Remaking the Maternal Body in England, 1680–1730

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Aristotle's Masterpiece was the most popular medical book about sex and babies from its first publication in London in 1684 through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; it quickly became a steady seller on both sides of the Atlantic, going into hundreds of editions. The book's anonymous author advised readers about how frequently a married couple should have sex: "The Bridegroom should remember, that it is a Market that lasts all the Year, and to be careful that he does not spend his Stock too lavishly."[1] Sexual relations were thus imagined as market relations, with men as active purchasers and women as the passive objects of consumption. Since in early modern England most actual markets were not open every day of the year but only on market days once or twice a week, in this metaphor marriage grants men privileged sexual access to women. Married men can spend sexually every day, so that they need to—pardon the pun—husband their resources carefully.

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[1] *Aristotle's Compleat Master-piece*, 11th ed. (London: Printed and sold by the booksellers, [1715?]), 33. The *Masterpiece* exists in multiple versions and hundreds of editions; by the mid-eighteenth century, there were more editions of it than all other popular books on reproduction combined. This quote is from the third, and most popular, version, first produced in the early eighteenth century. The *Masterpiece* was assembled from pieces of earlier texts by an anonymous writer. Roy Porter, "'The Secrets of Generation Display'd': *Aristotle's Master-piece* in Eighteenth-Century England," in *'Tis Nature's Fault: Unauthorized Sexuality during the Enlightenment*, ed. Robert P. McCubbin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1–21; Mary E. Fissell, "Hairy Women and Naked Truths: Gender and the Politics of Knowledge in *Aristotle's Masterpiece*," *William and Mary Quarterly* 60 (2003): 43–74; Fissell, "Making a Masterpiece: The *Aristotle* Texts in Vernacular Medical Culture," in *Right Living: An Anglo-American Tradition of Self-Help Medicine*, ed. Charles E. Rosenberg (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 59–87.

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In this article I argue that this imagined connection between economic relations and sexual ones is historically specific and significant. As England's economy transformed into a commercial and financial powerhouse at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, those economic shifts were imagined and represented through women's reproductive bodies. While other scholars have focused on the figure of the prostitute or the middle-class woman eagerly buying new consumer goods as sites for the cultural management of such economic changes, I argue that representations of women's reproductive bodies, which mysteriously transformed a tiny bit of semen into a baby and then nourished the baby with milk, were productive yet troubling analogies to the mysterious generativity of capitalism itself. Popular medical books such as *Aristotle's Masterpiece* used metaphors drawn from commerce and finance to describe pregnancy, labor and delivery, and breast feeding. But beyond the printed word, this capitalist imaginary also played out on the ground in changing economic relations between women over breast feeding and on the streets of London in moral reform campaigns as new boundaries to market participation were built, tested, and policed.

Sexual relations were so often described in commercial metaphors in this period because English economic and commercial life was rapidly changing. In the later seventeenth century, the English economy underwent a series of related changes that put the nation on the path to becoming a world power. In the process, the monarch's individual spending was transformed into state or public debt, and high taxes underwrote a very substantial public debt that financed England's wars with the Netherlands and France and the expansion of its imperial power.[2] Connected to this transformation was the invention of the joint-stock company and the creation of a stock market in which shares in such companies could be bought and sold.[3] Officials pressured joint-stock companies to loan money to the government, meaning that private stockholders participated in the creation of public debt. The government also devised new means to borrow money from its subjects in the forms of annuities, lotteries, and tontines. While the consequences of the speculative stock frenzy called the South Sea Bubble were disastrous in the short run for individual investors, the stock market regained confidence and became a stable feature of the financial world. A satirical deck of playing cards on the topic of the South Sea Bubble nicely illustrates how financial impropriety was easily represented by sexual misbehaviors. For example, the jack of hearts shows a woman spurning the man who courted her when she made a fortune but then crawling back to him after she lost it again;

[2] On Treasury financing and the public debt, see P. G. M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study of the Development of Public Credit, 1688–1756* (London: Macmillan, 1967); on the military-fiscal state, see John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

[3] Bruce G. Carruthers, *The City of Capital: Politics and Markets in the English Financial Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

the six of diamonds is a woman who lacks the fine clothes she once had to impress her lover and now has to dress like "a common jade"; and the seven of hearts is a woman who refuses to go to bed with a man offering South Sea stock because she only deals in ready money.[4]

In the eighteenth century, England's economy began to explode with new consumer goods. Certainly there had been periods in the past in which material life suddenly tilted in the direction of the greater acquisition of goods. But the eighteenth-century phenomenon seemed unique to observers in terms of its scale. Never before had people wanted so many new things, it seemed, and never before had clever entrepreneurs such as Josiah Wedgwood been so able and willing to provide them.[5]

That the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries represented a pivotal historical moment has also been noted by the authors of foundational texts in the history of sexuality.[6] For example, Randolph Trumbach has argued that a new intermediate "third gender" was born in early eighteenth-century London as the first form of male homosexual community was created. Raids on so-called molly houses and public outcry against the men who frequented them created much more rigid boundaries for acceptable male self-presentation and sexual behavior.[7] In his overview of English sexualities, Tim Hitchcock built upon an idea of Henry Abelove's and suggested that sexual encounters between men and women became much more oriented toward penetrative sex in the decades after 1700.[8] Similarly, Thomas Laqueur has provocatively claimed that the publication

[4] In the satirical decks of playing cards issued about the bubble, sexual and gender relations are depicted as fully enmeshed in the financial world. See South Seas Bubble Collection, Baker Library, Harvard Business School. http://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/ssb/recreationandarts/cards.html, accessed September 10, 2015. The South Sea Bubble was the speculative boom and disastrous crash of a joint stock company designed to trade in South America, hence the name.

[5] For accounts of this explosion of the production of consumer goods, see Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, eds., *The Consumption of Culture, 1600–1800: Image, Object, Text* (New York: Routledge, 1995); John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993); Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660–1760* (London: Routledge, 1988); and Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[6] For a recent brief overview, see Michael McKeon, "The Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Sexuality Hypothesis," *Signs* 37 (2012): 791–801; and Thomas W. Laqueur, "The Rise of Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Historical Context and Historiographical Implications," *Signs* 37 (2012): 802–12.

[7] Randolph Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 3–8. See also his recent restatement of his position: "The Transformation of Sodomy from the Renaissance to the Modern World and Its General Sexual Consequences," *Signs* 37 (2012): 832–47. On a slightly earlier period, see the pioneering work of Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982).

[8] Tim Hitchcock, *English Sexualities, 1700–1800* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 27–37; and Henry Abelove, "Some Speculations on the History of Sexual Intercourse during the Long Eighteenth Century in England," *Genders* 6 (1989): 125–30.

of *Onania* in 1712 was a crucial turning point in the history of sexuality. It influentially depicted masturbation, formerly considered morally insignificant, as a dangerous, even life-threatening practice that embodied the twin threats of modernity: untrammeled commerce and the endless and asocial pleasures of reading fiction.[9] More recently, Faramerz Dabhoiwala has argued that the eighteenth century saw "the first sexual revolution," in which sexual relations became a matter for personal concern between consenting adults rather than the business of church authorities.[10] In other words, although these historians disagree about *what* exactly changed, all see the period 1680–1730 as crucial to remaking English sexuality.

Much of the scholarship on the connections between discourses of capitalism and sexuality has focused upon prostitution. But I would argue that to understand how intimately sexual metaphors were intertwined with the language of commerce during this period, we need to focus on women's reproductive bodies more generally, not just on the figure of the prostitute, and examine how they served as a means for imagining and naturalizing larger economic changes. Recent work on late seventeenth-century representations of prostitutes has shown how anxieties about luxurious dress and the fear that maids might be taken for their mistresses led to new forms of writing about prostitution and new representations of prostitutes. James Grantham Turner, Melissa Mowry, Laura Mandell, and Laura Rosenthal have usefully demonstrated how historically specific commercial anxieties were read onto prostitutes.[11] In the early eighteenth century, prostitutes were imagined to be almost unable to get pregnant and therefore functioned as the opposite side of the representational coin to the middle-class mother, who was generally depicted as engaged by pregnancy and breast feeding. Ballads, chapbooks, and moral reform tracts depicted the contrast and tension between the mother at home and the prostitute on the streets, deepening the geographic specificity of both. The engines of new economic relations, such as the Bank of England and the haunts of prostitutes, were described in specific locations in London on specific streets. Indeed, in the new retail shopping space called the Exchange, men who bought and sold stocks and prostitutes literally inhabited the same space.

