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AMOROUS TOYS AND VAIN DELIGHTS:
EARLY MODERN PROSE ROMANCE TALES
AND THE USES OF EROTICISM

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Chapter One

Amorous Toys and Vain Delights: Early Modern Prose Romance Tales and The Uses of Eroticism

Sexuality must not be described as a stubborn drive, by nature alien and of necessity disobedient to a power which exhausts itself trying to subdue it and often fails to control it entirely. It appears rather as an especially dense transfer point to relations of power... Sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of maneuvers and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies. (103)

--Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality

...the concrete institutional forms of sexuality at any given time and place are products of human activity. They are imbued with conflicts of interest and political maneuvering, both deliberate and incidental. In that sense, sex is always political. But there are also historical periods in which sexuality is more sharply contested and more overtly politicized. In such periods, the domain of erotic life is, in effect, renegotiated. (267)

--Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality"

In Elizabethan and early Stuart England, marriage and sexual morality were of more central social and political concern than they are today. Then as now, the family based on the conjugal couple was the primary matrix of procreation and of the socialization--in contemporary terms, the 'education'--of the young. To a greater extent than at present, the family household was important as a unit of production and consumption, as a vehicle for the accumulation and transmission of property, and as the fundamental institution of social order and political authority. (125)

--Martin Ingram, Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640

It seems likely that, if they could, neither Gayle Rubin nor Michel Foucault would agree with Martin Ingram that sexual morality is less central to twentieth-century social and political concerns than it was to sixteenth-century England. However, Ingram's linking of sexuality and marriage does point to a crucial aspect of the renegotiation of the "domain of erotic life" which was taking place in early modern England. Historians of the early modern period in England, like Lawrence Stone, Joan Kelly-Gadol, Ralph Houlbrooke, Peter Laslett and Ingram himself, have consistently argued that changes in the economic system from feudalism to capitalism brought about an enormous pressure on the family system, marriage, and sexuality, transforming these aspects of culture, so they would better support the new economic order.¹ Therefore, the early modern period would be one of these periods, to which Rubin alludes, when sexuality is under negotiation, both sharply contested and strictly policed. Literary critics have seen this negotiation in such diverse cultural phenomenon as wives' killing husbands on the London stage (Belsey Subject), the rise of an ideology of conduct for women (Armstrong and Tennenhouse), the pamphlet wars over the

nature of women (Henderson and McManus), and attacks on cross-dressing in the theater (Orgel, Rackin "Androgyny," Howard "Crossdressing," and Levine). Most of these cultural phenomena have in common a concern with and fear of a female sexuality that threatens to unravel the fabric of society when it is not effectively policed or secured within the bonds of marriage.

This dissertation adds prose romance tales to the list of cultural productions that were engaged in the process of renegotiating sexuality in early modern England. It examines the representations of female sexuality within the genre, the attacks on the genre, the uses for the genre described by the author and bookseller, and the audiences which were imagined for particular works within the genre. Although prose romances seem an ideal place to examine early modern ideas about sexuality, little attention has been paid to their role in the struggle to redefine sexual desire and marriage in this period.² The largest part of the critical work on early modern romance focusses on Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia, the only prose romance to have endured in the current literary canon; and much of that work focusses on Sidney's role in power struggles between aristocratic men

and Queen Elizabeth.³ Much recent feminist work on romance has focussed on Lady Mary Wroth's Urania, sometimes in terms of its connection with her uncle Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia.⁴ The early Italianate romance tales that I will be addressing have been largely ignored except as sources for Shakespeare plays.⁵

Although the place of prose romance genre in the literary canon has been made more secure by this recent work on the Sidneys, early modern prose romances have a history of critical attack that stretches back over 400 years. Sixteenth-century humanists like Juan Luis Vives, in Instruction of a Christian Woman, and Roger Ascham, in The Scholemaster, suggested variously that reading romances would destroy family structure and national security. In the seventeenth century, prose romances were derided as a "feminine" genre, popular with women and apprentices;⁶ and in the twentieth century John Carey proclaimed that Elizabethan fiction "was thoroughly and ... deservedly dead" (361). These diverse criticisms generally focus on the non-elite audiences for the genre and its subject matter--sexual desire, love, and marriage. It is just these concepts--a larger, more diverse audience that included women and

middle-class readers and the genre's role in defining desire and sexuality--that make the prose romance ideal material for adding to the cultural history of sexuality in which historians and literary critics are currently engaged. Indeed, Leah Marcus describes romances as part of the "unexplored or undeveloped territory within early modern studies" (47). By examining the political uses of eroticism in literary texts, this dissertation repositions these neglected works within the critical discourse on sexual politics in the early modern period.

The changes in representations of sexuality, love, and marriage within the genre correspond to changes in the way prose romances were advertised to audiences that include women and non-aristocratic men. In addition to the way the works increasingly advertised themselves to a more diverse audience, the statistical evidence for the broadening of the book-buying public for romance fiction is convincing. Edith Klotz tracks the dramatic increase in the number of new fiction titles printed after 1550. Although books on religion and philosophy made up the largest category of works printed, fiction was far and away the next most popular kind of book, with a fairly stable increase in

numbers of new works well into the next century (418). According to Sterg O'Dell's A Chronological List of Prose Fiction . . . Printed in England, only ninety-two prose fiction works were published in England in the seventy-five year period from 1475 to 1549. Over the next twenty-five years from 1550 to 1574, that number was almost matched, with eighty-nine fiction titles published. However, it was in the last quarter of the century that prose fiction outstripped all other kinds of literature except for religious works (Klotz 418). From 1575 to 1599, three hundred prose fiction works were published.

Moreover, female readers were a significant part of the imagined readership of these new prose fiction works. In Chaste, Silent and Obedient, Suzanne Hull notes that many of these new works

made a direct appeal to women readers in their dedications and titles. . . . The emergence of women as a reading public, recognized by authors and booksellers, coincides with the fiction explosion in the last quarter of the sixteenth century and raises interesting questions on the possible influence of women on the

development of literature in the late Elizabethan period. (74-75)

Changes in the demographics of the reading public, the economics of professional writing and the booksellers' desire for new markets all contribute to the prose romance's enormous growth at this point in history. The values of the classes making money and buying books increasingly became that of the fiction produced for them.

The emerging popular audience for vernacular texts, particularly texts that were described as "recreation" rather than study, created the prose romance as a place where the cultural meanings and the politics of sexual desire could be presented, contested, and policed, reflecting the power of class and gender hierarchies as well as their instability. The central place that romances hold in the renegotiation of sexuality in the early modern period becomes clear in the debate that goes on both within and outside of the works themselves about their uses: what service they could offer the society, whether there was any need for such service, how readers of different classes or genders might employ them, and what privileges or benefits

they may bestow upon their readers.

In the title pages, dedicatory epistles, letters from the author or bookseller of almost all of the prose romances published between 1550 and 1600, one can see the wide variety of audiences imagined for these works and hear an ongoing discussion about the function of prose romances in Elizabethan society. Romances were being marketed to a certain extent as recreational reading that would control and contain their readers's sexuality, but also as descriptions of sexuality. A certain number of words and phrases, in slightly varying configurations, occurred in nearly every introduction to prose romances: the works are advertised as containing tales of valor and discourses of love, and they were described as "amorous toyes,"⁷ "trifles," and "vaine delights," that were to be read as "recreation," in "idleness" and for "pleasure." The effect of the romance on its reader was articulated in terms of a readership defined in binary oppositions: the wise and the wanton, the old and the young, men and women. But, most importantly, even in introductions to the most erotic and titillating romances, the effect was described as repressing vice and amorous indiscretion while teaching virtue.

Although the meanings assigned to sexuality, love and marriage within the prose romance tale in the sixteenth century are unstable and heterogeneous, the way writers and booksellers consistently argue for the genre's social value suggests that representations of sexual desire were considered threats to social stability, particularly when read by women and the non-aristocratic classes.⁸ Importantly, the descriptions of how reading prose romances affected their readers suggests that writers and critics alike considered eroticism useful: the eroticism in a literary work could be used to corrupt, instruct, entertain, derange, or persuade a reader.

These claims by authors and booksellers point to a debate over romance' effect--the way in which reading romances acts upon the reader; they insist that reading romances does something to readers, changes them in some way. For producers of romances it is always described in positive social terms; but writers not involved in selling romances describe their effect quite differently.⁹ Both the marketing ploys of romance producers and the reception of these works reveal a cultural anxiety about how reading shapes ideas about love, sexuality, and gender: "amorous

toyes," "trifles" and "recreation" jockey for position with claims of "commendable purposes" and "virtues."

Early modern theories of reading present literature not primarily as high art--esthetic objects to be admired for their beauty--but as an instrument for shaping and changing its audience. In most early modern defenses of literature, writing, and fiction in particular, was described in terms of the specific social tasks it accomplished. George Puttenham's The Arte of English Poesie and Sir Philip Sidney's Defense of Poetry are probably the most well known and read of these defenses, yet these ideas are present in the introductions of almost all romances as well. In the early modern period, the writing, printing, selling, and reading of imaginative literature were, much more clearly than they are today, political acts.¹⁰

This positioning of the romance genre by book producers as a narrative space where these dangerous ideas could be played out draws attention to the cultural anxiety over leisure and recreation literature--literature without an obvious didactic purpose--and its dispersal to a larger reading public. This debate is exemplified by the conflict surrounding the publication of Geoffrey Fenton's collection

of prose romance tales, Certain Tragical Discourses, which are translations of Italian tales by Mateo Bandello. The seriousness of the debate between Fenton and the humanist scholar Roger Ascham, which I will discuss in Chapter Two, suggests that prose romance tales which originated and were set in Italy, were considered particularly erotic and dangerous.

This great variety of attacks on and defenses of romances, along with the diversity of audiences imagined for them, makes the determination of any one particular use for the genre impossible. Rather, they have a multiplicity of uses. I have chosen to address four texts which offer opportunities for examining how a work's purported uses change the representation of female sexuality.

Within the broad category of prose romance, there are a number of sub-genres that have varying degrees of eroticism. I have chosen to focus on a particular sub-genre: the short romance tale, usually presented in a collection of tales, and, I think, best defined by Margaret Schlauch's term "society romance":

tales in which normal upper-class human relations are

the centre of interest rather than military or supernatural adventures, and in which techniques of dialogue and monologue, description, gesture and action are employed to give vitality to the characters. (17)¹¹

Moreover, all of the works I address are further connected by their reliance on Italy as a socially-licensed site for eroticism: by this I mean that the works are either translations from Italian tales or tales by English writers set in Italy, that the *locus amoenus* of Italy is an essential part of the work's eroticism, and that such portrayals of sexual desire would not be acceptable set in England.

Collections of tales were the most popular form of the prose romance from the 1560s to 1590s, until an English tradition of longer prose romances, like Sidney's Arcadia and Lyly's Euphues, modeled on a Greek romance, Heliodorus' Ethiopian Tale, came into vogue. Geoffrey Fenton's collection of tales, Certain Tragical Discourses (1567), went through two editions; William Painter's The Palace of Pleasure (1566) through five editions; George Pettie's A

Petite Palace of Pettie His Pleasure (1576) through six; Barnaby Riche's Farewell to Military Profession (1581) through four; and George Whetstone's An Heptameron of Civil Discourses (1582) through two.¹²

Over a period of roughly twenty years, from the mid-1560's to the 1580's, this extremely popular literary sub-genre influenced and was influenced by changes in the ideologies of love, the institution of marriage, and discourses of sexuality and desire. These changes--in conceptions of sexuality, love, and marriage, and in this genre--seem to correspond to the renegotiations in the ideology and function of marriage in early modern English culture as the family is redefined as one of the central economic and political units of the nation. As the nuclear family in the early modern period increasingly becomes a model for social order and hierarchy within early capitalism, representations of female sexuality tend to portray it as contained within the bonds of marriage.

For the early modern period, negotiations within the erotic system--the way desire and sexuality are culturally constructed--are often located at the point where ideologies of love, discourses of sex and sexuality, and the

institution of marriage intersect with the economic system. Within the prose romance tale, we can see over the second half of this century a constant shifting and reshifting of power as it defines female sexuality and its relation to marriage. Each of my chapters addresses a different configuration of these three terms--sexuality, love, and marriage--and looks at how particular authors and audiences find the intersection of those terms useful for their social and political agendas.

Geoffrey Fenton's tale, "Pandora of Milan," which I analyze in Chapter Two, presents an arranged marriage that is undermined by the ideology of courtly love and a chaotic female sexuality. Although the tale serves as a critique of aristocratic courtly love, the dangerous and spectacular female sexuality it portrays functions as the erotic charge of the tale. Although the work is dedicated to a female patron, the anxieties about the female body and the political power of the female role in reproduction point to concern in a larger male audience about the connection of female sexual pleasure and conception.

In the 1570's and 80's the economic power of a larger book-buying public brings a new erotic figure within romance

tales. Instead of representing sexually voracious female characters within the tales as Fenton had, the figure of the English gentlewoman reader--who is directly addressed in the text of the tales and whose uncontained sexuality threatens ideas about chastity and obedience--serves as a counterpoint to the heroines of the tales who are chaste and faithful usually to the point of death. This gentlewoman reader is represented as a proponent of passionate love with an overly desirous sexuality who will create instability and disobedience within the institution of marriage. With George Whetstone's 1582 Heptameron of Civil Discourses, we see the increasing power of Protestant moralists over the genre as female sexuality is domesticated within the bonds of marriage and, tamed by a companionate love, contributes to social stability. Writing for educated men of the middling rank, Whetstone connects this contained female sexuality and stable marriage with English national identity, using it as a way to mark the boundaries of the middling rank within the social hierarchy.

The changes within the literary representations of the relationships among female sexuality, love, and marriage that I outline in this dissertation intersect with and

spring from historical changes, but not necessarily from real changes in female sexuality per se. Female sexuality, as Foucault and Rubin argue, is the place where negotiations of other power issues takes place. It is a dense transfer point for power, a shifting and reshifting power that is flexible and plural. As we shall see, representations of sexuality--and female sexuality in particular--within the prose romance genre are extremely "useful," to appropriate Foucault's term, for all sides in the struggle for economic, social, and political power in the early modern period.

The works I explore illuminate this process of struggle to contain female sexuality within the marriage bond. Geoffrey Fenton's 1567 "Pandora of Milan" presents a chaotic and destructive female sexuality located outside of marriage. George Pettie's Pettite Pallace (1576) and Barnaby Riche's Farewell to Military Profession (1581) present two competing versions of female sexuality, one that is unruly and destabilizing of marriage and another that is chaste and contained within marriage. And, George Whetstone's Heptameron of Civil Discourses (1582) presents a female sexuality happily ensconced in the marriage bond, female desire domesticated and sated by affectionate

marriage.

Although this chronological schema seems to suggest a rather neat progressive change in ideas about sexuality, it is complicated by the fact that all of these books were reprinted in later decades, so that all of these versions of female sexuality were in circulation at the same time, creating a pool of competing discourses on female sexuality and marriage available for readers in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As newer ideologies of love, marriage and sexuality were being produced and published, the older ideologies remained in circulation. New ideologies did not so much replace what had come before them as enter into a process of shifting and reshifting in which the positions of dominant and marginal discourses could trade places.

Increasingly, the proliferation of discourses on sexuality in print allowed groups within English society whose values had not previously been represented to buy books that privileged or catered to their tastes, as well as recognizing their social and economic status. Constance Relihan sums up these social and economic changes adeptly:

During the hundred years following the arrival of printing in England, social and economic changes occurred that altered the way narratives were transmitted and received. More people--non-aristocratic people--were moving from rural areas into London and gaining access to various levels of education. . . . Educational changes fostered and were accompanied by economic changes. Aristocratic and gentle classes were gradually losing wealth and status while the merchant classes were gaining economic power. (58-9)

The sheer numbers of prose romance works printed in the sixteenth century makes clear their enormous popularity and the expanding readership they hoped to attract.¹³ The new popularity of these "trifles" and "toyes," allowed for by an expanding book-buying public, complicates the changes in representations of marriage, love, and sexuality within these works.

This relationship between book production, expanding readership, and changes in representation does not lend itself to exact causes and effects, but it seems likely that

new audiences for prose romances were, in part, the engine for the changing representations, both because some authors wanted to court and flatter the tastes of these new audiences and because others wanted to harness or develop their tastes. This period sees a change in prose romance from a purely aristocratic genre--written about and for the aristocracy--to one in which the speech and erotic actions of the upper classes are available for the entertainment of the middle and lower orders of society.

Geoffrey Fenton, in Certain Tragical Discourses, dedicates his work to Lady Mary Sidney, the mother of Sir Philip Sidney and Mary Sidney Herbert, to whom he was distantly related. However, in his prefatory letter to Mary Sidney, Fenton argues that his representations of sexual chaos are useful for all social orders. Barnaby Riche and George Pettie, although they make claims to have written their tales for the pleasure of upper-class women, seem to have a much more middle-class audience in mind as they attempt to market aristocratic entertainments to a more diverse audience. Indeed, in Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England, Louis Wright notes that many early modern writers continued to dedicate their works to

aristocrats but wrote for the middle-class (402-405).

George Whetstone's stated audience is the nation, but clues within the work suggest that he was writing particularly for educated men of the middling rank, who were attempting to define their own place within the nation.

In the rest of this chapter, I will define the three essential terms of my analysis--discourses of sexuality, ideologies of love, and the institution of marriage--that I have put into play. I will begin by defining "sexuality" as a theoretical term for historicizing literary texts, then address the historical and literary evidence of changing ideas of love and its connections to marriage.

II.

In the early modern prose romance tales, female sexuality is, as Michel Foucault argues, "not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of maneuvers and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies" (103). In this genre, female sexuality was used

by writers with varied audiences and political agendas. However, as Phyllis Rackin argues, one of the most difficult issues that face modern readers of early modern literature when they take on the subject of sexuality is whether we have any "way of knowing how 'it' really was" ("Foreign" 68). Although most current criticism on early modern sexuality since Thomas Laqueur's controversial book, Making Sex, has argued that early modern sexuality is different from present-day sexuality, Rackin foregrounds the connection between past and present, between early modern text and late twentieth century critic:

The questions with which we approach the past are the questions that trouble us here and now, the answers we find (even when couched in the words of old texts) the products of our own selection and arrangement. These difficulties are especially troublesome in the case of gender and sexuality--subjects that tend to be occluded in the historical records of the past and are heavily fraught with present concerns and controversies. Moreover, since both women and sexuality were largely unwritten, there is always the temptation to

universalize, to assume that because neither has a written history--that both were always and everywhere what they are now. ("Foreign" 68)

Rackin's warning raises the question of how literary critics of early modern literature theorize sexuality as it is "written" in literary texts.

In the work of cultural materialists like Jonathon Dollimore who analyze the literature of the early modern period, attention to sexuality has led to a new link between psychoanalytic theory, a system of thought that seemingly relies on a transhistorical definition of the human subject, and a cultural materialist theory that attempts to dismantle such systems.¹⁴ Susan Zimmerman elucidates the problem of bringing together cultural materialism and psychoanalytic theory, claiming "the very terms in which [materialist] criticism represents culturally specific constructions of sexuality depend on psychoanalytic terminology and paradigms" (2). The work of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan has allowed cultural materialists to overcome the hurdle of essentialist paradigms of sexuality because it adds a materialist bias to notions of sexuality originated by

Freud.

For Lacan, language, sexuality and subjectivity are one complex developmental process, with a subject's first encounter with language at the moment when culture, and its construction of sexuality, is imposed on the subject.¹⁵ Because Lacan's theory is inscribed in the operation of language, it is useable and useful for theorists of the material. Dollimore, Valerie Traub, and Catherine Belsey have used this intersection of materialism and psychoanalysis to outline the construction of sexual identity and subjectivity in early modern culture.¹⁶ My focus is not identity or subjectivity but changes in representations of female sexuality in the early modern period. I want to use Lacan's idea of the sexual relation as a product of language--the idea that there is no sexual relation outside culture, and therefore no "natural" sexual drive or desire that does not take its shape and form from language. The "natural" and the "unnatural" are categories that occur repeatedly in prose romance tales; the spectacle of dangerous and horrifying sexualities defines what is natural and draws the lines that demarcate transgressions, acting to both police and to subvert, to mark transgressive

acts and also to put them into language and into print and circulation.

In the works I study in this dissertation, transgression--crossing the lines of "natural" hierarchies of gender, sex, and class--creates the eroticism within the texts. In Geoffrey Fenton's "Pandora of Milan," that transgression takes the form of crossing and blurring the lines between male and female bodies. Pandora, whose bodily fluids and sexual appetite mark her in some ways as "male," threatens to overturn the hierarchy of what Thomas Laqueur has described as the "one-sex" body, in which men and women are understood to have the same body except that the male's is the more perfect version of it. In Barnaby Riche's Farewell to Military Profession and George Pettie's Pettie Palace of Pettie His Pleasure, the transgressive act is assigned to the reader, who can, through the figure of the "gentlewoman reader" inscribed in the tales, cross the lines of class and/or gender. Because both Pettie and Riche strenuously claim to be writing only for the "pleasure" of aristocratic women, male readers are transgressing gender lines to read as women, and readers from the middling rank are crossing class lines to read aristocratic "private"

entertainments. In George Whetstone's Heptameron of Civil Discourses, transgression is more problematic because Whetstone's project is to draw class and gender lines rather than to transgress them: his work is therefore less erotic and less successful. He attempts to eroticize the gender issue of female virtue for a male reader, yet the work's emphasis on social place and duty, along with the narrative frame which stresses the rational behavior of both male and female listeners, make the collection, like the female sexuality it represents, tame and unexciting.

I want to stress that my readings of prose romance tales as cultural sites for the construction and negotiation of female sexuality are not primarily psychoanalytic readings. On the contrary, my readings focus on the linguistic construction of female sexuality.¹⁷ However, I want to take from Lacan these two basic assumptions: 1. sexuality is formed in language and therefore literary texts offer a place for examining that process of formation; 2. the power relations inherent in defining sexuality are particularly formed and written of the female experience of sexuality--it is what is different, changing, unknowable, feared, Other because it is not the center.¹⁸

To use literary texts to reveal the sexuality of the early modern period is to write both literary criticism and cultural history: critics historicizing literature also attempt to historicize its subjects--in this case, sexuality. Importantly, historicist critics have not argued that literature gives greater access to the sexual practices of the early modern period by reflecting them. Rather, literature is analyzed as both a rhetorical construct and as a cultural document which can reveal the differences in the meanings assigned to sexuality in the early modern period. These writers attempt to denaturalize sex and sexuality, to challenge assumptions about the essential that are assigned to bodies based on sex, and to suggest that sexuality is not entirely natural but overwhelmingly cultural, regulated, and defined by competing discourses and political needs.

I am not arguing that representations of female sexuality offer a more authentic picture of early modern sexual practice, but that how female sexuality was imagined offers insight into the political and economic power relations. In other words, what is "natural" at any given time changes, and documenting these changes undermines not only the norms and beliefs of this earlier culture but also

of our own. Writing more specifically about homosexuality, Jeffrey Weeks claims

There is no *essence* of homosexuality whose historical unfolding can be illuminated. There are only changing patterns in the organization of desire whose specific configuration can be decoded. (6)

Likewise, there is no essence of female sexuality or heterosexuality that the early prose romance will illuminate. Instead, looking at the collections of prose romance tales I have chosen, one can see the changing patterns in the way desire is organized in the texts. In other words, from the 1560's to the 1580's there is not necessarily any great change in sexuality or sexual practice, but there is an observable change in the pattern of desire represented in the texts I have chosen. Female sexuality in the early modern period may or may not have changed from chaotic to domesticated, but, to some extent, we can see that its representations do change in this way.

This historical unfolding of changes in representations of sexuality is not linear or progressive; my project is to

document changes, to demonstrate the complexity of the relationship between power within a society and the social organization of sexuality. For cultural history, discontinuity and heterogeneity are often more revealing than the progressive narratives of traditional literary history.¹⁹ Rather than a concept of history as a linear, chronological set of true facts illuminating what "really happened," cultural history offers culturally specific, synchronic *histories*.²⁰ The way female sexuality is represented in early modern prose romance tales illuminates this kind of mobility and heterogeneity, and the movement and changes in sexuality generally work in relation to each text's representation of the social institutions of marriage and the family.

The family, in Tudor political theory, was often defined as a 'little commonwealth' that served as a metaphor for the structure of the state: the power of the male head of a household over his wife, children, and servants was analogous to the power of the king over the nation.²¹ Therefore, representations of the unruly or uncontrolled sexuality of wives who subvert or usurp the rightful dominance of their husbands suggests larger issues of social

control within the commonwealth. To bring female sexuality under control within the bonds of marriage in literary texts would support a return to social order or the approximation of the social order being constructed by political theorists.

Martin Ingram notes that these ideas about the metaphorical connection of kingdom and household were already well in place by 1500:

But concern about marriage and sexuality intensified among the clerical and lay leaders of society from around the middle of the sixteenth century. The economic and social changes of the period helped to stimulate a quest for order which re-emphasised the importance of the 'little commonwealth'. . . . Among moralists and social commentators, these concerns coalesced into an insistence on the need for responsible, stable marriage and stricter standards of sexual morality. . . . (126)

The social and economic changes that caused the renewed emphasis on the little commonwealth were several, including

the increasing economic strength of the merchant class, the problem of poverty and social disorder throughout the country, the rise of Puritanism and the power of fundamentalist religion, and the transfer of property and alliances between families.

Susan Amussen has described a similar connection of marriage and ideas of social order allegorized through the family unit in England. Examining manuals for householders, Amussen claims:

Familial language did not merely, as the theorists had hoped, give the political and social order the sanction of God and nature, it also provided an accessible model of the state and the social order which was used . . . to impose order on their communities. (Ordered 66)

With the family as a model of the state and stability, the control of female sexuality had to be reorganized for social good as the basis for the family, as a force which creates the family rather than threatens it.²² This renewed emphasis on the little commonwealth also coincides with newly articulated ideology of romantic love leading to

affectionate or companionate marriage.

Moralists and conduct book writers lay out a theory of love and marriage in which the loyalty of the wife to her husband, the head of her household, is based on their mutual attraction and affection. This theory of love and marriage, while not entirely confined to the middle class, certainly addresses its experience of marriage more than that of the aristocracy. A good deal of critical attention has focussed on the importance of connections between sexual love and marriage found in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestant tracts, sermons, and conduct books, which specifically link emotionally strong marriages with the national economy and the nuclear family as an economic unit. Thomas Becon's The Booke of Matrimony (1560-63), one of the first works of this kind written in English,²³ claims that marriage affects the "whole health and prosperytie of mankynde, of publique weales, of kyngdomes, and finally of all degrees. . ." (qtd. in Mikesell 142), and importantly links this marriage with a very physical love:

For what thing is sweter, then with her to liue, with whom ye may be most straightly coupled not only in the

beneuolence of the minde, but also in the coniunction of the bodye? . . . it is an especiall swetenesse to haue one, with whom ye may communicate the secreat affecciions of your mind with whom ye may speke euen as it wer with your own self . . . (qtd. in Mikesell 142)

Women, or more specifically wives, are capable of taking the place of males in the role of friends and advisors through their "benevolence of the minde," and this friendship is eroticized as husbands and wives are described in terms of sexual intercourse: "coupled" and "conjunction of the body."²⁴ In this conception of the marriage bond, sexuality is domesticated; it creates and cements the family based on the couple; sexual desires and practices are perceived as an essential part of the marriage contract.

