

## Title Page

The Theory and Practice of Comic Sexual Euphemism: A Comparative Study of English and French Renaissance Texts

Submitted by Anna Rose Blaen to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in French, April 2017.

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## Abstract

This thesis is on the theory and practice of comic sexual euphemism in Renaissance France and England. The term 'comic sexual euphemism' means the use of non-literal descriptions for sexual topics for the purposes of comedy, similar to an innuendo or double-entendre. Crucially, instances are often more explicit than straightforward literal statement, so fail to be euphemistic. I use ancient, early modern, and modern theory, as well as my own theoretical insights, and apply this to three types of Renaissance text: texts associated with the court from England and France, medical texts from France and their English translation, and theatre from England and France. Primary authors include Baldesar Castiglione, Pierre de Brantôme, Sir John Harington (who translated Ludovico Ariosto into English – Ariosto is also translated into French by Jean Martin), Laurent Joubert, Jacques Ferrand (translated into English by Edmund Chilmead), Thomas Middleton, Ben Jonson, Edward Sharpham, John Marston, and Pierre de Troterel. At the court of both countries a dangerous line was walked between protecting women and gossiping about them, between proving yourself witty regarding sexual material and going too far. In the world of French medicine, where you might expect professional and clinical language, there is instead a trend towards outrageous sexual humour. As at court, if deemed to have exceeded social norms, this could get writers into trouble. The stage was in some ways a safer environment in which to use comic sexual euphemism, as it was expected more in comic drama. This does not, however, lessen how vibrant and multi-faceted such language could be in early modern drama. Interestingly, similar imagery is found across texts and genres. In this period overall there was a tension between the rhetorical rules which forbid the discussion of the sexually obscene and the clear delight writers took in breaking these.

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## Author's Declaration

All the work here is my own, unless otherwise specified in the referencing. If a translation has no reference – for example, it is not fully referenced at the beginning of a chapter or section then has no page references within a chapter – it is my own. In places I have adapted translations to bring them closer to the original; this is outlined in footnotes.

## Definitions and Abbreviations

- Comic Sexual Euphemism: when vocabulary is used for sexual topics which is technically a euphemism, since it does not apply literal terms, for comic effect. A euphemism is specifically comic and sexual when it acts like an innuendo or double-entendre because the euphemistic veil is transparent.
- Metaphorical Field: when scandalous sex with the potential to offend is compared to something socially acceptable in an extended metaphor. Examples include sex and riding, sex and games, sex and business, sex and music, sex and war, sex and clothes, sex and disease, sex and art, sex and language, and sex and meat.

I am following the convention of putting the full MHRA references in footnotes at the beginning of every chapter and often at the beginning of sections, then abbreviated versions for the rest of the chapter. Sometimes, within the text, names of texts and reference works are abbreviated after the first use. *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, becomes *OED* and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* becomes *Chaste Maid*. The first time an author is mentioned in a chapter, their full name is given; subsequently their surname is only given for the most part. When it is clear which text I am referring to – for example, if the section's title features a particular text, or if the footnotes with full references make it clear which texts the following quotes in a chapter come from – then the pagination or reference is given within the text.

## Chapter One: Introduction and Theory Chapter

This thesis is on the theory and practice of comic sexual language and euphemism in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France and England: it is a comparative study of English and French texts c.1512-1659. The first two chapters will consider in detail relevant contributions from theoretical debate in this area. Once the theory has thus been outlined, the following chapters will analyse the practice in light of this. Practice in this case is the use of comic sexual euphemism, and its relationship to dysphemism where applicable, in texts associated with the court, medical texts, and theatrical works.<sup>1</sup> This type of euphemism often amounts to an innuendo or double-entendre, where supposedly euphemistic language is used to address sexual topics for comic effect. An example of this is Jacques Ferrand's use of 'la porcherie de Venus' ['Venus' pigsty'] for the female genitalia.<sup>2</sup> The extent to which such language is truly euphemistic, if it is clear what it is referring to, will be an important topic of discussion.

What I term 'comic sexual euphemism' often occurs in what I define as a 'metaphorical field' – where something obscene or offensive, such as scandalous sex, is extensively talked of in terms of something socially acceptable. Euphemism was (and still is) a tool to say what should not be said: what some would consider inappropriate to say. This thesis explores the comic ways three types of text find to address taboos and speak the unspeakable. Sometimes this is done using *paradiastole*, which can use euphemism to reframe a vice as a virtue. These texts are part of a fascinating world of, on the one hand, joy with language and, on the other, a profound commentary on key aspects of what it is to be human: gender, the body, power, social status and interaction. The fact that the use of comic sexual language touches upon these issues means it is not merely vulgar or crude. Use of this type of language reveals important characteristics regarding why

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<sup>1</sup> Henceforth, texts from chapter three on texts associated with the court will be called 'courtly texts'.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Ferrand, *Traité de l'essence et guérison de l'amour, ou De la mélancholie érotique* (Tolose: Colomiez, 1610), p. 193. This will be elaborated on below.



writers feel the need to hide some parts of life in their work while also highlighting them by placing them in the category of comedy.

Comparing French and English texts over this time period allows for in-depth analysis which simultaneously considers a broader range than just researching texts from one country. It is often the case that comparing the French and English versions of the same text provides deeper and surprising insight. One language can pick up on elements the other misses. Although the original is Italian (1528), the French translation of Baldesar Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, for example, is often more vibrant than the English from Thomas Hoby in 1561.<sup>3</sup> However, Sir John Harington bucks the trend of French versions being bawdier than their English counterparts (which holds true for medical texts), by often adding in more comic sexual euphemism to his translation of *Orlando Furioso* than the original or French versions.<sup>4</sup> It would be convenient to argue one language, culture, and country had a clear influence on the other; unfortunately the reality is not so simple. In chapter five, I demonstrate some of Michel de Montaigne's influence on John Marston, but this is not about innuendo first and foremost. This thesis is not, therefore, claiming a straightforward impact made by French double-entendre upon English innuendo. Nevertheless, it is helpful to compare the productions of the two nations for a fuller picture.

The earliest text considered in this thesis is from Erasmus in 1512 (who provides theory, rather than practice, regarding the language I examine), while the latest possible Renaissance date is provided by the printing of Pierre de Brantôme in c.1659 (which is much later than the text's original conception). The majority of the corpus<sup>5</sup> is from the late sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries. I am not considering the entirety of the early modern period because a shorter range allows deeper focus. The length of the historical time period allocated facilitates valid points of comparison and the demonstration of the evolution of case studies, while not being so long an era as to lose focus. The Renaissance period may seem unusual for

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<sup>3</sup> Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Courtier*, trans. by Thomas Hoby (London: Seres, 1561). See section 3.1 for details.

<sup>4</sup> Lodovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso in English*, trans. by John Harington (London: Field, 1591). Chapters three and four will elaborate on these issues.

<sup>5</sup> See section 1.2 for details.

consideration of comic sexual language and euphemism. Early modern people can sometimes be perceived as being very bawdy, by which I mean comically unchaste, wanton, lewd, and sexually obscene, and unconcerned with euphemising this lewdness. Yet there can be deeper meanings behind the choice of words selected to display this bawdiness. Most importantly, this period has tension between the rhetorical imperative and the reality: the clear guidance not to engage with innuendo and the way this was widely flouted.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.1 Defining Comic Sexual Euphemism

The word 'euphemism' is rooted in the Greek verb 'euphemeo', literally 'I speak well or favourably', specifically 'I speak words of good omen' – 'euphemia' means 'good speech' from 'phemi', 'to speak'. Consequently, this meant 'I avoid all unlucky words' as was the requirement for sacred rites. The concept of 'well' inherent in this word is why we have the linked word 'evangelical', with connotations of bringing good news. Paradoxically, then, 'euphemism' was used in practice to mean 'be silent' so as to avoid unlucky or ill-omened words. Officiating priests would give the order in the Greek imperative 'euphemeite', literally meaning 'speak well' but actually commanding their auditors to 'keep holy silence!' This was because the surest way to avoid the utterance of ill-favoured words was to keep quiet.<sup>7</sup> This line of thinking leads Thomas Wilson to proclaim that 'the wicked can not speake wel',<sup>8</sup> since there is a perceived relationship between negativity and skill with speech. By this type of logic, the Greeks would use euphemisms out of a mix of fear and reverence to give positive names to negative things, so as not to offend unpleasant forces. They would call the Furies, for example, the 'Eumenides' meaning 'the kindly ones' and the Black Sea the 'Euxine' meaning 'the hospitable one'.<sup>9</sup> The left hand, typically the sinister one, from the Latin 'sinistra', was given the back-to-front name of 'aristera' meaning 'the better hand'. Eric Partridge states how 'the Greeks and many other races

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<sup>6</sup> See my second chapter.

<sup>7</sup> The relationship between euphemism and silence will be examined in the Conclusion section 6.1.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (n.p.: Hiidenkirja, 2012), p. 199.

<sup>9</sup> With thanks to Ron Impey for information in personal correspondence on Greek uses of euphemeo.

believed [...] “there is a direct relation between a thing and its name”, perhaps surprisingly so since euphemism came to mean the opposite of this direct relation.<sup>10</sup> There are several references to these euphemisms in classical literature by Homer, Aristophanes, and (in Latin) Horace. Similarly, ‘dysphemism’ was from the Greek for ‘not’ or ‘badly’, so means ‘to speak poorly’.<sup>11</sup> The idea of speaking well or badly and having skill with language is very important for the texts examined throughout this thesis.

Despite the etymology of ‘euphemism’ having such ancient beginnings, the word did not enter the English language until much later. Much work has been done on the concept of obscenity existing before the word, which the *Oxford English Dictionary* first places at 1589.<sup>12</sup> The word ‘euphemism’ is also special in this way: I argue that the concept existed before the term, an issue on which my second chapter sheds light. The *OED* entry states that the earliest use of ‘euphemism’ is in 1656, meaning ‘a good or favourable interpretation of a bad word’. Closer to the meaning we have today, where ‘a less distasteful word or phrase’ is ‘used as a substitute for something harsher or more offensive’, occurs in 1793, says the *OED*, when ‘falling asleep’ is referred to instead of ‘dying’. Comic sexual euphemism, however, can often be just as, if not more, ‘distasteful’ than the literal term for some Renaissance readers and audiences, and this thesis will analyse arbitrary and shifting standards of taste. This dictionary definition confirms that people were unlikely to refer directly to the use of ‘euphemism’ in both the core period for this thesis and ancient theories of rhetoric. This is even more the case for the concept of comic sexual euphemism, which is a specialised term today let alone in the early modern period, with the closest common term being double-entendre. Yet, as chapter two will show, Renaissance writers, influenced by ancient thinkers, discuss this concept of euphemistic phrasing before the word existed.

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<sup>10</sup> Eric Partridge, *Here, There and Everywhere* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), p. 40.

<sup>11</sup> C.T. Onions (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 330, p. 676, p. 330, p. 296.

<sup>12</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://0-www.oed.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/Entry/76238?rskey=z2y8WN&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 27 Sept 2013], n.p. Unless otherwise stated, all *OED* references throughout the thesis are from here.

One definition of euphemism, provided by Partridge, is the ‘Substitution of mild or vague expression for harsh or blunt one; expression thus substituted’ where ‘almost every example’ can be labelled ‘discretion’.<sup>13</sup> However, as this thesis will demonstrate, such substitution is not always mild, vague, or discreet in euphemisms that are comic and sexual. I will use the term ‘comic sexual euphemism’ for linguistic phenomena which, for the purposes of humour, do not use the literal terms for sexual content. Sigmund Freud provides an explanation close to a working definition of comic sexual euphemism, although he does not use this label: ‘[allusion or] replacement by something small, something remotely connected, which the hearer reconstructs in his imagination into a complete and straightforward obscenity’.<sup>14</sup> Sexual material can be euphemised if the vocabulary that is used to describe it is not its straightforward name. However, a euphemism can and, in the examples I analyse, often does fail to be euphemistic – if we think of euphemistic language as trying to hide the sexual material. Failure to be euphemistic occurs when the offensive aspect is not veiled by and is maybe even emphasised with the use of the euphemism. A euphemism which is not euphemistic is still a euphemism due to its deliberate lack of literalness. Montaigne comments on this, believing indirect points are made more strongly than direct.<sup>15</sup> In fact, this failure to be euphemistic is what makes comic sexual euphemism so remarkable.

Similarly, Erasmus’ 1512 *On Copia of Words and Ideas* and 1526 *Institution of Christian Matrimony*<sup>16</sup> make statements on this issue: ‘Sometimes a metaphor is more obscene than a simple word’. This potentially increased obscenity of a metaphor is precisely because it is not literal. Simply using the literal or straightforward term, he argues, could be less obscene than a metaphor. This can be the case even if the euphemism is serious

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<sup>13</sup> Partridge, *Here, There and Everywhere*, pp. 39-41.

<sup>14</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, ed. by James Strachey (Middlesex: Penguin, 1986), pp. 143-144.

<sup>15</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais, Livre III*, ed. by V.L. Saulnier and Pierre Villey (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965), III.5. I will return to this.

<sup>16</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Michael J. Heath in John W. O’Malley and Louis A. Perraud (eds). *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 203-438; Desiderius Erasmus, *On Copia of Words and Ideas*, ed. and trans. by Donald B. King and H. David Rix (Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2012), pp. 22-23.

rather than comic, so it is not just the addition of comedy which makes it more obscene. For Erasmus, 'innuendo and suggestiveness' can be so explicit 'that pure filth could not be filthier'.<sup>17</sup> This failure to be euphemistic or hide the sexual content is when we witness different levels of transparency. Some euphemisms are more obvious in meaning than others, meaning there are different degrees of explicitness versus veiling of terms. In *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, for example, sexually available women are repeatedly referred to as 'mutton'.<sup>18</sup> This has all the connotations of its literal meaning – fleshy, carnal, fulfilling appetites – but it is also fairly obvious every time it is used that it is referring to sex. Few would fail to understand this, meaning it is at the more transparent end of the scale. It is one of the euphemisms which is more readily obvious in meaning. At the other end of the scale, sexual jokes involving the Latin term *mentula* (often used for 'penis') require education to grasp the full meaning, so exclude certain types of people. Yet, even here, the surrounding context and a suggestive delivery could convey some of the potential obscenity. The issue of delivery is, of course, particularly important for theatre.

There is not, therefore, just one type of euphemism or euphemising process. Dysphemism, for example, occurs when a term, often itself an acceptable euphemism in one context, finds its way into another context in which it is inappropriate. This is where the idea of speaking poorly, from the etymology of dysphemism, comes in. Laurent Joubert's use of potentially scandalous vocabulary is accepted in the male-only dissecting room, but becomes dysphemistic when it escapes this world and is put into vernacular print which women can be exposed to.<sup>19</sup> Erasmus refers indirectly to what we would now call dysphemism, writing long before the word was born, which was, according to the *OED*, in the nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup> He argues some kinds of conversation were inappropriate in certain contexts: 'dirty talk has no

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<sup>17</sup> Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Heath, p. 426.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. David Bevington (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), pp. 1453-1513: 1.1.144.

<sup>19</sup> Laurent Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (Bordeaux: Millanges, 1578), p. 468. Chapter four will go into this in detail.

<sup>20</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://0-www.oed.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/Entry/76238?rskey=z2y8WN&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 27 Sept 2013], n.p.

place in the family circle'.<sup>21</sup> In the case of 'dirty talk', the scandalous material may not be types of euphemisms but what could well be more straightforward obscenity. There is a suggestion that these are appropriate, or perhaps less inappropriate, in other social settings. This type of material, the argument goes, may not have a place in the family circle, but that does mean it does not have a place elsewhere. As this thesis will demonstrate, context is crucial.

Some linguists, including Kerry L. Plaff, Raymond W. Gibbs, and Michael D. Johnson, use 'X-phemism' as an inclusive term for euphemism and dysphemism. Plaff, Gibbs, and Johnson outline how:

Because social context plays a major role in determining whether a specific expression is euphemistic or dysphemistic, some linguists have coined the term "X-phemism" to refer collectively to both groups of terms. For instance, it seems best to refer to the expression *we had a nice roll in the hay* (when referring to sexual intercourse) as an X-phemism because it might be euphemistic to use in talking to a friend [...] but it could be dysphemistic to employ in talking to your grandmother.<sup>22</sup>

This point about your grandmother is a modern version of Erasmus' point about avoiding dirty talk in the family circle. For Erasmus, it would be dysphemistic to discuss such things in front of any women or children. Partridge calls dysphemism the opposite of euphemism,<sup>23</sup> but this passage from Plaff, Gibbs, and Johnson reveals a more complicated relationship between the terms. The idea of X-phemisms is a helpful tool for this thesis, since many of the comic sexual euphemisms studied here are appropriate in certain circumstances but scandalous in others. It can be helpful to think of euphemisms which fail to be euphemistic as X-phemisms. The following chapter will examine ancient and early modern notions of comic sexual euphemism.

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<sup>21</sup> Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Heath, p. 384.

<sup>22</sup> Kerry L. Plaff, Raymond W. Gibbs and Michael D. Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 18 (1997), 59-83 (pp. 2, 60).

<sup>23</sup> Partridge, *Here, There and Everywhere*, p. 41.

## 1.2 Corpus and Rationale for Textual Selection

In this section I will explain which texts were chosen, the reasons why they were chosen, and in what order they are and why. This thesis, or, in fact, several theses, could have been written on different corpora for this topic. I could have written a thesis on sexual language in the works of François Rabelais or William Shakespeare, or one drawing purely on English or purely on French texts. Consequently I shall mention these two very famous canonical writers in an ancillary capacity only, although I hope my methods and insights will be helpful for those who study them. Rabelais is undoubtedly influential on sexual comedy in this period in France especially. He is, of course, a point of reference for issues of sexual jokes and euphemism throughout this era and for multiple types of text. Randle Cotgrave, for example, is a Rabelaisian lexicographer.<sup>24</sup> Rabelais' influence is large enough that most of the comedy in the texts throughout this thesis can be described as Rabelaisian. There is evidence that roots can be found in Rabelais for the metaphorical fields of sex and riding, sex and meat, sex and games, and sex and war which I examine. Rabelais' work can be used as a lens through which to view following texts which engage in the comic and sexual. However, many other scholars have written on Rabelais so the potential for originality is limited and ultimately my focus is not on one author but one type of language.

I therefore acknowledge that sexual humour appears in other contexts to my chosen analyses and that other sources exist which I could have possibly covered. The direction I took offers a cross-section of texts because it is the type of language – comic sexual euphemism – first and foremost that I am analysing, not a certain type of text. This type of language is found in multiple types of texts in French and English in this period. My thesis is not, for example, chiefly on English courtly texts or French medical texts. Rather, it examines different contexts in which comic sexual euphemism features as its primary concern. Of course, the sections devoted to the texts I have chosen

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<sup>24</sup> As pointed out by Anne Lake Prescott, *Imagining Rabelais in Renaissance England* (London: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 48-49; Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Aslip, 1611), <<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cotgrave/>> [accessed 18 Oct 2013], n.p.

will go into more detail than is possible here and, as each unfolds, the full extent of the texts' significance will become apparent. The use of comic sexual euphemism demonstrates Renaissance attitudes to important aspects of being human – gender, power, shame, and much more. These three types of text provide the best insight into how this language reflects such issues. They each have a theatrical element. This is obvious with drama, but it is also the case for courtly and medical texts. Both doctors and courtiers felt the need to perform, either in the anatomy theatre or at court, using comic sexual language to do this. The consequences could be dire if this went wrong.<sup>25</sup> This cross-section of texts is representative of the period and a variety of writers. Combining French and English texts means that I can consider a wider picture of the Renaissance than just that of France or England. My purpose in this thesis is to argue that comic sexual euphemism is a very significant type of language – rather than an easily dismissed form of vulgar smut – and it is found in unexpected yet complementary places. A French physician can use the same imagery as an English courtier. The importance of this language transcends borders of nation and genre.

The chosen texts allow me to explore the following issues and questions:

- What is perceived as too shocking or obscene to express overtly when it came to sex in this period? Such issues can be subjective, so what is the consensus (if there was one) in the Renaissance?
- How do people find ways to express scandalous material anyway for the purposes of comedy?
- To what extent does euphemism avoid or express the comically and sexually obscene? When does euphemism stop being euphemistic and draw more attention than simple explicit statement?
- If euphemism is meant to be seen through, why was it used at all?

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<sup>25</sup> Chapters three and four will elaborate on this.



- What are the shifting standards of acceptability in different contexts?
- Is Latin more or less euphemistic than the vernacular?

This section, as well as the sections devoted to specific texts, will explain some of the ways these texts help to answer these questions. Each chapter on the three types of text – courtly, medical, and theatrical – has its own more specific questions of research which complement those of the other chapters. The chapters will specify how different types of text address these, while the above list is for the thesis overall. The writers I analyse play with the boundary of social expectations, the importance of types of audience, and the tension of Latin versus the vernacular.

The sections of the Introduction on theoretical debate are essential for establishing background and a theoretical framework. This thesis is on *both* the theory *and* practice of this type of sexual humour, so the Introduction partly serves to establish the theoretical elements. The second chapter completes this process. This includes ancient theory because it was so influential on early modern thinking, early modern theory because it is of the same period as my corpus, and modern theory because one cannot ignore significant recent findings in the field.

Laurent Joubert is an early modern French physician who is useful in two ways for my thesis. He provides medical writing which uses similar imagery to literary texts at the time (which chapter four deals with) and he writes on the theory of laughter. His theoretical treatise from 1560 is analysed early on in my thesis as it discusses attitudes to taboo parts of the body and how they can prompt laughter.<sup>26</sup> Joubert's consideration of ugliness links nicely to the arguments of Sigmund Freud, who also makes important points in 1905 for my analysis.<sup>27</sup> Like Joubert, he points out how, when we laugh at sex, something that is concealed and hidden is brought to light, with different layers of transparency. His discussion of double meanings not being equally

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<sup>26</sup> Laurent Joubert, *Traité du ris* (Paris: Chesneverd, 1579. Reprinted 2014); Laurent Joubert, *Treatise on Laughter*, ed. and trans. by Gregory David De Rocher (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1980).

<sup>27</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, ed. by James Strachey (Middlesex: Penguin, 1986).

prominent, and the way sexual jokes combine the similar and the dissimilar, is very important for my own theory of metaphorical fields (which is explained below). He considers the importance of context, which has a huge influence on when sexual humour is acceptable or scandalous. He also considers social power and sexual aggression between genders, which are major factors of Renaissance attitudes to sexual humour. I analyse how he contrasts smut with wittier sexual jokes and how social status impacts on this, as well as his consideration of the triangulation of the teller, the subject, and the hearer of a joke. Another important consideration is that of the repression of the taboo and the obstacles society puts in place to guard us from the scandalous. These are all significant for early modern comic sexual language. I then briefly discuss the arguments of Mikhail Bakhtin regarding laughter from 1965.<sup>28</sup> He believes laughter went through a change in the seventeenth century and, in contrast to previous attitudes, was not seen as having a deep philosophical meaning. The extent to which there is a deeper meaning behind the type of Renaissance comic sexual euphemism I discuss, and the wider implications, are important facets of this thesis.

The next type of theory I consider is from modern linguistics. Modern concepts such as negative and positive politeness (which are considered by Montaigne, though he does not use these terms) are helpful for studying Renaissance euphemism. One might expect euphemism to be using negative politeness, which avoids the taboo, but comic sexual euphemism uses positive politeness as it engages with the taboo, albeit in a particular way. A synopsis of the concept of negative and positive politeness is as follows. Negative politeness or the avoidance of taboos is the approach taken by wider society overall, while positive politeness or engaging with taboos takes place in small in-groups. Section 1.7 will explain further by outlining different individual linguists' considerations of the concept in more detail than there is room for here. This concept of differentiating politeness helps answer the question, outlined above, of the extent to which euphemism can avoid or express the comic and sexual. Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson (1987) discuss these forms of politeness, how much we deal with sexual

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<sup>28</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

taboos, and how much we hide from them.<sup>29</sup> I apply these questions to Renaissance humour. The experiments of Kerry L. Plaff, Raymond W. Gibbs, and Michael D. Johnson from 1997 have significance for my research which is almost impossible to overstate.<sup>30</sup> Just as Erasmus argued, they believe it really matters which words are chosen to form an image. They prove this with experiments using different euphemisms, some of which fit the situation and some of which jar. I argue that the sexual humour of, for example, theatre would have been easier to follow when an extended metaphorical field was used repeatedly. The final modern linguistic theorist I consider is R. Anthony Lodge (2007), who discusses negative and positive politeness and the engagement with taboos that takes place within groups.<sup>31</sup> Comic sexual euphemism is often used within groups, such as educated males, in a way which inevitably excludes others. When the taboo language escapes from the unique context in which it was acceptable (such as the anatomy theatre), this can create havoc in the outside world.

The agreed conclusion amongst many modern writers, including myself, Plaff, Gibbs, and Johnson,<sup>32</sup> is that the ability to use euphemism (especially when it is comic and sexual) demonstrates a high level of skill with language. There is not room to consider other theories on comedy, so the most salient have been selected. It is not humour in general (of which there are numerous analyses) or euphemism in general<sup>33</sup> that I am focussing on, but specifically comic sexual euphemism, which requires a more precise approach.

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<sup>29</sup> Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>30</sup> Kerry L. Plaff, Raymond W. Gibbs and Michael D. Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 18 (1997), 59-83.

<sup>31</sup> R. Anthony Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 60. See section 1.7 for more.

<sup>33</sup> For example, there is not room to consider the arguments regarding euphemism, blasphemy, and dysphemism made by D.J. Enright (ed.), *Fair of Speech: The Uses of Euphemism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Joss Marsh, *Word Crimes: Blasphemy, Culture, and Literature in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process* (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000); Keith Allan and Kate Burridge, *Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Keith Allan and Kate Burridge, *Euphemism & Dysphemism: Language Used as Shield and Weapon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

The second chapter considers more theoretical debate. After outlining early modern terms which come close to defining comic sexual euphemism, I turn to the highly influential ancient thinkers Cicero (c.44 BCE) and Quintilian (c.95 BCE).<sup>34</sup> These two are the most important classical writers when it comes to the issues surrounding the type of language this thesis discusses. Cicero firmly believes that we should hide the shameful, both physically and using language. Cicero also discusses a word for genitalia, *mentula*, which becomes a useful tool (no pun intended) for early modern jokes from Michel de Montaigne, as well as doctors and playwrights. Like Cicero, Quintilian prefers silence to unbecoming expressions. He is concerned with how clear words are and the issue of using real terms. Comic sexual euphemism can reveal more than it conceals and my Conclusion will consider how euphemistic silence can be.

Moving on to early modern theory, I discuss the writings of Erasmus (1512 and 1526), Richard Sherry (1550), Thomas Wilson (1553), and George Puttenham (1589).<sup>35</sup> Montaigne is also used here (originally published 1580).<sup>36</sup> Erasmus' disapproval of frank language when it comes to sexual topics would have been well-known by writers like Thomas Middleton. Middleton flaunts his use of this language. Erasmus fears that words which can begin as innocent and polite euphemisms can undergo the process of pejoration and become as filthy, or even filthier, than what is being euphemised. Sherry provides a Renaissance consideration of metaphor, Wilson is concerned with how natural sexual or filthy language is, and Puttenham analyses how the meaning of words can change significantly. Context is important for many of these Renaissance theoretical writers as well as for the courtly, medical, and theatrical texts I examine. Montaigne, the final

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<sup>34</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Obligations*, ed. by P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ed. and trans. by Donald A. Russell (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 2002).

<sup>35</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Michael J. Heath in John W. O'Malley and Louis A. Perraud (eds). *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 203-438; Desiderius Erasmus, *On Copia of Words and Ideas*, ed. and trans. by Donald B. King and H. David Rix (Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2012); Richard Sherry, *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* (Tennessee: General Books, 2010); Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (n.p.: Hiidenkirja, 2012); George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London: Field, 1589).

<sup>36</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais, Livre III*, ed. by V.L. Saulnier and Pierre Villey (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965); Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, ed. and trans. by M.A. Screech (London: Penguin, 2003).

thinker considered in this chapter, makes important points about indirect imagery being more powerful than directly stating something. Perhaps, he suggests, euphemistic statements actually draw more attention than explicitness. This provides one answer to my above question regarding euphemism not being euphemistic: for Montaigne, simple explicit statement may draw less attention than elaborate euphemisms. He discusses whether we should be ashamed to say what we are not ashamed to think, stating that sexual topics are (in contrast to Cicero's argument) natural. These early modern theorists have been selected for their standpoints on how we engage with, and whether we should engage with, taboo and sexual humour. They are the most relevant from their period for these issues. Other writers may consider sexual humour to be appropriate or inappropriate, but no one else discusses the details of why and how in the way these do.

After completing the sections on the theory of comic sexual euphemism, this thesis moves on to consider the practice. I do this by using three types of text, which allows me to examine this euphemism in different social contexts and a variety of genres. Courtly, medical, and theatrical texts all amount to particularly potent contexts in which comic sexual euphemism can become problematic. These are not the only contexts in which comic sexual euphemism appears (for example, I sometimes use poetry as a point of comparison) but they are the richest and the ones with particularly high stakes when offence is caused. Courtiers are close to royalty and have to be very aware of what they say, and doctors have their professional reputation at stake. These types of text have been chosen to be representative of some of the different writers in this period using this language. Any more than three types would be too many to do justice to in the space of one thesis.

The court is an environment with a certain level of expectation to be witty and skilful when it comes to playing with sexual language. However, there is also tension with the equally important expectation to behave appropriately and acceptably. This means there can be a clash between the rhetorical rules of behaviour at court, to be polite and avoid the taboo, and the reality which pushes the boundaries of these rules. Rhetoric and what actually takes place can contrast hugely. Puttenham states that the courtly maker shall

shun foul speech,<sup>37</sup> but often this does not happen. Courtly texts help answer the important question of why writers would use euphemism that is meant to be seen through – to gain attention at court and display your wit. This can be dangerous, however, and sometimes writers and people at court would go too far and get into trouble. Baldesar Castiglione and Pierre de Brantôme describe situations like this (with Brantôme justifying that he himself has not gone too far) while Sir John Harington quite probably got into trouble himself for such behaviour. Courtly texts demonstrate the strong link between sexual humour and power. The court was also a place which was fundamentally structured around gender, with an injunction against being disrespectful to women juxtaposed with the frequent use of comic sexual language to ruin women's reputations.

The texts considered in this chapter are Castiglione's *Cortegiano* from 1528 (hereafter called the *Book of the Courtier*) in early modern French (1585) and English (translated by Thomas Hoby in 1561), Brantôme's *Les Dames galantes* [*Lives of Fair and Gallant Ladies*] (written in the late sixteenth century, only printed much later in c.1659) in early modern French and modern English, and Harington's version of *Orlando Furioso* (c.1580). I will also consider Ludovico Ariosto's original version in modern English and early modern French translated by Jean Martin (1544)<sup>38</sup> as well as other pieces by Harington from 1596 and 1606 as points of comparison.<sup>39</sup> This chapter begins with Baldesar Castiglione because he provides a bridge with the preceding chapter, having written on the theory of comic sexual euphemism and the background to significant debates, as well as sexual humour at court. This is also why chapter three follows the chapters with theory. In his text (which was

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<sup>37</sup> Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, p. 212.

<sup>38</sup> Baldassarre Castiglione, *Le Parfait Courtisan du Comte Baltassar Castillonois*, trans. by Gabriel Chapuis (Paris: Bonfons, 1585); Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Courtier*, trans. by Thomas Hoby (London: Seres, 1561); Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. and ed. by George Bull (London: Penguin, 2003); Seigneur de Brantôme, *Les Dames galantes*, ed. by Paul Morand (Paris: Gallimard, 1981); Seigneur de Brantôme, *Lives of Fair and Gallant Ladies* 1922, trans. by A.R. Allinson, <<http://tinyurl.com/nenpex2>> [accessed 17 July 2013]; Lodovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso in English*, trans. by John Harington (London: Field, 1591); John Harington, *Ariosto's Orlando Furioso: Selections from the Translation of Sir John Harington*, ed. by Rudolf Gottfried (London: Indiana University Press, 1966); Loys Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Jean Martin (Lyon: Sabon, 1544); Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Guido Waldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>39</sup> John Harington, *Nugae Antiquae*, ed. by Thomas Park (Charlestown: BiblioLife, 2009); Misacmos, *The Metamorphosis of Ajax* (1596); John Harington, *A New Discourse of a Stale Subject, Called the Metamorphosis of Ajax* (London: Field, 1596).

hugely popular in France and England), Castiglione asks whether we should tell jokes using this sexual language in front of women at court and discusses the way obscenity can be increased by the smallest of adjustments to words. He discusses how courtiers can go too far with their sexual humour. Brantôme provides fascinating examples of the hypocrisy of, on the one hand, wanting to protect women from scandal and, on the other hand, revelling in scandalous gossip about women using comic sexual euphemism. He provides different instances of this language from France where people clearly relished the opportunity to push the boundaries of acceptability. Some of his stories demonstrate the reality of Castiglione's belief that those who stain a lady's honour should be punished. His text helps us to answer the above question regarding shifting standards of acceptability, as the situations he describes differ from king to king as well as from kings and their subjects. Harington is the final writer analysed in this chapter. His translation of a canto from Ariosto was chosen for many reasons. He plays with the same joke as Brantôme, of claiming to abhor scandal-mongering while delighting in it. His translation is not particularly faithful to Ariosto's original, almost becoming an entirely different text, so is unique in that respect. Most importantly, there is a credible story regarding Elizabeth I's reaction to Harington's text and the scandal it caused at court, leading to his banishment (chapter three will outline this further). Even if this is not true, the fact that it would be a potentially fitting reaction shows that the sexual humour in this text is worth examining. I compare Harington's version to that of a modern English and an early modern French translation.

Courtly texts use the same metaphorical fields found in theatre of the time. They help answer the question, outlined above, of what were the shifting standards of acceptability in different contexts; for example, there is some evidence that James I found Harington's canto less offensive than Elizabeth may have. Another important question above, asking what is perceived as too shocking to express overtly in this period, is addressed by these texts in the way that sex is discussed through the use of veiling euphemism. Euphemism adds a layer of distance from the offensive content, but, when it fails to veil sufficiently, adds humour and sometimes offence. Brantôme cannot openly discuss sexual gossip without this layer but Harington may well have failed to

protect himself when his euphemisms were seen through. These three courtly texts offer some of the best examples of the type of language I am interested in from France and England. To claim to disapprove of sexual language is one thing, and to use it is another, but to do both is particularly remarkable.

The next type of text I consider relates specifically to the world of medicine. Here I consider two texts by French doctors, one of which is translated into English in the seventeenth century: Laurent Joubert's *Erreurs Populaires* [*Popular Errors*] (1578 then revised in 1579 and 1584) and Jacques Ferrand's *Traité de l'essence et guérison de l'amour, ou De la mélancholie érotique* [variously translated as *A Treatise on Lovesickness, Erotomania* or *Erotique Melancholy*] (1610 then revised in 1623), translated into English in 1640 and 1645 by Edmund Chilmead.<sup>40</sup> I also discuss how both physicians were influenced by Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, a text from the fourteenth century and printed many times (I use the 1558 edition), and share traits with Jacques Duval's *Des Hermaphrodits* (1612).<sup>41</sup> Joubert was also influenced by Marguerite de Navarre's *L'Heptaméron* (first published posthumously in 1558).<sup>42</sup> This medical world was chosen for the way that comic sexual language may be acceptable within it, but unacceptable when transplanted into the outside world. This transplant was made possible by writing in the vernacular, removing the restriction of needing to know Latin to understand the vocabulary. This means these texts help answer the question examining what the shifting standards of acceptability in different contexts are, since what is seen as acceptable within a medical context is not outside it.

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<sup>40</sup> Laurent Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (Bordeaux: Millanges, 1578); Laurent Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by Gregory David De Rocher (London: University of Alabama Press, 1989); Jacques Ferrand, *Traité de l'essence et guérison de l'amour, ou De la mélancholie érotique* (Tolose: Colomiez, 1610); Jacques Ferrand, *De la maladie d'amour ou mélancholie érotique*, ed. by Donald Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella (Paris: Éditions Classiques Garnier, 2010); Jacques Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Donald A. Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1990); Jacques Ferrand, *De la maladie d'amour ou mélancholie érotique. Discours curieux qui enseigne à cognoistre l'essence, les causes, les signes, & les remèdes de ce mal fantastique* (Paris: Moreaz, 1623); James Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Edmund Chilmead (Oxford: Lichfield, 1640); James Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Edmund Chilmead (Oxford: Lichfield, 1645).

<sup>41</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *Le Decameron* (Lyon: le Maçon, 1558); Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, ed. and trans. by G.H. McWilliam (London: Penguin, 1995); Jacques Duval, *Des Hermaphrodits, accouchemens des femmes*. (Paris: Geuffroy, 1612).

<sup>42</sup> Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, ed. by Michel François (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1950); Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron* (Bruneau: Prevost, 1559); Marguerite de Navarre, *The Heptameron*, ed. and trans. by Paul A. Chilton (London: Penguin, 1984).



These texts are also especially well-placed for consideration of my question of whether Latin is more or less euphemistic than the common tongue. They did not cause scandal until their sexual humour was made available to those who could not read Latin. This is a demonstration of the argument made by modern theorists, that there are different rules for sexual humour in and outside of communities, in these cases the medical and highly educated community.

Both of the texts in this chapter were especially guilty of causing offence in this manner. They were both forced to make revisions of their work. I examine the editions before and after these editions; one of the ways I do this is by comparing Ferrand's original to early modern English translations of the revised version. Joubert tries to deny he ever crossed the line and Ferrand refuses to make all of the changes demanded of him. One of Joubert's responses attempts to proclaim some women can acceptably read his work while other women cannot, creating a more complicated demarcation than one simply based on gender. These texts also provide an answer to the vital question of what could be seen as too shocking to express overtly at this time and how writers got round this objection to discuss such topics regardless. To discuss genitalia in the open way Joubert does before the revisions was seen to cross a line. Chapter four will explore how he attempts to get away with his offensive discussions by, for instance, placing asterisks where so-called chaste eyes should look away. Similarly, Ferrand's humorous focus on sexual topics was disapproved of by the Church. His response is to tone down his work for the most part while also maintaining a few hints at his previous humour, perhaps in a stubborn effort not to bow completely to the will of the Church's tribunal. One might expect medical texts to be clinical about the body, so it can perhaps be surprising when they use bold humour. Language that is actually very comic about taboo subjects is not what is immediately expected in a medical context. These two texts complement each other perfectly and no other comes close to their attitude to comic sexual euphemism – especially not English texts from the time, which are far more straightforward in their use of language.

The final type of text is theatre, providing the first purely literary form to be considered in this study. One of my most significant findings is that we find

the same imagery used across literary and non-literary texts. It is not immediately to be expected that a doctor and a playwright would use the same sexual jokes. Theatre is an important resource for studying the Renaissance period, often rich in its use of metaphorical fields and providing insight into issues of gender, narrative, class, and much more. In a developing plot, it is possible for playwrights to portray extended sexual jokes which can be planted early then drawn out to great depths. In this chapter I consider the anonymous *Wit of a Woman* (1604), Thomas Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (c.1613) and *Your Five Gallants* (c.1607), Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) and *Epicene* (c.1609), the latter of which also features in the Conclusion, Edward Sharpham's *Cupid's Whirligig* (1607), and John Marston's *Parasitaster, or The Fawn* (1606) and *The Dutch Courtesan* (1604). Alongside these are two French plays by Pierre de Troterel, *Les Corrivaux* (1612) and *Gillette* (1620).<sup>43</sup>

Middleton's plays are unusually virulent in their enthusiasm for sexual humour. They may be the most unrelentingly lewd of their time, at least in the manner in which this thesis is interested. Middleton pushes sexual humour to the extreme feared by Erasmus, where excessiveness is the joke and repeating a euphemism too much makes it less and less euphemistic due to pejoration. His language is so full of comic sexual vocabulary that euphemism is almost reversed so anything can be sexual. It is unfortunate that there is not room for more than two Middleton plays to be examined here. *Wit of a Woman* was chosen for one of its characters, a painter who indulges in the metaphorical field of painting and sex to a great extent. Marston's plays engage with issues of the court, sex, and language, so have links to chapter

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<sup>43</sup> Anon., *Wit of a Woman*, ed. by Walter Wilson Greg (Oxford: Hard Press, 2012); Thomas Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 907-962; Thomas Middleton, *Your Five Gallants*, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 594-636; Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. by David Bevington (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), pp. 961-1065; Ben Jonson, *Epicene*, in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. by David Bevington (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), pp. 775-860; Edward Sharpham, *Cupid's Whirligig* (London: Alde, 1607); John Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by David A. Blostein (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978); John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by David Crane (London: A & C Black, 1997); Pierre Troterel, *Les Corrivaux*, in *Ancien Théâtre François*, ed. by M. Viollet le Duc (Paris: n.pub., 1856; repr. Liechtenstein: Kraus, 1972), pp. 227-296; Pierre Troterel, *Gillette, comédie facétieuse* (Rouen: Du Petit Val, 1620).

three. They draw heavily on Montaigne when it comes to attitudes to sexual humour. Sharpham's play is obsessed with cuckoldry and has particularly noteworthy jokes surrounding men's rapiers which some characters fail to understand. Troterel's plays are used as a point of comparison. The metaphorical field of sex and riding, for example, where women are likened to horses, appears in both English and French plays. The same is true of the metaphorical fields of food and sex and language and sex. Troterel is one of the most appropriate French playwrights to compare to English writers using similar language. Rabelais, hugely influential across Europe, established a general discourse of what I describe as comic sexual euphemism for French audiences. The comic performances provided by Troterel are evidence of this which is contemporaneous with the Jacobean plays I examine. The Jonson plays I have selected have the strongest uses of the metaphorical field of meat and sex. Jonson also provides interesting discussion, through his drama, of gender and comic sexual euphemism, as well as the issue of silence which I consider in the Conclusion so he bridges this with chapter five. With theatre, it is not the case that these are rare examples of texts (unlike, say the medical texts). There are many, many examples of drama with bawdy jokes from this period. However, there is not room to consider every example and the ones I have selected offer what I would argue are the most potent instances of comic sexual euphemism, which is a more complicated type of language than mere bawdiness. These examples of theatre are also not the most famous (which is not to say they are unheard of) so will not have been covered by previous scholarship to the extent that some plays have been. All of these examples provide an answer to the question of why euphemism was used onstage that was meant to be seen through: to increase the humour and risqué and titillating nature of going to the theatre, in a cleverer way than merely stating the sexually obscene.

Chapter five is the longest and concerns the type of drama one might expect when looking at Renaissance comedy, but examined in new ways. It makes sense for this to be the final main chapter, as it leads into discussion of silence and *Epicene* in the Conclusion. Chapters three and four have striking examples of comic sexual euphemism which might be more unexpected. In

each chapter the chosen texts are salient case studies as it is not possible to examine every example.

Of course, comic sexual language was very widespread in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. To cover all the significant examples from French and English is well beyond the scope of one thesis. By studying such language in texts associated with the court, medical texts, and theatre, I can examine different social contexts which raise different but complementary questions.<sup>44</sup> It is also outside the range of originality to reprise some of the better-known examples of comic sexual euphemism (which could include, as previously mentioned, the works of Rabelais and Shakespeare). Similarly, there is not room, for example, for analysis of all Middleton plays. This is why each chapter has selected representative case studies. Also, I am not analysing so-called slips of the tongue which fall into a different category, since they are not metaphorical, but supposedly accidental expressions of sexual content.

I am obviously not the first scholar to consider Renaissance innuendo. The scholarship on the bawdy in, for example, Shakespeare is vast. I am original, however, in considering these French and English texts side by side in this specific way, especially with metaphorical fields. Many authors have considered obscenity, particularly in French, but their focus is, while not irrelevant, different to mine on comic sexual language and euphemism.<sup>45</sup> Katherine Crawford's *The Sexual Culture of the French Renaissance* (2010), for example, covers the more socially acceptable sides of sexual culture, such as marriage, but does not really consider what might be euphemised. *The Reinvention of Obscenity* (2002) by Joan DeJean focuses on the relationship between obscenity, print culture and censorship in early modern France, making some comparisons to England. For my purposes, this has a tendency to place too much emphasis on censorship as the opposing force of obscenity. Clearly censorship is a very important issue, but it must also be

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<sup>44</sup> These questions are outlined in detail in individual chapters (in addition to the bullet points early on in this section), but a few examples include what comic sexual language is used by, say, French doctors and how does this compare with that of English courtiers? How does the context of the court compare to that of the stage? Are there differences between France and England for different contexts when it comes to, for instance, medicine or theatre? Such questions will be explored throughout this thesis.

<sup>45</sup> Hugh Roberts, Guillaume Peureux and Lise Wajeman (eds), *Obscénités Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 2011); Anne L. Birberick and Russell J. Ganim (eds), *Studies in Early Modern France: Volume 14 – Obscenity* (Charlottesville: Rookwood Press, 2010).

remembered that euphemism can be seen as the other side of the coin of obscenity. This book offers some useful insight but ultimately obscenity is not my most important focus, but rather the veil placed over this. Similarly, Roger Thompson's *Unfit for Modest Ears* from 1979 touches on many important themes for my research, but is slightly too late in terms of time period, focussing on England in the second half of the seventeenth century which is later than the majority of my corpus. Eric Partridge's *Shakespeare's Bawdy* (1968) lays a foundation for scholars of Shakespearean innuendo, breaking bawdiness down into different categories and providing an in-depth glossary of Shakespeare's uses. This does make links to writers such as Rabelais, but is not directly relevant for the writers or euphemism in my corpus.<sup>46</sup>

Likewise, writers like Partridge have analysed the linguistic theories surrounding euphemism, but often do not apply them to this period or these texts. Partridge tends to ignore the early modern period, claiming 'We have not yet returned to such an absence of euphemism as characterised the Restoration and the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean days'.<sup>47</sup> I would disagree with this, and this thesis will demonstrate that there was not in fact a lack of euphemism in Elizabethan and Jacobean society, even if it was transparent. Similarly, De Rocher, when editing Joubert's treatise, claims that 'There seemed to be very few taboo words in sixteenth-century France'.<sup>48</sup> Even if this is true of words, there were certainly taboo subjects. Otherwise the writings of Joubert and Ferrand would not have created the scandal they did. The idea of what is taboo can be relative and subjective, meaning some are offended where others are not. However, while these two doctors claimed

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<sup>46</sup> Katherine Crawford, *The Sexual Culture of the French Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Joan DeJean, *The Reinvention of Obscenity: Sex, Lies, and Tabloids in Early Modern France* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Roger Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears: A Study of Pornographic, Obscene and Bawdy Works Written or Published in England in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979); Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968). See each chapter for particularly useful critical editions (where they exist) of my main texts and see my Bibliography for other examples of texts on similar subjects regarding innuendo. I shall consider specific secondary sources on a case by case basis throughout this thesis which have been helpful to me and consider how I differ from these and others.

<sup>47</sup> Eric Partridge, *Here, There and Everywhere* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), p. 45.

<sup>48</sup> Joubert. *Treatise on Laughter*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. xiv.

they were sufficiently euphemistic, their critics disagreed, meaning their words and/or subjects were at least taboo to some.

This thesis aims to shed new light on these texts and bring together three types of text which may seem disparate but are in fact united in their unexpected and striking use of one particular type of language, comic sexual euphemism. All of the texts in the main chapters help answer the question of why euphemism was used if it was meant to be seen through: comic sexual euphemism was more fun, wittier, and more revealing of several aspects of society than simply stating the obscene. All of the examples I consider demonstrate answers to the significant question of how people found ways to express forbidden sexual subject matter – by using multi-faceted types of comic sexual euphemism. On the one hand, I argue that context is all-important when it comes to the subjectivity of what is taboo in sexual humour. What is permitted for educated males is unacceptable for, say, women reading in the vernacular. Yet, on the other hand, I also argue that, even in different types of text – within and beyond the comedy genre – we find a shared type of language. Comic sexual euphemism, using the same types of imagery, can be found in surprisingly disparate places, despite shifting standards of acceptability. Boundaries are blurred by these three types of text between countries and literary versus non-literary writers, and they all demonstrate why this language makes such important waves throughout Renaissance society.

### 1.3 Methodology

The first and most important of my research methods is a close reading of primary sources. Most of my methods and tools are outlined by Janet Gail Donald in her discussion of skills needed to study English literature, such as

an ability to read critically, noticing patterns of images and recurring ideas or themes. It is also important to be able to synthesise material,

to see how each work connects with other works, and also how they connect to the main themes or ideas.<sup>49</sup>

Indeed, I use critical reading to observe and analyse the strands of comic sexual language and euphemism running through French and English texts from the court, the world of medicine, and theatre. I found it very important to synthesise the texts in the way Donald describes, to create a thesis which makes connections between the texts and to the overall theme of comic sexual language. I also carry out what Philip W. Martin describes as essential for the study of English and History: examining a 'range of genres' in historical contexts and 'methods of understanding', to study 'one rich [historical] period in depth, so as to maximise understanding of [...] different kinds of analysis, as well as comprehending the nature of sources, and historiography'.<sup>50</sup> My methods, therefore, are mainly concerned with primary texts from the Renaissance period. Another very useful early modern source is Randle Cotgrave's French to English dictionary from 1611, which provides an important barometer of sexual vocabulary.<sup>51</sup> However, it is also necessary to examine modern secondary sources in order to determine what previous scholarship existed before me, its level of helpfulness for me, and how I was to be original and differ from existing research. Employing the theory outlined in the Introduction and following chapter was part of this. One of the ways I am original in terms of methodology is to see and categorise use of particular imagery within texts as metaphorical fields, marrying metaphors in a way other scholars may have neglected.

Another important part of my methodology involves strategies of dealing with potential euphemisms. Occasionally, one might come across a comic sexual euphemism, say, from a character within theatre, which it could be suggested was unintended by the speaker. It can be difficult to ascertain if

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<sup>49</sup> Janet Gail Donald, 'The Commons: Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Encounters', in *The University and its Disciplines: Teaching and Learning Within and Beyond Disciplinary Boundaries*, ed. by Carolin Kreber (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 35-49 (p. 43).

<sup>50</sup> Philip W. Martin, 'Key Aspects of Teaching and Learning in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences', in *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Enhancing Academic Practice*, ed. by Heather Fry, Steve Ketteridge and Stephanie Marshall, Third Edition (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 300-322 (p. 308).

<sup>51</sup> Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Aslip, 1611), <<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cotgrave/>> [accessed 18 Oct 2013], n.p.

a comic innuendo is unintended, or if it ever can be. There is a methodological issue of how to distinguish comic sexual euphemism from more innocent words. The word 'part', for example, is often not meant sexually, but sometimes it is, as in a sexual body part or in the phrase 'shameful parts'. In *The Dutch Courtesan*, sometimes characters make declarations with the phrase 'for my part' or similar,<sup>52</sup> often not meant as anything sexual. At other times, however, it is, such as when a man in *Cupid's Whirligig* is accused of having sex with a woman is said to 'take her part'.<sup>53</sup> The danger is that one starts to read innuendo and double-entendre into almost anything. This could seem to appear everywhere, when it might not necessarily be there. Sometimes, this can be a genuine question; in the theatre, sexual humour is to be expected in comedies but this is often not the case for texts associated with the court and the world of medicine. In this way, genre is to be taken into consideration for this issue. Thankfully, it is often very obvious if a sexual joke is being made – however, I also deal with cases when it is not. To tackle this issue, I take jokes on a case by case basis, being careful with assumptions. The contexts within the texts provide helpful clues. There has to be an empirically good reason to conclude it is a double-entendre. This is the criterion I adopt to distinguish between a straightforward use of a phrase or word and one where innuendo is clear.

It can be considered whether there is a difference between a sexual pun and a euphemism. The difference often lies in the intention behind it – sometimes a euphemism is designed so it will not be understood by some, whereas puns are usually deliberately transparent. A comic sexual euphemism, however, can use technically euphemistic language in order to make transparent puns. Sometimes, it can be problematic to determine whether a euphemism is comic or is serious and truly euphemistic. In *The Fawn*, for example, there is the euphemism for female genitalia 'Why, once with child, the very Venus of a lady's entertainment hath lost all pleasure'.<sup>54</sup> Venus can be used in sexual humour, and is by Ferrand, for instance, but in

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<sup>52</sup> John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by David Crane (London: A & C Black, 1997): 1.2.17.

<sup>53</sup> Edward Sharpham, *Cupid's Whirligig* (London: Allde, 1607), sig.G2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> John Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by David A. Blostein (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978): 2.1.141-142.



this case does not appear to be. These types of issue need to be considered when searching for and analysing euphemisms. With this methodology, I shall address first the theory then the practice of comic sexual euphemism.

#### 1.4 Early Modern Theory of the Comic: Joubert's *Traité du ris*

Before I engage with the practice of comic sexual euphemism in the texts of my corpus described above, it is necessary to consider the theory, starting with that of Laurent Joubert. There are, of course, numerous theorists in existence who discuss humour and comedy but the most helpful for my purposes are Joubert, who writes a treatise on laughter, Sigmund Freud, who comments on jokes, and (briefly) Mikhail Bakhtin, who also discusses laughter. In chapter three (section 3.1), Castiglione's writings on jokes and the theories of Mary Douglas are also considered. I have selected only the most useful writers for the purpose of writing about comic sexual euphemism. While many more theories of the comic exist, wider ideas on general humour are sufficiently specific for my area, so only a few writers are salient.<sup>55</sup> Joubert's work is especially apposite because his medical work, the *Erreurs Populaires* [*Popular Errors*] (1578), which is a key part of my corpus, caused offence with its comic sexual language.

The following pages therefore examine how Joubert's *Traité du ris* [*Treatise on Laughter*], the first version of which appears in 1558 in Latin then 1560 in French, relates to the comic sexual euphemism used by himself and others.<sup>56</sup> This text does not have comic sexual euphemism, and the type of comedy surrounding it, as its main focus. The *Traité* does, however, make a few comments which can be applied to the type of comic language I discuss, not least in relation to the *Erreurs Populaires*. He highlights, for example, one cause of laughter as seeing the 'shameful parts' (p. xi).<sup>57</sup> Since his medical writings were often on these very body parts, this serves to link medicine and

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<sup>55</sup> For example, while I briefly consider Bakhtin, there is not room for other examples of commentaries on laughter.

<sup>56</sup> Laurent Joubert, *Traité du ris* (Paris: Chesneverd, 1579. Reprinted 2014); Laurent Joubert, *Treatise on Laughter*, ed. and trans. by Gregory David De Rocher (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1980), p. xi. Unless otherwise stated, all Joubert quotations in French and English in this section are from these editions respectively.

<sup>57</sup> Like the phrase 'chaste eyes', 'shameful parts' is a cliché of the period and does not reflect my personal opinion.

comedy. In this treatise he makes dubious claims as in his medical work, such as when he claims to say nothing of what stirs in the shameful parts (p. 66). This is demonstrably not the case. He also points out the humour in gossiping about wives' infidelity, a topic explored with comic sexual language by numerous writers, including several that I study: most notably, Sir John Harington, Pierre de Brantôme, and Thomas Middleton.

For Joubert, laughable speech often plays with language, puns being an example. He argues the number of forms wordplay can take is almost infinite, including the 'lascif' and 'outrageus' (p. 30) ['lascivious/outrageous'] (p. xi). This thesis demonstrates this type of wordplay across different types of text. Joubert believes ambiguous speech causes laughter, including the 'impudique' (p. 32) ['lewd'] (p. 25), 'deshonetes, lascifs, facecieus, outrageus [...] & indisces' as well as 'emphase [...] que mettent les Rhetoricians' (pp. 30-31) ['disgraceful, lascivious, facetious, outrageous [...] and indiscreet' as well as 'emphasis [...] put forth by the rhetoricians'] (p. 24).<sup>58</sup> Euphemism can sometimes be the kind of ambiguous speech Joubert is referring to, because it can be unclear which of the multiple levels of meaning (innocent or comic and sexual) is prevalent. This is a useful passage, since the ambiguous language which causes laughter includes the indiscreet. This contrasts with Quintilian, for whom such indiscretion is always unacceptable. Many contemporaneous readers of the humorous language in the *Erreurs Populaires* found it to be lewd and disgraceful, which chapter four will discuss further with examples. Ambiguity also plays a part in where the line of acceptability is drawn by different members of early modern society.<sup>59</sup> The ambiguity arises with the problem of interpretation: when obscenity is in the eye of the beholder.

Joubert's most significant comment on laughter for my purposes is:

Ce que nous voyons de laid, difforme, des-honneste, indessant, mal-seant, & peu convenable, excite an nous le ris, pourveu que nous n'an soyons meus à decouvrir les parties honteuses, les quelles par nature,

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<sup>58</sup> See chapter four for more.

<sup>59</sup> See chapter three section 3.1 for Castiglione's comments on the sexual humour created by ambiguous words.

ou publique honnesteté nous sommes coutumiers de cacher, pour ce qu'il est laid, toutes fois indigne de pitié, incite les voyans à rire. (p. 16)  
[What we see that is ugly, deformed, improper, indecent, unfitting, and indecorous excited laughter in us, provided we are not moved to compassion. Example: if perchance one uncovers the shameful parts which by nature or public decency we are accustomed to keeping hidden, since this is ugly yet unworthy of pity, it moves the onlookers to laughter.] (p. 20)

Joubert states that when laughter is provoked by ugliness without compassion, it has sadness within it (pp. 73-74). Following his theory, perhaps those who were offended by his medical chapter could not laugh as they could not overcome the sadness roused by the discussion of ugly and shameful parts. For them, perhaps the ugliness was too excessive.<sup>60</sup> Joubert's point that these cause laughter but only if they do not go so far as to provoke compassion is valid – today we still stop laughing at something if we feel sorry for it. Castiglione also argues that we should stop laughing when the subject of the joke is so wretched as to excite compassion.<sup>61</sup> Joubert's points are borne out by many comic sexual euphemisms: sex is an awkward subject to talk about, which is why it is often pushed into the realm of euphemising – but this is also why it has so much potential for comedy. This passage confirms Joubert's belief that catching sight of the so-called shameful parts is an occasion for laughter. Joubert here demonstrates how he is part of the debate over what is natural when it comes to genitalia, found in Cicero and others, by commenting that the shameful parts are normally kept hidden by nature or public decency.<sup>62</sup> This theory outlined above may explain why his *Erreurs Populaires* chapter is humorous. He goes on to say how we would not laugh at more mundane body parts because they are not ugly or indecent (pp. 16-18), so if his outrageous chapter was on the chest, arms, or feet (p. 20) it would not have been funny or, indeed, scandalous. Using the *Traité* as

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<sup>60</sup> I shall return to the importance of laughter caused by the ugly or improper for Freud (section 1.5) and again for Castiglione (section 3.1).

<sup>61</sup> Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. and ed. by George Bull (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 156.

<sup>62</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Obligations*, ed. by P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 43-44.

evidence, we can hypothesise that Joubert knew his chapter would cause both laughter and offence.

According to Joubert, 'Que toute derision convienne à chose deshonnete, il n'an faut point de preuve: on l'antand assés, si on y prand garde' (p. 34) ['That all derision corresponds to something indecent is unnecessary to prove: it is heard often enough if one only listens'] (p. 25). Objects of laughter, claims Joubert, are often 'indessante, laide & sotté' (p. 39) ['indecent', 'ugly and ridiculous'] (p. 27). Gregory David De Rocher argues<sup>63</sup> that Joubert is influenced by Castiglione when he asks 'Mais dequoy nous meuvent à rire ces moqueries, rancoutres, mots piques, & lardons? Non d'autre chose, que de certaine laideur ou difformité, indigne de pitie' (p. 32) ['But in what way do these mockeries, puns, stinging words, and gibes make us laugh? Not in any way other than through a certain ugliness or deformity, unworthy of pity'] (pp. 24-25).<sup>64</sup> For many readers of Joubert's chapter in the *Erreurs Populaires*, whether they are scandalised or amused by the humour, perhaps the supposed shameful parts belonged to this group of ugliness and deformity. Certainly they are improper, which for Joubert would be part of what makes them a source of comedy.

Joubert comments further on laughter, jokes, and deformity:

Donques, les propos ridicules sont petites subtilités, ralheries, rancontres, aequivoques, & samblables qu'on dit an recitant, ou an reprenant autruy, sans toucher affaire d'importance, ne à l'honneur. Tous ont quelque difformité: car nous estimons laid d'etre moqués, et d'avoir fait ou dit chose reprehensible. (p.33)

[Laughable remarks, therefore, are little subtleties, railleries, puns, equivocal expressions and similar things said in recounting or replying to another, without touching on things of importance or honour. All have some sort of deformity: for we find it unseemly to be mocked, and to have said or done something reprehensible.] (p. 25)

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<sup>63</sup> Joubert. *Treatise on Laughter*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 136.

<sup>64</sup> Chapter three section 3.1 outlines Randle Cotgrave's definitions of French terms like *piques*, *railleries*, and *moquerie*, also used in these pages by Joubert, to tease out the implications of such vocabulary associated with innuendo. Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Aslip, 1611), <<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cotgrave/>> [accessed 18 Oct 2013], n.p.

The idea of honour in this context is important, considering Joubert got into trouble for endangering the honour of the dedicatee of the first edition of the *Erreurs Populaires*, Marguerite de Valois, as well as his own professional honour as a doctor. He claims Cicero as the authority on this, ascribing to the Roman orator the view that 'la risée procede de certaine vilanie ou difformité, comme y ayant siege de sorte qu'il n'y ha pas grande differance du Ris, à la moquerie' (p. 34) ['laughter springs from a certain ugliness or deformity as though it were its source, in such a way that there is not much difference between laughter and mockery'] (p. 25). Here Joubert uses key terms for the type of language this thesis explores, referring to puns and equivocalness. Mocking can be part of the humour which sexual euphemism engages in, such as the gossip in chapter three. This gossip participates in an honour culture where shame is brought on those who act in a way that is seen as sexually inappropriate, or those who joke about sexual topics in a way that is also seen as inappropriate. Such an honour culture affected both men and women. Women were seen as the legal property of their husbands meaning that, if their honour is tainted, so is that of the men around them. Men could also, of course, be dishonoured by their own actions. This passage also has mocking of the rhetorical rules not to partake in innuendo by flouting such instruction.

Joubert also discusses the humours behind shame (among other emotions). According to Joubert, 'vereconde' ['verecund shame'] is 'naturel' (p. 52) ['natural'] (p. 31). He explains how:

Lors an premier lieu, les esprits recourent au dedans puis soudain ils reviennent au dehors ear s'ils ne retournoient, ce seroit puremant crainte & non-pas honte. La honte ou vergongne se fait tout à coup, la vertu animale n'attendant aucun mal, comme dit Galen: ains elle avient de certaine mollesse & crainte naturelle, quand on ne peut andurer d'aetre au-pres d'une personne pl' digne, ains on an voudroit abstenir, & desire (si on pouvoit) de s'an retirer incontinent. Parquoy comme refuyant tant seulemant, laditte vertu se retire au dedans, sans aucune refrigeracion. [...] Le mouvemant du Ris n'ët guieres dissamblable à

ceus-là [...] Donques ces quatre passions ont preque samblable analogie ou proporcion au pou: savoir et, le Ris, la honte, le courous & la peur [...] Duquel ils different autremant an plusieurs choses, & mememant an cecy [...] quelques uns sont mors de vergongne, comme l'on dit: mais du Ris, sort peu de jans. (pp. 321-324)

[And so first the humours rush inward, then suddenly they turn outwards again, for if they did not it would be purely fear and not shame. Shame or verecund feelings happen all of a sudden when animal virtue does not expect something awful, as Galen says, and come about because of a certain weakness and natural fear when one cannot endure being next to a more dignified person, but would like to be absent, and desires (if possible) to withdraw immediately. And so, as if fleeing a bit, the said virtue retires within without any cooling. [...] The movement of laughter is scarcely dissimilar to these [...] Thus these four emotions have a similar analogy or proportion to the pulse, namely, laughter, shame, anger, and fear [...] they also differ in several things, and especially in this: [...] some have died of shame, as they say; but of laughter, very few people.] (pp. 123-124)

This is borne out by the so-called shameful parts. If laughter and shame are connected in this way and operate together, where shame counteracts laughter, this provides a reason why much comedy is about the shameful. Parts of life which may be deemed shameful, like sexual topics, can be addressed through the realm of comedy. Renaissance authors may apparently hide such subjects away, the better to highlight them with laughter. The reaction to a discussion such as Joubert's about the shameful parts could be shame or laughter, which for Joubert seem to be two sides of the same coin. I will return to shame and laughter with Freud.

To conclude this section on Joubert, he believes some laughter is 'debordé et immodeste' (p. 213) ['excessive and immodest'] (p. 88), although he does not give specific instances of when this would occur. Joubert obviously believes laughter is wonderful and important, yet also talks of 'lascive risée' (p. 117) ['lascivious laughter'] (p. 56) and points out the relationship of laughter in general to shame, ugliness, and deformity. The

relationship between laughter and shame is part of why comic sexual language is not merely vulgar but part of what it is fundamentally to be human.

### 1.5 Modern Theory of the Comic: Freud's *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*

Freud's writing on jokes and how they relate to the unconscious from 1905 touches on some important issues for this thesis.<sup>65</sup> He is fitting to analyse after Joubert since in some ways Freud's views are similar to those in the *Traité du ris*. According to *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, 'The comic is concerned with the ugly in one of its manifestations' (p. 40). He quotes Kuno Fischer in stating that some jokes 'bring forward something that is concealed and hidden' (p. 44) and that:

If it (what is ugly) is concealed, it must be uncovered in the light of the comic way of looking at things; if it is noticed only a little or scarcely at all, it must be brought forward and made obvious, so that it lies clear and open to the light of day. (p. 40)

Freud argues this 'has more to do with the nature of jokes than with their being part of the comic' (p. 44). This has similarities to Joubert's argument. Freud is not arguing that the genitalia are the ugliness in the way Joubert's *Traité* does. However, they both give ugliness a significant role when it comes to laughter, jokes, and the comic.<sup>66</sup> These ideas are significant for comic sexual euphemism since it is often about euphemising the shameful or ugly.