[9] Thomas Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone Books, 2003), 25–41.

[10] Faramerz Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex: A History of the First Sexual Revolution* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

[11] James Grantham Turner, "Pictorial Prostitution: Visual Culture, Vigilantism, and 'Pornography' in Dunton's Nightwalker," *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 28 (1999): 55–84; Melissa Mowry, "Dressing Up and Dressing Down: Prostitution, Pornography, and the Seventeenth-Century English Textile Industry," *Journal of Women's History* 11, no. 3 (1999): 78–103; Laura Mandell, "Bawds and Merchants: Engendering Capitalist Desires," *ELH* 59, no. 1 (1992): 107–23; and Laura J. Rosenthal, *Infamous Commerce: Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

We find evidence of the use of this sexual imagery to mark economic geographies not only in the ballads of the day but also in a range of small printed works intended to advise, instruct, and amuse ordinary readers. My analysis is grounded in an examination of vernacular medical books—small inexpensive books that explicitly state that they are for a non-medical-professional reader. Such books go back to the dawn of the English printing industry, but like other vernacular works, they became much more numerous from the 1650s onward.[12] I also draw on both popular devotional works and conduct books, the small advice books that offered counsel about appropriate behavior and manners in a religious framework. Such works on religious themes were the largest single category of books produced in the eighteenth century, and they were very widely owned. For example, an eighteenth-century Somerset shoemaker possessed just a handful of books: the Bible, two devotional works, and two popular medical books, as well as a short work of fiction; such small libraries dominated by religious works were typical of artisanal households.[13] Finally, I situate these medical and devotional books within the larger universe of what historians call "cheap print"—the lowest common denominator of print, such as ballads, chapbooks, and news-sheets. Many of these works might have been read aloud—or even sung—and were thus consumed by people who lacked the skill of reading, as well as by their literate counterparts.[14] In sum, I analyze two kinds of advice literature, medical and religious, and relate them to cheap print in order to excavate systems of meaning that were widely available in print culture.

In what follows, I argue that although cheap print had long depicted female reproductive bodies using imagery about economic production, in the late seventeenth century, older workshop metaphors about reproduction were supplanted by commercial and mercantile images. These mercantile

[12] For an introduction to vernacular medical works and their readers, see Mary E. Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Paul Slack, "Mirrors of Health and Treasures of Poor Men: The Uses of the Vernacular Medical Literature of Tudor England," in *Health, Medicine, and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Charles Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 237–74. On conduct books, see R. C. Richardson, "Social Engineering in Early Modern England: Masters, Servants, and the Godly Discipline," *Clio* 33, no. 2 (2004): 163–87.

[13] James Lackington, *Memoirs of the First Forty-Five Years of the Life of J.L.* (London: Printed for the author, 1792), 91. Lackington himself left Somerset and life as a shoemaker to become a celebrated London bookseller; here he was recalling the master to whom he was apprenticed as a teenager.

[14] Of course, cheap print was not just consumed by people at the lower end of the social scale. One of the largest collections of late seventeenth-century ballads extant today is that collected by Samuel Pepys. Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). See also Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); and Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500–1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).

images about the female reproductive body created some unexpected connections amongst breast feeding, masturbation, female desire, and prostitution, connections that were often mutually reinforcing. Relationships between new economic forms and the female reproductive body were forged, I argue, both in the realm of the imagination—in medical and devotional works and cheap print—and in concrete economic encounters between mothers and wet nurses. I conclude by arguing that images of the prostitute, the economically active doppelgänger of the middle-class mother, became located in specific London streets. Both in moral reform literature and in bawdy cheap print, the very same London streets that were home to new financial institutions were also the haunts of prostitutes, underlining the ways in which female reproductive bodies seemed to echo economic processes. Arrest records suggest that actual prostitutes did indeed walk the streets of London's emerging financial district, that the imagined landscape of cheap print was echoing lived experience.[15]

Women's reproductive bodies had been described in terms of artisanal production metaphors at least since the advent of the printing press.[16] Such comparisons varied from building to alchemy but tended to center on a vaguely defined sequence of concoction, storage, and construction. In 1651 Nicholas Culpeper compared "making seed" (that is, the body making what we would call ova) to construction, describing how the preparing vessels were like laborers who carried bricks and mortar to the masons who build a house.[17] In 1671 Jane Sharp referred to the seed as "the workmaster which makes the Infant."[18] Like the agricultural images so often used in midwifery texts, these representations were grounded in the material realities of early modern England, where most goods were made in the home or in small family-run workshops.[19] Making babies, these images suggested, was much the same as building a house or casting metal.

[15] Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution*, 112–34; Henderson, *Disorderly Women*, 53–57.

[16] Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies*, 202–3.

[17] Nicholas Culpeper, *A Directory for Midwives, or A Guide for Women* (London: Printed by Peter Cole, at the Sign of the printing press in Cornhil, near the Royal Exchange, 1651), Thomason E.1340(1), 9. Cheap print can be bibliographically challenging. In what follows, I use the customary references to catalogs of early modern printed books in English, such as Thomason and Wing, which assign specific "call numbers" to each edition; this citation is thus to page 9 of the book cataloged as E.1340(1) in the Thomason Tracts, a printed catalog of a collection in the British Library. However, scholars now usually use the English Short Title Catalogue Online (http://estc.bl.uk) to access such bibliographic details; the ESTC utilizes the older references to the printed catalogs such as Thomason to identify specific editions. Where no page number is indicated, the work is a broadside, that is, a single sheet of paper printed on one side, making page numbering redundant.

[18] Jane Sharp, *The Midwives Book* (London: Printed for Simon Miller, at the Star at the West End of St Pauls, 1671), Wing (2nd ed.), S2969B, 86. On agricultural metaphors for reproduction, see Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies,* 31–32, 201–7.

[19] Carole Shammas, *The Pre-industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 17–51.

Around the turn of the early eighteenth century, older workshop metaphors were replaced by images that were much more specifically about financial markets and international trade, while workshop images gradually took on a commercial aspect. For example, descriptions of seed making as a sort of craft process often shifted to the language of trade to discuss the storage of seed. Writers such as Jane Sharp compared the saving up of sperm to the accumulation of goods in a warehouse, describing "the stores and magazines of the Seed," or "storehouses" constructed so that "the whole should not be wasted in one act."[20] This image of saving up seed was usually only applied to men, thus portrayed as thrifty, provident, calculating merchants in control of their wares. The word "magazines" added a military flavor to the metaphor, imagining seed to be like ammunition.

While male seed is metaphorically linked to a warehouse of ammunition or weapons by the late seventeenth century, medical texts start representing women as passive goods or containers of goods to be traded or sold. Late seventeenth-century texts begin to equate a pregnant woman with a ship laden with merchandise. For example, in his 1694 book, James Macmath uses a lengthy description of a ship's voyage to explain pregnancy: "The Impregnant Woman, embarques upon a Voyage so long and perilous through such rough and rocky seas . . . that she needs all careful Conduct to save her from these Rocks, upon which else, she either lyes miserably Split (especially if more britle and heavy Laden, whome the smallest Blast and Shake easily Shipwracks, sometimes most suddenly, yea, while also near the Harbor)."[21] If she is not "split" upon the rocks, she may miscarry there, losing her cargo. This description depicts pregnancy as a potentially violent process ("miserably Split" and "Blast and Shake") while making it clear that such violence could be the result of the woman's own lack of "careful Conduct." If she makes it past the dangerous rocks, there are still threats ahead, but the pregnant woman becomes more passive, a mere container: "The chief Concern and Care, is about her right Unloading and Delivery, that being brought safe to Port, she and the Child be well, with safety and convenient speed parted."[22] Here the role of the woman/ship is to be unloaded and to permit the removal of the goods/child.

Robert Barret's 1699 midwifery guide contained a similar set of images and made punning use of a number of words that referred both to child-

[20] Jane Sharp, *The Compleat Midwife's Practice Enlarged* . . . , 3rd ed. ([London]: Printed for Nath. Brook at the Angel in Corn-hill, 1663), Wing (2nd ed.), C1817E, 45; Sharp, *Midwives Book,* 15.

[21] James Macmath, *The Expert Mid-Wife: A Treatise of the Diseases of Women with Child and in Child-bed* (Edinburgh: Printed by George Mosman, and are to be sold at his shop in the Parliament Closs, M.DC.XCIV. [1694]), Wing (2nd ed.), M222, sig. A4v. Early modern printed books such as this sometimes lack pagination; scholars use the signature markings as a reference instead. This cite is to the fourth page of signature A, on the "verso" (obverse) side of the page.