Not all historians of the early modern period agree that this period sees significant changes in the actual practices of love, marriage and family relations, and the arguments between historians on these questions point up the significant differences between *representations* and actual *practices*. The most damaging assault to the theories of changes in marriage practices and the family system come

from Alan Macfarlane's attacks on the arguments of Lawrence Stone. Stone argues that there was a major shift in marriage practice, primarily in the selection of marriage partners, from the early sixteenth century to the later sixteenth and seventeenth century. He claims that marriage in the earlier period was mainly arranged marriage with little emotional attachment between family members or spouses and that the later period sees a dramatic change in which romantic and emotional attachments are contained in "restricted patriarchal nuclear families" (Family, Sex, and Marriage 4-8, 180-194). Macfarlane criticizes Stone's claims for dramatic change, arguing that Stone's study is biased towards the upper-class experience.²⁵

Other historians who argue for an increased emphasis on the patriarchal family make less dramatic claims than Stone. Indeed Ralph Houlbrooke, Keith Wrightson, and Martin Ingram argue that there is great continuity from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries--indeed more continuity than change--and that the evidence for that continuity lies in surveys of larger section of the population, particularly the "middling groups who played such an important part in parish society" (Ingram 138). These findings suggest that the literary

representations of marriage, love, and sexuality before this period tended to represent aristocratic experience. The ideas that Stone argues were new--such as the nuclear family and romantic love--may well have existed as actual practices in families of the middling ranks from much earlier on, suggesting that middle-class experience is increasingly finding its way into literary texts in this period.

In conduct books, romances, and pamphlets--the genres made popular by an expanding readership--there is in fact this new emphasis on romantic love and marriage. Therefore, the debate between Macfarlane and Stone would seem to support my assertion that a broadening audience for prose romances, including readers from the middling classes, is the occasion for changing representations of female sexuality. In other words, changes in representations of sexuality, love, and marriage in sixteenth century texts seem to reflect a shift in focus from the concerns of the aristocracy to increasingly represent those of the middling ranks of society made up by merchants, tradespeople, and their families.

These historians suggest that romantic love had likely existed for some time in the marriage formations for large

numbers of the population. Yet in literary genres, love has a more complex history. In the literary genre of the prose romance, the movement from a courtly love ideal, where sexuality and desire are located outside the marriage bond, to romantic love leads to an enormous pressure on the construction of sexuality, primarily female sexuality, within the genre. The prose romance genre in England developed out of the medieval romance tradition and its ideology of courtly love that had in Europe.²⁶ England's first printed romance, the Morte D'Arthur firmly began an English tradition of romance tales told in prose.²⁷

In her essay "Did Women Have a Renaissance?," Joan Kelly-Gadol points out the shifting social and sexual roles for women that accompany changes from courtly love to romantic love. By analyzing the sexual roles of women in romance tales and lays, Kelly-Gadol argues that the love relationship of medieval courtly love, which reinforced the dominant values of feudalism and the church, could represent an expression of sexual love by aristocratic women that was not tied to marriage. She then describes a significant shift in representations of female sexuality and connects it to social and economic changes, noting how contemporary

writings on sex roles disclose

certain new constraints suffered by Renaissance women as the family and political life were restructured in the great transition from medieval feudal society to the early modern state. Almost all such works--with certain notable exceptions, such as Boccaccio and Ariosto--establish chastity as the female norm and restructure the relation of the sexes to one of female dependency and male domination. (140)

She cites as evidence the "telling transformation of the love relation" in early modern period texts like Castiglione's The Courtier in which the connection of love with marriage becomes an allegory of larger social relations within the state (157).²⁸ In other words, male domination and female chastity and dependence, represented in these texts, stand for the political dominance of the state and the dependent positions of the aristocracy and non-aristocratic classes.

Comprehending these changes--within the romance tradition and within early modern discourses on female

sexuality necessary to support and construct the ideal of affective marriage--requires an understanding of the love ideal which affective marriage is replacing. The early modern ideology of romantic love which contains reproductive sexuality within marriage stands in stark contrast to the courtly love ideal of the middle ages, which was both extramarital and non-reproductive. The conflict that surrounds the change from the privileging of courtly love to the ascendance of romantic love as the cultural ideal underlies the movement from disruptive female sexuality to a domesticated one that I outline in this dissertation. In Chapter Two, I suggest how Geoffrey Fenton's 1567 Certain Tragical Discourses presents a female sexuality associated with the courtly love tradition that privileges female sexual pleasure, while representing that sexuality as dangerous and unnatural. In Chapter Three, I argue that Riche's and Pettie's works present two kinds of female sexualities: one which is extramarital and oriented to female pleasure like that of the courtly love ideal, and another which is contained in marriage by both love and honor. Finally, in Chapter Four, I analyze how George Whetstone presents a controlled, rational, orderly, and

unthreatening female sexuality that supports marriage and the family system and has little to do with female pleasure.

Within the romance genre, an enormous change occurs in the location of female sexuality and desire. In the medieval romance tradition, romantic love and desire is primarily located outside the marriage bond in an adulterous relationship between an aristocratic married woman and a vassal-like lover.²⁹ Although for most of this century, critics writing on the literature of courtly love have argued that it is entirely an allegory of spiritual growth and chastity, recent writers on courtly love have focussed on the often graphic sexual punning and innuendo present in the texts. The purely spiritual interpretation of courtly love is particularly prevalent in English studies where C.S. Lewis's description of the courtly love ideal as a "religion of love" in which the relation of lovers to each other is actually "a struggle between abstract personifications" has held sway for a many decades (1).³⁰

Such readings rely on interpreting the courtly love literature in light of the theological writings of Augustine, Alanus of Insulis, and Saint Bernard in which the word amor "came to be used for both 'cupidity and charity'"

(Dahlberg Romance 12). In this interpretive mode, Christian charity is the goal of the lover as he grows through "reason" from "cupidinous love" to the ideal of charity (Dahlberg "Love" and "Macrobius"). Such readings make courtly love literature about a male quest for spiritual fulfillment rather than a literature about a quest for female sexual pleasure for its own sake. While I am not denying the validity of these "spiritual" readings of courtly love, I do want to argue that these critics often overlook the erotic undertones of the texts, as well as their role in supporting the power of the feudal aristocracy.³¹

Betsy Bowden argues that this sanitized version of courtly love is aptly demonstrated by John Jay Parry's 1941 translation of the central text of courtly love, Andreas Capellanus's De Amore, titled in English The Art of Courtly Love. Where Bowden reads a De Amore full of "explicit sexual allusions, including obscene Latin puns" (67), Parry renders the text into a chaste and prim bowdlerization of the original. Bowden asks us to wonder

why do the characters go on and on so about

punishments, about poenis--punishments of lovers and of nonlovers, for women and for men, the hard punishments of the man whose love is refused, the diminishing punishments of the man who has entered the doorway to the court of love? (67)

Bowden argues that Capellanus's frequent use of the most inflected forms of *poena*, which sound like and are often spelled like penis, gives these punishments rather obvious physical meanings. Parry, on the other hand, translates this sexual pun simply as "pain" (Bowden 72).

Rather than simply an ideology of chastity and the contemplation of the religion of love, the texts of the courtly love tradition also seem to present depictions of sexual relations, in which the creation of desire is as important as its satisfaction. Because courtly love is extramarital, it had to be non-reproductive, or it would have caused insuperable difficulties over inheritance and succession. Instead, recent writing on courtly love suggests these sexual relations were based on clitoral stimulation, fondling, kissing, and coitus interruptus, but not on consummated sexual intercourse (Jacquart and

Thomasset; Bowden). This creating of desire and pleasure is written as a mutual activity: for the male lover the enhancement of his own desire was one of the rewards of his service to the lady, and for the lady pleasure came from the power of directing and teaching this desire to the lover. Courtly love texts are about prolonging desire, deferring desire, but as Bowden and others argue, they are also about satisfying those desires with non-reproductive sexual relations.

This kind of sexual relationship is one in which the female partner is not portrayed as possessed by the lover. Indeed, the troubadours focus on the woman's role as the granter of favors and the woman as initiator of the male lover's education in pure love. It is the woman's decisions that move the male partner through the phases of the courtly lover: suitor, suppliant, recognized lover and finally, carnal lover (Jacquart and Thomasset '95). In this literature, women are in charge of the organization and experience of pleasure through the creation of desire and by carnal acts. In an early attempt to talk about the physical acts described in courtly love literature, literary historian A.J. Denomy can detail these sexual acts but still

call them spiritual because they do not include intercourse.³² Yet the erotic arts of courtly love defined by the trobairitz (women troubadours) explicitly teach that the lover could never claim the rights of the husband because the focus was to be on female sexual pleasure. As Jacquart and Thomasset note:

Nothing that might recall the husband's prerogatives, the brutality of the procreative act, could be accepted in this exercise. If the behavior alluded to was indeed as described, courtly love seems to have led to a rediscovery of and demand for clitoral stimulation, to the use of the man as an erotic stimulant--and thus to a sexuality that was active, specific, and what is more, recognized and even exalted as such by an aristocracy of the sensibility and the intelligence.

(95)

This alternative, "resexualized" interpretation of the courtly love tradition forcefully argued by Jacquart, Thomasset, and Bowden is defined by these characteristics: it aristocratic, extra-marital, non-reproductive, and

focussed on female sexual pleasure for its own sake. Geoffrey Fenton's "Pandora of Milan," discussed in Chapter Two, represents this kind of courtly love, but demonizes it by making it reproductive. Female sexual pleasure in his tale is the source of anxiety for the long list of lovers who--according to anatomical theories of the day--cannot pleasure Pandora enough to allow reproduction. However, her courtly lover, the young knight, understands female sexual pleasure yet breaks the basic tenet of courtly love--not to usurp the husband's role of reproduction. In Chapter Three, I discuss how the "gentlewoman reader" in the collections of Riche and Pettie retains many of the elements of courtly love: aristocratic, focussed on female pleasure, and with the suggestion of extra- or pre-marital sexual activity. However, the tales in which these "gentlewomen readers" reside do not represent a courtly love: the heroines of the tale find sexual love within marriage. Finally, George Whetstone's Heptameron, discussed in Chapter Four, revises aristocratic love as contained within marriage and based on female virtue and duty rather than pleasure.

1. See Laslett, The World We Have Lost and The World We Have Lost Further Explored; Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage; Kelly-Gadol, "Did Women Have a Renaissance"; Houlbrooke, The English Family, 1450-1700. Later in this chapter, I address the arguments made by Alan Macfarlane against these theories of changes in the family system.
2. In Writing for Women, Caroline Lucas writes about the romance in terms of a female readership, and I discuss her arguments about female sexuality in the romances in Chapter Three. In Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England, Bruce Smith has a chapter on homosexuality in the romances based on Greek models.
3. See Kinney "Intimations"; McCoy Sir Philip Sidney; Raitiere; and Sinfield. However, some recent Sidney criticism also explores gender and sex roles in the Arcadia (Anne Shaver; Margaret Sullivan; Michio Tokumi).
4. See Mary Beth Lamb; Maureen Quilligan "The Constant Subject." Most recent work concerns issues of female authority and identity (Mary Ellen Lamb "Women Readers"; Heather Weidemann; Nona Fienberg; Anne Shaver "A New Woman"; Josephine Roberts "Radigund Revisited"; Maureen Quilligan "Lady Mary Wroth"; Naomi Miller). More recently, critics have begun to address sex roles in the Urania (Josephine Roberts "`Labrynths of Desire'"; Carolyn Swift).
5. See Beauregard; Cheatham; Kott; Mikesell; and Price.
6. See Caroline Lucas for a good summary of references to women readers of romance, which range from gentlewomen's diaries to stock comic characters in seventeenth-century drama--romance-reading maid-servants (15-17).
7. The word "toyes" has a particularly erotic meaning. The earliest reference to it found by the compilers of the OED is a

single instance in the 1300s, before it becomes a popular bawdy word in the sixteenth century. However, this unusual 200 year gap in usage did not change its erotic meaning. The 1303 reference by Robert of Brunne clearly demonstrates the sexual connotations of the word: "Whedyr hyt be yn a womman handlyng, Or yn any o[th]er lusty [th]yng;...Ammende[th] [ygh]ow, pur charyte, And make[th] nat a-mys [th]e toy. [Th]at [th]e fende of [ygh]ou have Ioye." Toy here seems to have the bawdy meaning of penis: the toy can be in a woman's handling or in any other lusty thing. In the early sixteenth century, the meaning has expanded to mean foreplay and sexual intercourse: the early sixteenth century song "Bachelor's Life" explains "If he [the married man] be merie and toy with any, His wife will frowne, and words geve manye." And, the 1566 Daily News of September 10th describes a monetary penalty for toying: "That none toy with the maids, on paine of 4d."

8. I discuss female literacy at length in Chapter Three.

9. In the early sixteenth-century conduct book for aristocratic women, Instruction of a Christen Woman, Juan Luis Vives expresses a fear of women romance readers using these books to transgress gender roles in marriage: "And verely they be but folisshe husbandes and mad, that suffre their wives to waxe more ungratiously subtyle by reding of such bokes" (F1v); rather than women should read romances "It were better for them nat only to have no lernynge at all, but also to lose theyr eies, that they shulde nat rede: and theyr eares, that they shuld nat here" (E4r).

As the century progressed, these dire predictions about the consequences of women reading romances became a standard element of conduct books for middle-class families. Thomas Salter instructs fathers not to allow their daughters to memorize books, poems or songs about "dalliance." He berates fathers who

doe give them [their daughters], so sone as they have any understandyng in readyng, or spellyng, to cone and learne by hart bookes, ballades, songes, sonettes, and ditties of daliance, excityng their memories thereby, beyng then most apt to retayne for ever that whiche is taught them, to the same manner...therefore I would wish our good matrone [who teaches young girls] to eschew suche use as a pestilent infection. (Collier 10-11)

Salter's description of excited memories depicts a fear of the power of eroticism in literature which imprints itself on readers and affects them "for ever". Edward Hake expresses a similar anxiety about the lasting effects of erotic literature. Laying down "a perfect rule" for the education of children he complains that girls are either not educated or "amorously" educated:

Eyther shee is altogither kept from exercises of good learning, and knowledge of good letters, or else she is so nouseled in amorous bookes, vaine stories and fonde trifling fancies, that shee smelleth of naughtinesse euen all hir lyfe after..." [Sig. C 4]

Hake's use of the word "nouseled," a form of nuzzled, reveals other ideas about reading. Nuzzled was commonly used at this time to describe education or nurturance, although usually in a negative sense. However, it also had the sexual meaning of touching or lying close to someone, and the literal meaning pushing one's nose into something. In this passage, it is not clear from the verb who or what is doing the action. She may be nuzzling into the books--poking her nose into them; or, when she is reading in amorous books, she may be nuzzled and tickled--the book may be poking into her. Reading here seems to be imagined as a kind of sexual relation: romances can be used by readers to experience this sexual relation and the writer and producer of the book may be using this sexual relation to make money for themselves.

In the Anatomy of Melancholy, Robert Burton equates romances with pornography, claiming that reading romance tales is just as likely to bring on love madness as is looking at sexually explicit pictures. Burton writes

Some again are incensed by reading amorous toys, Amadis de Gaul, Palmerin de Oliva, the Knight of the Sun, &c., or hearing such tales of lovers, descriptions of their persons, lascivious discourses, such as Astyanassa, Helena's waiting-woman, by the report of Suidas, writ of old, of the various positions in lovemaking, ... must needs set them on fire, with such like pictures as those of Aretine, or wanton objects in what kind soever; no stronger engine than to hear or read of Love-toys, fables and discourses...and many by this means are quite mad. (59)

The "pictures of Aretine" were woodcuts depicting graphic sexual scenes which accompanied equally graphic sonnets written by Pietro Aretino in sixteenth-century Italy. Burton suggests that romances, even though they depict sexuality with words, have the same effect as pornography and will change the reader from sanity to madness.

10. Jane Tompkins makes this argument effectively in "The Reader in History: The Changing Shape of Literary Response."

11. Schlauch credits Sarah F. Barrow with the creation of this useful term in The Medieval Society Romances (New York: Columbia UP, 1924). Schlauch's description indicates the project of her book, Antecedents of the Novel: her focus on dialogue and realistic characterization supports her view of these works as the groundwork for the novel. She therefore judges them in the critical terms of that genre. I am most interested in these works because they are primarily about upper-class love relations rather than wars and magic.

12. Certain Tragical Discourses was printed in 1567 under Fenton's name and in 1579 as a work by Bandello (STC 10792). Painter's volume one was first published in 1566; volume two was first published in 1567. Both volumes were published together in 1569, 1575, and [1580]. Pettie's Pettite Pallace was printed in [1576], [1577], [1580], [1585], 1608, and 1613. Riche's Farewell was printed in 1581, 1583, [1594], and 1606. Whetstone's Heptameron was printed in 1582 and reprinted under the title Aurelia in 1593.

13. Hans Robert Jauss's Reception Theory offers a particularly strong methodological base for addressing the questions I have raised about the uses of eroticism in early modern prose romances. Jauss proposes a kind of literary history which challenges both traditional chronological literary history and current literary theory by valuing the audience or "addressee" as formative of both literature and history. Criticizing both historical and aesthetic approaches, he argues:

Their methods conceive the Literary Fact within the closed circle of an aesthetics of production and of representation. In doing so, they deprive literature of a dimension that inalienably belongs to its aesthetic character as well as to

its social function: the dimension of its reception and influence. Reader, listener, and spectator--in short, the factor of the audience--play an extremely limited role in both literary theories. (19)

I am particularly interested in Reception Theory's ideas about the importance of cultural responses to a text and the influence of the audience on the production of new literary works. In other words, how the reception of a particular work influences the works produced after it. Yet the limits of audience as a methodological concept are material: we only have access to the meanings of audience or reading or genre still in circulation and we are clearly not able to recover the experience of the reader.

14. In Sexual Dissidence, Dollimore describes his work as "at the point where materialism and psychoanalysis converge with, but also contest each other. It learns from the range of writers...who situate their own cultural politics within, or derive it from, the tension between theoretically inconsistent perspectives" (34). For cultural materialists, this rapprochement with psychoanalytic theory comes through the essays of Louis Althusser, in particular, his "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses" and "Freud and Lacan."

15. For Lacan, the induction of a subject into language coincides with their induction into a culturally coded sexuality which occurs through the intervention of the paternal metaphor--the phallus of the law. Lacan argues that consciousness and unconsciousness come into being simultaneously in the human subject. This simultaneity causes a gap between these consciousness and unconsciousness, and in this gap "desire" is born. In Freud, the unconscious is below, pushing up, but for Lacan there is a radical split between consciousness and unconsciousness with desire as the electric charge between.

16. See the essays collected by Susan Zimmerman in Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage for the broadest and most encompassing effort to bring materialist and psychoanalytic criticism together.

17. Recently, feminist critics interested in erotic politics--such as Gayle Rubin, Valerie Traub, Jean Howard, Susan Zimmerman and Catherine Belsey--have begun to argue for a separation of

gender and sexuality. Rubin argues that the current body of work on sexuality is incoherent and underdeveloped and that the feminist movement has only mystified the subject (275). Rubin claims that

Feminism is the theory of gender oppression. To automatically assume that this makes it the theory of sexual oppression is to fail to distinguish between gender, on the one hand, and erotic desire, on the other. (307)

Rubin suggests that gender has become culturally fused to sexuality and that earlier feminist theorists had simply derived theories of sexuality out of a theory of gender. She argues for the recognition of sexual systems which take place in the context of gender relations, which are affected by gender and which have gender-specific manifestations, but which are arenas of social practice distinguishable from gender (307-8).

However, Rubin's harsh assessment of feminist theory is premature, as many feminist literary critics have begun to work within her distinctions. Feminist critic Valerie Traub, following Rubin, complains that for too long critics "tend[ed] to unthinkingly conflate gender and sexuality--as if, because gender and sexuality are constituted simultaneously, they are identical, as if sexuality flows unproblematically from gender role" (12). Although it may be impossible to talk about sexuality without addressing gender, Traub argues for an "attempt to separate temporarily sexuality from gender in the interest of gaining greater specificity in our conceptual categories" (12). Traub offers useful and precise definitions to clarify the vocabulary with which we talk about eroticism and gender.

[1.] "sex" will refer exclusively to those anatomical, biological distinctions by which cultures differentiate between males and females; it will not be used in the sense of "to have sex" or "to make love," nor will it be used synonymously with "gender."

[2.] "Gender" denotes the culturally prescribed roles and behaviors available to the two "sexes"; its ideologically freighted outcome is a "masculinity" and "femininity" correlated with "males" and "females," but its instability is underscored by the cross-gendered presence, for instance, of "effeminate" men and "butch" women.

[3.] "Sexuality" refers to erotic desires and practices, including but not limited to the direction and scope of

erotic preferences (i.e., object choice). (21)

Traub argues convincingly that such precise categories are necessary to combat assumptions that each sex has a corresponding gender, and that each gender has a natural correlative sexuality (21). "Sex," in this paradigm, seems like an anatomical category, and gender a cultural category; however, Traub's intent is to read "sex" as a cultural construction of anatomical distinctions rather than as a map of real bodies.

18. Two Lacan essays--"God and the *Jouissance* of ~~The~~ Woman" and "A Love Letter --are particularly useful for historicizing female sexuality through language. Lacan's argument that the sexual relation between men and women does not take place, but that there is only an imaginary misrecognition of one, opens a place to address this sexual relation in language rather than as a "natural" function of the body. This misrecognition is an attempt to recover a lost wholeness, what Lacan cryptically refers to as "There is something of One." Lacan sets up the issue as:

If the unconscious is indeed what I say it is, as being structured like a language, then it is on the level of language that we must interrogate this One. The One has resounded endlessly across the centuries. (139)

Lacan's essay "God and the *Jouissance* of The Woman" offers a similar strategy for addressing the way female sexuality is put into language. Like the sexual relation, Lacan argues that "The Woman" does not exist except in language where phallic sexuality assigns her to a position of fantasy in which the woman is "not all" and the phallic is "all." Lacan notes the dangers of taking the woman for your subject in language and culture that is "phallogentric:"

it means that when any speaking being whatever lines up under the banner of women it is by being constituted as not all that they are placed within the phallic function. It is this that defines the...the what? -- the woman precisely, except that The woman can only be written with The crossed through. There is no such thing as The woman, where the definite article stands for the universal. There is no such

thing as The woman since of her essence -- having already risked the term, why think twice about it? -- of her essence, she is not all. (144)

However, at the same time the woman is "not all," she is also marked by something more, something in excess of, something "beyond the phallus" that Lacan terms "jouissance" (145). Woman therefore is a category constructed around phallic sexuality, but at the same time is always in excess, always threatening to overflow, to overrun. Female sexuality then can be both a lack but also a destabilizing, uncertain place to write cultural norms about the natural.

19. See Catherine Belsey, "Towards Cultural History--In Theory and Practice."

20. This idea is intelligently argued by Louis Montrose in "Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture."

21. See Amussen Ordered; Jordan; and Ingram.

22. See also Schochet; Shanley.

23. Early in the sixteenth century, the English conduct books tend to be translations of humanist tracts like Juan Luis Vives's The Office and Duetie of a Husband [1555?], Erasmus's A Ryght Frutefull Epystle . . . in Laude and Prayse of Marriage [1530], and Heinrich Bullinger's The Christen State of Marriage (1543).

24. There is much debate among critics over whether this new status of the wife as sexual and economic partner changed the relationship between men and women in early modern England to one of greater equality. William and Malleville Haller argue that women's status changes significantly, whereas Linda Fitz sees little change in either the ideology of marriage or women's status within the family system. Other feminist critics have addressed the issue of the seemingly incompatible coupling of mutuality between the married pair and the "natural dominance" of the husband (See Mary Beth Rose, ch. 1, and Amussen "Gender" 201).

25. See Macfarlane's review of Stone in History and Theory 18 (1979): 103-26.
26. See Ronald S. Crane, The Vogue of Medieval Chivalric Romance During the English Renaissance.
27. Paul Salzman notes, "Before the sixteenth century, English narrative took the form of verse, rather than prose. Malory may have signaled the end of medieval romance, but his narrative also points forward to the Elizabethan interest in prose as a medium for telling a story" (1).
28. See also Arthur Marotti's argument that love in Elizabethan sonnets allegorizes political power relations in "Love is not Love: Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences and the Social Order," ELH, 49 (1982), 396-428.
29. See Sandra Resnick Alfonsi's Masculine Submission in the Troubadour Lyric.
30. See also Kelly; Robertson; Coghill; and Denomy Heresy.
31. Toril Moi's essay, "Desire in Language: Andreas Capellanus and the Controversy of Courtly Love," makes a strong argument for such a materialist reading of the courtly love tradition.
32. Denomy cites a poem by Bernard de Ventour in which the desires of "pure lover" are

to assist his lady to undress, to be present when she undresses, to feel her arms about his neck, to look at her fair body as she lies abed. He asks that he might lie beside her, a kiss, an embrace, to lie in her arms, to see her abed and to strain her to him, to fondle and kiss her and to draw her svelte body to him. (171)

Yet even after this lengthy list of erotic acts, Denomy still wants to suggest that this love is spiritual or pure simply because intercourse does not take place:

Pure love consists in the contemplation of the mind and the affection of the heart. It binds together the hearts of the two lovers with every feeling of delight. It goes as far as the kiss and the embrace and the modest contact with the

nude lover. But it omits intercourse because that is not permitted to those who love purely....Because it forbids consummation, pure love is chaste and the guardian of chastity; no injury can come from it, God sees very little offense in it; the beloved, widow or wife, suffers no harm or injury to her reputation. (177)

Chapter Two

Pandora's Box:
The Pleasures and Dangers of the One-Sex Body

Turn outward the woman's, turn inward, so to speak, and fold double the man's [genital organs], and you will find the same in both in every respect...[Think of] the uterus turned outward and projecting. Would not the testes [ovaries] then necessarily be inside it? Would it not contain them like a scrotum? Would not the neck [the cervix and vagina], hitherto concealed inside the perineum but now pendant, be made into the male member?
--Galen of Pergamum (c. 130-200) (qtd. in Laqueur 24-5)

[A] woman ought not...to be so squeamish...to abhorre both the company and the talke [of men] (though somewhat of the wantonest)...for a man may lightly guesse that she faigned to be so coye to hide that in herself which she doubted others might come to knowledge of. (191)
--Castiglione's The Book of the Courtier, translated by Sir Thomas Hoby, 1561

Whereof I had long ere this given you understanding by plain practice, if the veil of shame (a common enemy to the amorous enterprises of us women) had not covered mine eyes, and closed my mouth with fears, that I durst never (whilst my husband was at home) cast forth such baits of great good-will I have borne you. (168)
--Geoffrey Fenton, "Pandora of Milan"¹

I.

The anatomical theory of Galen of Pergamum, circulating in early modern England and Europe, argues that male and female bodies are essentially the same: mirror images of

each other, except that female sex organs are tucked inside the body, and male sex organs, because of the greater "heat" of male bodies, are external to the body. Males and females, in this view, are not "opposite" sexes; they are one sex in which the female body, lacking heat, is simply a less "perfect" version of the male body. However, as the quote from Sir Thomas Hoby's translation of The Book of the Courtier illuminates, sex (what a woman may be "in herself") is at odds with the strict cultural rules of gender--how a woman ought to act to fulfill the cultural expectations of "femininity." This clash--between the kind of sexuality that is imagined by a system of thought that understands male and female bodies as in almost every aspect the same and the bifurcated gender roles demanded by the patriarchal hierarchy of early modern society--lies at the heart of Geoffrey Fenton's prose romance tale, "Pandora of Milan."

This tale is collected in Fenton's 1567 volume of tales, Certain Tragical Discourses, one of the earliest collections of prose romance tales published in England. All of the tales in Fenton's collection were written in Italian by Matteo Bandello; however, Fenton's translations are not from the Italian originals, but from a French

translation of Bandello, the Histoires Tragiques of François de Belleforest. There are significant changes in the tales as they are translated into French by Belleforest and as they are retranslated into English by Fenton. My project here is not to compare the English versions of the tales to the French or Italian texts, but to analyze the stories that Fenton chose to bring into English and the language he used to do it.