Freud points out that 'A favourite definition of joking has long been the ability to find similarity between dissimilar things – that is, hidden similarities' (p. 41). Donald Perret agrees, highlighting how 'In studies on laughter from Cicero to Freud and Bergson there is general agreement that a primary

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<sup>65</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all Freud quotations in this section are from Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, ed. by James Strachey (Middlesex: Penguin, 1986).

<sup>66</sup> In this way Freud can be linked to Castiglione's comments on laughter and deformity and some of Mary Douglas' arguments on twisting the form of beauty in jokes. See chapter three section 3.1 for more on this; Mary Douglas, 'Jokes', in Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings: Selected Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 146-164.

source of laughter is the collision of two normally separate and independent series of associations', what the latter calls *interférence des séries*.<sup>67</sup> Joking, for Freud, can also be defined as 'the ability to bind into a unity, with surprising rapidity, several ideas which are in fact alien to one another both in their internal content and in the nexus to which they belong' (p. 41). This is how the euphemistic metaphorical fields I examine behave. They find the joke in sex being represented by something that at first glance is dissimilar – whether it be money, games, meat, dancing, war, language, riding, or clothing.<sup>68</sup> Castiglione argues a similar point that we laugh at things which do not accord with each other.<sup>69</sup> Freud believes there can be comic effect when we depart from normal linguistic usage (p. 43), which many comic sexual euphemisms do with their linguistic play. In the metaphorical field of, for example, sex and meat – such as the 'mutton' imagery mentioned earlier – normal linguistic usage of words for meat are transferred to female bodies, rather than those of dead animals.

He also discusses how jokes often use the same word in two different ways (p. 64). He is of the opinion that double meaning 'arising from the *literal* and *metaphorical* meanings of a word' is 'one of the most fertile sources for the technique of jokes' (p. 70). This is how comic sexual euphemisms behave – the euphemistic word often retains some of its original meaning while being given a new obscene one. Freud, like Erasmus in his talk of pejoration,<sup>70</sup> also talks of words losing their original meanings (p. 68). Freud thus touches on major facets of comic sexual euphemism which concerned early modern thinkers focussed on.

Freud comments further on words having multiple meanings in jokes. He has several categories of jokes, the most important for this thesis being that of 'Double meaning', including 'meaning as a name and as a thing',

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<sup>67</sup> Donald Perret, *Old Comedy in the French Renaissance 1576-1620* (Geneva: Droz, 1992), p. 97.

<sup>68</sup> See chapter five, such as section 5.15, for examples which combine some of these metaphorical fields.

<sup>69</sup> Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. and ed. by George Bull (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 184.

<sup>70</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Michael J. Heath in John W. O'Malley and Louis A. Perraud (eds). *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 203-438 (p. 428); Desiderius Erasmus, *On Copia of Words and Ideas*, ed. and trans. by Donald B. King and H. David Rix (Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2012), pp. 22-23. See the following chapter section 2.4.



'metaphorical and literal meanings', 'double meaning proper (play upon words)', 'double-entendre', and 'double meaning with an allusion' (pp. 76-77). These double meanings and double-entendres are common in Renaissance texts, such as the use of *equivocé*.<sup>71</sup> He discusses how double meaning can involve sexual meaning (as well as non-sexual). He claims double-entendre or '*Zweideutigkeit*' in German can have two meanings, not equally prominent, with one lying behind the other. For Freud, the sexual meaning is sometimes as usual and familiar as the non-sexual yet is sometimes 'covered and hidden and might even escape the notice of an unsuspecting person altogether'. Sometimes 'no attempt is made at thus concealing the sexual meaning'; at other times it 'sounds like a piece of obscenity and hardly gives the impression of joke' (pp. 75-76). Regarding Renaissance comic sexual euphemism, it is sometimes the case that the sexual meaning of a double-entendre is more obvious than the apparent clean meaning. The phrase 'To keep their standings in another's gate', an example from Harington's translation of Ariosto, brings to mind the ruder meaning long before the possibility of a literal gate.<sup>72</sup> Other times, the sexual meaning is rather more elaborate and hidden. An example of this is the painter in *Wit of a Woman*. The manner he speaks in is often undoubtedly filthy but it can be problematic to determine exactly why.<sup>73</sup> This is rare for the examples featured in this thesis, of which my analysis examines how they are comically sexual. Freud applies this argument to a sexual joke, which he also places under the category of double-entendre (p. 75).<sup>74</sup> In euphemisms, one word can express two things in this way, such as in Renaissance jokes about riding and sex. Harington tells, for example, of a master who is cuckolded by a servant, who 'now was riding on his master's saddle'.<sup>75</sup> 'Saddle' here has a literal meaning and a sexual one. This is true of most or all comic sexual euphemisms.

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<sup>71</sup> See section 2.1.

<sup>72</sup> Lodovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso in English*, trans. by John Harington (London: Field, 1591), XXVIII.49. This particular phrase comes specifically from Harington, not Ariosto. See section 3.3 for more.

<sup>73</sup> See chapter five section 5.3.

<sup>74</sup> Chapter five section 5.16 elaborates on this sexual joke.

<sup>75</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Harington (1591), XXVIII.21. This is another phrase which comes specifically from Harington; see section 3.3.

Freud has a further method for dividing jokes and so on into categories. He distinguishes between innocent jokes and jokes with a purpose, otherwise called tendentious jokes (p. 133). Comic sexual euphemism falls into the latter category. Like obscenity, the perception of jokes can be in the eye of the beholder. He states that you can be ashamed at laughing at something which you feel is fine to laugh at if it is in the context of the theatre (p. 283). This is easily applied to Renaissance theatre, but also other texts. In Joubert's anatomy theatre, he made jokes which presumably his students laughed at readily enough.<sup>76</sup> When similar humour was transferred to his vernacular writing, there was potentially shame attached to laughing at them, especially when projected onto women readers.

Freud argues that no sexual joke or innuendo is non-tendentious or without purpose. This coheres to the argument of this thesis: almost always, a joke has a wider meaning. Freud further divides tendentious jokes into types.

Where a joke is not an aim in itself – that is, where it is not an innocent one – there are only two purposes that it may serve [...] It is either a *hostile* one (serving the purpose of aggressiveness, satire, or defence) or an *obscene* joke (serving the purpose of exposure). (p. 140)

I would argue a joke can be both hostile and obscene. Almost any of the multiple jokes about women being whores, as seen especially in Renaissance theatre, can be said to be both. The metaphorical field of sex and war similarly transfers the aggression of battle to the subject of sex, such as in *The Fawn* where a character is said to be 'maimed or dismembered in love'.<sup>77</sup> This transforms what in other circumstances could be romantic into something violent and aggressive.

In discussing obscene and exposing jokes, Freud talks of smut, which he calls 'the intentional bringing into prominence of sexual facts and relations

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<sup>76</sup> See section 4.1.

<sup>77</sup> John Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by David A. Blostein (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978): 5.1.208.

by speech' (p. 140).<sup>78</sup> He distinguishes between smut and wittier jokes of exposure, claiming that someone who enjoys the former will not enjoy the latter since it requires more intelligence or education (p. 203). By this distinction, comic sexual euphemism tends to be wittier, cleverer, and more well-thought-out than mere smut. However, one can draw an operational distinction between different grades or degrees or levels of comic sexual euphemism, with elaborate double-entendres on the one hand and more obviously smutty terms such as 'hole' on the other hand. Freud also argues that smut is directed to a particular person who sexually excites the speaker of smut and who is expected to be sexually excited as a result, although they may react with shame or embarrassment instead. This is similar to Joubert's belief that shame counteracts laughter.

Smut, states Freud, 'is thus originally directed towards women and may be equated with attempts at seduction' (p. 140). Again, by this definition of smut, comic sexual euphemism may not be very smutty, since in these texts it reaches a wider audience than just one-on-one. Nevertheless, texts using comic sexual euphemism can relay one-on-one situations to bigger audiences, as Brantôme does. Comic sexual euphemism can also cast the female audience member or reader into the role of the object of smut. Freud suggests smut is often between men, with a woman caught in the middle. He also comments on the aggression involved in the telling of smut. If, he argues, one man or a group of men tell or listen to smut, they imagine the original smutty situation, usually hidden by social inhibitions. When a man laughs at thus smut, he 'is laughing as though he were the spectator of an act of sexual aggression' (pp. 140-141). The sexual material of smut can thus include traits peculiar to each sex in some cases, common to both sexes in other cases, and to which, for Freud, the feeling of shame extends (p. 141). This can be applied to Renaissance texts. For instance, in Brantôme's gossip, King Francis is said to be not so strict in his concern for women that he does not relish good stories about them, the paradox of protecting but defaming women

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<sup>78</sup> Freud admits this definition is not particularly helpful, explaining how an anatomy lecture on the sexual organs and procreation 'need not have a single point of contact with smut' (p. 140). Joubert could have used smut in his lectures, despite it not being necessary.

being part of the joke.<sup>79</sup> Harington's text also delights in gossiping about the sexual transgressions of women.<sup>80</sup> There is much potential for shame here, from that of the women and those who laugh at hearing about them. Ruining their sexual reputation can be a kind of act of sexual aggression.

It could be asked what is being exposed according to Freud in obscene and exposing jokes. This question ties into a major issue for comic sexual euphemisms, namely the way they can reveal more than they conceal. Freud argues that such obscene words compel the hearer to imagine the body parts or procedures they refer to and that smut is motivated by the desire to see the sexual exposed (p. 141). This is indeed part of the perceived danger of sexual jokes in the Renaissance period – that they will force the hearer to think impure thoughts. Comic sexual euphemism was thought in the Renaissance to make a negative impression upon those who hear it, especially if they are perceived as vulnerable. Chapter three will explore how a sexual joke about someone can get the person who tells it, the person who is the subject of the joke, and anyone who hears it into trouble. For Freud, smut or exposure and comedy can be linked and 'it is the task of jokes to take the place of smut and so once more to open access to a lost source of comic pleasure' (p. 286). This comic pleasure, in Renaissance times, could also be a source of mischief and problems.

Freud then expands this exposure (what is being exposed in obscene and exposing jokes) to human libido in general, arguing that this type of language is a substitute for an earlier and more primitive desire to touch sexual parts and that talking and looking have replaced touching (pp. 141-142). Looking and listening play, of course, vital roles in the dramatic and anatomy theatres. By this logic, some of the sexual events portrayed onstage and sexual body parts discussed in anatomy lectures are substitutes for lascivious touching. The suggestion is that obscene jokes may be expressions of our libido, which may explain why they can be seen as dangerous. Euphemism can be an attempt to be more modest, or, if it is meant to be seen

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<sup>79</sup> Seigneur de Brantôme, *Les Dames galantes*, ed. by Paul Morand (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), p. 452.

<sup>80</sup> See section 3.3 for both how Harington was influenced by the original of the text he was translating, and how he put his own spin on the material.

through, to partake in this expression. The concept of negative and positive politeness influences this issue, which is analysed further in section 1.7.

All of Freud's discussion of smut versus exposure is part of the analysis of tendentious jokes. He outlines the number of people needed for a tendentious joke to work:

Generally speaking, a tendentious joke calls for three people: in addition to the one who makes the jokes, there must be a second who is taken as the object of the hostile or sexual aggressiveness, and a third in whom the joke's aim of producing pleasure is fulfilled [...] it is not the person who makes the joke who laughs at it and therefore enjoys its pleasurable effect, but the inactive listener. In the case of smut the three people are in the same relation [...] none of the formal requirements which characterise jokes are made of the smut itself. The uttering of an undisguised indecency gives the first person enjoyment and makes the third person laugh. (pp. 143-144)

We have here a triangulation of the auditor or speaker, the subject of the joke, and the audience. There is often gender specificity in Renaissance jokes of this kind, where the subject is female and the others male. The idea of the listener of the joke being important will be particularly related to chapter three. Freud continues,

Only when we rise to a society of a more refined education do the formal conditions for jokes play a part. The smut becomes a joke and is only tolerated when it has the character of a joke. [...] Here there is allusion or] replacement by something small, something remotely connected, which the hearer reconstructs in his imagination into a complete and straightforward obscenity. The greater the discrepancy between what is given directly in the form of smut and what it necessarily calls up in the hearer, the more refined becomes the joke and the higher, too, it may venture to climb into good society [...] smut which has the characteristic of a joke has at its disposal, apart from

allusion, whether coarse or refined, all the other methods of verbal and conceptual jokes. (pp. 143-144)

He is arguing that double-entendres need to be ever more elaborate to succeed in higher social circles. In the Renaissance, some sexual jokes required a certain level of education to fully appreciate so the higher classes may have engaged in the more sophisticated type of sexual humour.<sup>81</sup> As discussed above, the point about the hearer reconstructing obscenity in his mind is borne out by comic sexual euphemism, where something socially unacceptable (like scandalous sex) can be replaced by something acceptable (such as, for instance, games). When the euphemism fails to veil the obscene, it becomes more of a complete obscenity in the way Freud describes so almost the opposite of a 'normal' (not comic and sexual) euphemism. Brantôme talks, for example, of a woman having sex in terms of her seeing the enemy on the field and fighting him until dawn.<sup>82</sup> This is fairly obvious in meaning but is still called a euphemism because it employs non-literal terms in an ostensible acknowledgement of being euphemistic.

Freud, therefore, breaks down the concept of jokes into who hears and who tells them (p. 209). This can be applied to comic sexual euphemism, which typically needs another person or an audience to participate in a situation where the sexual content is heavily implied but not said outright. If the euphemism is of the more polite kind, this also generally involves other people in front of whom you need to be polite, such as chaste women. Some of the comparisons Freud discusses also have similarities to euphemism that is comic and sexual. He mentions cases of serious and unfamiliar things being compared to the commonplace and inferior (p. 273). This is not exactly the same as, but can be likened to, examples of Renaissance euphemism. The metaphorical fields are instances of this. More specifically, the first paragraph of this Introduction demonstrates how Ferrand uses imagery which joins Venus with a pigsty so mixes a goddess with the commonplace.

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<sup>81</sup> See chapter three section 3.1 for Castiglione on people of high status discussing sexual jokes.

<sup>82</sup> Brantôme, *Les Dames galantes*, ed. by Morand, p. 32. See chapter three section 3.2.

As well as obscenity being subjective, depending on whom the hearer is, Freud argues that it also relies on how the material is presented:

When we laugh at a refined obscene joke, we are laughing at the same thing that makes a peasant laugh at a coarse piece of smut. In both cases the pleasure springs from the same source. We, however, could never bring ourselves to laugh at the coarse smut; we should feel ashamed or it would seem to us disgusting. We can only laugh when a joke has come to our help. (p. 145)

Freud is right that there can be different levels of sophistication when it comes to sexual humour. An intelligent use of imagery in comic sexual euphemism can contrast to simple smut. The use of a riding metaphor, for example, when discussing sex, may seem crude but has wider connotations of social commentary on the lower status of women: albeit, in an often unpleasant manner for modern readers, since this can amount to the sexual aggression Freud discusses.

According to Freud, 'The pleasure in the case of a tendentious joke arises from a purpose being satisfied whose satisfaction would otherwise not have taken place' (p. 165). Comic sexual euphemism serves a purpose in this way, whether it be to entertain or reveal a deeper aspect of society such as inequality or shame. The purpose of tendentious jokes is, Freud argues, to:

make possible the satisfaction of an instinct (whether lustful or hostile) in the face of an obstacle that stands in its way. They circumvent this obstacle and in that way draw pleasure from a source which the obstacle had made inaccessible. The obstacle standing in the way is in reality nothing other than women's incapacity to tolerate undisguised sexuality, an incapacity correspondingly increased with a rise in the educational and social level. (pp. 144-145)

What Freud says about obstacles applies to the Renaissance in some ways, since, if there were no obstacles to sexual material, early modern writers would not need types of euphemism. The idea of sexuality being undisguised

is particularly significant when it comes to the early modern attitude to protecting chaste women from the obscene. It is also another side to male power: men exercise their power, supposedly to protect women, who are therefore cast as being vulnerable. Similarly, Freud's idea of repression can be applied to Renaissance innuendo, which is repression of the obscene in action:

The woman who is thought of as having been present in the initial situation is afterwards retained as though she were still present, or in her absence her influence still has an intimidating effect on the men. We can observe how men of a higher class are at once induced, when they are in the company of girls of an inferior class, to reduce their smutty jokes to the level of simple smut. The power which makes it difficult or impossible for women, and to a lesser degree for men as well, to enjoy undisguised obscenity is termed by us "repression". (pp. 144-145)

Laughing at sexual jokes relieves people slightly of this repression. Like Joubert, Freud suggests that shame and laughter operate in the same way – if shame counteracts laughter, then laughter could counteract shame. Tendentious jokes 'are able to release pleasure even from sources that have undergone repression' (p. 185). They overcome both external obstacles and internal inhibitions or repressions, and liberate pleasure, as Freud puts it, 'more clearly than any other of the developmental stages of jokes' (p. 185). Freud argues they assist their purpose either with impulses kept suppressed or by putting themselves entirely 'at the service of suppressed purposes' (p. 185). Many comic sexual euphemisms serve to express repressed feelings and desire. This is why a layer of euphemism and a layer of comedy are used, to introduce distance between what is expressed. This distance also brings more freedom to discuss the unspeakable.

Another of the ways Freud's writing has an impact on issues of euphemism is in the points he makes about separate things being brought together (see above) – alien ideas joined in the same word (p. 168). This can be applied to the metaphorical fields I highlight being used by early modern



authors, such as sex being represented by war. However, he also makes a point about jokes bringing together similar concepts: 'If representation by the opposite is one of the technical methods of jokes, we can expect that jokes may also make use of its contrary – representation by something *similar* or *akin*' (p. 113), correlated or connected (p. 114). This can also be true of metaphorical fields, otherwise the given metaphor would not work. I said above that, at first glance, they do not seem to have much in common with what they represent. At second glance, however, or at a deeper level, they do have shared characteristics. Like games, for example, sex has metaphorical rules, players, and goals. Both eating meat and having sex involve enjoying bodies. Euphemism can seem childish at times, but this linguistic similarity is how it can be so rich and multi-layered at others.

#### 1.6 Modern Theory of the Comic: Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World*

There is not room here for an in-depth discussion of Mikhail Bakhtin.<sup>83</sup> However, one point he makes in his text *Rabelais and His World* (first written in 1965), regarding laughter in the Renaissance, is worthy of some attention. He argues that:

The Renaissance conception of Laughter can be roughly described as follows: Laughter has a deep philosophical meaning, it is one of the essential forces of the truth concerning the world as a whole, concerning history and man; it is a peculiar point of view relative to the world; the world is seen anew, no less (and perhaps more) profoundly than when seen from the serious stand-point. Therefore, laughter is just as admissible in great literature, posing universal problems, as seriousness. Certain essential aspects of the world are accessible only to laughter. (p. 66)

Since sexual topics are often taboo, they are arguably one of these essential aspects which require laughter to access. He contrasts this attitude with that

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<sup>83</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). Unless otherwise stated, all Bakhtin quotations in this section are from this edition.

of the seventeenth century. By making this distinction he departs from the usual definition of the Renaissance period (and certainly the one this thesis follows), which includes at least the beginning of the seventeenth century. For Bakhtin, on the other hand, the following contrast appears:

The attitude toward laughter of the seventeenth century and of the years that followed can be characterised thus. Laughter is not a universal, philosophical form. It can refer only to individual and individually typical phenomena of social life. That which is important and essential cannot be comical. Neither can history and persons representing it – kings, generals, heroes – be shown in a comic aspect. The sphere of the comic is narrow and specific (private and social vices); the essential truth about the world and about men cannot be told in the Language of Laughter. Therefore, the place of laughter in literature belongs only to the low genres, showing the life of private individuals and the inferior social levels. Laughter is a light amusement or a form of salutary social punishment of corrupt and low persons. The Renaissance expressed its attitude toward laughter in the very practice of literary creation and appreciation. (p. 67)

For Bakhtin, therefore, the Renaissance is a turning point for the meaning of laughter. As Richard M. Berrong points out, Bakhtin believed that ‘the one thing that most clearly divided men into two distinct cultures was their attitude towards laughter’.<sup>84</sup> Bakhtin argues that ‘for the Renaissance [...] the characteristic trait of laughter was precisely the recognition of its positive, regenerating, creative meaning’ (p. 71). After the Renaissance, in contrast, Bakhtin asserts that this attitude was lost. John Lippett believes that Bakhtin’s concern is to attempt to reclaim this philosophical importance, now obscured, of laughter.<sup>85</sup> This importance is rooted in the way that, as Kobena Mercer highlights, ‘laughter’s relationship to seriousness is one of antagonistic

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<sup>84</sup> Richard M. Berrong, *Rabelais and Bakhtin: Popular Culture in Gargantua and Pantagruel* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 10.

<sup>85</sup> John Lippett, ‘Laughter: A Tool in Moral Perfectionism?’, in *Nietzsche’s Futures*, ed. by John Lippett (London: MacMillan Press, 1999), pp. 99-126 (p. 108).

interdependence rather than logical incompatibility'.<sup>86</sup> One of the reasons Bakhtin takes the side of the Renaissance attitude is his belief that fear is 'defeated by laughter' (p. 41).<sup>87</sup> Bakhtin's argument reinforces my point, made at the beginning of this thesis, that the topics of humour I discuss are not merely vulgar, crude, and unimportant. On the contrary, they are highly significant and represent profound aspects of society. According to Bakhtin, Renaissance society also believed this at the time when it comes to laughter.

### 1.7 Modern Linguistic Theory

Modern theory is also helpful for insight into the linguistic natures of euphemism. A major example of this is the concept of negative and positive politeness: negative politeness is the avoidance of taboos and positive is the addressing of taboos. Comic sexual euphemism arguably appears to be negative but is actually positive, as thinkers like Michel de Montaigne have pointed out, especially if the action of euphemising draws more attention to the taboo than simply ignoring it altogether. Negative politeness is what Montaigne refers to (though, of course, not using this terminology) when he talks of the exclusion of 'genital activities' from polite conversation.<sup>88</sup> Kerry L. Plaff, Raymond W. Gibbs, and Michael D. Johnson's study into X-phemism and how people associate euphemism in different contexts is also very significant. There are social consequences of X-phemism for Joubert, Ferrand, Harington, and many others in my corpus. This section considers some late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century linguistics.

Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson's *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (1987) discusses positive and negative politeness.<sup>89</sup> Positive politeness often occurs in small groups or communities, such as the college students of the experiments carried out by Plaff, Gibbs,

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<sup>86</sup> Kobena Mercer, 'Carnavalesque and Grotesque: What Bakhtin's Laughter tells us about Art and Culture', in *No Laughing Matter: Visual Humour in Ideas of Race, Nationality, and Ethnicity*, ed. by Angela Rosenthal, David Bindman and Adrian W.B. Randolph (Dartmouth: Dartmouth College Press, 2016), pp. 1-22 (p. 4).

<sup>87</sup> Mercer discusses how laughter matters for Bakhtin because it counteracts fear; Mercer, 'Carnavalesque and Grotesque', p. 5.

<sup>88</sup> See the following chapter section 2.4.

<sup>89</sup> Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

and Johnson.<sup>90</sup> Negative politeness, on the other hand, is the dominant approach in wider society. These concepts are richly suggestive for the study of early modern sexual humour. The authors of *Politeness* have ‘three main strategies of politeness, “positive politeness” (roughly, the expression of solidarity), “negative politeness” (roughly, the expression of restraint) and “off-record (politeness)” (roughly, the avoidance of unequivocal impositions)’.<sup>91</sup> The idea of comic sexual euphemism acting in this way, to create in-groups who are allowed to hear this type of humour, is important for this thesis. Like Freud, Brown and Levinson believe these types of language reveal different social statuses. Women, for example, are put on a different level to men by this humour in Renaissance texts – a level where they can be objects of scandal or vulnerable creatures to be protected from such topics.

When Brown and Levinson mention euphemism it is quite often in the ‘off-record politeness’ section of the book, though it also appears implicitly as positive politeness. As well as politeness, these linguists analyse the nature of ellipses, which (although they do not consider this) euphemisms can take the form of – leaving a blank to be filled in by the reader.<sup>92</sup> They do not consider how euphemisms can fail to be euphemistic. In fact, they state that most euphemisms ‘simply avoid confrontation with taboo topics’, suggesting they belong to the category of negative politeness.<sup>93</sup> However, the fact that ellipses are positive, and euphemism can come in the form of ellipses, can lead to the conclusion that they too are positive.

Brown and Levinson discuss the idea of euphemisms influencing the impression people make of themselves, both on others and on themselves.<sup>94</sup> Partridge also touches on this issue, arguing that:

euphemism is employed not to hide the truth or the fact or the thing (silence is best for that) but merely to minimise the painful impression

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<sup>90</sup> Kerry L. Plaff, Raymond W. Gibbs and Michael D. Johnson, ‘Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism’, *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 18 (1997), 59-83 (p. 60). See below for more.

<sup>91</sup> Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, p. 2.

<sup>92</sup> Erasmus also indicates this. An ellipse can be considered as silence, which the Conclusion discusses; Desiderius Erasmus, *On Copia of Words and Ideas*, ed. and trans. by Donald B. King and H. David Rix (Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2012), p. 23.

<sup>93</sup> Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, p. 177.

<sup>94</sup> Chapter three is full of comic sexual euphemism’s effect on social status and reputation.

on the listener or the unpleasant results for the speaker [...] related to this [...] is the speaker's desire to make a favourable impression.<sup>95</sup>

How much silence is actually best for hiding the truth will be discussed in the Conclusion. The main point here made by Partridge links to the fact that, as with Castiglione's jokes, partaking in euphemism involves a complex interaction between a speaker or writer and listener or reader. Brown and Levinson, regarding this issue of the impressions people make of themselves, claim 'Positive politeness is oriented toward [a person's] positive self-image that he claims for himself [...] Negative politeness, on the other hand, is oriented mainly toward partially satisfying (redressing) [...] the person's] basic want to maintain claims of territory and self-determination'.<sup>96</sup> It is clear that the role played by both negative and positive politeness in society is a significant one, for perception of self and others.

Sometimes Brown and Levinson address euphemisms for taboo topics more directly, stating how they can be 'derived from implicatures' which become 'conventionalised', creating endless pressure to invent new ones 'as by association the old euphemism becomes more and more polluted'.<sup>97</sup> The idea of pollution recalls Erasmus' anxiety over pejoration.<sup>98</sup> If a euphemism is in turn replaced by a new euphemistic term, the cycle will continue. Again, some aspects of modern linguistic theory and experimentation were already in existence in early modern times. Brown and Levinson believe that 'All our evidence indicates that euphemisms are a universal feature of language usage'.<sup>99</sup> This is a similar conclusion to that drawn below by Plaff, Gibbs, and Johnson.<sup>100</sup> These scholars differ from my consideration of euphemism, however, since they do not consider how many euphemisms are not euphemistic and are more akin to innuendo. This type of euphemism, unlike

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<sup>95</sup> Eric Partridge, *Here, There and Everywhere* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), p. 41.

<sup>96</sup> Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, p. 70.

<sup>97</sup> Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, p. 216.

<sup>98</sup> Erasmus, *On Copia*, ed. and trans. by King and Rix, pp. 22-23; Desiderius Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Michael J. Heath in John W. O'Malley and Louis A. Perraud (eds). *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 203-438 (p. 428). See section 2.4.

<sup>99</sup> Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, p. 216.

<sup>100</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 81. See below.

innuendo, plays on the demand to euphemise sexual and other functions in polite conversation. This is the repression Freud refers to, which is released a little by innuendo, leading to pleasure and laughter. If euphemisms are a universal feature of language, the implication is that sexual humour is a kind of psychological and social corollary or necessary safety valve. The existence of euphemism itself points to a level of repression which makes people uncomfortable discussing some things outright. Most or all of the sexual euphemisms in this thesis play with this discomfort using comedy. Ferrand's use of the phrase 'le labyrinthe d'Amour' ['the labyrinth of love'] for female genitalia is an example.<sup>101</sup> This is sufficiently explicit that the euphemistic layer is worn thin, forcing us to confront the offensive in a humorous context.

Other comments made in Brown and Levinson's text on euphemism include: 'Some euphemisms proceed by metaphorical substitution [...] If such euphemisms proceed by the substitution of good things for bad, much verbal abuse derives from reversed metaphorical substitution, particularly the use of words for animals to apply to people'.<sup>102</sup> The euphemising process allows for its opposite. The substitution of good things for bad is appropriate for my corpus in that 'bad' or shameful subjects are talked of in terms of 'good' or acceptable things. There are many Renaissance examples of the use of animals in sexual humour, from likening having sex to riding to using the metaphor of meat for sex and/or women. Such imagery is often misogynistic, degrading women to be on a par with animals. This may offend us today, but would have been much more acceptable to some in the Renaissance.

More recent linguistic theory on euphemism than that of Brown and Levinson is provided in the 1997 article 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism' by Kerry L. Plaff, Raymond W. Gibbs, and Michael D. Johnson.<sup>103</sup> This is an account of six experiments undertaken on college students to ascertain the role of metaphor in the use and understanding of euphemism and dysphemism. The first two experiments demonstrated that familiar euphemisms and dysphemisms were viewed as

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<sup>101</sup> Jacques Ferrand, *Traité de l'essence et guérison de l'amour, ou De la mélancholie érotique* (Tolose: Colomiez, 1610), p. 193. See chapter four.

<sup>102</sup> Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, p. 223.

<sup>103</sup> Kerry L. Plaff, Raymond W. Gibbs and Michael D. Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 18 (1997), 59-83.

more appropriate and easier to comprehend when they share a conceptual match with the context. This matches Erasmus' point that to believe it does not matter in which words something is expressed is to err greatly.<sup>104</sup> In *Chaste Maid*, for example, where lots of meat imagery is used to represent sex, this is a deliberate choice to liken scandalous sex to meat which was forbidden during Lent. Another metaphor would not have had the same connotations. The conclusion of this article was that people's metaphorical conceptualisation of a certain topic can influence the length of time it takes them to process the information and what use of euphemistic and dysphemistic expressions are considered appropriate.<sup>105</sup> I argue that these findings can be applied to the Renaissance period – that what I call extended metaphorical fields are more easily accepted by readers and the audience than a one-off occurrence of such imagery.

The article, in discussion of how euphemisms can sometimes be dysphemisms, highlights how

For better or worse, euphemism is an appropriate adjustment of the language to different situations. Just as we use euphemism to soften the effect of what we really wish to communicate, we can also employ certain words or expressions, called dysphemisms, to offend others, express anger, or even be humorous [...] Thus, one might comment that someone who has just died *bit the dust*, *bought the farm*, or is now *pushing up daisies*. Dysphemisms like these seem rather harsh in expressing ideas about sensitive, sometimes taboo, topics. Yet even dysphemistic expressions appear quite appropriate to use in many contexts.<sup>106</sup>

By this definition, many of the sexual innuendoes in my corpus are dysphemisms as well as euphemisms. A dysphemism can also be defined as a term which has offensive connotations (either to the person hearing it or the

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<sup>104</sup> My following chapter section 2.4 will discuss this in greater depth.

<sup>105</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 59.

<sup>106</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 60.

person it is about, or both) so is replaced by a more neutral term, often itself a euphemism. The euphemism 'he croaked', for example, becomes a dysphemism if used by a doctor to a dead patient's family, so is an example of a dysphemism being inappropriate (as the majority are) – the euphemism 'he passed away' is much more appropriate.<sup>107</sup> The implication here is that no expression is inherently euphemistic or dysphemistic, but varies according to context and time. What is appropriate in early modern society is often not a fixed standard, which is why many writers argued they were not scandalous in their writings while others disagreed.

For these experiments, the contention was that 'a speaker should consider one X-phemism more appropriate than another in a certain context because she or he is conceptualising that context metaphorically'.<sup>108</sup> This conceptualisation using metaphor is what I argue also happens with Renaissance metaphorical fields. The aim of these studies was:

to examine people's intuitions about why some X-phemisms, but not others, are more appropriate to use in certain contexts. For example, given that you are a college student and wish to refer to sexual intercourse, which of the many phrases in common use would you choose?<sup>109</sup>

The methodology was to show the students scenarios, such as a relationship coming to an end, and ask them to choose an appropriate X-phemism to describe the situation. If the scenario used words like 'road', for example, to imply the relationship was like a journey, participants were more likely to select euphemistic terms like 'going nowhere', 'going their separate ways', or 'taking different paths' for a couple breaking up.<sup>110</sup> This showed context is important for which X-phemism is chosen and there is evidence of, as the

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<sup>107</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 61.

<sup>108</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 61.

<sup>109</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 60.

<sup>110</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 61.



experimenters put it, 'an interaction between story and euphemistic ending'.<sup>111</sup> The experimenters claim this undermines 'Traditional theories of euphemistic and idiomatic meaning [which] have postulated that the choice of one phrase over another in a particular context is mostly arbitrary because these expressions have become quite familiar and therefore have generally lost their metaphoricity'.<sup>112</sup> These findings indicate that, counter to previous thinking, people do in fact remember the literal meaning of X-phemistic terms, and this meaning is still important. This is important for the analysis of early modern comic sexual euphemism, as it shows the choice of imagery does matter. If meat is used in one context to euphemise sex and games in another, it is not just a trivial concern over which was selected for which situation. People 'do pay close attention to the individual words in these phrases', as the experimenters argue.<sup>113</sup> My second chapter (section 2.4) highlights how this is what Erasmus would argue too. If the students are exposed to the attitude that love is a competitive game, for example, they are more likely to call sex 'mattress hockey' than if the attitude is that it is a co-operative dance between partners, in which case the more likely term chosen is 'mattress dancing'.<sup>114</sup> This study, therefore, supports Erasmus' point and my arguments regarding Renaissance texts.

Such analysis of the appropriateness of terms, however mentally quick or subconscious it may be, leads the experimenters to believe that 'Speaking euphemistically is part of what it means to be a competent speaker of the language'.<sup>115</sup> This is because, as Plaff, Gibbs, and Johnson state, 'Euphemisms and dysphemisms are an important part of everyday speech'.<sup>116</sup> They may or may not have been aware that the idea of speaking well is rooted in the original etymology of 'euphemism'. These experiments also

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<sup>111</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 62.

<sup>112</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 62.

<sup>113</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 79.

<sup>114</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 78.

<sup>115</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 81.

<sup>116</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 78.

showed that length of time to read and process information is affected by context. As Plaff, Gibbs, and Johnson outline, 'Participants were able to read an X-phemistic final phrase more quickly if there was a metaphorical match between the context and the ending. This provides evidence that X-phemisms are easier to understand in a metaphorically consistent context'.<sup>117</sup> When X-phemisms which were strange or unusual in relation to the context (such as 'chainsawed the link' for a scenario about a couple breaking up which used words implying love is a journey) were used, people took longer to read the information and make a selection, probably due to the jarring nature of the words.<sup>118</sup> This supports my argument that metaphorical fields help the audience accept the imagery.

In one of the experiments, the students were exposed to taboo or shocking words, such as sexual conquest, being a game or war. If a game, phrases like 'getting to first base' were picked. If a war, 'breaking down her defences' was more likely to be chosen. The nature of the findings could differ if the subject was more taboo than simply ending a relationship. Plaff, Gibbs, and Johnson explain that:

Not only did we show that metaphorical concepts influence people's selection of figurative phrases in discourse contexts [...] but we also found that people's metaphorical conceptualisation of certain topics affects their real-time processing of conventional X-phemistic phrases that relate to these topics. In addition, we showed that people's metaphorical conceptualisation of various sensitive, even taboo, subjects influence their use and understanding of novel X-phemistic expressions.<sup>119</sup>

This imagery of sex as a game or war is very common in the Renaissance; this thesis will demonstrate many metaphorical fields which put these into use.

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<sup>117</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 68.

<sup>118</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 69.

<sup>119</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', p. 79.

The world created where these metaphors are used repeatedly helps the reader accept these terms over the literal.

Of course, metaphors themselves are fluid and time-dependent, but the way we use them may not have changed since the early modern period. These findings are significant for modern usage of euphemism and dysphemism, and it is worth considering that early modern people also pay attention to the literal meaning of the euphemistic terms they use. We know that this idea would not have been alien to Renaissance society, due in large part to the influential writings of Erasmus which the next chapter will explore. The idea, suggested in this article, that using euphemism is a sign of being skilled with language, is reinforced by the examples in this thesis of talented writers and playwrights employing this language.

*A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French* by R. Anthony Lodge in 2004 is another text which talks of positive and negative politeness.<sup>120</sup> For Lodge, negative politeness has 'objective detachment', is 'universalistic', has 'distance', occurs in an 'out-group', and has 'social acquiescence'; positive politeness has 'subjective involvement', is 'context-bound', relies on 'proximity', occurs in an 'in-group', and employs 'social defiance'.<sup>121</sup> This is why a close-knit social group can develop its own sort of language. The idea of in-groups is significant for comic sexual euphemism, where it can sometimes be the case that only some will fully understand. Whether they were deliberately aiming to be socially defiant, both Joubert and Harington caused offence with their sexual humour.<sup>122</sup>

Lodge outlines more differences between positive and negative politeness: 'Whereas negative politeness culture seeks to emphasise the dignity of the participants, interposing distance between them, colloquial speech favours the reverse, seeking constantly to reduce the dignity of topics under discussion in the interests of social solidarity'.<sup>123</sup> The idea of social solidarity is important for comic sexual euphemism which does not use literal terms but may still be transparent: society makes a sort of pact to shield its

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<sup>120</sup> R. Anthony Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 235.

<sup>121</sup> Lodge, *Sociolinguistic History*, p. 235.

<sup>122</sup> See sections 3.3 and 4.1.

<sup>123</sup> Lodge, *Sociolinguistic History*, p. 236.

perceived vulnerable members (in the Renaissance, chaste young women) from the offensive. When writers like Harington and Joubert break this solidarity, they are rebuked. This can be applied to the question of why people feel the need to euphemise (albeit, often with transparency). Is it to reduce topics' dignity? Or to maintain a sort of dignity by not mentioning the real name for the undignified content? Lodge argues that:

Whereas negative politeness avoids direct evocation of issues pertaining to the intimacy of the participants, positive politeness seeks to promote in-group solidarity by doing the reverse and by frequent recourse to expressions relating to bodily functions and to taboo words [...] These naturally include a large number of oaths and swearwords [...] Indeed, it is quite clear that since early modern times the urban cities have cultivated negative politeness strategies in a most systematic way, vehemently rejecting the values implicit in positive politeness, which they attribute to the lower orders, in public at least.<sup>124</sup>

In the materials I examine, there is not an inordinate amount of swearing. Rather, the socially unacceptable is more often transformed using imagery and metaphor for the purposes of comedy and to be more acceptable in front of others. The idea of protecting the addressee is, of course, very common in early modern euphemism. This passage implies that it is just the higher social levels in early modern societies who avoid taboos altogether, thereby leaving euphemism to discuss taboos to the lower classes. Yet I provide evidence, especially from court environments, that calls this labelling of one class as bawdier into question.<sup>125</sup> Even if the degree of explicitness differs for different groups of people, it is too simplistic to rule some out altogether when it comes to comic sexual euphemism.

## 1.8 Metaphorical Fields

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<sup>124</sup> Lodge, *Sociolinguistic History*, pp. 236-237.

<sup>125</sup> For the study of different culture levels in the Renaissance and the question of the high/low divide, see, for example, Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009).

This section will describe a theory which is my own original conception. Chapters three and five especially analyse what I call 'metaphorical fields'. I define this as taking place when something scandalous, like certain types of sex, is talked of extensively in terms of something socially acceptable. The type of sex that is used in such fields is most often bawdy and unchaste, involving humour in the scandal. It is more likely to be with a prostitute than a spouse or intended marital partner, although not always. Metaphorical fields act as a type of comic sexual euphemism, where non-literal terms are used but the content is still conveyed, and allow for multiple levels of double-entendres. This is not just a one-off occurrence, but rather a continuous comparison where it is almost as if a whole world is created within a text where sex is likened to something else so frequently that it is inextricably linked to varying degrees. This is not restricted to one text, with many Renaissance texts using the same metaphorical field or fields, suggesting different audiences would be aware of these lines of thinking and relate to them. When put together, such texts create a network with shared metaphorical fields. The linguistic research of Plaff, Gibbs, and Johnson has shown that people are more willing to accept euphemisms if they are within what I call extended metaphorical fields. As well as being consistent with these findings, metaphorical fields arguably demonstrate Erasmus' fears of obscenity made a reality. I am the first to apply these modern findings to, for example, the works of Middleton. I argue that the discovery of Plaff, Gibbs, and Johnson, that people accept a piece of reading more if it consistently uses the same euphemisms, applies very well to metaphorical fields.

Metaphorical fields I examine, in plays and other Renaissance works, include sex being compared to business or money, painting or art, meat and other food, games and sport, disease, dancing and music, clothing, war and battles, riding and horses, language, hunting, law, and (in a different way) silence. They can also blend into one another, or writers can jump quickly from one to the next. Chapter five features many of the same metaphorical texts as those found in courtly texts, such as riding, games, business, war, clothes, language, and meat. Like all euphemisms, the symbolic link made with sex in a metaphorical field can be explicit and implicit, overt and covert, clear and opaque. Such links can fall on different points on a scale of

explicitness. Sometimes it is obvious what is being meant, which leads to the question of what the reason behind using euphemistic imagery is. Other times, the euphemism can be so effective that the double meaning needs explanation in order to be appreciated for both contemporaneous and modern audiences. Chapter five gives examples of a euphemism needing to be clearly explained before some characters understand. This is helpful to modern readers, who do not have the benefit of seeing the original performances so may miss some of the intended meaning, and would also have been useful to any Renaissance audience members who did not get the joke.

In this period, as the *OED* points out, 'meat' could refer to any food.<sup>126</sup> These texts provide examples of sex being talked of in terms of any and all food, eating in general, and specifically meat. There are obvious links to be made between carnal pleasures or sins of the flesh and enjoyment of eating meat – both use bodies. Also, both apply the vocabulary of appetite for food to appetite for sex, crossing hunger for food with sexual desire. Sometimes this comparison is so unsubtle it is almost not euphemistic. To lewdly claim a sexual experience was like eating meat can be so obvious that the ruder meaning is not hidden and is plain for everyone to see. It is at least of the more transparent type of euphemism. It is nearly, although not quite, always women who are compared to meat and food. Most frequently, these women are prostitutes, highlighting the way they are objects to be purchased like slabs of meat. By indicating they are a commodity, the metaphorical field of meat and sex is linked to that of money and sex.

The next chapter considers an overview of the most significant classical and early modern thinking when it comes to comic sexual euphemism, thus completing the vital discussion of theory preceding the analysis of the practice of this language. The world of Renaissance comic sexual language and euphemism is a rich, varied, and exciting one. The different uses of humour in the following chapters can often have deeper repercussions than might be expected. There is more to these jokes than their surface, which may appear to be simply crude. They reveal how those in early

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<sup>126</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://0-www.oed.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/Entry/76238?rskey=z2y8WN&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 27 Sept 2013], n.p.

modern society viewed their own bodies, how men and women related to each other, and who had the power both in terms of gender and the structure of both France and England.

## Chapter Two: Ancient and Early Modern Notions of Comic Sexual Euphemism

This chapter will examine ancient and Renaissance thoughts on the concept of comic sexual euphemism. It starts with French and English contemporaneous terms which were forerunners to 'euphemism', then analyses the influential ancient writers Cicero and Quintilian, before exploring important early modern thinkers from France and England.

### 2.1 Early Modern Terms

Having given definitions of comic sexual euphemism and dysphemism in the Introduction, it is now helpful to see what different terms were used for these concepts in contemporaneous discussion and their implications in French and English. This will serve to define my terms more clearly and demonstrate how what I am discussing is prominent in the Renaissance in various ways. As with the relationship between science and natural philosophy, it is necessary to be careful not to attribute modern concepts to the early modern world. However, even before the term 'euphemism' came into being, Renaissance writers discussed the use of more acceptable terms to imply or hide shocking or scandalous content, and debated whether obscene content should be veiled with euphemistic phrasing. They were at times polite and at times comic about this phenomenon. There were Renaissance terms in both French and English close in meaning to euphemism, cognates such as '*équivoque*' and 'equivocation', 'dissembling', 'periphrasis', and 'circumlocutions'. None of these are necessarily comic or sexual, however, but often are in practice. Sexual comedy was often called 'bawdy' at the time.

*Équivoque*: this was a French term for a double meaning and a play on words involving terms which sound the same but had different meanings. Randle Cotgrave defines this as 'an equivocation', 'a double or diverse sense in one word', a mistake of one meaning for another, something that is 'doubtfully spoken' or 'doubly meant', and the action of using 'words of diverse



significations' with 'double meaning'.<sup>1</sup> These were often comic or sexual, though again not by necessity. Such plays on words are very common in French writing of the time. François Rabelais provides some examples with 'disoit qu'il n'y avoit qu'un antistrophe entre femme folle à la messe et femme molle à la fesse' ['he said that there was but an Antistrophe, or little more difference than of a literal inversion between a woman [...] foolish at the Masse, and of a pliant buttock']. He also provides this example of *équivoque*: 'À [B]eaumont le viconte [...] à beau con le vit monte' [In Beaumont the viscount, To a lovely cunt the prick rises] (this is a literal translation, unlike Urquhart's 'to faire mount the priccunts [...] to faire C. the pr.:').<sup>2</sup> This type of play on words shares a cheeky personality with comic sexual euphemism.

Jape: the *OED* defines this as 'To trick, beguile, befool, deceive', 'To seduce (a woman); to know carnally' or 'To have carnal intercourse', 'To mock, deride, insult' and 'To say or do something in jest or mockery; to jest, joke, jeer; to make game, make fun, sport'.<sup>3</sup> All these meanings were evident in the Renaissance. These definitions make links between deceiving and mocking language, the carnal, and sport.<sup>4</sup> This term is used by George Puttenham: '*Jape with me but hurt me not, Bourde with me but shame me not*' and 'As one that would say to a young woman, *I pray you let me jape with you*, which in deed is no more but let me sport with you', with clear imagery regarding sport and games.<sup>5</sup> A man asking a young woman to jape with him is the type of situation Freud comments on.<sup>6</sup>

Bourde: this, says the *OED*, is 'An idle tale, a jest, a joke; jesting, raillery, joking, merriment, fun; a merry tale'.<sup>7</sup> This is the same word and meaning in French, which Cotgrave defines as a jest, a fib, and a tale of a

<sup>1</sup> Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Aslip, 1611), <<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cotgrave/>> [accessed 18 Oct 2013], n.p.

<sup>2</sup> François Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by M. Huchon (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 274, p. 293; François Rabelais, 'Of the qualities and conditions of Panurge', *Pantagruel* Second Book Chapter XVI, trans. by Sir Thomas Urquhart (London: Everyman's Library, 1994), pp. 247, 227-231.

<sup>3</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://0-www.oed.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/Entry/76238?rskey=z2y8WN&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 27 Sept 2013], n.p.

<sup>4</sup> All of which will be explored in this thesis.

<sup>5</sup> George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London: Field, 1589), p. 212.

<sup>6</sup> See the Introduction section 1.5.

<sup>7</sup> The above Puttenham quotation features this term. *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p.

tub.<sup>8</sup> The *OED* also has for this word: ‘In a bad sense: Mockery, bantering’ and ‘Play, game’.<sup>9</sup> Again, all these were in existence in this period. Puttenham puns on ‘board’, with a sexual sense of ‘accost’ or ‘enter’.<sup>10</sup>

Periphrases: this is the plural of ‘periphrasis’, which is ‘speaking in a roundabout or indirect way’ according to the *OED*. The first recorded use in English is 1533 and it is the same word in French. For Laurent Joubert, ‘periphrases & circonlocutions [...] ont été depuis inventées, pour parler plus secretement, de ce que toutesfois on veut bien estre antandu, an denotant les choses qu’on ha honte de voir’ [‘periphrases and circumlocutions [...] have since been invented in order to speak more secretly about that which we nevertheless wish to have clearly understood when we designate what we are ashamed to look at’].<sup>11</sup> Joubert here associates shame with sight, not language – or, rather, he believes the shame of sight to extend somehow to language. Richard Sherry also defines this term alongside metaphor, ‘Periphrasis’ or ‘circuicio’: ‘a larger descripcion eyther to garnyshe it, or if it bee foule to hyde it, or if it be bryefe to make it more playn’ – ‘save onlye for garnyshyng sake he myghte have sayde playnlye’.<sup>12</sup> Here we have highly significant ideas of garnishing, and hiding foul content but also making some things plainer. Sherry gives an example of the sort of periphrases which hide something foul: ‘When Saule was doying his busines, David might have killed hym. Doyng hys business, ye wot what it meaneth’.<sup>13</sup> This is the type of euphemism that assumes the audience has sufficient knowledge to appreciate what is being said without it being stated outright – the ‘you-know-what’ attitude. The elaborate double-entendres of, for example, Thomas Middleton and so on take advantage of the opportunity to garnish in the way Sherry describes but obviously deliberately do not conceal the foul. These writers therefore both observe the rule and break it at the same time. Erasmus

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<sup>8</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

<sup>9</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p.

<sup>10</sup> George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, ed. by Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 340. See section 2.4 below for more on this quotation.

<sup>11</sup> Laurent Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (Bordeaux: Millanges, 1584), sig.A3<sup>r-v</sup>; Laurent Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by Gregory David De Rocher (London: University of Alabama Press, 1989), p. 7. See chapter four section 4.1 for further analysis of this.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Sherry, *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* (Tennessee: General Books, 2010), p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> Sherry, *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes*, pp. 18-19.

also discusses periphrasis alongside methods of varying language with terms being interchanged, describing how '*periphrasis*, which some call *circutio*' includes examples such as 'if someone should say destroyer of Carthage and Numantia for Scipio; or as Horace said, author of the *Trojan Wars* for Homer' so does not use the literal term.<sup>14</sup> This veiling is what occurs in comic sexual euphemism, alongside the addition of humour and a sexual topic.

Circumlocutions: used alongside periphrasis by Joubert, this is, according to the *OED*, 'using many words to state something simple where a few would do'; the *OED*'s first recorded use in English is in 1518.<sup>15</sup> In French it is *circonlocutions*. Neither periphrases nor circumlocutions were seen positively by Joubert.<sup>16</sup> When discussing the covering of body parts, Erasmus claims that

No part of the body is shameful, since God created all parts good and beautiful; yet in some cases decency demands that they be concealed, and even that they should not be named directly, but indicated by some modest circumlocution.<sup>17</sup>

Notice that the circumlocution Erasmus suggests might be appropriate for naming body parts must be 'modest' and not the type of euphemism that is itself dirty.

Dissembling: 'to hide or disguise true feelings or motives to deceive real nature', first recorded in the *OED* from 1535.<sup>18</sup> Thomas Wilson uses this term to comment on how words can be interpreted differently by different readers or audience: 'The interpretation of a worde, doth oft declare a witte [...] Sometimes it is delitefull, when a mans word is taken, and not his meaning'.<sup>19</sup> This demonstrates the distinction between the literal meaning of a word and the meaning that can be conveyed – a vital difference when it

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<sup>14</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *On Copia of Words and Ideas*, ed. and trans. by Donald B. King and H. David Rix (Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2012), pp. 27-28.

<sup>15</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p.

<sup>16</sup> See chapter four section 4.1 for expansion on Joubert's attitude.

<sup>17</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Michael J. Heath in John W. O'Malley and Louis A. Perraud (eds), *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 203-438 (p. 427).

<sup>18</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (n.p.: Hiidenkirja, 2012), pp. 174-175.

comes to euphemism. Wilson also believes that 'It is a pleasant dissembling, when we speake one thing merily and thinke an other earnestly'.<sup>20</sup> Again, we have a suggestion that dissembling could be close in meaning to euphemism at the time. Similarly, Michel de Montaigne claims to suffer when he 'fein[t]' [dissembles].<sup>21</sup> This is part of his discussion of the veiling nature of being euphemistic, so once again the concept of euphemism occurs before it is crystallised as a word.

Kakemphaton: this is a Greek term for when a word sounds filthy but is actually innocent, making it the opposite of euphemism or like a euphemism in reverse.<sup>22</sup> It is defined by Quintilian as 'a phrase perverted by bad usage so as to give an obscene meaning', so here is like pejoration, and 'a collocation of words which has an unfortunate sound'.<sup>23</sup> Like euphemism, we have circumstances where new and potentially offensive meaning is given to a term. Puttenham comes close to defining kakemphaton in a passage quoted in section 2.4 on early modern rhetorical theory. An example of this is provided by Montaigne, who uses the word *fouteau* which is French for 'beech tree' which was mistaken for the verb *foutre*, meaning 'to fuck'. This was excluded by John Florio, Montaigne's translator, who euphemistically called it 'more bawdie in sound then in effect, it signifieth the name of a Tree and another thing'. Similar occurrences appear in *The Dutch Courtesan*, whose author is heavily influenced by Montaigne, with 'Foutra' and 'fowtra'.<sup>24</sup> Kakemphaton has the same issues of interpretation as euphemism, indicating that the perception of obscenity is subjective. It is also referred to by Erasmus and Sherry. A modern definition is provided by Richard J. King:

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<sup>20</sup> Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique*, p. 178.

<sup>21</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais, Livre III*, ed. by V.L. Saulnier and Pierre Villey (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965), III.5; Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, ed. and trans. by M.A. Screech (London: Penguin, 2003), III.5.

<sup>22</sup> Dominique Brancher, 'Virgile en bas-de-chausse: Montaigne et la tradition de l'obscénité latine', in *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance*, LXX-1 (Geneva: Droz, 2008), pp. 95-122.

<sup>23</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ed. and trans. by Donald A. Russell (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 2002), pp. 364-365. See section 2.4 for more on pejoration.

<sup>24</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Donald M. Frame (London: Everyman's Library, 2003), III.5; Michel de Montaigne, *Essayes*, trans. by John Florio and ed. by George Saintsbury (London: Sims, 1603), III.5; John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by David Crane (London: A & C Black, 1997): 2.2.35, 3.4.65.

an emphasis upon phonetic play (intentional or accidental) along a text's objective surface that unearths, in the listener's (mis)judgement, scandalous, sexual [...] meanings [...] Ambiguous collocations of syllables (across words) provide opportunities for scandalous emphasis [...] Pauses and stresses, either in delivery or in the audience's imagination [...] articulate unanticipated combinations or new word divisions at odds with objective divisions of words [...] or] a subtype of "figured speech" [...] which ancient rhetoricians theorised as simultaneously concealing and revealing meaning to divergent audiences. Figured speech thus acts in literature as a verbal "screen".<sup>25</sup>

This term therefore has many aspects which affect euphemism, such as obscene meanings being in the mind of the listener, but unearthed by this emphasising process. The idea of a verbal screen is particularly significant, as that is what euphemism is – a screen which at times can be glimpsed through. New word combinations and divisions, such as ellipses and syllable changes, are displayed and discussed by Renaissance writers like Castiglione, Puttenham, and Wilson for their contributions to euphemising. Puttenham also analyses the idea of figured speech. All the terms in this section lend weight to the different degrees of X-phemism I discussed in the Introduction, some being more explicit than others.

## 2.2 Ancient Rhetorical Theory

This section will explore the discussion provided by Cicero and Quintilian.<sup>26</sup> Cicero is important for issues of euphemism because of his reaction to the Cynics' position that some needs for food, excretion, and sex can be satisfied

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<sup>25</sup> Richard J. King, *Desiring Rome: Male Subjectivity and Reading Ovid's Fasti* (Ohio: Thomson-Shore, 2006), p. 155.

<sup>26</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Obligations*, ed. by P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ed. and trans. by Donald A. Russell (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 2002). Unless otherwise stated, all Cicero and Quintilian quotations are from these editions. Helpful secondary sources include Emily Butterworth and Hugh Roberts, "'L'Obscene" in French Renaissance Texts', in *Obscénités Renaissance*, ed. by Hugh Roberts, Guillaume Peureux and Lise Wajeman (Geneva: Droz, 2011); Emily Butterworth, 'Defining Obsenity', in *Obscénités Renaissance*, ed. by Hugh Roberts, Guillaume Peureux and Lise Wajeman (Geneva: Droz, 2011).

in a very natural and shameless way. In contrast, Cicero believed it was actually natural to shield ourselves from such so-called obscenity. As well as Renaissance humanists like Erasmus, he influences Quintilian, who was concerned with the clarity of words and whether we should use real terms. He also impacted upon early modern thinkers, who were very aware of what Hugh Roberts calls the 'ancient prohibition on naming obscenities'.<sup>27</sup> His *De officiis* [*On Obligations*] (44 BCE) argues against claims that behaviour that some call socially scandalous is natural and therefore should be acceptable to discuss and carry out openly.

Cicero believed nature has actually hidden many features we think of as shocking if exposed in public, such as the genitals: 'all right-minded people', he argues, 'keep out of sight what Nature has hidden and take pains to respond to nature's demands as privately as possible'. He argues we 'should follow nature, and avoid whatever our eyes and ears do not approve'.<sup>28</sup> Nature is, for Cicero, 'our teacher and guide' as to where modesty should be applied, believing she has 'cloaked and concealed' body parts which are 'unsightly and ugly to look at', so 'all men of sound sense' follow nature by keeping these parts out of sight.<sup>29</sup> The implication is that as well as being kept out of sight and behaviour, such unseemliness should be kept out of language as well, to avoid explicit reference to these parts. Cicero practises what he preaches by avoiding the explicit Latin verb *futuo* for sexual intercourse,<sup>30</sup> which, as P.G. Walsh highlights, was often found in epigrams and graffiti.<sup>31</sup>

In Cicero's opinion, therefore, he is closer to nature in wanting to euphemise and censor some things than those who believe (what some may call) taboo and wanton behaviour is natural, right, and proper. *De officiis* claims the Cynics 'censure and ridicule us for holding that the mere mention of some actions that are not immoral is shameful, while other things that are immoral we call by their real names'. He makes the similar claim that 'in the

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<sup>27</sup> Hugh Roberts, 'Erasmus', in *Obscénités Renaissance*, ed. by Hugh Roberts, Guillaume Peureux and Lise Wajeman (Geneva: Droz, 2011), pp. 100-105 (p. 102).

<sup>28</sup> Cicero, *On Obligations*, ed. by Walsh, pp. 43-44: 1.128.

<sup>29</sup> Cicero, *On Obligations*, ed. by Walsh, pp. 43-44: 1.127-129.

<sup>30</sup> James Morwood (ed.), *Oxford Latin Desk Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 80.

<sup>31</sup> Cicero, *On Obligations*, ed. by Walsh, p. 151.

case of those parts of the body which only serve nature's needs, neither the parts nor the functions are called by their real names [...] to speak of them is indecent'.<sup>32</sup> Calling bodily parts and functions by their 'real names' or 'precise terms' is, of course, the opposite of euphemism.<sup>33</sup> For Cicero, euphemism is the right result of a natural sense of shame and propriety, especially about sexual matters. He therefore also rejects early Stoicism, which adopts the Cynics' frankness.<sup>34</sup> The consequences for comic sexual euphemism are that using euphemism which is more opaque can be seen, if Cicero is to be believed, as more desirable, because more natural, than the more transparent comic sexual euphemisms. Euphemism which can be seen through perverts what Cicero calls the natural desire to euphemise. The question becomes, can it really be natural to euphemise? Of course, what is natural is a huge debate for which there is not scope here. However, it is certainly the case that almost every culture feels the need to euphemise at least to some extent, although this will occur in different degrees.

The Roman rhetorician Quintilian was strongly affected by Cicero. His twelve-volume work *Institutio Oratoria* [*Institutes of Oratory*] (c.95 CE) praises Cicero as a great instructor. Quintilian draws the Ciceronian conclusion that we received language from nature and that some things are unwholesome, and discusses whether words should be used euphemistically. He devotes part of his writings to unbecoming expressions 'to be avoided',<sup>35</sup> stating that

Metaphor can only be justified by reference to the context. [...] I say this to warn those who do not think it necessary to avoid obscenity, on the ground that no word is shocking in itself and that, if the thing meant is disgusting, it comes to be understood by whatever name it is called. For my part, I shall content myself with our modest Roman ways, and follow the tactful procedure of answering such speakers by silence.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Cicero, *On Obligations*, ed. by Walsh, pp. 43-44: 1.128-129.

<sup>33</sup> Cicero, *On Obligations*, ed. by Walsh, p. 43: 1.127-128.

<sup>34</sup> Cicero, *On Obligations*, ed. by Walsh, p. 151.

<sup>35</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ed. and trans. by Russell, pp. 332-333.

<sup>36</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ed. and trans. by Russell, pp. 362-363.

The comment that the obscenity will still be conveyed no matter what veiling phraseology is used suggests that euphemism does not work – it fails. It is a verbal fig-leaf. There are similarities here both with Cicero, with exact or real terms as opposed to metaphor, and Erasmus, with indecency still being understood even with (or because of) the use of attempts to conceal with euphemism. Both Erasmus and Quintilian use this failure of euphemism to object to it. However, they do not deal with the problem set out in this thesis – that there are degrees and levels of obviousness when it comes to euphemism. They merely seem to give up, circumventing the issue I shall address. Quintilian’s argument here is that obscenity is never appropriate: for Quintilian (at least, in this case) it is not relative. This Quintilian passage also claims that the Romans were modest. Since the stereotype is that Romans were actually quite immodest, many famously so, Quintilian’s reference gives the lie to the view that such propriety is natural. Rather, the suggestion is that it is a product of culture, which he ascribes to the Romans. The idea of silence being a modest reaction to potential obscenity will be significant in my Conclusion.

One of the issues regarding words which concerned Quintilian was their clarity:

The most important characteristic of Lucidity in words is Propriety. But Propriety itself can be understood in more than one way. Its first sense is that of calling everything by its right name. We should not always do this, for we should avoid words that are obscene, disgusting, or low. By “low” I mean beneath the dignity of the subject or the speaker’s standing. [...] There is no positive virtue in this kind of Propriety, which consists in using the actual names for things, but its opposite is a fault.<sup>37</sup>

‘Propriety’ (*proprietatem, proprietas, proprietatis*) is also *decentia, decor, decorum* or *convenientia* in Latin.<sup>38</sup> If a word is euphemistic, it may not always be clear to what it is referring. However, the issue in the above passage is

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<sup>37</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ed. and trans. by Russell, pp. 326-327.

<sup>38</sup> Morwood (ed.), *Latin Dictionary*, p. 391.



that it is in fact clear what most euphemisms are talking about. Here, Quintilian warns against the extreme use both of metaphor, as above, and real names.

Quintilian again highlights the complicated relationship between euphemism and perspicuity of meaning:

Words which signify more than they say may be thought to come under Lucidity, because they help one to understand. But I prefer to treat Emphasis under the ornaments of speech, because its effect is not just to make something understood, but to make an extra something understood as well. [...] Obscurity results from words no longer in common use.<sup>39</sup>

This demonstrates how euphemisms, which carry more meaning than the literal interpretation of what they say, can either be clearer or more confusing than explicit statements. The attitudes of these ancient writers run through to the early modern period, whether through obedience to or defiance of them, or circumventing them comically. Puttenham, for example, also discusses ornaments of speech.

To conclude this section, rhetorical treatises such as these officially disapprove of sexual obscenity and jokes, yet leave room to play against the norms they set out. Paradoxically, then, the injunction on naming obscenities invites people to joke about and almost name them. Cicero, for example, inadvertently sets up the ability to joke with obscenities by drawing attention to the issue. In practice, this almost amounts to a challenge to writers of comedy to defy his idea of what is natural when it comes to euphemism. By advocating the euphemising process, this opens the door to euphemistic terms which will, through the process of pejoration (see below), eventually become obscene themselves. Later writers who toy with his rules will not always directly refer to him, but he is unquestionably influential on this type of Renaissance comic language. Middleton's humour, playing with and against the well-known rules, is an example of this.

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<sup>39</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ed. and trans. by Russell, pp. 332-333.

### 2.3 Cicero, Montaigne, and *Mentula*

In chapters four and five, I analyse jokes using the Latin term *mentula*, which can mean male or female genitalia in different contexts and is also used in grammatical rules.<sup>40</sup> Such jokes are not new to the Renaissance period, being passed down from Roman writers. They are popular in Renaissance texts from both France and England. From 1596, for example, ‘mentula’ or ‘a mans yarde, his pricke, his privities’ and ‘verpa’ or ‘a mans yard’.<sup>41</sup> The word is equated with male genitalia here (but elsewhere it can be female). Melissa Mohr also points out how ‘Latin usually gives us our proper medical terms for immodest parts of the body – *vagina* and *penis*, for example – not our primary obscenities’.<sup>42</sup> This raises significant issues of the relationship between Latin and the vernacular for the comically sexually obscene. According to Mohr, *mentula* (which can equally be translated as penis or cock) was one of the top ten worst words in ancient Latin: ‘*Mentula* (penis) was quite obscene [in the Roman period ...] Even the word *penis* itself was offensive in Latin, though not as shocking as the two primary obscenities, *mentula* and *verpa*’.<sup>43</sup> These examples demonstrate how *mentula* jokes in early modern drama were part of an ancient tradition. In one of Augustus’ poems, for example, ‘To preserve the health and dignity of his *mentula* (penis), Augustus is forced to fight’.<sup>44</sup> Also, as Mohr points out, ‘Martial knew well that his epigrams “can’t please without a cock” (*non possunt sine mentula placere*)’.<sup>45</sup> The Latin term *mentula* would have been comic to educated male readers, who were well-aware of Martial and so on. Thus this word is at once somewhat euphemistic, because it is not a vernacular term, and comic.

One of the most significant instances of Roman discussion of *mentula* comes from Cicero. It responds to a letter from Paetus which uses this word and refers to the issue examined above, that for the Stoics what some may

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<sup>40</sup> Sections 4.1 and 5.8.

<sup>41</sup> See Melissa Mohr, *Holy Sh\*t: A Brief History of Swearing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 39.

<sup>42</sup> Mohr, *Holy Sh\*t*, p. 19.

<sup>43</sup> Mohr, *Holy Sh\*t*, p. 17, p. 41.

<sup>44</sup> See Mohr, *Holy Sh\*t*, p. 26.