[22] Ibid.

birth and to commerce. "The Womb may be fitly compared to a rough Sea, in which the Child floats for the space of nine Months," he argued. "The Labour of Delivery, is the only Port, but full of dangerous Rocks. The Woman, after she has arriv'd at the desired Port of Delivery, and has disengag'd herself of her loading, has yet much need of help to defend herself against a great many Inconveniencies, which may ensue upon her Travel."[23] We still use the words "labor" and "delivery" in childbirth and in commerce. "Travel" was also a pun. It meant either a journey or the pains and labor (from the French word *travail*) of childbirth.[24] As in the prior example, women's reproductive bodies are reimagined as passive vessels, loaded with valuable cargo and traveling in dangerous waters. The women themselves do not steer the ship but only passively permit it to be unloaded.

These types of metaphors lived on into the eighteenth century. In 1724 John Maubray built upon the metaphor of trade to cast himself, and his book, as the pilot for this dangerous process. Describing his role in managing labor and delivery, he wrote, "In this nice Affair, like a faithful Pilot, in a narrow Channel, I shall not only point-out the Barrs and Rocks, on which she may be Shipwreck'd, but also direct and prescribe her Course, by which she may sail safe into her wish'd for Port."[25] Maubray's function was then to ensure that the woman and her cargo were secured.[26] In other words, through the actions of men, acting as merchants, pilots, and dockworkers, a pregnant woman will deliver a valuable cargo that by implication represents a profit for its investors.

Such commercial metaphors also structured the third version of *Aristotle's Masterpiece*, cited at the beginning of this essay, which was first produced in the early eighteenth century. The book warns young women not to dawdle too long in marrying, since "if they keep [their virginity] too long, it grows useless, or at least loses much of its Value: a stale Virgin (if such a Thing there be) being look'd upon like an old Almanack out of Date."[27] This statement contradicts much of what we know about family formation in early modern England, in which young people only got married when they were economically able to form their own households. Young working women married relatively late, on average around age twenty-four, often after having spent as much as a decade as household servants. In theory,

[23] Robert Barret, *A Companion for Midwives, Child-Bearing Women, and Nurses* (London: Printed for Tho. Ax, at the Blue Ball in Duck-Lane, 1699), Wing B913, 37.

[24] As the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes, the words "travel" and "travail" were etymologically the same in the Middle Ages, only slowly becoming differentiated with different stresses. See http://www.oed.com.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/search?searchType=dictionary&q=travel&_searchBtn=Search, accessed July 27, 2016.

[25] John Maubray, *The Female Physician containing all the Diseases incident to that Sex in Virgins, Wives and Widows* (London: James Holland, 1724), ESTC T45777, 70.

[26] See also ibid., 74, where Maubray casts himself as the pilot of a ship, who is not always available, so that instructions must be given to the steersman.

[27] *Aristotle's Masterpiece* (1715?), 25.

both men and women postponed marriage until they each were able to bring sufficient means of survival—cows and cooking pots, for instance—to form a new household.[28] *Aristotle's Masterpiece* presents the issue differently, imagining a marriage market in which women lose their value over time (rather than accruing saved wages) and ultimately become utterly without value.[29]

The same version of the *Masterpiece* goes on to depict sexual relations within marriage, offering a poem for a man to say to his wife to seduce her. The lines are drawn from a much longer one by Thomas Carew (1595–1640), a poet associated with the court of Charles I. Decades later, the anonymous compiler of the *Masterpiece* rearranged the lines of Carew's poem, inverting its meaning. Carew's version lauds extramarital sexual liaisons, but in the *Masterpiece*, the rearranged verse serves to place sex within marriage. The first two lines do not come from Carew: "Now my fair Bride, now will I storm the Mint / Of Love and Joy, and rifle all that's in't."[30] Rather than purchasing a woman in a market, the narrator implies that he will invade her body, imagined as a passive and valuable item of consumption. Her body is a mint, the place where new coins / new babies are stamped out in the image of a male ruler/father. The poem continues by employing the ship metaphor, but it reverses the usual gender roles: the ship becomes a phallic symbol: "Whilst my tall Pinnace in the Cyprian Strait, / Ride safe at Anchor, and unlades the Freight."[31] The woman is compared to a pilot, who steers the ship by means of a phallic rudder. The "Cyprian Strait" represents the female genitalia; it is a term most often used in bawdy ballads or pornographic literature.[32] Although the usual woman-

[28] E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541–1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 265–69; Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[29] This devaluation of women appears at the same time that the sex ratio in England was skewed strongly; it has been argued that there were 1.3 adult women for every male in London in the later seventeenth century, largely owing to migration and military service. See, for example, D. V. Glass, "Two Papers on Gregory King," in *Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography*, ed. D. V. and D. E. C. Eversley (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., [1965]), 167–220, cite is to 207.

[30] *Masterpiece*, 11th ed. (1715?) 33. This kind of borrowing and rearranging was commonplace in English print culture at midcentury; see Arthur Marotti, *Manuscript, Print and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Adam Smyth, *"Profit and Delight": Printed Miscellanies in England, 1640–1682* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004).

[31] *Masterpiece,* 11th ed. (1715?), 33.

[32] On the meanings of "Cyprian," see Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearian and Stuart Literature* (London: Athlone Press, 1994), 1:359–60. On pornographic literature of the period, targeted to a small elite readership, see Sarah Toulalan, *Imagining Sex: Pornography and Bodies in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Karen Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

as-ship is inverted, the woman's body in the poem is compared to valuable goods, such as ivory and gold, and it is referred to as "Virgin Treasure." In other words, she is still rare merchandise.

Despite the frequency of this type of imagery, metaphors that connected new economic processes with female reproductive bodies were often unstable. Such figures of speech could be subverted to transform economically passive pregnant women into their opposite: economically active prostitutes. For example, in a ballad, "Jenny" explains that she took her "virgin treasure" and used it to make money for herself as a prostitute:

> Then I never shall be poor,
> But have Gold and Silver store . . .
> Virgin treasure I'll use at pleasure,
> why shou'd not young Lasses make use of their own?[33]

Before turning to prostitution, Jenny had worked at a quintessentially female task: spinning. In the seventeenth century, such work was performed within the home and was not nearly as remunerative as prostitution. But then Jenny became her own business person, using her sexual capital for her own pleasure and profit.

Popular medical books were a part of this larger cultural tendency to connect women with commerce and serve as an example of how each of these two categories was used to deepen the negative aspects of the other. Women's sexual desire, or their desire for consumer goods, made a mercantile economy seem morally dubious, while the complex intersections of pleasure and profit in a merchant economy could be used to cast women as prostitutes. On another level, both capitalism and reproduction contained a mystery at their heart: the seeming transformation of a tiny bit of material (seed, money) into something much larger and more valuable (a baby, riches). As a 1720 satire about the South Sea Bubble explained: "Our cunning South-Sea, like a God, Turns Nothing into All Things."[34] The interior economy of the body, which transmuted blood, seed, and breastmilk, seemed as mysterious as the commercial economy, in which pieces of paper created or destroyed wealth.

In addition to imagining women's bodies as precious cargoes, treasures, or goods in a shop, economic changes recast women's reproductive bodies in ways that removed them from the marketplace, both literally and

[33] "The Country Lass, Who Left Her Spinning-wheel for a More Pleasant Employment. To the tune of My maid Mary" ([London]: Printed for P. Brooksby, J. Deacon, J. Blare, J. Back, [1690?]), Wing (CD-ROM, 1996), C6540, http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/21305/image. The ballad presents a naive view of the economic relations of prostitution. A detailed analysis of the economics of prostitution is available for Amsterdam in this period; see Lotte van de Pol, *The Burgher and the Whore: Prostitution in Early Modern Amsterdam*, trans. Liz Waters (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 167–99.

[34] Ned Ward, *A Looking-Glass for England: or, the [succ]ess of stock-jobbing explain'd, [writ]ten by a true-born Englishman, and recommended to the serious* . . . (Bristol: S. Farley, 1720).

symbolically. Just as imagining a woman as a treasure denied her the possibility of becoming an economic actor, discussions of breast feeding in popular medical books constructed a female body whose sole purpose was to nurse her children, thus removing her from economic activity. After exploring how medical books shifted from an emphasis upon choosing the right wet nurse to urging mothers to breast-feed their own babies, I will look closely at a text that uses breast feeding both literally and symbolically to remove women from economic activity.[35] By the late seventeenth century, breast feeding was an economic activity in the process of being transformed from paid employment to voluntary labor, but it also came to function as a cultural signifier of a good mother who was insulated from the world of commerce.