Fenton's "Pandora of Milan" presents a horrifying picture of an uncontrollable female sexuality that transgresses the blurry boundary between male and female within the model of the one-sex body. Although Pandora's sexuality is marked as masculine in many ways, she escapes detection and punishment for her sexual transgressions by upholding the gender expectations--acting like a virtuous and meek woman in public. This transgressive and ultimately dangerous sexuality is almost entirely pre- and extra-marital, undermining the institution of marriage and the family system. Fenton represents the tradition of courtly love, which privileges female sexual pleasure, as a cultural key which unlocks female sexuality, letting loose its unnatural power. Fenton uses eroticism in "Pandora of

Milan," and most of the other stories in his collection of Italian prose romance tales, as an exciting threat: the female sexuality the tales portray, as my reading of "Pandora" will show, is always spectacular, but it is rarely supportive of the social structure of marriage and family. Fenton overwhelmingly presents sexual desire as a threat to the family system and a political order increasingly represented by the metaphor of the nuclear family. Within the collection of tales in which "Pandora of Milan" is presented, desire almost always brings about social disorder and death.

Fenton claims in his introduction to Certain Tragical Discourses that he uses "a special discretion in culling out such examples as best agreed with the condition of the time" (45); and the tales he chooses to translate and publish overwhelmingly connect sexuality and sexual desire, both male and female, as intimately connected with death and social disorder. Out of thirteen *Bandello* tales Fenton has chosen to collect, there is one story which ends happily in heterosexual marriage, one chaste heroine who prefers death to sex, one chaste maid who can fight off an Abbot, and one tale of a chaste man. The other nine tales detail unruly,

aberrant, and chaotic sexual desire which, even when contained within the institution of marriage, causes death, including two tales in which the lovers die after their first sexual contacts.² The dangerous, unsettling and murderous nature of sexuality is the focus of tale after tale: loyalty is rewarded with death, chastity with death, desire for a spouse with death. Fenton uses eroticism as an instrument of terror: desire is marked as unnatural, transgressive, and destabilizing.

The dangers of sexual pleasure became the focus of a debate between Fenton and humanist scholar Roger Ascham. This debate focussed on the uses of eroticism in prose romance tales, with Fenton claiming that an eroticism which is coupled with terror can be as effective a tool for teaching virtuous behavior as is Scripture and Ascham arguing that erotic tales from Italy can transform English readers into licentious "Englishmen Italianated" capable of "plenty of new mischiefs never known in England before; for manners, variety and vanities and change of filthy living" (67). Ascham's Scholemaster, published in 1570 but written sometime before his death in 1568, attacked recently published collections of Italian tales: William Painter's

The Palace of Pleasure (1566) and Fenton's Certaine Tragical Discourses (1567). After a lengthy censuring of English travelers to the continent, Ascham claims that the greatest threat to English morality comes from the new popularity of Italian novellas in English translation being sold by London booksellers. Indeed, whereas only the very wealthy, and usually only men, were able to travel to Italy, a much larger public had access to the erotic tales printed and sold for an affordable sum.³

Ascham claims that the eroticism of these tales is used to destroy English sexual morality, arguing for the political efficacy of controlling the reading public to enforce morals:

These be the enchantments of Circe brought out of Italy to mar men's manners in England: much by example of ill life but more by precepts of fond books, of late translated out of Italian into English, sold in every shop in London, commended by honest titles the sooner to corrupt honest manners, dedicated overboldly to virtuous and honorable personages, the easier to beguile simple and innocent wits. It is pity that

those which have authority and charge to allow and disallow books to be printed be no more circumspect herein than they are. Ten sermons at Paul's Cross do not so much good for moving men to true doctrine as one of those books do harm with enticing men to ill-living.

(67)

These erotic tales dedicated to aristocratic readers, purporting in their dedicatory epistles to be tools for teaching wisdom by exposure to vice, were vilified by Ascham for their association with Italy and the Church of Rome.⁴ Ascham tries to brand Fenton as a Papist because of the bawdiness of the tales, but the real argument that exists between Ascham and Fenton is over how reading worked upon readers and the extremely blurred line between fiction and truth in early modern culture. Ascham argues that these works are a threat to the Protestant religion and their writers part of a Catholic plot:

When the busy and open Papists abroad could not, by their contentious books, turn men in England fast enough from truth and right judgment in doctrine, then

the subtle and secret Papists at home, procured bawdy books to be translated out of the Italian tongue, whereby over many young wills do now boldly contemn all severe books that sound to honesty and godliness.

Ascham's complaint about reading tastes and the scorn for "severe" books is likely a response to Fenton's argument in the introduction to the Tragical Discourses that reading "histories" is as necessary for the mind and soul of Christians as is the reading of Scripture. Seeming almost to anticipate Ascham's attacks, Fenton argues,

There is required in all estates both a faith and a fear in God, and also an outward policy in worldly things: whereof, according to the philosophers, the one is to be learned by perusing Scripture, and the other cannot be gotten but by the assistance of histories, which are the only and true tables whereon are drawn in perfect colour the virtues and vices of every condition of man, both their flourishing time, whilst they embraced the first, and miserable fall when they grew in delight with wickedness of the last. (41-

2)

Fenton privileges these histories over other forms of moral teaching because "both the dignity of virtue and foulness of vice appeareth much more lively than in any moral teaching" (42).

Both Ascham and Fenton are defining the usefulness and the possible misuses of reading erotic literature. They participate in the ongoing debate about the value of recreational literature and the wider access to it afforded by the an expanding readership, which I outlined in Chapter One. They part ways when it comes to the role of the reader. Fenton posits an active reader who is spurred to goodness by seeing evil portrayed; Ascham sees a passive reader who absorbs and becomes what is represented in books. However, Fenton and Ascham were both engaged in an explicit battle to control sexuality through the control of reading. Yet, necessarily, because of the complex nature of social control, their writing expresses great variation over what needed controlling and how best to control it. For Ascham, any association with the "Italianate" loosens the social strictures of English Protestantism. For Fenton, the

association of sexuality with chaos, violence, and death will police the titillated readers and convince them to be satisfied with the pleasures of reading rather than those of the flesh.

In his dedicatory letter to Lady Mary Sidney, the mother of Sir Philip Sidney, later to be one of England's most famous romance writers, Fenton tries to lay down a rationale or theory for producing and reading recreational literature which portrays erotic acts and illicit behavior. Fenton's rationale might be said to coalesce around his frequent use of the word "commodity," which he employs in a number of senses. His uses of "commodity" reflect the conflict inherent within the word at the time as now between a quality or condition of things--their "conveniency," "fitting utility" "interest or advantage"-- and its meaning as a thing which can be bought, sold, or traded--an article of commerce [OED]. Commodity is a crucial word for Fenton and illuminates what he sees as the uses of histories. Using classical precedents, he argues that stories are useful products which must be available to readers of all classes: "[Tully] persuades a great necessity to all degrees to be privy to the commodity of stories" (41). He contends

that all classes must have access to stories in order to effect national harmony through social order dispersed by reading: "to the private person, antiquity gives choice of admonitions for obedience to his superiors, with charge to apply and employ all his care for the commodity of his country" (42).

For the reader, Fenton affirms two returns on the investment of reading: pleasure and moral profit. Like many others after him, Fenton argues that pleasure is a legitimate goal of leisure reading and not to be feared: "touching the commodities to be culled out of antiquities, Livy is of opinion that the pleasure and profit falleth out of indifferent value to such as bestow their time, with upright judgement, in view of ancient records" (42). Moreover, he asserts that the portrayal of evil or anti-social behavior is a commodity, a thing which benefits mankind: "seeing that study to resemble their virtues the eschewing of the evil parts in a number of vicious persons is a singular commodity" (43).

Fenton further claims that creators of such literature are, through their efforts, doing God's work. Writers of stories that portray such behavior create them as

commodities to be distributed to readers and through that commerce in stories bring the benefit of social harmony:

Nicephorus said very well that those which write Histories and keep not that which is profitable and praiseworthy as it were in their store-house at home, but rather, being beneficial to the commonwealth, do expose so common a profit to the general commodity of all men, are (as it were) the executors of God's divine providence. (43)

The story is imagined as product which can be distributed, circulated, and shared as an article of commerce and also as something which offers advantages, interest, and benefits to mankind.

In the debate over romances and reading implied by Fenton's argument, we see a culture trying to define the nature of the written word or "art" as a commodity-- something which is useful and which can be bought and sold. Yet like so many words in early modern culture, and like Fenton's tales themselves, eroticism writes itself over these literal meanings: ironically, "commodity" is also

sexual slang for prostitute.⁵ This meaning, although not intended by Fenton in his arguments for the uses of tales, seems to be the meaning Ascham attaches to them, arguing that these books corrupt English morals, which he sees as based on monogamous marriage.

Ascham's arguments against these new collections of prose romance tales touch on the genre's earlier incarnation in England, the Morte D'Arthur, and in particular the adulterous courtly love that work portrayed. He claims,

In our forefather's time, when papistry . . . overflowed all England, few books were read in our tongue, saving certain books of chivalry, as they said, for pastime and pleasure, which, as some say, ere made in monasteries by idle monks or wanton canons; as one for example, Morte Darthur, the whole pleasure of which book standeth in two special points--in open manslaughter and bold bawdry; in which book those be counted the noblest knights that do kill most men without any quarrel and commit foulest adulteries by subtlest shifts: as Sir Lancelot with the wife of King Arthur his master, Sir Tristram with the wife of King

Mark his uncle, Sir Lamorak with the wife of King Lot that was his own aunt. . . . What toys the daily reading of such a book may work in the will of a young gentleman or a young maid that liveth wealthily and idly, wise men can judge and honest men do pity. And yet ten Morte Darthurs do not the tenth part so much harm as one of these books made in Italy and translated in England. They open, not fond and common ways to vice, but such subtle, cunning, new, and diverse shifts to carry young wills to vanity and young wits to mischief, to teach old bawds new school points, as the simple head of an Englishman is not able to invent. . . . Suffer these books to be read, and they shall soon displace all books of godly learning. . . . there be more of these ungracious books set out in print within these few months than have been seen in England many score years before. And because our Englishmen made Italians cannot hurt but certain persons and in certain places, therefore these Italian books are made English to bring mischief enough openly and boldly to all states, great and mean, young and old, everywhere.

(68-9)

More than English travelers, who can only hurt a limited number of people with their "Italianated" ideas, prose romance tales, as printed and widely distributed commodities, pose a much larger threat. The threat, as Ascham defines it, is to the institution of marriage, which is undermined by tales--like Fenton's "Pandora of Milan"--which detail acts of adultery. Although the threat of Italian influences to English humanist arguments for monogamous, companionate marriage is implied in this passage, Ascham draws a clear line from the courtly love tradition, with its component of extra-marital sexual love, depicted in the Morte D'Arthur and the Italian prose romance tales circulating in the 1560s.

Ascham returns to this problem again later in his work, drawing more clearly the connection between the sexuality these tales and travelers import and the issue of marriage:

Our Italians bring home with them other faults from Italy... For commonly they come home common contemners of marriage and ready persuaders of all other to the same, not because they love virginity nor yet because they hate pretty young virgins, but being free in Italy

to go whithersoever lust will carry them, they do not like that law and honesty should be such a bar to their like liberty at home in England. (73-4)

For Ascham, these tales do not police behavior by exhibiting the downfalls of vice, rather they make vices more readily available to a wider reading public.

In these arguments by Ascham and Fenton, prose romance tales are a locus for cultural debate and definition. That debate centers around how the eroticism of these texts is used by their producers and readers. We cannot know whether Ascham ever read "Pandora of Milan" or the other tales in Fenton's collection, but elements of these tales suggest that they were meant as a kind of social control of sexuality. In fact, Fenton argues that their value as commodities lies in their eroticism, which defines and polices culturally constructed sex and gender roles. However, "Pandora of Milan" illuminates a disjunction between sex and gender roles that accounts for and threatens to unravel Fenton's rationalizations. Whereas the terrifying spectacle of female sexuality that Fenton represents is meant to police social roles, "Pandora of

Milan" also illuminates the cultural anxiety that surrounds the disjunction of sex and gender roles caused by anatomical theories like those of Galen. The tale's horrific female sexuality undermines the stability of both ideas of biological sex and culturally prescribed gender roles, and in doing so, represents women in a way that is completely incompatible with humanist and puritan ideas about companionate marriage.

II.

Fenton's tale "Pandora of Milan" begins in Pandora's fourteenth year when she initiates sexual relations with a page in her father's household. She has sexual relations with him every night until she becomes bored and moves on to a second lover, a young gentleman. A rich, elderly gentleman, who admires Pandora's beauty and youth, arranges to marry her; however, he is incapable of sexual relations due to his age and infirmity. Pandora brings her former page into her new household and continues her sexual

relationship with him and with several other lovers until she meets "the knight." This knight woos Pandora with letters that, using the language of courtly love, proclaim him her "servant" and cause her to become extremely desirous of him. They begin a sexual relationship, and Pandora becomes pregnant. The knight is advised by one of his friends of Pandora's other sexual engagements and is convinced to break off his connection to her. The knight then marries another woman. Pandora, enraged at being abandoned, tries by various methods--herbs, potions--to abort the fetus. When none of these remedies work, she decides to abort it herself with the help of her maid. Pandora has the maid jump on her stomach to untether the six-month old fetus. Once the fetus has been dislodged, Pandora dismembers it and feeds it to her dog. Unscathed by the experience, Pandora returns to society several days later.

"Pandora of Milan" is Fenton's most extreme version of eroticism as terror. It is a story so sexualized and so gruesome that no other collector of romance tales chose to translate it into English.⁶ "Pandora of Milan" presents the problem of female sexuality when it is not contained by an

effective ideology of love and marriage. The ideology of love represented in the story is that of courtly love in which the man, vassal-like, serves a married woman as lover. As the medieval courtly love ideal is aristocratic, extra-marital, non-reproductive, and, according to recent scholarship, focussed on female sexual pleasure for its own sake, Pandora's sexual desire is satisfied by courtly love; however, within the course of the story, the lovers do not adhere to the most important tenet of courtly love. Unlike its earlier medieval incarnations, Fenton's version of courtly love is reproductive--Pandora becomes pregnant by her courtly lover.

Literary historians have argued that the woman of the courtly love tradition was the dominant partner in both social and sexual scenarios.⁷ Rather than containing female sexuality and organizing its relation to the institution of marriage as it does in medieval romances, courtly love in Fenton's tale unleashes a chaotic and destructive female sexual energy which, when denied the courtly lover as its object, wreaks havoc, drawing "innocent blood." Yet, even after brutally murdering her own aborted fetus Pandora pays no social penalties because she adheres

to feminine gender roles in public. This representation of courtly love as an ineffective ideology of love undermines the powerful gender roles and sex roles women had enjoyed within it.

Recent work on the history of sex, physiology and sexuality suggests that it is crucial to attempt this separation of sex and gender as conceptual categories when reading early modern literature. In particular, the work of Thomas Laqueur offers significant material for our understanding of the construction of the body and sex in this period. In Making Sex, Laqueur collects and interprets medical and anatomical theories from classical Greece to Freud in order to argue that sex and the body are not trans-historical categories but social constructions that support the political and social order. Laqueur argues that before the eighteenth century the body was imagined quite differently than it is today, contending that only from about 1750 onward were the dominant discourses about sex organized in a "two-sex model," in which men and women are separate and "opposite" sexes. Laqueur illustrates the two-sex model with a horizontal axis on which the male is located on one end and the female on the other with a great,

yawning chasm of difference between them.

Basing his argument on the Galenic theory with which I began this chapter, Laqueur claims that the early modern period imagined sex along a vertical axis in which women were not the opposite of men but merely lesser versions of them. Laqueur names this conception of the body the "one-sex model" and asserts it was the dominant paradigm for imagining sex from classical Greece until the mid-eighteenth century.⁸ Importantly, Laqueur contends that, in this paradigm, the female body had a sexuality imagined as like that of males, with pleasure, excitement, bodily fluids, and the production of seed being the province of both male and female bodies; female bodies were imagined as simply producing lesser or weaker versions of these things than male bodies. For a female body imagined as less than males, sex roles, as opposed to gender roles, would be the same, but lesser. The threat of movement implicit in this conception--women capable of sliding from less to more along this vertical axis, men from more to less--mirrors the fears and anxieties present in Fenton's tale, "Pandora of Milan."⁹ The terror of the one-sex body is the danger of movement upward on the axis for women and the concomitant threat of

downward movement for men, and in "Pandora" this danger is intimately connected with female sexual pleasure. Fenton's tale seems situated within the Galenic conception of a naturally desiring female sexuality, but it paradoxically attempts to represent that sexuality as unnatural.

Laqueur's project is, more than anything else, concerned with the political implications of female sexuality, arguing that how female sexuality is represented can define and support such diverse institutions as the family system, organized religion, the judiciary, and the medical establishment. The shift from the one-sex model to the two-sex model that Laqueur locates in the eighteenth century coincides, for him, with the disappearance of the female orgasm.¹⁰ In the one-sex model, anatomists believed that female sexual pleasure and orgasm were necessary for procreation; in the two-sex model, they do not. This model of the body suggests a much wider divide between sex roles and gender roles in the early modern period than in the modern world. Laqueur argues that the two-sex model had two corresponding genders, but that before 1750, there was a conflict between sex and gender roles because there were two genders--masculine and feminine--but only one sex. After

the eighteenth century, the conception of sex as a horizontal axis in the two sex model allows for an easier conflation of sex and gender roles because women were imagined as passive, meek, acted upon and hysterical in both their sexual roles and in their gender roles. On the vertical axis, women's sex roles, as much as men's, rely on the pleasuring and pleased body: generation depends on female orgasm as much as it does on male. In this conception, an active, desiring and orgasmic female sexuality is the norm. This active sex role, however, could be at odds with the construction of gender roles within the family system of early modern England where female chastity and obedience were models of the state.

"Pandora of Milan" represents an attempt to demonize and make "unnatural" this female body which has sexual pleasure--marked by desires and by fluids--like a male body. The tale also attempts to undermine courtly love as a cultural supplement that enhances this pleasure by portraying the sexual and rhetorical arts of Pandora's courtly lover as the impetus for the violence to which that sexual pleasure leads. The tale argues that female desire, once unleashed, can be dangerous and difficult to controll.

Drawing this line between nature--represented by biological sex--and culture--represented by the social hierarchy of gender and the art of courtly love, Fenton's tale displays anxiety about both categories: gender is a cultural construction that can hide the "unnatural" natural desire of the female body, and courtly love is a cultural construction which lets loose the extremely dangerous power of female sexuality. Both nature and culture in his tale make possible pleasures that ultimately lead to a destabilizing of social hierarchies. The tale offers no solution to this instability of natural and cultural hierarchies, presenting it only as the grounds for terror.

Moreover, Galenic theory while constructing a "natural" female capacity for sexual pleasure--women must be orgasmic to reproduce--also raises the specter of male sexual inadequacy when sexual intercourse does not result in reproduction. In "Pandora of Milan," Pandora's reproductive body and her sexuality define each other and also illuminate the anxieties they elicit: first, as an extremely sexually active female who initially does not reproduce, Pandora represents male sexual inadequacy as her many lovers fail to bring down her seed; and later in the story, as a sexually

satisfied woman who reproduces but secretly destroys the fetus in a ritual that mirrors the traditional all-female childbirth ceremonies, Pandora also represents fears of female control over reproduction. Pandora's sexuality is marked by the "fluids" described in Galenic theory as more perfect than that of her male partners; not only does Pandora effortlessly produce her own fluids, she illuminates a lack of fluidity in her male lovers. She threatens to move up the axis of the one-sex body. Pandora's box, open, uncontrollable, lets fly innumerable anxieties into the world of men.

Indeed, the title, "Pandora of Milan," heralds this tale as a story about the destructive powers of female sexuality. Critics writing on homoeroticism have argued that naming was one way of constructing sexual identity in the early modern period; for example, Shakespeare's choice of the name Ganymede for the cross-dressed Rosalind of Twelfth Night marks that character as a figure of homosexual desire.¹¹ For English readers, the title offers a double onomastic charge: Pandora's given name marks her as open, dangerous and genital; her association with "Milan" marks her as foreign, "Italianated." Although Pandora's story is

reported as a true tale of a real woman, her name, Fenton suggests, has been changed to protect the innocent: her family and other women who might bear the same name. In Greek mythology, Pandora is the name of the first mortal woman, who received from Jupiter a box containing the whole multitude of human ills, which he forbade her to open. Disobeying him, Pandora lets all evils fly out of the box. "Pandora's box" then is a catch phrase for the evil brought into the world by disobedient women. Moreover, box, since ancient Greek times, has been bawdy slang for vagina (Henderson 130); and certainly box continued to have that meaning in the early modern period.¹² The woman's vagina contains the multitude of human ills which escape when the woman opens it to experience its unknown pleasures. Over the course of the following century, the term "Pandora's box" became increasingly associated with prostitution and venereal disease.¹³

In "Pandora of Milan," Fenton alludes repeatedly to female genitals in terms of their social and economic value to the family system and as the site of a dangerous and voracious female sexual pleasure. Fenton consistently uses economic metaphors to describe both female genitals and the

sexual relation, and the focus of the narrative is on the subversion of the economy of marriage by female sexual desire that acts to satisfy itself rather than form marriage alliances. Pandora is "bankrupt of her honour" (158); one of her lovers had "crept so far into her credit" (158); her virginity is a "precious commodity" (158); she had "paid the first fruits of her virginity" (158); she moves on to a new lover "concluding a new bargain of love" (159); her servant "had free access to her chamber where he paid his arreages" (160). The marketplace is where value is established, where consumption is organized, and where one must have goods in order to trade. These three economic concepts--value, consumption and assets--are the images used to represent anxieties about the female reproductive body. Pandora corrupts values of chastity and virginity; she consumes male lovers, draining and exhausting them; and she reveals a lack of male sexual assets, of the erotic goods of liquids, seeds, and the capacity to pleasure women, which hinders them from reproducing offspring and increasing their familial assets.

Pandora sets her own pleasure as the value of her virginity by taking control of her genitals, a commodity or

currency which patriarchy does not consider her own. Pandora subverts this economy of female sexuality by profiting from its value herself: her body does not circulate to support the family system but to gather sexual pleasures to herself. Pandora's transgression of the family system, her power in the marketplace--it is she who is usually being "paid"--is eroticized through sexually explicit genital imagery. Before she is "full of fourteen years," Pandora initiates sexual relations with a household servant and "feasted him so frankly with the pleasant juice and precious commodity of her island, not erst inhabited by strangers, that his common exercise was to keep her company every night alone in her chamber" (158-9). Fenton's language focusses on Pandora's genitals--it is an "island" where she "feasts," it has "pleasant juice," but is still a "commodity."

Fenton presents the problems of this desiring female sexuality in relation to traditional gender roles. By trading in her "commodity," Pandora presumably empties it of its exchange value as a basis for making marriage, yet her secrecy and adherence to gender roles allows her to continue to realize virginity's full value:

neither was she doubted (wheresoever she came) to be referred to the first place in the beadroll of pure virgins; although (as you have heard) she had paid the first fruits of her virginity to one no less worthy of the offering than to enjoy the possession of so dear a jewel. (159)

This female sexuality corrupts the value of virginity necessary for an arranged marriage, but paradoxically a pleasuring female sexuality is also necessary for reproduction in the Galenic one-sex body and therefore the continuance of the family. This first part of "Pandora of Milan" sets up an economics of desire in which female sexuality disguised by gender roles undermines the social economy of the family system by destabilizing the value of chastity: the value depends on knowledge of her acts, and her actions are not uncovered. Gender roles provide a cultural cover for a hidden female sexuality.

Part of the anxiety around female genitals in the story is their internal status. They can not be seen or examined in the same way the male genitals can: they are hidden, interior, mysterious. This genital secrecy allows for

bodily practices to counterfeit virginity and chastity, again allowing the value of virginity to be both destroyed and maintained. Fenton notes of Pandora's husband

... he took her for a pure virgin: a thing not much to be marvelled at, seeing the daily accidents in the like affairs, and specially the subtle charms and sundry legerdemains, whereof such Dermopterae or leatherwinged housewives as Pandora have no small store, to cover their faults, and make them seem maidenlike (although they have already played the didapper), that the clearest eyes had need of spectacles, and the wisest wits want sleight, to discern their cunning. (161)

This passage again illuminates the anxiety over female sexuality in which the eroticism depends on descriptions of female genitalia. In this brief passage, Fenton makes three different bawdy references to the vagina, constantly playing on a fascination for the organ while also dressing it in shame, revulsion and mystery. In the first line, Fenton plays on the bawdy meaning of "thing," slang for penis but also for vagina, when he describes how the husband believed

Pandora to be a virgin.¹⁴ Fenton describes "a thing not much to be marvelled at" with "thing" read as the husband's misconceptions but also as Pandora's vagina, a thing which must be looked at to make the designation of virgin, but which cannot be considered marvelous because it is imperfect.

Fenton continues these double meanings as he describes the magic and tricks which women use to ape virginity. To be taken as virgins, sexually active women must "cover their fault"; Fenton plays on "fault" which means both their acts against the law of chastity for women, but also refers to the vagina, the place they must "cover" to fool the observer looking for physical signs of virginity.¹⁵ Fenton seems to be suggesting that women have some kind of prosthesis or covering for the vagina which can be used to approximate an unbroken hymen and "make them seem maidenlike." The final phrase "discern their cunning" plays on a common pun for female genitals. "Cunning" was often a play on "cunny" a diminutive form of cunt.¹⁶ Although cunning also means skill, deception and magic, its sexual charge here connects it with the previous bawdy references to the vagina. In this passage, male spectators can "discern" women's

genitals, look directly at them with their "spectacles" on, but these organs still will not divulge their secrets. Pandora's box is unreadable, unknowable, and therefore its value is unstable and disruptive. The references to leather wings and "didapper" (a kind of wading bird) are also sexualized: leather winged is usually associated with bats and night-traveling animals suggesting sexual doings, and didapper seems here to be a fanciful variation on goose which was slang for prostitute.¹⁷

The disjunction between Pandora's sex roles and her gender roles in these passages--she can be sexually active and yet still be "listed in the beadroll of virgins"--illuminates the tensions inherent in the Galenic one-sex model of the body circulating in the early modern period in which the female body "naturally" wants sexual pleasure in order to reproduce. Sexual acts and sexual roles that focus on female sexual pleasure and that are necessary for generation undermine and threaten to overturn gender roles in which women must be marked by shame and timidity rather than an open and desirous sexuality.