<sup>45</sup> Mohr, *Holy Sh\*t*, p. 48.

call obscene is actually natural. Cicero, when highlighting which words should be avoided, states that *penis* is obscene but less so than *mentula* – the former of which he can bring himself to say but the latter he can only allude to. Originally, *mentula* was a euphemism for ‘tail’.<sup>46</sup> Cicero’s heavy influence on early modern writers makes it significant that he felt the need to highlight, by way of allusion, *mentula*. It is also significant that Renaissance humorous playwrights did not feel the need merely to allude to this word and did not fear to use it directly. Although, as it is not a vernacular word for English writers, it takes on a different status of meaning.

Montaigne uses two quotations which feature the word *mentula*. One is ‘*Si non longa satis, si non bené mentula crassa: | Nimirum sapunt vidéntque parvam | Matronae quoque mentulam illibenter*’.<sup>47</sup> Florio does not translate this but Donald M. Frame explains it is from Priapea and means ‘But if the penis be not long or stout enough ... | Even the matrons – all too well they know – | Look dimly on a man whose member’s small’.<sup>48</sup> The other quotation is ‘*Sit tandem pudor, aut eamus in jus, | Multis mentula millibus redempta, | Non est haec tua, Basse, vendidisti*’.<sup>49</sup> Again, this is left without translation by Florio but Frame points out it is from Martial and provides the translation: ‘Bassus, for shame, or we must go to law: | I bought your penis at a heavy price; | You’ve sold it, Bassus, it is yours no more’.<sup>50</sup> It is likely that these uses of the word *mentula* influenced John Marston, who found inspiration in Montaigne for much of his work, as shall be examined more closely in chapter five.

## 2.4 Early Modern Rhetorical Theory

This section examines Erasmus, Richard Sherry, Thomas Wilson, and George Puttenham.<sup>51</sup> All of these writers have an idea close to euphemism in

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<sup>46</sup> See Mohr, *Holy Sh\*t*, pp. 51-52. Chapter five section 5.8 has more on the significance of ‘tail’.

<sup>47</sup> Montaigne, *Essayes*, trans. by Florio and ed. by Saintsbury, III.5.

<sup>48</sup> Montaigne, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Frame, III.5.

<sup>49</sup> Montaigne, *Essayes*, trans. by Florio and ed. by Saintsbury, III.5.

<sup>50</sup> Montaigne, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Frame, III.5.

<sup>51</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Michael J. Heath in John W. O’Malley and Louis A. Perraud (eds). *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Desiderius Erasmus, *On Copia of Words and Ideas*, ed. and trans. by

mind even if they do not use the word. Following this, I will briefly consider a highly significant essay of Montaigne's, which also comments on the idea of euphemising without using this term. Erasmus sometimes disapproved of euphemistic terms, not because they veil obscenity, but because they fail to veil it. If a euphemism is used enough, he argued, it itself becomes indecent. His arguments imply the right people (typically, educated men) will understand the hidden meaning. Wilson's text is instructional, passing on his rhetorical skills. Like Quintilian, he is concerned with the meaning of words being plain, and matching the right words with the appropriate things. This is important for matters of euphemism and comic sexual obscenity, as often unusual links of words and concepts are made (as Freud discusses). The theme of what is natural appears too in Wilson's text, showing a concern with where behaviour and language come from. Puttenham, like Castiglione, questions how the meaning of words can be changed by ellipses or small adjustments of syllables. Sherry provides an early modern definition of metaphor, which is useful since euphemism is often in the form of a metaphor.

Erasmus' *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, written for Catherine of Aragon in 1526, examines what constitutes obscenity more thoroughly than any contemporaneous writer. By the seventeenth century, his arguments would have been common knowledge for writers like Middleton who play with the norms Erasmus set out. Erasmus is influenced by Cicero in, for example, discussing the covering of body parts. Both are highly influential on later writers, even if they are not explicitly or directly referred to. Cicero's influence on Erasmus can be felt regarding his definitions of obscenity and his arguments about the process of pejoration. Erasmus also draws on Quintilian in discussion of euphemism and has comparisons to Wilson in terms of pejoration. He contrasts to some of Montaigne in debating whether we should not be ashamed to say what we are not ashamed to think. Wilson discusses Erasmus, sometimes departing from his viewpoints on moral standards coming from nature. Sherry's text is often combined with Erasmus' writings as

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Donald B. King and H. David Rix (Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2012); Richard Sherry, *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* (Tennessee: General Books, 2010); Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (n.p.: Hiidenkirja, 2012); George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London: Field, 1589). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from these thinkers are from these editions.

he was most likely a translator of *The Education of Children* by Erasmus.<sup>52</sup> Also, both Montaigne and Erasmus discuss whether euphemism draws more attention than straightforward explicit content would.

Erasmus questions what is obscene, highlighting how some deeds are foul, like murder, but people do not perceive the names for such deeds to be obscene. He explains how ‘Similarly, some things are not offensive in themselves, but if you describe them in unvarnished language they become obscene’.<sup>53</sup> Here we see Cicero’s influence. This demonstrates a disapproval of language left bare, yet Erasmus also disapproves of the use of euphemistic terms, as this method can make such words widespread and in turn indecent themselves, thus removing their veiling or varnishing character. At the end of this process, the language is left as unconcealed as before. *Amare* for sexual intercourse, for example, used to be acceptable but, for Erasmus, ‘is now so discredited that you cannot decently use it even in an entirely innocent context’.<sup>54</sup> He finds this deeply distressing. ‘Sometimes’, he says, ‘changing usage creates obscenity, although neither the word nor the deed is intrinsically obscene: the same word seems quite proper in one time or place, but not in others’.<sup>55</sup> This is almost the definition of ‘dysphemism’. It is also a process known as ‘pejoration’, where a semantic change takes place so a word’s meaning becomes lower, less respectable, appropriate or decent, or more improper – as the *OED* defines, ‘the development of a less favourable meaning or of less pleasant connotations for a word or expression’.<sup>56</sup> Eric Partridge also gives a definition of pejoration, although he does not give it this name:

in one restricted but significant group (that of physical intimacy and the sexual parts) the euphemisms are accountable by the fact that [... they have] become too gross to be used by the respectable. [...]

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<sup>52</sup> Richard Sherry, *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes and Erasmus’ The Education of Children* (Charlestown: CreateSpace, 2016).

<sup>53</sup> Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Heath, p. 427.

<sup>54</sup> Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Heath, p. 428.

<sup>55</sup> Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Heath, p. 428.

<sup>56</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://0-www.oed.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/Entry/76238?rskey=z2y8WN&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 27 Sept 2013], n.p.

Euphemism may cause the word it displaces to be forgotten or to become obsolete.<sup>57</sup>

This process can be far-reaching. When writers use very common words, such as 'thing' or 'etc.',<sup>58</sup> for comic sexual innuendo, they provoke the thought that anything can have a sexual sense and any word could be the object of pejoration. Wilson talks about pejoration (quoted below). Erasmus was very concerned about this process, even though, once again, he was writing before the word was invented in the seventeenth century.

He raises the idea of the 'right people' when it comes to euphemism, since, as Roberts states, 'the expectation is that the right kind of people will see through' the veiling.<sup>59</sup> This invites the question of who these 'right' people are, which will be considered throughout this thesis. Erasmus has two ways of defining obscenity. The first, influenced by Cicero and Quintilian, is 'to name directly things that, for decency's sake, should be described more guardedly'.<sup>60</sup> The second is 'to describe indecent acts, though not in crude language, in such a way as to make indecency seem acceptable and laudable'.<sup>61</sup> It is in this definition that the concept of euphemism (set up as desirable in the first definition) appears.

Erasmus' 1512 highly influential *De Utraque Verborum ac Rerum Copia* [*On Copia of Words and Ideas*] is, of course, a guide to rhetorical copiousness.<sup>62</sup> Like the *Institution*, this text contains a passage on what is obscene:

Obscene words ought to be far from all speech of Christians. No attention should be paid to the Cynics who do not think that it is shameful to say anything that it is not shameful to do; and that what is not shameful to do in private, it is not shameful to do in public [...] But,

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<sup>57</sup> Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Heath, pp. 41-44.

<sup>58</sup> This is often found in Cotgrave, referring to genitalia. Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

<sup>59</sup> Roberts, 'Erasmus', p. 103.

<sup>60</sup> Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Heath, p. 427.

<sup>61</sup> Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Heath, p. 427.

<sup>62</sup> There is considerable scholarship on *copia*, including the recent special issue B. Cummings, 'Encyclopaedic Erasmus', *Renaissance Studies*, 28 (2014), 183-204; Terence Cave. *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

on the contrary, it is not always shameful to say what it is shameful to do. [...] It is modest to say stomach, but immodest to show it. Whence then is derived a rule of obscenity? From nowhere else but from the usage, not of anyone whatsoever, but of those whose speech is chaste. [...] Sometimes a metaphor is more obscene than a simple word. Some words are twisted to an obscene meaning although they are decent in themselves. Accordingly, words that are manifestly obscene should be completely avoided. Those that are indifferent can be applied in a decent sense.<sup>63</sup>

Erasmus differs from Cicero here by arguing that it is not always shameful to say what it is shameful to do. This passage raises all sorts of significant issues, such as words having inherent decency or obscenity, as opposed to such concepts being in the eye of the beholder, and the dichotomy of saying versus doing something shameful. This is also examined by Montaigne, who believes we should not be ashamed to say what we are not ashamed to think.<sup>64</sup> For Erasmus, it all comes down to the circular argument that chaste people speak chastely. Crucially, as in the Erasmus quotations in the Introduction, a metaphor or euphemism can be the more obscene option in the humanist's opinion. Erasmus' comment, quoted above, that words may be decent in themselves, is striking, as if any word can go through pejoration, the implication is that actually no word has inherent decency or obscenity.

Erasmus also describes types of metaphor, 'which is called *translatio* (transference) in Latin because it transfers a word from its real and proper meaning to one not its own'.<sup>65</sup> These are pertinent examinations for euphemism, which transforms the meaning of terms, even if they did not have the actual word. *De Copia* examines how far a topic can be extended. It opens with 'there is nothing more admirable or more splendid than a speech with a rich copia of thoughts and words overflowing in a golden stream'.<sup>66</sup> When training how to write and speak, 'all things ought to be exaggerated'.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Erasmus, *On Copia*, ed. and trans. by King and Rix, pp. 22-23.

<sup>64</sup> Montaigne, *Essays*, ed. and trans. by Screech, III.5.

<sup>65</sup> Erasmus, *On Copia*, ed. and trans. by King and Rix, p. 28.

<sup>66</sup> Erasmus, *On Copia*, ed. and trans. by King and Rix, p. 11.

<sup>67</sup> Erasmus, *On Copia*, ed. and trans. by King and Rix, p. 14.

Obviously, it is not as simple as saying Erasmus praises all copiousness in language, but he does believe a copious use of certain techniques can be very powerful in writing and rhetoric. The idea of copiousness and excess in language is played with by Middleton,<sup>68</sup> as well as many other writers examined in this thesis. Erasmus also believes that ‘they err greatly who think that it matters nothing in what words something is expressed, provided only it is in some way understandable’.<sup>69</sup> This idea that it matters which words we choose to express ourselves, with euphemism and other language, is supported by the findings of Plaff, Gibbs, and Johnson examined in the Introduction. The combined and remarkably similar insights of Erasmus, on the one hand, and Plaff, Gibbs, and Johnson, on the other, offers me a new set of tools with which to examine Renaissance theatre and primary uses of euphemism. I also argue that Middleton and others apply Erasmus’ ideas on the copiousness of language, but to a subject matter Erasmus would disapprove of. Exploring these two Erasmus texts highlights how he puts his finger on concepts which we may assume to have come into being much later than the time in which he was writing; so what readers may assume is a modern finding when it comes to comic sexual language was in fact highlighted by Erasmus long before.

Richard Sherry’s 1550 *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* – again influenced by Cicero and Quintilian – also examines figures of speech. Sherry’s treatise was originally published together with Erasmus’ *The Education of Children*.<sup>70</sup> He defines ‘Metaphora’ as

a worde translated from the thyng that it properlye signifieth, unto another whych may agre with it by a similitude. And amonge all vertues of speche, this is the chyese. None perswadeth more effecteouslye, none sheweth the thyng before oure eyes more evidently, none moveth more mightily the affeccions.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> As shall be seen in chapter five, such as section 5.1.

<sup>69</sup> Erasmus, *On Copia*, ed. and trans. by King and Rix, p. 18.

<sup>70</sup> Sherry, *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>71</sup> Sherry, *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes*, p. 1.



As euphemisms are often metaphors, this is important. Euphemisms have this tendency to transform a word, moving it away from the thing it literally signifies. This is carried out extensively in metaphorical fields.

Another useful text is the English diplomat Thomas Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique*, published in 1553, which sets out guidelines for successful oration and what rhetoric involves. He defines a 'metaphore' as 'an alteration of a worde, from the proper and naturall meaning, to that which is not proper'.<sup>72</sup> By 'proper' he means the literal meaning, which euphemisms depart from.

Wilson, like Quintilian, is concerned with the clarity of words and their meaning in rhetoric.<sup>73</sup> Issues of euphemism and obscenity appear in Wilson's text, in statements such as

Either it is an honest thing whereof we speake, or els it is filthie and vile, or els betwixt both [...] That is called an honest matter, when either we take in hande such a cause that all men would maintayne, or els gainsaie such a cause, that no man can well like. Then doe wee holde and defend a filthie matter, when either we speake against our owne conscience in an evill matter, or els withstand an upright trueth.<sup>74</sup>

Wilson seems to be referring to filthy matters being immoral and contrasting to what is honest, and, while he does not explicitly name obscenity as unethical, it is possible it would be included in this category. For Wilson, as with many writers, it is important to consider to whom you are speaking. Women are an example of who should not be spoken to about certain things. It is, according to Wilson, 'wisedome to consider the tyme, the place, the man for whom we speake, the man against whom we speake, the matter whereof we speake, and the Judges before whom we speake'.<sup>75</sup> Regarding comic sexual language, euphemism, and scandalous gossip, it is very important to consider whom you speak to and about, and the time or context you speak in.

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<sup>72</sup> Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique*, p. 206.

<sup>73</sup> Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique*, p. 194.

<sup>74</sup> Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique*, p. 28.

<sup>75</sup> Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique*, p. 28.

Both the above and following passages from Wilson use the word 'filthy', which has been almost a synonym for 'obscene' since at least 1553 – the same year Wilson was published – according to the *OED*,<sup>76</sup> when the 'private parts' are called 'fylthi partes':

And now here will some say, that this foule and filthie desire and stirring unto lust, came never in by Naturem but through sinne: for whose wordes I passe not a strawe, seeing their sayings are as false as God is true. For I pray you was not Matrimonie instituted [...] before there was no sinne. And againe, whence have all other Beastes their provocations? Of Nature, or of sinne? A man would thinke they had them of Nature. But shall I tell you at a worde, wee make that filthie by our own imagination [...] we thinke it lesse filthie to eate, to chewe, to digest, to emptie the bodie, and to sleepe, then it is to use carnall Copulation, such as is lawfull and permitted. Now sir (you may say) wee must followe vertue, rather then Nature.<sup>77</sup>

The idea that we make things filthy by our imagination implies there is no inherent sin in, say, sex or talking about it. By extension, obscenity or shame surrounding sex is not natural but a creation of human culture. Although he is fond of quoting them, this belief of Wilson's is actually the opposite of what Cicero and Erasmus teach, which is that shame comes from nature. If such things are in fact from us and our minds, this means no word is naturally obscene. Wilson is not claiming we can therefore write what we like and is not giving licence for double-entendre. However, his argument (which was widely known at the time) could be used by others to absolve writers of blame, since any scandalous characteristic would be introduced in the reader's mind rather than inherent to the text. An example of this occurs in chapter four where Joubert is accused by contemporaneous critics of using offensive vocabulary. He defends himself by saying it was a mistake and any scandal is, by implication, imposed on the text by the reader.

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<sup>76</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p.

<sup>77</sup> Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique*, p. 74.

Wilson comments, in a similar way to Castiglione, on the way that 'Sometimes it is wel liked, when by the chaunging of a letter, or taking away some part of a word, or adding sometimes a sillable, we make an other meaning'.<sup>78</sup> A small change can have a powerful effect on the meaning of a word. Wilson explains further his belief that:

Straunge using of any worde or sentence, contrary to our daiely wont, is either when we adde or take away a sillable, or a worde, or encrease a sentence by a chaunge of speech, contrary to the common maner of speaking.<sup>79</sup>

He does not directly refer to this as euphemism, but other texts feature examples of this being applied to the euphemising of rude words.

For Wilson,

Such are thought apt wordes, that properly agree unto that thing which they signifie, and plainly expresse the nature of the same. Therefore they that have regard of their estimation do warely speake, and with choise utter woordes most apt for their purpose [...] Albeit some not onely doe not observe this kind of aptnesse, but also they doe fal into much fondness, by using words out of place, and applying them to divers matters without all discretion [...] Thus are good words evill used, when they are not wel applied and spoken to good purpose. Therefore I wish that such untowarde speaking, may give us a good lesson to use our tongue warely, that out wordes and matter may still agree together.<sup>80</sup>

Innocent terms are, for Wilson, put into use as and employed for purposes that are the opposite of innocent. As above, Wilson raises the issue of whether words can be good or bad in and of themselves. In this case, even if you could argue such words started as pure, the way they are used warps

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<sup>78</sup> Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique*, p. 173.

<sup>79</sup> Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique*, p. 211.

<sup>80</sup> Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique*, p. 199.

this, implying this purity was never truly there. This is the closest Wilson gets to referring to innuendo specifically.

I shall now move on briefly to George Puttenham. His 1589 rhetorical treatise *The Arte of English Poesie* comments in his third book 'Of Ornament':

Yea and though it were not altogether so directly spoken, the very sounding of the word were not commendable, as he that in the presence of Ladies would use this common Proverbe, *Jape with me but hurt me not, Bourde with me but shame me not*. For it may be taken in another perverser sence by that sorte of persons that heare it, in whose eares no such matters ought almost to be called in memory, this vice is called by the Greekes *Cacemphaton*, we call it the unshamefast or figure foule speech, which our courtly maker shall in any case shunne, least of a Poet he become a Buffon or rayling companion, the Latines called him *Scurra*.<sup>81</sup>

The 'perverser sense' that people may hear is the type of pun discussed in the section on early modern terms above. 'Scurra' can be translated as loafer, joker or city-bred clown.<sup>82</sup> To be scurrilous is to be a joker or satirist. The idea of courtly makers shunning foul speech is far from wholly true of court contexts, in which wit, including on sexual topics, could be a mark of social distinction. The danger here is to go from being a poet, with the respect and high status that may go with this, to being a buffoon. To prevent this, care must be taken to avoid such language. Harington is an example of this issue being played out: his inappropriate use of sexual language – dysphemistic in front of a female audience – may well have got him into trouble at court. He is 'scurra' and deliberately plays with this issue. This shows how comic sexual language can be firmly linked to social status (in this case, rather than morality). Here, we have issues of words (not) being directly spoken, the opposite of euphemism, and, as with Castiglione, Joubert, and others, issues

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<sup>81</sup> Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, p. 212. This shows the context for the quotation in section 2.1 above. See also Dominique Brancher, 'Virgile en bas-de-chausse: Montaigne et la tradition de l'obscénité latine', in *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, LXX-1 (Geneva: Droz, 2008), pp. 95-122 (p. 102).

<sup>82</sup> Morwood (ed.), *Latin Dictionary*, p. 169.

of female audience. The type of audience is important in this extract, as the wrong sort (or the right sort, as they can see through the veil) will interpret more perversely. This third book of Puttenham's also discusses how language has an inherent artificiality so is 'not naturall to man'.<sup>83</sup> This reinforces Wilson's idea discussed above, that nothing is naturally shameful but our thinking makes it so. Like Castiglione, Puttenham points out how adding 'a sillable or letter to or from a word' 'consequently alters the tune and harmonie' of the word to the listener's ear.<sup>84</sup> This is part of kakemphaton, where innocent meanings can be mistaken for naughty ones. Puttenham analyses figures of speech, concluding they are especially artificial.

Therefore, Renaissance writers (both English and French, as well as of other nationalities), influenced by ancient theory, were aware of the questions raised by euphemism – when and whether it should be used, and how effective it was – despite not having the specific word for this concept. The nature of words (and, indeed, whether words' meanings come from nature) was clearly a topic that was weighing on people's minds. It is significant that similar themes appear in different countries at the time. Sometimes it is the case that some writers evidently influence others, but in other cases it seems similar ideas are independently formed.

Perhaps the most important Renaissance work outside of my core texts to comment on issues surrounding comic sexual euphemism is that of Michel de Montaigne. The following pages highlight a few key points raised by his essay 'Sur des vers de Virgile' ['On Some Lines of Virgil'] originally from 1580.<sup>85</sup> Montaigne's chapter has, of course, been very extensively studied. My purpose here is not to revisit this very famous material in any depth, but

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<sup>83</sup> Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, p. 120.

<sup>84</sup> Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, p. 134.

<sup>85</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais, Livre III*, ed. by V.L. Saulnier and Pierre Villey (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965), III.5; Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, ed. and trans. by M.A. Screech (London: Penguin, 2003), III.5. Unless otherwise stated, all French and English Montaigne quotations in this section are from these editions respectively. Other helpful editions include Michel de Montaigne, *Essais* (Paris: Camusat, 1635), III.5; Michel de Montaigne, *Essays* (London: Bradwood, 1613), III.5. The scholarship on Montaigne is vast. A few useful examples are Pierre Villey-Desmeserets, *Les sources & l'évolution des Essais de Montaigne* (Paris: BiblioBazaar, 2009); Michel de Montaigne, *Essais, Livre III* (Memphis: Books LLC, 2011), III.5; Philippe Desan, *Montaigne dans tous ses états* (Fasano: Schena Editore, 2001); A.M. Boase, *The Fortunes of Montaigne: A History of the Essays in France 1580-1669* (London: Methuen & Co, 1935); Olivier Millet, *La première réception des Essais de Montaigne (1580-1640)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1995).

rather to read it solely for insights into the strictly limited question of comic sexual euphemism. He undermines taboos surrounding sexual vocabulary and offers insight into whether euphemistic statements actually draw more attention to the subject under discussion than explicitness. He raises many heated and potentially outrageous issues. He is an example of a writer who reserves Latin for his most shocking vocabulary. Yet, he can also shock in the vernacular. He demonstrates determination not to hide behind euphemism or shy away from the truth, however inconvenient or unpleasant, quoting from an unidentified Latin source: '*Non pudeat dicere quod non pudeat sentire* [Let us not be ashamed to say whatever we are not ashamed to think]'.<sup>86</sup> Although he states '*J'ayme la modestie*'<sup>87</sup> ['I like modesty'],<sup>88</sup> '*Au reste, je me suis ordonné d'oser dire tout ce que j'ose faire: et me desplaïs des pensées mesmes impubliables. La pire de mes actions et conditions, ne me semble pas si laide, comme je trouve laid et lasche, de ne l'oser avouer*'<sup>89</sup> [he has 'moreover bidden myself to dare to write whatever I dare to do: I am loath even to have thoughts which I cannot publish. The worst of my deeds or qualities does not seem to me as ugly as the ugly cowardice of not daring to avow it'].<sup>90</sup> When he '*fein[t]*' [dissembles], he says, he suffers and that '*le mentir me semble encore pire que la paillardise*'<sup>91</sup> ['lying has always seemed worse to me than lechery'].<sup>92</sup> He portrays this attitude as having been thrust upon him rather than a choice. The time has come, he says, to talk openly but '*n'est par jugement, que j'ay choisi cette sorte de parler scandaleux: c'est Nature, qui l'a choisi pour moy*'<sup>93</sup> ['It is not my judgement which makes me choose this shocking sort of talk: Nature chose it for me'].<sup>94</sup> The frankness advocated in all these quotations is applied to, among other things, questions of sex. Both Montaigne's style of argument and choice of debate topic can be said to undermine early modern sexual taboos.

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<sup>86</sup> Montaigne, *Essays*, ed. and trans. by Screech, III.5. See also Montaigne, *Essais* (1635), III.5; Montaigne, *Essays* (1613), III.5.

<sup>87</sup> Montaigne, *Les Essais*, ed. by Saulnier and Villey, III.5.

<sup>88</sup> Montaigne, *Essays*, ed. and trans. by Screech, III.5.

<sup>89</sup> Montaigne, *Les Essais*, ed. by Saulnier and Villey, III.5.

<sup>90</sup> Montaigne, *Essays*, ed. and trans. by Screech, III.5.

<sup>91</sup> Montaigne, *Les Essais*, ed. by Saulnier and Villey, III.5.

<sup>92</sup> Montaigne, *Essays*, ed. and trans. by Screech, III.5.

<sup>93</sup> Montaigne, *Les Essais*, ed. by Saulnier and Villey, III.5.

<sup>94</sup> Montaigne, *Essays*, ed. and trans. by Screech, III.5.

The use of sexual vocabulary is, of course, intertwined with the use, or lack of use, of euphemism. Montaigne questions the practice of euphemising sexual activity:

Qu'a fait l'action genitale aux hommes, si naturelle, si necessaire, et si juste, pour n'en oser parler sans vergongne, at pour l'exclurre des propos serieux et reglez? [...] Est-ce à dire que moins nous en exhalons en parole, d'autant nous avons loy d'en grossir la pensée? Car il est bon que les mots qui sont le moins en usage, moins escrits et mieux teuz, sont les mieux sceus et plus generalement cognus. [...] c'est une action que nous avons mis en la franchise du silence.<sup>95</sup>

[The genital activities of mankind are so natural, so necessary and so right: what have they done to make us never dare mention them without embarrassment and to exclude them from serious orderly conversation? [...] Does that mean that the less we breathe a word about sex the more right we have to allow it to fill our thoughts? It is interesting that the words which are least used, least written and the least spoken are the very ones which are best known and most widely recognised. [...] It is interesting too that they mean an act which we have placed under the protection of silence.]<sup>96</sup>

The phrase 'la franchise du silence' is paradoxical, since 'franchise' is linked to frankness. If talk of such things and terms surrounding 'genital activities' are excluded from polite, orderly, or serious conversation, this has implications for comedy or impolite conversation. In this case, silence and this exclusion from conversation falls under negative politeness, the avoidance of taboos. This implies its opposite, the addressing of taboos, includes sexual humour. Theatre often presents this positive politeness as taking place in

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<sup>95</sup> Montaigne, *Les Essais*, ed. by Saulnier and Villey, III.5.

<sup>96</sup> Montaigne, *Essays*, ed. and trans. by Screech, III.5. See also Montaigne, *Essais* (1635), III.5; Montaigne, *Essays* (1613), III.5. The issue of silence will be discussed in the Conclusion section 6.1.

lower classes than that of the playwrights. However, there are more historical records of higher classes using positive politeness.<sup>97</sup>

The most significant quotation of Montaigne's on euphemism in his essay comments on how its use actually serves to illuminate the offensive content it tries to shield. Virgil and Lucretius, he argues, treat 'lasciveté' ['sexual pleasure'] with 'reservéement et discrettement' ['reserve and discretion'], but this seems to Montaigne 'luy donner plus de lustre; et dict-on que le coup du Soleil et du vent, est plus poissant par reflexion qu'à droit fil [...] il y a certaines autres choses qu'on cache pour les montrer'<sup>98</sup> ['to reveal it and throw a closer light upon it [...] it is said that the sun and wind beat down more heavily on us when deflected than when they come direct [...] some things are hidden in order to reveal them more'].<sup>99</sup> This is because euphemism can draw attention and encourage imagination more than if the words were just said explicitly. There is a link here to Erasmus' point that euphemism can be more obscene than the 'simple word'. Montaigne, therefore, uses figures such as Virgil both as role models for some positions, but also explains when we should turn away from their example. Alternatively, we could continue to follow their example of euphemism if our real goal is to highlight our subject matter. Montaigne is often being ironic in these quotations and wry observations, but the points he makes about directness, explicitness, and euphemism are very significant. For my restricted purposes, he offers important messages on euphemism and how the indirect portrayal of comic sexual content can often be stronger than the direct.

Writers from the ancient and early modern eras therefore have important arguments to consider when it comes to euphemising, the morality involved, and the nature of Latin and the vernacular, offering meaningful terms for a word that did not yet exist in English. This chapter concludes the majority of the theory required for this thesis, although some of the most important aspects will be applied directly to texts throughout. The following

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<sup>97</sup> Chapter three section 3.2 has many examples of the monarch and high status figures enjoying such language. Of course, there is a historical bias towards the upper classes, who are much more likely to have their remarks recorded than those of lower status.

<sup>98</sup> Montaigne, *Les Essais*, ed. by Saulnier and Villey, III.5.

<sup>99</sup> Montaigne, *Essays*, ed. and trans. by Screech, III.5. See also Montaigne, *Essais* (1635), III.5; Montaigne, *Essays* (1613), III.5.



chapters now turn to the practice of comic sexual euphemism: the first type of text to be considered in detail in this way is texts associated with the court.

### Chapter Three: Texts Associated with the Court

This chapter explores three courtly texts: Baldesar Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* from 1528, Pierre de Brantôme's *Les Dames galantes* written in the late sixteenth century but first printed c.1659 (the English version of which, *Lives of Fair and Gallant Ladies*, was printed c.1666), and Sir John Harington's translation of Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* from the 1580s (the original Italian of which first appeared in 1516). To ensure thoroughness when considering Harington's text, I also refer to Ariosto in modern English translation and early modern French from Jean Martin in 1544.<sup>1</sup> Competing and highly gendered social pressures at court, to protect one's reputation yet also be seen as wittily sociable and even entertaining, make the court environment a particularly potent one for the operation of comic sexual language. The court can be depicted as a lewd environment, on the one hand, while, on the other, courtiers had to be careful and consider their reputation. Sexual humour made a vital contribution to the reputation of both men and women. Euphemism, therefore, was a useful tool to veil one's language in a way that has the potential to be seen through. One could be seen to be witty but also cover one's back if accused of being too bawdy, by pointing to the 'innocent' meaning of comic sexual euphemism.

In courtly contexts, rhetorical rules of behaviour can clash with reality. What this reality is in and of itself is also problematic to determine, since the domination of various rules of behaviour and performance makes it far from clear-cut. One of these rules is the requirement to be seen to avoid discussing

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<sup>1</sup> Baldassarre Castiglione, *Le Parfait Courtisan du Comte Baltassar Castillonois*, trans. by Gabriel Chapuis (Paris: Bonfons, 1585); Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Courtier*, trans. by Thomas Hoby (London: Seres, 1561); Unless otherwise stated, French and English Castiglione quotations (the latter of which are by signature mark) are from these two above editions respectively; Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. and ed. by George Bull (London: Penguin, 2003); Seigneur de Brantôme, *Les Dames galantes*, ed. by Paul Morand (Paris: Gallimard, 1981). This title was not Brantôme's, but was added later; Seigneur de Brantôme, *Lives of Fair and Gallant Ladies* 1922, trans. by A.R. Allinson, <<http://tinyurl.com/nenpex2>> [accessed 17 July 2013], n.p.; Lodovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso in English*, trans. by John Harington (London: Field, 1591); later editions of Harington are from 1607 and 1634; John Harington, *Ariosto's Orlando Furioso: Selections from the Translation of Sir John Harington*, ed. by Rudolf Gottfried (London: Indiana University Press, 1966); Loys Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Jean Martin (Lyon: Sabon, 1544); Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Guido Waldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Throughout this chapter, where no reference is given for a translation, it is my own. The Brantôme section's early footnotes detail Allinson's translation for the quotations there.

the taboo, while often using the injunction against taboo topics in order to discuss them. George Puttenham states that the courtly maker shall shun foul speech,<sup>2</sup> but often this does not happen. If a courtier makes a lewd joke, this will be much more noticeable than if a peasant does. The chances of being recorded and your remark being passed on are much higher in a court environment, where much monitoring takes place. If deemed witty, the courtier could move up in social status. If deemed to have gone too far, his reputation and standing could be ruined – as Castiglione discusses and Brantôme and Harington demonstrate in and outside of their writings.

The court environment is the ultimate stage so in many ways is like its own theatre. The interaction of a court is like a story, a play in costume, a game in itself, where complex rules dictate the necessary sophistication required of its members at various levels. Each stratum has a different code it can follow and needs to know the mostly unwritten<sup>3</sup> rules needed for the level it is at. The monarch, for example, can be crude when their courtiers cannot always be. This is a game or dance, but one by which the players or dancers move up and down the social ladder, demonstrating wit and the ability to use word play to advance their position and, if they fail, making a crude mistake which sends them down said ladder. The language, like the clothing, reveals the standing and aspiration of the players. All this surmounts to the point I made in the Introduction: that sexual humour is more than just thigh-slapping fun but can be deadly serious in certain contexts.

The situation for women was also torturous and contradictory; this chapter will demonstrate how joking was part of wit, yet women were not supposed to demonstrate outwardly that they were able to understand too much. On the other hand, there were circumstances where women were given slightly more permission than usual to participate in this humour. These texts feature comic sexual language and euphemism as well as discussing how, when, and if such language should be used. This chapter also demonstrates how the theme of power – particularly that of men over women, but also that of the monarch over their court – is affected by and affects comic sexual language. In the Elizabethan age, issues of gender and power were

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<sup>2</sup> George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London: Field, 1589), p. 212.

<sup>3</sup> Apart from in works like Castiglione's.

particularly prevalent with a powerful woman on the throne as the ultimate paradox. The influence of other powerful and royal women also serves to create this tension, such as the impact made by Mary I and Marie de Guise. Sexual jokes reveal attitudes to gender, power, and the early modern honour culture. These texts have been examined by other scholars before, but this chapter will demonstrate why it is important to look at them again afresh, bringing in theory on politeness and comedy.

It is important to start with Castiglione, as he provides theoretical discussion and background to relevant debates, so performs a similar role to many of the texts considered in the Introduction and second chapter. Such texts reflect on the use of the type of language I examine. Castiglione was educated at the court of Lodovico Sforza, which undoubtedly influenced his writings on courtly behaviour. In 1524, he entered Papal service and was Papal Nuncio in Spain until his death five years later. The Papal environment was a special kind of court where he would have learnt about diplomacy and blasphemy.<sup>4</sup> His *Book of the Courtier* was, of course, highly influential throughout Renaissance Europe. Like Puttenham and Thomas Wilson,<sup>5</sup> Castiglione asks how the meaning of words can be changed (to be more or less sexually obscene, for example) by small adjustments of syllables or the addition of ellipses. One important issue in his writing is whether or not one can tell jokes, often sexual in nature, in front of and about women and how damaging this can be for their reputation.<sup>6</sup>

Reputation is also very important for Brantôme, whose reports of court gossip claim to disapprove of scandal-mongering while playfully calling attention to scandalous affairs. This may seem to involve at best a double standard and at worst an element of hypocrisy, but it is also part of the joke. He is rather like a Renaissance tabloid journalist, regaling readers with stories of scandal but (nearly) always protecting his sources. The younger son of the Baron de Bourdeille, he was born in 1540 and was attached to the court of

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<sup>4</sup> 'Blasphemy' is the etymological opposite of 'euphemism', meaning 'evil-speaking'; C.T. Onions (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 98; Castiglione, *Book of the Courtier*, trans. and ed. by Bull, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, p. 134; Thomas Wilson. *The Arte of Rhetorique* (n.p.: Hiidenkirja, 2012), p. 173.

<sup>6</sup> Castiglione, *Le Parfait Courtisan* (1585), p. 283, p. 299; Castiglione, *The Courtier*, trans. by Hoby (1561), sig.L4, sig.M4<sup>v</sup>.

Marguerite de Valois through his mother's family. He knew several courts, including the French royal court, and he also met Mary, Queen of Scots, and Elizabeth I in Scotland and England respectively. He was a soldier, but was injured falling off a horse and became almost a recluse around 1589 (while still receiving visitors to his house in the Dordogne). He spent his remaining years writing up gossip and scandalous reports until his death in 1614.<sup>7</sup> Some of his stories exemplify what Castiglione teaches – that those who impugn a lady's honour deserve severe punishment – featuring men who are indeed punished for this.

Sir John Harington often uses a tone similar to that of Brantôme. They both play with the joke of claiming to protect women's sexual reputation while spreading as much gossip about women as the scandal-mongers they claim to condemn. Unlike Brantôme, Harington's reports are of fictional gossip in his translation of *Orlando Furioso* – though it can be asked whether this is any less damaging to, by extension, the perception of actual women. Born in 1561, he was Elizabeth's godson. His text is very apt for chapter three for many reasons. Harington was a courtier himself, creating a stir in Elizabethan and Jacobean courts. Ludovico Ariosto was also attached to the Italian court and often attacked court life in his satires. Born in 1474, Ariosto's father was an official of the Ferrarese court and Ariosto himself spent his life at court and performing courtly duties. Harington's canto which is analysed here is also set in a court. Harington died in 1612 and Ariosto in 1533.<sup>8</sup>

The comic sexual language of my primary corpus in this chapter can be put into context by briefly examining a fourth early modern text which sheds light on what the court was expected to be. Edmund Spenser provides a significant summary of how people should ideally behave at court in the opening of the sixth book of his *Faerie Queene* (1596):

Of Court it seemes, men Courtesie doe call,  
For that it there most useth to abound;  
And well beseemeth that in Princes hall

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<sup>7</sup> *Notable Names Database*, <[www.nndb.com/people/152/000102843/](http://www.nndb.com/people/152/000102843/)> [accessed 10 June 2015], n.p.

<sup>8</sup> Harington, *Orlando Furioso*, ed. by Gottfried (1966), pp. 12-13; Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), p. vii.

That vertue should be plentifully found,  
Which of all goodly manners is the ground,  
And roote of civill conversation.<sup>9</sup>

Although this concerns the fairy court, it naturally alludes to the Elizabethan one. All my sources indicate that Spenser's portrayal of the court is an ideal that was not followed assiduously. In fact, the evidence demonstrates the exact opposite. As Ullrich Langer argues, Castiglione and Renaissance courtly literature 'chart an uneven course between the description of an illustrious courtly ideal never fully incarnate and the establishment of a set of rules enabling courtly practice and prescription' which contradict each other.<sup>10</sup> Civil conversation was associated with the Italians,<sup>11</sup> but even Harington's translation of an Italian text (or, indeed, Ariosto's original) does not obey this stereotype. Indeed, Spenser probably has an ulterior motive for expressing this ideal of court culture: by his sixth book he is famously angry and disillusioned, having been overlooked by Elizabeth for the promotion he expected. There is, therefore, a possibility he is being sarcastic and tongue-in-cheek here, especially with the phrase 'virtue *should* be plentifully found' (my emphasis). This could hint that in actuality there were power plays and nastiness instead.

All three of the main writers considered in this chapter tend to play with the boundary of acceptability and delight in the taboo. Important questions for these texts include the following. What comic sexual language do these texts use; how, when, and with what reflection – to what extent did courtiers engage with or make a show of avoiding the comic and sexual? Are the texts approving or disapproving of such use, or is the picture painted a more complex one than simply approval or disapproval; can we take disapproval at face value? What roles, revealed by the humour, do gender and power play? What sociolinguistic standards for dealing with the taboo are acknowledged but broken, and how well does linguistic theory apply to these texts? What are

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<sup>9</sup> Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Thomas P. Roche (Middlesex: Penguin, 1987), p. 878.

<sup>10</sup> Ullrich Langer, 'Merit in Courtly Literature: Castiglione, Rabelais, Marguerite de Navarre, and Le Caron', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 41 (1988), 218-241 (p. 218).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Stefano Guazzo, *La Civile Conversation* (Brescia: Bozzola, 1574).

the similarities in terms of language between courtly texts and contemporaneous drama?<sup>12</sup>

### 3.1 Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*

There has been much research done on Castiglione.<sup>13</sup> However, no one before has compared early modern English and French terminology for jokes and comic sexual language in the court environment in the way my chapter does. JoAnn Cavallo's article, for example, points out how Castiglione's section on joke-telling has been 'deemed by a number of critics as uninteresting'.<sup>14</sup> Cavallo examines joke-telling in her text but as a commentary on regional attitudes, not comic sexual language, and does not compare English and French versions. This is worth doing, since the discrepancy between the two languages is significant. The French terms are often considerably more charged than Thomas Hoby's English, which can come across as uncomfortable and less playful in comparison. There are many moments when the English flounders or is afraid of the issues raised, so attempts to stamp out the ambiguity.<sup>15</sup> The semantic richness of the French provides a nexus of vocabulary with many constantly changing implications – including but not limited to comic sexual euphemism.

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<sup>12</sup> Brantôme and Harington use many of the same metaphorical fields as theatrical English texts which I analyse.

<sup>13</sup> For example, Wayne A. Rebhorn, *Courtly Performances: Masking and Festivity in Castiglione's Book of the Courtier* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978); Virginia Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue: Literary Dialogue in its Social and Political Contexts, Castiglione to Galileo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). These first two are among the best scholarship along with Burke (see below); Mary Augusta Scott, 'The Book of the Courtier: A Possible Source of Benedick and Beatrice', *PMLA*, 16 (1901), 475-502; JoAnn Cavallo, 'Joking Matters: Politics and Dissimulation in Castiglione's Book of the Courtier', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 53 (2000), 402-424; John Bernard, "'Formiamo un Cortegiano': Castiglione and the Aims of Writing", *MLN*, 115 (2000), 34-63; Hilary Adams, "'Il Cortegiano' and 'Il Galateo'", *The Modern Language Review*, 42 (1947), 457-466; Nadine Page, 'Beatrice: "My Lady Disdain"', *Modern Language Notes*, 50 (1935), 494-499; Ullrich Langer, 'Merit in Courtly Literature: Castiglione, Rabelais, Marguerite de Navarre, and Le Caron'; Gerry Milligan, 'The Politics of Effeminacy in "Il Cortegiano"', *Italica*, 83 (2006), 345-366; David Starkey, 'The Court: Castiglione's Ideal and Tudor Reality; Being a Discussion of Thomas Wyatt's Satire Addressed to Sir Francis Bryan', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 45 (1982), 232-239.

<sup>14</sup> Cavallo, 'Joking Matters', p. 421.

<sup>15</sup> The distance between the languages has been somewhat hidden by the fact that modern translations in English, such as that of George Bull, can be closer to the early modern French than the early modern English.

The popularity and influence of Castiglione's text is demonstrated by the number of its translations in this period. As Peter Burke outlines, approximately 'sixty editions of the text in languages other than Italian were published in the ninety-two years 1528-1619'. These include twenty-three French editions between 1537 and 1592, seventeen Latin editions between 1561 and 1619 (of which seven were in England 1571-1619, all by the translator Bartholomew Clerke, and none in France), and three English editions between 1561 and 1603.<sup>16</sup> One 1588 edition, printed in England by Elizabeth's ambassador to France, Thomas Hoby, has the Italian, French, and English side by side.<sup>17</sup> According to Mary Augusta Scott, Hoby (whose 1561 edition I use in this chapter) provides 'far and away the most enduring Elizabethan translation from the Italian. [...] Hoby's English limps behind the courtly grace of the Italian, and it is at times inaccurate, but it is throughout sympathetic, and is on the whole an excellent piece of work'.<sup>18</sup> This is an important point for my research, which indicates that the French use of language captures more of this courtly grace than the English.<sup>19</sup> There are examples of Hoby's limping translation throughout this section and in Table 1 (every example of Castiglione being translated into English, unless otherwise stated, is from Hoby). Table 1 illuminates how far the English falls short of the French in this case. When we get to Harington in section 3.3, we will in some ways find the opposite, since Harington's is the more vibrant compared to the French translation. This is, however, unusual. If you are looking for accuracy over vibrancy, though, Harington's version should not be recommended. His may be the more interesting, but it is not as close to the original as the French. In this sense, he can be said to 'limp' in his translation like Hoby.

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<sup>16</sup> Peter Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier: The European Reception of Castiglione's Cortegiano* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp. 55, 158-162; Scott, 'The Book of the Courtier: A Possible Source of Benedick and Beatrice', p. 476.

<sup>17</sup> Baldesar Castilio, *The Courtier*, trans. by Thomas Hoby (London: Wolfe, 1588). In different countries and across various editions, Castiglione is called by variations on his name, such as Castilio.

<sup>18</sup> Scott, 'The Book of the Courtier: A Possible Source of Benedick and Beatrice', p. 476.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Burke also claims that many French and English readers would have read it in the original Italian, since Italian culture was perceived as desirably prestigious and Italian was likely to be the first modern foreign language learned in France and England at this time. Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier*, p. 56. The influence of Castiglione in courts across the Renaissance world cannot be ignored.



Castiglione discusses the appropriateness of jokes which often use comic sexual language in mixed-gendered company.<sup>20</sup> This work instructs courtiers how to behave, via dialogue between characters representing different views and positions. Castiglione himself is not featured directly as the conversation is depicted as taking place while he is away. However, we can speculate some characters – particularly Bernardo – represent his personal opinion. It is thought that Castiglione’s book was highly influenced by his personal experience.<sup>21</sup> The second book of Castiglione’s text, of particular relevance here, discusses ‘Practical jokes; to be used discreetly, particularly where women are concerned’.<sup>22</sup> The character Emilia Pia, based on a real woman of that name who died the year *The Book of the Courtier* is published, says to Bernardo, ‘cessez maintenant de nous faire rire, en employant comptes & faceties, & nous enseignez comme nous en devons user, d’ou on les tire: & tout ce que vous congnoissez sur cete matiere’ (pp. 254-255) [‘Leave now making us laugh with practising of jests, and teach us how we should use them, and whence they are devised, and whatever else you know in this matter’] (sig.K4<sup>r</sup>). It is significant that this request comes from a high status woman who was, according to George Bull, ‘a model of virtue’, perhaps aiming to demonstrate a desire to understand jokes so as to be virtuous in the avoidance of such humour.<sup>23</sup> This chapter of my thesis will comment on the choice of vocabulary, particularly for ‘faceties’ [‘jest’s’]. At the end of the section on Castiglione, Table 1 brings together all the French early modern terms, their definitions in Randle Cotgrave’s dictionary, and the early modern English versions from Hoby, to demonstrate the discrepancy. The English ‘jest’s’ above is simpler than all the connotations the French ‘faceties’ has, which includes a pretty encounter in speech.<sup>24</sup> This is an example of Hoby ‘limping’ behind his French counterpart.

Bernardo’s reply is that he does want to ‘fuir ceste charge’ [‘refuse this labour’], but he wonders whether he should ‘en la presence d’auditeurs qui

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<sup>20</sup> Such issues are important for other writers examined in this thesis such as Joubert.

<sup>21</sup> Scott, ‘The Book of the Courtyer: A Possible Source of Benedick and Beatrice’, pp. 476-477.

<sup>22</sup> Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903), p. ix.

<sup>23</sup> Castiglione, *Book of the Courtier*, trans. and ed. by Bull, p. 28.

<sup>24</sup> See Table 1 for details.

entendent beaucoup mieux que moymesme ce qu'il me faut dire, parl[ant] des faceties' (p. 255) ['take upon me to entreat of jests' 'in the presence of hearers that have much better understanding in that I have to say, than I myself'] (sig.K4<sup>v</sup>). As well as simply flattering his listeners and modestly humbling himself, this comment seems to be aimed at the gentlemen present, showing it is not just women who are considered when it comes to censorship. If men already know such things, the suggestion is that there is no point in re-informing them. Yet it is also a hint that he understands that the women know perfectly well how to use or receive sexual humour, since he was set on this path by a woman. Nevertheless, he goes on to declare he will divulge matters which cause laughter (pp. 255-256, sig.K4<sup>v</sup>). Playing with language and the use of euphemism in these texts is such a cause. More specifically, the nexus of language which includes terms like 'faceties' is discussed in Castiglione's text.

For Bernardo, laughter is provoked when the norm is twisted:

quasi la fontaine d'où naissent les ridicules consiste en une certaine deformité, pource que l'on rit seulement des choses, qui ne conviennent en soy, & semblent mal seantes, encores qu'elles ne le soient pas [...] quasi tousjours ce dont on rit est une chose qui ne convient pas, & toutesfois n'est pas mal seante. (pp. 257-258)

[laughing matters arise [...] from] a certain deformity [...] because a man laugheth only at those matters that are disagreeing in themselves, and (to a man's seeming) are in ill plight, where it is not so in need. [...] the thing that a man always laugheth at, is a matter that soundeth not well, and yet it is not in ill sitting.] (sig.K4<sup>r</sup>)

This goes some way to demonstrate Mary Douglas' point that all jokes have a 'subversive effect on the dominant structure of ideas' and that a 'joke is a play upon form' (in this case, the form of beauty).<sup>25</sup> The subversive nature of the humour in sexual euphemism is part of what makes it positive politeness, denying the negative politeness of wider society. As demonstrated in the

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<sup>25</sup> Mary Douglas, 'Jokes', in Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings: Selected Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 146-164 (p. 150).

Introduction section 1.4, Laurent Joubert's *Traité du ris* [*Treatise on Laughter*] also discusses its link to deformity and acknowledges Cicero's influence in this.<sup>26</sup> If jokes which cause laughter are about the deformed, this may be why it was felt that women should be protected from them. There are, of course, at least two parties involved in the telling of a joke – the teller and the listener – and so two or more levels at which the content can be inappropriate. In Castiglione's debate, it is not just hearers of jokes who can be unsuitable; it can also be inappropriate for gentlemen to be tellers of some types of joke. Bernardo believes that they should be conscious of 'gardant tousjours la dignité de gentil-homme, sans dire parolles deshonestes, ou faire actes moins que honnestes' (p. 266) ['always keeping a state of a gentleman, without speaking filthy words, or doing unbecoming deeds'] (sig.Q4<sup>r</sup>). Again, Hoby's English does not capture the complexity which the French provides. To be without 'honesteté' is more than just speaking filthy words – it is to lack virtue, goodness, integrity, truth, sincerity, worth, decency and a noble disposition.<sup>27</sup> All of these are important for a courtier. Sincerity is an interesting quality with regard to comic sexual euphemism, which is often deliberately insincere, with what it says on the surface not relating directly to its underlying meaning.

Of 'mots ambiguz' ['doubtful words'], he says there are 'plusieurs sortes [...] parquoy il y faut estre advise, pour choisir subtilement les parolles, & fuir celles qui n'ont point de grace' (p. 281) ['many sorts, therefore must a man be circumspect, and choose out terms very artificially, and leave out such as leave the jest cold'] (sig.L4<sup>v</sup>). Significantly, Hoby's English 'doubtful' is not the same as the French 'ambiguz' which can be translated as 'having two meanings'. The French advises the courtier to choose words subtly and avoid those which lack grace, which Hoby's English does not. Artifice was not seen as negatively as it is today, with an early modern emphasis on the 'art'. Even so, ironically, the term 'artificially' loses the subtlety of 'subtly'. 'Subtil' [subtle], a key term in Castiglione, could mean witty but also devilish as in the *King James Bible* Genesis 3:1 – 'Now the serpent was more subtile than any beast

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<sup>26</sup> Laurent Joubert, *Traité du ris* (Lyons: Tournes, 1560); Laurent Joubert, *Treatise on Laughter*, ed. and trans. by Gregory David De Rocher (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1980), pp. 19-27.

<sup>27</sup> See Table 1 for more.

of the field, which the Lord God had made'.<sup>28</sup> Cotgrave captures the wily and crafty facets of this word.<sup>29</sup> It was therefore potentially an asset to a courtier but also conveys a risky and dangerous quality to have. Much of the language in Castiglione's text reveals how wit was a double-edged sword.

'Grace' is also a loaded word which Hoby's English loses in the above quotation, since it was an important thing for a courtier to have. Similarly, 'mots ambiguz' are terms of several kinds with double meanings, which can include comic sexual euphemism. Hoby's English 'doubtful words' is less suggestive. This French phrase, therefore, could be seen as advocating euphemism, as the right artificial words can be the ones which (ostensibly) hide the true meaning of joking phrases. Indeed, another kind of joke discussed here plays on words by altering them: 'Il y a encores une autre sorte de bons mots [...] qui consiste à changer, accoitre, ou diminuer une lettre ou une syllabe' (p. 283) ['changing or increasing, or diminishing of a letter or syllable'] (sig.L4<sup>r</sup>). ('Bons mots',<sup>30</sup> 'faceties', and so on are part of a nexus of key terms for humour, including sexual humour). This method was used in Renaissance France to turn a swearword or obscene term into something that could be (slightly) more acceptable to publish or read. This acts like comic sexual euphemism, where a veil is applied to hide the offensive material yet it can easily be seen through. An example of this could be the use of ellipses, where the reader can fill in the blank for themselves, yet lip service has been paid to including the blank in the first place. How euphemistic this is in practice is highly debatable, as it arguably draws attention to the word rather than shielding its meaning (as Michel de Montaigne highlights).<sup>31</sup> Such humour can also work in the opposite direction, where an innocent phrase is made comic and sexual, such as with *contrepèteries* [spoonerisms].<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *King James Bible 1611 Facsimile* (Michigan: Zondervan, 2011), sig.A2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> See Table 1 below. Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Aslip, 1611), <<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cotgrave/>> [accessed 18 Oct 2013], n.p.

<sup>30</sup> Brantôme also uses this, section 3.2.

<sup>31</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, ed. and trans. by M.A. Screech (London: Penguin, 2003), III.5.

<sup>32</sup> See my second chapter section 2.1 for examples of this with *equivouqué*.

Pierre de Ronsard's *Folastries* of 1553, which are *blasons* or poems dedicated to the celebration of a body part, also use *contrepèteries*.<sup>33</sup> They are also full of comic sexual language with much potential to offend, mentioning the 'Lance au bout d'or' [lance with a golden tip], and 'l'instrument de bonheur' [the instrument of happiness].<sup>34</sup> One of these sonnets' thirteenth line plays with the word 'vit' [prick]:<sup>35</sup> 'Par qui l'on vit' [By whom we live], which can be inverted to 'par lui con vit' [Through him the cunt lives]. Another sonnet by Ronsard is full of diminutives and calls a hole 'constante', which means 'constant' but plays with 'con' [cunt] at the beginning of the word.<sup>36</sup> This is very common in French writing of this time. Ronsard therefore provides examples in French of playing with syllables and so on in jokes which Castiglione discusses.<sup>37</sup> Ronsard's writings were condemned and burned. He was a court poet who, like the main writers in this chapter, dabbled in the sexually offensive for the sake of humour.

Bernardo continues, 'C'est aussi une chose plaisante d'interpreter un vers ou plusieurs, le prenant en autre sens que ne l'a prins l'auteur, ou quelque autre dit commun, quelque fois au mesme propos, mais en changeant quelque parolle' (p. 283) ['It is also a merry device to mingle together a verse or more, taking it in another meaning than the author intended, or some other common saying, sometime in the very same meaning but altering a word'] (sig.L4<sup>r</sup>). Cotgrave's translations of 'plaisante' or 'plaisanterie' include 'witty' but 'knavish' conceits.<sup>38</sup> This perfectly encapsulates the tension between demonstrating wit but not going too far by becoming too offensive. The limited extent involved in the expectations made of a courtier's wit is a subtlety which Hoby's English neglects. This transformation to obscenity is the type of writing which annoys Erasmus.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Pierre de Ronsard, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Jean Céard and others (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), pp. 570-571.

<sup>34</sup> Ronsard, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Céard, p. 571.

<sup>35</sup> Ronsard, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Céard, p. 570. This word will be very important in chapter four section 4.1.

<sup>36</sup> Ronsard, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Céard, p. 571.

<sup>37</sup> A similar playing with language occurs in Harington's *Metamorphosis of Ajax*, which I will examine further in the section 3.3 of this chapter.

<sup>38</sup> See Table 1 below. Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

<sup>39</sup> For a Roman example of this which twists Virgil's words to describe a wedding night, see Ausonius, *Works*, trans. by Hugh G. Evelyn White (London: William Heinemann, 1989), pp. 370-375. The merry device is also used by Boccaccio, as shown in the following chapter, and,

This 'merry device' above is a technique Rabelais uses, by turning religious verse into pieces of humour, such as lines from psalms given lewd meanings. For Erasmus, it is 'worse than obscene to adapt some blameless piece of writing to a filthy theme'.<sup>40</sup> Castiglione also comments on such uses of religion in comedy: 'Il faut pariellement garder que la raillerie ne soit impie ou illicite: car, pensant estre veu subtil, l'affaire tourne en après en blasme' (p. 298) ['A man must take heed also this telling be not wicked, and that the matter intend not (to appear quick-witted) to blasphemy'] (sig.M4<sup>r</sup>). Both Castiglione and Erasmus, therefore, argue 'blameless' pieces of writing,<sup>41</sup> such as religious text, should not be given new funny or rude meanings. The French 'raillerie' is much richer than Hoby's English 'telling', including jesting, scoffing, and mocking. It is much harder to avoid being wicked in a jest or mockery than in a simple 'telling'. The message is to avoid irreligious jokes or such attempt at wit can turn into blasphemy, using the key word 'subtil' but here more negatively – closer to devilish than witty. Hoby's English has a shift to 'quick-witted' which is less powerful than the French 'subtil'. Castiglione's text also describes how 'L'on dit aussi quelquefois un mesme mot, à autre fin qu'il n'esten usage' (p. 288) ['Also sometime a man speaketh the very same word, but to another end the common use is'] (sig.M2<sup>r</sup>) and there can be a 'secrete signification' (p. 318) [hidden meaning], 'privily' and sometimes with 'a certain wantonness' (sig.P3<sup>v</sup>). This includes innuendo and comic sexual euphemism where one meaning can provide a layer of covering over another. Changing the meaning of words, with transformations from being perceived as innocent to being perceived as obscene, is how comic sexual euphemism operates.

Just as, according to Bernardo, those who 'veulent se monstrer facetieux avec peu de reverence envers Dieu, meritant d'estre chassez de la compagnie de tout Gentilhomme' ['go about to show their pregnant wit with small reverence to Godward, deserve to be excluded out of every gentleman's company'], the same holds for

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as Joubert picks up on, occurs in François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. by Sir Thomas Urquhart (London: Everyman's Library, 1994), p. 119.

<sup>40</sup> Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Michael J. Heath in John W. O'Malley and Louis A. Perraud (eds). *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 203-438 (p. 428).

<sup>41</sup> Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, p. 428.

tous ceux qui sont ords & deshonestes en parler, & qui n'ont aucun respect en la presence des dames, de maniere qu'il semble, que tout leur plaisir soit de les faire rougir de honte, & sur ce vont cerchans broquards & subtiles railleries. (pp. 298-299)

[they that be filthy and bawdy in talk, and that in the presence of women have no manner respect, and seem to take none other delight but to make women blush for shame, and upon this go seeking out merry and jesting words]. (sig.M4<sup>r</sup>-sig.M4<sup>v</sup>)

Here we have again the stronger and more powerful 'deshonestes' in French, compared to Hoby's English 'filthy and bawdy'. The former betrays part of what it is to be a courtier, while the latter is within the bounds of possibility for courtiers. It is possible to be bawdy and still be a courtier, but it is more problematic to be a courtier who lacks virtue, worth, and so on.<sup>42</sup> The French therefore undermines more what is inherent in the nature of the ideal courtier. The term 'subtiles' is used again too, here meaning 'jesting' but also with a warning about its potential for danger and offence. Hoby's English 'merry and jesting' do not seem negative in and of themselves, but the French is more ambiguous. 'Railleries' is another example in this quotation, meaning 'to mock', which is semantically richer than Hoby's English.<sup>43</sup>

A joke that, according to Castiglione's text, is 'ingénieux' [clever] or 'witty' when heard by men 'devînt [...] mal convenable' (pp. 298-299) ['appears bawdy and not to be spoken'] when ladies are present (sig.M4<sup>r</sup>-sig.M4<sup>v</sup>). Female presence makes it indecent and unseemly.<sup>44</sup> Castiglione implies that chastity is not an absolute standard that a woman might possess but rather is all about performance and how one presents oneself.<sup>45</sup> One of these signs is the reactions shown to sexual humour. This means the performance of chastity is another side of the performance of wit. This creates a tricky situation – knowingness and the ability to understand may be seen as

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<sup>42</sup> See the above discussion or Table 1 below.

<sup>43</sup> See Table 1 for full definitions.

<sup>44</sup> This is an attitude that affects the texts in this chapter, with Harington addressing ladies-in-waiting, and will be very relevant for my next chapter as well.

<sup>45</sup> Of course, a woman could be chaste as well as merely showing the signs of chastity.

a good thing on the one hand, yet, on the other hand, for women this cannot be seen to go too far. Another character, Pallavicino, responds that:

Les femmes [...] ne prennant plaisir d'ouïr parler d'autre chose, & vous leur voulez oster: quant à moy, je me suis trouvé rougir de honte pour les parolles profereés par les femmes, & beaucoup plus souvent que les hommes. (p. 299)

[Women have none other delight but to hear of such matters, and yet will you deprive them of it. And for my part I have been ready to blush for shame at words which women have spoken to me oftener than men]. (sig.M4<sup>v</sup>)

It is intriguing to consider whether Pallavicino blushes at women's words because of the words themselves or because they come from women – if men had said them, would they have caused blushing? Bernardo's response is that 'Je ne parle pas de telles femmes [...] mais des femmes vertueuses, qui meritent reverence & honneur de tous Gentils-hommes' (p. 299) ['I speak not of such women as these be', who make shocking statements, 'but of the virtuous that deserve to be revered and honoured of all gentlemen'] (sig.M4<sup>v</sup>).<sup>46</sup> These statements set up a double standard for jokes women are allowed to make as opposed to those men can make, which applied at court and which Brantôme especially uses to his advantage.

Castiglione's text argues that the courtier should beware of those who:

di[re] des choses qui offensent ceux-là, qu'il ne voudrait offenser, ce qui est une ignorance, pource que se trouvent aucuns qui pensent estre obligez à parler & poindre, sans aucun respect toutes les fois qu'ils peuvent: & puis après qu'il en aille de cela comme il pourra. Entre telle maniere de gens sont ceux qui pour dire subtilement une parolle, ne se gardent point de maculer l'honneur d'une noble dame: ce qui est tres mal fait & digne de tres-grief chastiment, pource qu'en ce

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<sup>46</sup> In the debate raised by Joubert, in section 4.1, we also find women being further categorised into groups who can (such as married women) and cannot (such as virgins) be allowed to hear shocking content.



cas les femmes sont du nombre des miserables: & pour ceste cause ne meritent en cela estre piqueés & taxeés, n'ayans aucunes armes pour se defendre. (p. 232)

[say things that may offend them whom he would not offend (which is ignorance). For some there be that think they are bound to speak and to nip without regard, as often as they can, however the matter go afterward. And among these kind of persons are they, that to speak a word which should seem to come of a readiness of wit, pass not for staining of a worthy gentlewoman's honesty, which is a very naughty matter and worthy of punishment. Because in this point women are in the number of [...] souls and persons in misery, and therefore deserve not to be nipped in it, for they have not weapon to defend themselves.] (sig.P3<sup>v</sup>-sig.P3<sup>r</sup>)

The French states that the women do not merit being mocked and teased. Hoby's English version of the Italian, 'nipped', is one of the few times it is fairly close to Cotgrave's definitions of 'poindre' and 'piqueés & taxeés',<sup>47</sup> although some of the complexities are still missed. The subtleties of, for example, being ridden from 'piqueés' are missed and being assessed and putting a price on from 'taxeés' are not included. This coheres with the metaphorical field of sex/women and riding and sex/women and money, discussed further in the Harington section 3.3. Castiglione does not make it clear whether impugning a lady's honour with sexual jokes means telling jokes about the lady or merely telling any inappropriate joke in front of her. Probably it is both, since each can cause damage. Even if the joke is about someone else, her reaction to it can lead to gossip about herself. Power is all-important for these texts which concern comic sexual language and women's reputation. In this and many other cases, the men have the power. This passage illustrates an odd theological point that women are lesser, almost below the level of children, so cannot defend themselves – like a warning not to mock the afflicted. This is a power move, much like those in Brantôme, since women are involved in the dialogue. Indeed, it has been observed more than once that Emilia shares

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<sup>47</sup> See Table 1.

characteristics with *Much Ado About Nothing's* Beatrice, who plays a vital role in the wit and banter of the intrigue.<sup>48</sup> There are unspoken power plays at work here in Castiglione's text. The idea of staining honour and a woman's reputation is a key dialectic of many of the jests I examine in this chapter. There is pressure for them to be 'subtil' [clever, witty] but not offensive, especially to women.