When a baby was born to a middling or upper-class family in the seventeenth century, its parents had two choices about its nourishment: either the baby could remain with its mother for her to breast-feed, or the baby could be sent to a wet nurse, often located in a small rural or suburban village. I will refer to the former choice as "breast feeding" and the latter as "wet nursing," although obviously wet nurses breastfed their charges. A third choice, artificial feeding, began to be practiced in aristocratic families in the late seventeenth century, but it remained a rarity and often killed the infant.[36] In manuals up to the end of the seventeenth century, the choice is often between a good wet nurse and a bad one, rather than between the baby's mother and a wet nurse.[37] Of course, a woman hired as a wet nurse had had a baby of her own, but popular medical books never discuss the health of that child or the probable effect upon it of early weaning or of

[35] Patricia Crawford, "'The Sucking Child': Attitudes to Child Care in the First Year of Life in Seventeenth-Century England," *Continuity and Change* 1, no. 1 (1986): 23–51; and Crawford, "The Construction and Experience of Maternity in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Women as Mothers in Pre-industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, ed. Valerie Fildes (London: Routledge, 1990), 3–38. Linda Pollock has disagreed with Lawrence Stone's argument that the shift from wet nursing to breast feeding was part and parcel of a larger reconfiguration of family life toward a companionate bourgeois form. See Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1550–1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), esp. 114; and Linda Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). The most important work on the history of infant feeding has been done by Valerie Fildes. See her *Breasts, Bottles and Babies: A History of Infant Feeding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1986); and *Wet Nursing: A History from Antiquity to the Present* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988). See also David Harley, "From Providence to Nature: The Moral Theology and Godly Practice of Maternal Breast-feeding in Stuart England," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 69, no. 2 (1995): 198–223.

[36] Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles, and Babies*, 289–92.

[37] See, for example, *Every Woman her Own Midwife* . . . (London: Printed for Simon Neale at the Sign of the Three Pidgeons in Bedford-Street near Covent Garden, 1675), Wing E3553, 18–19.

sharing its mother's milk with the nursling.[38] Walter Harris, whose focus was on children's health, provides a very good example of such advice about selecting a wet nurse. His 1693 text argued that a wet nurse who drinks or who has sex with her husband is a bad choice, ignoring the fact that most wet nurses were married.[39] The most common stereotypes of the faults of wet nurses were the two Harris mentioned—sex and drink—and the threat that a baby could imbibe harmful substances or ailments from its wet nurse's milk.[40]

Although Harris's arguments look much like those of later writers who were trying to persuade mothers to breast-feed, he mostly argued for the careful choice of a wet nurse. Passages that allude to funeral bells for dead nurslings evoke the reader's feelings of sympathy "for some child that is undeservedly Atoning and Expiating the faults and mistakes of its Nurse."[41] He tells an anecdote about the rector of Hayes, a village twelve miles from London with many nurse-children from the city. One year, this rector buried almost all of the babies in his parish because of overly mercenary or bad wet nurses who did not provide adequately for their charges.[42] Again, this tragic picture is only intended to persuade a reader to choose a good wet nurse, not to nurse her baby herself.

In the 1690s books sung the praises of breast feeding but also provided the kind of advice on picking a wet nurse that had been a staple of midwifery guides from the early seventeenth century. Robert Barret, for example, draws upon religious discourse to argue for breast feeding, arguing that

[38] The only book to mention the wet nurse's child was *The Countesse of Lincoln's Nurserie*, a very unusual text. It was written by a mother who advocated breast feeding but did not claim medical knowledge as such. Elizabeth Clinton, Countess of Lincoln, *The Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie* (Oxford: Printed by Iohn Lichfield, and Iames Short printers to the famous Vniversitie, 1622), STC (2nd ed.), 5432.

[39] English customs were unusual in this regard. In Scotland and in some places on the Continent, wet nursing was a form of employment for unwed mothers, who lived in the household rather than taking babies into their own homes. For the early seventeenth century, Linda Campbell shows that there were strong social ties between the Townshend family and their wet nurses, who may have lived in; see "Wet-Nurses in Early Modern England: Some Evidence from the Townshend Archive," *Medical History* 33, no. 3 (1989): 360–70. At the household level, see also Jane Whittle and Elizabeth Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth-Century Household: The World of Alice Le Strange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). On the later shift that brings wet nurses into the homes of their employers, see Marissa C. Rhodes, "Domestic Vulnerabilities: Reading Families and Bodies into Eighteenth-century Anglo-Atlantic Wet Nurse Advertisements," *Journal of Family History* 40, no. 1 (2015): 39–63.

[40] For example, it was well known that babies could contract syphilis from breastmilk and that nurses could reciprocally contract syphilis from nurslings.

[41] Walter Harris, *An Exact Enquiry into, and Cure of the Acute Diseases of Infants* (London: Printed for Sam. Clement at the White Swan in St Pauls Churchyard, 1693), Wing (2nd ed.), H883, 18.

[42] Ibid., 19.

"'tis both unjustifiable and horrid, that Christians should make the good and benefit of their children truckle to their own sloth and niceness."[43] However, Barret's arguments are preceded by some of the most specific advice to mothers about selecting and managing wet nurses in such popular medical books. Like almost all of the popular books about childbearing up to 1700, he takes an equivocal position about breast feeding versus wet nursing. Although these authors all refer to the benefits of maternal breast feeding, that advice is undercut by their detailed instructions on how to choose a wet nurse. But as we will see, this medical advice would change dramatically in the wake of late seventeenth-century religious arguments. In the 1690s clergymen published sermons and advice books arguing vehemently for maternal breast feeding and taking a more extreme position than medical writers. John Tillotson, the archbishop of Canterbury, for example, promoted maternal breast feeding in his published sermons.[44]

Given the focus on selecting the right wet nurse in late seventeenth-century medical texts, it is something of a shock to move a few decades into the eighteenth century and encounter the vivid ornate prose of *The Ladies Dispensatory*, which condemns any mother who would not nurse her own child. This anonymous medical guide was published by James Hodges, one of the men who produced editions of the best-selling *Aristotle's Masterpiece*. The *Dispensatory* invoked both God and Nature to persuade women to use the bodies that God gave them to nurse their own babies. The introduction thunders: "Can you think, that Nature should have furnished Women with these two beautiful Excrescencies for Ornament only, and not rather for the Support and Sustenance of her Children?" The passage continues by comparing women who do not breast-feed, who "extinguish that sacred Fountain," to women who have abortions "for the Sake of Beauty and Shape."[45] Invoking past criticisms of wet nurses, the book threatens that babies will be "corrupted by the base Mixture and Allay [i.e., Alloy] of a Stranger's Milk," and the child's first love for its parent will become "bias'd and perverted." "It is no wonder that we see so many Children bear so little Resemblance of their Parents," warns the book, invoking the image of children who did not look like their fathers, and thus a larger set

[43] Barret, *Companion for Midwives*, 90. "Niceness" here is pejorative; it means an excessive delicacy.

[44] John Tillotson, *Six Sermons* (London: B. Aylmer, 1694), Wing (2nd ed.), T1268A. On the larger religious context, see Harley, "From Providence to Nature."

[45] *The Ladies Dispensatory: or Every Woman Her Own Physician* . . . (London: Printed for James Hodges, at the Looking-Glass on London-Bridge; and John James, at Horace's-Head under the Piazza of the Royal-Exchange, M.DCC.XXXIX [1739]), ESTC T127083, vii–iii. It should be noted that this is a completely different book from the 1651 one of the same title and that this *Dispensatory* was in extensive dialogue with *A Rational Account of the Natural Weaknesses of Women* . . . , 2nd ed. (London: Printed, and sold at the Two Blue Posts; and A. Dodd, [1716]), ESTC T18464. I have been unable to find a copy of the first edition. Both works went into multiple editions.

of anxieties about paternity more common in Restoration-era texts.[46] Just as the prostitute's endless demands for money could threaten the transmission of property from father to son, so too the wet nurse might undermine a father's confidence that his son was his own and thus worthy to inherit his property.