This disjunction between sex and gender roles has an emasculating effect on the sexual desire of her lovers, as

the early love scenes present a nearly complete reversal of gender roles in sexual acts. In most cases, it's Pandora who is in control of the sexual scenario from its initiation to its denouement; her male lovers merely respond, often with some bewilderment and disappointment over the change in their roles:

This second lover, thinking to cull the first flower of the maidenhead of Pandora ..., began to doubt of the case when he found the way already beaten, and entry so easy without resistance. Albeit, contenting himself with his present fortune, ...he failed not ...[to supply] her greedy desire. (160)

For this lover, the sexual act is pleasurable, but the missing cultural value of virginity lessens his pleasure. However, Fenton uses genital allusions again to reinforce the disjunction of physical and socially constructed pleasure: the lover "contents" himself with the the sexual relation, an aural pun on cunt. Fenton uses similar wordplay when another lover finds the same kind of disappointment:

being arrived in the haven of his desire, God knoweth with what devotion they offered to the goddess of pleasure, celebrating the banquet with all dishes of delicacy. Wherewith the impudent Pandora forgat not to feast him so frankly with shameful encounters on her part...and with small cunning [he] gave her checkmate that stood slenderly upon her guard, loathing even now her incontineny that so easily yielded her honesty in prey to whosoever would pursue it. (162)

Male sexual pleasure in these passages depends, in part, on the upholding of female gender roles of chastity. At the moment of the sexual relation, Pandora cannot seem to uphold the gender expectations she manages in public. Fenton's wordplay illuminates the importance of gendered "positions" in the sexual relation. The chess imagery, "with small cunning have her checkmate that stood slenderly upon her guard," suggests that the male partner must win virginity and sexual superiority for the sexual relation to be fully satisfying. Pandora's overtaking of male gender prerogatives is underlined by Fenton's use of the phrase "small cunning" to describe the male partner, lowering his status with a

diminutive adjective and through the association with female sex organs: he has "cunning."

In general, these scenes of sexual relations rely on bawdy puns and allusions for their descriptions of sex acts, and therefore seem to be a form of soft pornography. In other words, the acts are described in terms so general that the reader is allowed to "fill in the blanks" as it were. The pun or bawdy slang becomes part of the erotic act of reading. Like Pandora, the tales maintain a surface which nods to social propriety, but conceal the erotic desires and acts which lie just below.

While maintaining traditional gender roles in social situations, in sexual scenarios Pandora becomes what modern critics have dubbed a "woman-on-top." Natalie Zemon Davis argues that:

In hierarchical and conflictful societies that loved to reflect on the world-turned-upside-down, the topos of the woman-on-top was one of the most enjoyed. Indeed, sexual inversion--that is, switches in sex roles--was a widespread form of cultural play in literature, in art, and in festivity. (129)

However, Zemon Davis here uses the term sex roles to describe what I am defining as gender roles, but in "Pandora of Milan" these inversions in sexuality suggest an instability not only in social and cultural roles such as gender but in the body as well.

Pandora herself describes her manipulation of gender roles in order to accommodate her sexuality. She explains to a prospective lover:

Whereof I had long ere this given you understanding by plain practice, if the veil of shame (a common enemy to the amorous enterprises of us women) had not covered mine eyes, and closed my mouth with fears, that I durst never (whilst my husband was at home) cast forth such baits of great good-will I have borne you. (168)

Zemon Davis notes that such sex and gender role inversions tend to reinforce hierarchal categories such as high/low and male/female, but that the image of the woman-on-top did not simply police women's social roles (130). She claims, "On the contrary, it was a multivalent image that could operate, first, to widen behavioral options for women within and even

outside marriage, and second, to sanction riot and political disobedience for both men and women in a society that allowed the lower orders few formal means of protest" (131).

The image of the disorderly or unruly woman offers a release of social anxieties but also participates in a process of change of the distribution of power within society (131). The anxieties that Fenton's woman-on-top releases are complexly related to changing power relations. The gender roles necessary for companionate marriage do not easily conform to the anatomical theories circulating which posit a natural female sexuality based on physical pleasure and orgasm necessary for reproduction. The one-sex body and female pleasure in this tale are represented as uncontrollable, "unnatural," and a threat to the marriage system because affectionate marriage is not an outlet for it. The conceptions of a pleasuring female sexuality threatens gender politics because female pleasure overturns gender roles, offering a site for resistance to political change. The conceptions of the female body which Fenton depicts in "Pandora" reveal the anxiety over an instability in the gender system. Moreover, each of these transgressions are made erotic through Fenton's use of

bawdry and genital imagery. His erotic scenes depict not only the adultery which Roger Ascham found so dangerous in courtly love romances like the Morte D'Arthur, but also the pleased and pleasuring female body and the emasculated male body.

In addition to the challenge that Pandora's sexuality offers to the gender system, it is a threat to conceptions of the body as well by its transgressions of boundaries that mark male and female. Pandora's excessive sexuality is marked by the emission and consumption of fluids. She easily and apparently without any decrease in sexual energy produces a vaginal fluid Fenton refers to as her "juice." In her first sexual encounter with the servant, Pandora "feasted him ... frankly with the pleasant juice ... of her island" (159). She is able to do this nightly until she suffers from sexual boredom and looks for a new partner. Her next sexual partner, a "lusty" gentleman, disappointed that Pandora's enthusiasm suggests she is not a virgin, must "[content] himself with his present fortune, being driven notwithstanding to drink the lees of the vessel which the page had gaged to his hand, and sucked out the sugared juice of that grape" (160). In both passages, there is a direct*

connection between the fluid and the vagina--it is the juice of her island, the lees of the vessel, the sugared juice of her grape. Fenton's verbs--"drink," "sucked," "feasted"--may be read metaphorically, or they could be allusions to oral sex. The second passage suggests that for the male partner the sweetness of the juice depends on the cultural value of virginity. However, both passages show an interest in the morphology of female genitalia and the production of sexual fluids--"juice"--in the female body. Yet fluid, the juice of her organ, marks a sexual distinction and places Pandora at the male end of the vertical axis of the one-sex body because Pandora seems to have endless reserves of both sexual energy and fluids.

"Juice" in early modern sexual slang is a word used to describe both male and female emissions of fluid, supporting the idea that Fenton was working within what Thomas Laqueur terms an "economy of bodily fluids":

In the blood, semen, milk, and other fluids of the one-sex body, there is no female and no sharp boundary between the sexes. Instead, a physiology of fungible fluids and corporeal flux represents

in a different register the absence of specifically genital sex. (35)

As a result, he argues, "male and female seed cannot be imagined as sexually specific, morphologically distinct, entities," as they later came to be understood (38). So whereas "discerning cunning" or looking at female genitals would not give definite sex or gender information, the quality or amount of genital fluid might. If Pandora produces more and stronger fluids than her male partners, is she not then more "male" than they?

In early modern sexual slang, "juiceless" meant a man drained of fluid, and unable to have sexual relations;¹⁸ and women who were "juicy" or "full of juice" were ready for sexual relations. In Jonson's Bartholomew Fair, a prostitute in a suburban brothel criticizes her detractors, saying "Ay, Ay, gamesters; mock a plain, plump, soft wench o' the suburbs, do, because she's juicy and wholesome. You must ha' your thin pinch'd ware, pent up I' the compass of a dog-collar, or't will not do" (II v 110-114). This passage clearly connects juice with wholesomeness (with an additional bawdy pun on "hole" (Partridge Bawdry)), yet in

Fenton's tale, Pandora is also marked by a constant desire for male fluids, indeed for more than her partners can supply. Her capacity to accept and create fluids is erotic because it creates a vast indeterminacy about Pandora's sex which is not specifically genital--although her genitals cannot be discerned, her juice is repeatedly described.

The sex of Pandora's male partners is also marked by the emission of fluids: the problem here is dearth rather than surplus. All of Pandora's lovers eventually suffer from the inability to produce semen, the liquid or liquor which Fenton suggests will quench her. The servant's sexual liaison with Pandora is ended because he "was not able to quench the lust of his insatiable mistress" (159). Her second lover suffers a similar predicament:

his chief exercise and time was employed in the supply of her greedy desire; until at last, being cloyed for want of fresh diet, or weary with so long hunting one kind of chase, or, peradventure, not able any longer to maintain the skirmish for want of fresh supplies...

(160)

Fenton's arrangement of the passage presents a sly humor about male impotence: beginning with the cause of the problem, supplying Pandora's "greedy desire," Fenton runs through a list of possible excuses for the lover to break off the liaison before finally suggesting that her desire has sexually incapacitated him, "not able any longer to maintain the skirmish" because he lacks semen, "fresh supplies."

Pandora's husband, whom she marries after the second lover, is fifty years old and epitomizes the problem of male "juicelessness":

[H]is former moisture and strength converted into watery humours of weakness, scarce able to sustain nature, . . . seemed far unable to encounter in single combat with her, that had not yet seen the uttermost day of eighteen years. (160)

Although the role of the male lover is defined in these passages by the ability to "supply" female sexual desire, in the figure of Pandora, that desire has been marked as "greedy" and consuming. Pandora's desire creates a lack, an

absence in male lovers. The metaphors of the marketplace-- "employed," "supply"--mingle with those of the table ("fresh diet"), hunting and warfare ("skirmish," "single combat"), to create a sense of masculine places and occupations, all of which are being overwhelmed, overrun by Pandora's desire. The excitement of the pleasuring female is the danger that she will consume you, leave you drained, dry, unable to trade, hunt or fight.

By becoming more "perfect," in the language of the Galenic one-sex body,--more capable of producing fluids-- Pandora represents an anxiety about the stability of this vertical axis in which women are at the bottom end and men at the top. If women can move up the axis toward perfection, then can not men slide down toward imperfection and lack? Pandora is a particularly threatening figure because her sexuality is not fixed at the appropriate end of the vertical axis, and worse she seems to unhinge her male lovers from their former positions of perfection. Pandora is represented as horribly unnatural-- a woman with male sexuality--whose "cunning" (in both senses of the word) does not reveal this transgression.

According to Galenic theory, Pandora's desire would

have been a result of the build up of fluids. Her fluidity marks her as desirous and ready for sexual relations--she is "juicy." Yet in Pandora, readiness for sexual pleasure and generation do not seem to go together--she does not become pregnant in the early part of the story despite the innumerable list of lovers she uses to supply her desire. In the Galenic theory of reproduction, this would suggest that one of the partners is not experiencing sufficient pleasure for orgasm. The story therefore also marks a breakdown in heterosexual biological generation. Since Pandora is emptying all her lovers of seed, why is she not conceiving? Is she non-orgasmic? not pleased enough to drop her seed after so much and so many have been, to use Fenton's language, employed to supply her? Fenton's tale suggests that consuming male seed is not enough for female orgasm and therefore generation; something more is needed. And in "Pandora of Milan," that something more is the rhetoric and practices of courtly love. The lover who finally impregnates Pandora has excited her with the trappings of courtly love, suggesting that, for women, the rhetorical traditions of love writings are necessary to generate the "heat" necessary for conception.

III.

Culture then, in the form of the "art" of courtly love, is presented as a necessary supplement to "Nature"--the instinctive physical capacity of male lovers to bring Pandora to orgasm and drop her seed. The category of the "natural," represented here by the sexual relation, is imperfect, containing a lack which culture in the form of courtly love must supply.¹⁹ Noting the importance of the opposition of Nature and Art for early modern culture, Edward William Tayler argues,

When Art is viewed eulogistically--as the product of man's 'erected wit,' of a faculty not entirely impaired by the Fall, of a faculty capable of rational creativity--then Nature usually signifies the unformed, the inchoate, the imperfect, or even the corrupt ... When, on the other hand, Art is viewed pejoratively--as mere imitation, falsification, reprehensible counterfeit, or even perversion--then Nature signifies the original, the unspoiled, the transcendent, or even the perfect. (36)

The paradox of Fenton's representation is that both Nature and Art are imperfect and undermined. Sexuality, whether it be naturally or culturally constructed, is unstable, dangerous, and notably imperfectable. When Art, in the form of courtly love rhetoric, is added to Nature in "Pandora of Milan," it leads to excess--an overflowing of the boundaries of social hierarchies.

Problematically, Fenton constructs courtly love as a supplement necessary for reproduction, whereas the courtly love of the middle ages was explicitly dependent on coitus interruptus and clitoral stimulation. In "Pandora of Milan," desire and pleasure are situated both in the body and in culture: these bodies are defined by the fluids, heat and seeds of Galenic theories of anatomy and generation, and Fenton portrays the tropes of courtly love, which place a higher value on women's pleasure than men's, as also necessary to "heat" the female body to orgasm. The reproductive female body, so necessary for the continuation of the family systems, must be brought to orgasm through a complex interconnection of physical acts and verbal expressions of a hierarchy of pleasure in which women are on top, while men fear sexual and verbal exhaustion, impotence,

and inadequacy.

Pandora has had many lovers and hundreds of sexual encounters before she encounters a young "knight" who leaves her pregnant. This lover is the first to woo Pandora with the trappings, language, and tropes of courtly love. Previously, Pandora had desired men as sexual partners rather than as love objects, but courtly love changes her relation to male lovers--her desire is no longer situated in the body alone; it is now in language as well. The knight begins a courtship of Pandora with a letter in which he presents himself as the vassal-like lover of medieval romance. He is a slave to his love for the married woman, his service pledged to her. In his letter to Pandora, the knight Caesar Parthenope outlines the power relation of the woman and the lover in the courtly love ideal where the lover makes himself a captive to the woman's beauty and courtesy, offers his service, and places himself within her power as a student of female sexual pleasure. He describes himself in the third person:

Neither doth he desire to have the fruition of his earthly days any longer, than employ the same with all

humility in the service of you; whom his heart hath
already pronounced the sovereign lady of his life,
whereof you only may dispose at your pleasure. (165)

The lover begins by giving up his "fruition," a word which means the act of enjoying, so he is declaring a shift in focus from his own sexual enjoyment to that of the woman. But "fruition" also has the more specific meaning of "the pleasure arising from possession" (OED). He will no longer possess himself, but will make himself subject to Pandora, who is now "sovereign." This reversal of power relations between men and women was an integral element of the code of courtly love; and the possession of earthly wants was not only a description of social power, but more specifically of sexual power. In addition to the courtly lover's submission of his self-possession to the woman, he was not to take possession of her through the act of completed sexual intercourse. Possession was considered an act of brutality not to be included in the repertoire of the courtly lover; it was the domain of the husband--the reproductive, sexual relation of the marriage bond, but not part of the extramarital code of love.²⁰

For the courtly love tradition to which Fenton's knight alludes, female pleasure is not linked to reproduction. As a form of erotic "art," courtly love was highly original: the woman was in control of pleasure for its own sake (Jaquart and Thomasset 96). The knight's letter makes this non-reproductive sexuality part of his promise of service. The lover also alludes to the woman's role as teacher of both a higher level of spirituality and sexual pleasure. He claims that "you only may dispose [of his service] at your pleasure" (emphasis mine). The role of the woman as teacher in courtly love is to instruct the lover in the arts of giving non-reproductive sexual pleasures to women.

In this courtly love ideal both sexual roles and gender roles are overturned: female pleasure is the end in itself. The sexual and social superiority of the lady are central to this pleasure. The knight's letter and its courtly love motifs serve to heighten Pandora's already keen desire for the knight, feeling "by the discourse of this letter, such increase of affection, pinching so extremely with the desire to see him" (166). His language increases her heat, adding something to the heat which is necessary for conception. Moreover, Fenton chooses a word to describe Pandora's

excitement which makes a direct connection between discourse and genital pleasure: "pinch" is yet another early modern bawdy slang for vagina.²¹ In Fenton's tale, sexual acts are not all that is necessary for creating desire in women; desire is enhanced by language describing the transgression of gender roles. Women are excited by being on top in sex roles, but more exhilarating still is to read and hear about a change in gender roles.

Pandora, "who hitherto had loved but only to satisfy her inordinate lust," is moved to affection for "her loyal Parthenope." Being in the position of emotional as well as sexual potency is the sexual spur necessary for Pandora to conceive. Moreover, the courtly lover brings not only the aphrodisiac of power within the relationship, but he also provides more dedicated sexual service:

And [the knight,] being in possession of the common place of Pandora, she found him so valiant in the affairs of her desire, that in respect of the lofty courage of this new champion, she accounted all the rest but children that erst had traded with her in the like traffic. (168)

In this passage, Fenton creates a two-fold division of metaphors for sexual acts, which seems to exalt the sexual skills of the courtly lover. The first part of the sentence focussing on female sexual pleasure uses the language of courtly love--"valiant," "champion," "lofty courage"--to describe a lover who intensifies, in his role of servant, the sexual pleasure and desire of the female character. The second half of the sentence describes unsatisfying lovers in the language of the marketplace--"traded," "traffic"--where sexual deals are made, where sexual acts are commodities, but where sexual pleasure qua pleasure is not necessarily part of the bargain.

Yet courtly love's idea of "service" to women--both social and sexual--is challenged by the story. Pandora's sexual excitement is heightened by the promise of "service" and the tropes of the lover; the courtly lover is also the better lover--satisfying her where she had never been satisfied before. But he does not uphold his promise to cede to Pandora his "fruition," his pleasure in possession. The sexual relation of Pandora and Parthenope is reproductive, and the knight is described as "being in possession of the common place of Pandora." "Common place"

in this context clearly means vagina, in Pandora's case it is derogatorily a place which has been frequented by many persons and is therefore common. But the word is also refers to language: a commonplace was also an ordinary topic of conversation, an everyday expression, a platitude or truism, as well as a rhetorical term for a store of arguments. Both physically and culturally, then, this phrase which begins a description of female sexual pleasure also illuminates a very different attitude Fenton holds towards it than that promoted by the ideology of courtly love. As a commonplace, Pandora's body and place in a language of love has been trivialized by the new version of courtly love inscribed in Fenton's text.

Pandora's body does become more of a commonplace at this point in the story. Whereas earlier sexual acts are alluded to with metaphors and bawdy puns, Pandora's body is displayed in the sexual scene with the courtly lover. In the passage describing their sexual relation, Fenton begins with an explicit description of Pandora's breasts, but then slips back into his martial imagery to describe the act of intercourse:

the knight...began to take possession of her mouth, adoring her eyes with looks of loving admiration, and, passing in order to her white neck of the colour of the fresh lily, came at last to behold her bare breasts, seeming like two little hills or mountains environing a rosy valley of most pleasant prospect, which he forgot not humbly to honour with the often print of his mouth. ...they entered the lists of their single combat, in a fair field-bed, ready dressed for the purpose; where Parthenope, encountering his pleasant enemy with no less force and courage of his part than she had grounded experience to withstand his malice in such exploits, entered the breach which so many had made assaultable to his hand. (168)

In this passage, Fenton puts the reader in the position of voyeur watching the undressing of Pandora and the acts of foreplay to their sexual relation--the knight's mouth upon Pandora's breast. However, his explicit description of the bodies of Pandora and the knight becomes metaphorical once the passage reaches the act of reproductive sex. The sexual relation is compared to a joust between two single

combatants, and Pandora's sexual organs are described with bawdy puns: her vagina, which has been described in so many different ways by Fenton, is now "the breach."

Although courtly love in this tale heightens female desire and makes men better lovers, it is ultimately bankrupt: neither the knight nor the lady adhere to its tenets; it is reproductive, non-monogamous, and finally dangerous because through it female sexual desire becomes chaotic, destructive and cruel. Pandora, whose sexuality is open, fluid and feasting, is scorned by the courtly lover who breaks his vows and does her great disservice, abandoning her after she conceives his child.

The culmination of Pandora's sexual career is marked by an exorbitant amount of bodily fluid, with blood replacing the tale's earlier focus on genital fluids. Her chaotic sexual energy becomes focussed on the child formed of sexual union with the courtly lover, and the central image of the narrative is again fluids as Fenton represents the bloody murder of an aborted six month-old fetus.²² The fluid which defines her is no longer her "juice" but her own blood--in the gruesome, painfully-described abortion by which she purges her body of the fetus--and the blood of her

own "flesh" as she beats and dismembers the fetus. Gail Kern Paster has noted how blood, of all the fluids in the humoral body,

encodes cultural narratives of engenderment. The blood of Shakespeare's warriors, typically depicted as voluntarily shed or metaphorized as phlebotomy, differs from the involuntarily shed, hence shameful blood of women. (21)

As with her sperm, Pandora is marked as both masculine and feminine by blood. In this scene, Pandora is gendered male as a warrior and killer, voluntarily shedding her own blood and the blood of her victim. However, the blood she sheds is also gendered feminine, dangerously close to the embarrassing, shameful blood of menstruation:

she devised a last means for the accomplishment of her enterprise, which the very enemy of nature, I am sure, would abhor to imagine; which was that . . . she resolved (as a bloody butcher of her own blood) to break the bed of the infant within her entrails, and

drive it out of her womb by force. (179)

Pandora's act of infanticide emphasizes the voluntary shedding of blood which was masculine: she is a "butcher" and the fetus is driven out like an invading army. Yet the blood--"her own blood" from her "entrails" is close to menstrual blood.

The tale's earlier anxiety about the secrecy of female sex organs reappears in these final scenes, where women can maintain the secrets of their bodies and further cover them with assumed gender roles. Fenton asks his readers:

Is it possible that a gentlewoman of so tender years, derived of honest parentage, nourished in civility, and that which more is, a Christian, born in the heart of Europe, should so much forget the fear of God and regard of His laws, as, in augmenting the heinous fault of the wrong already done against her husband by so many and unchaste adulteries, to commit in the end an execrable effusion of the blood derived of the drops of her own substance? (179)

When this female blood, which should be embarrassing and shameful, is regendered, controlled secretly and powerfully like a warrior mercilessly attacking an enemy, Pandora once again portrays male anxieties about sexual hierarchies by moving up the axis of the one-sex body towards maleness. Yet, Fenton simultaneously connects her act of infanticide with anxieties about gender hierarchies by portraying this gruesome abortion scene as a parody of the traditional childbirth ceremony accorded to women in early modern society.²³

Pandora's abortion scene includes many of the elements of the traditional birthing ceremony, but they are degraded and made threatening by the graphically brutal images of destruction which surround them. Pandora resolves to abort the fetus:

Wherein she was assisted by Finea, who, according to the commandment of her mistress, carrying a silver basin into the highest turret in the house, went thither immediately both together; where, after the doors were shut on all sides, Pandora, with a troubled countenance, all panting for the horror of the act

which she meant to execute, beholding her belly with serpentine eyes sparkling with flames of fury ... (179-80)

The accouterments of the childbirth ceremony--female assistants, privacy, locking men out of the room, bowls and other mysterious implements depicts the cultural organization of women's power in reproduction. The scene of childbirth in the early modern period has been described by Natalie Zemon Davis as another instance of "women on top" because women gave birth in the company of other women who were fully in charge of the birthing chamber. The ceremony of childbirth allowed women an opportunity to emphasize their social importance through reproduction while maintaining the power of secrecy, and this power of secrecy is constantly under scrutiny in "Pandora of Milan."

Fenton's abortion scene illuminates the cultural anxiety that surrounded the female control of reproduction. Any ceremony that cannot be viewed by men, like the female genitals which could not be "discerned" earlier, offers the opportunity for deception and the subversion of gender and sex regulation. In this male glimpse into the secret female

ceremony, Fenton presents unnatural horrors, rather than the standard scene of reproduction:

possessed wholly with the spirit of fury, having her eyes sunk into her head, her stomach panting, and her face all full of black blood, by the vehemency of the conflict which she had endured, she began to leap with all her force from the top of the cofer down to the ground, bruising her sides with her hands and playing on the drum with her fists upon her great belly, with such huge blows that, feeling even now the littel creature within her removed from his place, ready to drop out of her womb, called for the succour of Finea, who, standing in place of a midwife, received in a silver basin an infant male, unlawfully conceived, bedewed as yet with the wet suds of his wicked mother, sprawling and breathing with a little air of life.

(182)

Kern Paster notes that

whereas pregnancy and childbirth were instances of

female empowerment, that empowerment was constrained by a whole host of stratagems, both real and symbolic, designed to counter an understanding of the maternal body as polluted and polluting. (165)

This pollution, in part, revolves around the exposure of female genitals in birthing.

English anatomists Richard Jonas and Thomas Raynalde, in their translation of The Birthe of Mankynde, suspect that knowledge of the birthing process would lead to even less respect for women, and in particular, for their genitals:

Some aleaging that it is shame, and other some, that it is not meete ne fitting such matters to be intreated of so plainely in our mother and vulgar language, to the dishonor (as they say) of womanhood and the derision of their owne secrets, by the detection and discovering whereof, men it reading or hearing, shalbe moved thereby the more to abhorre and loath the companie of women, and further in their communications to jest and bourd of womens privities, not wont to be knowne of them. (8-9)

"Privities" here is a reference to female sex organs, which because of their internal status are able to hold "thier owne secrets" and can avoid "detection and discovering."

Yet, ironically in Fenton's tale Pandora's shame--sexual and reproductive--is never revealed to her family or society within the tale, and she suffers no consequences for her actions. In fact, the day after her infanticidal frenzy Pandora enjoys a scene much like the lying in which follows the traditional childbirth ceremony:

Pandora, who, waxing now somewhat cold in her former passions of frenzy and rage, began to be pinched with the pangs incident commonly to all women in the painful travail of child-bearing. Whereof, going to bed, she caused certain baines to be provided; wherein washing herself, the next day ... she was carried in a rich couch to visit the company of other ladies, amongst whom she was not worthy to keep place, being the shameful butcher of her own blood and wicked enemy to the life of man. (185)

Fenton claims that Pandora's shame and infamy are brought

about by his tale. In his introductory letter to Mary Sidney, Fenton presents his use of eroticism as purely didactic--teaching readers to vilify vice. However, his protestations do not stand up against "Pandora of Milan." Pandora's sexuality remains chaotic and destructive of both the assigned values of marriage and the family system, but her talent for maintaining public gender roles insures that she is not punished and her formal marriage is maintained. What then is the lesson readers take away from "Pandora of Milan?"

The tale seems to be an argument for both the instability of sexual roles in women along with a mistrust of gender roles in which chaste behavior, as Fenton argues, can cover their "faults." Fenton paints a portrait of a woman, constructed by nature and culture, to deceive men and to overturn the patriarchal social hierarchy. It is little wonder that a humanist like Roger Ascham should attack Fenton's tales. As Valerie Wayne convincingly argues,

humanism takes seriously the problems of marriage and of women, but its ideology of companionate marriage still tries to legitimate the hierarchies of class and

gender which sustained the Tudor religious and social order. Yet the commodification of women's virtue offered as part of the dominant ideology could also permit it to function in support of social mobility by according women's sexual control the value otherwise granted to their wealth or social status. (4)

Pandora's uncontrolled sexuality and destabilizing of gender hierarchies undermines marriage as a tenet of social stability. Her use of the "commodity" of her virginity and assumed virtue undermines the idea of both stable social hierarchies and unthreatening movement within those hierarchies.

In the following decade, the sexuality of female characters portrayed in romance tales changes. In the collections of tales by Barnaby Riche and William Pettie, female characters become more chaste, and their sexuality creates and supports affectionate marriages. A marginal, uncontained female sexuality still exists in their tales, but it is not terrifying like that of Fenton's Pandora.