Bernardo admits that women can be capable of making 'ingenieuses & belles' (p. 338) ['witty and pretty'] jokes (sig.Z3<sup>v</sup>), but on the whole wishes to divorce women from the context of jokes. 'Ingenieuses' is almost a synonym for 'subtlety' and is another part of the wide nexus of vocabulary. Gaspare, another character, argues:

Certainement, seigneur Bernardo, [...] vous estes trop partial à l'endroit de ces dames: he pourquoy voulez vous que les hommes ayent plus de respect aux femmes, que les femmes, aux hommes? Nostre honneur ne nous doit il pas estre aussi cher, comme à elles le leur? Vous semble il donques que les femmes doivent poindre les hommes & par parolles & par moquerie, en tout chose, sans aucun respect, ne que les hommes soient muets & encores les remercient? (p. 340)

[Truly, M. Bernardo [...] you are too partial to these women. And why will you that men should have more respect to women than women to men? Set not you as much by your honesty, as they do by theirs? Think you then that women ought to nip men both with words and mocks in every matter without any regard, and men should stand with a flea in their ear, and thank them for it?] (sig.Z4<sup>v</sup>)

As is shown in Table 1, the definition of 'moquerie' includes a proverb which states that he who might well be mocked mocks his neighbour. This perfectly captures the idea of women being mocked by men with stains to their sexual reputation and mocking back – although it could be dangerous to mock back. 'Poindre' is quite close to the English 'nip', but Cotgrave's definition of 'moquerie' provides many complex synonyms for what in Hoby's English here

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<sup>48</sup> For example, Scott, 'The Book of the Courtyer: A Possible Source of Benedick and Beatrice'; Page, 'Beatrice: "My Lady Disdain"'.

is conveyed in just the one word 'mocks'.<sup>49</sup> Again, we have Hoby's English version being simpler than the French. Bernardo counters this with:

Je ne dy pas [...] que les femmes ne doivent avoir ès faceties & aux bourdes le respect aux hommes, que nous avons dict: trop bien dy-je qu'elles peuvent, avec peu de licence, poindre les hommes peu honnestes, que non pas les hommes elles. (p. 341)

[I say not the contrary, but women in their jests and merry pranks ought to have the respects to men which we have spoken of. Yet I say with more liberty may they touch men of small honesty, than men may them.] (sig.Z4<sup>v</sup>)

As Table 1 demonstrates, the definition of 'honestes' includes what, as in Spenser's account, might be expected of a courtier – being civil and courteous. Being without this then could undermine how much of a courtier you are; yet at the same time there was also an element of wittiness expected which could lead to being of small honesty. The position of courtiers was therefore a tricky one. This is also another case of Hoby's English term being weaker than the French, as 'touch' does not convey the pricking, stinging, and biting which the French 'poindre' entails.<sup>50</sup>

In this way Castiglione presents more than one side of the argument surrounding women, yet Bernardo's position seems to hold more authority. This passage displays the belief that women should respect men, in a way letting them establish a place for themselves in relation to men. Simultaneously there is a small amount of permission or licence given to women to hit back more and be witty if a man has shown himself to be indecent and of small honesty (in both the French and English, but perhaps more so in the French). The licence is therefore highly gendered and, again, a double-edged sword where being too knowing can stain their own reputation. The French 'bourdes' is much more charged than Hoby's English 'merry pranks', as is often the case with the terms in Castiglione's text, with

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<sup>49</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

<sup>50</sup> The use of the plural 'respects' is curious and the *OED* does not have a definition for it; today a phrase like this (singular) means to take into consideration.

connotations of a lie or trick: Cotgrave gives ‘a jest, fib, tale of a tub’,<sup>51</sup> as discussed in the previous chapter.

Bernardo believes that ‘laquelle on parle mal une fois’ (p. 341) [‘she that hath once an ill name’] (sig.Z4<sup>v</sup>) is irreversibly shamed forever whether the report is true or not. This demonstrates how high the stakes were in this honour culture. Such disgrace could be brought on a woman’s reputation by claiming in a joke her conduct has been shocking in some way, or by telling a sexual joke in front of her which she laughs at, as women were often not meant to understand such things. *The Book of the Courtier* indeed mentions women feigning the inability to understand some topics of conversation.<sup>52</sup> This lends weight to the idea of a gendered definition of the comic and sexual, where women are represented as corruptible so need their chastity, or performance of chastity, to be protected.<sup>53</sup> Patricia Simons discusses this, pointing out how some women were allowed to be present for ‘loose talk’, which presumably includes sexual jokes, ‘as long as she persuasively performed the appearance of modesty and shame’ with, for example, ‘a light blush’.<sup>54</sup> It is debatable whether blushing actually makes you seem less chaste, as you understand the loose talk at least to the extent that you recognise it is rude in some way. Again, this is all about the performance of chastity and self-presentation. In the court context, these ‘facetious’ mean that double-entendres are unusually charged ways of testing a lady’s ‘chastity’ – another power play. Freud’s ideas on sexual jokes as acts of sexual aggression bear weight here, as well as his suggestion that such jokes are often really between men and at a woman’s expense.<sup>55</sup>

Table 1 brings together the key terms from this text for comic sexual language at the court and highlights the distance between the French and English from Hoby. It can be used to further define and identify my critical term ‘comic sexual euphemism’ as it highlights many important facets of this

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<sup>51</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

<sup>52</sup> See chapter five, such as sections 5.2 and 5.16, for examples of non-understanding of sexual jokes.

<sup>53</sup> Patricia Simons, ‘Gender, Sight and Scandal’, in *Obscénités Renaissance*, ed. by Hugh Roberts, Guillaume Peureux and Lise Wajeman (Geneva: Droz, 2011), pp. 115-128 (pp. 125-126, 128).

<sup>54</sup> Simons, ‘Gender’, p. 118.

<sup>55</sup> See the Introduction section 1.5.

type of language. Not all the terms are by necessity comic or sexual, but are used in this way in the contexts in this section.

Table 1: Castiglione's Key Terms for Comic Sexual Language

| RENAISSANCE FRENCH TERMS FOR JOKES AND COMIC SEXUAL LANGUAGE IN CASTIGLIONE | TRANSLATIONS FOR TERMS AND RELATED WORDS <sup>56</sup>  | RENAISSANCE ENGLISH VERSIONS OF TERMS IN CASTIGLIONE (FROM ABOVE QUOTATIONS FROM HOBY)   |
|---|---|--|
| Faceties<br>Facetieux   | Facetie = wittie mirth, a merrie conceit, a prettie incounter in speech.<br>Facetieusement = merrily, conceitedly, wittily, pleasantly.<br>Facetieux/euse = facetious; merrily conceited, wittily pleasant.   | Faceties = jests<br>Facetieux = pregnant wit   |
| Bourdes   | A jest, fib, tale of a tub  | Merry pranks   |
| Subtil<br>Subtilement<br>Subtiles   | Subtil/e = subtile, craftie, wilie, wittie, cunning. Subtilement = subtilely, wittily, cunningly, craftily.   | Subtil = wicked<br>Subtilement = artificially,<br>readiness of wit<br>Subtiles = jesting |
| Mots ambiguz  | Mot = a motto, a word, a speech; also a quip, cut, nip, frumpe, scoffe, jeast.<br>Eg mot de gueule = a wanton or waggish jeast, an obscene or lascivious conceit, mot de rencontre = a wittie conceit, dire le mot = to breake a jeast<br>Ambigu/üe = ambiguous, doubtfull, uncertaine, double; which may be taken in diverse senses, or diverse wayes.<br>Ambigüment = ambiguously, doubtfully, uncertainely; of diverse senses, with double understanding.<br>Ambigüité = ambiguitie; doubtfullnesse, uncertaintie. | Doubtful words   |
| Bons mots   | Fit jeasts, good words, good wit, proverb: 'Bons mots n'espargnent nuls' = Good words (or fit jeasts) pay home. <sup>57</sup>   | (Example of) doubtful words  |
| Piqueés & taxeés  | Piqué/ée = pricked; stung, nettled;   | Nipped in it   |

<sup>56</sup> Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Aslip, 1611), <<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cotgrave/>> [accessed 18 Oct 2013], n.p.

<sup>57</sup> This can be translated as 'Fit jests spare no-one', i.e. anyone is 'fair game'.

|                      |  |  |
|----------------------|--|--|
|                      | <p>piereed or thrust into; nipped, pinched, vexed; ridden, or spurred; also quilted, or sel thicke with oylar, haler, also wrought, also fastened, planted, or driven into the ground.</p> <p>Taxé/ée = taxed, rebuked, ebecked, reprehended, reproved, disparaged, disabled, also assessed. Taxer = to tax, checke, taunt, rebuke, reprehend, reprove, disgrace, disable, disparage, also as taxer.</p>   |  |
| Ingenieuses & belles | <p>Ingenieusement = ingeniously, wittily, with good invention.</p> <p>Ingenieux/euse = ingenious, wittie, inventive, sharpe-witted, nimble-headed.</p> <p>Ingeniosité = ingeniositie, ingeniousnesse, quicknesse of invention, dexteritie of wit.</p> <p>Beau/belle = beautious, faire, beautifull, seemely, comely, proper, handsome, gracefull; of a goodly presence, of a sweet aspect, of a pleasing dye or hue.</p>   | Witty and pretty   |
| Broquards            | <p>Brocard = a quip, gird, or cut; a jeast, flout, scoffe, gibe, mocke.</p> <p>Brocardé = quipped, cut, or jeasted at; scoffed, mocked, flouted, gibed.</p> <p>Brocarder = to quip, cut, gird; jeast at; flout, mocke, scoffe, deride, or gibe at.</p> <p>Brocarderie = a cutting, quipping, nipping; jeasting at; flouting, mocking, scoffing, deriding, gibing at.</p> <p>Brocardeur = a quipper, scoffer, mocker, flouter, derider, giber, or jeaster at.</p> | Merry words  |
| Poindre              | <p>Poindre = to pricke, sting, nettle, bite, vex, fret, spurre, stir, incite, also to peepe, or peere out, proverb: Qui contre esguillon recule deux fois se poind = he double hurts himselfe that kickes against a pricke.</p>  | <p>Nip without regard</p> <p>Nip with words</p> <p>Touch (with jests and merry pranks)</p> |
| Plaisante            | <p>Plaisamment = pleasantly, merrily, sportfully, joyfully, delightsomely.</p> <p>Plaisance = mirth, sport, pleasure, delight, game, jollitie, blithenesse, festivitie, rejoycing. Plaisant/ante = pleasant, merrie, jocund, blithe, joyfull, buxome, delightfull, gamesome, recreative, sportfull, also jeasting, bourding, scoffing, flowing.</p>  | Merry device   |

|                                       |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
|                                       | <p>Plaisant home = used verie often ironically, or in evill part – a goodlie fellow sure.</p> <p>Plaisanter = to gibe, jeast, flowt, scoffe, quip merrily, be pleasant with, to play the jeaster.</p> <p>Plaisanterie = jeasting, merriment, flowting, scoffing, scurrilitie, wittie (but knavish) conceits. Plaisanteur = a jeaster, buffoone, parasite, pleasant fellow.</p>  |   |
| <p>Deshonnestes<br/>Peu honnestes</p> | <p>Deshonneste = dishoneste, leud, bad; foule, impure, filthie, villainous; unfitting, unbeseeming, dishonourable.</p> <p>Deshonnestement = dishonestly, impurely, vilely, filthily, badly, leudly, naughtily, dishonourably, shamefully.</p> <p>Deshonnesteté = dishonestie, leudnesse, villanie, badnesse, filthinesse, impuritie, basenesse, vilenesse, unseemelinesse.</p> <p>Honneste = honest, good, vertuous, just, upright, sincere; also gentle, civill, courteous; also worthie, noble, honourable, of good reputation; also comelie, seemelie, handsome, well befitting.</p> <p>Honnestement = honestly, vertuously, sincerely, uprightly, gently, civilly, courteously, worthily, nobly, with good credit; handsomely, decently, in a good fashion.</p> <p>Honnesteté = honnestie, vertue, goodnesse, integritie, truth, sinceritie, justnesse, uprightness, humanitie, courtesie, civilitie, gentlenesse; worth or worthinesse; freedome of nature, open-heartednesse, a noble disposition, decencie, a decorum.</p> | <p>Deshonnestes = Filthy and bawdy, unbecoming<br/>Peu honnestes = of small honesty</p> |
| <p>Moquerie</p>                       | <p>Moquettes = mockes, frumps, flowts, gudgeons. Mocqué/ée = mocked, flowted, frumped, scoffed, jeasted at, gulled, gudgeoned, also disappointed, frustrated. Se mocquer = to mock, flowt, frump, scoff, deride, jeast at, laugh to scorn, to gull, gudgeon, frustrate, make a fool of, disappoint (dallie), proverb: se mocque qui cloque = he mocks that least may; the greatest mockers have commonly most imperfections, proverb:</p>   | <p>Mocks</p>  |

|              |   |                 |
|--------------|---|-----------------|
|              | <p>la paille se mocque du fourgon = one friend, or kinsman mocks another; he that might well be flowted flowts his neighbour.</p> <p>Mocquereau = a mocking child, or a little mocker. Mocquerie = a mock, flowt, frumpe, scoff, gibe, jeast, gull, gudgeon, derision, a mockerie, tale of a tub, ridiculous discourse, foppish thing, also a mocking, flowting, scoffing, frumping.</p> <p>Mocqueur = a mocker, flowter, frumper, scoffer, giber, derider.</p> |                 |
| Raillerie(s) | <p>Raillant = jeasting, scoffing at.</p> <p>Raillard/arde = jeasting, boording, pleasant, merrie, with, also flowting, gibing, scoffing, mocking.</p> <p>Railler = to jeast, boord, sport, be merrie, or pleasant with, to deride, mocke, flowt, scoffe, gibe at.</p> <p>Raillerie = jeasting, boording, sport, merriment, also a flowt, or scoffe, a flowting or scoffing.</p> <p>Railleur = a jeaster, boorder, mocker, scoffer.</p>                          | A telling/words |

This section overall and the table in particular provide evidence of Hoby's English translation being poorer than its French counterpart. His choice of words is much weaker. Some of the terms used in Cotgrave's definitions also occur in the other texts studied in this chapter.<sup>58</sup> Words like 'piques', 'railleries', and 'moquerie' are used by Joubert in his treatise on laughter.<sup>59</sup> Positive words like 'bons' and 'belles' may be used ironically when applied to comic sexual language, such as the 'bons mots' used by both Castiglione and Brantôme. The proverb from the definition of 'moquerie' – 'la paille se mocque du fourgon' ['one friend, or kinsman mocks another; he that might well be flowted flowts his neighbour'] – applies very well to the precarious status of the courtier. The frequency with which 'sport' and so on occurs in these definitions, such as for 'raillerie' and 'plaisante', should be noted since it forms a link to the metaphorical field of sex and sport or games, and pleasure

<sup>58</sup> See the Harington section 3.3, for example, for 'prick' which defines 'piqueés' and 'poindre'.

<sup>59</sup> Laurent Joubert, *Traité du ris* (Paris: Chesneverd, 1579. Reprinted 2014), pp. 32-34. See my Introduction section 1.4.



in witty and joking language. In other words, comic sexual language can be seen as fun and used for socialising.

Castiglione's text can be illuminated by theory on sexual jokes. The link between jokes and obscenity has been observed by Douglas, whom it is useful to quote at length. She highlights how they are:

obviously very close. A joke confronts one accepted pattern with another. So does an obscene image. The first amuses, the second shocks. Both consist of the intrusion of one meaning on another, but whereas the joke discloses a meaning hidden under the appearance of the first, the obscenity is a gratuitous intrusion. We are unable to identify joke patterns without considering the total social situation. Similarly for obscenity, abominations depend upon social context to be perceived as such. Language which is normal in male company is regarded as obscene in mixed society; the language of intimacy is offensive where social distance reigns and, similarly, the language of the dissecting room where intimacy belongs. Inevitably, the best way of stating the difference between joking and obscenity is by reference to the social context. The joke works only when it mirrors social forms; it exists by virtue of its congruence with the social structure. But the obscenity is identified by its opposition to the social structure, hence its offence.<sup>60</sup>

The humour involved in comic sexual euphemism plays on this borderline between obscenity that causes offence and wit that delights. In this way, Douglas's distinction encapsulates the situation of the courtier. The 'social structure' at court is, of course, particularly charged: some of the courtiers Castiglione describes got into trouble for telling jokes in a way seen as unbecoming their social context, showing how jokes can sometimes oppose the social structure and count as obscenity. Comic sexual language and euphemism therefore bear weight for this theoretical writing. The points about the intrusion of one meaning onto another, and how hidden the second

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<sup>60</sup> Douglas, 'Jokes', p. 158.

meaning is, are here made about obscenity but apply aptly to comic sexual euphemism as well. They cohere to some of the points made by Freud. Euphemism often has the ruder meaning intruding onto the innocent, which can then take over and hide the original meaning (as happens with pejoration). Comic sexual euphemism can be put into the category of jokes or obscenity here, being amusing and potentially shocking, each being in relation to the social situation. Douglas' comments on male versus mixed society are borne out by Castiglione and Joubert in his dissecting room especially, but also by Brantôme's stories and Harington's self-presentation. Making a joke can be doing the right thing socially in one context, but often only in the confines of that moment.

For Castiglione, jokes are sensitive material to be hidden like other potentially obscene content, and women should (almost all of the time) be shielded from the alleged corruption they might stir. This is, of course, another expression of male power and patriarchy. The French and English versions of this text can appear tangled at times, which is partly because they describe a very tangled situation of double standards and hypocrisy. The messiness of women being banned from sexual humour, apart from when many complex caveats are added to make jokes against men, can seem confused, uncertain, and incoherent. This is often reflected in the language and may be part of the reason the French and English can differ so much. Crucially, the type of sexual joke discussed in Castiglione's text is hugely influenced by power, controversy, and scandal.

### 3.2 Brantôme's *Les Dames galantes*

Power, controversy, and scandal are also key issues and themes for the comic sexual topics occurring in Brantôme's work. Issues of euphemism and the comically sexual often surround the subjective boundary of acceptability.<sup>61</sup> This can be a boundary Brantôme himself plays with, or the people he discusses are seen to play with. Approaching and crossing over the borderline

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<sup>61</sup> See for Brantôme: Emily Butterworth, 'Finding Obscenity in Brantôme's *Dames Galantes*', in *Studies in Early Modern France: Volume 14 – Obscenity*, ed. by Anne L. Birberick and Russell J. Ganim (Charlottesville: Rookwood Press, 2010), pp. 75-89 (p. 86); Simons, 'Gender', p. 125.

can demonstrate a seductive skill with language. In terms of the idea of negative and positive politeness,<sup>62</sup> Brantôme is arguably often pretending to be negative but is actually positive.<sup>63</sup> The same can be said of euphemism in general.

Brantôme analyses the (dis)respect various French kings had for women's honour, which is important for the consideration of who draws the line of acceptability where. The title of his sixth discourse, 'Sur ce qu'il ne faut jamais parler mal des dames et la consequence qui en vient' (p. 441) ['Of how we should never speak ill of ladies, and the consequences of doing so'], itself ironically suggests a rule more honoured in the breach than the observance. In a key example, which is useful to quote at length, of the danger of sexual humour in a courtly context, as well as its highly gendered nature, he states:

le roy François, qui a bien aymé les dames, at encor qu'il eust opinion qu'elles fussent for inconstantes et variables, comme j'ay dit ailleurs, ne voulut point qu'on en medist en sa cour, et voulut fort qu'on leur portast un grand honneur et respect. (pp. 447-448)

[our King Francis I, who was a good lover of fair ladies, and that in spite of the opinion he did express, as I have said elsewhere, how that they were fickle and inconstant creatures, would never have the same ill spoke of at his Court, and was always most anxious they should be held in all high respect and honour.]

The passage of Mary Douglas' on offence and the 'total social situation', quoted above, is useful to apply here. Here, the total social situation is highly complex. Women are supposed to be variable but also chaste. Chastity is not something one can practise variably. The first section of Brantôme's account is particularly significant, showing how contradictory the most powerful male in

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<sup>62</sup> R. Anthony Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 234-237; Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). See my Introduction section 1.7.

<sup>63</sup> All French quotations from Brantôme, unless otherwise stated, are from Seigneur de Brantôme, *Les Dames galantes*, ed. by Paul Morand (Paris: Gallimard, 1981). All English translations of Brantôme, unless otherwise stated, are from Seigneur de Brantôme, *Lives of Fair and Gallant Ladies* 1922, trans. by A.R. Allinson, <<http://tinyurl.com/nenpex2>> [accessed 17 July 2013], n.p. I have adapted this translation in places to bring it closer to the original.

the country is allowed to be. He believes women to be inconstant, yet forbids people to speak ill of them at court. The king can get away with wanting it both ways and in this sense the ability to laugh at such jokes is an expression of power. There are similarities to the power moves going on in Castiglione. Even though this passage of Brantôme's is not directly about jokes, it demonstrates how difficult a context the court was in which to express jokes.

Having established this contradictory social context, Brantôme shares an anecdote which illustrates the danger of engaging in 'medisance' of ladies at the court of François I:

J'ay ouy raconter qu'une fois, luy passant son caresme à Meudon près Paris, il y eut un sien gentilhomme servant, [...] lequel servant le roy de la viande, dont il avoit dispense, le roy lui commanda de porter le reste, comme l'on void quelquesfois à la cour, aux dames de la petite bande, que je ne veux nommer, de peur d'escandale. Ce gentilhomme se mit à dire, parmy ses compagnons et autres de la cour, que ces dames ne se contentoyent pas de manger de la chair crue en caresme, mais en mangeoient de la cuitte, et leur benoist saoul. Les dames le sceurent, qui s'en plainirent aussitost au roy, qui entra en si grande colere qu'à l'instant il commanda aux archers de la garde de son hostel de l'aller prendre et prendre sans autre delay. Par cas, ce pauvre gentilhomme en sceut le vent par quelqu'un de ses amis, qui evada et se sauva bravement. Que s'il eust esté pris, pour le seur il estoit pendu, encor qu'il fust gentilhomme de bonne part, tant on vid le roy cette fois en collere, ny faire plus de jurement. Je tiens ce conte d'une personne d'honneur qui y estoit; et lors le roy dit tout haut que quiconque toucheroit à l'honneur des dames, sans remission il seroit pendu. (pp. 447-448)

[I have heard it related how that one time, when he was spending his Lent at Meudon near Paris, there was one of the gentlemen in his service there [... who] was serving the King with meat, he having a dispensation to eat thereof, his master bade him carry the rest, as we see sometimes done at Court, to the ladies of the privy company, whose names I had rather not give, for fear of offence. The gentleman

in question did take upon him to say, among his comrades and others of the Court, how that these ladies not content with eating of raw meat in Lent, were now eating cooked as well,—and their blessed full. The ladies hearing of it, did promptly make complaint to the King, which thereupon was filled with so great an anger, as that he did instantly command the archers of the Palace guard to take the man and hang him out of hand. By lucky chance the poor gentleman had wind of what was a-foot from one of his friends, and so fled and escaped in the nick of time. But an if he had been caught,<sup>64</sup> he would most certainly have been hanged, albeit he was a man of good quality, so sore was the King seen to be wroth that time, and little like to go back on his word. I have this anecdote of a person of honour and credibility which was present; and at the time the King did say right out, that any man which should offend the honour of ladies, the same should be hanged without benefit of clergy.]

This extract provides a significant example of where one version of the line is drawn – when a person is seen to have gone too far. Of course, this depends on who the person is. What is acceptable for the king is not for his subjects. The borderline is relative to context. In this context, it is crossing the line to accuse women, in front of other men, of filling their bellies with cooked meat during Lent – thus associating women and scandalous meat-eating in a way cohering to the metaphorical field of sex and meat.<sup>65</sup> It is acceptable for the king to eat meat during Lent, but not for most other people; he probably crosses a line in giving meat to anyone else. The gentleman's play on words contrasts with 'chair crue' [raw meat], with a clear sexual connotation, and 'chair cuitte' [cooked meat], which would also have been unacceptable during Lent.

The joke, therefore, suggests that the ladies-in-waiting transgress doubly, in sexual and religious terms. Both cooked and raw meat transgress the social acceptability of the domains of sex and food. To add another layer,

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<sup>64</sup> This is not my translation but that of Allinson. Brantôme, *Lives of Fair and Gallant Ladies* trans. by Allinson, n.p.

<sup>65</sup> See chapter five section 5.6.

since 'benoist' is descended from 'bénir' [to bless], (as in 'benir la table' [to say grace] – 'benoicte' is 'blessed' in Cotgrave),<sup>66</sup> the lines of acceptability in religious domains as well as sexual ones are being crossed over. Perhaps, therefore, the person who made the joke is seen to have gone too far here as religious language is applied to the sexual arena, with 'en mangeoient de la cuitte, et leur benoist saoul' [ladies-in-waiting eating their 'blessed fill']. While the women have transgressed, the focus is on the man, who stains the reputation of women when his story escapes the male-only context. He has also crossed a line and is ordered to be punished. The king himself can make insults about women, but will not suffer it from others. He is, as Brantôme states above, anxious to preserve women's honour, suggesting perhaps on the surface this is a maxim that all should obey, even royalty. Yet this is undermined by the way he does not always follow it himself, demonstrating the gap between the ideal and what some can get away with, while others cannot. At court especially, jokes can take on a life of their own as gossip and tittle-tattle. Discerning what was appropriate for each social stratum was part of the demonstration of the court's sophistication and became an elaborate game or ritual in its own right.

The tension between wanting to protect women's reputation but also hear scandalous stories about them is displayed in the following, also from the sixth discourse:

Or ne pensez pas que ce grand roy [François] fust si abstrait et si reformé au respect des dames qu'il n'en aimast de bons contes qu'on luy en faisoit, sans aucun escandale pourtant ny decriement, et qu'il n'en fist aussi; mais, comme grand roy qu'il estoit et bien privilegié, il ne vouloit pas qu'un chacun, ny le commun, usast de pareils privileges que luy. (p. 452)

[Now never suppose this same great monarch [Francis] was so strict and stern in his respect for ladies, as that he did not relish well enough any good stories told him concerning them, without however any scandal-mongering or decrying of their good name. Rather like the

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<sup>66</sup> Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Aslip, 1611), <<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cotgrave/>> [accessed 18 Oct 2013], n.p.

great and highly privileged King he was, he would not that every man, and all the vulgar herd, should enjoy like privileges with himself.]

There is a fine line between protection and defamation of women. Because he is the king, Francis is in this case perceived as achieving the best of both worlds. He also has licence to hear and indeed pronounce ‘bons contes’ [‘merry tales’] (including sexual humour) but those of lower status – ‘un chacun’ – should not. Again, comic sexual language is shown to be intertwined with the theme of power.

The phrase ‘bons contes’ appears repeatedly in Brantôme’s work. It is similar to, and sometimes alongside, the phrase ‘bons mots’.<sup>67</sup> It has connotations of fictional tales, such as Boccaccio’s *Decameron* and Marguerite de Navarre’s *L’Heptaméron*,<sup>68</sup> as well as stories more generally. Cotgrave provides, among other things, an ‘idle or unlikely tale’ and ‘tale, fib, fable’ for ‘conte’ and related words such as ‘compte’.<sup>69</sup> There is a strong element of fiction to it. Brantôme can be seen as a ‘conteur’ [storyteller], flagging up the fictional but also giving an impression of reality. Sexual humour is an essential part of these tales.

Regarding another story in the sixth discourse, ‘Ce roy n’en espargna pas le conte, qui courut à plusieurs oreilles’ (p. 453) [‘The King made no ado about repeating the tale, which did reach the ears of not a few folks’], Brantôme comments that:

Il estoit fort curieux de sçavoir l’amour et des uns et des autres, et surtout des combats amoureux, et mesme de quels beaux airs se manioient les dames quand elles estoient en leurs maneges, et quelles contenances et postures elles y tenoyent, et de quelles paroles elles usoyent; et puis en rioit à pleine gorge; et après en defendoit la publication et l’escandale, et recommandoit le secret et l’honneur. (pp. 453-454)

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<sup>67</sup> See the Castiglione section 3.1, especially Table 1 with Cotgrave’s full definition which includes a nipping jest. Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

<sup>68</sup> These will be examined in chapter four. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Le Decameron* (Lyon: le Maçon, 1558); Marguerite de Navarre, *L’Heptaméron*, ed. by Michel François (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1950).

<sup>69</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

[This monarch was exceeding curious to hear of the love of both men and women, and above all their amorous engagements, and in especial what fine airs the ladies did exhibit when at their gentle work, and what looks and attitudes they did display therein, and what words they said. On hearing all this, he would laugh frank and free, but after would forbid all publishing abroad thereof and any scandal making, always strongly recommending an honourable secrecy on these matters.]

The word 'postures' is very suggestive, sometimes being used in French to mean sexual positions. The king's laughter is an expression of power, as is his injunction that these stories not become common knowledge. Yet he is allowed to hear them. The monarch has licence to enjoy this double standard. The parallels and contradictions in the terms 'la publication' ['publishing'], 'l'escandale' ['scandal making'], and 'recommandoit le secret et l'honneur' ['recommending an honourable secrecy'] create a tension of publishing and scandal on the one hand and honour and secrecy on the other. The irony that publication is forbidden yet the case is being recorded in Brantôme's work – in manuscript form and eventually to be printed – is clear. For Cotgrave, 'publication' includes 'making of things common'.<sup>70</sup> This story certainly undermines the idea that royalty should obey the maxim of preserving women's honour, though simultaneously confirms underlings can be excluded from the stories. Jokes in the social context of the court were potentially dangerous, as they could become rumour in a way that is not the case for my other chapters. Even more dangerously, women might overhear these rumours.

As David P. LaGuardia also notes,<sup>71</sup> Brantôme's dedication to the Duc d'Alençon highlights authoritative men enjoying such 'bons contes':

Monseigneur, d'autant que vous m'avez fait cet honneur souvent à la cour de causer avec moy fort privement de plusieurs bons mots et

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<sup>70</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

<sup>71</sup> David P. LaGuardia, *Intertextual Masculinity in French Renaissance Literature: Rabelais, Brantôme, and the Cent nouvelles nouvelles* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008).



contes, qui vous sont si familiers et assidus qu'on diroit qu'ils vous naissent à veue d'oeil dans la bouche. (p. 23)

[My lord, [...] you have so often honoured me at court by speaking with me intimately about several jokes and tales, which are so familiar and habitual to you that one would say that they are born in your mouth as soon as you see them with your eye.]<sup>72</sup>

This makes it seem surprising that men in power are strict about very suggestive 'bons contes', yet paradoxically are fans of them. The story of the women eating meat above would be an example of such a story. As shall be seen in section 3.3 on Harington, 'bons contes' have value at court but are simultaneously dangerous (not just for women, as Harington himself may have got in trouble using them). This puts the courtier in a difficult position – they should avoid being boring but also avoid seeming unsophisticated and lacking awareness of the unspoken rule of the court.

Robert D. Cottrell calls this dedication 'the image of two young bachelors who are intimate friends, amiably spending an hour or two together in a relaxed and casual atmosphere, laughing and telling each other amusing stories. Brantôme, always the courtier, wishes to entertain'.<sup>73</sup> For LaGuardia, in men's desire to 'perform their gender, men sought out other men to whom they could tell the story of their relations to women'.<sup>74</sup> Brantôme does indeed allude to a private homosocial world of men sharing jokes – the problem arises when the jokes escape this context to mixed gendered company. Yet this is where writers like Brantôme and Harington find the excitement, which is in many ways what Castiglione warns against.<sup>75</sup> Brantôme claims he cannot share these jokes with us, so as to avoid scandal. Yet, typically of such *praeteritio*, we are brought into this world at the same time as he protests we cannot be. There is, however, some restriction on this – we are not, for example, often given specific examples of scandalous jokes made. Sexual humour is hinted at more often than delivered in its entirety. One of the

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<sup>72</sup> LaGuardia, *Intertextual Masculinity*, p. 183.

<sup>73</sup> Robert D. Cottrell, *Brantôme: The Writer as Portraitist of His Age* (Geneva: Droz, 1970), pp. 35-36.

<sup>74</sup> LaGuardia, *Intertextual Masculinity*, p. 230.

<sup>75</sup> This has many parallels to Joubert's medical context.

exceptions to this is the story with the 'chair crue' versus 'chair cuite' [raw versus cooked meat] quoted above. At other times, the court is almost a theatrical microcosm where appearance is vitally important, but nearly everyone realises the reality under the façade – as much as with euphemism, homage must be paid to being chaste even if the lack of chastity is clear. This is what Simons calls the 'open secret'.<sup>76</sup> It must be said that *nearly* everyone sees under the façade as it is not as straightforward as everyone understanding it, due to these being 'contes' with nuances and different layers. Most will be able to see behind the veil but some – to follow the cliché of the day, young female virgins – could be less able to peel back the layers of façade.

It is, of course, problematic if courtiers express this 'open secret', as in the case Brantôme describes of a satire of a great widow who wanted to marry a prince:

[...] pour en destourner le prince firent un pasquin d'elle le plus scandaleux que j'aye point veu, là où ils l'accomparyent à cinq ou six grandes putains anciennes, fameuses, fort lubriques, et qu'elle les surpassoit toutes quatre. (p. 467)

[concoct a lampoon on her, the most scandalous I have ever seen, in the which they did compare her to five or six of the chiefest harlots of Antiquity, and the most notorious and wanton, declaring how that she did overtop them each and all.]

In order to claim this widow has transgressed, the accusers must show they also have some knowledge of unacceptable behaviour; it is hard to accuse her without knowing what the accusation entails, although, of course, it would be less unacceptable for men to be 'wanton'. Even so, they attempt to pass the blame. The authors, states Brantôme, present their satire to the prince, but claim it had been written by others: 'Ceux mesmes qui avoyent fait le pasquin le luy presenterent, disans pourtant qu'il venoit d'autres, et qu'on leur avoit baillé' (p. 467) ['professing however that it did emanate from others, and

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<sup>76</sup> Simons, 'Gender', p. 128.

that themselves had merely been given it']. The responsibility is again displaced. The prince responds with denials and insults. The royal man is once again the one with the power, status, and authority to comment on such sexual stories. In this account the open secret is too much in the open and Brantôme revels in the scandal in which satirical sexual commentary in the form of a 'pasquin' ['lampoon'] plays a key role.

For this reason, sexual humour is meant to stay in highly restricted contexts and not be spread through such satires. This is demonstrated by Brantôme thus:

Le roy [Charles] estoit si genereux et bon que nullement il favorisoit telles gens d'avoir de petits mots joyeux avec eux à part; bien les aimoit-il, mais ne vouloit que le vulgaire en fust abreuvé, disant que sa cour, qui estoit la plus noble et la plus illustre de grandes et belles dames de tout le monde, et pour telle réputée, ne vouloit qu'elle fust villipendée et mesestimée, par la bouche de tels causeurs et gallants; et c'estoit à parler ainsi des courtizannes de Rome, de Venise et d'autres lieux, et non de la cour de France, et que, s'il estoit permis de la faire, il n'estoit permis de le dire. Voilà comment ce roy estoit respectueux aux dames. (pp. 467-468)

[The King [Charles] was so great-hearted and kindly that he was never inclined to allow such people to share jokes with him in private; although he liked them,<sup>77</sup> he was most unwilling the common herd should be fed on such diet, declaring that his Court, which was the best ennobled and most illustrious by reason of great and noble ladies of any in all the world, should never, such being its high repute, be cheapened and foully aspersed by the mouth of suchlike reckless and insolent babblers. 'Twas well enough to speak so of the courtesans of Rome, or Venice, or other the like places, but not of the Court of France; it might be permitted to do the thing, it was not permitted to

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<sup>77</sup> This is an occasion where I have adjusted the translation. Allinson's translation may be a bit misleading: 'he was never inclined to favour folks of this kidney'. Brantôme, *Lives of Fair and Gallant Ladies* trans. by Allinson, n.p.

speaking thereof. Thus do we see how this Sovereign was ever respectful toward ladies.]

This is yet another case, especially at the beginning of the quotation, where power and status allows access to comic sexual language. Some people are permitted to share jokes with the king, but only some; hence the phrase 'mais ne vouloit que le vulgaire en fust abreuvé' ['but he was always most unwilling the common herd should be fed on such diet']. These can be the same type of joke Castiglione discusses. The implication is that such 'petits mots joyeux' are pleasurable and should not be outlawed altogether. Indeed, Brantôme informs us that Henri III 's'en fit un tres-rigoureux censeur, dont pour cela il n'en fut pas plus aymé' (p. 468) ['did exercise a very strict censorship [of staining women's reputation], and one we may be sure that made him not more liked']. Yet there is also the status of the court to consider. If, as in the 'pasquin' above, ladies at court are compared to 'courtizannes de Rome, de Venise et d'autres lieux', then there needs to be censorship of some form. The protection of individual ladies' reputations from sexual humour is subservient to the wish to protect the status of the court and hence the king. Power trumps morality.<sup>78</sup>

Brantôme delights in double-entendres, which are revealing of levels of acceptability. The following examples of Brantôme's use of euphemism and double-entendre are arguably veiled, so not outrightly obscene, yet at the same time it is often obvious what he is referring to – sex. Issues of levels of acceptability are apparent in these examples. What is significant here is the boundary Brantôme stops himself from crossing, when he does not use openly frank terminology. One male lover in Brantôme's text who spends the night with a woman is ready 'pour faire son devoir' (p. 29) ['to do his duty']. This is in the first discourse, 'Sur les dames qui font l'amour et leurs maris cocus' (p. 27) ['Of ladies which do make love, and their husbands cuckolds']. Brantôme gives us details such as the way the man is dressed in 'en chemise' (p. 29) ['shirt only'], but cannot bring himself to say explicitly that they had, or are about to have, sex – despite the fact that we are all aware which 'duty' he

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<sup>78</sup> On the attitude of various monarchs to this issue, see also Cottrell, *Brantôme: The Writer as Portraitist of His Age*, pp. 114-17.

is to perform. The question is: why go through the motions of euphemising? One reason may be to cover his back, ensuring that, if some readers (probably, as he followed the period's cliché, chaste women) are not aware of what he is talking about, he cannot be accused of corrupting them. A more likely reason is the comic contrast he creates with his use of 'devoir' ['duty']: it is far from his duty he is performing, since he is committing adultery! This is an example of how Brantôme gives the appearance of using negative politeness rather than positive. Since he employs the language of duty rather than explicit sexual obscenities, he could be said to avoid the addressing of taboos. However, he does actually engage with the taboo to a great extent, so is actually employing positive politeness. He pays lip service to a form of negative politeness, the better to express the kind of taboo material that positive politeness normally addresses.

A similar occurrence in Brantôme's text is when one female lover, linking sex with battle (a common metaphor), says:

“Adieu donc jusques à une plus seure et meilleure commodité, et alors librement je vous employeray pour la grande bataille, et non pour si petite rencontre”. Il y a forces dames qui n'eussent eu cette considération, mais, ennyvrées du plaisir, puisque tenoyent déjà dans le camp leur ennemy, l'eussent fait combattre jusques au clair jour. (p. 32)

[“Farewell then till a better and more secure occasion, and then right freely will I put you to the great battle, and not to such a trifling encounter as this.” Many dames there be would not have shown this much prudency, but intoxicate with pleasure, seeing they had the enemy already on the field, would have had him fight till dawn of day.]

Brantôme appears to borrow the metaphorical field of battles and sex and the corresponding comic sexual euphemism from the woman. It is almost as if she gives him licence to extend the metaphor even further – he cannot create much more scandal than the woman has already mentioned. While it cannot be historically verified whether the woman actually said any of this, we can go by Brantôme's account and the standards he sets up for himself. In his world,

the woman has created scandal for herself and this excuses and shields him, to an extent, from being seen as scandalous here himself. This is in turn reminiscent of Pallavacino's comment in Castiglione that women's expressions have often given him cause to blush: attributing such words to women gives further licence for writers like Brantôme to engage in salacious story-telling.

Similarly, soldiers in the first discourse 'assaillent le fort de pudicité des dames' ['assault the fortress of ladies' chastity'] and women receive 'leurs doux ennemis dans leurs fortresses' (p. 93) ['receive their pleasant foes within their fortifications']. In these cases it may simply be that Brantôme wishes to demonstrate his skill as a writer by employing metaphor. However, he is also obeying the social etiquette that some things are unacceptable to openly refer to, even if everyone knows what is being implied. He is playing with language and the standard misogynistic assumption that women are sexually voracious, which he uses to turn her joke into a back-handed compliment. By ascribing military language to 'dames', he also playfully inverts the normal power and gender relations. This is after all in a section on women who make their husbands cuckolds. In this context, the women hold power over their (emasculated) husbands.

Often, euphemism, 'bons mots', and humour in obscenity divides people into groups of right and wrong. The right people are the ones who, when faced with the euphemism 'you-know-what' or 'you-know-who', do indeed know what or who. In Brantôme, the king is permitted to be in this group. Responsibility is placed on the reader's shoulders, as they have filled in a gap (albeit a highly suggestive one) that the writer left empty – the rather flimsy defence is that it is all in the reader's mind. This is similar to Brantôme leaving it to the reader to guess the identity of most of the people he discusses – the right people will be able to guess correctly, while he has covered himself and protected identities from the wrong people. The question, as Erasmus asks, becomes at what point does the euphemistic replacement for the obscene become obscene itself through pejoration.

This idea of an elite group coheres to the idea of positive politeness, which often occurs in small groups – here, in the court. As R. Anthony Lodge states, positive politeness has 'subjective involvement', is 'context-bound',

relies on 'proximity', occurs in an 'in-group', and employs 'social defiance'.<sup>79</sup> With the possible exception of social defiance, which can be a problem for the examples I have cited which relate to monarchs' reactions to sexual humour, this list can be applied to Brantôme and his relation to readers and the people he describes.

Lodge argues that, when it comes to negative and positive politeness, 'The higher the style-level, the more walls there are to protect the addressee against the encroachment that any communication makes on privacy'.<sup>80</sup> The style-level (to use Lodge's term) of comic sexual language is often highly elaborate precisely because it plays on this apparent distinction between positive and negative politeness. This was the case with the above example of how, in Brantôme's language, a lover 'does his duty' rather than 'fucks'. This coheres to an extent with Cottrell, who divides Brantôme's style into low and high – low is the use of simple, direct and stark language, while high is heightened hyperbole for exalted readers.<sup>81</sup> While Brantôme often tries to avoid using direct names and examples, he certainly evokes scandalous issues (so does not often use negative politeness) even if specific phrases are not used. Readers feel that they are being included in the elite group of right people, which can even make them feel implicated in some of the scandal.<sup>82</sup>

In one of Brantôme's stories from the first discourse, one nobleman asks whether a man took a woman's virginity with the phrase 'A-il monté au moins sur la petite beste?' (p. 97) ['Did he mount the little beast, anyway?'].<sup>83</sup> This is an intriguing kind of euphemism, as it could be argued that it is not actually euphemistic if it is typical for sex to be talked of in terms of mounting. 'Monter sur la beste' ['mounting the beast'] seems to have been a recognised phrase for having sex.<sup>84</sup> On the other hand, the frequency of jokes surrounding the concept of mounting a woman like a horse in early modern comedy (such as Thomas Middleton's) suggests it was not merely a mundane

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<sup>79</sup> Lodge, *Sociolinguistic History*, p. 235. See my Introduction section 1.7.

<sup>80</sup> Lodge, *Sociolinguistic History*, pp. 236-237.

<sup>81</sup> Cottrell, *Brantôme: The Writer as Portraitist of His Age*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>82</sup> See Butterworth, 'Finding Obscenity in Brantôme's *Dames Galantes*', p. 86.

<sup>83</sup> This is not my translation but that of Allinson. Brantôme, *Lives of Fair and Gallant Ladies* trans. by Allinson, n.p.

<sup>84</sup> 'Monter sur la beste. i. *faire l'acte venerien*', Antoine Oudin, *Curiositez françoyses* (Paris: de Sommaville, 1640), p. 354.

everyday phrase, and was rather an idea to be played with and have fun with its language. It was also very common in French, hence Cotgrave's definitions of 'chevaucher' and 'chevaucherie' include 'To ride, or bestride a horse, to travel on horseback, also, to make a road, or journey with forces of horse and foot, against an enemy: also, to swive a woman' and 'A riding, a swiving'.<sup>85</sup> According to the *OED*, 'swive' has meant to copulate with a female in comic contexts since Chaucer.<sup>86</sup> The above question in Brantôme about mounting the beast suggests degrading attitudes to women and sex.<sup>87</sup> Humour is used to reinforce male superiority and power.

One of Brantôme's euphemisms for female genitalia in the first discourse is a purse – 'la bourse de devant' (p. 115) ['the purse in front'] and 'de leur corps' (p. 173) ['the body's purse'], where he draws a comparison between sex and money. This is imagery Brantôme uses twice comically – emphasising how oft-visited and swelled out yet ever ready for whoever wishes to fill them these purses in front are. LaGuardia comments on this monetary metaphor, arguing that women's bodies

are often metaphors for the economy of [...] desire in which wealth circulates among men through women's bodies as conduits and loci of economic saturation. [...] When men] look at women, they dissect their bodies in terms of both literal and metaphorical purses, as Brantôme does [...] Rhetorically the two semantic domains of sex and money are often so entwined in masculinist literature that terms from one of them inevitably signify terms from the other.<sup>88</sup>

It may be going too far to claim this signification is inevitable, but it is true that these terms are often symbolically related. LaGuardia correctly highlights the role of masculine power-play in sexual humour.<sup>89</sup> He observes that, as

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<sup>85</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

<sup>86</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://0-www.oed.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/Entry/76238?rskey=z2y8WN&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 27 Sept 2013], n.p.

<sup>87</sup> See section 3.3 on Harington below for more.

<sup>88</sup> LaGuardia, *Intertextual Masculinity*, pp. 204-205.

<sup>89</sup> The following pages explain the distinction between his semantic domains and my metaphorical fields, which may seem similar but have highly significant differences.



Thomas Laqueur also highlights, 'purse' was an economic term in English and French, but also a way of referring to both sexes' genitalia.<sup>90</sup> In Antoine Oudin, similarly, 'elle [...] ressemble [à] ma bourse, elle s'est laissé fouïller, &c. *cecy se dit d'une fille qui s'est laissé emplir le ventre. vulg.*' ['she resembles my purse, she has let herself be rifled, etc. *this is said of a girl who has got herself pregnant. vulgar.*].<sup>91</sup> 'Bourse', the word used in the above quotation, could mean 'scrotum' or 'uterus'.<sup>92</sup> Cotgrave defines this as 'a ballocke, or, the outward skin wherein the cod is contained'.<sup>93</sup> The metaphorical field of sex and money or business is used repeatedly by Middleton so chapter five section 5.9 will explore it further.

Brantôme has, of course, been examined by other scholars, but each with a focus that differs from my own. LaGuardia and Cottrell are two examples. My argument varies from that of Cottrell, who places more emphasis on Brantôme's moments of discretion than I believe they deserve. Brantôme's outrageousness far outweighs his caution. Cottrell believes he is 'sufficiently separated from the Renaissance [due to self-exile and bedridden injury] to be able to view it nostalgically as a heroic age, and yet close enough to it to recognise hidden truths behind the myth'.<sup>94</sup> For Cottrell, he

repeatedly disapproved of open debauchery [... and] demanded that vulgarity and crudeness be covered by a mask of gentility [...] he was concerned with maintaining a certain elegance and good form in respect to women [... believing] all women, regardless of their reputation [like to be treated with dignity].<sup>95</sup>

However, I question Cottrell's accuracy here. Brantôme is often very salacious, as this chapter demonstrates. This is not to say he never self-censors or shows awareness of the potential offence his subject matter might cause, but that this awareness rarely holds him back to any great extent –

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<sup>90</sup> Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 63-64.

<sup>91</sup> Oudin, *Curiositez françoises*, p. 56.

<sup>92</sup> LaGuardia, *Intertextual Masculinity*, p. 206.

<sup>93</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

<sup>94</sup> Cottrell, *Brantôme: The Writer as Portraitist of His Age*, p. 149.

<sup>95</sup> Cottrell, *Brantôme: The Writer as Portraitist of His Age*, p. 108.

indeed, if this were the case he would not speak of or write about such matters at all.

Similarly, what LaGuardia calls two separate semantic domains of, for example, sex and money,<sup>96</sup> I define as one metaphorical field.<sup>97</sup> In my terms, sex and money are not two separate domains which are sometimes entwined (as they are for LaGuardia), but one metaphorical field where they are so reflective of each other that they are almost the same thing, which is where the comedy comes in. A strong bond is formed between something socially acceptable, like money, and something socially unacceptable, like scandalous sex. This fits with modern linguistic theory<sup>98</sup> which demonstrates how people are more willing to accept metaphors if they are made within what I call a metaphorical field: not just a one-off comparison but an extended world created where one thing is humorously and repeatedly connected to another. This is how the concept of metaphorical fields and the concept of two different and separate semantic domains differ. Semantic domains can be sometimes entwined but can also be separated again. This is unlike metaphorical fields, which, once separated, are no longer a field, whereas semantic domains can be apart and still maintained.

LaGuardia discusses sex and money, economics, or land property further elsewhere, in both Brantôme and Rabelais.<sup>99</sup> He also picks up on some other common comic sexual metaphors, such as sex and war, which 'so often work together in the masculine mind of the period', and sex and riding.<sup>100</sup> However, unlike mine, his focus is on men and masculinity, and he does not identify these comparisons as comic sexual euphemisms or metaphorical fields. He instead labels them registers or a 'vast reserve of metaphors for speaking about women' which shows the 'impossibility of a single definition of women'.<sup>101</sup> As my research demonstrates, such language can be euphemistic with richer depths than simple metaphor. For LaGuardia,

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<sup>96</sup> He does this in a passage I analyse above.

<sup>97</sup> I have covered this in the Introduction section 1.8 and will analyse in more depth in chapter five but will give a brief outline here.

<sup>98</sup> Kerry L. Plaff, Raymond W. Gibbs and Michael D. Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 18 (1997), 59-83. See my Introduction section 1.7.

<sup>99</sup> LaGuardia, *Intertextual Masculinity*, pp. 115, 185, 200, 207-209.

<sup>100</sup> LaGuardia, *Intertextual Masculinity*, pp. 119, 185-186, 189-190, 204, 212-213, 224.

<sup>101</sup> LaGuardia, *Intertextual Masculinity*, p. 224.

comic sexual language is merely a side issue whereas it is my most important focus. Similarly, as I do, Cottrell discusses sex and food and sex and war or jousts,<sup>102</sup> but does not observe the euphemistic nature of these metaphorical fields to any great extent.

To conclude this section, Brantôme plays with the boundary between what is supposedly acceptable and unacceptable, and ways of getting away with discussion of the latter. Like many Renaissance writers I examine, he is aware of the rules of discretion yet often observes such injunctions the better to transgress them in playful and comic ways. The breach is what interests him. He enjoys the taboo, joyfully bringing up subjects in a manner which adheres to one of Erasmus' definitions of obscenity. Contrastingly, at other times he tries to, as he puts it, 'colorer' (p. 475) ['gloze over'] the obscene and offensive. It could be said that even at his most explicit he pays lip service to discretion.<sup>103</sup> Yet, the paradoxical, and doubtless deliberate, consequence of his insistence on this and his euphemisms is often to draw more attention than explicitness would: concealment, but in the form of an invitation to dig deeper, either directly or by implication. This is the role of comic sexual euphemism. Ultimately, like many of the people he discusses, he loves to bring up the comically sexual while claiming to disapprove of it.

### 3.3 Harington's Translation of *Orlando Furioso*, Considered Alongside Early Modern French and Modern English Translations of Ariosto

The relationship between hiding and revealing sexual humour, and between sexual humour and staining reputations, is also evident in the works of Sir John Harington.<sup>104</sup> He himself had a reputation for causing trouble at

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<sup>102</sup> Cottrell, *Brantôme: The Writer as Portraitist of His Age*, pp. 53-54, 121-122, 143.

<sup>103</sup> See Butterworth, 'Finding Obscenity in Brantôme's *Dames Galantes*', pp. 77-78, 82-83; Cottrell, *Brantôme: The Writer as Portraitist of His Age*, p. 117.

<sup>104</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all Harington quotations (referenced within the text) from *Orlando Furioso* are from Lodovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso in English*, trans. by John Harington (London: Field, 1591). The modern English version of Ariosto, indicated by footnotes, is from Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Guido Waldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). The early modern French version of Ariosto is from Loys Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Jean Martin (Lyon: Sabon, 1544). Unless otherwise stated, all French quotations of Ariosto are from here given with in-text references (since there is only one French version quoted, unlike the English), and are matched with their English equivalents from Waldman. Every edition in both languages divides the text into stanzas differently,

Elizabeth's court. He was, as Anne Lake Prescott describes, a 'courtier, wit, royal godson and royal (with a bar sinister) cousin, translator of the Italian poet he called his friend "Harry-Osto", epigrammatist, affectionate husband, and promoter of the flush toilet'.<sup>105</sup> He translated Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* in the 1580s (the exact date is not documented), producing the first more or less complete English translation of this epic romance poem.<sup>106</sup> Ben Jonson proclaimed 'that John Harington's Ariosto under all translations was the worst'.<sup>107</sup> A nineteenth-century translator, William Stuart Rose, agrees, dismissing Harington as, as Guido Waldman (a modern editor of Ariosto) puts it, 'inaccurate, mercilessly condensed, pedestrian where the original was poetic, dreary where the original was witty'. Waldman agrees strongly with Rose, arguing that Harington does not do Ariosto justice.<sup>108</sup> Rudolf Gottfried, a modern editor of Harington, believes this was because Harington was 'very free' with his translation<sup>109</sup> – catching the spirit of Ariosto yet putting his own spin on the material, often contracting or expanding it. This free attitude is, on the one hand, why other translators dislike Harington's text and, on the other, why it is a significant version for my purposes, because it means he often adds his own sexual humour. Gottfried explains how 'He seldom gives us exactly what Ariosto wrote': his version is approximately 6,000 lines shorter than the Italian and he adjusts the material to suit Elizabethan taste.<sup>110</sup> By examining Ariosto's text in modern English and early modern French, I have found this to be true; Harington produces a transformed version of this text. The French is mostly closer to the original than Harington.<sup>111</sup> This section of my chapter will examine canto 28, also called the twenty-eighth book, of the

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meaning their stanza numbers are not always the same. According to Waldman (p. xiv), twelve translations of Ariosto existed in France before Harington's in English.

<sup>105</sup> Anne Lake Prescott, *Imagining Rabelais in Renaissance England* (London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 106.

<sup>106</sup> Jason Scott-Warren, 'Harington, Sir John (*bap.* 1560, *d.* 1612)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/article/12326>> [accessed 11 Dec 2013], n.p.

<sup>107</sup> See Harington, *Orlando Furioso*, ed. by Gottfried (1966), p. 11.

<sup>108</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), pp. xv-xvi.

<sup>109</sup> Harington, *Orlando Furioso*, ed. by Gottfried (1966), p. 11.

<sup>110</sup> Harington, *Orlando Furioso*, ed. by Gottfried (1966), p. 11.

<sup>111</sup> The 1544 French is also much closer to the original than modern French translations, which omit and alter passages. For example, Loys Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Francisque Reynard (Paris: FB Editions, 2015). Where there is a corresponding reference for a quote in this text, this is given in footnotes; if I have not given it, this means that this modern edition does not provide an equivalent to an early modern French quotation.

poem in three versions – Harington’s, and Ariosto in English and French.<sup>112</sup> This thesis has found that, for the most part, French versions of texts have more sexual humour than English. Harington is an exception to this rule. At the end of this section, I will also consider some other relevant pieces of writing from Harington as points of comparison, such as an account of his reading some of *Orlando Furioso* to James and an example of Harington’s humour in a letter describing a Jacobean masque.

Canto 28 of *Orlando Furioso* has been selected for analysis here because there is what Jason Scott-Warren describes as a ‘celebrated anecdote’ and Gottfried calls ‘a tradition which has the earmarks of truth’ surrounding it.<sup>113</sup> The story, Gottfried explains, first recorded in the eighteenth century, is that Harington started his translation with this canto and ‘when his godmother the queen caught him circulating [... this] lewd tale [...] among her ladies-in-waiting, she banished Harington from the court until he had translated all thirty-three thousand lines of it’.<sup>114</sup> It is significant that his punishment is banishment while he completes the translation, not to stop translating. Now, we must obviously treat this story with care rather than assuming it is fact. It could be that this text has been blurred with his *Metamorphosis of Ajax*, what Gottfried calls ‘a Rabelaisian pamphlet on water closets’ which Elizabeth dismissed him for publishing in 1596 and which ‘ironically enough, he had written in order to secure official favour’.<sup>115</sup> For Lake Prescott, this text is ‘a burlesque reversal of polite society’s standards that jests with priorities and posteriors’.<sup>116</sup> However, *Orlando Furioso*’s canto

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<sup>112</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Harington (1591); Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008); Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Martin (1544). Harington omits 700 stanzas. Gottfried’s edition of canto 28 in turn is shorter than Harington’s original text, cutting the last 14 verses. Today, no edition provides a complete copy of his full translation.

<sup>113</sup> Harington, *Orlando Furioso*, ed. by Gottfried (1966), p. 10.

<sup>114</sup> Scott-Warren, ‘Harington’, n.p.

<sup>115</sup> John Harington, *A New Discourse of a Stale Subject, Called the Metamorphosis of Ajax* (London: Field, 1596); Harington *Orlando Furioso*, ed. by Gottfried (1966), p. 9.

<sup>116</sup> Lake Prescott, *Imagining Rabelais in Renaissance England*, p. 106. Harington also wrote this under the pseudonym Misacmos. Misacmos, *The Metamorphosis of Ajax* (London: Field, 1596). Another pseudonym, Misodiaboles, has been misapplied to Harington. The *Early English Books Online* description says texts written under the name Misodiaboles are ‘Misattributed to Sir John Harington; in fact a reply to his: *A New Discourse of a Stale Subject, Called the Metamorphosis of Ajax*’. *Early English Books Online*, <[http://0-eebo.chadwyck.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/search/full\\_rec?SOURCE=config.cfg&action=byid&ID=99898880&SUBSET=>](http://0-eebo.chadwyck.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/search/full_rec?SOURCE=config.cfg&action=byid&ID=99898880&SUBSET=>) [accessed 18 July 2015], n.p. Indeed, Harington’s pamphlet sparked controversy and was responded to by Misodiaboles, to whom Harington replied in turn with *An Anatomie of the Metamorphosed Ajax* and *An Apologie*. Misodiaboles, *Ulisses upon Ajax*

28 does have enough sexual and potentially obscene material that it is conceivable it got him into trouble as well as the *Ajax*. It is perfectly feasible that it did cause some scandal. Also, the suggestion that it was feared women would be corrupted by it is not out of the ordinary for approaches to the comic and sexual in this period. In the 'To the Reader' section of his *Orlando Furioso*, Harington declares his desire that these words are 'delightful to many' but 'hurtful to none', adding 'both they and I be called to account for it, where not only evil works, but idle words shall be punished' (sig.A<sup>r</sup>).<sup>117</sup> Yet if the story is true, these words hurt Harington and his position at court and he was indeed punished. This is similar in nature to Brantôme's tale about the man who went too far in his own joke about the ladies-in-waiting and their taste for meat.

This story surrounding Harington's translation, as well as his personal contributions to the text, mean his version is my primary consideration here (so is always quoted first in this section). However, in complementation, I also analyse the same quotations from Ariosto in modern English and early modern French. If a quotation is not included here in either of these versions, it means it does not exist in either type of text and is an independent injection on the part of Harington. It may never be possible to determine whether Harington's banishment was a serious punishment or a joke, a (possibly self-generated) myth or indeed an invention of the eighteenth century. Whether the story is true or not, it is certainly the case that female readers were an issue regarding this poem. This is made clear by its opening, phrased by Harington as:

Ladies, & ye that ladies hold in prize,  
Give not (perdie)<sup>118</sup> your ear, to this same tale  
The which to tell, mine Host doth here devise,

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(London: Robinson, 1596); John Harington, *An Anatomie of the Metamorphosed Ajax* (London: Field, 1596); John Harington, *An Apologie* (London: Windet, 1596). Nancy Peters Maude argues that Misodiaboles was most likely Thomas Lodge. Nancy Peters Maude, 'Was Thomas Lodge Also Misodiaboles?', *Review of English Studies*, 68 (2017), 488-506 (p. 495).

<sup>117</sup> These phrases do not appear in the early modern French or modern English. This reference has a signature mark because it is from early in the text, before it is divided into cantos and stanzas.

<sup>118</sup> 'Perdie' means 'by God'.

To make men think your virtues are but small:  
 Though from so base a tongue there can arise,  
 To your sweet sex no just disgrace at all [...]  
 Turn o'er the leaf and let this tale alone,  
 If any think the sex by this disgraced,  
 I write it for no spite, nor malice none [...]  
 My loyal love to ladies all is known,  
 In whom I see such worth to be embraced [...]  
 Peruse it not, or if you do it read,  
 Esteem it not, but as an idle babble;  
 Regard it not, or if you take some heed,  
 Believe it not but as a foolish fable. (XXVIII.1-3)

In Jean Martin's 1544 French translation, this section appears thus (both the French and modern English are in prose):

Genereuses & nobles Dames, & vous, qui les Dames avez en estime,  
 pour Dieu ne prêtez pas l'oreille à cette histoire: à ceste, qui l'hôte à  
 vostre mépris, & à vostre blâme, & infamie s'appreste de dire: combien  
 que vous scavez que langue si vile n'y saiche donner macule aulcune,  
 & que ce foit la vieille usance [...] Parquoi laissez ce chant s'il vous  
 semble bon, car l'histoire peult demeurer entier sans lui, & si encores  
 n'en sera elle moins claire. [...] je l'y ay aussi mise, non par  
 malveillance, ne par mocquerie: car je vous aime plus, que ma langue  
 n'a sceu exprimer, laquelle ne fut jamais avare de vous celebrer [...]  
 Passe trois, ou quatre fueilletz (qui voudra) sans en lire un seul vers: &  
 que toutesfois le voudra lire, qu'il lui donne celle mesme creance,  
 qu'on donne aux fictions, & abourdes. (XXVIII.1)

[Ladies (and ladies' devotees), by all means disregard this tale which  
 the innkeeper is preparing to relate to the disparagement, to the  
 ignominy and censure of your sex – not that a tongue as common as  
 his can either sully or embellish your image. [...] Skip this canto: it is  
 not essential – my story is no less clear without it. [... I have included it]  
 in no spirit of malevolence or provocation. That I dote upon you my

tongue has confessed – it has never stinted your praises [...] Those who wish, then, may skip three or four pages without reading a line of them; those who prefer to read them must regard the story in the same light as legends and fables.]<sup>119</sup>

See Table 1 for analysis of ‘mocquerie’, a word which here seems to have a more sinister meaning of malice or provocation in comparison to the cheeky and teasing meanings discussed in section 3.1. Claiming not to write it for spite or malice is a form of *praeteritio*. Harington asserts that the sweet sex cannot be disgraced, yet, like Brantôme, puts forward evidence of this very thing happening. This warning to women not to read what follows is highly typical of the method of acknowledging a rule while breaking it, thereby providing a setting for comic sexual euphemism, which does just this. This text is about the same honour culture that Castiglione emphasises. If women transgress sexually, their honour and reputation can be ruined. If men ruin a woman’s reputation by partaking in shameful sex with her or by joking and gossiping about her, they can be dishonoured too. This context plays with the rules and displays false modesty which is not in good faith. It pays heed to the rule that, for example, one should not say anything rude about or to women, but Ariosto and the translators give themselves licence to do this in coded ways just as a speaker in Castiglione gives permission to women to be rude in some circumstances. Harington’s last four lines admit the possibility that this poem will be read by women and pretends to safe-guard against this, which is, of course, all part of the joke. Women are warned not to ‘peruse’, ‘esteem’, ‘regard’, or ‘believe’ it – yet they are then given instructions on, if they must do these things, how to do them. These conditions reveal Harington’s intentions that they do in fact read and enjoy his work. If the actual hope was they would never read it, the conditions would not be necessary.

The same technique is used in many Renaissance texts, such as this 1618 poem at the beginning of the *Cabinet satyrique*:

Dames de qui la vanité

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<sup>119</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.1-3. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.1-2.



Est d'estre l'exemple des chastes,  
 Pour faire que l'eternité  
 Grave vostre gloire en ces fastes,  
 Et qu'aux yeux de tout l'univers  
 Vos vertus soient une merveille,  
 Gardez-vous de lire ces vers,  
 Ils f--tent les gens par l'oreille.<sup>120</sup>  
 [Ladies whose vanity  
 Is to be the model of chaste women,  
 To ensure that eternity  
 Engraves your glory in these annals,  
 And that in the eyes of all the universe  
 Your virtues may be a marvel,  
 Refrain from reading these verses,  
 They f\*\*k people in the ear.]

Rhyming 'vanité' and 'eternité' (which suggests morality) makes chastity being eternal a joke. The rhyme brings the two together, bringing the noble eternity down to the level of vanity. The idea of the 'fastes' plays with the joke of a book of obscene poetry being like noble records.<sup>121</sup> It is totally mocking of the moral structure and pretensions to chastity. This epigram demonstrates the dual nature of ostensibly warning against the content with one hand, while flagging it as enticing material with the other, which is inherent to many of the texts this thesis examines and often performs the same role as euphemism. Yet this poem is much more risqué than Harington's – where Harington plays with where the line is, this crosses the line. In both these texts, these supposed warnings come at the beginning, as if women's reactions bring their salaciousness into existence.

This poem and the opening of this canto are in fact very tempting, and actually invite further reading rather than discouraging it. Harington provokes

<sup>120</sup> *Le Cabinet satyrique* (Paris: Billaine, 1618), sig.ã iv<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>121</sup> 'On appelle encore poëtiquement et oratoirement *Fastes*, les Archives, les Registres publics où sont conservez les Memoires historiques des choses les plus memorables arrivées en chaque nation', Antoine Furetière. *Dictionnaire universel*, 3 vols (The Hague and Rotterdam: Leers, 1690).

a feeling, especially if the anecdote is true, that women are the intended audience. This is supported by him dedicating his work to the queen. And yet, if anyone condemned women reading such things, he (along with Ariosto and Martin) can immediately answer that it is not his fault as he expressly warned them not to. The way he tries to cover his back by including this playful warning anticipates the need to defend himself against critics.<sup>122</sup> Like Brantôme, he is obviously disingenuous and this alleged concern comes a distant second to the humour surrounding the dual nature of offering scandalous material and warning against it simultaneously. The assurance that this was not written with spiteful or malicious intentions is in much the same style as Brantôme's continuous claims that he is not scandal-mongering, while reporting scandalous stories. Harington often has much of the same deliberate disingenuousness as Brantôme which is part of the same joke they are both playing with.

This canto's tale, after its warning (quoted above) aimed at women, begins with praise for the king of Lombardy, then turns to Fausto, one of his courtiers. The king wonders whether Fausto can produce anyone comparable to the king in beauty. Fausto says this is impossible with the possible exception of his brother Jocundo, whom he is ordered to bring to court. After expressing doubts that he will come – one of which are he would not want to leave his wife – Fausto leaves for Jocundo's house. Jocundo consents to come.

They prepare to leave, but Jocundo's wife starts to protest 'With wat'ry eyes to show a sorry heart, | Complains his absence will so sore her grieve | Till his return she doubts she shall not live' (XXVIII.12). Martin translates this as:

ayant tousiours les yeux plains de larmes, & lui disant qu'elle ne savait, comment elle pourrait souffrir tel esloignement sans mourir. Car y pensant seulement, elle se sentoit arracher le coeur du coste gaulche.'  
(XXVIII.6)

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<sup>122</sup> This is highly reminiscent of Joubert's printer Simon Millanges placing asterisks beside parts women should avert their eyes from. See section 4.1.