The *Dispensatory* is the first popular medical book to use extensive arguments about duty and nature to persuade women to breast-feed their infants, although the arguments themselves were not new. Despite being a medical text, the *Dispensatory* recasts the debate about wet nursing versus breast feeding as a moral rather than a medical issue. To do so, the *Dispensatory* adapted material from sermons and devotional works. The author borrowed extensively from the 1694 sermon of John Tillotson, the archbishop of Canterbury. The *Dispensatory* quotes Tillotson's argument that mothers need to be shown that "nursing their Children is a natural Duty."[47] Tillotson compared wet nursing to exposing children—he called it little better than just laying them in a street and hoping that some kindly person would care for them. The *Dispensatory* drew on similar analogies when it compared a mother's refusal to breast-feed to an abortion. The *Dispensatory*'s reliance on Tillotson's sermon is fairly obvious, since the quotations are direct, although he is not cited by name. There are also echoes of Henry Newcombe's sermon *The Compleate Mother* (1695) in the *Dispensatory*. Newcome's sermon was the most extensive religious argument for maternal breast feeding made in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. That the *Dispensatory* relied on Newcombe's example is evident in word choice and theme: breasts, for example, are referred to as excrescences that must have a natural purpose beyond display. Both texts also refer to wet nurses' milk as containing an "Allay" (i.e., an alloy) that contains base metals, as well as those of value.

The fact that the *Dispensatory* took its arguments for breast feeding from religious texts rather than previous medical or prescriptive literature demonstrates the shift away from an emphasis on the physical and moral qualities of the wet nurse common in the later seventeenth century to a focus on the natural and social responsibilities of maternity in the eighteenth century. A woman's duty was toward her child, and only breast feeding could insure that infants would imbibe appropriate values and familial appearances along with mother's milk.

One of the important ways that the *Dispensatory* breaks with earlier popular medical texts is in its implicit denial of the concrete economic relations of mothers and wet nurses. Recent historical studies have begun to show us what wet nursing might mean from the nurse's perspective. Quite simply, wet nursing was the most remunerative employment most married

[46] *Ladies Dispensatory*, ix, x.
[47] Tillotson, *Six Sermons*, 103; *Ladies Dispensatory*, xi.

working women could possibly obtain.[48] Even John Tillotson had to admit, albeit in a moment of criticism, that wet nurses made good money, starting with the "excessive, not to say extravagant," tips they received at the baby's christening.[49] This highly paid work could also be fully integrated into women's unpaid domestic labor. At the very moment when a woman was pulled out of much potential wage work because of the demands of child rearing, the product of her body could command cash wages. Historians of the life cycle remind us that families were economically at their most vulnerable when children were small, since women's wages evaporated, while men's rarely expanded sufficiently to cover the gap, and very small children could not earn money or perform household tasks.[50] Wet nursing must have been the economic salvation of many a working household near a large city.

On the other side of the bargain, a working woman who put her baby out to wet nurse was free to work for wages or to participate fully in domestic production. In his sermon, Henry Newcome specifically targets this motivation for wet nursing, criticizing the wives of "the Trading part of the Nation" and dismissing their claims to productive labor by portraying them as covetous. He refers to the wife "who by her Inspection over the Household Affairs, or Attendance at a Shop, may save her Husband much more than the Hire of a Nurse."[51] For some women, the costs of wet nursing could be outweighed by the unpaid but crucial labor they performed, such as minding the shop and feeding, clothing, and housing apprentices for a husband who ran a workshop. For others who ran their own shops, the cost of a wet nurse was clearly offset by the income derived from uninterrupted trading. Wet nurses provided much more than breastmilk; they performed round-the-clock childcare every single day for the first year or eighteen months of a child's life. Many mothers were quite aware of the tangible and intangible economic bonds between themselves and their wet nurses. Not only was a wet nurse often selected by the mother, it seems that mothers visited their infants while they were at the wet nurse's home.[52]

When texts such as the *Dispensatory* inveighed against wet nursing, they attacked the economic status of two women simultaneously: the mother and the wet nurse. Middling and working women's potential economic produc-

[48] Valerie Fildes presents evidence that weekly payments to a wet nurse may have ranged between four and eight shillings a week. Male agricultural laborers would not have made much more than eight shillings per week and did not have constant employment, while a wet nurse with an infant could expect to be paid for an entire year or more. Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles and Babies*, 159–62.

[49] Tillotson, *Six Sermons*, 105.

[50] Richard M. Smith, "Some Issues Concerning Families and Their Property in Rural England 1250–1800," in *Land, Kinship, and Life-Cycle*, ed. Richard M. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1–87, esp. 69–71.

[51] Henry Newcome, *The Compleat Mother* (London: Printed for J. Wyat at the Rose in St. Paul's Churchyard, 1695), Wing N893, 94.

[52] Crawford, "The Sucking Child," 33–34.

tivity was obscured or ignored. Their "natural duty," providing breastmilk and childcare, was duty, not employment. Poorer women who depended upon wet nursing to balance a family's income were portrayed as careless, diseased, and dangerous to a middling family's integrity. Indeed, Newcome raises the specter of changelings. He suggests that a wealthy woman who puts her child out to nurse might not receive her own child back again. Her own child might have died due to ill care, or the wet nurse might have substituted her own infant for the nursling in the hopes of giving her child the kind of upbringing she could never provide herself.[53] Thus middling women who breastfed were keeping their family's priceless honor intact rather than building the economic resources of the household.

The *Dispensatory* not only removes women from literal economic relationships but also uses symbolic resources, especially images of the female breast, to exclude women from the very idea of the marketplace. In particular, the work tries to separate sexuality from maternity. It was widely believed that sexual intercourse might dry up or spoil a woman's milk, so women were advised to abstain from sexual relations while nursing. Ruth Perry and others have described this separation of maternity and sexuality in post-1750 medical books, novels, and other works of fiction. Perry argues that the implicit conflict between a husband's sexual desire for his wife and the needs of an infant was resolved in the infant's favor by the later eighteenth century. She cites a wide array of pre-1750 sources, from religious works to novels, suggesting that husbands often advocated wet nursing over breast feeding so that they could resume sexual relations with their wives well before the usual time that those mothers might have weaned their infants.[54]

Henry Newcome, for example, tells wives that they must obey their husbands, even if those husbands forbade them from breast feeding. However, on the next page, he addresses himself to those husbands: "If the Word of God and the Law of Nature oblige them [mothers] to Nurse, it obliges you to teach them their Duty . . . and not hinder them from it."[55] A conduct manual for young men similarly emphasized that it was a mother's duty to breast-feed and by implication her husband's duty to permit her to do so. In *A Cap of Grey Hairs for a Green Head*, Caleb Trenchfield advises his male readers: "If God shall give you Children, it is the Duty, which each Mother to her Off-spring owes, to be its nurse as well as Bearer."[56] Both Newcome and Trenchfield thus acknowledge that they must work to persuade both fathers and mothers of the duty of breast feeding.

[53] Newcome, *The Compleat Mother*, 49.

[54] Ruth Perry, "Colonizing the Breast: Sexuality and Maternity in Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2, no. 2 (1991): 204–34.

[55] Newcome, *The Compleat Mother,* 106–7.

[56] Caleb Trenchfield, *A Cap of Grey Hairs for a Green Head: or, the Fathers Counsel to his Son*, 5th ed. (London: Printed for A. Bettesworth, 1710), ESTC T108565, 133.

The chief reason why men might have been interested in their wives wet nursing instead of breast feeding was so that they could resume sexual relations with their wives (breast-feeding women were supposed to abstain from sexual relations), but most advice and medical books did not acknowledge this desire openly.[57] *The Ladies Physical Directory*, a popular medical book engaged in a dialogue with the *Ladies Dispensatory*, did not mention sex directly but referred to a husband's desire for pleasure. Describing a wife who wanted to breast-feed, the book notes: "But the Gentleman, what with thinking it would abridge him of the great Pleasure he took in frequently going into the Country with his Lady, and to bright Assemblies, and the usual Diversions in Town . . . absolutely refused his Assent."[58] This cautionary tale is characteristic of the text's novelistic aspects: the baby died, and the husband, grief-stricken and having investigated infant feeding, learned about the importance of breast feeding. The couple did not have another child for seven years, but after taking the author's special remedies, they had three children in five years, all of whom, needless to say, were breastfed.

