embedded in daily life. Rather than looking for sex with partner after partner in a dizzying progression—as was often the message of commercial productions—these objects looked carefully at individual sexual acts and sexual actors in everyday places. While this might have something to do with the medium of expression, it is also worth noting that these forms of sexual articulation and sexual pleasure seem to have been individually treasured and savored. These objects thus tell us something important about sexuality in nineteenth-century America that might otherwise be too easy to overlook. In the process, nineteenth-century homemade and handmade materials offer very pointed examples of sexualities unrestrained and slyly laughing at the slickness and cosmopolitanism available in other venues.

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