[her eyes ever swollen with tears, his wife told him that she did not know how she would endure his being so far away and not die of it: she felt her heart rooted out of her left side at the mere thought of it.]<sup>123</sup>

This is an instance where Harington stays quite close to the original in describing Jocundo's wife's plight. Yet after two miles' travel, Jocundo turns back for a forgotten item, and finds his wife in bed. This is when 'He draws the curtain softly without sound, | And saw that he would little have suspected: | His chaste and faithful yokefellow he found | Yoked with a knave, all honesty neglected' (XXVIII.21). In Martin's version, this appears as: 'sans sonner mot il lève la courtine, & voit ce, qu'il croyoit moins de voir. Car sa chaste & loyalle femme gisoit entre les bras d'un jeune homme' (XXVIII.8-9) ['He lifted the curtains without a word – and was no little surprised by what he saw: his chaste and loyal wife under the covers in a young man's arms!'].<sup>124</sup> There is heavy irony in the words 'chaste and faithful'. Harington makes a few changes in his translation. 'Yokefellow', says the *OED*, is a word for 'spouse' taken from the practice of coupling together oxen to draw a plough.<sup>125</sup> Harington uses it for a play on words when combined with 'yoked with a knave'. Her adultery suggests her prior distress was a performance, thereby calling into question all such displays of marital fidelity. Jocundo is understandably upset: 'Her too much company, did cause his moan' (XXVIII.25). This does not appear in the French or modern English, the closest phrase being: 'se deult de l'avoir laissée trop accompagnée' (XXVIII.10) ['he had left her all too well cared for'].<sup>126</sup> All these translations are funnier than simply stating that they had sex a lot – 'company' and being 'well cared for' are euphemistic but transparent phrases. However, Harington's is the most comic since 'moan' also has sexual connotations. Fausto, now called Faustus, is concerned both for his brother and that he will not appear beautiful before the king.

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<sup>123</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.12-13. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.9.

<sup>124</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.21. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.16.

<sup>125</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p.

<sup>126</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.25. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.19.

However, all is well with the king but Jocundo is still miserable. He wanders the halls he has been put up in, and to his shock sees the queen having sex with a dwarf: 'And here he saw a dwarf embrace the queen | And strive a while, and after homely play, | Such was his skill, that ere they went asunder, | The dwarf was got aloft, and she lay under' (XXVIII.34). This appears in the French as: 'Là regardant il veit une estrange luicte d'un Nain qui estoit accouplé avec elle, & ce petit homme avoit esté si habile, qu'il avoit mys la Reyne dessoubz' (XXVIII.10) ['What he saw here was the queen and a dwarf entwined together in a sort of wrestling match; the little man was so expert at this that he had thrust the queen beneath him'].<sup>127</sup> The comic sexual euphemism used here to describe the queen's affair contrasts in some ways to Jocundo's 'seeing [it] plain' – in other ways it does not contrast, however, as the euphemism is fairly explicit (XXVIII.35).<sup>128</sup> This makes Jocundo consider that perhaps his wife can be 'excused' for her behaviour (XXVIII.36).<sup>129</sup> He reasons that he 'the sex accused | That never can with one man be contented. | If all (quoth he) with one like stain are spotted, | Yet on a monster mine was not besotted' (XXVIII.36). Martin phrases this thus: 'attendu que ce n'estoit sa coulpe, plus que du sexe, qui ne se contenter jamais d'un seul homme. Et si toutes sont tachées d'un mesme encre, du moins la sienne n'avait choisi & pris Monstre defiguré' (XXVIII.10) ['it was not her fault so much as that of her sex, which could never be satisfied with a single man. If all of them were stained with the same ink, at least she had not taken up with a freak.'].<sup>130</sup> The word 'monster' draws attention to women's sexual voraciousness. These words relate the physical imagery as well as verbal wit involved in the queen and dwarf's affair. Jocundo returns day after day to their meeting place to witness the continuing affair, until, eventually, the dwarf fails to appear. One of the reasons for this is he is playing chess, meaning his two main activities cohere to the metaphorical field of sex and games.

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<sup>127</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.34. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.25.

<sup>128</sup> This phrase does not appear in the early modern French or modern English.

<sup>129</sup> Her behaviour is described as 'excusable' in both the French and English. Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Martin (1544), XXVIII.10; Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.36. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.27.

<sup>130</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.36. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.27.

Jocundo is relieved that he is not alone in being cuckolded, 'For though it grieved me to wear a horn, | It pleased me well I wear it not alone' (XXVIII.43). Martin gives us: 'car si bien il estoit tombé en opprobre, aumoins il estoit certain de n'estre seul' (XXVIII.13) ['for even if he himself had incurred shame, at least he knew that he was not alone'].<sup>131</sup> Harington introduces the more comically sexual idea of wearing a horn. Jocundo even tells the king, though making him swear not to take revenge. At this point the tale is interrupted with a plea for the reader to 'Believe my word I say; I need not swear' (XXVIII.44) in a tone very similar to Brantôme's. In the French, we have the following: 'vous le croirez bien sans que j'enjure' (XXVIII.13) ['you will accept without my having to swear it'].<sup>132</sup> This creates a sense that maybe the translator (in either language) or Ariosto feels the comic situation is too ridiculous to be credible at this point. However, the issue of credibility is secondary to the issue of playing on the misogynistic assumption that women are so sexually voracious that they will have intercourse with a 'monster' like a dwarf. The king asks Jocundo what he should do, and Jocundo proposes a quest to ascertain if all women behave in this way and put them on trial. They set off in disguise, and travel through many countries. They find that 'Among all womenkind there is not one, | That can content herself with one alone' (XXVIII.50). Martin translates this as: 'en toute la grand multitude des femmes, n'en est une, qui soit contente d'un seul homme' (XXVIII.13) ['in the whole tribe of women there is not one who will rest content with a single man'].<sup>133</sup> This perception of women is an important issue for all three courtly texts, from performance of chastity in Castiglione to women's sexual reputation in Brantôme. Harington's poem is littered with such misogyny, often unique to his translation: 'Some must be wooed forsooth, they were so chaste, | And some there were that wooèd them as fast' (XXVIII.48); even married women are 'too gentle to say nay' (which could have a sinister suggestion of rape), and so on.<sup>134</sup> Eventually, the men 'mean to leave this

<sup>131</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.43. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.32.

<sup>132</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.44. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.33.

<sup>133</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.50. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.37.

<sup>134</sup> These phrases do not appear in the early modern French or modern English.

sport, and go their way', a euphemism for sex and the quest to see if any women are chaste, which relates to the metaphorical field of sex and games or sport.<sup>135</sup> Harington relates how 'They found it [the sport] full of danger and debate, | To keep their standings in another's gate' (XXVIII.49). In the French, this becomes: 'ils ne pouvoient aysement entrer en maison d'aultruy sans hazard de mort' (XXVIII.13) ['they could not enter strangers' houses without the risk of being killed'].<sup>136</sup> This is another instance where Harington's version has more comic sexual language. His line uses many euphemisms, since 'standing' could refer to the male erection and 'gate' could mean 'vagina'.<sup>137</sup> The literal meaning of 'standings' in this context (which is given a layer of obscene meaning), according to the *OED*, is an aspect of a building or part of a piece of furniture.<sup>138</sup> This meaning is portrayed as secondary to the ruder meaning.

After more travel, they find an innkeeper's daughter in Spain, whose father wants to sell her off. Harington explains how 'She was new ent'ring in the flower and pride', using a euphemism for the female puberty process and menstruation (XXVIII.53). Martin phrases this thus: 'son eage tendre estoit encor en la fleur de sa premevere' (XXVIII.13) ['She was very young, indeed her springtime was still but in the bud'].<sup>139</sup> There is a Greek who had grown up in her father's house, and who often slept by her side, 'And much good sport, had passèd them between' (XXVIII.56). This is the following different phrase in the French: 'un garçon [...] aux premiers ans fut amoureux d'elle, & joui de son amour' (XXVIII.14) ['He had loved her from the first, and had enjoyed her love'].<sup>140</sup> Again, Harington adds to the sexual humour by using the metaphorical field of sex and sport. They continue their affair in secret. The king and Jocundo have both heard 'The bed to rock' (XXVIII.65). For this, Martin provides a slightly different phrase: 'Joconde, & le Roi avoient entendu le chaplis' (XXVIII.15) ['Jocundo and the king had felt the motion which kept

<sup>135</sup> This phrase does not appear in the early modern French or modern English.

<sup>136</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.49.

<sup>137</sup> See below for more on 'gate' and chapter five section 5.1 for 'standing' in Thomas Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. by David Bevington (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), pp. 1453-1513.

<sup>138</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p.

<sup>139</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.53.

<sup>140</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.56.

jolting the bed’].<sup>141</sup> ‘Chapplis’ is associated with the clashing of armour in Cotgrave, who defines it as ‘The hacking, hewing, and slashing that’s among armed men when they encounter’.<sup>142</sup> This introduces connotations of the metaphorical field of sex and war, giving a tone of competitive fighting. They accuse each other of being the one sleeping with her. They summon her and command her to confess ‘Which of us two it was, that all this night | So gallantly performed all his due’ (XXVIII.69). The French alternative asks ‘qui est celui si gaillard, qui toute nuit a joui de toi’ (XXVIII.16) [‘who was the doughty fellow who enjoyed you all night long’].<sup>143</sup> Harington’s version is once again funnier in its sexual language. The humour lies in the ambiguity and almost sarcasm about the sexual act being gallant. The same joke appears in Brantôme’s labelling adultery humorously as ‘devoir’ [‘duty’] (see above). Sex is also given the euphemisms of ‘work’ in the line ‘They cease not work, on days profane nor holy’ and ‘purpose’ in ‘the dwarf [...] | For whom of purpose twice before she sent’ (XXVIII.37-38). The latter line does not appear in the French or English, while the former appears thus in the French: ‘l’autre jour encore [...] qu’on laboure, & l’autre aussi. Finablement il ne passe jour, qu’on ne face feste’ (XXVIII.10) [‘The game was repeated on the following day [...] and again on the next – indeed they had no rest-day’].<sup>144</sup> The style of vocabulary implies a sense of duty, and is also found in Brantôme’s talk of ‘devoir’. The same is true for when the innkeeper’s daughter says ‘For every night, I lie betwixt them two [Jocundo and the king], | And they will quickly fear, and find the treason, | Sith still with one of them I have to do’ (XXVIII.61). In the French, this is the following: ‘je couche la nuit au milieu de deux, & ores l’un se joue avec moy, & ores l’autre, & tousjours je me trouve aux bras de l’un’ (XXVIII.14) [‘I always sleep between the two of them [...] There’s always one or the other making love to me – I’m always in the arms of one of

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<sup>141</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.65. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.48.

<sup>142</sup> Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Aslip, 1611), <<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cotgrave/>> [accessed 18 Oct 2013], n.p.

<sup>143</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.69. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.51.

<sup>144</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.37. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.28.

them.'].<sup>145</sup> She feels she is always obliged to choose one of them to sleep with.

She craves pardon, and explains that it was neither of them but 'How she had hoped, that though they happed to wake, | Yet for his partner either would it take'. In the French, this appears as: 'elle estoit conduite entre eulx avec espoir, que tous deux creussent, que se fut son compaignon' (XXVIII.17) ['she had behaved between them in the hope that each would think it was his companion'].<sup>146</sup> In Harington's translation, she hopes they will take pity on her 'woeful case' (XXVIII.70);<sup>147</sup> 'case' was often a euphemism for 'vagina'.<sup>148</sup> The two men find it highly amusing that her practice is discovered, and conclude that she is to be pardoned:

We had a thousand women proved before,  
And none of them denièd our request,  
Nor would and if we tried ten thousand more,  
But this one trial passeth all the rest;  
Let us not then condemn our wives so sore,  
That are as chaste, and honest as the best;  
Sith they be as all other women be,  
Let us turn home and well with them agree. (XXVIII.70)

The following can be found in Martin's translation:

Nous en avons éprouvé mille, & toutes belles, & si n'en fut jamais une entre tant, qui nous ayt contradict, & si nous encores esprouvons les autres, elles seront sans doute semblables: mais ceste ci suffise pour la dernière prœuve. Nous pouvons doncques croire, que les nostres ne sont point plus mauuaises, ne moins chastes, que les autres, & si elles sont (comme toutes les autres) sera bon, que nous tournions devers elles, & qu'elles soient nostres comme devant. (XXVIII.18)

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<sup>145</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.61.

<sup>146</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.70. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.52.

<sup>147</sup> This phrase does not appear in the early modern French or modern English.

<sup>148</sup> See chapter five section 5.1 for evidence.



[“We have sampled a thousand women, all of them beautiful, and not one of them yet has resisted us. Were we to try more, they would be just the same, but for a conclusive proof this little maid is enough. We can accept that our wives are neither more wicked nor less chaste than the rest. And if they are just like the rest, why, let’s return and make the most of them.”]<sup>149</sup>

There is a similar play here to the epigram at the beginning of the *Cabinet satyrique* – ‘honest’ and ‘chaste’ have been emptied of meaning as far as women are concerned. The presentation of women as being out of control serves to boost and demonstrate male power and dominance, showing comic sexual language can have a darker purpose. The type of Renaissance humour which uses comic sexual euphemism about women often reinforces stereotypes of a female lack of sexual restraint. If women are unable to control themselves, the logical position reached is that men should control them. This is how comic sexual euphemism can be more than just vulgar joking but a reinforcement of patriarchy and misogyny. It is perhaps odd that it is this woman who changes their mind within the poem, since she was still having sex outside of marriage, even if it was with neither of them. This oddity adds to the mixed conclusion of the poem over whether women should be defended or condemned. They let the Greek and the innkeeper’s daughter get married, left for home, ‘and had their sins absolved | And take again their wives, and end all strife’ (XXVIII.74).<sup>150</sup> In the comic world of the canto, acceptance of female sexual lasciviousness leads to a happy ending.

In Harington’s printed annotations to this canto he remarks that ‘History nor Allegory, nor scant any thing that is good, can be picked out of this bad book: but for Allusions, they come in my mind so plentifully’ (p. 232).<sup>151</sup> Allusions include double-entendres. It is as if sexual innuendo endlessly produces itself in a way that divests the author of responsibility in much the same way as women are forgiven their sexual indiscretions by Jocundo and

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<sup>149</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.73. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.54.

<sup>150</sup> This phrase does not appear in the early modern French or modern English.

<sup>151</sup> This phrase does not appear in the early modern French or modern English. This reference has a page number because it is not a stanza.

the king. Harington's text is, of course, full of these. In this story which he is reminded of, a husband is 'seeing evidently' that his unfaithful wife 'had played false at tables' (p. 232)<sup>152</sup>, a comic euphemistic phrase which is part of the metaphorical field of sex and games. Her adultery is like cheating in a game, breaking the rules of sexual behaviour like the rules of a game or sport.

The canto/book ends in a style very like Brantôme's: 'But here a while my story now shall cease, | Lest my mishap or punishment be such [...] for talking overmuch' (XXVIII.97). Martin translates this as: 'Mais mes paroles vous pourroient desormais estre trop longues, si plus j'en disois. Parquoi je fineray mon chant' (XXVIII.39) ['But you might find me too prolix if I were to continue, so I shall end this canto'].<sup>153</sup> This deliberately highlights the fact that Ariosto or the translator, and Harington in particular (who, most likely, did face punishment), has already talked a lot about sexual topics using humorously excessive language. The opening 'Argument' to the canto promises a 'lying tale, to woman's great disgrace' which 'Rodomont heareth of his passing Host' (p. 225).<sup>154</sup> Just as Harington multiplies the possibility of sexual connotations throughout his text, by talking about the tale as a lie, he plays with the reader. It also comes full circle back to the warning/invitation at the beginning – if the whole thing is a lie anyway, it covers his back if 'chaste eyes' are offended by the content.

I will now analyse other specific uses of sexual humour, euphemism, and metaphor in this canto. When Jocundo is debating, for example, whether to inform the king of the affair in Harington's text, he decides he 'would not have the thing from him concealed' (XXVIII.40),<sup>155</sup> which adds irony to the attempt to conceal the affair in the euphemistic language used. The banal nature of such an imprecise and widespread as 'thing' is itself a comic allusion to the banal nature of female infidelity, at least as far as this type of misogynistic comedy is concerned.

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<sup>152</sup> This phrase does not appear in the early modern French or modern English. This reference has a page number because it is not a stanza.

<sup>153</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.102. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.75.

<sup>154</sup> This phrase does not appear in the early modern French or modern English. This reference has a page number because it is not a stanza.

<sup>155</sup> This phrase does not appear in the early modern French or modern English.

As do Middleton, Brantôme, and many other early modern writers, Harington conjures imagery within the metaphorical field of sex or women and riding in a way sometimes unique to his text. The lover of Jocundo's wife is called 'A beggar's brat, bred by him from his cradle, | And now was riding on his master's saddle' (XXVIII.21).<sup>156</sup> Love or sex and riding are talked of in the same way: 'Love so pricks him, and he so pricks his steed' (XXVIII.23). Martin's French provides the following: 'lui picqué d'Amour, tellement le picqua encor [son cheval]' (XXVIII.10) ['pricked as he was by Love, so pricked his steed'].<sup>157</sup> The word 'pricks' literally means digging heels into the horse to quicken its pace, but also has clear sexual punning. It is included in some of the subtleties of meaning in Castiglione.<sup>158</sup> This adds humour to the very first line of *The Faerie Queene*: 'A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine'.<sup>159</sup> Although Spenser's epic is not a comedy first and foremost, it does feature comic language and can engage with double-entendre. The word is also used elsewhere in Spenser, such as 'a Knight He spide come pricking on with al his powre and might'.<sup>160</sup> When Jocundo tells the king what the queen is up to, he again uses the language of riding: 'For why the dwarf did manage with such skill, | Though she curvets, he keeps his stirrups still' (XXVIII.43). The closest to this in the French is: 'tenoit la Jument d'autrui soubz soy, qui touche des éperons, & faict jouer des rains' (XXVIII.13) ['he was mounted on another's filly, spurring her as his back jerked up and down'].<sup>161</sup> The queen is degraded to being ridden by a dwarf, who would hardly be seen as a masterful male but she is reduced to being below even his level. When Jocundo and the king accuse each other of being the one to sleep with the innkeeper's daughter, they use phrases such as 'That have this night a journey rode so long', 'That all this night, have rid a hunting pace', and 'I would, in faith I swear, | Have lent my dog a course among the rest, | But that I found yourself so busy were, | And rode so hard you could not spare the beast'. In Martin's text, this is presented as:

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<sup>156</sup> This phrase does not appear in the early modern French or modern English.

<sup>157</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.23.

<sup>158</sup> See Table 1 for details.

<sup>159</sup> Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Roche, p. 41.

<sup>160</sup> Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Roche, p. 886. Spenser's epic also features a dwarf.

<sup>161</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.43. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.32.

tu dois avoir fait grand chemin: & est bien temps que tu te reposes,  
quand tu as este toute nuit tu as chevauché a haste. Et moy encore  
(suyuit le Roi) sans faulte j'eusse laissé courir mon chien pour un coup,  
si tu m'eusses prêté un peu le cheval tant que j'eusse faict mon affaire.  
(XXVIII.16)

[“You must have ridden quite a distance; it’s high time you rested, for  
you’ve been on horseback the entire night.” [... “] you’ve been riding all  
night long.” [... “] [I] would certainly have let me hound off the leash for  
a while if you’d lent me the horse long enough to satisfy my  
purposes.”]<sup>162</sup>

Sex is talked of in terms of the use of animals. Such language is called ‘privy  
quips and taunts’ in Harington’s version (XXVIII.66-67).<sup>163</sup> ‘Privy’, as the *OED*  
explains, is ‘Private, personal; familiar, acquainted’ as well as ‘Relating to  
sexual activity or procreation [...] sexually intimate’.<sup>164</sup> There is a link between  
sex/women and horses again at the end of the canto, when a Pagan cannot  
sleep for thinking about his woman.<sup>165</sup> It describes how ‘His unkind mistres,  
him doth waking keep, | She troubles him, whither he lie on bed, | Whither he  
go, or ride [...] | But though him selfe could take but little rest, | Yet of his  
horse, he takes no little care’ (XXVIII.84-85). This becomes the following in  
Martin’s translation:

le Roi Païen [...] delà s’estendit au lict pour dormir jusques au despartir  
de clair obscur. Mais la nuit il soupira plus de sa Dame, qu’il ne  
dormit. [...] ayant tout ce bon respect (que tout bon Chevallier doit  
avoir a son cheval) [...] voyant que par deux journées il l’avoit plus  
constrained, qui si bon destrier ne se debvroit. (XXVIII.25-26)

[He lay down in bed to sleep until the dense darkness of night had  
cleared, but it was in sighing over his lady’s offences, more than in

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<sup>162</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.66-67. See also Arioste,  
*Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.50.

<sup>163</sup> This phrase does not appear in the early modern French or modern English.

<sup>164</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p.

<sup>165</sup> Gottfried omits this.

sleeping, that he passed the night. [...] having all proper respect for his steed as a good knight should [...] he realised that he had pressed on harder these last two days than he should have done on so fine a horse.]<sup>166</sup>

He cares for a horse when he cannot for a woman; the horse is the better alternative (in Harington's text). He also makes a connection between a 'Lady fair' and a 'goodlie horse' (XXVIII.90), so pleasing and unpleasing women alike are linked to horses and riding. Martin translates these as 'une Pucelle de face amoureuse' ['a delectable-looking damsel'] and 'un grand destrier' (XXVIII.30) ['a great charger'].<sup>167</sup> Riding vocabulary was often a euphemism for sex.<sup>168</sup> This sort of humour, as in Brantôme's phrase 'monter sur la petite beste', serves to degrade women to the level of beasts to be ridden by men. Such language reveals the attitude to women to be derogatory and the attitude to sex as not between equals. Yet again, male power over women is a key theme. Comic sexual language can therefore be used to reinforce the superiority of men.

Jocundo's wife, when acting distressed that he will leave, declares she will keep 'from meat my mouth' (XXVIII.14). Martin writes that her grief 'ne lui laisse prendre repas' (XXVIII.6) ['did not suffer her to taste food'].<sup>169</sup> Harington's version has more comic sexual connotations. Her literal meaning is that she is so upset she will not eat. However, meat and food are often a symbol for sex in Renaissance texts, so a new layer of humour is added, as she will not actually deprive herself of sex. The men on their quest also talk of pleasures, implying sex as well as drink and so on, including meat. Therefore, carnal needs of the body, sex and eating, and eating/consuming bodies are connected (XXVIII.14). This connection is a fairly intuitive one, perhaps unsurprising, yet still has potential for humour to be built around it. The Greek asks that his lover 'Let me enjoy thy sweetness once again [...] | One small

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<sup>166</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.85-86. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.62.

<sup>167</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.98.

<sup>168</sup> I will explore this further on in this thesis. It is evident in all the puns on riding and prostitution in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, for example.

<sup>169</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.14. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.10.

refreshing ere we quite depart' (XXVIII.59), a phrase which gives sex connotations of eating or drinking. This is different in the French, the closest phrase being: 'laisse moy descharger si grand desir' (XXVIII.15) ['let me discharge so great a passion'].<sup>170</sup> The humour, exaggerated by Harington in comparison to the other versions, lies in pointing out the similarity between the two types of bodily needs.<sup>171</sup> The link between meat and women is also hinted at in the way the innkeeper's daughter is called 'a pretty piece' by Harington (XXVIII.52).<sup>172</sup> In *Romeo and Juliet* and *Much Ado About Nothing* we also find this phrase, ending in 'a pretty piece of flesh',<sup>173</sup> so if this was a well-known phrase the implication is that the innkeeper's daughter is also a pretty piece of *flesh* and is therefore symbolically linked to fleshy meat.

Another sexual euphemism this poem uses, which was common in the period, as shown above, is that of women being or having purses, or being linked to money or business: 'The want [of sex] herein our purses shall repair. | Let us not spare our beauty, youth, and treasure, | Till of a thousand we have had our pleasure' (XXVIII.46). This appears differently in the French. Martin translates it as:

Quelle femme doncques sera qui nous use de rigueur, si elles ne se peuvent deffendre contres les laidz? Et si beaulté n'y vault, & jeunesse, aumoins il nous voudra de les avoir par argent. Parquoi je ne veulx sans doubte que tuournes, que premierement tu n'ayes eu la despouille ample de mille femmes d'aultruy. (XXVIII.13)

[What woman will rebuff us when they are defenceless against even the ugly? If neither good looks nor youth will serve us, at least our riches will help. I do not mean to return before despoiling a thousand men's wives of their prime treasure.]<sup>174</sup>

<sup>170</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.59.

<sup>171</sup> See analysis of Freud and sexual jokes playing on similarities and differences in my Introduction section 1.5.

<sup>172</sup> This phrase does not appear in the early modern French or modern English.

<sup>173</sup> William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. by Jill L. Levenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000): 1.1.29; William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 569-593: 4.2.82.

<sup>174</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.46.

In this economy, men have the power, just as in the metaphorical field of sex and business or money which I analysed in the Brantôme section 3.2. Women being objects in business transactions is also demonstrated in the way the innkeeper was going to sell his daughter: ‘The price agreed, away the strangers carry her, | Because the father money wants to marry her’ (XXVIII.53). In Martin’s French, this is the following: ‘le père était chargé de plusieurs fils, & ennemi mortel de pauvreté’ (XXVIII.13) [‘Her father was burdened with many children and poverty was his mortal enemy’], which is why he does not find it difficult to to give her into their keeping.<sup>175</sup> Harington’s version emphasises the metaphorical field more, opening the line with reference to the price. He also gives us the lines ‘Well might that woman think she had a treasure, | That had us two, her appetite to please’ (XXVIII.51).<sup>176</sup> In these quotations, Harington uses similar language to Middleton, as well as the same stylistic technique of mixing metaphorical fields.<sup>177</sup> The above quotation mixes metaphors of treasure and appetite (sexual and concerned with food). Linking appetite for food and for sex has humour for many reasons. It both serves to reduce and increase culpability for having sex – if it is a basic need like food, responsibility is reduced whereas, if it is inescapable like the need to eat (in women), this increases the misogyny as women are portrayed as slaves to their passions. Another example is found in the episode of the innkeeper’s daughter and the Greek:

a boy [the Greek] had been,  
 And slept full often sweetly by her side,  
 And much good sport, had passèd them between;  
 Yet fearing lest their love should be descried;  
 In open talk they durst not be seen;  
 That when by hap, the pages down were gone,  
 Old love renewed, and thus they talk thereon. (XXVIII.56)

In Martin’s French, this appears as the following:

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<sup>175</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.53.

<sup>176</sup> This phrase does not appear in the early modern French or modern English.

<sup>177</sup> See chapter five section 5.1.

Or en ce logis demouroit un garçon pour valet, qui autrefois avoit demeuré en la maison de la jeunette au service du pere, & aux premiers ans fut amoureux d'elle, & joui de son amour. Ils se reconnurent bien, mais ils n'en firent semblant, car chacun d'eux craignant d'estre apperceu: mais aussi tost, que les maistres, & la famille leur donerent lieu ils commencerent de parler ensemble. (XXVIII.14)

[Now one of the boys at the inn had once worked at the maiden's house, in her father's employment. He had loved her from the first, and had enjoyed her love. They exchanged glances now, but not openly, both of them fearing to be discovered. But as soon as their masters and the rest of the household left them the chance, their glances became more pointed.]<sup>178</sup>

Harington's translation, unlike Martin's, uses sport as a metaphor for sex, so mixes the metaphorical fields of sex and sport, and sex and language with their 'talk'. Martin raises the idea of 'parler', using talk to suggest sexual activity, but not sport. Harington's comedy is found in likening sex to sport and conversation, both of which are normally socially acceptable unlike sex outside marriage. It is significant that open talk is mentioned, as this is the opposite of euphemism and the type of language Harington uses, even if it is sometimes obvious what he is inferring.

As mentioned above, 'gate' could be a euphemism for female genitalia. This imagery of gates and doors is also used in the poem when the Greek is described entering the innkeeper's daughter's bedroom, with connotations of him having sex with her:

First to the door, which opened when he pushed,  
Then to the chamber, which was softly rushed  
[...] he gropes on either side,  
To find the bed, with hands abroad displayed;

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<sup>178</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.56. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.42.



And having found the bottom of the bed,  
He creepeth in, and forward go'th his head. (XXVIII.62-63)

In the French, the following can be found: he 'vient a l'huys, & le pousse, & celluy se ouvre: il entre [...] & il trouve le lict, [...] se pousse soubz la couverture la teste premiere' (XXVIII.15) ['came to her door and pushed on it: it gave, and he stepped in [...] he] groped his way till he found the bed – into which, [...] he quietly intruded head first.'].<sup>179</sup> Here, as at many points in his poem such as the field of sex and meat, Harington has designed things so that possible sexual connotations multiply, in the same way as women have multiple partners and so on. Even more so than Ariosto and Martin, he creates a situation where potentially everything appears to have a sexual connotation, although here it is with items which might already have an intuitive link to sexual activity. The bedroom and bed itself have become sexualised and eroticised. This is where the humour of his section of the canto lies, and is a trait common to many of the authors studied in this thesis, including Middleton – seeing sexual humour in almost anything. Features of the room could reflect features of the female body, such as being 'rushed' implying pubic hair. His creeping in could refer to sexual penetration, with the head being his penis. This is further suggested by the lines which follow this description: between her

tender thighs he came,  
That lay upright, as ready to receive;  
At last they fell unto their merry game,  
Embracing sweetly, now to take their leave;  
He rode in post, ne can he bait for shame;  
The beast was good, and would not him deceive;  
He thinks her pace so easy and so sure  
That all night to ride he could endure. (XXVIII.64)

Martin's French presents this as:

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<sup>179</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.62-63. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.47.

il [...] vint entre [s]es deux jambes [...] elle gisoit a l'envers. Et quand il fut pair apair il l'embrasse étroitement, & dessus elle se tint jusques aupres du jour chevauchant fort, sans estrieu: si ne lui couvint jamais changer de beste: car ceste lui semble, qu'elle trotte si bien qu'il n'en veult descendre de toute nuit. [...] Apres que le grec eut achevé son chemin, il s'en retourna, comme il estoit venu. (XXVIII.15)

[He slipped between [... her] legs, who was lying on her back, and slid up her until they were face to face, when he hugged her tightly. He straddled her till daybreak: indeed he rode her hard, without once changing horses, for he found no need to – this one, he thought, trotted so nicely that he did not want to dismount her once all night. [...] When the Greek had ridden his course, he left the way he had come.]<sup>180</sup>

While all versions feature riding, Harington uniquely mixes metaphorical fields, featuring sex and games, and sex and riding, since the language used about his horse is readily applied to his lover. Sex is therefore repeatedly associated with many elements in this poem, from riding to food and from talking to money. The overall effect here is to turn a potentially shocking situation – a young woman's reputation being ruined by sex outside marriage – into comedy, making light of the sex by calling it a game and enjoying misogyny by, once again, putting women at the level of beasts to be ridden.

Harington uses sexual innuendo in other texts as well.<sup>181</sup> In *The Metamorphosis of Ajax*, for example, Harington's alter-ego Misacmos demands his servant look up the word 'confornicari' in the dictionary, a word he says he 'could not English'. This is a word made up of other naughty words, 'con' and 'fornicate', a trick which the French love in this period and which plays with syllables in the way Castiglione describes. The demand is phrased thus:

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<sup>180</sup> Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Waldman (2008), XXVIII.64-65. See also Arioste, *Roland Furieux*, trans. by Reynard (2015), XXVIII.48.

<sup>181</sup> This is pointed out by Lake Prescott, although her main focus regarding Harington is his scatology. Lake Prescott, *Imagining Rabelais in Renaissance England*, p. 232.

What the good yere, what is this same *confornicari*? trust me there is a word I never read in Homer nor Aristotle [...] what a straunge word is this? [...] I thinke I shall give you a jerke, if you do not helpe me to some English for this word. Looke it sirra there in the dictionarie. *Con, con*. Tush what dost thou looke in the French? thou wilt make a sweete peece of looking, to looke for *con fornicar* in the French: looke in the Latin for *fornicor*. *F, fa, fe, fi, fo, for, foramen, forfex, forica, forma, fornicator* (now I think I am neare it) *fornix, fornicor, aris, are*.<sup>182</sup>

As Lake Prescott highlights, this imitates the sexual process, especially with being ‘near it’.<sup>183</sup> This phrase also explains how ‘fornicator’ is close to ‘fornicor’ (to fornicate). ‘Con’ is ‘a womans &c’ as Cotgrave defines it. Cotgrave also provides us with ‘fornicateur’: ‘a fornicator, wencher, smell-smocke, mutton-munger, whore-hunter’, ‘fornication’: fornication, lecherie committed by an unmarried couple’, and ‘forniquer’: ‘to play the fornicator, to leacher it, unmarried, with an unmarried person’.<sup>184</sup> Cotgrave, like Harington, is taking great pleasure in this vocabulary. A side note of the *Metamorphosis* proclaims ‘Eliots dictionarie and Coopers placed these 2 woordes, too neare together’.<sup>185</sup> The danger of such vocabulary is feared – or, perhaps in Harington’s case, hoped – to be increased when they are in close proximity. Like Cotgrave, both Thomas Cooper and Thomas Eliot define these ‘f’ words in terms of fornication, lechery, and committing whoredom.<sup>186</sup> ‘Confornicari’ is the present infinitive passive of ‘confornico’, so it means ‘to be over-arched/vaulted over’. The affected horror at ‘con’ and these ‘f’ words being too close is somewhat undermined by Harington himself placing them side by side. His sense of playfulness with language, therefore, comes out in both his sexual and scatological humour in multiple texts. He uses French and Latin to make sexual jokes, perhaps with the defence in mind that if it is not in the (English) vernacular it cannot be seen as so offensive – especially as he claimed to be ignorant of this word in the first place. ‘Confornicari’ is a

<sup>182</sup> Misacmos, *The Metamorphosis of Ajax* (1596), pp. 64-65.

<sup>183</sup> Lake Prescott, *Imagining Rabelais in Renaissance England*, p. 232.

<sup>184</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

<sup>185</sup> Misacmos, *The Metamorphosis of Ajax* (1596), p. 65.

<sup>186</sup> Thomas Cooper, *Thesaurus* (London, Denham, 1578), n.p.; Thomas Eliot, *The Dictionary* (London: Berrheleri, 1559), n.p.; Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

perfectly respectable word, but it could be read as ‘cunt to be fucked’ – that is what they are searching the dictionary for. He therefore plays with French and Latin to say something that would be too rude to say in English.

As previously stated, Harington tried (and quite probably failed) to curry favour at the Elizabethan court. When it became clear Elizabeth was nearing the end of her reign in and before 1603, he tried to put himself in good favour with James. Scott-Warren describes how, at the time of his translation’s publication, he presented ‘large-paper copies, some of them hand-coloured, to potential patrons’, including James.<sup>187</sup> He also wrote a *Tract on the Succession to the Crown* in 1602, in anticipation of James’ accession, as well as sending other gifts and texts to the Scottish king before and after he became James I.<sup>188</sup> Such attempts were not entirely successful, though, as Graham Parry explains, in 1606 he was granted an invitation to James’ ‘private closet’, and was subjected to ‘what was in effect a qualifying examination for royal favour’.<sup>189</sup> Harington took full advantage of this chance to rub shoulders with royalty.

Harington’s account of this meeting, not printed until after the early modern period, informs us that:

The Prince did nowe presse my readinge to him parte of a canto in “Ariosto”; praysede my utterance, and said he had been informede of manie, as to my lernynge, in the tyme of the Queene. He asked me “what I thoughte pure witte was made of; and whom it did best become? Whether a Kynge shoulde not be the beste clerke in his owne countrie; and, if this lande did not entertayne goode opinion of his lernynge and good wisdome?” His Majestie did much presse for my opinion touchinge the power of Satane in matter of witchcraft; and askede me, with muche gravitie, - “If I did trulie understande, why the devil did worke more with anciente women than others?” I did not refraine from a scurvey jeste, and even saide (notwithstandinge to whom it was saide) that – “we were taught hereof in scripture, where it

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<sup>187</sup> Scott-Warren, ‘Harington’, n.p.

<sup>188</sup> Scott-Warren, ‘Harington’, n.p.

<sup>189</sup> Graham Parry, *The Golden Age Restor’d: The Culture of the Stuart Court, 1603-42* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), pp. 265-266.

is tolde, that the devil walketh in dry places". His Majestie, moreover, was pleasede to saie much, and favouredlye, of my good report for merth and good conceite.<sup>190</sup>

There are many significant aspects to this account, which is a highly useful example of comic sexual language. Firstly, although we do not know from which canto Harington was requested to read, the fact that it was read at all contrasts to the story of Elizabeth's shocked reaction. Perhaps the difference is that it was read to men rather than ladies-in-waiting so was more acceptable. This passage demonstrates how the king is interested in what makes a courtier witty, so is self-regarding. Secondly, Harington's mischievous personality comes out in his inability to resist making a jest in response to James' question on witchcraft. Sexual humour is treated almost like a currency at court, although Harington also shows awareness of the risk he is taking. The phrase 'scurvy jest' has connotations of it being dirty and dangerous; the *OED* includes 'sorry', 'worthless', 'contemptible', 'shabby', and 'discourteous' in its definition of 'scurvy', and cites Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* (1578) which also uses the phrase 'scurvy jest'.<sup>191</sup> Yet, some protection is also provided by the source for the joke being biblical. If it is in the Bible, it is ambiguous whether one can be blamed for using it. The language used, featuring the devil walking in dry places, plays on Luke 11:24 which in the *King James Bible* became 'When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none' from Luke 11:24.<sup>192</sup> Old women are a standard object of such satire. This joke, surrounding older women appealing to the devil more because they are dry, also relates to early modern theory on humours. Post-menopausal women defied the idea that women should be cold and wet, so in being drier and more unnatural were more open to the devil's corruption. This is one of the most important aspects of the passage: the naughty joke is that old women will have dry and withered vaginas as the rest of their bodies have withered. James would have loved this humour, being famously incredibly bawdy. He

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<sup>190</sup> John Harington, *Nugae Antiquae*, ed. by Thomas Park (Charlestown: BiblioLife, 2009), pp. 368-369.

<sup>191</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p.

<sup>192</sup> *King James Bible 1611*, sig.G5<sup>r</sup>.

was always jealous of Elizabeth and her popularity so it is even conceivable that he saw her as an obvious example of the kind of old woman this joke preys upon. The concept of infertile or sexless people being dried up is also displayed by Middleton in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, with Sir Oliver Kix's (who cannot conceive) surname having connotations of dryness.<sup>193</sup> This is in contrast to the watery and very sexually active and fruitful Sir Walter Whorehound. Thirdly, Harington's conversing with Prince Henry as well as James is important, as he had transferred his hopes for patronage from James to Henry.<sup>194</sup> The use of humour regarding the sexual is therefore shown to be inseparably linked to many aspects of court life, from the lewdness of the court environment to the status perception of the current monarch in relation to predecessors and heirs.

Another reason why Harington's translation was possibly more acceptable at the Jacobean than Elizabethan court is perhaps that James' court was lewder. According to *The Golden Age Restor'd*, James was 'a dirty, ill-favoured man [... who] was excessively given to bawdiness in his talk [...] Towards the ladies of the Court he behaved boorishly, taking little pleasure in their company except when bawdiness got the better of him'.<sup>195</sup> However, we do not know for certain that Elizabeth was terribly afraid of lewd behaviour or that James' court was a lewder environment than that of his predecessor.

Harington's famous account of a masque in *Nugae Antiquae* supports the argument that James' reign was bawdy and lewd. It describes what happened when James' brother-in-law the king of Denmark visited in 1606 when, as Parry puts it, 'the drinking and revelry got entirely out of hand'.<sup>196</sup> Everyone present behaved with maximum debauched sexual indiscretion. Harington states in his letter that he has

been well nigh overwhelmed with carousal and sports of all kinds. The sports began each day in such manner and such sorte, as well nigh persuaded me of Mahomets paradise. We had women, and indeed

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<sup>193</sup> See chapter five section 5.1; Thomas Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 907-962 (p. 923).

<sup>194</sup> Scott-Warren, 'Harington', n.p.

<sup>195</sup> Parry, *Golden Age*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>196</sup> Parry, *Golden Age*, p. 59.

wine too, of such plenty, as would have astonished each sober beholder.<sup>197</sup>

It is possible that sport here refers to sexual activity in the same metaphorical field as in Harington's poem, but in this case this is unlikely. More likely, it uses 'sport' in the same sense as James' *Book of Sports*,<sup>198</sup> discussing actual women and actual sports of all kinds. Sex or women and food are a more certain metaphorical field here.

Harington talks of people wallowing in 'bestly delights' at this event and says 'The ladies abandon their sobriety, and are seen to roll about in intoxication'. He is being comic here, and this piece of writing relates to my earlier discussion of the metaphorical field of sex and riding, due to the similar use of beast imagery. He outlines how there 'hath been no lack of good living: shews, sights, and banquetings, from morn to eve'.<sup>199</sup> He describes many drunken women (trying to act out a masque) who committed a 'multitude of sins', one of these falling over and spilling the caskets she was carrying onto the Danish king, and how this was 'not a little defiled'.<sup>200</sup> Like Brantôme, Harington adopts a tone of regret at having to report scandalous behaviour with phrases such as 'I grieve to tell'.<sup>201</sup> This is all part of the joke. He claims he 'neer did see such lack of good order, discretion, and sobriety, as I have now done'.<sup>202</sup> There was 'all the foolery of these times' and 'good meat, good drink, and good speeches. I do often say (but not aloud) that the Danes have again conquered the Britains, for I see no man, or woman either, that can now command himself or herself'.<sup>203</sup> Finally, he advises the recipient of his letter

If you would wish to see howe folly dothe grow, come up quickly; otherwise, stay where you are, and meditate on the future mischiefs of

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<sup>197</sup> Harington, *Nugae Antiquae*, ed. by Park, p. 349.

<sup>198</sup> James I, *The Kings Maiesties Declaration to his Subjects, concerning Lawful Sports to be used* (London: Norton, 1618).

<sup>199</sup> Harington, *Nugae Antiquae*, ed. by Park, p. 349.

<sup>200</sup> Harington, *Nugae Antiquae*, ed. by Park, p. 350.

<sup>201</sup> Harington, *Nugae Antiquae*, ed. by Park, p. 351.

<sup>202</sup> Harington, *Nugae Antiquae*, ed. by Park, p. 352.

<sup>203</sup> Harington, *Nugae Antiquae*, ed. by Park, p. 352-353.

those our posterity, who shall learn the good lessons and examples helde forth in these days.<sup>204</sup>

'Folly' is a euphemism for sex in Harington's poem, such as when the queen's affair is described as 'committing folly' (p. 228). Considering Harington's cheeky, less than reputable interests and personality, it is hard to take him at face value here. In fact, rather than being as shocked as he claims, he is in fact being very comic indeed. After this event, Parry believes the tone of James' court sank even lower, often being portrayed as 'almost synonymous with lust, lechery, treachery and pride' in drama such as that by Middleton and poems by Jonson which warn of 'the damaging seductions of Court life', more so under James than Elizabeth.<sup>205</sup> In this sort of courtly atmosphere, filled with potentially lustful courtiers and wantonness, it would be strange to find *Orlando Furioso* offensive. In fact, Harington in all probability enjoyed this feature of the court. His reports on courtly festivities provide context for comic sexual language at court. This adds to the argument that James' court was lewder than that of Elizabeth. On the other hand, it must be remembered that Elizabeth did not (if the story is true) ban Harington from translating the poem altogether, which she would surely have done if it was so very offensive to her.

To conclude this section, Harington's playful translation displays many of the qualities and features of Renaissance sexual humour. He divides opinions in his own time, bouncing from banishment from court to invitations to it, and he divides opinions today, when he is sometimes esteemed and sometimes snubbed. It could be argued that in some ways he distances himself from his sexual material, as it is firstly a translation of someone else's work, and secondly it is then given another narrator within the poem. Yet he also absolutely delights in playing with his content. Whether or not the story of his banishment is true, and whether or not Elizabeth's court was politer than James', Harington's comic sexual language would defy Spenser's account of the ideal court cited at the beginning of this chapter. By emphasising the importance of goodly manners and civil conversation, we can see that

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<sup>204</sup> Harington, *Nugae Antiquae*, ed. by Park, p. 353.

<sup>205</sup> Parry, *Golden Age*, pp. 59-61.



Harington's comic and sexual poem, even more so than the original or French versions, would not have fitted into the type of court Spenser idealises. His version of this text defies the trend I have found for French to revel more than English in comic sexual euphemism.

These three courtly texts and writers have many significant links to the texts in the other chapters of this thesis.<sup>206</sup> The idea of female presence making unseemly and indecent what is perfectly acceptable in male company will be a very important attitude for the following chapter. Brantôme's story of women eating meat during Lent links women and scandalous meat-eating, as in the metaphorical field featured in chapter five section 5.6. The same is true for the food imagery in Brantôme's story of Charles and diet. As Harington dedicates his work to the queen, so other writers I examine, such as Joubert and Erasmus, dedicate to royal women. It could be that Harington's obscene material causes the same sort of problems for him as Joubert found in dedicating his work to the French princess, detailed in the following chapter. Cotgrave's definition of 'fornicateur', a word important for Harington, includes 'smell-smocke' and 'mutton-munger',<sup>207</sup> which imply the same metaphorical fields of sex and clothes and sex and meat respectively which I explore in chapter five sections 5.12 and 5.6. In fact, many metaphorical fields which appear in chapter five (in Middleton and other texts), such as sex and riding and sex and games or sport, also crop up in these courtly texts. Sex and talking are linked in similar ways in Harington, with the Greek and the inn-keeper's daughter, to in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* and *Epicene*<sup>208</sup> and my later sections on theatre will explore the metaphorical field of language and sex in greater depth. A link can be made between Brantôme and Duval, who is explored in more depth in my next chapter. Both describe the pleasure sexual vocabulary can bring, although for Duval this pleasure is not necessarily erotic.

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<sup>206</sup> Marguerite de Valois, to whose court Brantôme was attached, will be important for Joubert in my following chapter section 4.1. Brantôme was also influenced by and mentions many of the other texts which are influential on the medical writers in my next chapter, such as Boccaccio (mentioned also by Castiglione), Marguerite de Navarre, and Rabelais.

<sup>207</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

<sup>208</sup> Ben Jonson, *Epicene*, in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. by David Bevington (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), pp. 775-860. This is also found in Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, ed. by Wells and Taylor, pp. 569-593, for which there is not scope for more here.

I will conclude this chapter by returning to the questions outlined at the beginning and reiterating the answers I have arrived at. All three texts engage with comic sexual language, either to use it themselves, discuss others' use of it, or condemn it (which does not exclude the use of it themselves as well). Disapproval of comic sexual language cannot always be taken at face value. Gender and power are hugely significant for the boundaries of acceptability. The courts of both France and England feature similar issues when it comes to this type of language, and theoretical writing such as that of Douglas and positive and negative politeness can shed light on these uses. Metaphorical fields using the same imagery appear in these texts and drama – the full extent of this will become clear in chapter five. Not every king Brantôme mentions has exactly the same attitude, suggesting that what is obscene or acceptable regarding sexual humour varied even from king to king, so there was no static absolute standard that a monarch should follow. On the other hand, Castiglione's advice from the Italian court was highly transferrable and used in France and England, so we have universality in some places and context-dependency in others. The courtly community shares similarities to the medical community in the way they facilitate positive politeness. These three texts of and about court life provide salient case studies for comic sexual language and euphemism across the Renaissance world.

## Chapter Four: Medical Texts

This chapter discusses the role of comic sexual euphemism in two French medical texts: Laurent Joubert's *Erreurs Populaires* [*Popular Errors*], first printed 1578, and Jacques Ferrand's *Traité de l'essence et guérison de l'amour, ou De la mélancholie érotique* [variously translated as *A Treatise on Lovesickness, Erotomania* or *Erotique Melancholy*], first published 1610.<sup>1</sup> I will also consider some of the similarities and differences between Ferrand's revised edition from 1623 in French and its translation into English by Edmund Chilmead in 1640 (and again almost identically in 1645).<sup>2</sup> There are key points of comparison between Joubert and Ferrand; indeed, Ferrand is directly influenced by Joubert and acknowledges this. Both writers use scandalous comic sexual language and address this issue in revised editions. Medical writers in France at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century are increasingly aiming at wider readers of French and Latin,<sup>3</sup> a trend Joubert helps to set and in which Ferrand participates. What makes these two exceptional, even as part of a trend, is their humour.

Just as the court can act as a stage on which for courtiers to perform using comic sexual language, so the anatomy theatre can feature doctors behaving like actors giving performances to audiences. There was a need to maintain popularity and keep audiences entertained. Texts like Joubert's and Ferrand's originate in this environment and, as I discuss below, become problematic when the comic sexual imagery travels to a new context, namely the printed vernacular.

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<sup>1</sup> Laurent Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (Bordeaux: Millanges, 1578). Later French editions examined are from 1579 and 1584; Laurent Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by Gregory David De Rocher (London: University of Alabama Press, 1989); Jacques Ferrand, *Traité de l'essence et guérison de l'amour, ou De la mélancholie érotique* (Tolose: Colomiez, 1610); Jacques Ferrand, *De la maladie d'amour ou mélancholie érotique*, ed. by Donald Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella (Paris: Éditions Classiques Garnier, 2010); Jacques Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Donald A. Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Ferrand, *De la maladie d'amour ou mélancholie érotique. Discours curieux qui enseigne à cognoistre l'essence, les causes, les signes, & les remèdes de ce mal fantastique* (Paris: Moreaz, 1623); James Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Edmund Chilmead (Oxford: Lichfield, 1640); James Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Edmund Chilmead (Oxford: Lichfield, 1645).

<sup>3</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 34.

The humour of both texts can be surprising, often similar in tone to François Rabelais (another doctor), *contes* [tales], and farce. Both authors draw on the *Decameron* and, for that reason, I shall briefly discuss that key source here. They are far from meeting the expectation that medical texts will be serious and clinical about the body and taboo matters. Possibly as a reaction to having to deal with the body, Renaissance medical students, like their modern counterparts, had a reputation for pranks and comedy. Rabelais, for example, took part in a farce as a medical student and Joubert, as the Introduction section 1.4 examined, wrote a *Traité du ris* [*Treatise on Laughter*].<sup>4</sup> Joubert demonstrates this attitude in his remark that ‘ès anatomies publiques, je m’égaye assez librement, à traiter joyusement de ces parties là, ainsi que le sujet m’invite’ [‘at public dissections, I joke quite freely, treating these parts merrily, as the subject invites me to’].<sup>5</sup> For Joubert, the very topic of these body parts inspires humour, joy, and fun. He is displaying the same line of thinking as Jacques Duval – that there is inherent pleasure and enjoyment in sexual material.<sup>6</sup> This pleasure is not necessarily sexual or lustful itself, but rather fun, joyful, and playful.

This quotation has implications for the role of humour in medicine and anatomical dissections in particular, since the suggestion is that ‘parties’ are best discussed using humour and merriment.<sup>7</sup> Despite this, Joubert still, in his eyes, used euphemism: no one has ever heard him ‘proferer un mot propre aus dittes parties, ou à l’acte venerien’<sup>8</sup> [‘pronounce a literal term for the shameful parts or for the venereal act’].<sup>9</sup> Perhaps this is actually because he wants to use merriment in his vocabulary; literal terms are not ‘joyeux’ or merry so he avoids using them. In the context of male-dominated medicine, such jokes are more acceptable and even expected. The trouble begins when

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<sup>4</sup> Laurent Joubert, *Traité du ris* (Lyons: Tournes, 1560); Laurent Joubert, *Treatise on Laughter*, ed. and trans. by Gregory David De Rocher (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> Laurent Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (Bordeaux: Millanges, 1584), n.p. If no page reference is given for a translation, it is my own. This translation is informed by Cotgrave’s accounts of ‘s’egayer’, ‘joyusement’, and ‘inviter’; Randle Cotgrave. *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Aslip, 1611), <<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cotgrave/>> [accessed 18 Oct 2013], n.p.

<sup>6</sup> See below for more.

<sup>7</sup> See Cotgrave for ‘s’egayer’ and ‘joyusement’. Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

<sup>8</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1584), n.p.

<sup>9</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 8.

Joubert and Ferrand transplant the humour of the anatomy theatre to the printed page. It becomes dysphemistic. These texts, and their comic sexual language, therefore have implications for medical and gendered communities, and the contexts of restricted versus open. Doctors view bodies all the time so are able to regard them with fun and send up their profession with excitement in their language. The in-group this creates follows what modern theorists, as discussed in my Introduction section 1.7, argue about the treatment of taboos within communities, in this case the medical community.<sup>10</sup>

Laurent Joubert is an important figure, who has been the subject of several recent studies.<sup>11</sup> My thesis differs from these previous studies, which often take obscenity as their primary focus, by homing in on specific examples of euphemism and sexual language as comic. Born in 1529, Joubert studied under the chancellor of the *Faculté de Médecine* in Montpellier. He became chancellor himself relatively shortly after gaining his doctorate. During his career, he was personal physician to Catherine de' Medici and one of Henri III's physicians (*médecin ordinaire du roi*).<sup>12</sup> In this respect, then, he is absolutely part of the establishment. He died in 1582, leaving behind several medical works in both French and Latin. Joubert quotes Rabelais and acknowledges his debt to him. His *Erreurs Populaires* offer a key case study of scandalous sexual humour. Such language walks the line between obscene and euphemistic, all the while using comedy to play with this language.

Jacques Ferrand was born in around 1575 in Agen. The exact dates of his birth and death, whether he was married with children, his wealth, and his peers, both social and intellectual, are not known. He is likely to have had ties to Toulouse and probably studied there before becoming affiliated with its

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<sup>10</sup> Kerry L. Plaff, Raymond W. Gibbs and Michael D. Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 18 (1997), 59-83.

<sup>11</sup> Emily Butterworth and Hugh Roberts, 'From Word to Thing', in *Obscénités Renaissance*, ed. by Hugh Roberts, Guillaume Peureux and Lise Wajeman (Geneva: Droz, 2011), pp. 87-105; Valerie Worth-Stylianou, 'The Definition of Obscene Material 1570-1615: Three Medical Treatises Held to Account', in *Studies in Early Modern France: Volume 14 – Obscenity*, ed. by Anne L. Birberick and Russell J. Ganim (Charlottesville: Rookwood Press, 2010), pp. 148-167; Dominique Brancher, 'Du poème à la chair: La contagion érotique des traités médicaux (XVI-XVII siècles)' in *La contagion: Enjeux croisés des discours médicaux et littéraires (XVI-XIX siècle)* (Dijon: Editions Universitaires de Dijon, 2013), pp. 25-40; Patricia Simons, 'Gender, Sight and Scandal', in *Obscénités Renaissance*, ed. by Hugh Roberts, Guillaume Peureux and Lise Wajeman (Geneva: Droz, 2011), pp. 115-128.

<sup>12</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. XIV.

medical faculty.<sup>13</sup> Ferrand's treatise uses language similar to Joubert's in imagery and tone and is therefore another salient case study.

Both Renaissance doctors raise similar questions for research, especially as they attempt to deal with the scandal of comic sexual language in revised editions of their work. First and foremost, what sexual humour is used in medical writing? Why do these medical works use comedy for what could otherwise be a clinical subject? What characteristics do the works share with more literary texts? What do the revisions tell us about sociolinguistic standards? Does their writing comply with linguistic theory as explored in the Introduction? In which contexts was comic sexual euphemism acceptable or not? What is the significance of the vernacular, which both writers used?

Before in-depth exploration of both these French texts can take place, however, I shall briefly explain why medical texts by English doctors are absent from this chapter (Chilmead's translation being the only English text, which is examined in the section on Ferrand). Contemporaneous English doctors do not appear to use humorous euphemism to discuss sexual matters. They are aware of the issue of addressing scandalous material in the vernacular and sometimes emphasise the necessity of this evil to promote understanding of the body. However, they tend to avoid using comic sexual euphemism. Popular midwifery texts, for example, such as Thomas Raynalde's *The Birthe of Mankinde* (1540) and Jane Sharp's *The Midwives Book* (1671) both use imagery of fields being ploughed for the sexual act; yet this is not usually for comic effect and is often a direct comparison rather than a euphemism purporting to veil the offensive.<sup>14</sup> Raynalde's text, for example, states that 'yf this sede co[n]ceaved in the bowelles of the earth do not prove or fructyfye, then be sure that eyther there is lette in the sower, in the sede, or els in the earth'.<sup>15</sup> Sharp uses similar imagery, claiming that 'The womb is that Field of Nature into which the Seed of man and woman is cast'.<sup>16</sup> They are both matter of fact, rather than playing with humour in the likening of one thing to another. Jennifer Evans argues such 'language reflected the desire to view

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<sup>13</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Raynalde, *The Birth of Mankinde* (London: T.R., 1540); Jane Sharp, *The Midwives Book* (London: Marshall, 1671).

<sup>15</sup> Raynalde, *The Birth of Mankinde*, sig.C38<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Sharp, *The Midwives Book*, p. 63.

men as the active sex in generation, ploughing the female land and sowing the seeds of new life into it'.<sup>17</sup> This symbolism is more straight-faced than the mischievousness of comic euphemism. The absence of comic sexual language is probably due to a difference in professional approach between English and French physicians. English medical writers at this time tend to deal with the embarrassment of the body not with humour but more of a neo-Latin scientific matter-of-factness, using more direct language rather than euphemisms.

One English seventeenth-century text by James Primrose is of particular interest for its contrast to Joubert, as it has the same name of *Popular Errors* (1651) and the same aim of exposing myths. This text is, again, not humorous and does not cause the scandal Joubert stirred. Primrose wants to restrict knowledge to elite persons only, has an intense dislike of vernacular books, and writes in Latin (which is then translated into English and French). While Primrose's translator Robert Wittie aims to profit those who could not read Latin, Primrose himself wants even the translations to be aimed at the elite learned and not the vulgar people.<sup>18</sup> (The way Wittie proclaims this intention will be contrasted to Chilmead below). Joubert, in contrast, gets into trouble for taking the position that today we would celebrate – that knowledge should be shared (though not, after the first edition, with unmarried women, as shall be discussed below). Primrose mentions Joubert in discussion of other texts which consider popular errors. He explains how, in his opinion:

Of this subject [popular errors] but few have written. Laurentius Joubertus, indeed a Frenchman hath meditated something like to it, but he hath left the work imperfect, and hath unfolded but a few Errors, and those not very gross, and in my judgement little concerning the people.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Jennifer Evans, *Aphrodisiacs, Fertility and Medicine in Early Modern England* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2014), p. 64.

<sup>18</sup> James Primrose, *Popular Errours or the Errours of the people in matter of Physick*, trans. by Robert Wittie (London: Wilson and Bourne, 1651), p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> Primrose, *Popular Errours*, trans. by Wittie, sig.B3<sup>f</sup>.

This is another contrast between Joubert and Primrose – as well as disagreeing over the accessibility of knowledge for vulgar people, they differ on what the significant popular errors in medicine are. For Joubert, it is necessary to shine a (humorous) light on taboo sexual subjects, in a way that Primrose does not feel to be required.

Before discussing Joubert and Ferrand themselves, it will be helpful to briefly examine a source common to them both, namely Giovanni Boccaccio's tenth story of the third day of the *Decameron* (originally from the fourteenth century). I shall analyse this with specific regard to each text in sections one and two of this chapter respectively. The *Decameron* was, of course, very well known and highly influential on French literature, in spite of, or in some cases because of, its sulphurous reputation. Boccaccio explains that this story demands explicitness, so any seeming lack of restraint on the part of the author merely reflects the narrative's implied lack of restraint.<sup>20</sup> This attitude, that the material itself demands this kind of language, is also displayed by Joubert and Ferrand. The idea allows for maximum licence with the minimum of authorial responsibility. The *Decameron* story<sup>21</sup> describes how the girl Alibech is taught by Rustico the hermit to 'remettre le diable en enfer'<sup>22</sup> ['put the devil back in Hell'],<sup>23</sup> a double-entendre which inspires both Joubert and Ferrand.

Alibech stumbles upon a holy man in the desert who worried that if he took her under his wing the devil would come for him. He sends her to see Rustico the hermit, who:

l'ayant premierement avec certaines demandes interrogee, congneut qu'elle estoit aussi simple comme elle monstroit: & que jamais elle n'avoit eu cõgnoissance d'homme. Parquoy il s'avisa que souz couleur de servir à Dieu, il falloit la conduire à son desir. Et premierement lui

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<sup>20</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, ed. and trans. by G.H. McWilliam (London: Penguin, 1995), p. lxi.

<sup>21</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *Le Decameron* (Lyon: le Maçon, 1558), pp. 350-360. Other French editions include those from 1497, 1545, 1548, 1560, 1597, 1599, and 1603. It was also translated into German in 1471. The number of editions demonstrates the influence this text had.

<sup>22</sup> Boccaccio, *Le Decameron* (1558), p. 350.

<sup>23</sup> Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, ed. and trans. by McWilliam, p. 274.



monstra avec plusieurs parolles combien le diable estoit ennemy de nostre Seigneur: & apres lui donna à entendre que le service qui plus plaisoit à Dieu, estoit de remettre le diable en enfer, auquel nostre Seigneur l'avoit condamné.<sup>24</sup>

[By putting certain questions to her, [...] soon discovered that she had never been intimate with the opposite sex and was every bit as innocent as she seemed; and he therefore thought of a possible way to persuade her, with the pretext of serving God, to grant his desires. He began by delivering a long speech in which he showed her how powerful an enemy the devil was to the Lord God, and followed this up by impressing upon her that of all the ways of serving God, the one that He most appreciated consisted in putting the devil back in Hell, to which the Almighty had consigned him in the first place.]<sup>25</sup>

A religious framework is used in a most unholy manner, as Erasmus and Castiglione counsel against.<sup>26</sup> She replies 'O mon pere, puis que j'ay l'enfer, mettez y le diable quand il vous plaira'<sup>27</sup> ['Oh, Father, [since] I really do have a Hell, let's do as you suggest']<sup>28</sup> and put the devil in as you wish. By this method he seduces her several times, and she 'avint que le jeu lui commença à plair'<sup>29</sup> ['happened to develop a taste for the sport'].<sup>30</sup> In the modern English translation, Rustico is initially described as 'a very devout and kindly fellow'.<sup>31</sup> However, in the corresponding early modern French, he is an 'assez devote personne, & bonne'.<sup>32</sup> The key difference here is 'assez' ['quite'] rather than 'very', which is more humorous and hints that Rustico's actions will prove him to be less devout than his holy status would suggest. Joubert plays with this same joke, as is discussed below.

Eventually, he is worn out by her appetite, a typically misogynistic depiction. He tells her the devil has been subdued, to which she replies

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<sup>24</sup> Boccaccio, *Le Decameron* (1558), p. 352.

<sup>25</sup> Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, ed. and trans. by McWilliam, p. 276.

<sup>26</sup> See section 3.1.

<sup>27</sup> Boccaccio, *Le Decameron* (1558), p. 353.

<sup>28</sup> Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, ed. and trans. by McWilliam, p. 277.

<sup>29</sup> Boccaccio, *Le Decameron* (1558), p. 354.

<sup>30</sup> Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, ed. and trans. by McWilliam, p. 277.

<sup>31</sup> Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, ed. and trans. by McWilliam, p. 275.

<sup>32</sup> Boccaccio, *Le Decameron* (1558), p. 351.

'parquoy je te prie qu'avec ton diable tu aydes à oster la rage a mon enfer'<sup>33</sup>  
 ['Now that I have helped you with my Hell to subdue the pride of your devil,  
 the least you can do is to get your devil to help me tame the fury of my Hell'].<sup>34</sup>  
 She has become the seducer. The story concludes with the message that  
 young ladies should 'apprenez à remettre le diable en enfer: par ce qu'il est  
 fort agreable à Dieu & au plaisir des parties, & beaucoup de bien en peut  
 naistre, & s'en ensuy[vre]'<sup>35</sup> ['learn to put the devil back in Hell, for it is greatly  
 to [... God's] liking and pleasurable to the parties concerned, and a great deal  
 of good can arise and flow in the process'].<sup>36</sup> This goes against the original  
 stated aim of telling the story to prevent such behaviour.

The story's conclusion that young ladies should learn to put the devil in  
 hell is the exact opposite of standard morality, thus exposing that morality as  
 a façade. It is, of course, loaded with innuendo and is very tongue in cheek,  
 and acts like euphemism itself in the way it pretends to find the taboo  
 shocking but actually promotes it (at least behind a veil of sorts). This makes  
 the fact that the stated audience is female all the more important. Addressing  
 such writing to women makes it all the more salacious, which is partly why  
 Joubert gets into trouble. The story features the comic sexual euphemism 'la  
 résurrection de la chair'<sup>37</sup> ['the resurrection of the flesh']<sup>38</sup> for getting an  
 erection upon seeing the virgin girl naked, a provocative use of religious  
 language for sexual jokes. This particular euphemism dates back to the  
 second century.<sup>39</sup> Such religious language put to comic use also appears with  
 their sexual act being blessed by God and the statement that she should  
 'emprisoner ce maudit de Dieu' ['imprison this thing damned by God'] who is  
 'veritablement ennemi de Dieu'<sup>40</sup> ['truly an enemy of God']. The metaphor of  
 the devil and Hell, used by Joubert and Ferrand, is technically a euphemism  
 but is very explicit. It does not use the literal terms for genitalia. However, it is  
 a euphemism that is not euphemistic, since it does not disguise anything and

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<sup>33</sup> Boccaccio, *Le Decameron* (1558), p. 354.

<sup>34</sup> Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, ed. and trans. by McWilliam, p. 278.

<sup>35</sup> Boccaccio, *Le Decameron* (1558), p. 356.

<sup>36</sup> Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, ed. and trans. by McWilliam, p. 279.

<sup>37</sup> Boccaccio, *Le Decameron* (1558), p. 352.

<sup>38</sup> Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, ed. and trans. by McWilliam, p. 276.

<sup>39</sup> Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, ed. and trans. by McWilliam, p. 825.