None of the medical or religious works discussed above ever hinted that a woman might wish to hire a wet nurse so that *she* could resume sexual relations with her husband. Desire was assigned exclusively to husbands. Nor was it ever suggested that a woman's breasts might be sources of erotic pleasure for her, as well as nourishment for a baby. However, these books cannot wholly dismiss female desire. Some books displace female sexual desire onto women's wishes to engage in an urban social life in much the same way as *The Ladies Physical Directory*'s gentleman who wished to attend "bright assemblies." For example, John Tillotson's sermon describes "restraint" (what we'd probably call "limitations") as one of the reasons why women avoid breast feeding: "And as to Restraint, it can only restrain from spending the Morning in superfluous Dressing, the Day in formal and impertinent Visits, the Evening at lascivious Plays, and much of the Night in Gaming and Revelling."[59] Notice how all the activities are centered on gratifying aspects of female desire: adorning the body, pursuing "impertinent" visits, attending "lascivious" plays, and impulsively spending money on gambling. This mother is not restricted to the home but enjoys a range of urban consumer pleasures in a variety of sites, spending money on fashion, at the theater, and on gambling.

[57] Demographic historians have examined how this prohibition, in conjunction with the contraceptive effects of prolonged lactation, may have affected birth intervals. Indeed, those villages in which many women worked as wet nurses have been shown to have longer average birth intervals than other villages, but there is no evidence that contemporaries perceived a link between diminished fertility and lactation. See Fiona Newall, "Wet Nursing and Child Care in Aldenham, Hertfordshire, 1595–1726: Some Evidence on the Circumstances and Effects of Seventeenth-Century Child Rearing Practices," in Fildes, *Women as Mothers*, 122–38.

[58] *The Ladies Physical Directory, by a Physician*, 7th ed. (London: Printed, and sold by the Author's Appointment, 1739), ESTC N19116, 96.

[59] Tillotson, *Six Sermons*, 100, quoted in *Ladies Dispensatory*, xi.

This passage of Tillotson's sermon is inserted into the *Dispensatory* as a part of the larger argument that recasts wet nursing as a moral rather than an economic issue. Then, just a few paragraphs later, the book changes tack and makes its case by deploying fantasies about the female reproductive body. The submerged fascination with female desire, so carefully written out of the discussion of breasts, returns in a dramatic discussion of female masturbation. This discussion is taken from the runaway best seller *Onania*, the first book in English on the topic.[60] Few if any other books directly combine excerpts from an archbishop of Canterbury and the anonymous author of *Onania*! An analysis of this unusual combination reveals how issues about breast feeding were symbolically, as well as literally, connected to the marketplace.

After the *Dispensatory*'s discussions of breast feeding in the introduction, the first chapter of the book is devoted to a discussion of the "secret vice" of masturbation that is largely composed of rearranged (and unattributed) excerpts from *Onania*. Only female masturbation is criticized; there is no discussion of male masturbation whatsoever. The discussion portrays female sexual desire as dangerous and aberrant. The dreadful consequences of youthful errors are described through stories about unhappy women, many of whom were unable to bear children, such as one who "had been shewn this abominable Vice at Boarding-School." She experienced various uterine ailments, and worse yet, did not wish to have sex with her husband. For another young woman, masturbation was a pathway to death itself via the "furor uterinus": "In the Fits of it she would scream out, talk obscenely, pull up her Coats, or throw off the Bed-Cloaths, endeavoring to lay hold of any Man she saw, that he might lie with her."[61] Female sexual desire did not get much more threatening than this scene.

Another tale from *Onania* retold in the *Dispensatory* dramatized the dangers of female masturbation to marriage and family life. It described a young woman who continued masturbating after she married, "but what was worse, she continued the Practice after Marriage, and owned she had more Pleasure in it than in Copulation, altho' her Husband was a brisk young Man." This young woman was condemned to barrenness: "Her Womb was so slippery, that it was next to impossible for her to conceive in that Condition."[62] Here again, women's sexual desire is shown to be dangerously incompatible with motherhood. This story did have a happy ending: the woman was saved by the author's proprietary remedies, and she fulfilled her marital role by bearing children and forsaking the practice of masturbation.

[60] On *Onania*, see Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 25–31; and for different perspectives, Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution*, 63–64; Michael Stolberg, "Self-Pollution, Moral Reform, and the Venereal Trade: Notes on the Sources and Historical Context of *Onania* (1716)," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9, no. 1/2 (1999): 37–61.

[61] *Ladies Dispensatory*, 7–8.

[62] Ibid., 9.

These two stories and the one about the man whose desire to gad about town led him to force his wife to employ a wet nurse illustrate a range of connections between sexual desire and parenthood. For the man whose desire to attend "bright assemblies" led him to lose his baby, the remedy was relatively simple: he gave his wife patent medicines and permitted her to breast-feed, which she had wanted to do in the first place. It is no accident that this solution was compatible with what the author of *The Ladies Physical Directory* described as appropriate female maternal desires. Female sexual desires were, on the other hand, much more dangerous. In one story from the *Dispensatory*, a woman was literally dying from the consequences of masturbation. In the other, a married woman satisfied her own desires, ignoring her husband, and in reproductive terms became like a prostitute, unable to reproduce. While a prostitute's desire was for money and this woman's was for masturbation, both inappropriate desires could result in infertility. It is this textual failure to fully contain or control female desire, describing it in colorful detail, that highlights the difficulties inherent in reconstituting women as a sex easily able to trade the gratification of sexual desires for the comforts of maternity.

The story of the slippery womb also points toward the symbolic links between desire and the marketplace. Not only is female spending on "superfluous Dressing" or "lascivious Plays" analogous to the temporary fulfillment of desire, the very existence of desire threatens an image of marriage in which a wife is subservient to her husband and places his wishes before her own. In particular, the story of the slippery womb invokes the image of the prostitute. Over and over again, popular medical books explained that the womb is a place where the seed of a new being will sprout—a task that required just the right temperature and level of moisture. Whores' wombs could not retain a man's seed because the womb was slippery from overuse. As *Aristotle's Masterpiece* explained, "Common Whores (who often use Copulation) have never, or very rarely, any Children: for the grass seldom grows in a Path that is commonly trodden."[63] Despite what must have been lived experiences of prostitutes getting pregnant, it was widely believed that they were infertile.

In the late seventeenth century, moralists and medical writers who inveighed against prostitution emphasized the financial transactions between customer and prostitute. They began to draw a distinction, in other words, between a prostitute, who traded sex for money, and a woman who merely had illicit sexual relations.[64] Authors such as the advice writer William Assheton insisted that prostitutes ruined men economically, particularly by spending their way through a man's estate. Their desire, expressed as desire for money rather than sex, was limitless. Assheton warned a male reader

[63] *Masterpiece*, 11th ed. (1715?), 43; see also Sharp, *Midwives Book,* 80; Culpeper, *Directory for Midwives*, 33.

[64] Trumbach, *Gender Revolution*, esp. 135–68.

in 1702 that it would be the ruin of his estate if a woman ensnared him: "She will always be wanting something" until he is reduced to beggary.[65] The first edition of *Aristotle's Masterpiece* makes much the same point in a chapter on marriage. It compares harlots to those "who draw those that follow their misguiding Lights, into places of danger and difficulty, even till they have shipwracked their Fortunes, and then leave them to struggle with the tempestuous Waves of Adversity."[66] In other words, the harlot or prostitute—the public woman—is dangerous because her desires are never satisfied. Her desire for money is even more dangerous than that for sex, since it can financially ruin a man. As Laura Rosenthal argues, it is at this moment that prostitution became reimagined as a specific economic exchange and thus a rich site for critiques of capitalism.[67] The act, exchanging sex for money, becomes recast as an identity, that of a prostitute, and desire for sex is recast as desire for money. This emphasis upon the dangers that whores pose to a man's estate and to family life is historically specific to the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; at other moments prostitutes have been portrayed as diseased or as threatening to men's morality and salvation.[68] In *Aristotle's Masterpiece* and other writings from the period, prostitutes are threats to the orderly succession of property from father to son.

These historically specific anxieties about prostitution and property are connected to the social anxieties brought about by England's transformation into a commercial nation. Gendered images of precious goods, imported merchandise, and the economic relations that provided these rarities were commonplace in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Literary scholar Beth Kowaleski-Wallace has analyzed many types of texts, from Alexander Pope's poetry to anonymous pamphlets, to show how women were figured as rare, costly, and fragile commercial goods, like porcelain imported from China.[69] More generally, scholars have argued that many texts depict merchant capitalism as a feminized form of business, thus symbolically

[65] William Assheton, *A Discourse against Drunkenness* (London: Printed by Tho. Bradyll, and are to be sold by Richard Sympson, [1702]), ESTC R172589, 19–20.

[66] *Aristotles Master-piece, or, The secrets of generation displayed in all the parts thereof* (London: Printed for J. How, and are to be sold next door to the Anchor Tavern in Sweethings Rents in Cornhil, 1684), Wing (2nd ed.), A3697fA, 60. This is the first edition of the first version of the *Masterpiece*.