1. All quotations are from Robert Langdon Douglas's Certain Tragic Discourses of Bandello.
2. The tale of Livio and Camilla ends with Livio "dying of a passion of joy the first night he embraced his mistress in bed, [and Camilla] also the same way overcome with ... sorrow for the death of him she loved" (55); and it is not any better for Perillo and Carmosina who after suffering great love for each other and "marrying...in the end, were both two stricken to death with a thunderbolt, the first night of their unfortunate marriage" (57).
3. In Small Books and Pleasant Histories, Margaret Spufford details the range of reading available in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, including works for readers who were just barely literate.
4. Painter dedicates his work to Lord Burghley and Fenton writes his dedication to his relative Lady Mary Sidney, the mother of Sir Philip Sidney.
5. Thomas Dekker, in the 1608 Bellman of London describes "The whore, who is called the commodity."
6. See Rene Pruvost's Matteo Bandello and Elizabethan Fiction for a list of the Bandello tales which appeared in sixteenth-century collections.
7. In particular, see Sandra Resnick Alfonsi's Masculine Submission in the Troubadour Lyric and Jacquart and Thomasset.
8. Laqueur has been faulted by Katherine Park and Robert Nye for ignoring evidence which contradicts his neat division of pre- and post-1750 sex as either an one- or two-sex model. Primarily, they suggest that in his reading of the anatomies available in the early modern period and their classical precedents, Laqueur conflates Galenic and Aristotelian theories of generation. They argue that

There is, in truth, no single early Western model of sex and sexual difference. Laqueur's "one-sex model" is a hybrid of individual and sometimes mutually contradictory features assembled from the two dominant and fundamentally incompatible traditions of early writing on the subject, the

Aristotelian and the Hippocratic/Galenic. (54)

Park and Nye argue that Laqueur takes from Aristotle the idea that women are less perfect versions of men because they have less "heat," but that he ignores Aristotelian writings which claim the female is merely a receptacle for male seed, producing no seed of her own and therefore not requiring orgasm. However, Nye and Park's criticism does not completely undermine the idea that the early modern period could conceive of a one-sex body. Their claim is simply that in this period, there were many discourses about the body and sex in circulation. Laqueur's argument that bodies were imagined and perceived in ways very different from our own at the end of the twentieth century, as well as in intervening centuries, remains essential for the cultural history of sexuality. But it is also essential that we recognize multiple conceptions of the body, sometimes competing for dominance and carrying with them different political valences. As Jeffrey Weeks argues,

Power, like the politics around it, can be seen as mobile, heterogeneous, insistent and malleable, giving rise to various forms of domination, of which the sexual is one, and producing constant forms of challenge and resistance, in a complex history. (9)

9. For an early attempt to deal with the instability of the one-sex body, see Stephen Greenblatt's "Fiction or Friction." More recently, Patricia Parker has made the connection between theories of the one-sex body and fears of male inadequacy in "Gender Ideology, Gender Change: The Case of Marie Germaine."

10. Indeed, Laqueur notes this search for the female orgasm and female sexual pleasure became the starting point for his research for Making Sex. He claims, "I was reading seventeenth-century midwifery manuals--in search of materials on how birth was organized--but found instead advice on how to become pregnant. . . . Midwives and doctors seemed to believe that female orgasm was among the conditions for successful generation, and they offered various suggestions on how it might be achieved. Orgasm was assumed to be a routine, more or less indispensable part of conception. This surprised me . . . as a nineteenth-century historian I was accustomed to doctors debating whether women had

orgasms at all" (vii).

11. See Traub 125; Saslow Ganymede in the Renaissance 2; and Orgel "Nobody's Perfect" 22.

12. In Shakespeare's All's Well That Ends Well, Parolles says to Bertram "To th' wars, my boy, to th' wars! He wears his honour in a box unseen, that hugs his kicky-wicky here at home, Spending his manly marrow in her arms, Which should sustain the bound and high curvet of Mars's fiery steed" (II iii 281-286). In Jonson's Bartholomew Fair, Wasp says to Littlewit, whose wife has gone to look for a "black box" with her husband's clerk "Good Lord, how long your wife stays! Pray God, Solomon, your clerk, be not looking I' the wrong box, Master Procter" (I iv 35-38).

13. In the Female Fire-ships (1691), Richard Ames warns brothel (stews) inmates:

Breath, breath a while my over-heated Muse,
 Before you enter their accursed Stews;
 Where Aches, Buboes, Shankers, Nodes and Poxes,
 Are hid in Females Dam'd Pandora's Boxes.

The 1724 pamphlet A Modest Defense of Public Stews argues that the state cannot control the spread of syphilis because "this Distemper has one Thing in it peculiarly inveterate, as if it came out of Pandora's worst Box" (qtd. in Henke Courtesans).

One of the more interesting references to Pandora in the seventeenth century is John Milton comparison of Eve to Pandora in The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce (1643). Milton, "The Academics and Stoics, who knew not what a consummat and most adorned Pandora was bestowed upon Adam to be the nurse and guide of his arbitrary happinesse and perseverance, I mean his native innocence and perfection..." (II.iii).

14. In Courtesans and Cuckolds, James Henke claims "thing" can mean penis or vagina. He cites Thomas Dekker's Shoemaker's Holiday IV iii 55-56: Firk, who speaks constantly in bawdy slang, responds to the comment "I have found a better thing." with "A thing? Away! Is it a man's thing, or a woman's thing?"

15. Henke suggests that "faults" definition as a crack brought about its bawdy innuendo of vulva and vagina. In John Marston's The Malcontent, Pietro, who has just discovered that his wife is being unfaithful on a hunting trip, responds to her assertion, "The dogs are at a fault," by lamenting, "Would God nothing but the dogs were at it!" (III iv 1-3).

Henke paraphrases the following joke from Tales and Quick Answers (1535?) "Because of a "certain impediment" a woman had shaved her head. One day, as she sat in her house bareheaded, one of her neighbors called her into the street. The woman dashed out, forgetting to cover her head; and when her neighbor saw this she chided the bald one, who in shame immediately pulled her skirt and petticoats over her bare pate. "They that stood by began to laugh at her foolishness, which to hide a little fault showed a greater" (Courtesans).

See also Eric Partridge Shakespeare's Bawdry and E. A. M Colman The Dramatic Use of Bawdy in Shakespeare.

16. This meaning is clear in the popular 17th c. song "My Mistress's Cunny"

My mistress is a hive of bees
in yonder flowery garden:
To her they come with loaden thighs,
to ease them of their burden.
As under the bee-hive lieth the
wax, and under the wax is honey,
So under her waist her belly is
placed--and under that, her cunny.
(qtd. in Bradley and Duarte)

In Cymbeline, Iachimo tells Cymbeline how he tried to seduce Imogen and convinced her husband that he had "Your daughter's chastity...her bracelet,--O cunning, how I got it!" (V.v.205).

In Le Strange's "Merry Passages and Jeasts" (1630s), "Sir William Spring having a wench in examination, upon a matter of Bastardie, and the time and place being prest upon her, she confesst it was gotten in Cunninggate way just at Cuntson Gappe; a place well knowne in Suffolke" (qtd. in Henke Courtesans)

See also Eric Partridge's A Dictionary of Slang and J.S. Farmer and W.E. Henley's Slang and Its Analogues.

17. In The Faerie Queene, Spenser writes of "The lether-winged Bat, dayes enemy" in a stanza listing "the nation of unfortunate/ And fatall birds...Such as by nature men abhorre and hate" (II.xii.36).

18. The 1672 A Ramble in St. James's Park is quite explicit on this subject:

Had she picked out, to rub her arse on,
Some stiff-pricked clown or well-hung Parson,
Each job of whose spermatic sluice
Had filled her cunt with wholesome juice.
(qtd. in Henke Courtesans)

19. See Derek Attridge "Puttenham's Perplexity: Nature, Art, and the Supplement in Renaissance Poetic Theory" for a subtle treatment of the relation of "nature" and "art" in early modern culture.

20. Jaquart and Thomasset note that

according to the teaching of the trobairitz (women troubadours), ... the lover never enjoyed the rights of the husband. Nothing that might recall the husband's prerogatives, the brutality of the procreative act, could be accepted in this exercise. If the behavior alluded to was indeed as described, courtly love seems to have led to a rediscovery of and demand for clitoral stimulation, to the use of the mans as an erotic stimulant--and thus to a sexuality that was active, specific, and what is more, recognized and even exalted as such by an aristocracy of the sensibility and the intelligence. (95)

21. Henke, in Courtesans and Cuckolds, gives the song, "The Jully Trades-man," in which pinch clearly stands for vagina. In the song, a tailor brags about an extremely long needle.

The finest Sempster in this Town,
That works by line or leisure;

May use my Needle at a pinch.
And do themselves great Pleasure

22. Angus McLaren's work on the history of birth control suggests that Pandora's act is particularly heinous because of the age of the fetus. English abortion law stipulated that an abortion of a fetus that was "formed and animated [foetus erat jam formatus et animatus]" was homicide (140).

23. The widespread popularity of the childbirth ritual is implicit in Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale. In the lists of wrongs Hermione recounts after being falsely accused of adulteries is this "privilege:"

...myself on every post
Proclaimed a strumpet; with immodest hatred
The childbed privilege denied, which longs
To women of all fashion... (3.2.101-104)

Chapter Three

Publishing Private Pleasures:
The Gentlewoman Reader of Barnaby Riche and George Pettie

Shifts toward an audience newly come to see itself capable of intellectual and socioeconomic advancement produce changes in modes of literary production. Simultaneously, access to the bookstall and to a new class of readers alters the structures and subjects writers employ. . . . Elizabethan novelistic discourse . . . provided its readers with guidance on negotiating the boundaries that established socioeconomic difference. (15)

--Constance C. Relihan, Fashioning Authority

And in stead of reading Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia, let them read the grounds of good huswifery. I like not a female Poetresse at any hand. Let greater personages glory their skill in musicke, the posture of their bodies, their knowledge in languages, the greatnesse, and freedome of their spirits, and their arts in arreigning of mens affections at their flattering faces: This is not the way to breed a private Gentlemans Daughter. (173)

-- Thomas Powell, Tom of All Trades

I.

In 1576, George Pettie's A Petite Pallace of Pettie His Pleasure arrived in London bookstalls; it was so popular that another edition came out the following year, with four more editions printed by 1613.¹ Barnaby Riche's Farewell to Military Profession, published in 1581, was slightly less popular, with only four editions in twenty-five years.²

Pettie and Riche had found a strategy for making prose romance tales desirable to a larger, more diverse reading public: their tales were heavily moralized; the sexuality of female characters upheld the sanctity of the marriage bond; and the tales they chose to translate and collect portrayed romantic love.

These changes--from earlier representations of chaotic female sexuality which undermined marriage to chaste tales which supported marriage--made the prose romance tale more popular with non-aristocratic audiences, for whom marriage had long been based on romantic love.³ Moreover, as Valerie Wayne has convincingly argued, in the late sixteenth century, controlled female sexuality had begun to achieve a significant social value. To reiterate Wayne's point: "the commodification of women's virtue offered as part of the dominant ideology [of class and gender hierarchies] could also permit it to function in support of social mobility by according women's sexual control the value otherwise granted to their wealth or social status" (4).

However, Riche's and Pettie's collections of tales still represent a female sexuality like that represented by Fenton in "Pandora of Milan," which exists outside of

marriage, is assigned to the upper-class, and escapes punishment for its unruly desire. This sexuality is not ascribed to the female characters in the tales; instead, Pettie and Riche assign this unruly sexuality to the figure of the gentlewoman reader inscribed into the tales as a narrative technique. As the heroines of the tales become more chaste and more interested in romantic love, the erotic possibilities of an inscribed gentlewoman reader--the figure of an aristocratic female reader written into the text and addressed directly by the author--are exploited by both Pettie and Riche. The figure of the gentlewoman reader becomes an eroticized, transgressive character, indulging freely in sexual relations, undermining the strictures of gender rules, and doing all of this through the act of reading.

Riche and Pettie dedicate their works to these anonymous "gentlewomen" readers, address them in prefatory letters, and interrupt the narrative of the tales to speak with them. Riche's title page insists that his stories are "gathered together for the only delight of the courteous gentlewomen, both of England and Ireland, for whose only pleasure they were collected together, and unto whom they

are directly dedicated" (121).⁴ Pettie's letter to the reader, "To the gentle Gentlewomen," begins "Gentle Readers, whom by my will I woulde have onely Gentlewomen, and therefore to you I direct my woords" (3).⁵ Whereas Geoffrey Fenton addressed his work to a specific aristocratic woman, Lady Mary Sidney, these "gentlewomen readers," who will be sexualized figures in the author's introductory letters and in asides within the tales, cannot be named because of the ideas and practices the authors assign to them.⁶ This "gentlewoman reader" does not seem to be a real, historical personage, but a fantasy figure the authors make available to non-aristocratic readers. Although there are numerous contemporary references to aristocratic female readers of romances--probably most well known is Sidney's claim that he wrote the Arcadia at his sister Mary Sidney's behest--the popularity of these two books suggests that gentlewomen were not the only ones buying and reading them. This popularity raises the question of who were the audiences for these works?

Although Dale Spender has argued that, because of their limited educations, women readers were not even "an audience for women's books" (16), the work of Margaret Spufford on

popular literacy suggests that there was a female readership in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that included a substantial number of women in middling ranks as well as the aristocracy.⁷ However, even this expanded estimate of a female readership seems unlikely to have been able to sustain two popular works over several decades. Although there is still much debate about the exact size of the reading public at this time, the general consensus seems to be that a significant non-aristocratic audience existed for printed works, particularly for works in prose.⁸ Louis B. Wright long ago argued that a considerable "middle class" was beginning to define themselves through their ability to buy books and their choice of reading.⁹ Indeed, the most famous non-aristocratic male reader for these works was Shakespeare, who adapted one of Barnaby Riche's tales for the stage as Twelfth Night.

For readers of a different class or gender, the appeal of being addressed as "gentlewomen"--particularly when this address is highly sexualized--was arguably a strong element in the erotic charge of these works. This figure of the eroticized gentlewoman reader offers the possibility of imagined class and gender movement: the fetishizing of the

private pleasures of the "gentlewoman" suggests an appeal to an audience looking for access to such experiences. The introductory material to both Pettie's Pettite Pallace and Riche's Farewell to Military Profession indicates their authors' desire for a wider audience that would enjoy erotic behavior when it was safely located in the figure of the eroticized aristocratic reader. As Thomas Powell argues in the quote from his conduct book for middle-class families that prefaces this chapter, these erotic entertainments were seen by middle-class moralists as class markers: acceptable leisure activities for the aristocracy--whom he describes as "greater personages"--but not for men and women of middling ranks--personified for him by the figure of the "private Gentlemans Daughter."¹⁰

Because the upper-class sexuality represented is illicit and transgressive, the figure of the gentlewoman reader may even offer readers of lower classes a feeling of moral superiority. The figure of the English gentlewoman takes on the role of the Other, which had been filled in earlier prose romance tales by the "Italianated" female character. This shift in the eroticized figure from the foreigner to the aristocrat illuminates a change in issues

of sexual identity: the body, the ideology of love and the institution of marriage in these two texts were being defined in terms of class difference rather than in terms of national identity or in terms of differences between male and female bodies.

II.

The letters that preface Riche's and Pettie's collections of tales create an erotics of reading in very similar ways: they construct the reader as a voyeur and the author as a procurer. First, Riche and Pettie both set up images of voyeurism and pandering by exploring the connection of reading and privacy, constructing reading as a private act; second, both sexualize the figure of the gentlewoman reader through bawdy puns and sexual language; and third, both present the writer as a lover of women who has turned away from the love and friendship of men, giving up masculine pursuits and becoming feminized in order to write for women. I will explore each of these elements in the collections' erotics of reading--privacy, the sexualized gentlewoman and the effeminized author.

Proponents of the novel have argued that the genre coincides with the rise of the idea of privacy. In The Rise of the Novel, Ian Watt dates the idea of upper- and middle-class privacy to the seventeenth century and argues it coincides with the inception of this genre.¹¹ Yet we can see in the introductory materials which preface Riche and Pettie's tales that this idea of privacy and of private spaces within the home--and their connection with reading and sexual pleasures--was already being touted to prospective readers in the 1570s. Pettie's narrative frame develops the image of private reading materials, amorous in nature, created by male writers for a coterie of upper-class female readers; Riche emphasizes his privileged position in the private "chambers" of gentlewomen. These pleasures depend on the secrecy that privacy allows for sexual behavior that would, if known, be condemned; the reader's pleasure comes, in part, from seeing those secrets exposed.

Pettie's Pettite Pallace is prefaced by a letter from "R.B.," which elaborately constructs the gentlewoman reader in ways that allow the common reader to play the voyeur.¹² The "story" of the collection's publication leads the reader to believe they are being let in on the secrets of

aristocratic women, being let into their private chambers, so to speak. "R.B." is the producer of the book and claims that he is publishing these tales written by his friend, Pettie, without Pettie's knowledge or consent because Pettie would never allow the tales' publication as they depict the real life affairs of his aristocratic friends.

The introductory material includes a "private" letter from Pettie to R.B., begging him not to make public these tales:

I pray you only to use them to your owne private pleasure, and not to impart them to other, perchaunce to my prejudice, for that divers discourses touch neerely divers of my nere freindes: but the best is, they are so darkely figured forth, that only they whom they touch can understand when they touch: yet to avoid all captious constructions, I pray you in any wise let them bee an object only for your owne eyes. (5)

In this passage, Pettie eroticizes reading by playing on the sensual aspects of the act of reading--seeing and touching. Pettie couples privacy and the sense of sight in his last

phrase, "onely for your owne eyes," thus connecting reading with voyeurism. In addition, the tactile nature of the relation between texts and people is stressed by Pettie's constant repetition of the words "touch" and "near." In one sentence, Pettie describes tales that "touch neerely" his "nere freindes," going on about "whom they touch" and "when they touch."

The reader of the Palace of Pleasure is being offered something more than the true "histories"--set safely in the past and in Italy--that Geoffrey Fenton and Roger Ascham argued over so fiercely. They are now supposedly reading thickly disguised tales about modern English aristocratic men and women. Although Pettie's tales are taken from classical literature and usually conclude with the violent death of the heroine, they are supposedly the actions of contemporary aristocrats. R.B. alludes to the voyeuristic desire to see "authentic" erotic tales, offering the letter to the reader as an authorizing document: "that you may the better understande the drift of these devises, I have caused the letter . . . to be set downe in your sight" (4). The reader is supposedly being given a key to unlock the private chambers that hide amorous, upper-class behavior.

Although in the seventeenth century the romance genre was used as a *roman à clef* by a number of authors to present the thinly-veiled exploits of living persons for political reasons, Pettie is not presenting true stories of real people, only the fantasy of access to the private lives of a higher class.¹³ Indeed, as I mentioned, the choice of tales involving the death of the heroines would make them hard to assign to living aristocrats. Moreover, there was no outcry about Pettie's tale in the way there was about George Gascoigne's "Adventures of Master F.J.," which met with an extremely hostile reception because of certain readers' belief that it detailed actual events. However, this fiction of "real readers" whom the tales touch creates the portrait of a coterie of gentle and aristocratic people who engage in sexually transgressive behavior and then request writers like Pettie to put it all on paper for them to enjoy again. Pettie's letter sells the middle-class reader of the printed book a fiction of access to a coterie of readers who would circulate hand-written manuscripts detailing their own sexual exploits. What are purported to be aristocratic tastes and experiences are being commodified, made into products to be consumed by anyone with enough money for a

book. The reader of the printed work then becomes part of this imagined circle, privileged to its secrets--an insider.

Riche similarly titillates the reader with the idea of class differences in the experience of private pleasure. Like Pettie, Riche's collection purports to be written solely for gentlewomen readers. Anyone else who is reading the tales is then transgressing the class and gender lines which Riche has drawn. However, his introductory material makes clear the significantly wider audience he imagined for his collection: the letter to gentlewomen is followed by one to soldiers and by one to a general reader.

In the letter "To the Readers in General," Riche briefly constructs a frame much like Pettie's, in which tales created as private pleasures for the aristocratic reader to enjoy in manuscript are not meant to be seen by the general public. He solicitously teases the general readers with the tales's origins:

I assure thee, gentle reader, when I first took in hand to write these discourses, I meant nothing less than to put them in print, but wrote them at the request of some of my dearest friends, sometimes for their

disport, to serve their private use. And now again, by great importunity, I am forced to send them all to the printer. (135)

Notably, although now talking to a general reader, Riche maintains the use of the word "gentle," playing on the elevation of status and address possible in print. Even though any member of English society with enough money to purchase his stories could read them, the title of "gentle," "gentlewoman," and "gentleman" was also available for the price of the book. At the same time, Riche does not lose the image of a more exclusive audience who makes "private use" of erotic tales.

This imaginary class movement is extremely important for both Riche and Pettie. The meaning of the word "gentle" is in flux at this time, being transformed from a word which referred to class membership dependent upon birthright to a much wider term that could encompass movement from one class to another, usually based on the accrual of wealth and upon marriage. In his 1581 work, Guazzo's Civil Conversations, a translation of an Italian courtesy book that taught refined manners to the non-aristocratic classes, Pettie defined

"gentle" in terms of merit rather than birth: "Gentle of base are those who, extracted from low parentage, raise themselves to Gentry by their vertue" (90b).¹⁴ Keith Wrightson, Lawrence Stone, and other historians have elucidated the changes in the class system wrought by the economic success of the middling classes: peerages and titles were being created to expand the aristocracy; marriages between poor aristocrats and wealthy merchant and trade families were becoming more common; and the wealth of merchants and business classes was being translated into social power and status.¹⁵

Since marriage is a primary avenue for class movement, it is not surprising to find these issues of class movement swirling around the romance genre. From the earliest Greek tales like Longus's Daphnis and Chloe, romances have played with the idea of class-crossing marriages. However, the plots usually involve aristocratic characters who were "lost" as babies, grow up in humble, pastoral settings, and whose true class affiliation is revealed before their marriages to discerning aristocrats. Late sixteenth-century versions of this plot device include Shakespeare's romantic subplot in The Winter's Tale, where a good deal of the humor

focusses on the behavior of the lower class shepherds who unwittingly raised a princess and are rewarded by the king with titles.¹⁶ In Riche and Pettie, class movement is located not in plots of the tales themselves, but in the act of reading them. When the reading material of the aristocracy is available to the general public, reading becomes like wealth, clothing, or marriage--a means of changing ranks or, at the least, a fantasy of crossing class lines.

While offering the general reader class movement upward through the "gentle" address, Riche also privileges the concerns and morals of the class they inhabit. It is clear from the rest of Riche's letter to the "gentle" general reader that he is addressing an audience whose sense of propriety and morality must be coddled. He changes his strategy from seduction to apology:

I must instantly entreat thee that if thou findest any words or terms seeming more indecent than peradventure thou wilt like of, think that I have set them down as more appropriate to express the matter they entreat of than either for want of judgement or good manners.

(135)

Riche congratulates middle-class morality, privileging it over the morality of the "gentlewomen" for whom he has supposedly written these "indecent" "words or terms," while still offering the upper-class immorality as a commodity to be consumed by the middle-class reader.

After setting up the reading of these tales as class-crossing voyeurism, both Pettie and Riche create a highly sexualized figure of the gentlewoman reader by writing of their "service" to these women in familiar and obvious bawdy puns. In R.B.'s introductory letter to the Petite Pallace, he claims the work is for "Gentle readers, whom by my will I woulde have onley gentlewomen, and therefore to you direct my woords" (3). R.B. puns on "will," which means his desire or self-assertion, but which is also one of the most popular slang terms for penis in the early modern period. William Shakespeare probably makes the most use of this pun, as it also plays on his name.¹⁷ Through this bawdy slang and sexual innuendo, the gentlewoman reader is eroticized from this earliest mention in the text.

If the errant sexuality of gentlewomen is located both

in their liasons and reading pleasures, buying and reading these works, by extension, are also kinds of sexual acts. R.B. makes female pleasure the focus of his letter, asking the gentlewoman reader "May it please you to understand, . . . the great desire I have to procure your delight"

(3). Further, continuing to play on the multiple meanings of "will," he describes a deal between book producers and gentlewomen readers, in which those readers can assert their own desire for pleasure, presumably through buying books, although R.B.'s language allows for another sexualized meaning:

Which if your courtesies shall performe, you shall increase my dutie towards you, and [Pettie's] good will towards mee: you shall make me shew my will and his skill another time to pleasure you: you shall binde both of us to remaine ready at your commaundements. (4)

Playing on the language of courtly love, Pettie suggests that buying erotic books is a "courtesy" to their producers, which will "bind" them in a contract of mutual obligation.

Yet "courtesies" also has the meaning of sexual favors.¹⁸ And like the courtly love writers who played on the meaning of "poenas," which can be translated as pain or punishment, but which is also an aural pun on penis, R.B. puns continuously on "will."¹⁹ His promise, "you shall make me shew my will ... to pleasure you," ties the act of reading to the sexual act.

Barnaby Riche likewise addresses his tales to gentlewomen readers but without a mediating figure like "R.B.". Riche begins by presenting himself as the intimate of many gentlewomen and no stranger to their private chambers. He suggests that gentlewomen may be amazed to see an old soldier like himself "desire to live in peace amongst women and to consecrate [himself] wholly unto Venus" (123), but he explains, "I now see it is less painful to follow a fiddle in a gentlewoman's chamber than to march after a drum in a field" (123). Riche's explanation for why he takes on the genre of the prose romance tale--as well as writing for women--is replete with sexual puns and innuendos. He begins by referring to Venus, who is not simply the Roman goddess of love, but more specifically of desire or love in its sexual manifestations. "Venus'" bawdy meanings are

manifold, including lust, desire for sexual intercourse and specific references to female genitalia.²⁰ Dedicating oneself "wholly" (which sounds just like "holely") unto Venus, is also saying one is dedicating oneself to sexual intercourse and more specifically to female sexual pleasure located in the vagina.

Likewise, Riche's desire to "follow a fiddle" has multiple sexual meanings. In her analysis of the sexual undertones of The Roaring Girl, Jean Howard discovered the connection of viol-playing by Moll Cutpurse, the "roaring girl," with female sexual pleasure through self-stimulation ("Sex" 179-86). "Fiddle" at this time refers to any stringed instrument, including the viol, and stringed instruments--which were often held between the knees--were connected to female genitalia and female sexual pleasures.²¹ As a verb, to fiddle means to have sexual intercourse; fiddle-stick is bawdy slang for penis.²² And if that were not enough, both "drum" and "field" are slang for female genitals.²³

Riche presents himself as having privileged access to these highly sexualized female spaces and therefore to be able to recount their secrets for the general reader. He

suggests that the gentlewoman in private is a practitioner of sexual pleasures, and that the private chambers of gentlewomen are given over to these pursuits, presumably not with their husbands but with men who write for them.²⁴

The author's access to these chambers allows him to relate his intimate knowledge of female sexual practice, but both Pettie and Riche go further in their construction of the sexual nature of the relation of writer to the inscribed female reader. They both suggest an erotics of writing, as well as reading, in which the man who writes for women needs to be feminized, primarily by separating himself from manly activities and friendships. Laura Levine convincingly argues that numerous plays in early modern England exhibit a fear of "effeminization," by which the male self could become "unfixed" and turn into a woman (Levine Men 10-25). Notably, this unfixing tends to come about in the pursuit of love or sexual relations with women:

Cleopatra reminisces about dressing Antony in her tires and mantles . . . the effeminized Hercules, whose sexual play with Omphale consisted in the exchange of his hairy mantle for her "dainty" girdle . . . The

Arcadia's Pyrocles dressed as a woman, complaining that the love of a woman has turned him into one. (Levine Men 1)

Levine's examples illuminate how lovers of women are feminized, incapacitated in their male roles as warriors and statesmen, debilitated by their love for and proximity to women to the point that they describe themselves, or are described, as women.

Similarly, both Riche and Pettie construct the author who writes for women as effeminized by his practice. This effeminized position sets up a complex web of sexual relations between writer and readers of these texts. This crossing of sexual boundaries creates a shifting set of homoerotic relationships, which multiply with each new factor brought to bear on the relationship between writer and reader. To begin, we have a male writer depicting a sexualized relationship with female readers in which the male writer is made feminine: female readers are presented as desiring men who are like women, or desiring men made women. In this view, female sexual desire is defined as homoerotic or homosexual.

In addition to this homoerotic relationship between female readers and feminized writers, we also have male readers, being addressed as "gentlewomen" and in some sense reading from a female position, engaged in a sexualized relation with a male writer, who is gendered female by his relationship with women. In other words, the male readers are becoming women by taking on a female reading position; then they are having a female sexual experience that is homosexual in nature. These gendered, sexualized poses, available for writer and reader, create the possibility of sexual crossings and transgressions, sexual relations both heterosexual and homosexual, all depending upon the pose writer or reader chooses.