<sup>40</sup> Boccaccio, *Le Decameron* (1558), p. 353.

can so easily be interpreted on all levels. This makes it a comic sexual euphemism according to my definition in the Introduction section 1.1.

Many Renaissance English translations of the *Decameron* are heavily censored and bowdlerised, and thus very short.<sup>41</sup> This story, among many others, is missing from translations, in contrast to numerous French editions. Indeed, this specific story has been a 'notorious stumbling-block' for English translators for over 500 years, its translation often being neglected or omitted altogether until the nineteenth century.<sup>42</sup> It has been a curious finding of my research that often English texts are reluctant to include comic sexual language, as with the medical texts discussed above. One can speculate that this may be because sixteenth-century England is more extreme in its disapproval of sex in some contexts. Boccaccio's story was still scandalous in France, but was at least put into print and clearly influenced other writers. The difference in attitude for some texts between France and England is unlikely to be due to a total censorship in England of the comic and sexual. English Renaissance drama, for example, is often full of such language, as my following chapter will demonstrate. The line is drawn, however, at texts such as Boccaccio's and medical works. Such dangerous material was often only acceptable if the majority could not read it, which was also an issue for Joubert and Ferrand. The spread and appeal of this story is unrestricted to the extent, however, that French doctors could make use of it. This particular story and its use of innuendo appeals to Joubert and Ferrand since it exposes the open secret – which would be especially clear to doctors – that people have sex for pleasure.

The theme of pleasure is also crucial in a remarkable passage from Duval's *Des Hermaphrodites* (1612). Duval does not use comic sexual euphemism in the way Joubert and Ferrand do. He is, however, another example of a doctor who delights in sexual vocabulary, proclaiming:

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<sup>41</sup> For example, Giovanni Boccaccio. *The Decameron* (London: de Worde, 1525); Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron* (London: de Worde, 1532); Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron* (London: Iaggard, 1620). The 1620 is a much more comprehensive translation but has a different story for the tenth on the third day, pp. 112-121. Other English translations are from 1634, 1640, and 1657, and are also lacking in this story.

<sup>42</sup> Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, ed. and trans. by McWilliam, p. 825.

si j'uses de propos qui paroissent lascifs, ou ressentent quelque gayeté, dont puissent tant soit peu estre offensez les oreilles & méditation de ceux, qui détenus de pensées plus graves, pourroient desirer diction & discours correspondans à leur humeur & volonté. Je les prie de ne l'attribuer à ma faute [...] Mais plustost à la nature des choses dont j'ay cy à traiter, qui concerne principalement ce qui est en l'homme [...] quand j'userois de lettres Heirogliphiques empruntées des Egyptiens, ou seulement de signes expressifs répétés de l'Anglois Taumaste, pour les designer, sans autrement les nommer: encores ne pourrais-je rescinder cette naisve gayeté dont nature a voulu décorer & orner leur commémoration.<sup>43</sup>

[If I use language which appears lascivious, or gives an impression of some joyfulness, which may offend the ears and thoughts of those who are prisoners of more serious thinking and could desire diction and speech corresponding with their humour and volition, I beg them not to blame me [...] But rather the nature of the things that I must address, which concern primarily what is in man [...] even if I were to use hieroglyphics borrowed from the Egyptians, or only sign language repeated from the Englishman Thaumaste, to designate them, without otherwise naming them, still I could not cancel out this natural joyfulness of words with which nature wanted to decorate and adorn any mention of them.]

This passage alludes to Rabelais' characters Panurge and Thaumaste debating by signs in *Pantagruel* in a transparently obscene fashion.<sup>44</sup> Duval describes lascivious language of titillation, acknowledging the cliché that some ears may be offended. The fact that he says he is not to blame displays the type of avoidance of authorial responsibility that Boccaccio, Joubert, and Ferrand also attempt. He argues that even if he used hieroglyphs or sign

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<sup>43</sup> Jacques Duval, *Des Hermaphrodits, accouchemens des femmes*. (Paris: Geuffroy, 1612), n.p.

<sup>44</sup> François Rabelais, 'Comment Panurge fit quinarde l'Anglais, qui arguait par signe', *Pantagruel* Chapitre XIX, ed. by Claude Pinganaud (Paris: Arléa, 2010), pp. 304-308; François Rabelais, 'How Panurge put to a Non-plus the Englishman, that argued by signs', *Pantagruel* Second Book Chapter XIX, trans. by Sir Thomas Urquhart (London: Everyman's Library, 1994), pp. 240-243.

language, there would be a natural joyfulness in sexual terms which is inescapable. Since the joy is given to them by nature, the shocking element is inherent in the language so not his fault. The implication is that sexual language is exciting or erotic or playful with or without comedy. Whether or not comedy actually increases or reduces the eroticism may be a personal perception. Duval's interpretation of sexual language as innately joyful can also be found in the comedy of Joubert and Ferrand. For all three of them, it is a fairly extraordinary approach for a doctor to take.

#### 4.1 Joubert's *Erreurs Populaires*<sup>45</sup>

Joubert exemplifies many important elements for comic sexual euphemism. Whether knowingly or not, he is part of the debate over what it is shameful to see, do, or name, which has been on-going since Cicero. Like Sherry and Erasmus, he uses forerunners to the word 'euphemism', such as 'periphrases' and 'circonlocutions', as my second chapter (section 2.1) outlined. He shows the importance of context when potentially obscene content escapes the male-only world to mixed company. Yet, in Joubert's opinion he was sufficiently euphemistic from the start. Although he is defending himself and not acting as a neutral commentator on standards, his comments nevertheless display the lack of a fixed standard of acceptability.

Despite his protestation, one of the aspects of Joubert's writings which receives the most criticism from contemporaries is his apparent lack of euphemism. At the forefront of these critics is Scévole de Sainte-Marthe, who is even joined by one of Joubert's supporters, François Grudé de la Croix Du Maine, in regretting Joubert's writing choices.<sup>46</sup> The only critic to make his views known in print is Dominique Reulin in 1580 (so not part of the very immediate uproar), a little-known doctor who did not manage to circulate his

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<sup>45</sup> If a page reference is given for an English translation, unless otherwise stated it is from Laurent Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by Gregory David De Rocher (London: University of Alabama Press, 1989). I have adapted De Rocher's translation in places to bring it closer to the original and have highlighted in footnotes when this happens. If no page reference is given, it is my own.

<sup>46</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. XV.

work widely. Most evidence of the criticisms are from the author's and his defenders' responses.<sup>47</sup>

Joubert claims to use euphemism and does indeed use euphemistic terms in many places. The question therefore becomes: why does his text cause such a sensation, both in terms of being popular and scandalous? The answer to both this popularity and scandal is the language he uses. For his readers at the time, as Emily Butterworth and Hugh Roberts highlight, 'where to draw the boundaries of the obscene clearly provokes anxiety and concern'.<sup>48</sup> The controversy surrounding Joubert's text was caused in part by its dedication to a royal woman and a supposed misprint resulting in a taboo term. The most controversial section of Joubert's text, however, is the fourth chapter of his fifth book, entitled 'S'il y a certaine connoissance du pucelage d'une fille'.<sup>49</sup> ['Whether there is certain knowledge of the virginity of a maiden' (p. 208)]. This chapter is what predominantly leads to the book becoming a *succès de scandale*.<sup>50</sup> In this chapter, Joubert goes into detail about processes for determining whether a woman is a virgin or not, explaining how some of these procedures can themselves cause virginity to be lost. Much of the contemporaneous debate about his lack of euphemism is concerned with this chapter.

This was both a controversial topic and one that had serious ramifications, most obviously for the reputation of girls and their families. Yet Joubert treats the subject with humour, drawing on exactly the same kind of vocabulary and imagery as seen in the *Decameron*. He describes how:

Il faut s'approcher de plus pres, & dessandre aus abimes de l'anfer de la tres-devote Alibec de Boccace, auquel le bon & saint hermite Rustic

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<sup>47</sup> Valerie Worth-Stylianou, 'The Definition of Obscene Material 1570-1615: Three Medical Treatises Held to Account', in *Studies in Early Modern France: Volume 14 – Obscenity*, ed. by Anne L. Birberick and Russell J. Ganim (Charlottesville: Rookwood Press, 2010), pp. 148-167 (pp. 154-155, 158).

<sup>48</sup> Emily Butterworth and Hugh Roberts, 'From Word to Thing', in *Obscénités Renaissance*, ed. by Hugh Roberts, Guillaume Peureux and Lise Wajeman (Geneva: Droz, 2011), pp. 87-105 (p. 90).

<sup>49</sup> Laurent Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (Bordeaux: Millanges, 1578), p. 455.

<sup>50</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. XV.

mettoit son diable. C'est là où l'on trouvera le secret du pucelage, si aucun y an ha, & ou l'on sçaura de ses nouvelles.<sup>51</sup>

[It is now necessary to come closer and to descend into the infernal abyss of the most devout Alibech of Boccaccio, into which good and saintly hermit Rustico put his devil. It is there that the secret of maidenhood [if there is any] will be found, and where one will learn about it.] (p. 211)

This passage on the devil as visitor of bodies as well as souls also draws on the second tale of the third day of Marguerite de Navarre's *L'Heptaméron*,<sup>52</sup> which is, of course, inspired by the *Decameron*, even if it does not share its sexual humour. Indeed, her editor points out how sex is rarely fun in *L'Heptaméron* unlike in the *Decameron*.<sup>53</sup>

Her influence on Joubert, rather than being humour or specific euphemisms, instead comes in the form of a story of a lecherous prior trying to seduce a nun and, upon being denied, attempting to ruin her chaste reputation. He claims the only method of determining her virginity is to examine her himself. She refuses and he punishes her, but then wonders if she only turned him down for his ugliness so tempts her with a good-looking monk, whom she also refuses.<sup>54</sup> Marguerite's storyteller becomes genuinely euphemistic when describing the monk's propositions: 'le dict jeune religieux luy tint propos avec gestes si deshonestes que j'aurais honte de les referer'<sup>55</sup> ['the young monk accosted the poor girl with certain proposals and certain indecent gestures that I'd be too embarrassed to describe'].<sup>56</sup> This contrasts with uses of similar *praeteritio* for comic purposes.<sup>57</sup> Marguerite is very different to Joubert in approach, showing concern for the reputation of

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<sup>51</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1578), pp. 463-464.

<sup>52</sup> Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, ed. by Michel François (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1950); Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron* (Bruneau: Prevost, 1559).

<sup>53</sup> Marguerite de Navarre, *The Heptameron*, ed. and trans. by Paul A. Chilton (London: Penguin, 1984), p. 7, p. 14.

<sup>54</sup> de Navarre, *The Heptameron*, ed. and trans. by Chilton, pp. 255-266.

<sup>55</sup> de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron* (1559), p. 90; de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, ed. by François, p. 183.

<sup>56</sup> de Navarre, *The Heptameron*, ed. and trans. by Chilton, p. 263.

<sup>57</sup> See my Introduction section 1.1 for the methodological question of distinguishing between genuine and comic sexual euphemism.

nuns and the potential damage of this patriarchal and defiling interest in female virginity – all of which is utterly absent from Joubert.

Marguerite does not engage with comic sexual euphemism in the same way as Joubert. She is helpful as an example of a kind of opposite approach to Joubert, when dealing with similar questions, albeit in a very different genre. This makes it all the more surprising that Joubert is more like a storyteller in his medical work, than Marguerite is in a book of tales. The devil does not, therefore, appear in the exact metaphor used by Boccaccio and Joubert but is mentioned by Marguerite in connection to sex: upon hearing this story, the nun's mother exclaims:

Je pensois avoir mis ma fille aux faulxbourgs & chemin de paradis, mais je l'ay mise en celluy d'enfer, entre les mains des pires diables qui y puissent estre. Car les diables ne nous tentent s'il ne nous plaist, & ceux cy nous veullent avoir par force, où l'amour deffault.<sup>58</sup>

[I thought I had set my daughter on her way in the environs of Paradise, and I find I have placed her on the road to Hell, in the hands of the worst devils who could dwell there, for devils do tempt us unless we so desire, but these men are willing to take us by force if desire is deficient!]<sup>59</sup>

If you are familiar with Boccaccio, you might detect the more specific equation of the devil with the penis. However, although it has the same subject matter as Joubert's chapter, this story is tragic, not comic, and is motivated by Marguerite's theological views. Joubert refers to both Marguerite and Boccaccio in many of his chapters, and in this specific chapter combines their texts to create his sexual humour. He states above that it is 'necessary' to talk about this subject matter in order to learn (p. 211). He chooses to phrase this so-called educational material in highly comedic terms. This again has similarities to Boccaccio's story, which talks of teaching young women.

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<sup>58</sup> de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron* (1559), p. 91; de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, ed. by François, p. 184.

<sup>59</sup> de Navarre, *The Heptameron*, ed. and trans. by Chilton, p. 264.



Joubert's humour here is found in the contrast between words like 'tres-devote', 'bon' and 'saint', which claim Alibec to be a devout and pious girl, and the sexual subject matter this story displays. Thus Joubert plays on the same comic contrast between holiness and lewdness as Boccaccio. As well as the comedic implication that young women are unlikely to be virgins, as shown by the phrase 'si aucun y an ha' ['if there is any'], it is notable that Joubert talks of secrets of women in the above passage. This key term is not incidental, and in fact refers to a whole quasi-genre.<sup>60</sup> Joubert's use of 'nouvelles' which, according to Randle Cotgrave, means news, tidings, strange reports, and tales not heard of before, is itself playful.<sup>61</sup> Joubert's phrasing suggests such rumour. The idea of tales is especially important as it points to the origin of Rustico's devil in Boccaccio for Joubert's long double-entendre.

Rustico's devil returns later in Joubert's chapter:

Puis donc que la diverse conformacion des parties, & differante charnure, les filles d'un mesme age sont differantes an la capacité de leur anfer, & quand le diable de Rustic y ha passé, elles restent encore differantes selon le calibre de sa teste ecornée, commant pourra on juger du pucelage, an les sondant avec le doit, ou avec une chandelle, ou par le moyen d'un miroyr metrical, à recognoitre si ce conduit est ferré & étroit, ou lache & large, plus ou moins? Car si la filhe est de l'age nubil, & de le corpulance requise a mariage, elle recevra sans difficulté, ancor qu'elle soit vierge, une assés grosse sonde, com' elle recevrait bien le manche de l'homme autant gros. Touttesfois on ne dira pas, pour le passage qu'y ha fait la chandelle, que la filhe soit moins pucelle: com'on le dira, si le dit manche y a passé.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Dominique Brancher, 'C'est quand la langue dérape qu'elle dit la vérité: *Lapsus linguae et lapsus calami*'. Pre-Publication; Dominique Brancher, "When the tongue slips it tells the truth": Tricks and Truths of the Renaissance Lapsus', *Renaissance Studies*, 30 (2016), 39-56. With thanks to Dominique Brancher for giving me access to her original French draft of this article which has only been published in English and never in its original language.

<sup>61</sup> De Rocher's translation neglects this significance. Randle Cotgrave. *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Aslip, 1611), <<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cotgrave/>> [accessed 18 Oct 2013], n.p.

<sup>62</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1578), pp. 478-479.

[Since the size and corpulence [of female private parts] vary, since the structure of the organs varies as a result of different degrees of fleshiness, and since maidens of the same age differ in the capacity of their wombs, how is it that, when Rustico's devil has been through them and they still remain different according to the caliber of his hornless head, one will be able to determine their virginity by probing them with the finger, or with a candle, or with a speculum, in order to see if the passageway is more or less tight and narrow or loose and wide? For if the maiden is of a nubile age and of the corpulence required for marriage, she will accommodate without difficulty, even though she is still a virgin, a fairly large probe, just as she would well accommodate a man's member that is equal in size. Yet one will not say that because of the candle the maiden is any less a virgin, as one would certainly maintain if the member had been inserted.] (pp. 215-216)

This passage is about men's power over women, to both demand their virginity and investigate it. Women are the object of the surgeon's investigation and of the writer's wit, creating parallels to chapter three's texts in terms of the objectification of women. The passage is also demonstrative of changes made between Joubert's 1578 and revised 1579 editions. These include swapping 'manche' for 'membre' ['member'], used twice above.<sup>63</sup> The French above is from 1578, so uses 'manche'; Gregory David De Rocher's translation combines editions so elects to use 'member'. De Rocher describes 'manche' as a more colloquial term,<sup>64</sup> while one of Cotgrave's translations is 'a mans tool', a comic phrase.<sup>65</sup> This demonstrates that the noun was used so frequently in a comic sexual sense, not least by Rabelais, that this even became part of its definition. 'Manche', which can refer to a broom handle, is a joke term and therefore a naughtier, Rabelaisian, more impolite word than

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<sup>63</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 319.

<sup>64</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 319.

<sup>65</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

'membre' for 'penis'.<sup>66</sup> 'Membre' is obviously less humorous and vulgar, so the change referred to above is one of the visible traces of Joubert's self-censorship. This is an example of where he draws the line on the acceptability of comic sexual language. He is changing words rather than calling back the overall text, which will be discussed further below.

Different facets of euphemism are employed in Joubert's above passage. 'Parties' is almost apologetic and polite, while the language following, speaking of the devil and Hell, is much ruder. The latter are examples of positive politeness, the addressing of taboos.<sup>67</sup> The Introduction section 1.7 observed the characteristics of positive politeness, which are true of Joubert as well. He gets into trouble when his language escapes its context – the in-group of medical students and the medical community – and reaches a wider proximity of readers. Part of positive politeness is social defiance. His level of deliberate social defiance can be questioned, but he did defy expected convention. Doctors may be expected to address taboo subjects about the body, but to do so with comedy is more unusual. In particular, the section following 'la capacité de leur anfer' is extraordinary writing to come from a doctor (prior to this in the passage, it is closer to what might be expected in medical writing). Vocabulary such as 'anfer' consciously draws on Boccaccio, while 'calibre' is a technical term which only serves to contrast humorously with the naughtiness of the metaphor. This metaphor is pushed to an absurd comic extreme with 'sa teste ecornée' [his hornless head] – in this case, the hornless devil penetrates a girl's 'Hell'. This is not the language most would expect from their physician; or, at least, only amongst other doctors and certainly not in print. Joubert takes things to a comic extreme with burlesque use of religious language.

Joubert repeatedly uses such hellish imagery:

comme sont quelques unes peu chastes de coeur, & qui recevront  
bien dans leur anfer, le diable du bon hermite, si elles en avoient telle

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<sup>66</sup> See, for example, the prologue to the *Quart Livre* (1552), which contains extended play on 'manche' in this sense; François Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*, ed. by Robert Marichal (Geneva: Droz, 1947), p. 5, 26.

<sup>67</sup> R. Anthony Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 235.

commodité, & n'étoient tenues an crainte & an sujeccion: filles qui ont mauvais commencement, d'une mechante inclinacion à palhardise, ou pour estre oisives, ou adonnées à folles compagnies, à la lecture des livres de l'amour, & autre causes de lascivité.<sup>68</sup>

[a few who are unchaste of heart [...] would willingly receive into their hell the good hermit's devil if they but had the opportunity and were not kept from it through fear and obedience. Such maidens are off to a bad start with an evil inclination to lasciviousness, either because of idleness, foolish company, books of love, or yet other sources of lasciviousness.] (p. 220)

It is standard in this period to accuse love stories of corrupting young female readers. Joubert comes close, perhaps knowingly, to subverting this argument by alluding to Boccaccio's scandalous sexual tale in a passage where he simultaneously claims to condemn such tales. This is all part of his humour and attitude to language: he is writing just the kind of book which would corrupt girls, so this is tongue-in-cheek. There is also a conflict between using the comic sexual euphemism of the devil and Hell, which everyone would have understood, and the fact that perhaps knowledge of Boccaccio is necessary to fully understand the intertextual allusions here. This is how euphemism often works – at one level, anyone can understand, but at another level in-groups comprehend more about the secret than out-groups.

Why does Joubert use such language when the subject matter is already so sensitive? Is he being provocative? How did he think he would get away with this? One potential answer to these questions is that he uses such language in order to be successful. Rather than being successful despite comic sexual imagery, he could have been successful because of it. Tales such as Boccaccio's sell well and indeed Joubert's first edition sold the relatively high number of three or four thousand copies.<sup>69</sup> As the beginning of this section discussed, Joubert was influenced by the *Heptameron*, but added humour, thereby taking existing frameworks from Marguerite (and Boccaccio) while also making them his own. Rabelaisian sexual vocabulary in a

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<sup>68</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1578), p. 491.

<sup>69</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 10.

scandalous medical work could have been part of a marketing strategy. It also sends a message on how to approach taboo material. Making it comic could be a way of dealing with difficult issues, laughter here being a way round embarrassment. There could also be the suggestion that Joubert thinks the whole business of trying to decide a girl's virginity is somewhat ridiculous, and deserves to be mocked.

Due to his use of comic sexual imagery like this, critics condemned Joubert's work for being too explicit, especially for women such as his first dedicatee Princess Marguerite de France, better known as Marguerite de Valois. She was the daughter of Henri II and Catherine de' Medici, the wife of Henri de Navarre (future Henri IV), and the sister of François II, Charles IV, Henri III and Elizabeth of Spain.<sup>70</sup> For Joubert's critics, he spoke too openly on scandalous sexual material in the vernacular. One of the phrases he used in 1578, which was deemed too shocking, so was suppressed in 1579, was '*la femme qui n'ha jamais porté anfans, quoy que son angin ayt été long tams revisité, reconnu, & bien frequanté, demeure plus etroite, que si elle avoit fait des anfans*'<sup>71</sup> ['it is true that the woman who has never carried children (*even though her instrument has been frequently and for a long time visited and reconnoitered*) remains tighter than if she had had children'] (p. 214, p. 319). The emphasis is mine and the italicised terms are those which were suppressed, although peculiarly they appear again in 1584.<sup>72</sup> As with his statement, which I discuss above, 'if there is any secret of maidenhood', this is Joubert using misogynistic depictions of women as sexually promiscuous, here using the euphemism '[e]ngin' ['instrument'] in comic ways. He again pushes things to a comic extreme by using three synonyms 'revisité, reconnu, & bien frequanté', where one term would suffice. As if to demonstrate the flexibility of these comic sexual metaphors, Joubert subsequently uses '[e]ngin' to refer to male genitalia: 'Et une autre malautrue, qui sera fort serree de nature, qu'un goujat aura fafoulhé de son petit angin, vrayemant depucelée, sera tenue pour pucelle'<sup>73</sup> [And another poor wretched woman, who will be naturally very tight, that a soldier's boy will have rifled with his little

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<sup>70</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 283.

<sup>71</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1578), pp. 474-475.

<sup>72</sup> Laurent Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (Bordeaux: Millanges, 1584), pp. 474-475.

<sup>73</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1578), p. 482.

instrument, hence truly deflowered, will be taken for a virgin]. Again we have the use of humour for what could otherwise be a taboo or clinical subject. There is a tone of regret adopted with words like 'malautrue', which suggest sympathy for the woman mentioned, the sincerity of which is undermined by the enjoyment of the language and subject matter.

The three ways in which Joubert's writing is shocking – the subject matter, the language in which it was conveyed (vulgar both in terms of not being Latin, which often hid such material from the uneducated, and in being perceived as obscene), and the dedication to a royal woman – are all outlined by one of Joubert's defenders, the surgeon Barthélemy Cabrol. He also explains how Joubert was mostly justified in his choices. Joubert was, says Cabrol, seen as vulgar for his dedication, his treatment of so-called disgusting material and shameful parts, and for writing in a language women and girls (who are more ashamed of such subjects), as well as common people, can read. Cabrol explains how words seem worse in your own language than a foreign one. However, he defends Joubert on the grounds that Marguerite de Valois might be familiar with the terms used and, if not, that Joubert made amends. In Cabrol's opinion, many different kinds of people admired Joubert's work, an argument supported by the high sales numbers. He also argues that doctors tell many people what Joubert is talking about, so he asks, 'Est-il plus mal fait de l'escrire, que le dire?'<sup>74</sup> ['Is it worse to write it down than to say it?'].<sup>75</sup> Is it, he asks, not desirable for people to be told this information straight?<sup>76</sup> He is sure that this material is perfectly acceptable for chaste married women.<sup>77</sup> Joubert himself makes similar points about this material being actually commonplace, which are discussed below. However, whatever Cabrol might think, it is the case that this material was perceived as much worse in print than in speech, undermining his point that all doctors share such matters – even if they do, they are unlikely to be as comedic as Joubert.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Cited in Worth-Stylianou, 'Definition', p. 157.

<sup>75</sup> Laurent Joubert, *The Second Part of the Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by Gregory David De Rocher (London: University of Alabama Press, 1995), p. 13.

<sup>76</sup> Joubert, *Second Part of Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, pp. 4-17.

<sup>77</sup> Worth-Stylianou, 'Definition', p. 156.

<sup>78</sup> Whether the material is straight or direct enough ties into the whole issue of euphemism and will also be revisited in the discussion below.

Very soon after the publication of the 1578 edition of the *Erreurs Populaires*, its dedicatory letter was denounced. The scandal surrounding this edition may well have given an impression it would also attract many readers. The 1579 edition was then reformed hastily by Joubert and his printer Simon Millanges, suffering from cuts brought about by the criticism the earlier edition received. Yet the revision was only momentary as only a few years later the first edition became the most desired version and therefore the standard edition.<sup>79</sup> This is in contrast to Ferrand's text, where the revised edition became the standard for the Renaissance and for modern academia. With Joubert, more than Ferrand, it can be questioned whether he would still be remembered as much today without the scandal he caused.

Following the scandal, Joubert disingenuously claims he did employ euphemism in the first place, arguing 'je n'y ay usé d'aucun terme en sa propre signification'<sup>80</sup> ['I did not use words in their literal sense'] (p. 6) for 'des parties honteuses'<sup>81</sup> ['the shameful parts'] (p. 8). Of course, as this thesis demonstrates and as Erasmus believes,<sup>82</sup> sometimes the non-literal terms can be the most explicit. Joubert's friend, fellow physician, and defender Louys Bertravan challenges his critics, stating that married women could decently read and understand this chapter no less than *L'Heptaméron*.<sup>83</sup> He asks what word in all of the text could be considered foul and dirty:<sup>84</sup> 'Et puis que dit-il de scandaleux?' ['what does he say that is so scandalous?'].<sup>85</sup> If no word is foul and dirty in and of itself, the euphemism of the devil in Hell refers indirectly (although overtly) to a subject that could easily be interpreted as foul and dirty. However, one of Joubert's words which was itself deemed taboo – one he would have used 'en sa propre signification', as he puts it – is 'vit'.

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<sup>79</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, pp. XV, XXI-XXII.

<sup>80</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1584), sig.A3.

<sup>81</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1578), p. 457.

<sup>82</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Michael J. Heath in John W. O'Malley and Louis A. Perraud (eds). *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 203-438 (p. 426); Desiderius Erasmus, *On Copia of Words and Ideas*, ed. and trans. by Donald B. King and H. David Rix (Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2012), pp. 22-23.

<sup>83</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 8.

<sup>85</sup> Cited in Patricia Simons, 'Gender, Sight and Scandal', in *Obscénités Renaissance*, ed. by Hugh Roberts, Guillaume Peureux and Lise Wajeman (Geneva: Droz, 2011), pp. 115-128 (p. 126).

This is French for ‘prick’ or ‘A mans yard; a beasts pizle’<sup>86</sup> – which Joubert claims is a supposed misprint of ‘vir’: Latin for ‘man’.<sup>87</sup> This word appears in Ronsard<sup>88</sup> and in Rabelais in ‘bons gros vits d’ânes’ [‘Asse-pizzles’], as well as to refer to Gargantua’s prick and in a phrase which is itself given a comic turn by Panurge.<sup>89</sup> In Joubert, we find ‘Et le tout veu & visité feulhet par feulhet, avons trouvé qu’il y avoit trace de vit’<sup>90</sup> [And everything seen and surveyed page by page, we have found that there was a trace of prick]. There is a hint that inspecting female genitalia is like reading a book, a comic metaphor which eroticises books. This, of course, takes place in a book which refers to other erotic books such as the *Decameron*, so it all points to Joubert being very aware of the dangerous path he is walking when it comes to his use of sexual topics. However, he claims that ‘(car’celuy de la page 468 n’est pas mien: & si est un mot corrompu pour dire *vir*) comme aussi ils ne furent onc prononcez de ma langue’<sup>91</sup> [‘The foul word on page 468 is not mine, but a corrupted word for *vir*. Such expressions have never been in my vocabulary [or: never come out of my mouth]’] (p. 8). Other than in the much shorter 1579 text, he does not alter the supposedly misprinted word in later editions, such as in the 1584 text where it appears again,<sup>92</sup> merely adding this apology.

However, both his original statement and his explanation of it are comic and not to be taken at face value. On the surface, as part of this game, he hopes readers will read the ‘t’ as an ‘r’. It is noteworthy that he euphemistically will not refer to the word directly, and claims to cut it out of his language altogether. Given his general approach to sexual language, this claim seems unlikely to be sincere. Even if not referred to directly, such body parts are alluded to through euphemism. Due to differing levels of explicitness, euphemism can be more or less acceptable for those who might be offended than explicit statement. He points to other lascivious men who are too free

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<sup>86</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionnaire*, n.p.

<sup>87</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> See chapter three section 3.1.

<sup>89</sup> See section 2.1. François Rabelais, *Pantagruel* (Lyon: Juste, 1542), p. 86; Rabelais, ‘Comment Panurge fut amoureux d’une haute dame de Paris’, *Pantagruel* Chapitre XXI, ed. by Pinganaud, pp. 311-315 (p. 313); Rabelais, ‘How Panurge was in love with a Lady of Paris’, *Pantagruel* Second Book Chapter XXI, trans. by Urquhart, pp. 245-248, 224; François Rabelais, *Gargantua Pantagruel*, ed. by Claude Pinganaud (Paris: Arléa, 2010), p. 286.

<sup>90</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1578), p. 468.

<sup>91</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1584), n.p.

<sup>92</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1584), p. 468.



with their words and whose language, unlike Joubert's (or so he claims), corrupts chaste women and girls – although he does express a lack of surprise that people would object to his most controversial chapter.<sup>93</sup> Yet his defence seems dubious; he uses humour in order to defend humour. The excuse of a misprint is a tactic, as Dominique Brancher points out, 'd'autant plus suspecte qu'elle est directement empruntée à Rabelais' ['all the more suspicious for being directly borrowed from Rabelais'], who tries to argue that 'la faute et negligence des imprimeurs' ['the carelessness of the printers'] led to 'the printing the word *âne* [donkey] for *âme* [soul]'.<sup>94</sup> Ultimately, Joubert's justification for his supposed typo and comic sexual language is scarcely serious. Instead, he tells a classic joke which is part of his playfulness with language and is merely paying lip service to modesty.

In an apology to the Marguerite de Valois he claims that he is forced to speak about physical matters and natural functions which may seem offensive, such as determining virginity, but can nonetheless be spoken about decently even if they are secret, hidden, and possibly shameful. He believes that:

Mais sachant qu'on peut honnestement parler (comme je fais) de toutes actions naturelles, non moins que de toutes parties du cors humain, les plus secretes et cachées, qu'on dit honteuses, que les yeux chastes ne craignent point de voir an public, par les anatomies. [one can speak decently (as I do) of all natural functions no less than of all the parts of the human body, even the most secret and the most hidden (called shameful), which chaste eyes in no way fear seeing in public during dissections].<sup>95</sup>

He does, therefore, speak of them. He uses terms like 'honnestement parler', yet the issue with his comic sexual euphemisms is that they are not 'honneste' [decent]. He claims women attend such public dissections, which has

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<sup>93</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, pp. 8-9.

<sup>94</sup> Brancher. 'C'est quand la langue', n.p.; Brancher, "When the tongue slips", p. 55; François Rabelais. *Quart Livre*, LVIII, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by M. Huchon (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 520.

<sup>95</sup> Cited in Simons, 'Gender', p. 126.

implications for his writing being forbidden to them.<sup>96</sup> He concludes that he thought these defences would protect him from what he may consider slanderous judgements.<sup>97</sup> The phrasing of ‘qu’on dit honteuses’ is striking, as it suggests Joubert views the standard phrase of ‘parties honteuses’ as being just something people say. This would imply these so-called shameful body parts are not shameful in and of themselves, and are only called that as a superficial term.

This apology demonstrates many important points regarding Joubert. His stance that what some might deem shameful can in fact be discussed decently is exactly the opposite of Cicero’s argument, where there is shame in naming. Joubert is, therefore, on the side of the Cynics.<sup>98</sup> He puts the blame back on his critics, calling them venomous. He admits that his subject matter is potentially dangerous. This might be seen to counter his above claim that some scandalous vocabulary is not in his language, depending on how much significance we place on the difference between shocking words and shocking subjects which do not actually use such words specifically. He also claims it is possible to discuss shocking material in acceptable ways, which is a function of euphemism. Additionally, his assertion serves to counter his claim elsewhere that he expected to be attacked for his work, here expressing the view that he believed himself armed against this (p. 6). He is in visible difficulty.

Yet, most of Joubert’s words, for Bertravan, are not actually scandalous. Joubert himself justifies the content of his treatise on the grounds of disseminating medical knowledge clearly, which is indeed the whole point of a work dedicated to popular errors: ‘le peuple desire antandre (s’an informant tous les jours, tant hommes, que fammes honestes)’<sup>99</sup> [‘all things that people wish to know about and that they seek out every day, men as well as decent women’] (pp. 4-6). Comparisons can be drawn here to Michel de Montaigne (who had the same printer). My second chapter highlights Montaigne’s point that genital activity is natural, necessary, and right, and

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<sup>96</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 208.

<sup>97</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, pp. 278-279.

<sup>98</sup> Cicero, *On Obligations*, ed. by P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 43-44: 1.127-129.

<sup>99</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1584), sig.A2<sup>r</sup>.

(perhaps most importantly) widely known and recognised, even if this is not openly admitted.<sup>100</sup> This type of widely known, but never discussed information has been called the open secret by Patricia Simons.<sup>101</sup> Joubert's humour lies in highlighting such information while also veiling it, he would argue, with euphemism. His veiling techniques in the first edition include, as he claims, not mentioning literal names for supposedly shameful body parts and using metaphors such as the devil in Hell as euphemisms. Of course, these veils are not very opaque, which is also part of the humour. His use of the all-too-literal 'vit' may be an exception to his claim, but then, of course, he asserts it was never intentional.

Despite his claim to use it, occasionally Joubert comments on euphemism with more than a touch of contempt to his tone. The quotation on periphrases and circonlocutions in my second chapter (section 2.1) is the best example of this: 'periphrases & circonlocutions [...] ont été depuis inventées, pour parler plus secretement, de ce que toutesfois on veut bien estre antandu, an denotant les choses qu'on ha honte de voir'<sup>102</sup> ['periphrases and circumlocutions [...] have since been invented in order to speak more secretly about that which we nevertheless wish to have clearly understood when we designate what we are ashamed to look at'] (p. 7). For Joubert, scandal is more visual than verbal. This might explain why he is met with more shock than he claimed to expect. The dichotomy of visual and verbal may be part of the problem with direct language (the opposite of euphemism) – it conjures up an explicit image too immediately. Hence euphemism can be preferable, even if it is completely transparent: because it introduces an obstacle to this conjuring of explicitness. Joubert challenges the Ciceronian injunction to use periphrases: 'Mais que seroit cela que nous eussions familiere cognoissance des choses, qu'on ne sceut pas nommer?'<sup>103</sup> ['but what would it be like if we

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<sup>100</sup> See section 2.4. Michel de Montaigne, *Essais* (Paris: Camusat, 1635), III.5; Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais, Livre III*, ed. by V.L. Saulnier and Pierre Villey (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965), III.5; Michel de Montaigne, *Essais, Livre III* (Memphis: Books LLC, 2011), III.5; Michel de Montaigne, *Essays* (London: Bradwood, 1613), III.5; Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, ed. and trans. by M.A. Screech (London: Penguin, 2003), III.5. Montaigne is, after much debate, more approving of euphemism than Joubert. Unfortunately there is not room here to focus more on Montaigne.

<sup>101</sup> Simons, 'Gender', p. 128.

<sup>102</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1584), sig.A3<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>103</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1584), sig.A3<sup>v</sup>.

had a familiar acquaintance with things and yet did not know their names?]' (p. 7). Joubert is part of the early modern debate over what today we call 'euphemism' but using prior terminology for this concept.<sup>104</sup> This quotation of Joubert's is crucial for the issue of euphemism. It seems to reinforce his apparent belief that the type of taboo subject he discusses demands such language – whether comic or, in the case of 'vit', literal – even if he later has to retract this opinion.

Joubert acknowledges context can be important for deciding whether euphemism is required, and suggests that perhaps he was not sufficiently euphemistic in his writings because '[je] pensois (paraventure) parler à mes ecoliers, ainsi que je fais ès anatomies publiques'<sup>105</sup> ['as in my public dissections, [I] thought perhaps I was addressing my students'] (p. 10). As Simons points out, 'Joubert's language was adequately cloaked, he thought, so as to avoid scandal and to ensure no incitement of lust'.<sup>106</sup> The defence that he might have thought he was speaking to his students may seem weak, but it reveals the importance of context and how a change of register can determine what is acceptable or too explicit for different parts of early modern society. From this perspective, the presence of humour in the anatomy theatre is significant. Anatomy theatres had the potential for the same triangulation of performer, subject of the joke, and audience as dramatic theatres. Humour, especially sexual humour, among medical practitioners could be a coping mechanism for dealing with death. It could simply be people having fun. Either way, the key is the male-dominated context, giving permission for such comedy which would be, and indeed was, inappropriate in other situations.

The issue of female readership is important for Joubert. Part of his defence against the attack that his text would lead women astray is that his content is perfectly acceptable for married women but not unmarried girls. It is ironic that female virgins are the social group isolated, as they are the subject of the chapter, meaning everyone can read about them apart from themselves. (Valerie Worth-Stylianou suggests this is where the line of

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<sup>104</sup> See my second chapter.

<sup>105</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1584), sig.E<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>106</sup> See Simons, 'Gender', pp. 124-125.

acceptability was drawn because of marriage's intention to procreate).<sup>107</sup> This is patriarchy at work, which ties into the fact that most of Joubert's humour concerns penetration and/or the penis. Such comedy focuses on male control of women, a task which the early modern concepts of euphemism also perform when they veil the obscene from those who supposedly need protecting. If the euphemism involves, for example, a certain level of education, perhaps the ability to read Latin, in order to be understood, women will be more likely to be excluded. On the other hand, by writing in the vernacular, Joubert may actually be going against the misogynistic assumption that medical knowledge should be restricted to educated men. Part of his task is to inform and correct female medical practitioners, especially midwives. Comic sexual language, like that of Rabelaisian farce, could be a way of being more accessible or understandable in some cases, so can serve a pedagogic purpose. If this was Joubert's intention, however, his critics tried to thwart him with (attempted) censorship. The claim is that, by deciding standards of taboo on behalf of unmarried women, chaste eyes and ears are protected. This is a poorly disguised exercise in power.<sup>108</sup> Bertravan explains how in the chapter on virginity there are some words which it could be argued are not suitable for girls. A resolution to this concern is offered: the fact that girls are begged not to look at this chapter, with the second edition having asterisks placed next to the sections from which eyes should be averted.<sup>109</sup>

Millanges, printer of Joubert and Montaigne, states in the 1579 edition that Joubert

a esté bien souvant contraint en descouvrant les erreurs, [...] user de mots & parolles qui semblent estre un peu obscenes: il sera bon que les seuls mariez lisent les beaux advertissements [...] Et les religieus, religieuses, & tous ceux qui veulent vivre chastement sans se marier doivent entierement laisser la lecture desdicts livres à ceux & celles, qui sont mariez. Quant aux autres qui ne veulent ouïr parler des parties

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<sup>107</sup> Worth-Stylianou, 'Defintion', p. 156.

<sup>108</sup> See Simons, 'Gender', pp. 115-128.

<sup>109</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 4.

honteuses ils pourront passer sans lire les chap. & lieux marquez de ce signe \*.<sup>110</sup>

[has often been obliged, when uncovering the errors [...] to use words and terminology that seem to be a little obscene: it would be best if only married people read the excellent warnings [...] And monks, nuns and all those who want to live chastely without marrying must leave these books to married people alone. As for those who do not wish to hear talk of shameful parts, they will be able to pass over the chapters and places marked with this sign \*]. (p. 277)<sup>111</sup>

The phrase ‘contraint en decouvrant les erreurs’ implies the process of uncovering popular errors demands engagement with taboo material. This passage, according to Worth-Stylianou, has ‘one of the earliest examples in French of the term “obscene” employed in the modern sense’ and ‘its occurrence [...] crystallises the emergence of the concept’.<sup>112</sup> In the revised edition, the danger of the material for certain readers trumps the justification that it is necessary to engage with such subjects to expose errors to the population at large. Words are given a sort of mystical power of influence, where reading them will make you likely to act them out. Millanges divides readers into those who need protecting – unmarried women, women who have devoted themselves to religion and also men who have this devotion, as shown by ‘religieux’ – and those who do not have such delicate chaste eyes.

Thus Millanges acknowledges that Joubert’s original level of euphemism crosses a line. It is also significant that the solution is the placing of asterisks. These asterisks become a non-verbal euphemism in their own right – they pay lip service to obeying the rules of protecting the innocent, virginal, and chaste, but actually serve to highlight the naughty sections of

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<sup>110</sup> Laurent Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (Bordeaux: Millanges, 1579), p. 56.

<sup>111</sup> This is an occasion where it is necessary to adjust the translation slightly to bring it closer to the original. De Rocher gives ‘Joubert [...] was often forced, in discussing the errors [...] to use words and expressions that seem a little obscene, it would be good if only married people were to read the interesting information [...] And the religious, both men and women, and all those who wish to live chastely without getting married ought to leave entirely the reading of these books to those who are married. As for others, who do not care to hear about the shameful parts, they can skip over the chapters and passages marked with this sign \*.’ Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 277.

<sup>112</sup> Worth-Stylianou, ‘Defintion’, p. 154.

both the text and the body by drawing attention to them. Whether they were intended to be or not, the asterisks become to all intents comic in their lack of ability to conceal.

The paradox of the asterisks ostensibly veiling the comic and sexual, but in actuality highlighting it, is a perfect demonstration of Montaigne's argument that some things are hidden in order to be revealed.<sup>113</sup> The asterisk thus works like many euphemisms, both concealing and revealing, although I would argue in this case the revealing is more powerful than the concealing. Whether or not the secret goal is actually to draw attention to censored sections, the call for censorship in the first place displays the typical desire to protect the chaste eyes of unmarried women, a cliché of the period, yet unwittingly acts like a double-entendre.

Decency in women is important to Joubert, and he mentions it often. Even married women, unsurprisingly, he believes should be decent: 'La defloracion se cognoissoit plus-tost au visage, & aus yeus, si la filhe n'est par trop assurée, deshonorée, & effrontée [...] si elles sont modestes & honnestes'<sup>114</sup> ['upon being deflowered, even though this be done decently and in marriage, she [they/women] is a little subdued and ashamed [...] if they are modest and decent'] (p. 210). Joubert states his desire to 'examiner s'ils sont lascifs & deshonestes, de sorte que les femmes de bien, ne les puissent honnestement ouïr, ou lire'<sup>115</sup> ['examine whether they [his writings] are so lascivious and indecent that proper women could not read them or have them read to them'] (p. 8). This reflects an attempt to draw a line on 'honnêteté' [decency] which comic sexual language may transgress. Clearly, the main result of his examination is for his printer to place asterisks. These comments on female modesty suggest the asterisks are no joke, yet they are, perhaps unintentionally, comic in their lack of success in the stated goal of hiding content.

According to Simons, 'Distinctions between categories of readership [virgins versus married women] furthered a heterocentric, reproductive agenda; they also confirmed a definition of the obscene that relied on

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<sup>113</sup> See my second chapter section 2.4.

<sup>114</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1578), p. 460.

<sup>115</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1584), n.p.

gender'.<sup>116</sup> Sexual humour plays an important role in this agenda, drawing lines in the sand between who should and should not be allowed to discuss matters of sex – and then crossing these lines. Unmarried girls are declared too delicate for such language, but then are almost dared to indulge in it by the inviting asterisks. (On the other hand, putting the devil in Hell, for example, is more universally understandable as a concept, even if the image is enhanced by some knowledge of the *Decameron*). Strikingly, these categories of readership are not simply a case of men protecting women, because the material is suitable for a certain category of women. Other social factors, such as marital status, are therefore also important rather than gender being the only significant issue (although, of course, marital status is intertwined with gender power relations). This justification used by Joubert – that his content is fine for married women – conforms to his dedication. As a married woman, Marguerite would have fulfilled this criterion for Joubert (though not for other readers, as shown by his need to change his dedicatee to a man in later editions). Joubert did not see any evidence that Marguerite was displeased by what was dedicated to her – as Bertravan highlights, if she did not enjoy the text, Joubert would have been informed.<sup>117</sup> This supports his theory that married women should be allowed to read his work. It is questionable, however, whether this theory was a retrospective defence or whether he had it in mind from the beginning. It might be disingenuous: an expression of discontent from a woman might amount to a declaration of interest in sexual or salacious material. What is most important is the fact that how sexual language is expressed, in this case comically and too explicitly even if technically indirectly or euphemistically, impacts on who can be exposed to it according to critics.

Joubert points out a distinction drawn by society – the difference between naming something shocking and seeing it. He observes how people give more delicate treatment to the eyesight than to hearing, and says it should not be necessary to spare your ears more than your eyes.<sup>118</sup> He highlights the contradiction that the eyes are permitted to see shocking things

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<sup>116</sup> See Simons, 'Gender', pp. 125-126.

<sup>117</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 5.

<sup>118</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. XXII.



in the anatomy theatre, but the ears are not allowed to hear talk of them. These arguments tie into his claim, quoted above, that even chaste eyes view potentially shocking body parts in public dissections. He believes that if you do not fear seeing these 'shameful parts' publicly than you should not object to hearing of them and especially reading of them in private (p. 208). This distinction between naming and showing is demonstrated by Joubert's statement 'on nommera, sans comparaison, moins honteusement le derriere (parlant an reverence) qu'on ne le montrera'<sup>119</sup> ['For the behind (begging your leave) can be named with infinitely less shame than it can be shown'] (pp. 7-8).<sup>120</sup> Joubert thus attempts to excuse pre-emptively content (before the criticism arrives) which may be taboo and thus his comic sexual language as well, with an example that is itself comic. The debate over naming impacts upon euphemism – if you name something shocking, whether you do it humorously and indirectly is very important.

Crucially, however, this defence also takes the form of a joke by highlighting the comic discrepancy between showing and naming the bottom in contrast to other body parts which cannot politely be named or shown. Even in a letter apologising for comic sexual content, Joubert demonstrates his sense of humour and thereby mocks his mealy-mouthed critics. His use of the cliché 'parlant an reverence' amounts, like his earlier reference to the 'parties qu'on dit honteuses', to a parody of his censors. Joubert refers to his anatomy theatre, where he would name, show, and make jokes.

As a dissector of bodies, Joubert would be used to both speaking about and showing body parts. However, he argues the general public also expose themselves to potentially scandalous content on a daily basis. He and Bertravan believe there are some words and topics which everybody talks of so often that it is acceptable to talk of them openly – though whether they can be printed openly and dedicated to a princess may be a different matter.<sup>121</sup> Joubert uses a vocabulary of hearing and speaking, also found in his comment that 'Je pense toutefois avoir écrit assez modestement pour le sujet

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<sup>119</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1584), n.p.

<sup>120</sup> This is an occasion where it is necessary to adjust the translation slightly to bring it closer to the original. De Rocher gives 'for will one not name with infinitely less shame the bottom (speaking reverently) than one will show it?' Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, pp. 7-8.

<sup>121</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 4.

que j'avois [...] d'an parler samblablemat à couvert & an masque de propos deguisés'<sup>122</sup> [‘I think I have written rather modestly, considering the subject [...] speaking of them in a similarly covered and masked manner, in disguised words’] (p. 6). This is an attempt to excuse and justify himself after the fact of the scandal. It is also yet another example of his humour and playing with boundaries. The comedy here is found in the way he claims to have masked his words, yet one of his masks is that of the devil and Hell, which is so easy to see through.

As quoted above, Joubert claims to avoid literal terms for sexual body parts. At least, this avoidance is ostensible – ‘vit’ would be an exception if it was stripped of its excuse as being unintentional. This raises the question of why, even when faced with physical examples of such body parts, most people still feel the need to avoid literal terms for them. Even in this defence and even when not being merry, Joubert uses phrases like ‘shameful parts’ instead of more clinical or medical terms (which he does use elsewhere for slightly less shocking subjects, such as ‘des membranes’<sup>123</sup> [‘membranes’]) (p. 218). Perhaps one of the most salient aspects of this is the way that one can talk about something shocking that everyone knows about and understands, but what makes this potentially acceptable is the use of euphemism (and even then the context is still important). Comic sexual euphemism, even if only paying lip service to being a veiling technique, still shows awareness of the need to do this.

It is striking that at several points Joubert claims he wished he had used more self-censorship. The fact that he changed the dedicatee and added in simultaneously apologetic and defensive or justificatory paragraphs in later editions shows he does modify and adapt (but not always remove) parts of his work in response to the scandalised reception. He changes some specific vocabulary, such as ‘manche’ and ‘vit’. However, even though he says he wants to, he does not call back the overall scandalous parts, thereby making a decision not to self-censor much more than he does originally (asterisks aside). This is despite his claim that ‘Que j’avois bien preveu, &

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<sup>122</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1584), sig.A3<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>123</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1578), p. 487.

praedit aussi, que je serois calomnié'<sup>124</sup> ['How well did I foresee that I would be calumniated'] (p. 6). This lends credence to the argument that the level of euphemising an entire subject is more acceptable than individual euphemisms. In other words, it is easy to claim some subjects are filthy enough to require censorship, but the situation gets more complicated and difficult when it comes to single euphemisms which themselves run the risk of being too explicit.

In some ways this shows a determination to share knowledge and content in the face of complaint – what Simons terms 'scandalous in its daring revelations',<sup>125</sup> although the explanation he gives is one of printing practicalities (probably to cover his back). His text, he claims, was disseminated at such a fast pace that it was impossible to recall the shocking parts of the first edition.<sup>126</sup> This does not explain why the most controversial chapter was not removed in subsequent publications. Similarly, Bertravan, in response to the objection that Joubert should have excluded the chapters about matters which may be received as disgusting in his dedication to the princess, claims that he had always intended to do so but was advised by the king's court to publish it all together.<sup>127</sup> Joubert and his defenders thereby try to avoid him being blamed for the humour that went too far for many of his contemporaries.

Another important question surrounding Joubert is whether, due to the shocking nature of his subject matter, it may have been scandalous if euphemisms were used or not. Is it the subject in and of itself that is potentially offensive or the language used to describe it? Is it ever possible to discuss, for example, the female genitalia without social awkwardness or obscenity?<sup>128</sup> Perhaps the type of subjects Joubert brings up, especially in his most discussed chapter, are by definition scandalous. Some of Joubert's terms, such as 'parties amoureuses'<sup>129</sup> ['erotic parts'] (p. 211) and 'le mambre

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<sup>124</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1584), sig.A2.

<sup>125</sup> See Simons, 'Gender', p. 128.

<sup>126</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 10.

<sup>127</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 5.

<sup>128</sup> See Worth-Stylianou, 'Definition', pp. 152-155, which argues this is always a sensitive and taboo topic of discussion but that Joubert does not accept that this can by necessity be the case.

<sup>129</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1578), p. 464.

viril<sup>130</sup> ['virile member'] (p. 217), are standard euphemisms, which contrast with the humorous double-entendres. Joubert is very aware of the rules he is breaking. On the other hand, he does use polite euphemism, such as 'shameful parts' – which is not usually comic, unlike the devil. This suggests he sometimes needs to cloak his subject matter (although everyone would have known what he meant). Euphemism often permits some topics in early modern debate which would otherwise be too outlandish.

Joubert is joined by Ferrand in his approach to the taboo. They are unusual in their humour but not entirely unique in being shocking. The royal surgeon Ambroise Paré may have had even more potential for scandal as, according to Simons, 'the availability of [... his] anatomical illustrations would also have caused disquiet since these potentially reached even the illiterate', not just the vernacular-reading population of Joubert's and Ferrand's texts.<sup>131</sup> Paré, as part of the rivalry between doctors and surgeons, caused a scandal among doctors. Joubert also has some of the same tendencies as Brantôme. They both claim to want to avoid scandal yet created it. The work of both men breaks free of the (alleged) right context – for Joubert, the (male) medical community, and for Brantôme, the court. This is a common excuse in the Renaissance for offensive material – it only offends because the wrong person has come across it. The potential to be overheard or read by this wrong person is why such writing was dangerous.

There is one word used by Joubert which has particular implications for other texts examined in this thesis: 'm[e]ntule', a Gallicized version of the Latin *mentula*. De Rocher translates Joubert's 'la mantule'<sup>132</sup> as 'stick' for 'penis'.<sup>133</sup> 'la mantule ne le separe pas ces membranes de peu, ains les force tout a coup de sa teste, qui est plus grosse que le demeurant' ['the man's stick does not separate these membranes little by little but forces them abruptly with its head, which is bigger around than the rest of it']. Cotgrave gives 'a mans yard' for 'mentule'.<sup>134</sup> Although not specifically used as a joke by Joubert in this instance, this word is practically a joking term. It is used in

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<sup>130</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1578), p. 485.

<sup>131</sup> Simons, 'Gender', p. 124.

<sup>132</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1578), p. 485.

<sup>133</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, p. 218.

<sup>134</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

Rabelais' prologue to *Quart Livre*: 'j'ay mentule, voyre diz je mémoire bien belle, et grande assez pour emplir un pot beurrier' ['I have a mentula, or rather I mean a memory [...] quite fair and big enough to fill a butterpot']. Similarly, Rabelais uses the word thus: 'ô belle mentule, voire, diz je, memoire! Je soloecise souvent en la symbolisation et colliguance de ces deux motz' ['O lovely mentula, or rather memory! I often commit a solecism in the concurrence and connection between those two words'].<sup>135</sup> In Rabelais, then, this is a recurring joke based on a *lapsus linguae* or (sometimes conscious) slip of the tongue. As Camilla Nilles highlights, Priapus here views 'mémoire' as the fruit of his 'mentule', linking immortality through memory and procreation.<sup>136</sup> The word 'mentula' and its complexities are very significant for a number of English theatrical comedies at the time, most noticeably those by John Marston and Edward Sharpham discussed in chapter five section 5.8. Joubert is not using the word particularly humorously at this point, but the fact that he uses it at all contributes to the way he raises many important factors that resonate throughout this thesis. The humour of his medical text uses similar language to literary texts from both France and England.

Joubert offers a different divide between who might be considered as being in need of protection and who is not, complicating previous distinctions simply based on gender: the demarcation is not just men versus women but divides women into categories. Like Ferrand, he is important as a writer who took the time to respond (or refuse to respond) to criticism and justify himself, providing contemporaneous discussion of euphemism and obscenity – concepts which existed whether or not the modern terms were yet attached to them. He also (again, like Ferrand) raises linguistic issues, showing how Latin can be a form of euphemism, which he does not use, and the vernacular a danger to those wishing to hide certain things. Euphemism itself can be a (thin) veil, but this is often not sufficient if in the common tongue. Perhaps most importantly, Joubert highlights the relative subjectivity on who finds what offensive and therefore the role of euphemism.

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<sup>135</sup> Rabelais, *Quart Livre*, ed. by Marichal, p. 24; Translation in Paul J. Smith, *Disposito: Problematic Ordering in French Renaissance Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 78.

<sup>136</sup> Camilla J. Nilles, 'Twice-Told Tales in the Prologue to the *Quart Livre*', in *Rabelais in Context*, ed. by Barbera C. Bowen (Oklahoma: Vanderbilt University Press, 1993), pp. 113-131 (p. 125). I must reiterate how there is not scope in this thesis for more detail on Rabelais.

To conclude this section, the controversy Joubert causes raises both questions and answers about euphemism in Renaissance France. The *Erreurs Populaires* are used as evidence of what was an open secret: what was widely known, at least in Joubert's opinion, but not acknowledged in polite society. Worth-Stylianou suggests that Joubert exposes the 'erreur populaire' [popular error] that 'not to speak directly about sexuality in a medical work is a mark of respect'.<sup>137</sup> This is despite his claim that he was not actually direct, since he avoided literal names. Even the metaphor of the devil and Hell is, while being very transparent, a euphemism as it does not use the straightforward names for male and female genitalia. However, it is an example of how euphemism, when it is comic and sexual, can be lewder than the literal terms.

4.2 Ferrand's *Traité de l'essence et guérison de l'amour, ou De la mélancholie érotique*, Considered Alongside the English Translation *Erotique Melancholy*<sup>138</sup>

Ferrand's text aimed to portray love as a debilitating disease of melancholy.<sup>139</sup> His medical treatise in the vernacular on the subject of lovesickness is first published in France in 1610.<sup>140</sup> Ten years later, Church authorities and the *Parlement* of Toulouse, a notoriously conservative Catholic anti-libertine law court, condemn his work at a tribunal. A further three years later, in 1623, Ferrand brings out a revised and expanded second edition which, in some ways, he had toned down in order to comply with the tribunal's demands.<sup>141</sup> This 1623 version is the basis for seventeenth-century and modern English

<sup>137</sup> Worth-Stylianou, 'Definition', p. 158.

<sup>138</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all the French quotations from Ferrand are from the first 1610 treatise: Jacques Ferrand, *Traité de l'essence et guérison de l'amour, ou De la mélancholie érotique* (Tolose: Colomiez, 1610). If a page reference is given for an English translation, unless otherwise stated it is from Jacques Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Donald A. Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1990). Towards the end of the section, the 1623 French and 1640 English are referred to, but this is outlined in footnotes. If no page reference is given throughout the section, it is my own translation.

<sup>139</sup> D.A. Beecher, 'Erotic Love and the Inquisition: Jacques Ferrand and the Tribunal of Toulouse, 1620', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 20 (1989), 41-53 (p. 49).

<sup>140</sup> Ferrand, *Traité de l'essence* (1610).

<sup>141</sup> Jacques Ferrand, *De la maladie d'amour ou mélancholie érotique. Discours curieux qui enseigne à cognoistre l'essence, les causes, les signes, & les remèdes de ce mal fantastique* (Paris: Moreaz, 1623).

translations. Edmund Chilmead translates this version in 1640 and 1645.<sup>142</sup> Towards the end of this section, I will consider the relevant parts of Chilmead's translation, comparing and contrasting to the 1623 French.<sup>143</sup> Donald Beecher describes Ferrand's original work in 1610 as 'authority-baiting' and both aggressive and defensive.<sup>144</sup> According to Beecher, he has been depicted as a 'true offender of public taste, or victim of a circumstantial resurgency of repression'.<sup>145</sup> The extent to which Ferrand attempts to undo this offence and bow to the authority he baited will be discussed in this chapter.

Previous studies on Ferrand, although very helpful, have not focussed on his use of comic sexual language, but have instead concentrated on the censorship by Church authorities and the *Parlement*.<sup>146</sup> The subjects of love, erotic behaviour, and sex always have the potential to be offensive and obscene, and what Beecher calls Ferrand's 'occasionally racy' style could have contributed, as with Joubert, to the relative popularity of this text.<sup>147</sup> Depending on how it is handled, euphemism can temper this raciness or sometimes worsen it. It can be asked what exactly Ferrand thought he was doing in writing this text. It is extraordinary enough to publish, as he does, work on problems people experience having sex. To do so using the astonishing language I will analyse is even more unusual and unexpected. The expectation that doctors will be serious about the body is certainly powerful today and may have been so in the early modern period, given the reception of these texts. The unexpected nature of these writings is not

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<sup>142</sup> James Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Edmund Chilmead (Oxford: Lichfield, 1640); James Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Edmund Chilmead (Oxford: Lichfield, 1645).

<sup>143</sup> Donald A. Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella, rather than use Chilmead's translation, produce a new translation of the 1623 edition. They discuss why they chose to do this, pointing to Chilmead's inaccuracy and unreliability. Despite his French being good, they argue, he was hasty, often paraphrasing, deliberately not translating Latin or Greek if they were frank (I discuss examples of this below), and interpolating with added flowery style. Also, Ferrand's style of French was, according to Beecher and Ciavolella, too technical and problematic for Chilmead to translate straightforwardly. Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, pp. 14-15, 37, 205-207.

<sup>144</sup> Beecher, 'Erotic Love', p. 42.

<sup>145</sup> Beecher, 'Erotic Love', p. 47.

<sup>146</sup> In addition to Beecher's article, see the Introduction to Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, pp. 3-202.

<sup>147</sup> Beecher, 'Erotic Love', p. 52; Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 15.

mutually exclusive with their popularity – indeed, their surprising styles seem to have led to their success (as well as their scandal). Both doctors realise that sex sells, but their approach was still unforeseen. This section of the chapter will strive to shed some light on the issues such language raises.

As with Joubert, context is all-important for Ferrand. The different types of readership, whether they are within or outside of medical contexts, are very important. In discussing the target audience for the first edition, Donald Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella comment that the question of who the intended audience was ‘haunted’ the first edition and may have influenced the tribunal.<sup>148</sup> Ferrand might, they argue, have ‘escaped had he dealt with his topic in the “privacy” of Latin, but to expose such sex-related matters to the general public was a matter of serious concern for certain sectors of the clergy in seventeenth century France’.<sup>149</sup> Here, we see the importance of the vernacular, as with Joubert, widening the availability of scandalous material. There is common ground between the two doctors in this sense, as they exposed medical and taboo material to a non-specialist audience.

For the jurists, who had the role of guarding public morality, Ferrand’s worst crime is not the forbidden nature of the subject matter or usurping Church authority, but – as M. Desbarreaux-Bernard describes – writing in the vernacular: ‘ce qui est d’autant plus périlleux qu’il escript en langage vulgaire’<sup>150</sup> [‘which is all the more perilous because it is written in the vernacular’]. Beecher suggests three possible audiences for such language: physicians using it as a guide for their practice, people suffering from diseases, and amateur readers reading for pleasure.<sup>151</sup> Other than the physicians (most of whom would not need it to be in the vernacular), these audiences are outside the acceptable context of the coterie of male professionals. Issues of language and the vernacular are important, therefore, when it comes to texts which use comic sexual euphemism because the language can dictate exposure to different types of audiences. Beecher and Ciavolella speculate that maybe Ferrand wrote in the vernacular because he

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<sup>148</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 22.

<sup>149</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 22.

<sup>150</sup> Cited in Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 33. See also Beecher, ‘Erotic Love’, pp. 50-51.

<sup>151</sup> Beecher, ‘Erotic Love’, pp. 50-51.



was envisioning a national, not international, audience and both a popular and professional readership.<sup>152</sup> The French language, however, was widely known in other countries. Their argument is that the two editions have more in common than differences.<sup>153</sup> Yet, I argue that the variants or changes are highly significant. The use of the vernacular was indeed high on the list of the tribunal's complaints, but so was the use of comic sexual language. The concessions Ferrand makes regarding this language are vital, as I shall demonstrate.

Ferrand's work is perceived as shocking for more than just its sexual or obscene content. However, such scandalous material is by no means lacking in his writing. Ferrand's chapter XXII is one of the likeliest candidates for causing the tribunal's shock in the face of the encouragement of lecheries, sorceries of love, and accounts of aphrodisiac recipes.<sup>154</sup> This chapter is entitled 'Les moyens & remèdes pour se faire aymer & avoir la iouyssance des Dames principal remède d'Amour, & de la Melancholie Erotique' (p. 152) ['The means and recipes to make yourself lovable and to have the pleasure of the ladies, which is the chief cure for love and erotic melancholy'] (p. 31). This demonstrates a male target audience. This chapter's title is one of the controversial matters for the tribunal. It has the offensive characteristics of discussing taboo subjects and giving responsibility for treating erotic melancholy to doctors.

Ferrand's following chapter in the first treatise is named 'Les moyens pour conserver les mariez en amitié, & les guerir des amours illicites' (p.179) ['The means for keeping married couples in love and for curing illicit affairs'] (p. 31). Beecher and Ciavolella call this a more innocent title,<sup>155</sup> yet this chapter continues to discuss the taboo, dealing with problems arising from sexual incompatibility. This topic was not unique to Ferrand, other treatises dealing with it in the context of procreation and sterility, and women's diseases.<sup>156</sup> However, the way he uses the topic is more unusual. Indeed, according to Beecher and Ciavolella, he

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<sup>152</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, pp. 33-34.

<sup>153</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 31.

<sup>154</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 31.

<sup>155</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 31.

<sup>156</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 31.

dispenses with the usual theoretical and anatomical discussions that lead to consideration of the dysfunctions of the reproductory organs, moving straightaway to the pharmaceutical concoctions to be applied to the genitals variously to stretch or constrict the vagina, to stimulate the male member, or to increase the pleasurable sensations.<sup>157</sup>

This chapter of Ferrand's contains his use of euphemisms for such body parts which are so significant for this thesis.