[67] Rosenthal, *Infamous Commerce*, 30.

[68] Prostitution has been linked to VD in many contexts; the classic discussion is Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society, Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); see also Kevin Siena, "Pollution, Promiscuity, and the Pox: English Venereology and the Early Modern Medical Discourse on Social and Sexual Danger," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8, no. 4 (1998): 553–74; Phillipa Levine, "Venereal Disease, Prostitution, and the Politics of Empire: The Case of British India," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4, no. 4 (1994): 579–602.

[69] Beth Kowaleski-Wallace, "Women, China, and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-Century England," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29, no. 2 (1995–96): 153–67.

making women the bearers of those aspects of new economic practices that many found morally repugnant. The quest for profit then took on a kind of erotic charge.[70] Many of the authors of these texts depicted capitalism as female by casting *all* female economic activity as prostitution. Historians have recently begun to document the growing significance of new female investors in the eighteenth-century stock market at the same time that these negative gendered representations of women and finance were circulating. Despite these negative images, some upper- and middle-class unmarried women were able to utilize these new financial forms to generate incomes, granting them some measure of financial independence.[71]

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, popular print emphasized that prostitutes were generally to be found in certain districts of London. These genres eroticized particular urban spaces, making the distinction between stay-at-home mothers and city prostitutes one of geography, as well as sexuality. The figure of the breast was a particularly powerful way to evoke this contrast between the marketplace, where whores were to be found displaying their breasts in low-cut gowns, and the home, in which mothers were supposed to nurse their children. The precise pattern of sexualizing of women in public was historically specific, and I do not want to suggest that there is an essential or timeless dichotomy between nursing mothers and whores or domestic and public spaces.

Conduct manuals of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries made a symbolic link between female desires to go shopping or attend the theater, so criticized by John Tillotson, and the marketplace and the figure of the prostitute. The authors of books on moral behavior repeatedly admonished women who wanted to go shopping, attend plays, and spend money on fashion in terms that evoke prostitution. For example, in his conduct book about youth, Robert Codrington had used much the same language that Tillotson would adopt, faulting women who "spend the

[70] Mandell, "Bawds," 108–9; Laura Brown, *The Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993). See also Catherine Ingrassia, "The Pleasure of Business and the Business of Pleasure: Gender, Credit, and the South Sea Bubble," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 24 (1995): 191–210; Ingrassia, "Money and Sexuality in the Enlightenment: George Lillo's 'The London Merchant,'" *Historical Reflections / Réflexions historiques* 31, no. 1 (2005): 93–115; Melissa K. Downes, "Ladies of Ill-Repute: the South Sea Bubble, the Caribbean, and the Jamaica Lady," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 33 (2004): 23–48.

[71] See, for example, Anne Laurence, "Lady Betty Hastings, Her Half-Sisters and the South Sea Bubble: Family Fortunes and Strategies," *Women's History Review* 15, no. 4 (2006): 533–40; Laurence, "Women, Banks and the Securities Market in Early Eighteenth Century England," in *Women and Their Money 1700–1950: Essays on Women and Finance*, ed. Anne Laurence, Josephine Maltby, and Janette Rutterford (London: Routledge International Studies in Business History, 2009), 46–58; Judith M. Spicksley, "Women, 'Usury' and Credit in Early Modern England: The Case of the Maiden Investor," *Gender & History* 27, no. 2 (2015): 263–92; and Amy Froide, *Silent Partners: Women as Public Investors during Britain's Financial Revolution, 1690–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Afternoon in needless Visits, immodest Objects, and light Presentments."[72] He argued that

> they [women] give too much and too loose Reins to Liberty, making Pleasure their Vocation, as if they were created for no other end, than to dedicate the first fruits of the Morning to their Looking-glass, and the Remainder of it to the Exchange. The Artificiall Colour is no sooner laid on their faces, but the Play-Bills for that Day must be brought unto her by her Pensioner whom she keeps in Constant pay for that Purpose; her Eye views it and reviews it, and out of her Female Judgement, she makes choice of one which she is resolved to see, purposely to be seen.[73]

Codrington thus connects a number of female activities that he views as failings: desires to appear in public, to spend money, to adorn oneself, and to enjoy a play.

Devoting a part of the day to "the Exchange" had sexual resonances; the Exchange was a public commercial space where female merchants sold their wares (often ribbons, laces, trinkets, and other merchandise intended for women's consumption). Women of fashion went to be seen there, but it was also a place where prostitutes plied their trade. One moralist described the Exchange as "arsenals of choice vanities."[74] The 1675 satirical chapbook *Ape-Gentle-woman, or the Character of an Exchange-wench* made it clear that women who worked in or near the Exchange selling trinkets were no better than prostitutes: "She's but one Story above a common Harlot, and when ever she falls from her Shop, drops into a Brothel-house."[75] Similarly, theaters were associated with prostitution, giving female theatergoing a sexual overtone. Being in public teetered dangerously close to being a public woman.

Two new genres of cheap print in the latter half of the seventeenth century focused on the specific public spaces in which prostitutes worked; these urban spaces were the very same in which the key institutions of mercantile capitalism were located. First, after 1660, London publishers and printers began to produce a range of items about London prostitutes that I will call "night-walking texts," following John Dunton's 1696 *The Night-walker: or, Evening Rambles in Search after Lewd Women*.[76] From

[72] Robert Codrington, *The Second Part of Youth's Behaviour* . . . (London: Printed for W. Lee, 1664), C4878, 21.

[73] Ibid., 38–39.

[74] Hannah Woolley, *The gentlewomans companion* (London: Printed by A. Maxwell for Dorman Newman at the Kings-Arms in the Poultry, 1673), Wing (2nd ed.) W3276A, 59.

[75] *The Ape-Gentle-woman, or the Character of an Exchange-wench* (London: Printed for Francis Pye, 1675), Wing A3527, 1.

[76] See Matthew Beaumont's recent book *Nightwalking: A Nocturnal History of London, Chaucer to Dickens* (London: Verso, 2015), esp. 146–68; and John Dunton, *The Night-walker: or, Evening Rambles in Search after Lewd Women, with the Conferences Held with Them, &c.* (London: Printed for J. Orme in St. Bartholomew's-Hospital, 1696–97).

broadsides to chapbooks, these works packaged details of prostitutes' lives for a wide audience. For example, the broadside ballad "Newes from Hide Parke" is a song about a man who picks up a prostitute in London's Hyde Park.[77] Or there is the 1691 chapbook *Catalogue of Jilts, Cracks, Prostitutes, Night-walkers, Whores . . .* , which claims to list twenty-two women who can be found in Smithfield every night from the hours of eight to eleven.[78] One of the striking features of this new Restoration literature is its emphasis upon place. Smithfield and Hyde Park are specific locations in London. In *The Night-walkers Declaration*, one prostitute says, "Fleetstreet, Holborn, and Cheapside it self, can witness with how many industrious and weary steps we have trac'd along even till ten at night."[79] The 1660s serial publication called *The Wandring Whore* is replete with geographic details; one issue mentions Katharine-wheel Alley in Bishopsgate-street; the postern by Moor-gate; and Petty-France, just on the first page.[80] This publication reveled in details; each issue included a list of "Crafty Bawds, Common Whores, Wanderers, Pick-pockets, Night-walkers," and more. Sometimes names and locations were specified: "Mrs. Eaton, a Maiden-head-seller on the Ditch-side," "Elizabeth Herbertson, in New-Market," and "Mrs. Jones in Cross-lane." A ballad called "A Market for Young Men" echoed this fascination with the specific places in the city where specific whores worked: an unnamed woman at Maidenhead Court; Madame Mosella at a house outside of Temple-Bar; a squire's young miss who had been at Pall-mall but was now at the Bell tavern, and so on.[81] Whether these women actually existed or not, these small cheap texts seem to borrow a commercial accounting style to inventory the whores on the streets of London.

[77] *Newes from Hide-Parke* (London: Printed by E. Crowch, for F. Coles, T. Vere, and J. Wright, [n.d.]), Wing (2nd ed.) N97. On prostitution in London in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, see T. G. A. Nelson, "Women of Pleasure," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 11, no. 1 (1987): 181–98; Randolph Trumbach, "Sex, Gender, and Sexual Identity in Modern Culture: Male Sodomy and Female Prostitution in Enlightenment London," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2, no. 2 (1991): 186–203; Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution*; Tony Henderson, *Disorderly Women in Eighteenth-Century London: Prostitution and Control in the Metropolis, 1730–1830* (London: Longman, 1999); and Paul Griffiths, "Meanings of Nightwalking in Early Modern England," *Seventeenth Century* 13, no. 2 (1998): 212–38.