Riche tries to have it both ways by mocking and criticizing the effeminization that results from associating with women in a letter to male readers, "the noble soldiers both of England and Ireland," which is full of macho posturing. Riche describes the economics of writing "loving histories," claiming his previous book, Alarm to England, on the decay of the military did not "fit the time" (128). Romance tales were a more lucrative genre than military histories, and Riche admits to the soldiers

. . . and yet they say it is better to be idle than ill occupied. But I trust I shall please gentlewomen, and that is all the gain that I look for. And herein I do but follow the course of the world, for many nowadays go about by a great device as may be how they might become women themselves. How many gentlemen shall you see at this present date that, I dare undertake, in the wearing of their apparel, in the setting of their ruffs and the frizzling of their hair, are more newfangled than any courtesan of Venice. (128 emphasis mine)

Here Riche clearly connects writing for women with the idea that taking on the gendered practices of the female sex-- such as the wearing of particular items of clothing--makes men into women. This idea was already circulating in print in anti-theatrical pamphlets--like Stephen Gosson's The School of Abuse (1579) and Phillip Stubbes' The Anatomie of Abuses (1583)--around the time Riche published the Farewell to Military Profession. Stubbes goes so far as to argue that male actors who wear women's clothing on stage could become women.²⁵

Riche's anxieties about the gender and class markings

of clothing are similar to those of the anti-theatricalists because he argues that wearing women's clothes makes men women. However, Riche seems to be extending this effeminization to writing for women. Reading, like clothing--which women or non-aristocratic strivers could use to approximate the appearance of someone higher up on the social hierarchy--may subvert gender and class hierarchies.

Riche recounts for the "soldiers" a meeting he has in a London street with an effeminized man:

. . . in his hand a great fan of feathers, bearing them up very womanly against the side of his face. . . . I began to think it impossible that there might a man be found so foolish as to make himself a scorn to the world to wear so womanish a toy, but rather thought it had been some shameless woman that had disguised herself like a man in our hose and our cloaks--for our doublets, gowns, caps, and hats they had got long ago.

(129)

Riche clearly elucidates the problems that arise from transgressing the social codes of clothing: men's status is

lowered by female accessories; women, throwing off the social stricture of "shame," steal male power by taking over their fashions.²⁶ However, Riche's purpose in telling the tale is to explain his own turn to writing for women. He offers an explanation for the behavior of the effeminized man that parallels his own arguments for writing prose romance tales:

But I think he did it rather to please gentlewomen, and, the better to show what honor he bore them, would wear one of the greatest vanities that long to their sex. And to this end, gentlemen, I have told you my tale that you might perceive the sundry means we use, and all to please women. (129)

His explanation also includes an assumption about what it is that pleases gentlewomen: gentlewomen desire men who are like them. Riche titillates the reader with this image of crossing class and gender lines, suggesting that, like the gentleman who is effeminized by carrying a fan in order to please women, Riche himself has become like a woman by his practice of writing tales for women. In his introductory

letters, which sell the gentlewomen's private pleasures to a wider readership, Riche is offering the bourgeois reader a power similar to that he attributes to women who appropriate men's hats, hose, and gowns for their own fashion: these readers, through Riche's act of publication, can appropriate the reading materials of the upper classes and make those works their own.

In the prefatory letter to the Petite Pallace, R.B. does not mock effeminized men. Rather he celebrates the opportunity to break off male relationships in order to be closer to women. R.B. claims that he risks the loss of Pettie's and perhaps other men's friendships by publishing amorous tales for women. He argues

And though I am sure hereby to incur [Pettie's]
 displeasure, for that he willed me in any wise to keepe
 them secret: yet if it please you thankfully to accept
 my goodwill, I force the lesse of his ill wil. For to
 speake my fancy without feigninge, I care not to
 displease twentie men, to please one woman . . . (3)

The homoeroticism of Pettie's "will" suggests that R.B. is

describing writing for women as a move from a world of male/male sexual and social relations to one which is male/female. The sexualized language of the bawdy puns on "will" and the emphasis on pleasure--"displease," "please"--portrays the writer for women as one who must move from enjoying men's wills to satisfying female desires.

R.B.'s seduction of the gentlewoman reader also offers class-crossing fantasies. Whereas Pettie himself came from an old aristocratic family, "R.B." is an anonymous "any man." He is a business man, a publisher of books for money. In his seduction of gentlewomen readers in print, he is depicted as a man unmarked by family or class ties, offering his "good will" to upper-class women.

III.

Although the introductory letters which preface both the Pettite Pallace and the Farewell to Military Profession represent the experience of reading, the sexuality of the gentlewoman and the sexualized relationship between writer and "gentlewoman readers" in remarkably similar ways, their depictions of the gentlewoman within the prose romance tales are somewhat different. For one thing, Pettie's asides to

the gentlewoman reader are considerably more frequent and more provocative. I will begin this section by focussing on the similarities of Riche's and Pettie's use of the "gentlewoman reader" as a foil to the chaste heroines of the tales, but then I will turn my attention to the way Pettie addresses that reader in his asides to construct her as a possibly destabilizing agent in the early modern English family system.

Romantic love as the basis for marriage is a theme that runs throughout the tales collected by Pettie and Riche. Female characters increasingly make their own marriages--rather than having them made by fathers--and, once married, value above all else their love and duty towards their husbands. Two tales in Pettie's Pettite Pallace--"Admetus and Alcest" and "Scilla and Minos"--depict female characters attempting to make their own marriages: all works out for Admetus and Alcest, but Scilla is abandoned and dies. For the female characters of Pettie's tales, although they are generally chaste and in love with their husbands, affectionate marriage does not necessarily make for a contented life. Three tales, "Sinorix and Camma," "Germanicus and Agrippina," and "Icilius and Virginia,"

relate the trials of happily married women who attract the uncontrollable desire of other men and die by the end of the tale. Indeed, out of twelve tales in Pettie's collection, which supposedly expose the exploits of his close friends, the female character dies in eight tales, returns from the dead in one, and is turned into a bird in another. Female characters in Pettie's tales are believers in romantic love and chaste in their marriages, but their strong feelings do not allow them to overcome obstacles to their happiness or to the stability of the marriages.

Riche's tales have a much different focus, anticipating the popular form of romance that has come down to us in the canon: overwhelmingly, Riche's tales are about romantic love and courtship leading to marriage. Six of the eight tales in Riche's collection tell of young couples who fall in love, suffer through some hardships and trials that their love survives, and then marry. One tale, "Two Brethren and Their Wives" tells of an unhappy marriage; another, "Of Gonsales and His Virtuous Wife Agatha," relates the story of a wife so loving that she can forgive her husband for attempting to murder her so he could marry his courtesan. Moreover, the female sexuality which drives the characters

towards marriage is not as chaste as that of Pettie's married heroines. For example, Julina, one of the heroines of "Apollonius and Silla," blithely engages in pre-marital sex, but the sexual relation takes place after the couple has plighted their troth to each other. But whereas the female characters of the stories are chaste in marriage and driven by romantic love, the gentlewoman reader inscribed in the text is not necessarily either of those things. The tales then offer the reader two kinds of female sexuality, one which supports the social structures of marriage and the family, and one which is much less obedient and threatens social hierarchies.

In many of his tales, Pettie's inscribed female reader is desired by the tales's narrator and has a physical presence in the text; Pettie describes her body as interacting with the texts, going as far as to suggest that the sexual experiences of the text are available to the reader with the author. Describing an amorous talk between two lovers, Pettie writes:

But here hee aptly ended his talke upon her mouth, and they entred into sutch privy conference, their lips

beeing joyned most closely together, that I can not report the meaninge of it unto you, but if it please one of you to leane hitherward a litle I will shew you the manner of it. (137)

The gentlewoman reader's engagement with the text is not imaginative, but an embodied experience. Differences between the reading experience of R.B. and that of the gentlewoman reader illuminates gendered conceptions of reading: women experience texts with their bodies, while men experience tales with their "eyes." Pettie plays on the inadequacy of words to describe sexual contact, "I can not report the meaning of it," while at the same time playing with the idea that written texts allow an embodied erotic experience for the female reader with the "effeminized" male writer.

In Writing for Women, Caroline Lucas takes the introductory letters and textual asides to gentlewomen readers quite literally, claiming that early modern women readers were oppressed by the intimate relationship Pettie suggests between himself and "the gentlewoman reader." Lucas's argument is predicated on the assumption that the

suggestion of female sexuality was degrading to female readers. She claims that although the frame suggests the tales are only for a select group of women readers

[t]he audience in either case is, however, quite clearly female. And if the women who originally heard or read his tales might have excused his over-familiarity with them on the grounds that they knew him personally, his later--perhaps unanticipated readership--might well find his assumed intimacy offensive. (53)

The problem of Lucas's reading is that it conflates issues of sexuality with those of gender, making gender roles and sex roles one in the same. As I argue in Chapter Two, the anatomical theories circulating in early modern England make the separation of these two categories essential to feminist analysis of these texts. Lucas, whose objective is a feminist reader-response analysis of the tales, equates representations of female sexuality with oppression: the depiction of a woman reader with sexual desire which overruns the strictures of chastity, for Lucas, stifles

female readers who would be uncomfortable with such a sexuality. Lucas also misses the female reader's potential for sexual pleasure from reading.

Although her work uses reader-response theory, Lucas puts the sexual power of the text entirely with the author when she argues

For Pettie teases, bullies, mocks and ultimately woos his women readers. In the narrator's intervention in the text to comment on the stories, he creates a claustrophobically close and oppressive relationship with the readers whom he pretends to know. (53)

For Lucas, women readers must overcome the sexualized relationship between writer and reader inscribed in the text in order to get something more out of their reading experience; she argues that by focussing their attention on the female characters who are portrayed as "independent women who are able to influence the world around them," women readers could subvert the text (72). As women readers today, Lucas suggests we should cultivate a "recognition of the strong and powerful women whom [Pettie] portrays almost

despite himself" (73).

However, by conflating sexuality with gender, and demonizing sexuality, Lucas is able to ignore the larger historical issue of what these strong and independent female characters do: they make romantic marriages or die for them. In this view, female characters who make marriages are role models for early modern women: they are heroic because their sexual energy constructs heterosexual, monogamous marriage. Lucas absorbs the early modern strictures of chastity and romantic love, and, therefore, any suggestions of female sexuality that do not fit that bill are described as oppressive. Lucas' analysis sees the inscribed gentlewoman reader, who has a sexuality located outside of marriage and with the author, as a tool for subduing good women, who would not cross these gender restrictions. Yet, instead of the sexuality being a form of oppression, recent critics and historians argue that it is the increased emphasis on female gender roles of chastity and sexual control which result in romantic marriage that ultimately lessen the social and sexual power available for women.²⁷ Undoubtedly, Pettie's text engages in much gender oppression, but its oppression also lies in channeling

female sexuality and pleasure into the narrower bounds of affectionate marriage in the tales, which Lucas applauds.

However, Pettie presents the gentlewoman reader as sexually experienced and knowing. Whereas Geoffrey Fenton took pains to suggest that his female readers were nothing like the sexually voracious characters he portrayed, Pettie presents sexualized readers whose connections with the romantic love and marriage represented by the female characters of the tales are ambiguous at best. At the beginning of "Scilla and Minos," a tale of a princess who, driven by her desire for King Minos, attempts to make her own marriage by betraying her father and country, Pettie compares the reader's sexuality with Scilla's, and it is the reader's sexuality which is in question:

But Gentlewomen bicause most of you bee maydes (I meane at least taken so) I will manifest unto you the mischief of love by the example of a mayde, in that estate (though I hope not every way) like unto your selves, that admonished thereby, you may avoyde the like inconveniences in your selves. (147-8)

The readers of the tale are portrayed as sexually active and not determined to make marriage from the "mischief of love." Indeed, this aside even mocks the bourgeois impulse to turn this mischief--romantic love--into marriage. Pettie begins his address by claiming "most" of you be maids; the reader is in one sense being identified as an unmarried woman--a maid, but this identification is quickly qualified with the parenthetical "I meane at least taken so"--suggesting that his unmarried readers are sexually active. "Maid" represents both marital and sexual status.

As I noted in Chapter Two, Geoffrey Fenton reserved his doubts about fraudulent virginity for his monstrous character Pandora, who managed to have innumerable lovers and still be counted in the "beadroll of virgins"; Pettie applies these anxieties--over a female capacity to maintain the gender role of chastity while engaging in sex--to the gentlewoman reader. This depiction of the gentlewoman reader does two things: first, it creates a portrait of a coterie of upper-class women who, in addition to their reading pleasures, subvert the social strictures of gender roles and engage in sexual relations outside marriage; second, it also creates that coterie as spectacle for

bourgeois readers who can disapprove of the behavior while still enjoying the voyeuristic pleasure of learning the coterie's secrets.

The rest of this passage, although undoubtedly bawdy, is more difficult to unravel, but it seems to suggest that gentlewomen readers should refrain from affectionate marriages. The "estate" to which Pettie refers is likely maidenhood (it could also be "mischiefs of love"), so here Pettie is granting them virginity, but hoping that the reader is not like Scilla in the ways she responds to the "mischiefs of love." The "like inconveniences" which they would avoid are rejection by a lover and death as Scilla's suit for marriage to Minos is turned down, and she dies attempting to swim after him as he sails away. In this initial address then, these readers are sexually active and are being advised by Pettie to dissociate love from marriage.

Pettie again addresses the gentlewoman about marriage at the end of the tale; his position on love and marriage seems to have gone through great changes, and he suggests that he has one set of information and advice for gentlewomen and another to please their fathers. After

beginning another direct address to "Gentlewomen" he admonishes them to "pull not of your fathers haire that is, y^t you pul not their harts out of their bodies, by unadvisedly castinge your selves away in matching in marriage with those who are not meet you" (164). However, Pettie follows this admonition with another textual technique to suggest the privacy of the relationship between writer and reader. He pretends that a father, who may have been reading over a daughter's shoulder, has now left the room, and he can be more frank:

But (Soveraigne) now your father is gone, I will give you more sound advice: I will admonishe you all not to pull of your owne haire, that is not to binde your selves to the froward fansi of your politique parents, but to make your choice in marriage according to your owne mindes: [for parents usurp that authoritie over their daughters, bicause it is in them to departe with their Dowryes],²⁸ for over widowes you see Fathers have no preheminance of power touching their marriages: and you are not to know that marriage is a contract consisting of the free consent of both the parties, and

that only is required for the consummation of marriages...But mum, lupus in fabula. (164-5)

Notably, Pettie addresses the reader in this passage not as "Gentlewoman" but as "Souveraigne." By taking over the position of making marriages, women are also usurping the father's authority in the family. Pettie's aside to women as "Souveraignes," who could take on the position of the father, illuminates important social and legal issues which surrounded marriage in the late sixteenth century. The laws in place at this time about making marriage date back to the twelfth century. The basic premise of these laws was that a marriage had been created when the verbal consent of the couple was spoken in the present tense: a phenomenon known as "spousals" *per verba de praesenti*. The verbal act of consent did not have to take place in a church, witnesses other than the couple were not necessary, and the words used to perform the act of marriage were not predetermined (Ingram Church Courts 132). For Catholics in Europe, the council of Trent in 1563 decreed that marriages must be performed by a priest in public (Ozment "When Fathers" 29-37). However, the English laws were not significantly

changed until the eighteenth century (Ingram 132).

Historian Martin Ingram notes that although the laws on what constituted a marriage were so loosely defined, by the mid-sixteenth century, "marriage" meant a church ceremony for most people of all social classes (132). However, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, "spousals" remained a significant problem. Ingram notes that

[d]espite widespread acceptance of church marriage and the decline of spousals even as a preliminary to ecclesiastical solemnisation, the fact that an informal contract could still create a binding union entailed uncertainty, moral ambiguities and opportunities for deceit and fraud. (133)

And, as Ingram notes, the most pressing issue underlying the concerns over self-made marriages was the usurpation of parental power and influence (135). Clearly, Pettie in this passage is tying in to the debate over the formation of families that is premised on questions of the rights of the individual in conflict with the family and the larger

community and commonwealth which it upholds. The gentlewoman reader is not only a threat to gender roles through her fraudulent maidenhood, but she also threatens the hierarchies of the family system and marriage through the possible making of her own marriage.

The ambiguity of Pettie's and early modern England's ideas about sexual and social sovereignty for women is played out in another authorial aside giving advice on marriage and sexual satisfaction. In this earlier passage, Pettie focusses on the economic possibilities for satisfying female sexual desire within the marriage bond:

I am heere, Gentlewomen, to admonish you not to suffer yourselves to be caryed away with covetousnesse . . . not to yeeld your selves as a pray to any who hath no neede of your wealth . . . but rather frankly to bequeath your selves to some poore younger brother, who may thinke himself made by marrying you . . . whom you may bind to you by benefits . . . who will rather serve you, then seeke superioritytie over you: who will be your man then your master: your Liege, then your Lorde: your subject than your soveraigne; wherby you shal live as

you list, your profits shall pleasure you, your gooddes
shall do you good. (100-101)

In this aside, the language of courtly love, which was strictly extra-marital in its medieval form, is strong and emphatic, but now attached to the gentlewoman's sexual and social relationship with her husband. Pettie's argument for the basis of marriage is not love but economics. Whereas romantic love drives the heroines of Pettie's tales, in this passage, he argues for a kind of power-driven courtly love for the gentlewoman reader. Like the woman of courtly love whose "servant" is generally of a lower social position, Pettie here argues for women to choose husbands of lower economic positions, in order to overturn the order of the husband as sovereign in the home.

Although this argument for making marriages is different in some ways from the one he makes for "spousals" earlier in the text, the common link is the suggestion that women should determine their marriage partners to satisfy their own sexual desires. These passages reinforce the difference between the heroines of the tales, whose goals are to maintain marriages, and the gentlewoman reader, who

is constructed as interested more in her own sexual pleasure. The gentlewoman reader in the text threatens to subvert the very values and social structures the tales uphold. This narrative technique of including a reader who subverts the meanings of the narrative allows Pettie to satisfy the bourgeois morality of a wider reading public, while still offering the transgressive, subversive sexuality necessary for exciting the reader.

We can examine the way this figure of the gentlewoman reader works within a narrative by looking at the example of an author who wrote the figure of a gentlewoman reader into a prose romance narrative but then decided to edit out that figure in the process of revision: namely Sir Philip Sidney and his Arcadia. The gentlewoman reader is a central trope in the early pastoral romance which has come to be known as the Old Arcadia. Although the exact dates of composition are not known, Sidney likely began the Old Arcadia as early as 1577 and completed by 1580, while in exile at Wilton, Mary Sidney's country house (Evans 10). Therefore, Sidney was writing at roughly the same time as Pettie and Riche. The manuscript of the Old Arcadia was circulated among the Sidney family and friends but never published in the

sixteenth century.²⁹

Between 1582 and 1584, Sidney began to make revisions of the text, rewriting as much as revising (Evans 12). He had rewritten the first two books and part of the third before his death at Zutphen in 1586, adding heroic tales, changing the narrative structure to something much more complex and, most importantly for my argument, deleting the asides to the "fair ladies" that had peppered the text. These asides are generally about the issues of love and desire and assume a female reader sympathetic to the desires of the characters.

For example, describing the onset of love in one of his characters, Sidney claims

But you, worthy ladies, that have at any time feelingly known what it means, will easily believe the possibility of it. Let the ignorant sort of people give credit to them that have passed the doleful passage, and daily find that quickly is the infection gotten which in long time is hardly cured. (44)

He also claims to write in order to curry the favor of the

female reader:

It were a very superfluous thing to tell you how glad each party was of the happy returning from these dangers, and doubt you not, fair ladies, there wanted no questioning how things had passed; but because I will have the thanks myself, it shall be I you shall hear it of. (46)

Sidney's descriptions of female desire and the relationship between male writer and inscribed female reader echo, in a much more courteous style, those of Riche and Pettie. Indeed, Riche and Pettie seem to be approximating for the general reader exactly the kind of coterie readership Sidney in fact had for his work.

Yet this aristocratic female reader is edited out of the New Arcadia, in which Sidney was striving to move prose romance narrative into a different direction. Following the lead of continental writers like Jacopo Sannazarro, Sidney wanted to use the pastoral romance genre to approach the epic. Importantly, revising for the epic involves eliminating the amorous gentlewoman reader. In excising

her, Sidney may even be responding to the selling of the gentlewoman to the middle class which takes place in Pettie and Riche's collections. It seems likely that Sidney recognized that the sexualized figure of the gentlewoman reader trivialized and feminized both writer and reader, and Sidney could not accept this effect in the revision towards epic.

1. Pettie's The Pettite Palace of Pettie His Pleasure was printed in [1576], [1577], [1580], [1585], 1608, and 1613.
2. Riche's Riche His Farewell to Military Profession was printed in 1581, 1583, [1594], and 1606.
3. See my discussion of the work of Lawrence Stone, Alan Macfarlane, Martin Ingram, Keith Wrightson and Ralph Houlbrooke in Chapter One.
4. All quotes from Barnabe Riche His Farewell to Military Profession come from Donald Beecher's Dovehouse edition.
5. All quotes from A Pettite Pallace of Pettie His Pleasure are taken from Herbert Hartman's Oxford UP edition, reprinted by Barnes and Noble.
6. For a complete list of printed works dedicated to particular gentlewomen, see Suzanne Hull's Chaste, Silent and Obedient.
7. There are essentially two schools of thought on how to assess literacy in early modern England: one, with a narrow,

quantitative focus put forward by David Cressy of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, argues that literacy can only be measured by calculating the percentage of people able to sign their names; the other, focuses on a broad range of written sources such as diary accounts which describe reading instruction, experience, and the availability of printed matter even in rural areas, considers circumstantial evidence such as the number of books printed and the audience at which those books were directed, and is most forcefully propounded by Margaret Spufford, also of Cambridge.

In Literacy and Social Order, David Cressy maintains that correlating the percentage of the population which uses a mark to represent themselves on ecclesiastical court documents with the percentage that can sign their names "forms the only body of direct evidence for investigating the distribution of literacy in Tudor and Stuart England" (61). He then acknowledges and briefly attempts to discredit the kinds of evidence used by Spufford, asserting that other kinds of evidence are "merely inferential" (42) and that contemporary reports of literacy are contradictory and therefore can be used selectively by the historian to support the argument that suits them (45).

Given Cressy's measurement of literacy, women were preponderantly illiterate. The data yielded by the ecclesiastical court records prove that between 1580 and 1640, 90% of women in London, and 95% of those in the countryside were unable to sign their names (144). Yet, this is precisely the period which experienced a dramatic increase in the number of works printed specifically for a female readership. Cressy attempts to deflect such criticism by showing his awareness of it, but obstinately clings to his statistics:

Unfortunately, reading leaves no record, so some of the most tantalizing and important questions about literacy in Tudor and Stuart will have to remain unanswered. The indirect evidence . . . may help us guess the size and character of the reading public, but it does not enable us to measure it. Only one type of literacy is directly measurable--the ability or inability to write a signature. (57)

Cressy is interested only in measurement, even if that measurement requires a qualified, restrictive definition of literacy.

In Small Books and Pleasant Histories, Margaret Spufford counters Cressy's argument claiming "an account of 'literacy' based on the only measurable skill, the ability to sign, takes no account of the implications of the fact that reading was a much more socially diffused skill than writing" (27). Although Spufford's conclusions cannot be used to measure precisely the extent of literacy, she attempts to hypothesize how large we might reasonably assume the literacy rate in the general population to be based on information drawn from contemporary spiritual autobiographies, diaries and a collection of penny chapbooks made by Samuel Pepys.

Spufford offers the significant number of rural readers, the distribution of reading material through itinerant peddlers, and of knowledge through local schoolmasters as evidence of widespread literacy, and claims "that the historians of literacy were probably being far too conservative in their estimates of the spread of reading ability" (xviii). Spufford argues that many children, even in rural areas, seemed to have access to some early education and because reading was taught separately from, and before, writing, many of those who could not sign their names could likely read. She also cites literacy research conducted among women in the nineteenth century that showed that "as many as 3/4 of the women making marks could read, since writing was frequently omitted from the school curricula for girls from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century" (39). Clearly, there is no easy answer but Spufford's evidence is convincing that an assessment of women's literacy must begin with estimates of access to reading instruction rather than measurements of writing ability.

8. Constance Relihan nicely summarizes this debate in Fashioning Authority (11-15). See also Laura Caroline Stephenson, Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsmen in Elizabethan Popular Literature; David Margolies, Novel and Society in Elizabethan England; Elizabeth L Eisenstein, The Printing Press as Agent of Change; Keith Wrightson, English Society, 1580-1680; David Cressy, Literacy and Social Order; and Margaret Spufford, Small Books and Pleasant Histories.

9. Although Wright's work has been criticized for its overly enthusiastic description of the effects of the "middle class," his encyclopedic assessment of the reading material available for a very broad readership is still convincing. Wright notes "The

most obvious result of the spread of education among the middle classes was the growth of the reading public. From the mid-sixteenth century onward, the number of average citizens who were buying and reading books was steadily increasing, and even before this time, a large portion of the output of the printing presses had been designed for ordinary readers. In the century that followed the accession of Elizabeth, the habit of reading became so widespread that by the outbreak of the Puritan revolution, the printing press was perhaps the most powerful single medium of influencing public opinion. Behind this extension in the scope of popular literacy lay something more than the mere increase in the ability to read and write. There had come an unconscious development in the public taste, an increase in the appetite for printed works, a fixed habit of book-buying among citizens whose fathers, if they read at all, had been content with an almanac and the Bible" (81).

10. Powell's work is published in the early seventeenth century, when "gentle" had a broader meaning than it did in the 1570s. I discuss the word's changing meaning later in this chapter.

11. See Watt's chapter 6, "Private Experience and the Novel."

12. Speculation on who "R.B." really was has kept Pettie's readers busy for centuries. Hazlitt began the tradition of reversing the initials to assign the credit to Barnaby Riche, although without any solid evidence for the claim. See Hartman for a list of other possibilities (xvi-xvii).

13. For a thorough listing of these works, see Paul Salzman English Prose Fiction, chapter 11. Annabel Patterson details Charles I's use of the romance form in Censorship and Interpretation (166-76).

14. In Chapter Four, I discuss at length the class overtones of the word "civil," which generally applied to the non-aristocratic classes; "courtesy" being the word to describe aristocratic manners and behavior.

15. Lawrence Stone, The Crisis of the Aristocracy (389); Keith Wrightson, English Society 1580-1680; Christopher Hill, Reformation to Industrial Revolution.

16. Clown: ...You denied to fight me this other day because I was no gentleman born. See you these clothes? ... try whether I am not now a gentleman born.

Autolycus: I know you are now, sir, a gentleman born.

Clown: Ay, and have been so any time these four hours.
(5.2.130-138)

17. See Stephen Booth's notes on Shakespeare's Sonnet 135, "Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy will" in which Booth determines Shakespeare's use of six different meanings for "will," including the male sex organ ("hide my will" 135.6) and the female sex organ (whose will is wide and spacious" 135.5). He also notes this line from All's Well That Ends Well, "this night he fleshes his will in the spoil of her honor" (4.3.14).

18. In Courtesans and Cuckolds, Henke defines courtesy as slang for sexual favors, giving the following examples: In Philaster, the King says to Megra, who has been discovered in Pharamond's lodging, "...tell me, / Had you none to pull on with your courtesies/ But those that must be mine, and wrong my daughter?" (2.4.144-46); in Romeo and Juliet:

Romeo: .. my business was great; and in such a case as mine a man may strain courtesy.

Mercutio: That's as much to say, such a case as yours constrains a man to bow in the hams.

Romeo. Meaning, to court'sy.
(2.4.55-58)

"Courtesy" because of its connection to "curtsy"--bending and lowering the body into a bow--is often part of bawdy puns on stooping for defecation or for copulation.