Like Joubert, Ferrand employs comic sexual euphemism in a section of this chapter where the influence of Boccaccio is clear. In one of his many potentially shocking recipes and prescriptions in the first edition, Ferrand discusses the impediments to pleasure in sex which can come from women. By the standards of the time, this was a scandalous topic, and Ferrand's language makes his treatment of it all the more provocative. He advises the woman who is *serrée* [too tight]:

Poudre de noix moscate & de ladan. de chacun une once (sinon qu'elle fust travaillée de la descente de matrice) faictes un pessaire, & mettez-le dans le labyrinthe d'Amour, Que si le defaut du plaisir, provient de ce que la femme a son guilloquet trop fendu, le guillenart trop eslargy, ou la porte de l'enfer d'Alibec trop ouverte, où Rustic ne prend plaisir à faire courir son Diable. Elle se servira du remède suivant, que les Courtisanes Italiennes practiquent pour se vendre pucelles. R. Alum de Roche, deux dragm. roses rouges demy poignée, avec demy dragme de galange: faictes le tout boüillir en eau ferrée, & la troisieme partie du vin rouge; ou vous tremperez une esponge preparée en forme de pesseire, laquelle la femme mettra dans la porcherie de Venus. (pp. 192-193)

[take only one ounce of nutmeg powder and one ounce of laudanum (if she does not want to risk the falling of the uterus), makes a pessary and put it into the labyrinth of love, and if the lack of pleasure derives

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<sup>157</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 31.

from the fact that her wicket is too split and the tunnel too stretched, or the door to Alibec's inferno is too wide so that Rustic gets no thrill out of running his devil, let her make use of the following remedy which the Italian courtesans use in order to sell themselves as virgins. Take two drams of stone alum, half a handful of red roses with half a dram of English galingale. Boil them all in water in which a piece of hot iron has been quenched. Let the third part of it be red wine. The woman then dips into it a sponge in the form of a pessary and puts into it Venus's hog/pigsty.]<sup>158</sup>

There are noteworthy similarities to Joubert here, both in terms of the subject matter of virgins and the humorous use of Rustico's devil. Ferrand takes the typical medical structure of *receptes* [recipes/prescriptions] used by physicians and charlatans, and injects sexual humour. On the one hand, there is prescriptive advice here, yet on the other hand there is vocabulary which is far from strictly necessary to convey the medical point. The point about Italian courtesans in particular is scarcely a reassuring recommendation for the would-be moral or religious censor. It also shows how the issue of virginity and tightness was part of the commercialisation of women's bodies. Like Joubert, Ferrand is having fun with language and, quite possibly, censors. As Michel Jeanneret aptly states, 'Ferrand s'amuse et nous amuse'<sup>159</sup> ['Ferrand is amusing himself and amusing us']. This amusement played a big part in getting him into trouble.

The fact that both Joubert and Ferrand refer to this story displays many things, the first being a shared language in the medical community to deal with the taboo and release tension. The second is the implication that the devil is common comic currency – a comedic commonplace. Specific use of the devil as referring to the penis is clearly prominent in the culture of French medical practitioners, as shown by its use by these two doctors. Yet, in this instance, the meaning of the phrase would be clear to non-doctors and even to those who had not read Boccaccio. This familiarity and accessibility could

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<sup>158</sup> Beecher, 'Erotic Love', pp. 44-45.

<sup>159</sup> Andrea Carlino and Michel Jeanneret (eds), *Vulgariser la Medecine: Du Style Medical en France et en Italie* (Paris: Droz, 2009), p. 90.

lessen the tension or awkwardness of discussing taboo subjects, although this does not really work for either medical writer since they are forced to revise their work.<sup>160</sup> Such comic language serves heuristic purposes. This kind of language is not wholly acceptable in non-medical comic works, like the *Decameron*, so it could be that people thought doctors, like Ferrand and Joubert, should have known better. The fact that this story of Boccaccio's is very often omitted from editions, such as in English, shows non-medical texts could also be condemned for such scandal. If the medical context is where this material is acceptable, this is to be expected. Problems arise when the material is exposed to those outside the in-group of doctors and medical students.<sup>161</sup> Ferrand is being especially provocative in citing a particularly salacious piece of Boccaccio in an already scandalous part of his treatise. It is as if the shocking subject matter demands this kind of language, a claim Joubert also seems to make.

In addition to 'le labyrinthe d'Amour' and 'la porcherie de Venus', Ferrand uses other comic euphemistic expressions for 'vagina' such as le 'jardin de Venus' (p. 195) ['Venus' garden'] (p. 31) and 'la vallée des soupirs, & de miserie' (p. 193) ['the vale of sighs and misery'] (p. 31). These euphemisms are comic in their mixing of high and low – the use of a goddess, mixed with, for example, a lowly pigsty and even a provocative mixture of sexual and religious language that was already present in Boccaccio. This is an example of what Freud describes as things which are serious and unfamiliar being mixed with commonplace and inferior things.<sup>162</sup>

Like putting the devil in Hell, vocabulary like 'la porcherie de Venus' uses euphemisms in the technical sense, as in deliberately not naming literal terms. However, once again these comic sexual euphemisms are not euphemistic in that they are not covering or veiling – and this is, of course, a major part of the comedy. These types of euphemisms contrast to the polite use of 'parties honteuses' in the example discussed in the Joubert section 4.1.<sup>163</sup> Ferrand's metaphor of the vale is humorous in its overdramatic

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<sup>160</sup> Although, if the goal is to gain readers and notoriety, both were successful.

<sup>161</sup> The idea of an in-group is explained in section 1.7 of my Introduction. In-groups engage in positive politeness, the addressing of taboos, whereas wider society avoids taboos.

<sup>162</sup> See my Introduction section 1.5.

<sup>163</sup> Laurent Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (Bordeaux: Millanges, 1578), p. 457.

hyperbole but also plays on the ‘vale of tears’ from Psalms 84:6. Beecher and Ciavolella label these euphemisms as Ferrand allowing himself ‘certain stylistic indulgences’.<sup>164</sup> I would argue instead that these ‘indulgences’ are deliberately provocative, playful, and designed to titillate and amuse the reader in equal measure. Moreover, by partaking in a language common to both doctors and the general public, Ferrand, like Joubert, disseminates medical knowledge to the ‘vulgaire’. In these medical works, sexual humour can therefore even be seen to follow the standard humanist view of literature as being both pleasant and informative, as well as provocative. Some euphemistic language can be designed to demarcate the in-group from the out-group. However, the comic commonplaces of the devil noted above create a problem for both the works of Joubert and Ferrand, since it welcomes non-medical readers into the in-group of positive politeness and those who joke about sexual body parts so provoked censors.<sup>165</sup> The medical context changes the question of reception of comic sexual vocabulary. The fact that similar comedy arises in medical texts and fictional works is again surprising. When considering what made the doctors think this was a good idea, one can speculate that it was part of a knowing strategy that led to their books being successful.

This section of Ferrand’s, therefore, has a series of elaborate sexually euphemistic expressions which are highly comic. The example of a man ‘ne prend plaisir à fairie courir son Diable’ [getting (or, in this case, not getting) pleasure in ‘running his devil’] again pays homage to Boccaccio. Ferrand also uses the words ‘guilloquet’ and ‘guillenart’ in the passage above, as does Joubert in a list of ‘points representing [female] virginity’,<sup>166</sup> both of which Cotgrave defines as ‘part of a womans &c’. (Cotgrave’s translation, a playful sexual euphemism in its own right, also applies to ‘vite’ – the feminine of the ‘vit’ which gets Joubert into trouble).<sup>167</sup> Indeed, the prefix ‘guill-’ seems to appear in several items of sexual vocabulary: Cotgrave also defines ‘guillebardeau’ as a tool or instrument and a related word ‘guilledou’

<sup>164</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 31.

<sup>165</sup> See section 1.7.

<sup>166</sup> Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1578), p. 468; Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (1584), p. 467; *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by De Rocher, pp. 212-213.

<sup>167</sup> Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Aslip, 1611), <<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cotgrave/>> [accessed 18 Oct 2013], n.p.

connotated being a whore and 'aller la nuit dans des lieux suspects'<sup>168</sup> [to go around at night in suspect areas]. Duval is one of the rare other sources from this period to use the word 'guilloquet', also in a list of body parts.<sup>169</sup>

In Ferrand, these are further comic sexual terms. He attributes the loss of male pleasure to a 'guilloquet' ['wicket'] being too split and a 'guillenart' ['tunnel'] being too stretched, or 'la porte' ['the door'] to Alibec's inferno being too wide.<sup>170</sup> These gate and door images are not new to the Renaissance. Melissa Mohr states that the euphemism 'wicket', which is in Beecher's translation, for 'vagina' persists from Roman times to the Renaissance. Thomas Elyot's 1538 dictionary, for example, talks of 'cunnus' or 'a womans wyket'.<sup>171</sup> Literally speaking, as Mohr explains, 'A wicket is a small door or gate built into a larger one – a structural analog to the labia and vagina'.<sup>172</sup> Ferrand could be (mistakenly) interpreted as displaying a certain discomfort with directly naming body parts. However, as he is a physician, it is unlikely that he feels much embarrassment with such things. There is intimation that the extraordinary subject matter requires the language of farce. He also does not use in this quotation the flipside of euphemism – the clinical medical terminology. The language he does use is there for comic purposes, and inventive ones at that. Ferrand is playfully subverting the expectation of medical texts to be serious.

Ferrand has several other potentially shocking recipes, for treating male impotence and so on.<sup>173</sup> He comments on balms to treat women during sexual inactivity to prevent membranes or 'cobwebs' forming.<sup>174</sup> In his most shocking chapter XXIII from 1610, for example, he writes on female masturbation with comic sexual euphemism:

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<sup>168</sup> Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'Ancienne Langue Française et de tous ses Dialectes: du 9e au 15e Siècle*, <<http://0-www.classiques-garnier.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/numerique-bases/index.php?module=App&action=FrameMain>> [accessed 20 Apr 2015], n.p.

<sup>169</sup> Duval, *Des Hermaphrodits*, p. 129.

<sup>170</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, pp. 31-33.

<sup>171</sup> See Melissa Mohr. *Holy Sh\*t: A Brief History of Swearing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 18.

<sup>172</sup> Mohr, *Holy Sh\*t*, p. 18.

<sup>173</sup> Beecher, 'Erotic Love', p. 45.

<sup>174</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 32.

Il ne se faut donques estonner si plusieurs Dames trop douillettes & appréhensives des accidens de fortune durant l'absence des maris [...] se font frotter le lard, balayer, ramoner & épousseter souvent les replis du sacré tissu de Vénus, de peur que [...] les araignées n'y besogent. (pp. 196-197)

[It should not therefore be astonishing if several ladies, too delicate and apprehensive about the vicissitudes of fortune during the absence of their husbands [...] rub their own bacon and often sweep and dust the inner folds of the sacred tissue of Venus, for fear that [...] spiders start spinning webs there.]

Again, this euphemism using Venus is obviously comic rather than reverential in its reference to a goddess, and we have the common joining of the religious so theoretically sacred (even though pagan) with the sexual and potentially obscene. It is perhaps not surprising that Venus is not treated reverentially, but Ferrand acknowledges the convention that she should be – while undermining this convention. He also acknowledges the common use of Venus, whose name has connotations of the venereal, to be linked with sex. The euphemistic phrase 'sacré tissu de Vénus' is a joke with much potential to shock, since it associates the sacred with the profane and what is obviously not sacred.

Ferrand further jokes that lack of sex may cause spiders to live in the female body, so sweeping is necessary. This sexual imagery of, for example, 'cheminée' ['chimney'] sweeping<sup>175</sup> is used by Rabelais. Rabelais is influenced by the farce *Le Ramoneur de cheminées*<sup>176</sup> [*The Chimney-Sweep*] and refers to the 'chimney-sweeper of Astrologie' and *Maneries ramonandi fournellos*<sup>177</sup> [pseudo-Latin for 'How to Sweep Chimneys'], attributed to the Catholic theologian Johann Eck.<sup>178</sup> Rabelais uses the common technique of

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<sup>175</sup> See Brancher, 'Du poème', p. 36.

<sup>176</sup> *Le Ramoneur de cheminées*, in *Recueil de farces (1450-1550): Volume 4*, ed. by André Tissier (Geneva: Droz, 1989), pp. 111-166.

<sup>177</sup> Rabelais, 'How Pantagruel came to Paris, and of the choice Books of the Library of St. Victor', *Pantagruel* Second Book Chapter VII, trans. by Urquhart, pp. 187-193 (p. 193); Rabelais, 'Comment Pantagruel vint à Paris, et des beaux livres de la librairie de Saint-Victor' *Pantagruel* Chapitre VII, ed. by Pinganaud, pp. 243, 245-283.

<sup>178</sup> Barbera C. Bowen, *Enter Rabelais, Laughing* (Oklahoma: Vanderbilt University Press, 1998), p. 97.

playing with religious subject matter from this theologian to joke about sex. As E. Bruce Hayes points out, the humour of this *Ramoneur* farce ‘centres on the act of chimney sweeping as a lewd metaphor for sexual activity.’<sup>179</sup> A chimney sweep laments to his apprentice that his advanced age puts him at a disadvantage when opposed to younger competitors: ‘C’est que les apprentis tousjours les meilleurs maistres sont’ [‘It is the apprentices who are always the best masters’]. The sweep’s wife complains ‘Il ne ramonne plus, non plus qu’ung enfant nouveue ne’ [‘He no longer sweeps (or rams his rod), no better than a newborn’].<sup>180</sup> He, as Barbera C. Bowen highlights, ‘can no longer sweep a number of chimneys in one day, because his equipment is worn out’.<sup>181</sup> Ferrand therefore uses the Rabelaisian language of farce and comedy for his medical work.

‘Frotter le lard’ [‘rub the bacon’], used above by Ferrand, is a classic double-entendre which appears more than once in Rabelais. In *Gargantua*,<sup>182</sup> Grandgousier is said to ‘avait [...] bonne munition de jambons’<sup>183</sup> [be ‘well furnished with gammons of Bacon’].<sup>184</sup> He and his wife Gargamelle ‘faisaient eux deux souvent ensemble la bête à deux dos, joyeusement se frottant leur lard’<sup>185</sup> [‘did often times do the two backed beast together, joyfully rubbing & frotting their Bacon ‘gainst one another’] so she gets pregnant.<sup>186</sup> Similarly, in *Pantagruel*,<sup>187</sup> Panurge declares ‘qu’heureux sera celui à qui ferez cette grâce de celle-ci accoler, de la baiser et de frotter son lard avec elle’<sup>188</sup> [‘how happy shall that man be to whom you will grant the favour to embrace her, to kisse her, and to rub his bacon with hers?’].<sup>189</sup> This link made between meat and

<sup>179</sup> E. Bruce Hayes, *Rabelais’ Radical Farce: Late Medieval Comic Theatre and its Function in Rabelais* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), p. 31.

<sup>180</sup> Cited in Hayes, *Rabelais’ Radical Farce*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>181</sup> Bowen, *Enter Rabelais, Laughing*, p. 97.

<sup>182</sup> François Rabelais, *Gargantua* (Lyon: Juste, 1535), n.p.; Rabelais, ‘Comment Gargantua fut onze mois porté au ventre de sa mère’, *Gargantua* Chapitre III, ed. by Pinganaud, pp. 30-32; Rabelais, ‘How Gargantua was carried eleven months in his mothers belly’, *Gargantua* First Book Chapter III, trans. by Urquhart, pp. 30-32.

<sup>183</sup> Rabelais, *Gargantua*, trans. by Pinganaud, p. 30.

<sup>184</sup> Rabelais, *Gargantua*, trans. by Urquhart, p. 30.

<sup>185</sup> Rabelais, *Gargantua*, trans. by Pinganaud, p. 30.

<sup>186</sup> Rabelais, *Gargantua*, trans. by Urquhart, p. 30.

<sup>187</sup> Rabelais, ‘Comment Panurge fut amoureux d’une haute dame de Paris’, *Pantagruel* Chapitre XXI, ed. by Pinganaud, pp. 311-315; Rabelais, ‘How Panurge was in love with a Lady of Paris’, *Pantagruel* Second Book Chapter XXI, trans. by Urquhart, pp. 245-248.

<sup>188</sup> Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, ed. by Pinganaud, pp. 312-313.

<sup>189</sup> Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, ed. by Urquhart, p. 246.



sex, as discussed in chapter three, is a metaphorical field which often appears on the early modern stage.<sup>190</sup> However, this is an innuendo which goes too far and is too extreme for Thomas Eliot in his *Ortho-Epia Gallica*.<sup>191</sup> This text usually sticks very closely to Rabelais, but in this instance in the Parliament of Prattlers' conclusion it cuts any mention of bacon and replaces it with 'couché avec vous'<sup>192</sup> ['going to bed with you']. This cleaned up version is not comic. Even for this bawdy writer, there are limits when it comes to this phrase. This is not the case for Ferrand.

The remainder of this section will examine the 1623 revised edition, then called *De la maladie d'amour ou mélancholie érotique* [*Of the Malady of Love or Erotic Melancholy*], along with Edmund Chilmead's translation. (If a quotation referred to above is not mentioned in the following paragraphs, this is because Ferrand, followed by Chilmead, cuts it from the revised version). Ferrand's overall approach is altered in terms of the questions he asks: while the first treatise describes how magic can command love, the second asks whether it is possible or moral for the physician to use magic for diagnosis of love matters. The first offers concrete advice while the second asks theoretical questions about forbidden matters.<sup>193</sup> Beecher and Ciavolella suggest that he is now aiming his writing solely at physicians rather than courtiers and lovers.<sup>194</sup> While the first version asks whether love needs jealousy, whether love could continue after marriage, and if women are more passionate than men, the second questions where the bodily seat of love is, the age at which it manifests, how to diagnose it, and if it is hereditary.<sup>195</sup> The tone of the revision moves away from the sexual humour of the original. In this move Ferrand is supported by his translator Chilmead.

When he revises his writing, Ferrand discards the chapter on attracting ladies and adapts his advice in the chapter (XXXIV) to married couples having sexual difficulties. He trims and adjusts this chapter which previously contained the significant comic sexual euphemisms and the devil metaphor, in

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<sup>190</sup> See section 5.6.

<sup>191</sup> Thomas Eliot, *Ortho-Epia Gallica* (London: de Wolfe, 1593).

<sup>192</sup> Eliot, *Ortho-Epia Gallica*, p. 160.

<sup>193</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 32.

<sup>194</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 36.

<sup>195</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 36.

order to comply with more rigid decorum.<sup>196</sup> This chapter is given the new title of ‘Les remedes pour guerir les mariez de la melancholie erotique’<sup>197</sup> [‘Remedies to Cure Love Melancholy in Married Persons’].<sup>198</sup> It still discusses the inability to experience sexual pleasure in marriage, but is much more straightforward and lacks humour. Phrases like ‘ce passage’<sup>199</sup> [which becomes ‘natural passage destin’d for the use of Copulation’ in Chilmead’s English]<sup>200</sup> are used for sexual body parts rather than comic euphemism. (I examine the extracts of Ferrand and Chilmead in which these phrases are used further below). Not all scandalous material, therefore, is deleted altogether, though the language it is discussed in is heavily modified. The suggestion is that Ferrand thought the censors were objecting more to his jokes than anything else. This new chapter is much more what one might expect from a doctor and no longer has the section on Rustico’s devil influenced by Boccaccio, instead referring to Aristotle and Pliny in a manner not employed in the 1610 chapter.<sup>201</sup> There are the lines, for example, ‘Aristote recommande l’arreste-navire, remore [...] Lequel texte Pline a traduit’<sup>202</sup> [‘Aristotle commends for this use the fish called *Remora* [... also] translated by Pliny’].<sup>203</sup> He is flagging up learning, not naughtiness. Venus’ tissue is mentioned, but the humour is toned right down, in contrast to the 1610 quotations above:

Juno affin d’empescher que son mary Jupiter n’affolast plus de l’Amour de Latone, Yo, Calixto, & autres siennes concubines au rapport d’Homere emprunta de Venus son tissu ou ceinture, en

<sup>196</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 31.

<sup>197</sup> Ferrand, *De la maladie* (1623), p. 210. See also Ferrand, *De la maladie*, ed. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 335.

<sup>198</sup> Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Chilmead (1640), sig.C3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>199</sup> Ferrand, *De la maladie* (1623), p. 219. See also Ferrand, *De la maladie*, ed. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 341.

<sup>200</sup> Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Chilmead (1640), p. 295.

<sup>201</sup> Ferrand, *De la maladie* (1623), pp. 210-221; Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Chilmead (1640), pp. 281-297; Ferrand, *De la maladie*, ed. by Beecher and Ciavolella, pp. 335-342.

<sup>202</sup> Ferrand, *De la maladie* (1623), p. 216. See also Ferrand, *De la maladie*, ed. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 339.

<sup>203</sup> This is the same in both the 1640 and 1645 versions. Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Chilmead (1640), p. 290; Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Chilmead (1645), p. 290. See also Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 339;

laquelle estoient entrelassez tous les Cupidons, graces, persuasions, appasts & allechemens requis entre les mariés.<sup>204</sup>

[*Homer* feigns that *Juno*, for to restrain her Husband *Jupiter* from falling any more in Love with *Latona*, *Jo*, *Calisto*, and other his Concubines, borrowed *Venus* Girdle [...] Wherein were wrought all the desires, graces, persuasions, baits, and allurements required to the confirmation of love betwixt man and wife.]<sup>205</sup>

Chilmead's English censors some of the 1623 French, not mentioning the 'tissue'. This is one of the instances in which Chilmead shies away from comic sexual euphemism even more than Ferrand does in his revisions (another example will be discussed below).

Venus is also brought up in the revision in an anecdote about the goddess having revenge. This is not linked to sexual euphemism; it is worth quoting at length to contrast with the 1610 references to Venus quoted above. Similarly, this same passage is also the only mention of the devil in the revised version:

Je me contenteray de vous dire que plusieurs Theologiens & Medecins croyent vray-semblablement que le diable autheur de toute meschanceté, peut rafroidir les Amours licites, & allumer les illicites: premierement, rendant l'homme impuissant envers sa femme par application de choses naturelles, lesquelles il peut oster lors qu'il s'approche de quelque autre femme: en second lieu, en causant riottes, ou jalousies entre les mariez: encores par quelque maladie, comme on dict que Medée rendit par ses charmes, & sorceries l'haleine des femmes Lemniennes puantes, à fin que leurs maris les haïssent. Davantage troublant l'imagination, faisant paroistre les maris ou femmes legitimes laides, & les autres belles, ou bien causant quelque occulte & secrete antipathie. Car nous lisons dans B. Egnatius

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<sup>204</sup> Ferrand, *De la maladie* (1623), p. 212. See also Ferrand, *De la maladie*, ed. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 336.

<sup>205</sup> Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Chilmead (1640), pp. 283-284. This is the same in the 1645 version. Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Chilmead (1645), pp. 283-284. See also Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 337.

que certaine Valasque chambriere Bohemienne, par ses charmes porta les femmes de Boheme à tuer dans une nuit tous les hommes du lieu. Finalement en alterant par quelque estrange maniere les parties genitales des hommes ou des femmes, dont les hommes sont rendus impuissants, & quelques femmes semblables aux chiennes, au rapport de Saxon le Grammairien. Mais il se faut garder le rapporter à magie, charme & sorcelerie les effects de causes naturelles par ignorance, comme jadis les Scythes au tesmoignage de nostre Hippocrate, rapportoient leur impuissance causée par les paracontese des veines, arteres, ou nerfs joignans les oreilles, à la vengeance de la Déesse Venus Uranie, pour ce que leurs ancestres avoient ruiné & volé son temple en Ascalon, ville fameuse de la Palestine. On prendra aussi garde que le femme ne soit [... non perforée et frappe d'incapité],<sup>206</sup> telle que fut jadis Cornelia mere des Gracches: & en ce cas on ouvrira ce passage avec le rasoir, selon la doctrine d'Albucasis, Aëce, Jean Vuyet, Paré, & autres Autheurs authentiques, comme j'ay fait faire par deux fois en la ville de Castelnaudary à deux jeunes filles: quoy que ce mal puisse arriver aux femmes veufves, ou bien aux mariées durant la longue absence de leurs maris, ainsi que Jean Liebaut assure avoir experimenté en deux siennes voisines. Et je me doute que Namysia, & Phaëtusa, que nostra divin vieillard dict avoir esté changées en hommes, avoient ceste maladie; laquelle est plus rare que son opposite, qui rafroidit souvent les Amours des mariez. Je ne vous parleray à present des remedes de ces deux maladies, que vous lirez dans Avicenne, Aëce, Æginete, & tous les modernes qui ont traité de la sterilité, ou des maladies des femmes. Arnaud de Villanoua en son Traicté des receptes contre le diable & ses sorceleries, ordonne d'apporter une plume remplie d'argent vif, du corail, armoise, ou bien de la squille, ou oignon marin. Jean de Vigo fait arouser le maison de celui qui est charmé, du sang d'un chien noir, quelques autres vieux resveurs sont manger de la chair de la pie, ou pivert: ou bien oignent le corps de l'ensorcelé avec le fiel du corbeau meslangé avec la poudre

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<sup>206</sup> Translated from Greek in Ferrand, *De la maladie*, ed. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 341.

de seseli. Mais je croy que les charmes & sorceries sont plustost guerrissables par prieres, jeusnes & oraisons, que non pas par les remedes physiques.<sup>207</sup>

[And it is the opinion also of many both Divines and Physicians that it is probable, that the Devil, who is the Author of all Mischief, hath power to quench lawful Loves, and to kindle new and unlawful desires in men: as first, by making the Husband Impotent towards his own wife, by the application of some natural things that may have that virtue; which he can at his pleasure remove again, when the same man comes to meddle with any other woman. Secondly, by raising dissentions, and Jealousies betwixt them. Thirdly by causing some loathsome disease or other, in either of the Parties: as it is reported of *Medea*, who by the power of her Charms is said to have made all the Lemnian women to have stinking breaths, in so much that their Husbands could not endure to come near them. Fourthly, by troubling their Imagination, and making either the Husband, or the wife seem misshapen and deformed to the other's eye, and all other both Men and Women to appear fair and beautiful. Or lastly, by working some secret Antipathy betwixt them. For it is reported by *Egnatius*, that one *Valasca*, a Bohemian wench, by her charms caused the Women of *Bohemia* to kill all the men in that place where she was, all in one night. Or else the Devil may do this, by working some strange Alteration in the Temperature of the Genital parts either of the Man, or of the Woman: for by this means some men have become Impotent, and unapt for Copulation: and on the contrary, some Women have been as salt as Bitches: as *Saxo Grammaticus* reports. But we must take heed that we do not Ignorantly impute these effects to Magic, Charms, or Sorcery, when as indeed they are produced by Natural causes: As did of old the Scythians, who, having made themselves Impotent, by cutting the veins, Arteries, or Nerves that join close to the Ears, notwithstanding thought that it was a punishment inflicted upon them, by the Goddess *Venus Urania*, in revenge of the injury their Ancestors had done unto her, in pulling down

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<sup>207</sup> Ferrand, *De la maladie* (1623), pp. 218-221. See also Ferrand, *De la maladie*, ed. by Beecher and Ciavolella, pp. 340-342.

and rifling a Temple that was dedicated to her Honour in *Ascalon*, a famous city of *Palestine*. We must also be sure that the Woman be not [unperforated ...] & [incapacitated ...],<sup>208</sup> wanting the natural passage destin'd for the use of Copulation; as was *Cornelia*, the mother of the *Gracchi*: And in this case, the passage must be opened with an instrument, according to the directions of *Albucasi*, *Aetius*, *Joan Wierus*, *Pareus*, & other Authentic Authors: Which thing I myself also once caused to be done in the City of *Castelnaudary* to two young maids of the same place. Notwithstanding this defect is incident both to Widows, and to Married women also, if their Husbands chance to be a long time absent from them: as *Jean Liebault* affirms that himself hath known it happen to two women that were neighbours of his. And I am much inclined to suspect, that *Namysia*, & *Phaethusa*, two women whom *Hippocrates* reports to have been Metamorphosed into Men, were only troubled with this disease: which is indeed more rarely, and seldomer seen in Women, than the other contrary disease to this is, which many times proves the Occasion of quenching Loves desires in Married persons. But I shall not here set down the manner of curing these two opposite diseases: but shall rather refer you to *Avicen*, *Aetius*, *Aegineta*, and all modern writers that have spoken anything of Barrenness, or of the diseases of Women. *Arnaldus de Villa Nova*, in his tract that he hath written concerning the Remedies that must be used against the Devil, and his sorceries, counsels us to cause the party affected to carry about him a quill of Quicksilver, or else a piece of Coral, the herb Motherwort, or Squills, *Johannes de Vigo* adviseth to besprinkle the house of the party that is enchanted or bewitched, with the blood of a black dog. Some other will have him eat the flesh of a Magpie, or Wood-pecker: or else to anoint the body of the Enchanted person with the gall of a Raven, tempered with the powder of Hartwort. But my opinion shall ever be, that Enchantments and Sorceries, are to

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<sup>208</sup> Translated from Greek in Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 340.

be cured rather by Prayer and Fasting, and not by Physical or Natural remedies.]<sup>209</sup>

This demonstrates the differences in the revised version when it comes to discussing both Venus and the devil. Both Ferrand and Chilmead leave some words in Greek, outlined above in footnotes, regarding the perforation of women. This implies that a non-vernacular language will provide a veil for obscene subjects. Ferrand here also uses the phrase ‘ce passage’ I mentioned above, which is translated by Chilmead into a longer phrase regarding a woman’s ‘natural passage’. This is, for once, a more detailed version (provided by Chilmead compared to Ferrand) of one phrase which is potentially ruder, but is still not a comic euphemism. This extract refers to many noteworthy common beliefs about the devil, such as the ability to alter genitalia. However, unlike the 1610 edition, it does not use a direct sexual euphemism where the devil represents a specific body part. If you know the *Decameron’s* story, you might detect an allusion to its link between the devil and sex. However, this link here is now much more general and does not equate the devil with male and Hell with female genitalia. The new tone Ferrand employs is much less humorous and playful, and more full of warning – though this warning is actually to beware doctors who believe this about the devil, rather than against the devil himself. There is a visible influence of the tribunal here, as Ferrand is not only more polite but also more religious. All this contributes to a (temporary) resetting of standards. Chilmead continues to promote this politeness since, as shall be demonstrated below, he almost always censors sexual taboos as much as, if not more than, Ferrand’s revision.

The sale of Ferrand’s first treatise was forbidden and all known copies were ordered to be recalled and burnt. The accusations made against him and his works include using words of sacred scripture profanely and lasciviously (a common Renaissance offence), defending judiciary astrologers, teaching tools of abomination, and supplying corrupting

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<sup>209</sup> Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Chilmead (1640), pp. 293-297. This is the same in 1645. Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Chilmead (1645), pp. 293-297. See also Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, pp. 338, 340-341.

pharmaceutical preparations. The two most important accusations from my perspective here are 'donne les remèdes damnables pour se faire aimer des dames' ['furnishing recipes for compelling love from the ladies'], and referring to some of the most ever reprehensible and lecherous books and inventions regarding the sorcery of love.<sup>210</sup> Such books would include Boccaccio's. Ferrand's comic uses of sacred scripture include his twist on the term 'vale', discussed above. This is another possible influence from the *Decameron*, which uses religious language for its comedy. Beecher argues that the tribunal documents do not hold back: the first is in Latin and outlines how Ferrand is 'sacrilegious and pernicious in the extreme', openly discussing occult, astrological, and magical matters, while the second is in French and highlights that this treatise does not follow the norms of morality and decency.<sup>211</sup> According to Beecher, 'For the literal-minded churchmen of Toulouse [...] there was apparently no case to be made for the work on the basis of its arguments, its rhetorical distinctions, and its routine warnings against philters, magic, and all superstitious practices'.<sup>212</sup> To discuss something and bring attention to it while warning against it is demonstrative of the dual nature of euphemism itself. It is a technique used to allow for comic double-entendres, used by Brantôme and Boccaccio's storyteller who claims only to talk of putting the devil back in Hell to prevent such behaviour while concluding the exact opposite. Ultimately, it is highly important that comic sexual euphemism in these texts is not innocent; rather, it contributes to offence and scandal. Some readers may find it funny and enjoyable, but this only stokes the fire for censors. Comic sexual vocabulary, therefore, was not the only issue for censors: perceived heterodoxy was more of a concern than lewdness. Nevertheless, such language was still a major issue as demonstrated by Ferrand's own alterations.

Beecher and Ciavolella argue that 'On the matter of offending decency, Ferrand had exercised no caution at all'.<sup>213</sup> This is a questionable statement, and is important for the nature of euphemism. In many circumstances, euphemisms are evidence of some caution being exercised. In Ferrand's

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<sup>210</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, pp. 27-28.

<sup>211</sup> Beecher, 'Erotic Love', p. 44.

<sup>212</sup> Beecher, 'Erotic Love', p. 44.

<sup>213</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 32.



case, however, his comic language most likely draws more attention to the taboo subjects than simply and plainly naming the body parts would. Here, therefore, euphemism is actually the less cautious option so it may be that Beecher and Ciavolella are fairly accurate. Would his work have been more or less shocking if he had directly named body parts using literal terms? Euphemism can be very explicit even when not using literal names. His use of provocative vocabulary, and the reaction it received, suggests that explicitly and literally naming might have been the more reassuring option for censors of the 1610 edition. Some explicit nouns, such as 'vit', are taboo at this time. Yet, as I have demonstrated, there are also euphemisms which refer to body parts entirely acceptably. Ferrand chooses not to do the latter, but to play with language provocatively.

These comments from Beecher and Ciavolella regarding Ferrand's lack of caution apply to his first edition. Ferrand's revised chapter can certainly be described as more cautious than the original. He does not tone down everything in the second treatise – some controversial theological issues Ferrand, argues Beecher, 'neither concedes nor offers a more cogent defence' of.<sup>214</sup> Yet sexual topics are given more consideration during revision. He is therefore more discreet and goes into less detail on these matters.<sup>215</sup> Whether he intended it or not, this second treatise would have passed the ecclesiastical standards for offending public decency with more ease than the first did due to the lack of comic sexual euphemism (although his continued assertion that doctors had more right to treat erotomania than the Church would still not have been well received).<sup>216</sup> The trouble the first edition caused is probably the reason it is the second, more discreet, edition from 1623 that is translated into English in 1640 and 1645. The 1623 text is also the basis for Beecher and Ciavolella producing an entirely new translation in full and editing the 1623 French.<sup>217</sup>

When it comes to Chilmead's translation of this text, Beecher and Ciavolella believe that its very existence is proof of Ferrand's popularity – presumably of the revised version, since the scandalous 1610 edition is not

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<sup>214</sup> Beecher, 'Erotic Love', p. 46.

<sup>215</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 32.

<sup>216</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 32.

<sup>217</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 206.

translated.<sup>218</sup> (This is not to say the earlier version was not popular in France at the time). This popularity in England is proved again when Chilmead publishes his second edition in 1645. Beecher and Ciavolella argue that English readers had an appetite for treatises on love melancholy which ‘could not be entirely satisfied by native writers’.<sup>219</sup> This is undoubtedly true, but what English medical texts do not share is the appetite for comic sexual language of their equivalents in French (as discussed at the beginning of this chapter). Hence, Chilmead translates the tamer and less controversial edition and on top of this, as I shall demonstrate, tames it down even further in places.

Chilmead does not, in the introductory sections of his 1640 and 1645 translations, indicate a target audience. In this respect he contrasts to Robert Wittie, translator of James Primrose’s *Popular Errors*, whom I discussed earlier in this chapter. Wittie declares that:

I here present [...] a literal interpretation of [popular errors ...], as have been already observed by my learned Author, wherein he hath so elegantly discussed them, that he hath deservedly gained much credit among the Learned, although indeed the book doth more concern the vulgar and unlearned, whose Errors it does detect.<sup>220</sup>

This demonstrates that the translator’s target audience differed from the original author’s – Wittie, as mentioned above, felt the text should be aimed at the unlearned. He elaborates on the target audience he has in mind, specifying a female readership:

My desire of profiting those that cannot understand the Latin, first prompted me to this Work; as for others, I refer them to the original. But my especial aim was to do an acceptable service for my country’s Gentlewomen, to whom this subject will be exceeding useful and

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<sup>218</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 15.

<sup>219</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 15.

<sup>220</sup> James Primrose, *Popular Errours or the Errours of the people in matter of Physick*, trans. by Robert Wittie (London: Wilson and Bourne, 1651), sig. A3<sup>r</sup>.

delectable; and therefore I have endeavoured to be as plain as the Nature thereof, and my task would permit.<sup>221</sup>

Wittie, therefore, takes pains to discuss why he translates this text and for whom. The fact that Chilmead does not do this suggests it was much less of an issue for him.

The temptation here is to assume that because he does not outline a differing opinion to Ferrand, he must therefore agree with him on most counts. This is indeed the case most of the time, but there is one occasion where Chilmead's translation differs significantly from Ferrand's original. In the 1623 revised edition, Ferrand extraordinarily makes an addition of a comic sexual euphemism, in a section which is useful to quote at length:

Les femmes qui ont voulu escrire ce qu'elles sçavoient en Medecine, comme Cleopatre soeur d'Arsenoës, nous ont donné plusieurs remedes à ces fins, & si le mal a ja terminé en manie ou fureur uterine, ceste bonne Dame (qui veut estre appellée la Roine des Medecines, comme elle parle en son prologue) enseigne sa fille Theodota de mettre dans ledit leiu *radiculam panno involutam*, & ce qui est merueilleux, elle dit qu'on trouvera dans ce drapeau, quand on le retirera de la porcherie de Venus, de petits vermisseaux. J'advertiray en cest endroit le lecteur, que je desire parler le plus modestement qu'il m'est possible, mais je veux bien aussi garder les preceptes de la Medecine, que ne s'accordent pas souventefois avec l'honesteté des paroles: *amo verecundiam, sed magis libertatum loquendi*, disoit Ciceron, quoy qu'au reste je ne sois point de la secte de Zenon: *cui placuit suo quamque; rem nomine appellare, sic enim disserit nihile elle obscœnum, nihil turpe dictum*: & qu'il semble d'abord que les paroles ne peuvent estre deshonestes, puis que les parties signifées

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<sup>221</sup> Primrose, *Popular Errors*, trans. by Wittie, n.p. Friends of Wittie also contribute to the opening sections and the matter of translating for vulgar readers, one of whom, Richard Roper, writes him a poem: 'He that at first so do quaintly did thee pen, | Spake to the Learned, not to Vulgar men: | Now in their proper Idiom they may see | The Pop'lar Errors which in Physick be | So Thou'rt the people's guide' (n.p.). Another of Wittie's friends, John Burnsell, states that 'I praise thy smooth Translation, that doth teach | The Vulgar Errors in a Vulgar speech' (sig.B').

ne le sont pas, puisque naturels, utiles, & nécessaires, desquelles nous faisons la dissection & demonstration en public, & apprenons leur substance, nombre, figure, situation, connexion, action & usage.<sup>222</sup>

[There are also diverse other Remedies and Prescriptions, in case of this disease, which have been left us by women, that have had some proportion of skill in Physic: such as was *Cleopatra*, sister to *Arsnoë*, who in her Prologue to her book desires to be called, *The Queen of Physicians*. Her advice to her daughter *Theodota* is, that if the disease be already grown to Madness, or Uterine Fury, that then she should *intra portulam Veneris radiculam immittere panno involutam: dicitq (mirum dictum) super pannum hunc exinde repetitum Vermicolus quosaam invenirs*. And here I would desire the Reader to take notice by the way, that my desire is to speak as modestly as possibly I can: yet must I withall observe the Precepts and Terms of Physic, which cannot so well withstand oftentimes with the Civility and modesty of Language. *Amo Verecundiam; (saith Tully,) sed magis amo libertatum loquendi*. I love Modesty: but yet I love the Liberty of Speech more. And yet I am not one of *Zeno's* sect *cui placuit suo quamq rem nomine appellare*; who would have everything called by its own name: and maintained, that nothing was Obscene, nor unfit for the chastest ears to hear. And indeed it may seem to be something a disputable business, whether or no the names are obscene and dishonest, when as the Parts themselves that are signified by them, are not so, but are Natural, useful, and necessary: and of which also we oftentimes make public dissections and demonstrations, and discourse openly of their substance, number, figure, situation, connection, Actions, and use.]<sup>223</sup>

The key phrase here is 'la porcherie de Venus' ['the pigsty of Venus']. This is a comic sexual euphemism used in the 1610 version (as quoted above), but this specific instance seems to be specially added to the otherwise toned down 1623 edition. It is part of chapter XXXII (which is the same in the 1645

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<sup>222</sup> Ferrand, *De la maladie* (1623), pp. 203-204. See also Ferrand, *De la maladie*, ed. by Beecher and Ciavolella, pp. 329-330.

<sup>223</sup> Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Chilmead (1640), pp. 270-272. See also Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, pp. 331-332.

edition),<sup>224</sup> ‘Remedes pharmaceutiques pour le preservation de l’Amour ou de la Melanch. Erotique’<sup>225</sup> [‘Medicinal Remedies for the Prevention of Love, or Erotic Melancholy’].<sup>226</sup> This is not one of the chapters that are most likely to have been targeted by the tribunal, so perhaps Ferrand felt he had a better chance of getting away with it here. He is aware that this type of rude vocabulary is exactly what the tribunal ordered him to jettison, quickly adding a justification that he tries to be as modest as possible but that we should also have freedom of speech. He is discussing the theory behind different levels of acceptability regarding sexual humour, to defend his use of such language, which he stubbornly refuses to abandon completely. Ferrand draws upon ancient writers (the ideas of whom I discussed in chapter two) to support his point here, although, as Beecher and Ciavolella point out, ‘The beginning of Ferrand’s translation, “I like modesty, but much more freedom in speech,” is quite the opposite of Cicero’s words.’<sup>227</sup> He therefore twists Cicero’s teachings to suit his purposes and point to an authority supposedly supporting him. He is struggling to, on the one hand, cohere to the tribunal’s wishes, and, on the other hand, rebel with the use of comic sexual euphemism (supported by excuses as to how this is acceptable). He also, in this extract, uses the same phrase as Montaigne, ‘I love Modesty’ and has a similar attitude to Montaigne when it comes to sexual topics being ‘Natural, useful, and necessary’ (see section 2.4).<sup>228</sup> He additionally demonstrates the same belief as Joubert, that sexual body parts are discussed and seen at public dissections (see the beginning of this chapter). Ferrand therefore draws on similar ideas to those of his French contemporaries, as well as the ancients, to support his argument that he should be allowed to use this scandalous language.

Crucially, Chilmead deliberately leaves out the line about the pigsty of Venus. This is part of what Beecher and Ciavolella call his tendency to render ‘certain passages into Latin because he found them too frank for his

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<sup>224</sup> Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Chilmead (1645), pp. 270-272.

<sup>225</sup> Ferrand, *De la maladie* (1623), p. 197. See also Ferrand, *De la maladie*, ed. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 326.

<sup>226</sup> Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Chilmead (1640), p. 264. See also Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 329.

<sup>227</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 560.

<sup>228</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais, Livre III*, ed. by V.L. Saulnier and Pierre Villey (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965), III.5.

readership'.<sup>229</sup> This phrase is therefore hidden behind the veil of Latin, which keeps at bay those readers who would not be able to translate. Beecher and Ciavolella translate the section left out by Chilmead as 'Cleopatra taught her daughter to "take a root, wrap it in a rag" and put it into the said place, and that wonder of wonders, when it is withdrawn from the pigsty of Venus, she would find it in this clout, little worms'.<sup>230</sup> This redaction of Chilmead's (which is the same in his 1645 translation),<sup>231</sup> as well as the fact that it is the 1623 toned down edition he translates, contribute to the overall trend I have found regarding English medical texts – they tend to be, in comparison to their French counterparts, politer and not humorous when it comes to sexual topics. The absence of the type of language I pursue may be as significant in Chilmead's text as a presence. In contrast to the 1610 text, which contributes to my analysis because it contains specific uses of comic sexual language, the 1623 and 1640 versions are noteworthy for their lack of references to such language. This lack of references can still contribute to my evaluations of euphemism. The implications of this language not occurring in revised versions are that the tribunal held beliefs which were also played out by English medical texts (including Chilmead's translation): namely, that, far from being an appropriate environment in which to joke about sexual taboos, the world of medicine should discuss the body with solemn decorum. This solemnity is what we expect from doctors in the twenty-first century, so in this way English medical texts are closer than French to modern perceptions of what medicine should be.

Before all the revisions, Ferrand's work shared many features with that of Joubert. The parallels between Joubert and Ferrand are not a coincidence – in fact, Joubert provides medical precedence for Ferrand. Ferrand even directly refers to Joubert in some places in the first edition, such as after his description of the vale of sighs and misery, mentioning some of the advice in *Erreurs Populaires* (p. 193, 178) (not, however, regarding the comic and sexual). By not hiding behind more obscure language, Ferrand and Joubert

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<sup>229</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 205. This is one of the reasons Beecher and Ciavolella's edition does not use Chilmead's translation.

<sup>230</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, pp. 331-332.

<sup>231</sup> Ferrand, *Erotique Melancholy*, trans. by Chilmead (1645), pp. 272-272.

can also be said to follow ancient medical writers, for, as Beecher and Ciavolella describe, 'There was a certain reticence on the part of the early physicians to speak plainly of erotic melancholy'.<sup>232</sup> What makes these two out of the ordinary for this trend in their time is the humour.

Ferrand shares with Joubert many of the reasons to put such scandalous language into print. They both failed to be sufficiently euphemistic for their critics. Their motivations doubtlessly included amusing themselves and their readers (and audiences in the anatomy theatre), to be popular and notorious and sell books, to represent language which doctors use among themselves, and to disseminate medical knowledge. With both doctors, it is remarkable they got away with it to this extent, and did not get into even more trouble than they did.

To conclude this chapter, I will address how it has answered the questions outlined at the beginning. Throughout this chapter, the type of sexual humour which appears in medical writing has been examined along with the reasons comedy is used for such issues. As with Puttenham, Castiglione, Montaigne, and many other writers, there is an issue of female readership. As for Wilson, it is vital to consider to whom you are speaking.<sup>233</sup> Scandal obliged both Joubert and Ferrand to revise editions – scandal caused in large part by their comic sexual language, which shares characteristics with more obviously literary texts. Some might argue their content may have been obscene in itself, as shown by the way Joubert uses (or at least argued he used) euphemism but people were still upset by his writings. Yet, Ferrand's humour seems to have been even more offensive than his subject matter – which is not to say that his material is inoffensive to the religious censor! The work of both doctors highlights the importance of context, meaning some topics which are obscene when displayed to mixed genders are not obscene in a male-controlled situation. The use of the vernacular is seen as highly dangerous, facilitating escape from context. This aligns with linguistic theory on positive politeness and has similarities to jokes in Castiglione's work with the transference of the potentially obscene from male-dominated contexts to mixed company. Context and demarcation of who can and cannot read such

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<sup>232</sup> Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, ed. and trans. by Beecher and Ciavolella, p. 41.

<sup>233</sup> See my second chapter section 2.4.

material is more complicated than the question of male as opposed to female readers. If Joubert's original level of euphemism is unacceptable, he is at least partly aware of the issues surrounding obscenity and offence, even if he does not meet the required standards for some of his peers.

Ferrand and Joubert share many of the same issues regarding revision due to failed euphemism. That is, if the aim was to hide the offensive, the euphemisms failed. If the aim was to be provocative, they were successful – if anything, too successful, hence the scandal and censorship. There are differences between the two writers; Ferrand, for example, offends the Church over matters of profession in a way Joubert does not. However, it is crucial that their shared humour in dealing with sexual matters contributed both to scandals and revisions which are a vital indication of changing standards for sexual vocabulary. Other than the similarities they share, these two doctors are exceptional in their use of comedy. My findings here demonstrate the exciting phenomenon of what was expected in terms of vocabulary shifting rapidly at this time, and these doctors are caught up in these shifts in the French language. Ferrand's and Joubert's works reflect a connection to the theatrical elements found in the three major types of text under consideration in this thesis, where sexual humour requires performance and audiences. Ultimately, these doctors' texts and the reaction they receive are key for what is varyingly seen as unacceptable when it comes to the shocking trends of comic sexual euphemism in the medical and non-medical worlds of Renaissance France.



## Chapter Five: Theatre

This chapter examines eight English and two French plays: the anonymous *Wit of a Woman* (1604), Thomas Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (c.1613) and *Your Five Gallants* (c.1607), Edward Sharpham's *Cupid's Whirligig* (1607), John Marston's *Parasitaster, or The Fawn* (1606) and *The Dutch Courtesan* (1604), Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) and, to a lesser extent, *Epicene* (c.1609), and Pierre de Troterel's *Les Corrivaux* (1612) and *Gillette* (1620).<sup>1</sup> These plays are important texts for the issue of comic sexual language and euphemism in the Renaissance. They demonstrate the genre of performing sexual comedy which courtly and medical environments seek to emulate.

The poets and playwrights Thomas Middleton (b.1580-1627) and Ben Jonson (1572-1637) need little introduction. Apart from William Shakespeare, Middleton is thought to be the only writer in the English Renaissance whose plays are still examples of significant texts from all four theatrical genres (comedy, tragedy, history, tragicomedy). *Your Five Gallants* was first performed by the Children of the Chapel at the Blackfriars. *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* was first performed at the Swan Theatre in the spring of 1613 by Lady Elizabeth's company and printed in 1630. Middleton most likely worked on some of Shakespeare's writings; in contrast, he alienated himself from Jonson, as he worked with Thomas Dekker, with whom Jonson had a personal dispute. Middleton did not collect his own complete works. Also, as

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, quotations throughout this chapter and in the Conclusion, using act, scene, and line numbers or signature mark, are taken from the following editions (the chapters make clear which play is being discussed). Anon., *Wit of a Woman*, ed. by Walter Wilson Greg (Oxford: Hard Press, 2012); Thomas Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 907-962; Thomas Middleton, *Your Five Gallants*, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 594-636; Edward Sharpham, *Cupid's Whirligig* (London: Alde, 1607); John Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by David A. Blostein (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978); John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by David Crane (London: A & C Black, 1997); Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. by David Bevington (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), pp. 961-1065; Ben Jonson, *Epicene*, in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. by David Bevington (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), pp. 775-860; Pierre Troterel, *Les Corrivaux*, in *Ancien Théâtre François*, ed. by M. Viollet le Duc (Paris: n.pub., 1856; repr. Liechtenstein: Kraus, 1972), pp. 227-296; Pierre Troterel, *Gillette, comédie facétieuse* (Rouen: Du Petit Val, 1620). Throughout this chapter, where no reference is given for a translation, it is my own unless otherwise stated.

he worked for various companies, no single company was in a position to publish his complete works posthumously. His work was finally collected in 1840. An anonymous epigram from 1640, as Gary Taylor points out, said 'Facetious *Middleton*, thy witty Muse Hath pleased all, that books or men peruse'.<sup>2</sup> Chapter three (section 3.1) demonstrated how 'facetious' can be an important word in English, as well as the French equivalents<sup>3</sup> for jests and wit. According to the *OED*, this word has had connotations of polished style since 1542, when Erasmus states that Cicero was inferior in wit and facetiousness to Caelius, and of witty, humorous, and perhaps inappropriate pleasantry since 1594.<sup>4</sup> Middleton is therefore regarded as witty by early modern commenters, perhaps in a manner that is polished and carefully thought out. Jonson is, of course, also highly clever in his wit, which can be darker in its humour than that of Middleton. David Bevington explains how Jonson's plays emerge: *Bartholomew Fair* was first performed in 1614 at the Hope Theatre by the Lady Elizabeth's Servants and first printed in Jonson's second folio 1631-40. *Epicene* was first performed late 1609 or early 1610 by the Children of Her Majesty's Revels at the Whitefriars Theatre and printed in 1620.<sup>5</sup> According to Ian Donaldson, both Middleton and Jonson were inspired by James' accession to the throne.<sup>6</sup> These two playwrights share a tendency to use comic sexual euphemism, although Middleton arguably takes this language to the furthest extremes.

The other known English playwrights examined in this chapter, John Marston and Edward Sharpham, are less famous. Marston, baptised in 1576, died in 1634. His father was a member of the Middle Temple and Marston himself was specially admitted in 1592. Some of his texts, such as *The Malcontent*, bear the marks of Italian influences, as J.R. Mulryne and

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<sup>2</sup> Gary Taylor, 'Middleton, Thomas (*bp.* 1580, *d.* 1627)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/article/18682>> [accessed 27 Feb 2013], n.p.

<sup>3</sup> *Facetieux* and *faceties*, for example.

<sup>4</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://0-www.oed.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/Entry/76238?rskey=z2y8WN&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 27 Sept 2013], n.p.

<sup>5</sup> Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, Bevington (gen. ed.), p. 962, p. 969, p. 1064; Jonson, *Epicene*, Bevington (gen. ed.), p. 859.

<sup>6</sup> Ian Donaldson, 'Jonson, Benjamin (1572–1637)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/article/15116>> [accessed 20 May 2013], n.p.

Margaret Shewing explore.<sup>7</sup> Both Marston's and Sharpham's work has evidence of a legal background. *Parasitaster, or The Fawn* was written in 1606 and is thought to satirise James. It was performed by the Children of the Queen's Revels at the Blackfriars. In approximately 1604 Marston produced *The Dutch Courtesan* for the Children of the Blackfriars, although it was not printed until 1607. Albert H. Tricomi argues that he has a history of causing offence on the stage.<sup>8</sup> He was Jonson's rival and collaborator, with whom he had a strained relationship. He parted company from Jonson in approximately 1605, putting criticism of him in print. In approximately 1609 he became a priest like his father-in-law, prompting Jonson to comment 'Marston wrote his father in law's preachings, and that his father-in-law his comedies'. We do not know much of his actions after 1616; an exception to this is his lobby to have his name removed from the title page of the 1633 collection of his plays, for unknown reasons. Marston was influenced in his writing, as James Knowles outlines, by Aretino and Michel de Montaigne.<sup>9</sup> This chapter will explore some of the the impact Montaigne had upon this playwright.

Edward Sharpham was baptised 1576 in Devon and died of the plague in 1608. He attended a Devon grammar school and was admitted to the Middle Temple in 1594, an influence which shines through in his play. He is called a rogue by Jonson but it is possible he also wrote a poem recommending Jonson's *Volpone*. Sharpham's *Cupid's Whirligig* was written in 1607 for the Whitefriars theatre and the Children of the King's Revels company. It is thought he was influenced by Marston. His writing seems to poke fun at James and Scots in general. As David Kathman states, this play was reprinted in 1611, 1616, and 1630, as well as for a second time in 1607

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<sup>7</sup> J.R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewing (eds), *Theatre of the English and Italian Renaissance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), p. 221.

<sup>8</sup> Albert H. Tricomi, 'John Marston's Manuscripts', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 43 (1980), 87-102 (p. 87).

<sup>9</sup> James Knowles, 'Marston, John (bap. 1576, d. 1634)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/article/18164?docPos=1>> [accessed 20 July 2014], n.p.

to include a dedication to another Devonian, Robert Hayman.<sup>10</sup> The fairly high number of editions implies it was successful in bookshops.

Pierre de Troterel, sieur D'Aves, was born c.1586 in Normandy. He is one of France's most important playwrights of this period, but relatively little is known of his life and works, which were small in number but varied in style. He was what Donald Perret calls a 'provincial dramatist', publishing in Rouen.<sup>11</sup> His *comédies facétieuses* use farce for satirical commentary and are notable for their lively language. *Les Corrivaux* was printed in 1612. *Gillette* was written in the summer of 1619 and printed in 1620.<sup>12</sup> *Gillette* is a country comedy where the eponymous shepherdess turned chambermaid is pursued by different men including a *gentilhomme* [country gentleman] and a *laquais* [lackey or bumpkin]. After much scandal, she is married to the bumpkin. *Les Corrivaux* is a longer story and an urban comedy. It is the more sexually obscene of the two. It also features a young woman, Clorette, who is courted by multiple men, including both masters and servants. At the very start of the comedy, one of these men complains that another 'prendre son plaisir avecques ma Clorette' (1.1) [takes his pleasure with my Clorette]. The tone of this play is summed up by Clorette's words when she is pretending to be prudish: 'Ha! Cela n'est pas beau, mais deshonneste et sale' (2.2) [That isn't pretty, but obscene and filthy]. Some characters are shocked by such filthy language, stating 'Helas! mon Dieu, qui sont les demons infernaux, | Les causeurs impudents, ou bien impudiques, | Qui vous ont rapporté ces choses tant iniques?' (2.2) [Alas! my God, who are the infernal demons, the impudent or immodest characters who have told you such wicked things?]. Other characters, as I shall demonstrate, revel in this language, which seems to be everywhere, hence this statement: 'Car je sçay qu'il va me longuement retarder, | Et de sales propos me poindre et brocarder' (2.2) [I know that he will keep me for long, and vex and mock me with filthy speech]. Again, following scandal, the resolution to the play is a marriage, but not necessarily

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<sup>10</sup> David Kathman, 'Sharpham, Edward (*bap.* 1576, *d.* 1608)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/article/25239>> [accessed 23 July 2014], n.p.

<sup>11</sup> Donald Perret, *Old Comedy in the French Renaissance 1576-1620* (Geneva: Droz, 1992), pp. 149-150.

<sup>12</sup> The public theatre in France was less developed than in England, with only one purpose-built theatre in Paris (the Hôtel de Bourgogne) at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

a happy one.<sup>13</sup> The characters in these works, as Perret states, are defined by 'their sexual obsessions and their explicitly loose language'.<sup>14</sup> These are comedies in which both men and women fail to behave with sexual discretion.<sup>15</sup>

These comedies are described by Brian Jeffery as 'parodies of the genre', due to their tendency to 'take for granted' comedy conventions.<sup>16</sup> For Perret, they are counter-genres or antidotes to conventional forms which 'pervert' tradition because 'their transgressions shock moral and stylistic decorum'.<sup>17</sup> This moral decorum, according to Perret, partly comes from 'Cicero's stress on moral decency' and is discussed by Erasmus.<sup>18</sup> Characters defy the behaviour socially expected of them, including sexual behaviour. Troterel is, therefore, influenced by some of the ancient and early modern thinkers I discussed in my early chapters, even if it is to undermine their arguments.

Troterel also disobeys the imperative from Horace that literature should both please and instruct.<sup>19</sup> The Prologue to *Les Corrivaux* states that 'Car sçachez que ces vers ne sont faits que pour rire | Et non pas pour aux mœurs autrement vous instruire' [Know that these verses are only written to make you laugh, and not otherwise to teach you morals.] As Perret argues, this 'derides the traditional promise of a virtuous lesson'.<sup>20</sup> The Prologue continues to confirm its focus is not a virtuous one by referring mockingly to procreation and chastity: 'Apprenant de bonne heure à vivre chastement | A tous vos beaux enfants [...] | Quand bien vous en auriez quatre ou cinq cens ou mille, | Et voire mesme encor tout plain vostre maison' [Teaching all your beautiful children from an early age to live chastely [...] when you would even have four or five hundred thousand, and even your whole house full]. This is described

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<sup>13</sup> Critical editions of these plays are not forthcoming, creating a reliance on older printed forms. These tend to have irregular pagination, as Perret has observed (even if they have been reprinted), and only provide acts and scenes with no line numbers. Consequently, this thesis can also only refer to acts and scenes for these French comedies. Perret, *Old Comedy*, p. 125.

<sup>14</sup> Perret, *Old Comedy*, p. 136.

<sup>15</sup> Perret, *Old Comedy*, pp. 14-15, 123-125, 127, 129, 136.

<sup>16</sup> Brian Jeffery, *French Renaissance Comedy 1552-1630* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 50.

<sup>17</sup> Perret, *Old Comedy*, pp. 21, 124.

<sup>18</sup> Perret, *Old Comedy*, p. 136.

<sup>19</sup> Horace, *Ars Poetica*, ed. and trans. by John Watson Logan (London: Nabu Press, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Perret, *Old Comedy*, p. 134.

by Perret as being in 'gargantuan proportions' and providing a comic license straightaway which frees characters later on from 'any sexual restraint'.<sup>21</sup> Troterel is tongue-in-cheek when it comes to the preoccupation with moral decorum his contemporaries had.<sup>22</sup> A similar attitude to chastity is taken in *Gillette*. Gillette feigns chastity before revealing her true self.

Moy pour ne le mécontenter  
J'ay fait de la sainte nitouche,  
Parlant d'honneur à pleine bouche,  
Et tenant en mon cœur caché  
Ce plaisir qu'il nomme peché,  
Qui ne l'est que qu'en tant qu'on l'évante,  
Et que par sottise on s'en vante. (4.1)

[To not disappoint him, I acted out the false prude, speaking freely of honour and holding hidden in my heart this pleasure he calls sin, but which isn't unless one speaks of it and foolishly brags about it.]

This is not the virtuous spouting which might be seen as the requirement of a young woman. The thin veneer of chastity overlaying the sexual naughtiness underneath mirrors the way comic sexual euphemism behaves. Troterel, therefore, defies conventions with both literary style and sexual behaviour. My focus will not be the specificity of French stylistic decorum and how Troterel plays with this, but it is worthy of note that he is a subversive writer. I will instead examine the sexual humour he uses which strike the same note as his English counterparts.

A brief explanation of the significance of Cheapside is required here. Cheapside is an important place for Middleton and other playwrights in this chapter. Sharpham mentions Cheapside (sig.F3<sup>r</sup>), a place associated with lewd sexual conduct and language, which is projected onto people of low status. As in chapter three, power plays a role in the way high status audiences and playwrights project onto their social inferiors in this way. *The Dutch Courtesan* also briefly discusses Cheapside (2.3.5, 5.3.70). It is said of

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<sup>21</sup> Perret, *Old Comedy*, p. 134.

<sup>22</sup> Perret, *Old Comedy*, p. 135.

one woman 'I have been inward with her, and so has many more' (3.3.2-3), with clear innuendo, and her husband 'comes forward in the world well' (3.3.6-7), also with innuendo referring to successful male climax. She 'is a proper woman, that she is. Well, she has been a proper a woman as any in Cheap' (3.3.7-9). One meaning of this is, as David Crane puts it, she 'is properly a woman (i.e. well capable of sex)'.<sup>23</sup> This certainly fits with Middleton's bawdy depiction of Cheapside.

Cheapside is therefore an important setting for writers of English comedy and the type of language they use. It has significance for comic sexual euphemism since the examples considered in this thesis of using this place are from educated men writing about what can be defined as the 'other' to them – what is depicted as a lustful place full of vice and the lower classes. It becomes a means for them to exercise sexual content and language which would be less palatable if presented as happening elsewhere. It is, of course, more acceptable from their perspective to portray certain lower types of social status, such as prostitutes, in this context than in others. The court is also often portrayed as a sexually-charged environment in the eyes of contemporaneous writers, so it is not as if such high status locations are free from sexual language. However, at court these depictions are often made more subtly and under a veil, even if this veil can be seen through. Cheapside can be portrayed more unsubtly and blatantly. This is why Middleton uses the phrase 'a chaste maid in Cheapside', akin to the proverbial flying pig (although his play does indeed feature this rare chaste maid).

Of course, I am not the first scholar to examine these texts. However, no one has considered these plays in quite the same way I do. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, for example, highlight innuendoes and bawdiness, but tend not to go further in their analysis, such as examining their implications, and certainly do not see them in the light of metaphorical fields. It is rare too to juxtapose English and French, and plays with courtly and medical texts. Finally, my application of linguistic theory, be it ancient, early modern from Erasmus and Montaigne, or modern, will allow me to shed new light on comic sexual euphemism and metaphorical fields. Important questions for this

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<sup>23</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 64.

chapter include what comic sexual euphemism and language is used in these plays? What similarities are shared between this language and that analysed in chapters three and four? How does linguistic theory apply to these texts? What is the role of gender in this humour?

As with many or all of the texts in this thesis, a major question is: if you are going to have such clearly sexual content, why go through the motions of euphemising? With all transparent (and, indeed, opaque) euphemism, why use a euphemism at all? In comedic drama as well as other types of text, as this thesis has shown, the answer is for comic effect. The humour lies in the fact that it is an uncomfortable subject to discuss. This is also the reason it is talked of in the context of comedy, which provides more lee-way for such topics. At other times, it is for the sake of politeness. In this way it can be either funnier or politer to discuss, for example, sexual disease rather than the sex itself, even if the sex itself is what is implicitly being talked about. So, part of the answer to this question is the fact that there is not one type of euphemising, but rather levels of obviousness. The shifts allowed by this fact permit many kinds of comic and dramatic play.

### 5.1 Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* and Metaphorical Fields

Following an introduction to Middleton's use of sexual humour, I shall present the metaphorical fields and sexual humour he uses in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* using Tables 2-4.<sup>24</sup> These metaphorical fields appear in more than this one play, but it is nonetheless a very good example so will allow me to set them out. This analysis will then be followed by examination of the other plays. Other chapters in this thesis are arranged into sections by text. In this chapter, however, many of the same types of jokes occur across different plays, so the best way to bring out the implications of this is to examine them by similar humour and metaphorical fields shared across plays. To be a metaphorical field, the comparison must be more than a single instance. Rather, almost a whole world must be created where sex is likened to, or euphemised with, something else repeatedly. This occurs many times in

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 907-962. Unless otherwise stated, all *Chaste Maid* quotations come from this edition.



*Chaste Maid*, sometimes jumping quickly between such comparisons. Sex is compared to language, meat and other food, business and money, games, dancing and music, and clothing in this play. Even the names of the characters carry extra sexual meaning, making them euphemisms of sorts – while on the surface they are names of people, underneath they reveal important comic sexual comment on their personality and actions.

Middleton's writing style is heavily loaded with comic sexual euphemism, sexual puns, bawdy innuendoes, double-entendres, and some of the earliest examples of this type of sexual slang. 'Sheep-biting' (2.2.99), for example, is slang for 'whoring'. As Taylor and Lavagnino point out, *Chaste Maid* is a play that was seen as too bawdy to be performed after the Jacobean period until the twentieth century.<sup>25</sup> The play is an excellent example of Middleton's tendency to be bawdier than Shakespeare. The London it presents is, as Taylor puts it, 'jubilantly oversexed'.<sup>26</sup> This even extends to the use of names (of characters and plays). The play's title, as well as suggesting an impossibility, also puns on 'chaste' as in 'sexually pure' and 'chased', as Moll is by suitors and her parents. The title reveals Middleton's enjoyment of language straightaway. There is also a possible suggestion of, as highlighted by Taylor and Lavagnino, 'prostitutes "chased" behind carts as a punishment'.<sup>27</sup> This practice is referred to in the play with talk of 'riding' (2.1.105-106) (both horses and whores) (3.3.108), suggesting both sexual acts and being carted through the streets.<sup>28</sup> *Your Five Gallants* also puns on 'riding' as a sexual act (2.1.31). As Taylor and Lavagnino state, 'Middleton's references to spurs often imply sexual goading'.<sup>29</sup> The metaphor of riding is particularly appropriate as it suggests a kind of public display of the body, especially when riding through the streets, and these plays promise exactly such a display of bodies in Cheapside.