[78] *A Catalogue of Jilts, Cracks, Prostitutes, Night-walkers, Whores, She-friends, Kind Women . . .* (London: Printed for R. W. near Smithfield, 1691), Wing (CD-ROM) C1339B.

[79] *The Night-walkers Declaration* (London: Printed for D.M., 1696), Wing (CD-ROM) N1156, 5.

[80] *The Wandring Whore*, no. 2 (London: Printed in the year 1660), Thomason 156:E.1053[3], 3.

[81] *A Market for Young Men: or, a Publick Sale in Sundry Places in and about London, Where Young Beautiful Virgins and Graz'd Widows are to be Sold for Clip'd Money . . .* (London: Printed for E. Tracy, on London-bridge, [1688–94]), Wing (CD-ROM), M610A. Eben Tracy, the publisher of this ballad, also produced a version of *Aristotle's Masterpiece*. "Temple bar" refers to the old city gate on Fleet street; this woman would be found in a house in the area just outside the gate.

There is an odd echo of the geographic mappings of whores in a very different genre, namely, the publications of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners. These societies, first founded in the 1690s, were groups of men who met together to combat what they saw as signs of England's wickedness. They paid informers and initiated legal proceedings against wrongdoers to ensure prosecution in a period when the application of the law was often still dependent upon the activities of private individuals.[82] Blaspheming, swearing, selling goods on the Sabbath, theatergoing, and prostitution—all urban sins that took place in public on the streets—were the focus of the groups' attention. There was a gendered component to these preoccupations. Prostitutes were female, and many of the people arrested for selling food on the Sabbath were also female, while the members of the societies, constables, informers, and other legal personnel who enforced these strictures were largely male.[83]

As Margaret Hunt has noted, one of the most remarkable aspects of the societies was their obsessive record keeping.[84] The unintended consequence of this attention to detail, I suggest, was the continued or even enhanced eroticization of specific urban spaces. London had as many as twenty societies for reformation, and the accumulated prosecutions brought by the societies numbered in the thousands annually.[85] Because the societies published an annual report, readers everywhere could follow the details of the campaign to clean up the city's morals. Interestingly, from 1700 to 1707, the only offenses listed in the reports were sexual: "lewd and disorderly people" and keepers of "bawdy houses."[86] This list, which was published both as a part of a report of the societies' doings and as a separate broadside that could be hung on a wall, bears an eerie resemblance to the night-walking texts. In each instance, vice is personified and particularized, located in a specific female body within London, even within a specific street. Indeed, John

[82] A. G. Craig, "The Movement for the Reformation of Manners, 1688–1715" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1980); Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England, 1680–1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 101–24; Robert B. Shoemaker, "Reforming the City: The Reformation of Manners Campaign in London, 1690–1738," in *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems in England, 1689–1750*, ed. Lee Davison, Tim Hitchcock, Tim Keirn, and Robert B. Shoemaker (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1992), 99–120; Faramerz Dabhoiwala, "Sex and Societies for Moral Reform, 1688–1800," *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 2 (2007): 290–319.

[83] For names, see the broadside *A Black list of the names or reputed names of seven hundred and fifty two lewd and scandalous persons* (London: Printed, MDXCVII [1698]), Wing B3043A. On a slightly later period, see Heather Shore, "'The Reckoning': Disorderly Women, Informing Constables and the Westminster Justices, 1727–33," *Social History* 34, no. 4 (2009): 409–27, on the role of Reformation of Manners Societies in targeting women.

[84] Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, 101–24.

[85] Dabhoiwala, "Sex and Societies for Moral Reform," 301.

[86] *Proposals for a National Reformation of Manners* (London: Printed for John Dunton, at the Raven in the Poultry, MDCXIV [1694]), Wing P3725. The broadside equivalent is *A Black list of the names or reputed names of seven hundred and fifty two lewd and scandalous persons* (London: Printed, MDXCVII [1698]), Wing B3043A.

Dunton's 1696 *The Night-walker* seems to court a kind of genre slippage. He had published a genuine reformation of manners text two years earlier, but his 1696 work contains details about which streets he walked and the conversations he had with prostitutes he found in them.

Randolph Trumbach's work on the arrests and prosecutions of prostitutes in London in the early eighteenth century gives a material dimension to the fantasies of the night-walking texts and the obsessive lists of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners. He shows that it is in this period that London developed a long promenade linking the City to Westminster for the first time—a promenade quickly populated by whores walking individual beats.[87] The commercial heart of the City, with the Bank of England, coffeehouses, and the Exchange populated by stock-jobbers, was bisected by the whores' promenade.

It is in this figure of the prostitute that the themes of this article are united: she embodies the troubling relationship of pleasure to profit, of a commodified body available for hire, of a woman who divided sexuality from maternity but chose the former over the latter. Her breasts were not emblems of motherhood; rather, their display served as an advertisement for her trade in sex. Images of commerce and trade thus played complex roles in the construction of a female body. At the very moment when middling women were being urged to withdraw from literal and symbolic markets (the use of wet nurses and enjoying shopping and theatergoing), their reproductive bodies were reimagined as commercial objects, ships bearing cargoes.

Metaphorical systems such as these are often two-way, each term reshaping the other. Women's reproductive bodies helped people to imagine the making of money and vice-versa. One last example of this figurative system could be seen on the London stage from 1728 onward. In act 2, scene 13 of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, the wildly popular musical satire about highwaymen, Newgate prisoners, and other London low-life characters, Polly Peachum sings that she has been deceived. Macheath, to whom she is secretly married, has been having sexual relations with an array of women. Singing "I've been bubbled," Polly reveals that the South Sea Bubble had entered slang as a term for being cheated. What makes the song funny, however, is that she is bubbled in another way—she sings the song while she is heavily pregnant, swollen with Macheath's child.[88] In the satirical world portrayed in Gay's play, the ways that female reproductive bodies are like the mysteries of the stock market are such a commonplace that they serve to make the audience laugh.

In conclusion, this article has explored the ways in which England's transformation into a mercantile and financial powerhouse were represented and naturalized in images of women's reproductive bodies. Figuratively,

[87] Trumbach, *Sex and Gender Revolution*, 112–35.

[88] John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera. As it is acted at the Theatre-Royal in Lincolns-Inn-Fields* (London: No publisher, MDCCXXVIII [1728]), 36. Many thanks to Carl Estabrook for this reference.

popular medical books transformed older workshop metaphors, in which a baby was produced in an artisanal process, into figures of speech that made babies into new items of long-haul commerce, brought in on ships and safely delivered by men. Once those babies were born, devotional and popular medical books began to proclaim that they had to be insulated from the market, fed at home by their mothers rather than put out for pay to a wet nurse. While pregnancy and delivery might be imagined in economic terms, this new advice literature emphasized that the actual commodification of reproductive processes in buying and selling breast milk was unacceptable. Middle-class mothers could not hire another woman to nurse their babies so that they could engage directly in the market, selling wares in the Exchange or managing their husbands' businesses. Such mothers were imagined as lacking sexual desires, although advice literature often seemed to return to issues of female desire via discussions of masturbation and/or prostitution. The negative connotations of new economic relations were read onto the figure of the prostitute, who was imagined to be unable to bear children but whose desires for money threatened the prosperity and financial security of her clients. Prostitutes were independent economic actors whose desires were rich fodder for the imagination of readers, while mothers were discursively removed from the market, feeding their babies at home with breast milk.

The net of references traced here was complex, but so too was the world of stock markets, profits from overseas trade, and investment banking. Reproduction, some aspects of which remain mysterious to us even today and the mechanics of which were very poorly understood at the time, was a rich and detailed way to think through the substantial economic changes England experienced in the commercial and financial developments of the turn of the eighteenth century. The processes through which the negative aspects of such economic changes were imagined in gender terms also had potential consequences in actual markets, since they encouraged moralists to insist that women—or at least mothers—could not be independent economic actors. The women who were independent actors were prostitutes, whose outsized financial desires threatened the economic stability of middling families. Representations of each kind of reproductive body—that of the prostitute or that of the middle-class mother—shadowed each other, functioning to embrace the contradictions of mercantile capitalism, rendering its workings seemingly natural.

About the Author

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