19. In "The Art of Courtly Copulation," Betsy Bowden asks us to wonder

...why do the characters go on and on so about punishments, about poenis--punishments of lovers and of nonlovers, for women and for men, the hard punishments of the man whose love is refused, the diminishing punishments of the man who has entered the doorway to the court of love? (67)

20. The OED notes the connection of Venus and vagina in the following phrase, "It yeeldeth very good nourishment, which ...encreaseth seede, and exciteth Venus" (Venner, Via Recta iii, 61).

21. The 1655 miscellany entitled Wits Interpreter, The English Parnassus includes the following poem, connecting the string instrument and female sexual pleasure:

The Violin

To play upon a Viol, if
A Virgin will begin,
She first of all must know her cliff,
And all the stops therein.

Her prick she must hold long enough,
Her backfals gently take;
Her touch must gentle be, not rough,
She at each stroak must shake.

Her body must by no means bend,
But stick close to her fiddle:
Her feet must hold the lower end,
Her knees must hold the middle.

She boldly to the bowe must flie,
As if she'd make it crack;
Two fingers on the hair must lie,
And two upon the back.

And when she hath as she would have,
She must it gently thrust,
Up, down, swift, slow, at any rate
As she herself doth list.

And when she once begins to find
That she growes something cunning,
She'll nere be quiet in her mind,
Untill she find it running.

(Qtd. in Howard "Sex" 189)

22. The OED notes this sense of sexual intercourse: 1632 Chapman and Shirley, Ball (II, iii) "Fiddling ladies, you molecatcher!" Henke offers the following song disparaging the Irish from Bussy D'Ambois.

Their Mutton and Beef they are all wild Runts,
 Their wives are all nasty, and so are their ----
 But I'll keep my Fiddle-stick out of their Cases,
 They stink like Privies, a Pox of their Asses.
 (3.2.292-296)

23. Frankie Rubenstein notes the bawdy sense of "field" as "womb, vulva," citing Montaigne, Bk II ch. 11: on 'copulation with women' quotes Lucretius: "the bodie doth light-joyes fore-know, / And Venus set the woman's fields to sow" (100).

Henke lists the bawdy sense of "drum" as female pudendum. In The Alchemist, Face talks to Dol of the Spanish Don, who shall be "thrown / In a down-bed, as dark as any dungeon; / Where thou shall keep him waking with thy drum; / Thy drum, my Dol, thy drum" (3.3.42-45).

24. In addition to the constant punning on female sex organs and sexual intercourse, the passage also raises the question of which room in an Elizabethan house is the "gentlewoman's chamber." According to Orest Ranum, the "chamber" valorized privacy and intimacy as a sign of wealth (217-218). Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century paintings and engravings of chambers tend to depict sexual scenes, confirming what Ranum argues is the "intimate nature of the chamber" (219). In Lena Cowen Orlin's Elizabethan Households, "chamber" is primarily used to describe a bedroom, which, Cowen Orlin argues, is represented as a "female space" because of associations with child bearing (116). Ranum likewise argues that the chamber's association with women and sexual relations was the focus of visual representations: "Canvases . . . showing disheveled beds and women dressing alone attest to the fact that in the early modern period well-to-do males continued to fantasize about the bedroom" (219).

25. See Laura Levine's chapter 1, "Men in Women's Clothing," for an extensive review of the anti-theatrical attacks on "effeminization."

26. The literary criticism on the phenomenon of cross-dressing is substantial, focussing on cross-dressed characters in literary texts and on the seventeenth-century pamphlets on it: Hic Mulier: or, The Man-Woman: Being a Medicine to Cure the Coltish Disease of the Stagers in the Masculine-Feminine of our Times (1620) and Haec-Vir: or The Womanish-Man: Being an Answere to a Late Booke intituled Hic-Mulier (1620). Excerpts from the two pamphlets are printed in Henderson and McManus's Half Humankind. See also Jean Howard, "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England"; Stephen Orgel, "Nobody's Perfect"; Phyllis Rackin "Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Herione on the English Renaissance Stage."

27. Joan Kelly-Gadol's article "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" is the earliest of these arguments. See also the the Introduction to Rewriting the Renaissance by Margaret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan and Nancy Vickers; and Ann Rosalind Jones' "Nets and Bridles."

28. Line in brackets is missing from the first 1576 edition, but occurs in all further editions.

29. The Old Arcadia was not in print until the twentieth century; A. Feuillerat published the first edition in 1912. In 1590, Fulke Greville published the truncated revised sections of the Arcadia, ending mid-sentence. In 1593, Mary Sidney brought out a version adding the final books of the Old Arcadia to the revised sections previously published by Greville.

Chapter Four

Domesticating Desire in the Service of the Nation:
George Whetstone and the Civil Governing of Marriage

[Sixteenth-century England comprised] a unique set of conditions that gave men of middling status and humanist education, men born at or shortly following the midcentury, the task of laying the discursive foundations both for the nation-state and for a whole array of more specialized communities that based their identity on their relation to the nation and the state....The men who accomplished these tasks engendered (even as they gendered) a national cultural formation that has not only survived for the last four centuries on the British Isles but has served as a sequentially engendering paradigm for nations throughout the world. (299)

--Richard Helgerson, Forms of Nationhood

So, Morall Whetstone, to his Countrey doth impart,
A Worke of worth, culd from the wise, with Judgement, wit
and art

...

Such matter in good wordes, these few leaves doo reveale,
Unforst, or strainde, as that it seemes, a naturall common
weale. (9)

--T.W. Esquier, In the commendation of the Aucthor, and his
needefull BOOKE.¹

More than any collection of prose romance tales printed in England before it, George Whetstone's 1582 An Heptameron of Civil Discourses makes clear the connection between social order and the institution of marriage. It does this in two ways: first, by clearly and constantly arguing for

the social benefits of marriage in the book's introductory material, which includes letters from Whetstone and laudatory poems by his friends, and in the narrative frame that surrounds the tales, in which a group of men and women gathered at the home of an Italian nobleman debate the topic of marriage as they tell the romance tales. Second, it does so by representing a significantly different version of love and sexuality than that in the romance tales of earlier writers, including his own earlier collection of tales, The Rocke of Regard.

Whetstone's collection of prose romance tales begins with an English traveler arriving at the estate of an Italian nobleman on Christmas eve. He is given a hospitable welcome and invited to stay for their week-long Christmas revel. Aurelia, the sister of the nobleman, is made queen of the festivities, and, at her suggestion, the group decides that each day they will debate a different question about marriage. Each day begins with a civil conversation about marriage and culminates in a prose romance tale that illuminates the issue they have discussed. After each tale, members of the group comment on the tale's lesson or meaning. The tales usually represent the opinions and

personalities of their tellers. Although there is occasionally heated debate over the value of marriage, the large majority of the group believes in companionate marriages.

Whetstone's Heptameron offers the reader a tame, contained, orderly female sexuality that leads to marriage, that is contained within it, and that I am calling a "domesticated desire." This female sexuality is controlled, based on reason and virtue, and, when properly satisfied in marriage, leads to economic growth and "civil" harmony. Whetstone's female sexuality is not the most erotic or exciting version available at the time, but like the other authors I have discussed, his "eroticism" was seen as useful for affecting a change in its readership. Unlike the collections of romance tales I addressed in Chapter Three, this collection seems to have a male audience in mind or at least presents its audience as male. In the Heptameron, eroticism becomes a tool for persuasion, useful for coaxing its readership of men from the middling rank to see their interest in national stability and well-governed marriage as one in the same thing.

The "Englishness" of mastering desire is repeatedly

associated with the sexual and social control of Queen Elizabeth. When the English narrator arrives at the estate of the Italian nobleman, his English nationality recommends him to his host, who asks

And are you of that blessed Ile...where the people live in peace and prosperitie, under the rule of a Mayden Queene, crowned with such devine vertues, as the whole world may hardly contain her fame? (16)

Sexual restraint and mastery over sexual desire is the national reputation assigned to the English by this Italian character. The marginal note which glosses this part of the text makes the connection between sexual control and English nationalism even clearer: "The vertues of the Queenes Majestie, maketh the Iland of Englande famous through out the whole Worlde" (16).

In this chapter, I will explore the way these lessons for the man of the middling rank are presented, first in the introductory material--titlepage, dedicatory letters and laudatory poems, then in the extensive narrative frame which surrounds the tales, and finally in what I argue is the most

important tale in Whetstone's Heptameron, "Promos and Cassandra," the source for Shakespeare's Measure for Measure. This tale, which comes on the fourth and central day of the narrative's seven days, disciplines unruly male sexuality and celebrates female sexuality that supports the institution of marriage. The English narrator--presumably Whetstone--wholeheartedly approves of the tale's message. Indeed, this tale prompts him to define "virtue" as feminine and "vice" as male, drawing the ire and insults of the Italian men. Through this dispute, in which interpretations of the tale's meanings divide male listeners by nationality, Whetstone presents the opinions of the narrator as particularly English, representing the ideas that shape English national identity.

In Forms of Nationhood, literary historian Richard Helgerson argues that in the second half of the sixteenth century England was attempting to define itself as a nation-state. Poets, map-makers, explorers, dramatists, and clergy engaged in a project of "writing England." Whetstone's life follows the outline Helgerson draws for the generation of men who engaged in the project of writing the nation (see quote above). He was born at mid-century, probably around

1544, into a successful merchant family--his father was a London haberdasher, who owned property in several counties; he was probably educated at the Inns of Court, then made a career as a professional soldier and writer (Shklanka ix-xv).² Like other men of his generation and social class, Whetstone was attempting to define the nation; in his Heptameron, he chooses to write England as a paradise for stable, companionate marriage--an institution easily available to his middle-class audience.

The "forms" of Helgerson's title refers not only to different conceptions of nationhood, but more importantly for his argument about discursive formations, to the literary forms that writers chose to present these representations of England. He explores such diverse genres as New World discovery narratives, epic poetry, drama, and sermons as these genres are used to define the nation as well as particular communities within it. Helgerson finds that the nationalist project of epic poets was different from that of map-makers, certain genres seemed to oppose each other, and writers chose forms that had generic expectations which suited their vision of the nation. In other words, the choice of form in a nationalist project

raises questions of the form's generic expectations: its traditional audience, structural techniques, and their cultural meanings.

The prose romance tale does not necessarily seem to be an obvious form for this project of writing the nation and defining national interest; other forms seem much more serviceable for such a discursive project. Indeed of all the kinds of romance writing available to readers in the late sixteenth century, the one most strikingly connected with the project of writing the nation would be the chivalric romance, with its depiction of male characters defined by courage and martial skills. So, what do tales of desire, love and marriage have to do with constructing the idea of empire?

The second quote which begins this chapter, the commendations of T.W. on George Whetstone's An Heptameron of Civil Discourses, suggests that the project of defining the nation or "common weale" did not necessarily have to take place in works which conspicuously defined the empire, but could also be the project of a writer like "Morall" Whetstone, whose work T.W. considered "needeful" and written by Whetstone for "his countrey." Within this didactic work

for men of the middling rank, government of the self, the home and the nation are linked through the institution of marriage and the management of the "little commonwealth." This linkage of the acts of the individual citizen with the health and stability of the nation raises such a seemingly ordinary acts as getting and staying married to the level of patriotism, and perhaps even to heroism.

Nevertheless, a collection of prose romance tales is a subtler form for writing the nation than the genres Helgerson explores, but not less useful for creating citizens with a sense of their nation and of their place within a national community. The generic expectations of the prose romance tale in England at this time have important national implications that date back to the attacks on reading romances, which I outline in Chapter One, and Roger Ascham's argument with Geoffrey Fenton, which I discussed in Chapter Two. The prose romance tale was a genre imported from Italy, and previous English writers, like Geoffrey Fenton and Roger Ascham, had used Italy as an erotic "Other," chaotic, destructive and quintessentially foreign.

Moreover, as I described in Chapter Three, collections of prose romance tales had become associated with

aristocratic and upper-class female readers and their private pleasures. Whetstone's audience--educated men of the middling rank--and purpose--positioning that audience within the public discourse of national power--raises more important questions of genre: why use the prose romance tale, a genre associated with women and excessive sexuality, to write a work for men about social stability? The answer is that Whetstone is attempting to domesticate the genre, as well as desire, in the service of the nation.

Whetstone undertakes to rewrite the genre which had presented the reading public with so much anxiety over female sexuality and its effect on marriage, in order to allay that anxiety and make a case for female sexuality that supports the gender hierarchy within marriage. Through marriage, the man of the middling ranks could practice governance--of himself, his wife, and his family. These changes in audience and purpose create a different kind of romance tale and narrative frame: it is more didactic, argued in a rational and civil style; it does not terrify like Fenton's collection, it does not titillate like those of Riche and Pettie; rather, it seeks to persuade its male reader.

There are three primary threads in the weaving of the Heptameron's revision of the prose romance tale. First, Whetstone defines the audience for his work as male and of the middling rank, revising the generic expectations of the prose romance tale as a feminine and aristocratic genre and making substantial changes in the generic conventions to accommodate this "new" audience. Second, Whetstone defines Englishness by revising the generic expectations of the Italianate in the prose romance tale: Italy does not threaten to overwhelm the English traveler. In fact, the English traveler, representing a particularly English mastery of desire, is admired by the Italians. Third, Whetstone revises the depiction of female sexuality within the romance tale, making it less threatening and more supportive of companionate marriage. I will examine each of these threads and describe how Whetstone weaves them together in the Heptameron in order to domesticate unruly desire in the service of the nation.

I.

Almost all of Whetstone's works are steeped in nationalism: he produced fourteen books between 1576 and

1587, the large majority of which have moral, didactic, and nationalistic purposes. Eleven of his fourteen published works were primarily moral and patriotic: a number of them are poems to "remember" a great man as an ideal of English manhood--A Remembraunce of George Gaskoigne (1577), A Remembraunce of Thomas late Earle of Sussex, (1583), Sir Phillip Sidney (1587)--and an even larger number are prose works which define manners and explain the connections between manners and national strength, such as A Mirour for Magestrates of the Cyties and A Touchstone for the Time (1584), A Mirror of Treue Honour and Christian Nobilities (1585), The Honorable Reputation of a Soldier (1585), The English Myrror (1586), and The Censure of a Loyall Subject (1587).³ In these works, Whetstone's primary audience is male. He attacks the vices of men, such as playing dice, drinking, and whoring, while privileging the status of England under Queen Elizabeth, promoting Protestant values, and always scorning Catholicism and Papists.

Like his other more explicitly nationalistic literary productions, his prose romance tales collected in The Rocke of Regard and the Heptameron also clearly imagine and court a primarily male readership. The Rocke of Regard includes

warnings to young men, among them "Whetstone's Invective Against Dice." The Heptameron is dedicated to a male patron, Sir Christopher Hatton, and the introductory material for the Heptameron by Thomas Watson and Johannes Boetricus presents a clear connection between Whetstone's Heptameron and the Inns of Court, which, in the late sixteenth century, were creating a greater sense of class coherence for the English aristocracy and gentry, but also for men of middling rank able to move up in English society through education.

Historian Keith Wrightson argues that changes in the education of the aristocracy and gentry in the later sixteenth century led to significant differences in the way the aristocracy perceived itself. As aristocratic educational practices shifted from home tutoring to increasingly more formalized education in grammar schools and then universities or the Inns of Court, Wrightson finds a marked "growth of a homogeneous national culture among the English ruling class" (191). Significantly, this education is based on the adoption of a set of manners and behavior that marked class lines.⁴ David Margolies convincingly argues that the increase in aristocratic enrollment at the

universities and Inns of Court displaced, or thwarted the hopes of, educated men from the middling rank like Whetstone, who would have sought court positions, but had to turn to writing for publication to earn a living.

Margolies identifies the audience for the work of these writers as educated gentry and the growing middling rank of merchants and tradesmen who had

cultural needs which could not be served adequately by literature for the Court or traditional oral literature. They needed something that recognized their lack of accommodation in the inherited feudal ideology, that reflected the concerns of their own lives and embodied their own attitudes. (11)

The middling rank seemed to be developing a new sense of their place in English society through education and reading, and writers like Whetstone were engaged in the project of defining that sense of place. As Helgerson notes in the quote with which I begin this chapter, "writing the nation" was, in part, writing your community's place within the nation. Whetstone's works privileged a particular

community by writing its place within the larger "imagined community" of the nation.⁵

Whetstone's rather odd, patch-worked title for his collection of prose romance tales, An Heptameron of Civil Discourses, ties it to a number of earlier works within the romance genre, but it also clearly marks it as a work for middle-class readers through the choice of "civil" to describe its manners. Whetstone's title alludes to Marguerite de Navarre's romance tales called The Heptameron, first published in French in 1558 and in England in 1597. In addition, Whetstone's choice of the word "discourses" to describe his tales seems to refer to Geoffrey Fenton's earlier collection of romance tales, Certain Tragical Discourses. However, what is new to Whetstone's title signals the community whose interests in the nation Whetstone seeks to buttress.

Whetstone does not advertise his tales as amorous, tragical, pleasurable or recreational as earlier writers and translators of tales had; he chooses the word "civil" to describe his tales. "Civil" in Whetstone's title clearly has two meanings: it refers to a standard of behavior based on ideas of courtesy, polite conversation, and highly

developed manners, but it also has the earlier meaning of pertaining to citizens and their rights and by extension to the community of citizens, the commonwealth [OED]. The ideal of "civility" was developed in Italy in a series of conduct books, responding to economic changes that enlarged the size of cities and changed the status of classes based on money, thereby necessitating the construction of a code of behavior to organize these changes.⁶ In literary studies, the most well known of these conduct books is Baldesar Castiglione's The Courtier, which defines the social position and responsibilities of the aristocracy. However, in addition to constructing the courtier, a number of extremely popular works engaged in defining and constructing the role and position of the citizen within the society.

One of these works defining the citizen, as opposed to the courtier, was translated into English by George Pettie one year before Whetstone published his tales. Diana Shklanka argues that Pettie's 1581 translation of Stefano Guazzo's The Civile Conversation was "sufficiently popular in England to give wide currency to the phrase 'civil conversation'" (lii).⁷ Guazzo's text offers a middle-class

audience guidelines on marriage, dress, love, and other social issues. Certain printers, like Whetstone's printer Richard Jones, took on "civility" books as a specialty.

The word "civil," moreover, does more than connect manners and behavior with the structure of the commonwealth and its government. "Civil" marks a class difference between the courtier and the citizen, between the aristocrat and the middle class striver. The OED notes that civility is a lesser cousin of "courtesy," a word to describe the behavior of aristocratic "courtiers": "*Courteous* is thus more commonly said of superiors, *civil* of inferiors, since it implies or suggests the possibility of incivility or rudeness." This construction of civility as something that must be taught to those who would otherwise be incivil or disorderly (in personal and social terms) is apparent in the title of a 1579 work for middle class readers, Cyville and Uncyvile Life, also published by Richard Jones.⁸ Civil--in this sense of the opposite of uncivil--has a kind of disciplinary function: it is a word used to prevent or circumvent the misbehavior of non-aristocratic classes and in some way to impose order, both social and political, on those classes.

Most literary criticism of Whetstone's Heptameron has focussed on how the work is like a handbook of manners, interpreting the "civil" of the title as only pertaining to behavior and social graces, generally ignoring the political meaning of civil--i.e., relating to the commonwealth. However, the claims of Whetstone's title page make it clear that both meanings are actively in play and that he does not separate the behavior of the citizen from concerns about the stability of the state. Indeed, the title page quickly moves from "civil discourses"--civility as a rule of speech--to the concept of "civil government," with "government" also carrying a double meaning of individual behavior and the power structure of the commonwealth. The first half of the title page reads:

An Heptameron of Civil Discourses. Containing: The Christmasse Exercise of sundrie well Courted Gentlemen and Gentlewomen. In whose behaviours, the better sort, may see, a representation of their own Vertues: And the Inferiour, may learne such Rules of Civil Government, as wil rase out the Blemish of their basenesse: (clxi)

The class distinctions that Whetstone makes are subtle but insistent. The gentlemen and women of the tales are "well courted," in other words, connected with the court and ideas of courtesy. However, the tales will have a social function beyond entertainment, and that social function is also moderated by class differences. The better sort--i.e., those who are also "well courted" or aristocratic--will be satisfied by seeing the representation of their own perfections, but the truly transformative function of the tales will be enacted on those who are "inferiour," in this case, not courtly, or anything under the courtly, for they will learn not "courtesy" but civility or in Whetstone's terms, "Civil Government." Importantly, "civil government" will elevate them, but not in class position; it will somehow erase the blemishes of their class that are here presented as something akin to original sin.

Making claims for the social function of romances was common for writers and publishers of romance tales, but Whetstone's title-page is unusual for a romance because it goes beyond generalities of teaching "virtues," as most romance title pages proclaim, to explicitly link itself to the institution of marriage. As part of the training in

civility, the title page promises "And herein, also, [as it were in a Mirrour] the Unmarried may see the Defectes whiche Eclipse the Glorie of MARIAGE: And the wel Married, as in a Table of Housholde Lawes may cull out needefull Precepts to establysh their good Fortune" (clxi). For Whetstone, the cornerstone of civil government, both of the individual and the larger community of citizens, is the institution of marriage.

He also makes clear the connection of his prose narrative with the moral project of conduct book writers: his Heptameron is like a "Table of Householde Lawes." In other words, Whetstone's project is to take the laws, rules and admonitions of the moralists and conduct book writers and put them into narrative as a way of heightening the impact of these rules. By giving these moral precepts about marriage a dramatic and narrative frame, these ideas can be more widely distributed and enforced among a larger percentage of the populace. Moreover, by promising that adherence to these social ideas about marriage will "establish their good Fortune," Whetstone also makes clear the economic valence of marriage, alluding to its social role as the basis of the nuclear family and the nuclear

family's position as the crucial economic unit of early modern English society. A properly functioning and well-organized marriage then is presented as an engine of economic growth and stability.

The importance of marriage for social stability is also a recurring theme in the verses in praise of the author which preface the work. There are two such poems that laud Whetstone's representation of marriage. The first poem in Latin, signed by *Johannes Botrevicus*, contains the following passage on marriage:

*Non Apinas Tricasve canit, sed conscia laudis
Musa vacat studiis gravioribus: arctaque junctae
Conditione pari commendat foedera vitae;
Conjugiique refert incommoda disparis Aucthor. (2)*

Diana Shklanka translates it as,

The Muse does not sing of useless or worthless things, but mindful of praise, she devotes herself to more serious concerns: confined by this same aim she recommends the compact of marriage between equals. The

author reports the disadvantages of unequal marriage (238).

The second poem by T.W., likely Thomas Watson, describes the Heptameron as a "needefull BOOKE" and connects it with the national interest. Watson claims that

...Morall Whetstone, to his Countrey doth impart
 ...Such matter in good wordes, these few leaves doo
 reveale,
 Unforst, or strainde, as that it seems, a naturall
 common weale. (9)

Watson also focusses on the necessity for equal marriages and adds that they cannot be based on "hasty love."

Of forced Marriage, he dooth shew the foule event,
 When Parents joyne, the Childrens hands, before their
 harts consent;
 And how these fortunes eke, in wedlock seeldom prove,
Unequall choice, in birth, in yeeres: and Childrens
 hasty love. (9)

The similarity of Botrevicus's and Watson's commendations lies in their focus on the usefulness of Whetstone's representations and of Whetstone's focus on "equality" between partners in the making of a successful marriage. In the tales to which these writers allude, Whetstone argues that partners to a marriage should be equal in age, social rank or "birth" as well as financial status. These quotes reveal the connection between ideas of "civility" and a concern for social place, the need for a community to draw its own lines around itself.⁹ Marriage, for both of these writers, is about shunning difference, about maintaining and defining one's place in the society. The middling rank are defining their own territory and their own set of manners, not in opposition to gentry and aristocracy, but along side of them. The praise these authors lavish on Whetstone's work illuminates the Heptameron's perceived role of defining the place of its readers within the larger national community.

II.

Historian George L. Mosse is one of the first theorists to posit a definite link between the construction of

national and sexual identity. In Nationalism and Sexuality, he delineates the connection between a proliferation of nationalisms in eighteenth-century Europe and the construction of social standards for the body and sexual practices. Two centuries earlier at a historical moment when separation from Italy and the Church of Rome was important for England, Whetstone was using a generic expectation of the prose romance tale to realign the position of England vis-à-vis Italy, because "national identity is determined not on the basis of its own intrinsic properties but as a function of what it (presumably) is not" (Parker et al. 5). English nationhood could be defined against Italy through the sexual attitudes and behavior of English and Italian characters within the Heptameron.

Notably, Whetstone's Heptameron revises the highly sexualized Italy of earlier prose romance tales in significant ways. Although in "Nation-States and National Identity," Perry Anderson argues that a nation is unavoidably "shaped by what it opposes," we see in Whetstone an attempt to change the terms of the opposition between England and Italy to one in which English virtue is the focus of spectacle, rather than Italian unruliness and

passion (3). In effect, Whetstone domesticates Italianate desire, and he does so in a way which reorganizes the idea of an eroticized Other. Whereas the romance tales of the 1560s and 1570s relied for their erotic charge on the spectacle of the uncontrolled sexual practices of other nations, Whetstone, through the figure of an English narrator traveling in Italy, presents a tamed Italian sexuality which is defined by its admiration of Englishness. English readers of Whetstone's Heptameron, instead of looking on in thrilled horror at the exploits of unruly Italian Papists, are offered a view of Italian noblemen and women admiring the sexual and social manners of an English gentleman.

For earlier English romance writers, Italy had the imaginative status of a socially licensed site for eroticism and sexual desire; indeed, the experience of Whetstone's friend, George Gascoigne, proved that Italy was the most acceptable setting for amorous tales. Whetstone was undoubtedly well aware of the furor excited by the publication in 1573 of Gascoigne's romance tale, "The Adventures of Master F.J.," which tells the story of a young man's first love affair with an older married gentlewoman,

set on an estate in the north of England. Because of its setting, English readers were speculating on who the characters represented among the English aristocracy, raising accusations of slander.

Two years later, Gascoigne brought out a substantially revised version of this tale: Master F.J. and his mistress Elinor are now Ferdinando Jeronimi and the Ladie Elinora de Valasco, the setting is an Italian estate, and the tale is announced as translated "out of the Italian riding tales of Bartello." Although Gascoigne claims to have purged the tale of "wanton words," very little of the erotic language and scenes have been removed.¹⁰ The primary change in the 1575 revision is that the action has been moved to what Gascoigne must have imagined was a socially licensed erotic site--Italy. The chaotic sexuality of "Master F.J.", even in fiction, was only acceptable in an Italian setting: eroticism is bearable if it is also exotic, foreign and Other.

However, Whetstone's narrative frame, with its lone English character among a group of Italians, focusses more closely on the importance of national culture and character in the construction of sexuality, love and marriage.

Certainly all of the English prose tale writers before him had made use of Italy as a licensed site for eroticism, but Whetstone places the Englishman in Italy and changes the Italian scene from one of unbridled sexual excess to one in which men and women discuss the issue of marriage civilly and tell tales to back up their positions. Whetstone himself had traveled in Italy and there is a strong suggestion that this English narrator is meant to represent Whetstone. Whetstone was entering a debate about the effects of travel on Englishmen: the main question was, as the author of the 1575 The Traveiler puts it, "whether traveling do a man more good or harme?" (qtd. in Shklanka xxx). The Heptameron's representation of the English traveler depicts him as untractable, not afraid of changing into some other nationality, of being "Italianated" to use Roger Ascham's term. "Englishness" in this text becomes the stable term, "Italianate" the one likely to change by seeing its Other.

In the narrative frame that surrounds Whetstone's tales, both the Italian characters and the Englishman define Englishness through the relations between men and women. Although not married, Whetstone's English narrator is given

the name Ismarito for the duration of the Christmas revels. The name clearly derives from the Latin verb "to marry" and the Italian noun "marito" or husband, yet the text offers a much different translation: "and for I was a Traveler, she calde mee Cavaliero Ismarito, in Englishe, The Wandering Knight" (28). Ismarito is a model for the male partner in a companionate marriage based on mutual love and respect. He defends, and defers to, women throughout the text, and this attitude towards women is defined as particularly English. After Ismarito declares the meaning of the tale of "Promos and Cassandra" to be that "Soveraigne Vertue is Feminine...Yrksome Vice is Masculine," the Italian men object to his distinctions:

But, Soranso, halfe angrie, answered, that if Ismaritos cuntrymen, were of his minde, they might be ashamed that they were so effeminate.

Pardon me, (quoth Ismarito,) it is theyr commendation to yeelde unto Women, and to conquer Men. (142)

This exchange defines masculinity and nationality through attitudes about male and female sexuality. Indeed,

Whetstone uses another Italian character, Bergetto, to make clear that these "effeminate" characteristics were being assigned to the English nation, not simply to the English narrator.

Using the English national icon, Saint George, as a metaphor for effeminization, Bergetto suggests that all of English knighthood is gendered female by the garter, alluding to the Order of the Garter, an order of knights dating to the mid-fourteenth century:

Tush, Tush (quoth Bergetto) to nip himself by the nose, Ismarito is to be pardoned: for his Captaine Saint George, is shackled in a Womans garter.

It is true (quoth Ismarito) but thus fettered, he hath many times chased Saint Michael to his Mounthe. (142)

In this exchange, it is the narrator's respect for women and his own rational and mannered behavior that recommend him. The English narrator's civil answers to the discourteous barbs of the Italian males proves his superiority in the art of "civil conversation," yet he wittily upholds English martial power by alluding to English

victories over France: the French order of knighthood was the Order of Saint-Michel. The Italian characters of Soranso and Bergetto have been portrayed throughout the Heptameron as uncivil and discourteous because of their antagonistic relationships with women.

Moreover, the civil Italian characters--in particular the host of the gathering--have particularly English qualities: they are Protestant, not Catholic, and they admire English national culture and the figure of the Queen. When Ismarito meets the host Signor Philoxenus, Philoxenus focusses on the good fortune of Englishmen to "live under the rule of a Mayden Queene, crowned with such devine vertues, as the whole world may hardly containe her fame" (16), exclaiming to the author

that happy and thrice happy are you, the Subjectes of the good Queene of England, whose gracious government, filleth your Coffers with wealth, sealeth your dores with peace, and planteth quietnesse in your Conscience: so that (blessed above other Nations) you live abroad, without suspition of daunger at home: and at home fearlesse of enemies abrode. Wherefore, in honour of

your Soveraigne, whose fame armeth al true knights,
 with an earnest desire to doo her service, I am glad of
 the meane, to bestow on you, or any of hir nation, the
 affection of a friend. (17)

It is Elizabeth's virtues or manners which the Italian connects with his praises of the English nation and the privilege of being an Englishman. Moreover, it is the stability of England, based on the Queen's "vertue," that allows the English traveler to visit other nations.

England, like the English narrator, is secure, not afraid of an overwhelming and threatening Other.

In the Scholemaster, Roger Ascham had charged that English men who travel to Italy come back without religion, but in Whetstone's Heptameron, the Italian character becomes more like the English, taking on English characteristics. Indeed, the host of the gathering, exalted for his courtesy, is recommended by his religion:

But, which shined above the rest, he was in his youth,
 brought up in the French Courte, where, by the grace of
 God, and labour of some good freend (as his behavours

could not but winne many) he learned to serve God, with pureness of heart, and not with painted ceremonies, as his superstitious Countrie men do. (18)

For any reader who did not pick up on the subtlety of Whetstone's allusions to true religion, the marginal gloss is ready to clear up any misconceptions, proclaiming jubilantly, "He was a Protestant." (18).

Indeed, Whetstone tells us that Signor Philoxenus' Protestantism is what allows him to comprehend English virtue, personified by Queen Elizabeth:

[his religion] was one chief cause, why he spake so reverently of the Queenes majestie, whose vertues make her enemies dumbe, for malice will not let them say well, and shame forbids them to speake amis, of her sacred lyfe. (18-19)

The Italian character's capacity to appreciate virtue or sexual control stem from his adoption of the state religion of England. Whetstone clearly draws a line which links nationality with sexuality, but as he does this, he

constantly shows the Italian characters crossing the line which divides Englishness from the Italianate. Philoxenus, the most civil of the Italian characters, is the most like an Englishman. English nationalism and sexual mores are not only unthreatened by the Italian Other, they even reform him.

III.

While the national pride of the English narrator seems to privilege a community of male readers, much of the narrative frame and the tales themselves privilege the sensibilities and experiences of women, in order to revise the image of female sexuality that subverts the institution of marriage. Like the female characters in one of its sources--Marguerite de Navarre's Heptameron--the female characters in the narrative frame of Whetstone's Heptameron are a part of the discourses and telling of tales: women ask for tales to be told, women respond to tales, and one woman tells a tale. The female characters are an active part of this narrative frame, not as seekers of pleasure, but as rational, coherent participants in the arguments on marriage. Whetstone's use of Navarre's narrative techniques

helps him revise the image of the gentlewoman popular in earlier works in the prose romance genre in England.

On the first day of the entertainment, the company debates an adage attributed to Plato: "Marriage was a Parradice on earth, if her Lawes be observed: and a Hell in the House where her statutes are broken" (36). This adage serves as a point of reference for the following six days, with the early days focussing on the second part of this equation and the later days on "paradisal" marriage. The idea of marriage as a "little commonwealth" is particularly clear in this passage, with the language of the government, "Lawes" and "statutes" mingling with those of the householder, "in the House" and those of religion, "Parradice on earth" and "Hell."

The fourth day is the central point in the time line of the "seven days" of the title, and Whetstone uses this central day to most clearly represent female sexuality as domesticated by and to marriage. On this day, the topic for discussion is described as a "varietie of necessarie Discourse, and yet withall, the greater part appertaining to the generall argument of Marriage" (114). The "greater part" Whetstone refers to is the lengthy tale--"Promos and

Cassandra"--which takes up most of the day's entertainment. Just how "Promos and Cassandra" argues for marriage is not immediately obvious. The tale presents pre-marital sex, rape, government intervention into marriage making, and threats of death as part of its "generall argument."

However, its underlying point is the recognition of the powerful agency of women to make and maintain marriage and, by extension, promote social and governmental stability.

"Promos and Cassandra" is a tale that obviously had great meaning to Whetstone. In fact, it is a prose version of a play Whetstone had written and published four years earlier in 1578, but which seems not to have been produced. A marginal note in the Heptameron alerts the reader to Whetstone's earlier authorship of this tale in dramatic form, "This Historie for rareness therof, is lively set out in a Comedie, by the Reporter of the whole worke, but yet never presented upon stage" (125). Importantly, though, the tale that Whetstone specifically identifies as his own is the only tale in the Heptameron that is told by a female character. "Promos and Cassandra" is told by Madam Isabella, described at the outset by the narrator as "a well spoken Gentlewoman" (23).

Madam Isabella promises her auditors

with your favour and patience, I will reporte an
Historie, that shall open suche a haynous treacherie
done by a man, as shall take away all possibilytie from
a woman to commit so impious an Act. (125)

She might have also added that she would show how female duty and agency would overwhelm the destructive nature of male desire. Stabilizing the social order does not end in the punishment of this "haynous treacherie" but in redemption and containment of male desire in marriage.

To understand how Whetstone is using this story to persuade his readers of the social value of marriage and the domestication of female sexuality and male desire within it, it is helpful to look at it with Shakespeare's Measure for Measure (1604), which is based on Whetstone's tale. The changes Shakespeare makes in his drama to Whetstone's original narrative point to a position on sexuality, female agency and marriage much different from Whetstone's. Where "Promos and Cassandra" attempts to persuade its readers of the transformative power of women to make and maintain

stable marriages, Shakespeare's play, among other issues, takes on the instability of early modern marriage making and the problem of female sexuality that attempts to resist marriage.

The story of "Promos and Cassandra" begins with King Corvinus of Bohemia promoting his worthy Lord Promos to the "Lieutennantship" of the city of Julio, where a strict law had once governed adultery: if a couple was caught in an adulterous relationship, the woman would be forced to wear clothing which marked her as an adulterer, but the man would be beheaded as he was considered more in the wrong. Promos revives this statute and applies it to the unhappy couple of Andrugio and Polina. Cassandra, Andrugio's sister, throws herself at Promos' feet and begs for her brother's life, arguing that Andrugio had planned to marry Polina all along. Promos is excited by Cassandra's virtuous beauty and loses control of his desire. He offers to spare Andrugio if Cassandra will yield her virginity to him. Cassandra tells her brother what has passed; Andrugio argues that she should save his life, and Cassandra decides to give in to Promos's desire, then kill herself, saving her brother's life but giving up her own. After Cassandra sleeps with Promos, he

reneges on his promise and orders Andrugio beheaded.

Divine intervention allows for another criminal to be beheaded instead, and Andrugio escapes, going into hiding. Promos has what he believes is Andrugio's head sent to Cassandra, who buries the head and sets off to tell her grievances to the King of Bohemia. The King believes Cassandra; he marries Cassandra to Promos to save her honor, and then he immediately sentences Promos to death for having killed Andrugio. Acting as a good and virtuous wife, Cassandra argues for Promos's life, but the King is not swayed until Andrugio, moved by his sister's sorrow at losing her new husband, steps forward to prove that he had not been murdered. Andrugio then marries Polina.

In Measure for Measure, the addition of one character and significant changes in the role of another lessens the central role of the "Cassandra" character. Shakespeare adds a female character, Mariana, who has been promised marriage by the "Judge" character, making the issue of marriage-making a prominent theme of the drama. Moreover, the "ruler" character--a king in Whetstone, a disguised Duke in Shakespeare--has a much expanded role in Measure for Measure, lurking about in disguise for a good part of the

play and organizing its resolution in a triple marriage.

The action of Measure for Measure begins with the pregnant Julietta and her troth-plighted husband Claudio accused of illegal fornication under Viennese law. Claudio is sentenced to death for this crime by Vienna's severe and zealous judge, Angelo, who, it is later revealed, has made a promise of marriage to Mariana but then abandoned her. The Claudio-Julietta scenario connects sexual relations and the making of marriage vows, whereas the Angelo-Mariana relationship problematizes the act of vowing marriage without sexual relations: unlike Julietta, Mariana's vows are not "written" on her body through pregnancy. The character of Mariana and her relationship to Angelo make problematic the unstable connections of bodies, words and the laws of the state.¹¹

Shakespeare's complication of the instability of marriage making and social attitudes towards it is illuminated by the resolution of the Angelo-Mariana relationship through what Janet Adelman calls the "bedtrick," which is also not part of Whetstone's tale. Angelo, whose desire is focussed on Claudio's sister Isabella, a novice who has not yet taken her final vows,

demands sexual relations with Isabella in return for Claudio's life.¹² Angelo's downfall is arranged by Isabella and the disguised Duke of Vienna by substituting Mariana for Isabella to satisfy Angelo's demand. The bedtrick allows Isabella to retain her virginity and Mariana to have sexual relations with her troth-plighted husband.¹³

The resolution of Measure for Measure--marriage for Julietta with Claudio, Mariana with Angelo, and Isabella with the Duke--is completely organized and orchestrated by the play's patriarchal figure of the state: the Duke. This male figure of state authority, who acts as a disciplinary force punishing male characters with marriage, has a much more minimal role in Whetstone's tale. As told by Madam Isabella, "Promos and Cassandra," also gives a much different view of female sexuality and agency, primarily because there is no organizing male figure of the disguised Duke, who knows and sees all without being known to others. The figure of the king in Whetstone's tale is made aware of problems in his kingdom only when they are brought to him by Cassandra. In "Promos and Cassandra," the figure who governs wayward sexuality into marriage and then maintains that marriage is a woman, the central character of

Cassandra.

Whetstone's tale offers a quite different figure for organizing and orchestrating marriage in the figure of Cassandra--a woman whose sexuality is not chaotic and extramarital but allied to duty, civility, rationality, and who supports the patriarchal system. His purpose is to convince his male readers of the positive agency of female sexuality, which supports and enhances male position in the social structure. The individual's desires and the good of the commonwealth must be brought into harmony, but not through an ultimate authority like Shakespeare's Duke but through self-policing civility and the very English desire for social harmony and social place.

Whereas the virginal Isabella of Shakespeare's play evades the sexual advances of Angelo and is "rewarded" with marriage to the Duke, Cassandra, to save her brother's life, agrees to sexual relations with Promos, marries him and then saves his life and maintains their marriage. Although in both Measure for Measure and "Promos and Cassandra," the sexual desire of the judge character is sparked by the female character's "virtue," Cassandra is not a novice and has not renounced her sexuality and place in the world.

Unlike Shakespeare's Isabella, Cassandra is convinced by her brother that her virginity is worth the price of his life and his final argument is the possibility of marriage,

This further hope remaineth, that as the Gilliflower,
both pleases the eye and feedeth the sence: even so the
vertue of thy chast behaviour may so grace thy bewty,
as Promos filthie lust, may bee turned into faithfull
love: and so move him, to salve thy honour in making
thee his wife. (130)

The differences between Shakespeare's Isabella and Whetstone's Cassandra are important for understanding Whetstone's project of persuading male readers that domesticated female desire upholds the institution of marriage and the family system. Shakespeare's Isabella proves a double threat to social stability: her refusal of heterosexual relations threatens to damage the family system (through the death of her brother) and the institution of marriage (through her considered rejection of it). However, Whetstone's Cassandra puts both the family system and the institution of marriage before her own interests or perhaps

sees her own interest in a supportive and constructive role in both.

When Promos is sentenced to death for the murder of Andrugio, Whetstone instructs the reader on the "natural" movement from sister to wife,

So sweete Cassandra, who (simply) by vertue overcame the spight of Fortune: In this marriage was charged with a new assault of sorrow: and preferring the dutie of a wife, before the naturall zeale of a Sister, where she before prosecuted, the revenge of her Brothers death, shee now was an humble suter to the Kinge for her Husbands lyfe. (135)

Cassandra's movement from her original family to the new family through marriage is immediate and represented as natural. The word "duty" is also repeated in the marginal gloss, which proclaims, "The duetie of a wyfe, truely shoven" (135).

Unlike Whetstone's pragmatic Cassandra, Shakespeare's Isabella is a threat to the family system by her principled denial of sexuality. Isabella's dedication to sexual

abstinence and bodily purity endanger the social order just as much as her brother's and Angelo's wayward sexuality do. When she puts her ideology of chastity and heterosexual abstinence before her concern for her brother's life, her duty is clearly to an ideal rather than to the family. Fatherless, like so many heroines in comedies and romances, Isabella is less constricted to obey her brother, who cannot command her and who tries to argue with her to trade her virginity for his life. Unlike Whetstone's Cassandra, Shakespeare's Isabella refuses to save her brother's life through sexual relations with the judge. Her choice, without the greater authority of a father's governance, is to value her body over the maintenance of the family-- Claudio is presumably its male heir. Similarly, Isabella's dedication to the value of her own body puts her outside the institution of marriage which Whetstone figures as supportive of the "civil" order.

Whetstone's Cassandra is never a threat to the family system or to marriage: her heroic acts are to agree to sexual relations with the judge character and then marry him. However, as David Beauregard suggests, Shakespeare's use of the Heptameron as a source for Measure for Measure

goes beyond the bare bones of the story line of "Promos and Cassandra." In addition to adapting some of the names of characters from the framing narrative, Shakespeare likely appropriated the use of a novice character to throw the connections of female sexuality and marriage into relief.

Whetstone's narrative frame includes a character named "Lucia Bella," who is destined for the nunnery. On the first day of the Christmas revels, the company's argument is to determine which is more true, "that Mariage, is the most honourable event of Love" or "that a Single lyfe is the greatest testimonie of Chastytie" "a civill Contention, to proove which is the most worthy of the two, would conclude much contentment" (27). The task of defending the single life falls to Lucia Bella, "whom this Charge can not mislyke, because ...she meanes to be a professed Nun" (28).

Not surprisingly, considering the advertisements Whetstone uses on his titlepage, the decision of the debate is for marriage. The judges find that

a single chast lyfe pleased God, because, Chastitie is pure: and also delighteth man, because, shee quieteth the mynde: but a chast marryed lyfe, bothe pleaseth and

honoureth God: because Marriage, howrely, presenteth
 the world, with the Image of himself: pleaseth and
 profiteth man, because, she giveth him a companyon, by
 affection, chaunged into his owne disposition...(36)

Whetstone presents his male readers with the decision of a rational debate: choosing the "chaste" sexuality of a female "companyon" in marriage is not only supportive of the state, but also of God. Whetstone's company of civil discourses agree that women support men in marriage, changing to men's "own disposition."

However, to understand the differences in Whetstone's and Shakespeare's representation of female sexuality, we must follow Whetstone's novice, Lucia Bella, to the final day of the Heptameron, where, unlike Shakespeare's Isabella, she renounces her intention to take her final vows. Importantly, she is convinced of the wrongness of her plans to become a nun and reject her sexuality by nothing other than a prose romance tale told by Signor Philoxenus, the host of the gathering. The tale argues for the value of marriage for social stability with the loving couple ending the dissension between warring countries. Upon hearing the

tale, Lucia Bella abandons her intention to live an unmarried, sexually abstinent life:

Seignior Philoxenus, by the vertue of this dayes exercise, the onely travell of this learned wit, so raysed the heartes of the companie, with the desire of Mariage, that Lucia Bella, who, in the beginning of Christmasse, was determynd to have beene a vestall Nunne, now confessed that they were enemies to Nature, and not worthy the society of men, which scandylised, or scorned this sacred Institution. The rest of this honorable company, by plawsible speeches, confirmed Lucia Bellas opinion, or by silence shewed a willing consent. And to conclude the exercise, (quoth Queene Aurelia), Seignior Philoxenus, your sweet vertues, have described so devyne a Paradice, as our soules cannot, but long, after this holy Institution. (226)

Within the narrative frame, the female character of Lucia Bella, representing complete chastity, is taught her duty of using her sexuality to support marriage by a convincing tale.

The power of tales to instruct listeners or readers is also foregrounded in the male responses to "Promos and Cassandra." Whetstone shows his middle-class male readers how the male listeners within the narrative frame comprehend the lesson of "Promos and Cassandra." Once the tale has been told by Madam Isabella, two male characters, possibly representing the male readership Whetstone imagines for his work, describe what they have learned from the tale and how the structure of the tale worked on their emotions. The first male commentator, Soranso, comments that the "happy ending" of male sexuality redeemed by marriage rather than punished by death was a more effective way of teaching male virtue:

Madam (quoth Soranso) your good conclusion, hath likewise preserved us from a great danger: for had you ended with the sorrow you began, wee had bene all like to have bene drowned in teares. (137)

In response to a female character's claim that women listeners could lament the difficulties which faced Cassandra, the second male respondent, Fabritio, suggests

that men and women will learn different things from the tale:

It is true...but to participate of [women's] joye, wee men have learned out of Promos example of evil, for feare of his likelie punishment of evil, to doo well: and you Women, by example of ...Cassandras vertue, are both warned and incouraged to weldooing. (137-38)

Male readers of the tale then will learn good behavior from this story, keeping sexual desire within marriage, and women will learn that making and maintaining marriage is virtuous "weldooing."

These male responses to the story of "Promos and Cassandra" illuminate Whetstone's strategy for persuading male readers of the value of marriage: the male reader is not coerced, not "drowned in teares," but simply shown the image of a woman as a positive force for marriage. Such tales, as framed by the apparatus of the Heptameron, are considered capable of reforming the misogyny of male listeners, convincing novices to give up their vows, and ultimately, helping to create a nation of stable, middle-

class companionate marriages which mirror the stability of the government.

That Whetstone and his printer considered this work as more socially transformative than entertaining or at least that they were selling it that way, is evident from the final description of the work on its titlepage as "A Worke, intercoursed with Civyll Pleasure, to reave tediousnesse from the Reader: and garnished with Morall Notes to make it profitable, to the Regarder" (clxi). However, the publication history of the work suggests that Whetstone's strategy was perhaps too blatant. The prose romance tale is more successful at putting ideas about love, sexuality, and marriage into circulation when it makes use of transgressive sexuality as the source of its eroticism.

The collection of tales did not become popular immediately the way Barnaby Riche's and George Pettie's collections did. When Whetstone's work was reprinted over ten years later, the way it was marketed to readers significantly changed. Whetstone's title, which alluded to Marguerite de Navarre, Geoffrey Fenton, and Stefano Guazzo, was entirely transformed into a more conventional romance title. In the 1593 reprint, the work was called Aurelia.

The Paragon of Pleasure and Princely Delights.

More importantly, all of the references to the uses of "civility" are gone. The new title page still advertises the desire to see the actions of nobility, but without the baldly stated purpose of creating better citizens. It is simply described as "the seven days solace...of Madona Aurelia, Queene of the Christmas Pastimes, & sundry other well-courted Gentelmen, and Gentlewomen, in a noble Gentlemans Palace." All of the references to a readership divided by marital status are gone, and the last part of the advertisement revises Whetstone's grim description of his work as "good medicine" and returns to selling the work in terms of its amorous attractions. Aurelia is described as

A worke most sweetly intercoursed (in civill and friendly disputations) with many amorous and pleasant Discourses, to delight the Reader; and plentifully garnished with Morall Notes, to make it profitable to the Regarder" (clxii).

It seems likely that this edition came out after Whetstone's death, and it clearly shows that the printer, who brought

out the Heptameron and other books on civility, had rethought how the work should be marketed.

Whetstone's Heptameron, with its balanced arguments, its lack of dissension, transgression and excitement, disappoints the generic expectations of the prose romance tale too much. When desire is domesticated and tamed, it is much less marketable.

* * * *

Although Whetstone's Heptameron lends closure to this dissertation, it does not do the same for collections of prose romance tales in early modern England. There remain a number of interesting works within the genre that I have not yet addressed. As I continue to explore the way this genre participates in the renegotiation of sexuality in late sixteenth-century England, I intend to consider two works in particular: George Gascoigne's "The Adventures of Master F.J." (1573) and Robert Greene's Philomela, or My Lady Fitzwater's Nightingale (1587). Both of these works seem particularly suitable for inclusion in this study because

their publication and reception histories fit with the issues I have used to define it: representations of female sexuality, attacks by moralists on the work's effect, the uses described by the author and bookseller, and the audiences imagined for the work.

Because of the attacks on "The Adventures of Master F.J." by "reverend divines," Gascoigne's revision of it offers another point of entry into the debate over the effects of recreational reading. In his preface to the second version of the tale, Gascoigne describes the reception of the earlier version that made the changes necessary. He claims that "some busie conjectures have presumed to thinke that the same was indeed written to the scandalizing of some worthie personages, whom they woulde seeme thereby to know" (7). Gascoigne places the dangers of erotic literature firmly within the reader--what "they woulde seeme thereby to know"--as well as from the writer. Despite the 1575 revision, the reverend divines succeeded in having the work banned in 1576.

Greene's Philomela brings up a new issue in the romance tale's social role in renegotiating ideas about sexuality and its containment in marriage. Greene dedicates his work

to Lady Fitzwater, who had been a widow for some time. In an introductory letter, he offers his tales as a diversion, but also as an encouragement for her to end her grieving and to remarry. His unusual dedication and argument allows for the interrogation of the third term in the early modern *troika* "maid, wife or widow" as a way of defining a woman's social-sexual position.

1. All references to and quotations from Whetstone's Heptameron of Civil Discourses are taken from Diana Shklanka's Garland edition, 1987.
2. For a detailed description of Whetstone's financial problems and court proceedings over inheritance claims, see Mark Eccles, "George Whetstone in Star Chamber." Whetstone describes his financial problems at length in The Rock of Regard.
3. In addition to the Heptameron (1582), Whetstone had earlier collected prose romance tales and some verses in a book entitled, The Rocke of Regard (1576), and written a play called Promos and Cassandra (1578), which may not have ever been produced on the London stage.
4. Wrightson argues, "In the universities and Inns of Court they rarely pursued the established curricula of studies with any assiduity, and still more rarely obtained degrees or legal qualifications. But they did acquire, in common with their peers, the general education in mind and manners considered appropriate to men of their station...The common experiences provided by the transformation of gentry education thus contributed much to the development of a degree of cultural

cohesiveness which went over and beyond common consciousness of rank" (191-2).

5. Benedict Anderson defines nationalism as an "imagined community" with three particular characteristics. They are limited by "finite, if elastic borders, beyond which lie other nations" (16); they are imagined "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (15); and they present themselves as communities "because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as deep, horizontal comradeship" (16).

6. The urban roots of the "civility" trend is evident in Guazzo's insistence, in Civile Conversation (1581), that it is not only an urban phenomenon:

You see then, that we give a large sense and signification to this woorde (civile) for that we would have understoode, that to live civilly, is not sayde in respect of the citie, but of the quallities of the minde: so I understand civile conversation not having relation to the citie, but consideration to the manners and conditions which make it civile. And as lawes and civile ordinances are distributed no onely to cities, but to villages, castles, and people subject unto them, so I will that civile conversation appertaine not onely to men inhabiting cities, but to all sortes of persons of what place, or of what calling soever they are. (I, 56)

7. See also Ann Rosalind Jones, "Nets and Bridles," for an intelligent analysis of Guazzo's text and its construction of gender distinctions (42-48).

8. Jones was the printer of other works which advertise civility such as Simon Robson's 1577 A New Yeeres Gift: The Courte of Civil Courtesie, whose title blurs the distinctions between courtesy and civility.

9. Botrevicus's publishing history in England aligns him consistently with works on civility and social order. He also contributed a Latin verse to Whetstone's A Mirour for Magestrates of Cyties (1584), and he has been identified author of a

complimentary verse to William Blandy's The Five Books of Civil and Christian Nobilitie. In his Index of Dedications and Commendatory Verses in English Books Before 1641, Franklin B. Williams identifies Johannes Botrevicus as the Johannes Butterwike who wrote the verse commending Blandy. Both works are concerned with civility and manners are connected with the Inns of Court, Whetstone's Mirour being addressed to the "yong Gentlemen of Innes of Court."

10. For a sharp analysis of Gascoigne's forced revisions of "The Adventures of Master F.J." and his history of problems with authorities who would censor and "emasculate" his work, see Richard McCoy's "Gascoigne's '*Poemata Castrata*.'"

11. A good number of the critical studies of Measure for Measure have focussed on its relation to matrimonial law in the early seventeenth century (See Birje-Paril; Hagarajan; Harding; Hawkins; Nuttall; Schanzer; Scott; and Wentersdorf). The problems of "hand-fasting" and "spousals" as a threat to the stability of marriage, which I discussed in Chapter Three, have been the primary focus of these studies. Many critics have seen the connection of self-made marriages and premarital sex as a reflection of or criticism of the ambiguity inherent in English matrimonial law at this time, where simply plighting your marriage vows to another was enough to legally make a marriage.

12. For a complete list of the names and characters the Heptameron and Measure for Measure have in common, see David Beauregard's "Isabella as Novice: Shakespeare's Use of Whetstone's Heptameron."

13. Lindsay Davies notes the paradox of Shakespeare's plot:

Isabella and the Duke of Vienna regard Claudio's fornication and impregnation of his troth-plight bride Julietta as a sin, but at the same time the Duke plans and Isabella endorses the bedtrick in which Angelo unknowingly consummates his betrothal to Mariana (98).

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