As well as revelling in playing with the language of names (which Table 3 will outline), Middleton also delights in exploring what Bevington calls

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<sup>25</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 911.

<sup>26</sup> Taylor, 'Middleton', n.p.

<sup>27</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 912.

<sup>28</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 923.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Middleton, *Your Five Gallants*, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 594-636. Unless otherwise stated, *Your Five Gallants* quotations are from this edition.

'unorthodox sexual situations'.<sup>30</sup> As Bevington highlights, for example, Lady Kix, who cannot conceive a child and is given medicine that supposedly contains Sir Walter's means to potency, 'must take it "abed", either in her bed itself or in their coach [... This is at a time when] coaches were notorious as places for assignations'.<sup>31</sup> This is only one example of unusual sexual arrangements – willing cuckoldry and the separation of spouses to prevent excessive fertility are other examples. Taylor and Lavagnino argue that 'The absence from the play of those city comedy favourites, prostitutes, bawds, and usurers, alerts us to the fact that it locates its marketed sex not in the streets but within marriage'.<sup>32</sup> In some respects this is unusual, since sexual humour often surrounds scandalous sex outside of rather than within marriage. Middleton demonstrates how there is humour to be found in different sexual contexts not just those which society marginalises. Scandal can be found within marriage in Middleton's world. This marginalisation is hinted at without featuring directly, since character names remind us of prostitution even if prostitutes are not physically present.

There are different layers of meaning when it comes to the play's use of words. Taylor and Lavagnino point out how

The many sexual puns are a sort of counterfeiting – a respectable word turns out to have a filthy meaning, like a gilded tuppence [...] the play associates money with sexuality: money, sex, and language are weirdly interchangeable. Sir Walter transmits English to his [Welsh] mistress through intercourse, like a venereal disease, and also turns her into gold (1.1.105-107); [...] a man is to "utter all" on his wedding night (5.4.48) – "utter" could mean to speak, to ejaculate sexually, to sell in the market, or to pass counterfeit money.<sup>33</sup>

We therefore have multiple levels at which a word can be interpreted. Jonson draws many of the same comparisons in *Bartholomew Fair*, where the market

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. by David Bevington (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), pp.1453-1513 (p. 1456).

<sup>31</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Bevington (gen. ed.), p. 1457.

<sup>32</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 908.

<sup>33</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 908.

and sex are closely intertwined. The metaphorical field of money/business and sex serves to equate women with objects to purchase as at the market.

As I shall show, the connection of language with sex is also a significant factor. Tim, another character in *Chaste Maid*, makes an announcement in Latin that ‘*vero homunculus ego sum natura simul et arte baccalaureus, lecto profecto non paratus*’ [truly, I am a little man by nature and at the same time a bachelor by training, really not prepared for the marriage bed’] (4.1.118-121). It is worthy of note that he uses Latin to belittle his own sexuality, as it can act as a sort of linguistic euphemism, both explicit but restrictive for reception to only those who speak Latin. As Tim claims he is a ‘homunculus’, which is a ‘fully-formed proto-human present in sperm’, Taylor and Lavagnino believe his ‘strained Latin’ actually ‘suggests sexuality at the very moment he is insisting that he is not prepared for bed’.<sup>34</sup> This demonstrates how complex, double-edged, and paradoxical the meaning of a statement can be. The sexual play with language is almost unrelenting in *Chaste Maid*.<sup>35</sup>

Table 2: Metaphorical Fields in *A Chaste Maid for Cheapside*

| METAPHORICAL FIELDS FOR SEX | EXAMPLES FROM <i>CHASTE MAID</i>   |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Language                    | Sir Walter says to his Welsh mistress, “Twas strange that I should lie with thee so often   To leave thee without English’ (1.1.105-106), so language is transmitted through sex like a disease. <sup>36</sup> |
|                             | Touchwood Junior should ‘utter all’ (5.4.48) on his wedding night, referring to selling in the market, using counterfeit money, and ejaculation. <sup>37</sup>   |
| Meat and other food         | Women are ‘ewe-mutton’ (1.1.144) – like in <i>Bartholomew Fair</i> , scandalous sex is likened to meat forbidden during Lent.  |

<sup>34</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 942.

<sup>35</sup> Other Middleton plays, such as *No Wit Like A Woman’s*, *The Phoenix*, and *The Roaring Girl* also use euphemism and contribute to the sexual content of English literature from this period. However, there is not room here for analysis of these. I shall consider the use of Latin sexual vocabulary further in section 5.8 on the term *mentula*.

<sup>36</sup> See section 5.7 for a similar instance in *Epicene*.

<sup>37</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 908.

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|--------------------|--|
|                    | <p>'Mutton' is a euphemism for 'whore' (2.1.82) eg. 'There's nothing tastes so sweet as your Welsh mutton' (4.1.160).</p> <p>Touchwood Senior says of Lady Kix when she desires a fertile man: 'I hold my life she's in deep passion   For the imprisonment of veal and mutton   Now kept in garrets; weeps for some calf's head now.   Methinks her husband's head might serve with bacon' (2.1.121-124). He mistakenly believes she longs for meat forbidden due to Lent, not realising she wants a different kind of flesh,<sup>38</sup> since she and her husband can't conceive.</p> <p>'other trades thrive – butchers by selling flesh,   Poulters by vending conies' (4.1.235-236), where 'poulters' (dealers in poultry)<sup>39</sup> can mean 'pimps' and 'conies' can mean 'rabbits' or 'whores'.</p> <p>Allwit's wife 'longs for nothing but pickled cucumbers' (1.2.7) where phallic cucumbers are a euphemism for Sir Walter's penis.</p> <p>'Besides drinkings abroad, that's never reckoned;   This gear will not hold out' (2.1.16-17), where the cost of drinking or dining out suggests sexual encounters and 'gear' means 'business' and is also a euphemism for genitalia.<sup>40</sup></p> |
| Business and money | <p>A 'bargain' (2.1.58) is a euphemism for sexual encounter.</p> <p>'ware i' the shop' (2.1.100) is a euphemism for sexually available women, thus presenting women as merchandise for sale as part of consumerism.<sup>41</sup></p> <p>Touchwood Senior's comment on the potency of his penis 'I have such a fatal finger' ends with 'in such business' (2.1.59).</p> <p>See the language row above for notes on 'utter all' and the above meat and other food for notes on 'gear'.</p>   |
| Games              | <p>'The game begins already' (1.2.79) referring to the game of having sex with another man's wife.</p> <p>Touchwood Senior, when talking of giving up sex, says 'There I give o'er the set, throw down the cards,   And dare not take them up' (2.1.41-42).</p>  |

<sup>38</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 923.

<sup>39</sup> Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson (eds), *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 1124.

<sup>40</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 921.

<sup>41</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 922. This also occurs in *Your Five Gallants* with puns on 'wholesale' and the selling of holes or maidenheads (5.1.103).

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
|                   | <p>He 'ne'er played yet   Under a bastard' (2.1.55-56), meaning he never had sex without producing a bastard child – this image is also from card-playing as having a bastard is a phrase for having a card which scores against one<sup>42</sup> and 'Bastard' is a card in rummy and other games which counts against its holder.<sup>43</sup></p> <p>'For who'er games, the box is sure a winner' (5.1.171) where 'box' is a euphemism for female genitalia.</p> <p>'Gamesters' (5.1.151) is a euphemism for 'lechers'.</p> <p>'Shuttle-cock' is a euphemism for 'whores' (3.2.202), since shuttle-cocks bounce between players.<sup>44</sup></p> |
| Dancing and music | <p>Maudline says her dance teacher 'missed me not a night;   I was kept at it [...] he took pleasure in my company' (1.1.16-18) and she was 'lightsome' (a euphemism for sexually easy) and 'made quick' (a euphemism for pregnant) (1.1.10).</p> <p>She asks her daughter if she has 'played over all your old lessons o' the virginals' (which is an instrument but also suggests a virgin or chaste maid) and says she needs to be quickened herself (1.1.2-5). Given the dance teacher did not miss a night with her, it seems unlikely she remained virginal for long.</p>  |
| Clothing          | <p>A 'smock' is a euphemism for a loose woman (3.3.69) – section 5.12 will elaborate on similar uses of this word in <i>Your Five Gallants</i>. This term is also used in <i>Parasitaster, or The Fawn</i> (2.1.313, 5.1.342).</p>   |

Table 2 demonstrates in schematic form how this play exemplifies metaphorical fields to be studied throughout this chapter. Before moving on to the next section, however, I will home in on a few key points raised by Table 2. The connotations of Touchwood Junior uttering all fits with the early modern belief that silence is linked to chastity or a lack of sexual activity (at least for women), so their opposites are also linked.<sup>45</sup> 'Mutton' is a term often used for older women with much sexual experience. Sexually available women are regularly talked of like meat in Jacobean humour, as Taylor and Lavagnino argue.<sup>46</sup> The meat prohibition during Lent is talked of with bawdy

<sup>42</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 921.

<sup>43</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Bevington (gen. ed.), p. 1469.

<sup>44</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 936.

<sup>45</sup> See the Conclusion section 6.1.

<sup>46</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 916.

innuendo, highlighting carnal lusts in different forms (2.2.76). This is all within the metaphorical field of sex as meat. The use of mutton imagery for women and sex is in keeping with a definition provided by Randle Cotgrave of 'fornicateur': 'a fornicator, wencher, smell-smocke, *mutton-munger*, whore-hunter' (my emphasis).<sup>47</sup> Cotgrave also follows the trend of comparing sex and clothing in this definition, with 'smell-smocke'. He delights here in providing synonyms that stray from the French but that are comic, using the imagery of meat, clothing, and hunting. The metaphorical field of sex and money is brought to the forefront in this play by the way relationships between characters and their personal lives are dominated by, and sex is commodified through, money. Bevington believes that London's commerce is eroticised.<sup>48</sup> Also, according to Taylor and Lavagnino, deceptive words – of which euphemism is a category – are symbolically linked with counterfeit coins.<sup>49</sup> *Chaste Maid*, for example, has the lines 'Has no attorney's clerk been here o'late | And changed his half-crown piece his mother sent him, | Or rather cozened you with a gilded twopence, | To bring the word in fashion?' (1.1.30-33). The frequency of sexual jokes and euphemism is itself a counterfeiting since, like a fake coin (as Taylor and Lavagnino consider), an innocent word has a lewd meaning underneath.<sup>50</sup>

In Middleton's case, even more than Jonson's, money, meat, and language are some of the types of extended metaphors Kerry L. Plaff, Raymond W. Gibbs, and Michael D. Johnson discuss.<sup>51</sup> Within these fields, euphemisms which cohere to the symbolism with similar language will be, in accordance with the study's findings, more acceptable to the audience. Middleton and the other playwrights allow readers to accept and participate in the whole world created by metaphorical fields. When Sir Walter talks of sex as if it could be sexually transmitted, this is a perfect example of how language and sex come together – the English language itself is a sign of scandalous sex. It is within the metaphorical field of language and sex.

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<sup>47</sup> Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Aslip, 1611), <<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cotgrave/>> [accessed 18 Oct 2013], n.p.

<sup>48</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Bevington (gen. ed.), p. 1457.

<sup>49</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 908.

<sup>50</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 908.

<sup>51</sup> Kerry L. Plaff, Raymond W. Gibbs and Michael D. Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 18 (1997), 59-83.

Middleton's love of experimenting with language is also shown when he includes other languages, such as Welsh and Latin. As Taylor and Lavagnino show, 'Language [in the play] is topsy-turvy: learned, cerebral Latin is translated into Anglo-Saxon monosyllables belonging to the lower body: *parentibus* becomes "a pair of boots"; *fertur* becomes "farts"' (1.1.71, 4.1.114-116).<sup>52</sup> In comic sexual euphemism, language communicates sexual topics but can also be used to represent sex itself.<sup>53</sup>

If, in the world of the play, language and speaking are linked to being obscene, this strengthens the early modern belief that silence (in women, at least) is a sign of chastity, highlighted by Taylor and Lavagnino.<sup>54</sup> While Touchwood Junior should 'utter all at [his wedding] night' (5.4.48), Moll is 'silent with delight' (5.4.49) – although her silence is clearly expressive, informing us of her delight, an issue to which I will return. It is a joke, since she is speaking and therefore not silent. In contrast to such 'silence', the play opens with women talking frankly – yet using euphemism – about men and sex. This is mainly in the metaphorical field of 'dancing', which was slang for 'sex' (1.1.13). This shows how metaphorical fields can symbolically interconnect: in one way we have language itself being linked to sex and in another we have language being used to talk of dancing representing sex.

Indeed, Middleton sometimes mixes metaphorical fields. Immediately before Touchwood Senior announces that he will give up sex in terms of throwing down his playing cards, he talks of doing anything 'Anything, wench, but what may beget beggars' (2.1.40). This makes links to begging for forbidden food during Lent. Taylor and Lavagnino state that 'His sexual "fast" is counterpoised against Lenten food fasting in the play, the former being about as rigorous as the latter'.<sup>55</sup> Here Middleton jumps very quickly from one metaphor to another, expecting his audience to keep up. Then sex is again linked to playing a game with the line quoted above referring to never playing under a bastard.

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<sup>52</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 909.

<sup>53</sup> See section 5.7 on language and sex.

<sup>54</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 910.

<sup>55</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 921.

The metaphorical field of sex and business/money is, as Taylor and Lavagnino put it, 'casting women as shop goods in a consumer world'.<sup>56</sup> This association of sex and business is also present in *Your Five Gallants*. According to Taylor and Lavagnino, 'Throughout the play [*Your Five Gallants*] money that goes from hand to hand is likened to women who do the same'.<sup>57</sup> These women are called 'movables' (1.1.124), for their ability to be moved. Bevington argues that, for *Chaste Maid*, 'Money dominates most of the human relationships in the London of this play', and sex is commodified through money.<sup>58</sup> This is why the metaphorical field of money and sex is so important. To talk of sex in terms of business and games or gambling suggests that it is all about the exchange of money.

Middleton seems to be applying Erasmus' recommendation of copiousness in language but to a topic that Erasmus would disapprove of. Middleton most likely knew Erasmus' writings well and they could well have been a potential influence or even a source of sorts for Middleton. Erasmus' influential advice on speeches can be legitimately applied to drama, which involves similar public speaking. Middleton may be, in Erasmus' opinion, an example of when *copia* is attempted by the unskilled, who Erasmus believes may be excessively talkative yet say very little, 'leaving out many things that certainly need to be said'.<sup>59</sup> Erasmus would arguably say that by constantly repeating sexual language, Middleton fails to say anything new. From Erasmus' perspective, this would make Middleton one of 'those who strive for [...] *copia* foolishly'.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps, paradoxically, by using copious language the end result for Middleton is the same as silence (or so Erasmus would arguably believe) – if you are not adding any new information, the end result is the same as not saying anything at all. Unless we are trained in the principles of *copia*, states Erasmus, 'we shall often find ourselves either confused, or crude, or even silent'.<sup>61</sup> He would find Middleton crude. For Middleton, excessiveness is the joke.

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<sup>56</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 922.

<sup>57</sup> Middleton, *Your Five Gallants*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 611.

<sup>58</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Bevington (gen. ed.), p. 1457.

<sup>59</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *On Copia of Words and Ideas*, ed. and trans. by Donald B. King and H. David Rix (Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2012), p. 15.

<sup>60</sup> Erasmus, *On Copia*, p. 15.

<sup>61</sup> Erasmus, *On Copia*, p. 17.



The study carried out by Plaff, Gibbs, and Johnson<sup>62</sup> has many implications for examining these plays, particularly *Chaste Maid*. Their findings suggest we are more comfortable with a euphemism if it is in keeping with an appropriate metaphorical field. Tables 2-4 in this section provide information in the light of Plaff, Gibbs, and Johnson's study on *Chaste Maid's* character names with innuendo, metaphorical fields, and sexual imagery. This study is important for my research in more ways than one, but for *Chaste Maid* the idea of euphemisms, including X-phemism, within wider comparisons is particularly important. They demonstrate that people pay attention to the literal meaning of euphemistic phrases, so are in keeping with Erasmus' point in *De Copia*.<sup>63</sup> The implication is that Erasmus' argument is just as applicable today as it was then and that the findings of Plaff, Gibbs, and Johnson could also be applied to Renaissance language. Their examination of how likely people are to accept certain euphemisms in different contexts can be applied to my metaphorical fields. Most of these metaphorical fields and euphemisms are also employed by Middleton in his other plays, such as *Your Five Gallants*.

Table 3: Sexual Meanings of Character Names in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*

| NAMES OF <i>CHASTE MAID</i> CHARACTERS WITH INHERENT INNUENDO | POTENTIAL SEXUAL MEANINGS  |
|---|--|
| Touchwood Senior  | <p>Connotations of touching wood or an erection, reinforced by his statement 'I have such a fatal finger' (2.1.59) where finger is a euphemism for phallus (the lament being that he is excessively fertile).</p> <p>'Touchwood' also appears as innuendo when, on the surface, referring to tinder which sets alight a musket's touchhole.<sup>64</sup></p> |
| Touchwood Junior  | See above.   |
| Sir Oliver Kix  | An oxymoron since 'Oliver' means 'fruitful' but 'Kix' is a type of plant with a dry hollow stalk. Sir Kix is therefore dried-up and lacking in sap. 'Kix'  |

<sup>62</sup> Plaff, Gibbs and Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism'. See my Introduction section 1.7 for an outline of this.

<sup>63</sup> Erasmus, *On Copia*, ed. and trans. by King and Rix, p. 18.

<sup>64</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 920.

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
|                               | also refers to 'cicuta', an aphrodisiac and treatment for sexual maturation. <sup>65</sup> Sir Oliver Kix has failed sexually as he cannot produce children.   |
| Mistress Underman             | Suggests sexual easiness.  |
| Maudline                      | Connotations of prostitution as recalls Mary Magdalene. <sup>66</sup>  |
| Moll                          | A traditional name for a prostitute, also used in <i>The Roaring Girl</i> . These connotations fit with the interpretation of the title being about prostitutes behind carts.  |
| Sir Walter Whorehound         | 'Whorehound' implies he is a hunter of whores.   |
|                               | 'Walter' was pronounced 'water' so suggests semen as male sexuality was expressed in terms of liquids. <sup>67</sup><br>He 'has got   Nine children by one water that he useth:   It never misses' (2.1.180).<br>'There comes a maid with all speed to take water' from him (it is suggested) to fertilise the Kixes (4.3.21).<br>Water imagery was typically used in this period to convey desire, lust, passion, gluttony, and an interest in money. <sup>68</sup> |
|                               | 'Walter' was also related to 'wallow', with connotations of coarse enjoyment of the sensual. <sup>69</sup>   |
|                               | 'Water horehound' is also a plant which grows best in a moist environment. <sup>70</sup> The phrase 'stinking water horse-tail' for the plant 'Chara' was coined by John Ray. <sup>71</sup>  |
| Allwit                        | 'Wittol' is a willing cuckold (1.2.1), which Allwit is: a near-anagram and ironic inversion of syllables from all wit.   |
| Two Men, with meat in baskets | Possible reference to their genitalia, linking meat and sex in a way that is repeated throughout the play.   |

The references to Mary Magdalene have the potential to be very offensive, if seen to have the byproduct of insulting the Virgin Mary, who, of

<sup>65</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 923.

<sup>66</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 929.

<sup>67</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 909.

<sup>68</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 909.

<sup>69</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 914.

<sup>70</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 914.

<sup>71</sup> John Ray, *A Collection of English Proverbs* (Cambridge: Hayes, 1678); Claire Preston, 'Impertinent, Cloudy, and Darksome: Scientific Neologism'. University of Exeter: Centre for Early Modern Studies, 27 March 2013.

course, shared the same name.<sup>72</sup> The most outrageous name, however, has to be Sir Walter Whorehound. 'Whorehound' is so obvious (as a chaser of whores) as to hardly need explanation, but 'Walter' would also have been significant in its sexual connotations. His name suggests that even in plays like this there are degrees of explicitness. Taylor and Lavagnino comment how 'Whorehound's name specifies his character; yet meaning, transparent to the audience, is opaque to the characters, an impression of realism paid for in counterfeit coin [...] In the Renaissance, water imagery conventionally attended concupiscible passions – lust, gluttony, acquisitiveness'.<sup>73</sup> His very name, then, like Allwit's, is a euphemism – 'Walter' perhaps more so than 'Whorehound' – that is intended to be transparent to reveal his character. Like *Chaste Maid*, the names of *Your Five Gallants* carry sexual meaning. Crophin's name, for example, means, as Taylor and Lavagnino explain, 'one of the refuse sort of herrings [...] suggesting that, in contrast with Mistress Onset, he is sexually feeble'.<sup>74</sup> According to Taylor and Lavagnino, Mistress Cleveland's name has 'the sexual innuendo "place of cleaving, cleft"'.<sup>75</sup> In these plays, therefore, almost any name deserves a second look in order to reveal sexual humour and character traits.

As another example of Middleton's copiousness, *Chaste Maid* has a very high number of euphemisms for genitalia and their associations. Sexual topics are also referred to more overtly at times in this play, such as 'Now's out of work, he falls to making dildoes' (1.2.57) – though 'out of work' is also a euphemism for sexually inactive. The 'dildo' threatens men and risks making them unemployed. Similarly, there is vocabulary in the play like 'tumbler' (1.2.71) or 'knocker' as in copulator (2.2.25), 'knowing' meaning to have sex with (2.1.6), and 'making' meaning mating (1.2.70). Some of these examples are more straightforwardly overt than euphemisms. Of course, a euphemism can also be overt. Some euphemisms for genitalia fit naturally into metaphorical fields, as shown above. However, not all of them do. Genitals are compared to so many different things that it is almost as if they are a

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<sup>72</sup> Using biblical material in an obscene way can be likened to writers like Rabelais who similarly distort religious content. This could be the subject of other research with that scope.

<sup>73</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), pp. 908-909. Counterfeit money and its symbolism within the play will be discussed below.

<sup>74</sup> Middleton, *Your Five Gallants*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 598.

<sup>75</sup> Middleton, *Your Five Gallants*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 615.

metaphorical field in themselves, the standard to which everything else is likened. It is as if there is no limit to the number of metaphors, and everything is implicitly compared to them. Here are some examples.

Table 4: Euphemisms for Genitalia in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*

| EUPHEMISMS FOR GENITALIA IN <i>CHASTE MAID</i>  | MEANINGS  |
|---|---|
| 'hare-mad' (3.2.192)  | Mad for pubic hair  |
| 'blood' (1.1.146)   | Sexual desire   |
| 'stomach' (1.1.151)   | Sexual appetite   |
| 'I'll stop that gap where'er I find it open' (1.2.106)  | Female genitalia  |
| 'case' (3.3.30)   | Female genitalia  |
| 'the poor wenches curse me   To the pit' (2.1.56-57)  | Female genitalia  |
| 'thou shalt not miss so fair a mark' (2.1.131)  | Target or/of female genitalia   |
| 'a wise man for love will seek every hole' (4.4.10-11)  | Female genitalia  |
| 'Can any woman have a greater cut?' (2.1.138)   | Female genitalia <sup>76</sup>  |
| Touchwood Junior's talk of rings and fingers when he gets his wedding ring fitted (1.1.178-199) | Male and female genitalia, sexual acts  |
| 'Little countess!' (2.2.26) and 'we may lodge a countess!' (5.1.165)                            | Female genitalia or 'cunt'  |
| 'I ne'er stand long' (2.3.32)   | Erection. <sup>77</sup>   |
| 'I'm not given to standing' (3.3.115)   | Erection  |
| 'red hair' (1.1.42)   | Sexual looseness  |
| 'Goose Fair [...] at Bow', 'dish of birds' (1.1.85-86)  | 'Goose' can mean 'whore', 'Bow' can mean genitalia, 'dish of birds' can mean serving of loose women |
| 'mountains' (1.1.136)   | Mountings, a pun also made in <i>Your Five Gallants</i> (2.4.296-298, 1.1.36)                       |
| 'two brave drums and a standard bearer' (3.2.183)   | Male genitalia  |
| 'measure' (1.1.187)   | Size of genitalia   |

<sup>76</sup> This is also used in this way in *Twelfth Night*, which there is unfortunately not room to venture into here; William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, ed. by J.M. Lothian and T.W. Craik (London: Methuen, 1985): 2.5.85.

<sup>77</sup> This joke is also found in Harington (section 3.3); Lodovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso in English*, trans. by John Harington (London: Field, 1591), XXVIII.49.

These tables demonstrate how *Chaste Maid* is replete with euphemistic phrases, with different levels of explicitness. 'Hair' (3.2.192), for example, is used to imply pubic hair by using the direct word but to refer to a naughtier type of hair than the hair on one's head. This is also a form of synecdoche for the genitalia. Genitalia are referred to covertly on a regular basis. The different words for female genitalia are also examples of the varying degrees of obviousness. 'Case' is a comic sexual euphemism which can be considered euphemistic, but this is much less true for 'hole' and 'cut'. The imagery of a ring for female genitalia is also used in *Your Five Gallants*: is 'the ring safe and secret? As a virgin's' (2.1.266-267). This ring in *Your Five Gallants* is passed around, in keeping with the theme of exchange and commerce, suggesting its owner may be a loose woman. Later, when a woman loses her maidenhead, it is said she is 'cracked in the ring' (2.4.126): both of a coin and body part, so another example of sex being associated with money. Also, men euphemistically (as in not using literal terms) yet also openly say they cannot maintain erections with talk of standing: the same euphemism is used in *Your Five Gallants*, with 'I ne'er stood still since I saw her' (Interim 2.50). The commonality of jokes appearing in these texts, such as those by Middleton and John Harington, shows a shared type of language in the early modern period. The writers chosen for this thesis are all exceptional in their own way, but simultaneously they display collective features which prove these comic sexual euphemisms are not the produce of a lone maverick but rather something which would be recognised by different audiences across genres.

One of the most important issues for this thesis is whether comic sexual euphemism forces the audience or readership to supply the apparent obscenity or whether it is somehow innate in the more or less euphemistic expression. One side of this argument is that some topics will be inescapably offensive whatever the context by their very nature, while the other is that such things are relative and subjective. *Chaste Maid* comments on this issue. The character Davy, on seeing Allwit, the willing cuckold, exclaims 'Honesty wash my eyes! I have spied a wittol' (1.2.1). Taylor and Lavagnino's explanation of this is that he is willing clean thinking to clarify his vision – 'he ironically attributes his identification of Allwit as a wittol to his own filthy

mind'.<sup>78</sup> This could be interpreted as Middleton arguing that the obscene is only present if the reader or audience draws it out. However, the fact that Allwit is indeed a wittol may mean Middleton believes the opposite – because Davy is correct in his interpretation, the implication may be that this is not a subjective matter. Also, since it is obvious to the audience that Allwit is a wittol, it is striking that Davy refers to honesty, as if the moral standard allows for an expression of or excuse for naming the obscene. *Your Five Gallants* also has a line which comments on whether perception of obscenity comes from within or externally – 'subaudi lechery' (3.3.11). 'Subaudi' is, as Taylor and Lavagnino outline, 'a Latin term telling the listener to supply in his or her mind the true word'.<sup>79</sup> This could be designed to suggest blame for perceived obscenity is placed on the audience. Alternatively, Middleton may well be playing on the lack of veil hiding most of the sexual language, by ironically suggesting the lechery is 'subaudi'. This all ties into the issue of whether euphemisms are meant to be seen through. Clearly, some, like 'hole', are scarcely euphemistic, but this does not rule out the possibility that others are 'subaudi'. The overall effect is to maximise potential sexual meanings. After all, if the audience fails to realise the implied meaning of euphemistic lines, they will miss some of the meaning behind dialogue and maybe even plot.

*Chaste Maid*, despite being full of sexual vocabulary, is at times censored with lines missing, so it is possible there was even more vocabulary of this type at one point. Touchwood Senior says to Sir Oliver 'Stir up and down, sir, you must not stand', to which Sir Oliver replies 'Nay, I'm not given much to standing' (3.3.114-115). As Sir Oliver is having trouble conceiving children, this talk of 'standing' is a euphemism for maintaining erections. Touchwood Senior responds with 'So much the better, sir, for the ...', a line which is cut off (3.3.116-117). Taylor and Lavagnino believe that the words omitted are 'probably obscenities'.<sup>80</sup> Other examples of this occur at 4.1.228, 4.1.232, and 4.1.263. Towards the very end of the play, we have the lines 'I'll pick out my runts there; and for my mountains, I'll mount upon ...' (5.4.116-117). As well as the pun on 'mountains' and 'mountings' (as in *Your Five*

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<sup>78</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 917.

<sup>79</sup> Middleton, *Your Five Gallants*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 619.

<sup>80</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 939.

*Gallants*), there is a significant censoring here. Taylor and Lavagnino believe that the line ‘may have been censored for indecency (“cunts” to chime with “runts” in the previous line?), or left open to be filled in by a lewd gesture, or cut short’ by another character,<sup>81</sup> and Bevington agrees.<sup>82</sup> An alternative is these lines could have ended in silence, a branch of euphemism I will return to. Potentially, leaving a gap actually draws more attention and invites more scandalous thought than leaving the offensive words there.

To conclude this section: my methodology discussed whether there is a difference between sexual puns and euphemisms.<sup>83</sup> Of course, some puns can also be euphemisms. *Chaste Maid*'s innuendo ‘tis a husband solders up all cracks’ (1.1.38), which plays on the early modern concept of women as leaky vessels, is an example.<sup>84</sup> For all euphemisms, the question must be asked of whether their true meaning is intended to be revealed – are people (the characters and audience) meant to see through the veil? Which people? If so, why use euphemism at all? This is particularly pertinent for dramatic performances. Sometimes the audience is included in the joke when the characters are not, as with Sir Walter’s name. Euphemism in this case is a type of dramatic irony: the audience is meant to understand the full meaning where characters are not. At other times, euphemisms are understood by the audience and some of the characters, but not other of the characters. This occurs when Touchwood Junior is talking to Moll’s father about a wedding ring (and using sexually euphemistic language, as shown in Table 4) he plans to give his daughter, unbeknownst to him (1.1.178-199). At still other times, some audience members will be excluded if a certain level of education or worldliness is required. This play, therefore, raises many issues regarding the nature of comic sexual euphemism in drama and the type of person, fictional or otherwise, it is aimed at. In fact, all of these plays raise important questions and issues over the relationship between layers of meaning in words and early modern dramatic performances.

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<sup>81</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 957.

<sup>82</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Bevington (gen. ed.), p. 1512.

<sup>83</sup> See section 1.3.

<sup>84</sup> Gail Kern Paster, ‘Leaky Vessels: The Incontinent Women of City Comedy’, in Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Discipline of Shame In Early Modern England* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 23-63.

## 5.2 Overview of the anonymous *Wit of a Woman*, Sharpham's *Cupid's Whirligig*, and Marston's *Parasitaster, or The Fawn* and *The Dutch Courtesan*

In order to bring out important aspects of these texts which influence the sexual humour, I offer an overview of some of the other major plays. Starting briefly with *Wit of a Woman*, I then consider Sharpham's *Cupid's Whirligig* alongside Marston's *Parasitaster, or The Fawn* and *The Dutch Courtesan*,<sup>85</sup> before moving on to specific metaphorical fields and categories of jokes. *Wit of a Woman* is a play concerned with the power of words.<sup>86</sup> Characters express the belief that 'good wordes makes amendes for misdeedes' (sig.A3<sup>r</sup>), showing belief in the restorative power of the right type of words, while also prompting the question of what the wrong words might be. Also, a group of women are very concerned that they call each other no name but sister and other than mother (sig.A3<sup>v</sup>-A4), highlighting a feeling that calling someone something, such as family, will make them so (sig.B2<sup>v</sup>). This feeling is common to Renaissance texts, with an anxiety that to call someone obscene will corrupt them into really being that way. This is an issue, for example, for the jokes about women Castiglione discusses. The most important figure in the play for double-entendres and euphemism is the painter. Perhaps the concern over the power of words leads to the concern that if he implies he will have sex, with his talk of painting, then he really will.

One comment in this play links to Montaigne's beliefs that one should not be afraid to say what one is not afraid to think.<sup>87</sup> The line 'You may see a man thinkes not alwaies of that which hee speakes' (sig.C<sup>v</sup>) shows a disparity between thoughts and what is spoken outloud. Towards the end of the play,

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<sup>85</sup> Anon., *Wit of a Woman*, ed. by Walter Wilson Greg (Oxford: Hard Press, 2012); Edward Sharpham, *Cupid's Whirligig* (London: Allde, 1607); John Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by David A. Blostein (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978); John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by David Crane (London: A & C Black, 1997). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations are from these above editions. Other useful editions include John Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn* (London: Purfoot, 1606); John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Peter Davison (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1968); John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan* (London: Purfoot, 1605).

<sup>86</sup> In *Cupid's Whirligig*, a woman also talks of the wit of a woman. When wit is deemed to be more of a male characteristic, it is especially challenging for women to be witty, particularly in terms of sexually charged wit.

<sup>87</sup> This is a paraphrased translation which captures the main argument of Montaigne's point here. See section 2.4 for the statement in Latin with translation. Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, ed. and trans. by M.A. Screech (London: Penguin, 2003), III.5.



one character responds to another's Latin with 'I pray thee leave thy latine, and [speak] in plaine mother-tongue' (sig.G2<sup>r</sup>). This shows an awareness of the meaning of some things being obscure, either because it is not what people are really thinking or because it is cloaked in a different language. (The desire to speak in the vernacular, which can be dangerous when it comes to sexual humour, is also a practical issue of making sure audience members can understand – this issue is played with by Middleton). The painter can represent a departure from this obscurity, since his euphemisms are often so lewd as to be clear in meaning. Even when it is not crystal clear what he is implying exactly, the general feeling he creates of obscenity remains strong.

The three other plays share many features. At least two of them, in different combinations, explore the fear of cuckoldry and fake pregnancies, the perceived influence of Cupid, the relationship of the court with language and sex, the word *mentula*, gossip and reputation, and prostitution, as well as, of course, many euphemisms and innuendoes. The standard and intense fear in these plays of being cuckolded (rooted in both real and fake cuckoldry) demonstrates a statement from Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*<sup>88</sup> – 'For this I find, where jealousy is fed, | Horns in the mind are worse than on the head' (5.5.74-75). Comic sexual euphemism often plays with this anxiety. The three plays I now examine here are written within two years of each other. They use much of the same language and terminology. They also share structural similarities, for example, in their openings and closings – starting with the trope of warning the audience or apologising for what is to follow, and finishing by talking again to the audience in reflection. The occurrences of these which are relevant will be discussed below. They all mention Cheapside (see section 5 for discussion of such references). This chapter will consider how they can even be illuminated by Sigmund Freud's theory of jokes. The two by Marston clearly borrow extensively from Montaigne, so offer a link between French and English texts. Both Sharpham and Marston can also be related to chapter three for their depictions of the court as filled with lust.

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<sup>88</sup> Ben Jonson, *Every Man in His Humour*, ed. by Felix E. Schelling, <<http://www.fullbooks.com/Every-Man-In-His-Humour3.html>> [accessed 27 July 2013], n.p.

Edward Sharpham's *Cupid's Whirligig* of 1607 is a play obsessed with cuckoldry and the fear it inspires, which is the vehicle for much sexual humour. One husband, Sir Troublesome, even plans to get gelded or castrated so if his wife becomes pregnant he will be sure she has cheated on him. He fears he 'breede my hornes as children teeth' and has 'the horne plague' (sig.B2<sup>f</sup>). The fear of cuckoldry is so strong in this play that it is said one man checks the gender of a flea in the bed, 'for feare a comes to Cuckold him' (sig.H1<sup>v</sup>-sig.H2<sup>f</sup>). It is taken to comedic extremes. This play also contributes to the idea of the court as a sexually-charged environment, arguing that courtiers have a dozen mistresses and showing the knight fears courtiers will seduce his wife more than anyone else (sig.C1<sup>v</sup>). (The prevalence of sexual scandal at the court contributes to the existence of the courtly texts and their use of comic sexual euphemism discussed in chapter three). This was Sharpham's second and last play, written a year before his death. It is immediately given a sexual tone, since in his dedication Sharpham describes himself as being 'pregnant with desire' and 'now being brought a bed' to produce this play, which is then called a child (sig.A2<sup>f</sup>). The play, therefore, starts as it means to go on, with much sexual humour.

The play opens with discussion of offence that might be caused. The Prologue states that

Since laughter is peculiar unto men,  
And being sure, free to speake can be no sinne,  
If honest wordes have honest construing.  
Therefore to flie the least cause of offence,  
He onely findes but words, you finde the [of]fence:  
Wherefore, if ought unto your eare taste tart,  
Thank but your selves, which good to ill convert. (sig.A3<sup>v</sup>)

The commonplace issue of laughter being unique to human beings is crucially used here to justify scandalous content. The idea of speaking freely is important within the texts I examine, especially when awareness is shown of this leading to offence. The lack of a euphemising veil can be speaking freely. Comic sexual euphemism can be the attempt to say what is not allowed to be

said freely. The line 'freelie to speake can be no sinne' is a huge claim which justifies all the sexual jokes I have found. The Prologue here suggests offence is subjective, putting blame for offence firmly on the eye of the beholder. It also implies that a prudish response is ridiculous by using the nonsensical suggestion that the ears can taste. The play also ends with Cupid speaking to the audience, saying that if they 'well doe censure him' (the author), he is ready 'Another time to pleasure you' (sig.L4<sup>v</sup>). It is as if the figure of the prude or censor is needed at the beginning and end of the play as a kind of foil for its naughtiness. In a way, the reaction of the prude brings the obscenity into existence. There is also a hint that, if the aim is to please the censor, that the censor takes furtive pleasure in the material he condemns.

Lady Troublesome is outspoken about sex in this play. She states that she loves fashion 'in nothing but my cloathes', so not in sexual practices:<sup>89</sup>

tis not the fashion in all places to lie with ones owne husband everie night. Slight I had rather lie with a man, and never marrie him, then marrie a man and never lie with him, come, come, I speake my minde freely, I am none of these simpering wenches that come at everie, word & saies I forsooth, and no forsooth, and blushes at the sight of a childe, it puts her in minde how twas made and cries faugh at a wanton jest in a plaie, and harkens to a baudie tale in her eare. (sig.L<sup>i</sup>)

She therefore sets herself in contrast to the stereotype of chaste women blushing at the merest hint of the comically obscene. The phrase 'cries faugh at a wanton jest in a plaie' is an example of the play performing a potential audience reaction of the prude, which is hypocritical. There is a distinction between public disapproval of the jest in the play but private welcoming, with 'a baudie tale in her eare', of the obscene. This shows an awareness from Sharpham of the reception of his bawdiness; it is commentary on bawdiness rather than such language in its own right.

This subjectivity of the obscene is explored further later in the play. A comic sexual euphemism for 'penis' – 'rapier' – is used, but only some

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<sup>89</sup> See section 5.12 for the metaphorical field of clothing and sex.

characters get the joke. Using much of the same comedy as the duel in *Twelfth Night* (3.4.215-370), Lady Troublesome invents a sword-wielding madman to distract her husband from the fact that another man had tried to seduce her. The humour of the scene is heightened even more when one man says to Sir Troublesome 'he might easily have slaine you sir, for he had a very long rapier'. His wife agrees, teasing her husband: 'True, I know my selfe he had the better weapon, or else I would nere a stood so against him', with the added joke of standing being a euphemism for erection. Her husband innocently replies 'I, had I such a rapier, I would a made him run like an Irish Lackey' to which his wife adds 'I, to have overtaken ye' (sig.12<sup>r</sup>). He fails to notice the phallic nature of this rapier and what the fact that he lacks one indicates.

In the next act, another man asks Sir Troublesome 'Why did you not perceive it?' to which he asserts 'Not, I protest'. His friend has to explain to him that his wife was making a sexual joke:

O monstrous! Why did she not say herselfe, she knew hee had the better weapon, for which cause she stood against him, meaning Bauderie, flat baudery, and yet you could not perceive it: now by this light, had you stept but one foote lighter, ye had them taken them in the verrie fact, but you goe dreaming hanging downe your head, that tis no marvell your wife makes you a Cuckold: for the husband being the wives head, why when the head goes downe thus, the heeles must needes mount up. (sig.12<sup>v</sup>)

This exclamation thus ends with a hint at the metaphorical field of riding and sex, with mention of mounting. It is also pertinent for the metaphorical field of language and sex, since linguistic incompetence is linked to sexual failure.<sup>90</sup> If a husband fails to grasp the full meaning of euphemistic language, as well as to realise the fight was fake, horns are bound to weigh down his head. This episode is also an inversion of one of Freud's arguments. When discussing smut, Freud states that it is almost always from a man directed to a woman,

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<sup>90</sup> Riding and sex, language and sex, and heels as an indication of sex are all discussed further below.

producing sexual excitement or shame.<sup>91</sup> In Sharpham's play, however, it is from a woman to a man, who is eventually mocked and shamed. Perversely, this may support Freud's point, since the man in question is a failed man. Above all, this passage is a kind of meta-innuendo – a discussion of innuendo as 'bawdery'.

John Marston's *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, hereafter called *The Fawn*, of 1606 was heavily influenced by Montaigne, who also mentions a figure named Faunus.<sup>92</sup> *The Fawn* is obsessed with the court and the metaphorical field of sex and language, which, of course, also feature in *The Dutch Courtesan*.<sup>93</sup> There is also a pun inherent throughout the play on the court both as a place and the verb 'to court'. As well as an environment in which to play with language, Marston uses the society of the court as a model for how people should and should not behave and how the genders should interact, as David A. Blostein points out.<sup>94</sup> One point I disagree with is Blostein's argument that 'Marston's purpose is still to "correct" as well as to please',<sup>95</sup> since Marston states the opposite in *The Dutch Courtesan*, detailed below. The court is depicted as being, argues Blostein, 'dominated to an alarming degree by ruling passions'<sup>96</sup> and a disguised character visits the court, encouraging people to give in to their vices and lust. This man, the eponymous Faunus, is in the role of what Blostein calls an 'agent of correction',<sup>97</sup> similar to the disguised Justice Overdo in *Bartholomew Fair*. Yet he does not really correct. He describes himself surrounded by the vice of the court,<sup>98</sup> 'As on a rock, from whence I may discern | The giddy sea of humour flow beneath, | Upon whose back the vainer bubbles float | And forthwith break' (2.1.577-580). This is a standard position for a satirist: observer of the

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<sup>91</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, ed. by James Strachey (Middlesex: Penguin, 1986), pp. 140-141.

<sup>92</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*, trans. by John Florio and ed. by George Saintsbury (London: Sims, 1603), III.5; all quotations from Montaigne here are from Florio's 1603 translation, which is the edition Marston would have used, and, unless otherwise stated, are from 'On Some Lines of Virgil'. Because Marston used the English translation, and because it is Marston, not Montaigne, who is a big part of my corpus, I have not included the French here.

<sup>93</sup> It could belong in chapter three as well as chapter five.

<sup>94</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 13.

<sup>95</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 13.

<sup>96</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 12.

<sup>97</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 15.

<sup>98</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 17.

world's vices. In a comedy, following an outsider looking in on vice and lustful activity has huge comic potential. They provide the audience with someone to relate to, who, like them, is looking in on the use of sexual humour and vocabulary.

The attitude, displayed in the play, that (what some call) obscene behaviour should not be suppressed in speech draws on Cicero's and Montaigne's arguments about shame and euphemism in general: whether euphemism hides and reveals more, and therefore suppresses or sets free obscenity, is a highly important question. The idea of allowing the passions freedom demonstrates Marston's opinion that sexual liberation and the carrying out of supposedly obscene behaviour can lead to knowledge. Faunus' attitude is shown by statements in the very first scene that the 'appetite of blood' cannot be locked up (1.1.40-41):<sup>99</sup> that passions shall no longer be repressed.<sup>100</sup> A 'fawn' can be a satyr, an infamously lustful figure. It is therefore natural for Faunus to express these views.

In the play's court, all courtiers have an inner desire or lust to which they yield.<sup>101</sup> This can include the lust for words, which is shown by the proclamation 'I am sure the lust of speech hath equally drenched us all' (1.2.279-280). That language is something to be lusted over links it to sex, as part of the metaphorical field of language and sex. The play believes that 'we must once be wild; 'tis ancient truth' (1.1.47) and 'my forced life against the stream of blood | Is tugged along' (1.2.57-58) so constraints force you to move in the opposite direction to natural inclinations.<sup>102</sup> One of the characters describes the 'pretty toying wit' he had as a youth (1.2.113-114), where 'toying' means amorously playful,<sup>103</sup> so follows the idea of being free with lust when young.

At one point, whether the court is an innocent or honest environment is discussed. The character Donna Garbetza states that 'In this state of innocency was I brought up to the court [...] | And now instead of country innocency have you got court honesty' (4.1.83-86). The suggestion is that

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<sup>99</sup> 'Appetite' is an important word for the field of food and sex. See section 5.6.

<sup>100</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 79. This is borrowed from Montaigne; see below.

<sup>101</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 27.

<sup>102</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 80.

<sup>103</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 87.

court honesty is not honest at all; the very phrase suggests courtly dissimulation and is a further suggestion of the court as a lustful environment. The court of *The Fawn* is a fictional one, but there is a theory that its Duke is, according to Blostein, 'meant to be a comic portrait of the "wisest fool in Christendom", King James'.<sup>104</sup> This theory is supported by the Duke's claim that 'We use no rhetoric' (1.2.188), which is reminiscent of James' first speech to the English parliament where he promised to 'plainly and freely in my maner tell you [...] That it becommeth a King, in my opinion, to use no other Eloquence then plainnesse and sinceritie'.<sup>105</sup> For James, speaking plainly was part of kingship, as he advised his son.<sup>106</sup> This has significance as Marston is thought to have been mocking James in his plays. It must also be remembered that to say one is not using rhetoric is a traditional technique that is itself part of rhetoric. It is a trope called *captatio benevolentiae*, that is used to portray the author or speaker as someone who is trustworthy and is not plain speaking. In this way it can be related to euphemism, which is not plain or straightforward. Elaborate double-entendres can take different positions on this spectrum of speaking plainly, some revealing more than they conceal.

The influences of Montaigne are manifested in this play in many different ways. One of these ways is Marston's female characters, who are, for Blostein, 'even when presented comically, generally treated sympathetically'.<sup>107</sup> They are reminiscent of the ending of the end of Montaigne's 'On Some Lines of Virgil'. The closing lines of this essay argue that 'both male and female, are cast in one same mould; instruction and custome excepted, there is no great difference between them'.<sup>108</sup> This sentiment, in a more satirical form, appears in the play as 'By Janus, women are but men turned the wrong side outward' (4.1.128-129). It may be referring to what Thomas Laqueur defines as the one-sex model, where women are a deformed version of the male gender norm.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 32.

<sup>105</sup> Cited in Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 90.

<sup>106</sup> James VI, *Basilikon Doron* (Edinburgh: Waldegrave, 1599).

<sup>107</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 23.

<sup>108</sup> Montaigne, *Essayes*, trans. by Florio and ed. by Saintsbury, III.5.

<sup>109</sup> Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990).

This essay of Montaigne's supplies Marston with, as Blostein puts it, 'passages to illustrate virtually every subject of his farrago'.<sup>110</sup> The way Montaigne deals with the theme of love, its definitions, problems, different forms in civilisations, and its revelations on men and women, as well as the trade in marriage in Italy, boasting, cuckoldry, secrets, 'the perversity of restraining healthy appetites in women', 'the pitfalls of eloquence and rhetoric', and 'the beneficial effect of confession and public exposure of one's faults' all, according to Blostein, provide precedent for Marston's characters and events.<sup>111</sup> Indeed, the drive to be disguised as Faunus and put off what Blostein calls 'the secret arts of rule in exchange for a fling at adventure' is the same as what is articulated at the beginning of Montaigne's essay.<sup>112</sup> There is much consensus for this influence from Montaigne in scholarship on Marston,<sup>113</sup> and much evidence provided by his plays. As in *The Dutch Courtesan*, there is the belief that 'incontinence will force a continence' (2.1.123). Montaigne phrases the same point by stating that 'Belike we must be incontinent that we may be continent, burning is quenched by fire'.<sup>114</sup> This is important for the symbolism of continence being the suppression of the passions, so to be restrained and behave politely, we must first be allowed to be free to be wanton.

The play's message to the reader quotes Martial: '*Absit a jocosum nostrorum simplicitate malignus interpretres*'<sup>115</sup> (To My Equal Reader, 18-19) or 'May the frankness of my jests find no malicious interpreter'.<sup>116</sup> Drawing on Martial is a double-edged way of seeking to justify frankness, as, of course, the Roman poet is well-known for his explicit sexual vocabulary. Frankness may in turn allow for more or less explicit double-entendres, but these may be more elaborate and veiled than *simplicitate*. Euphemism that is comic and sexual allows for the expression of the obscene, albeit under a (thin) veil. It

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<sup>110</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 41.

<sup>111</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 41.

<sup>112</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 41.

<sup>113</sup> See Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 42; Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Davison, pp. 3-4; Harold Bloom. *The Western Canon* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995).

<sup>114</sup> Montaigne, *Essayes*, trans. by Florio and ed. by Saintsbury, III.5.

<sup>115</sup> Martial, *Epigrams*, ed. and trans. by D.R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1994), pp. 40-41.

<sup>116</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 68.



could be said that Martial and early modern writers perversely hope for a censor who would then be the target of their jests. This part of the play is less of an apology than Sharpham's opening. Both writers seem to believe obscenity is in the eye of the beholder, and Marston puts blame on an interpreter being malicious if offence is caused. The play's Prologue states that

Nor doth he [Marston] hope to win  
Your louder hand with that most common sin  
Of vulgar pens, rank bawdry, that smells  
Even through your masks, *usque ad nauseam*;  
The Venus of this scene doth loathe to wear  
So vile, so common, so immodest clothings. (Prologus.13-18)

Like many of the texts I study, the opening denies that comic sexual obscenity will follow in a way that makes the reader expect it, half warning and half titillating. The warning is part of the joke.

In the play, Hercules' assertion to 'Speak what you think, and write what you do speak' (1.2.335) is reminiscent of Montaigne's '*Non pudeat dicere, quod non pudeat sentire*' or 'Let us not be ashamed to speake, what we shame not to thinke'.<sup>117</sup> This statement is very significant for this thesis, as the second chapter (section 2.4) discussed. It concerns the theory of euphemism rather than euphemism itself, and gives licence for sexual comments. The comedy involved in sexual euphemism hangs upon the tension of speaking what one might be ashamed of saying, but in a supposedly veiled way. Montaigne believes that 'Vices smothered in ones thought, are not the worst'.<sup>118</sup> This line of thinking is also significant for a statement in the play that 'What I will do shall be horrible but to think' (2.1.298-299). Here we have a distinction but also a relationship between thinking and doing which is important for comic sexual euphemism. Such language and talking about sex (even in a veiled manner) might make one think sexual thoughts or even encourage one to carry out sexual acts.

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<sup>117</sup> Montaigne, *Essayes*, trans. by Florio and ed. by Saintsbury, III.5.

<sup>118</sup> Montaigne, *Essayes*, trans. by Florio and ed. by Saintsbury, III.5.

Marston's 1605 play *The Dutch Courtesan* was written a mere two years after John Florio's translation of Montaigne. Like *The Fawn*, it draws heavily on the French writer. Indeed, according to William M. Hamlin, 'No play composed in early modern England draws more heavily on Montaigne's *Essays* than does *The Dutch Courtesan*'.<sup>119</sup> 'On Some Verses of Virgil' is almost a source for both of Marston's plays. Marston does not borrow Montaigne's personal viewpoints but is influenced by his examination of morality in theory applied to the practice of human experience. However, Marston does not follow Montaigne completely. Marston may, for example, be more concerned than Montaigne with the comedy of sexual situations. This is not to say Montaigne never highlights this. There is, for instance the story of his young daughter reading aloud and coming across an obscene word, which, explains Donald M. Frame, was '*fouteau*',<sup>120</sup> similar to *The Dutch Courtesan*'s 'Foutra' (2.2.35) and 'fowtra' (3.4.65). These are examples of kakemphaton, as explained in the second chapter (section 2.1), due to the circumstances they set up where an innocent term for 'beech tree' is taken for a rude term, 'to fuck'. Kakemphaton is one of the candidates for forerunners to 'euphemism' – early modern discussion of the concept before the word existed. Montaigne, therefore, does indulge in some comic sexual language. However, Marston brings this comedy out even more in his overall portrayal of love and/or lust. Marston's female character Crispinella is the most representative of Montaigne. As Hamlin highlights, 'Marston allows certain speakers to voice Montaignian views',<sup>121</sup> and Crispinella is the prime example of this. She says things that are too undisguised, broad, and free for her modest sister, but is somewhat more reserved than the eponymous prostitute

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<sup>119</sup> William M. Hamlin, 'From an English Montaigne to *The Dutch Courtesan*', in William M. Hamlin, *Montaigne's English Journey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 95-109 (p. 95). Another point made by Hamlin is that Marston suggests that 'prostitutes, like translated books, may certainly be condemned on the grounds that they render common that which should be precious' (p. 96), as shown by the play's lines 'thou art as false, as prostituted, and adulterate, as some translated manuscript' (4.3.6-8). This attitude to translation revealing otherwise precious content appeared frequently in chapter four.

<sup>120</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Donald M. Frame (London: Everyman's Library, 2003), III.5.

<sup>121</sup> Hamlin, 'From an English Montaigne', p. 95.

Francheschina.<sup>122</sup> This fits with Montaigne's call to not be ashamed to say anything we are not afraid to think.<sup>123</sup>

In keeping with Marston's depiction of lust, his characters describe sex as 'necessary' (1.2.25-26) and state that 'No life's without some lust, no life without some love' (1.2.148). Beatrice contrasts love and lust, saying 'my love's not lust' (3.1.205). This is not a text which shies away from mentioning lustful behaviour. Like the other two plays examined here, *The Dutch Courtesan's* opening comments on what is to follow and whether readers or the audience should be offended by it. The Prologue says 'Slight hasty labours in this easy play, | Present not what you would, but what we may: | For this vouchsafe to know, the only end | Of our study is, not to offend' (Prologue.1-4). It is an appeal not to 'tax and scout' (Prologue.10) or censure and scornfully reject.<sup>124</sup> It could be that this is a message not to take the innuendo-filled contents of the rest of the play too seriously.<sup>125</sup> There are certainly many innuendoes throughout in quick succession, so this is likely to be something the audience will notice. It can be easier to overlook sexual humour in small amounts but much harder when the audience is bombarded with it. It could well be, therefore, that the Prologue would want to ask them to take the sexual jokes in the manner intended, as part of the comedy, rather than as a scandalous cause of offence (they could, of course, be both). If so, it is a typical double-edged message to avoid something by highlighting it since people tend to remember what they are told to forget.<sup>126</sup> The Prologue is also a message to Jonson, as it states 'We strive not to instruct, but to delight' (Prologue.8). As Crane argues, Jonson believed art should do both, and replied in *Volpone* to that effect.<sup>127</sup> This is using the commonplace regarding literature passed down from Horace, which I mentioned early on in this chapter. Like Troterel, this message is deliberately disobeying convention. Marston's *Fabulae Argumentum* or Argument of the Play states that 'The difference betwixt the love of a courtesan and a wife is the full scope of the play, which, intermixed with the deceits of a witty city jester, fills up the

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<sup>122</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. xxvi.

<sup>123</sup> There is more examination of Crispinella and outspokenness below.

<sup>124</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 3.

<sup>125</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. xxviii.

<sup>126</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. xxviii.

<sup>127</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 3.

comedy'.<sup>128</sup> This, as Baldesar Castiglione, Pierre de Brantôme, and Laurent Joubert do, separates women into the categories of unchaste and chaste. Comic sexual euphemism often plays with these stereotypes. This play also comments on the court being a lustful place, with another name for the pox being 'court misfortune' (1.1.107-108). Again, this is an example of when texts from the genre of theatre can be used to shed light on the courtly texts in my above chapter: the sexual environment permeating at the court led to writers like Castiglione discussing where to draw the line of acceptability and writers like Harington threatening to cross this line.

The issue of women (not) speaking freely in these plays is an important concept for euphemism and sexual jokes. This is important for issues of silence, language, sex, and gender, as silent women were stereotyped as more chaste.<sup>129</sup> Crispinella is the woman who represents Montaigne in *The Dutch Courtesan*. It could be said she is in the role of *raisonneuse* in that she is a reasoner, an arguer, but also an embodiment within the play of an author's viewpoint. More specifically, she demonstrates Montaigne's influence upon Marston. She makes an argumentative speech about speaking boldly which it is helpful to quote at length here, where the influence of Montaigne is clear. She embodies many (not all) of Montaigne's attitudes: for example, she agrees with his belief in openness of discussion rather than his scepticism. When told by her sister that 'you speak too broad' and 'I'll be gone if you speak too broad', she replies:

Let's ne'er be ashamed to speak what we be not ashamed to think. I dare as boldly speak venery as think venery. [...] Now bashfulness seize you! We pronounce boldly robbery, murder, treason, which deeds must needs be far more loathsome than an act which is so natural, just, necessary as that of procreation. You shall have an hypocritical vestal virgin speak that with close teeth publicly which she will receive with open mouth privately. For my own part, I consider nature without apparel; without disguising of custom or compliment, I give thoughts

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<sup>128</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 3.

<sup>129</sup> This could be placed in the section on language and sex as a metaphorical field; instead of using language as a symbol for sex, these women are using it as a tool to discuss sex (among other subjects).

words, and words truth, and truth boldness. She whose honest freeness makes it her virtue to speak what she thinks, will make it her necessity to think what is good. I love no prohibited things, and yet I would have nothing prohibited by policy, but by virtue; for, as in the fashion of time, those books that are called in are most in sale and request, so in nature those actions that are most prohibited are most desired. (3.1.26-45)

This is not necessarily comic, but is a discussion of the context of comic sexual euphemism and even the theory. Paradoxically, if we follow Crispinella on speaking freely, there would be no sexual euphemism, let alone comic sexual euphemism. What looks like a lack of censorship in allowing frankness would lead to one type of language being discontinued. The line about speaking ‘with close teeth publicly’ but receiving ‘with open mouth privately’ alludes to the commonplace figure of the hypocritical prude – the same one who above ‘cries faugh at a wanton jest in a plaie, and harkens to a boudie tale in her eare’ (sig.L<sup>r</sup>). This passage serves to promote the opposite of euphemism, which is to speak plainly.<sup>130</sup> Crispinella is in danger of staining her reputation here with her determination not to hold back linguistically. Her sister Beatrice tells her ‘the world would censure you; for truly, severe modesty is women’s virtue’ (3.1.46). In other words, Beatrice stands for the standard morality of the day, which would indeed recommend such ‘modesty’ for women – at least for those of high social status. Crispinella represents Montaigne’s alternative to this standard. And, of course, Montaigne is brought in heavily throughout her speeches. Passages of his which are used here include:

Why was the acte of generation made so naturall, so necessary, and so just, seeing we feare to speake of it without shame, and exclude it from our serious and regular discourses? We pronounce boldly, to rob, to murther, to betray, and this we dare not but betweene our teeth. [...]

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<sup>130</sup> In section 6.1 on silence in the Conclusion, I will analyse how outspokenness can be a sign of a lack of chastity in women.

Is it not herein as in matters of books, which being once called-in and forbidden become more saleable and publik?<sup>131</sup>

For my part I am resolved to dare speake whatsoever I dare do. And am displeased with thoughts not to be published. The worst of my actions or condicions seeme not so ugly unto me, as I finde it both ugly and base not to dare to avouch them. [...] He that should be bound to tell all, should also bind himselfe to do nothing which one is forced to conceale.<sup>132</sup>

As the second chapter discussed, these attitudes lead to positive politeness, the addressing of taboos, since this is seen as necessary, natural, and not shameful. Crispinella therefore adopts Montaigne's stance on these issues. She is the primary character to do so, but the only one. Beatrice, for example, responds to her sister:

Virtue is a free, pleasant, buxom quality. I love a constant countenance well; but this froward, ignorant coyeness, sow, austere, lumpish, uncivil privateness, that promises nothing but rough skins and hard stools [...] good for nothing but for nothing. (3.1.46-53)

This recalls Montaigne's 'Vertue is a pleasant and buxom quality'.<sup>133</sup> Montaigne, and Marston following him, is being paradoxical here; the commonplace view is that virtue is the harder, rougher path. Crispinella's discussion of what might be called wanton behaviour and nature brings in the debate Cicero engaged in. She also discusses the idea, again from Montaigne, of people wanting something more when it is declared obscene, both with forbidden books and, by implication, her own speech when her sister tries to shush her. Her apology for what is normally deemed inappropriate for women to say provides a kind of internal justification for bawdy humour.

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<sup>131</sup> Montaigne, *Essayes*, trans. by Florio and ed. by Saintsbury, III.5.

<sup>132</sup> Montaigne, *Essayes*, trans. by Florio and ed. by Saintsbury, III.5. Montaigne's versions of these can also be found in the second chapter section 2.4.

<sup>133</sup> Montaigne, *Essayes*, trans. by Florio and ed. by Saintsbury, III.5.

At a different point Crispinella offends a man with her sharp tongue, again highlighting the issue of frankness, and another man jumps to her defence with 'Hold, hold! My mistress speaks by contraries.' 'Contraries?' the man asks, to be told 'She jests, faith, only jests' (3.1.187-189). The play performs a rejection of the outspoken woman who reveals an open secret about sex. Such rejection of frankness allows for jokes and jests in the form of comic sexual euphemism – if one is forbidden to speak literally then one can argue the only remaining choice is euphemism, which then reduces blame if the euphemism is comic and sexual. 'Contraries' here implies 'paradoxes' or notions opposed to commonly-held opinion. If they are mere jests, they are dismissed and not to be taken seriously. This has implications for comic sexual language, which is easy to dismiss but can often have more serious implications about society. If she jests in the same way as Sharpham's Lady Troublesome mentions, she wantonly jests.

Another female character of Marston's, Zoya in *The Fawn*, draws a distinction between speaking wantonly and bawdily. 'If any man ha' the wit, now let him talk wantonly, but not bawdily' (2.1.353-354). As in the texts associated with the court, there is a double standard in operation: people are not meant to be bawdy but wit also involves making bawdy allusions – to be witty, but not go too far. The examples here are not themselves comic sexual euphemisms but show how humour is itself a topic of discussion in these plays. They display a kind of theory within dramatic practice. Blostein claims that the 'fine distinction preserves Zoya's image, a woman who can hold her own with men for wit, but who is essentially chaste'.<sup>134</sup> The joke Zoya makes, playing with language, seems to be that wit gives licence for wantonness but not bawdiness. If the two are synonyms, this in itself is a piece of wit – a joke inclusive of those with wit.

In this way both Lady Troublesome and Crispinella, and other female characters, defy the official expectation that women will be silent on such issues and fulfil the unofficial expectation that women will misbehave. Officially, women are expected to follow the rules. Unofficially, there can be a

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<sup>134</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 124. The *OED* is not terribly helpful regarding the adverb 'bawdily', as their earliest example is from 1629. It is therefore problematic to determine whether bawdily and wantonly were synonyms as adverbs at the time Marston was writing.

misogynistic assumption that they will not. This is also important for euphemism, since these women are playing a game with such linguistic issues and rules. On the one hand, they are speaking freely, and drawing attention to their free-spoken ways. On the other, as they also use innuendoes and euphemisms to veil their speech, in some ways they are not speaking freely as they feel the need to disguise their words. Frankness, often associated with Montaigne, is significant for euphemism, which has different levels of frankness. This is how euphemism has a dual nature of explicitness and implicitness, and these women are enjoying playing with this. I will now consider different metaphorical fields and examples of comic sexual euphemism across different plays.

### 5.3 The Metaphorical Field of Painting/Art and Sex

The following sections focus on specific metaphorical fields throughout different plays. Painting and sex as a field plays on the perception that painters were morally dubious when it came to sex. *Wit of a Woman*<sup>135</sup> has a painter who frequently uses sexual terms and double-entendres, within the metaphorical field of painting and art being akin to sex and procreation. This is implied by his statement ‘I have instruction enough for the perfecting of my worke, which if it be not like my selfe, let mee be counted a bungler’ (sig.B2<sup>v</sup>). As Marguerite A. Tassi states, the painter’s art of portrait painting becomes like the lover’s art of seduction. She elaborates, describing how:

painting was thought to have the power to feed the imagination, provoke desire, cause idolatry, and result in actions that only an actor would play upon a stage. The Elizabethan gentleman [...] who practiced painting in a discreet manner might bring praise and honor to himself [...] yet he just as easily might welcome scandal and dishonour if he indulged in the reputed illicit aspects of a painter’s life.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Anon., *Wit of a Woman* (London: White, 1604).

<sup>136</sup> Marguerite A. Tassi, *The Scandal of Images* (Cranbury: Susquehanna University Press, 2004), p. 127.



Indeed, the painter is much more a figure of seduction than artwork. In fact, he begins as a layman pretending to be a painter. According to Taylor and Lavagnino, a bungler, a word used in *Chaste Maid* as well as in the above quotation, can mean an 'unperforming husband'.<sup>137</sup> If, therefore, he fails as a painter, he would also fail as a lover. The fact that this lascivious character picks painting as the profession to feign demonstrates the basis in real cultural perceptions of this craft as being full of what Tassi calls 'amorous opportunists'.<sup>138</sup> Even if he did not start as a real painter, he, according to Tassi, 'knows what painters do, but what is more, he knows what they have a reputation for doing with their female sitters. He therefore feels capable of adopting a painter disguise in order to woo a lady'.<sup>139</sup> He eventually becomes indistinguishable from the stereotype of real painters, boasting that he has been schooled in both the craft of painting and the art of love-making.

When he is counselled by another man, for example, on how to woo women, painting imagery is used:

Now for you Sir, you are Apelles for your artificial spirit, and when you come to the mount of Venus, if your Pensill fall, give over your occupation: but in any wise be sure of good stones for the grinding of your colours. (sig.B2<sup>r</sup>)

Painting becomes a trope for sex: he is cast 'in the role of Apelles, obscenely bent on mounting the woman he paints', as Tassi highlights.<sup>140</sup> The word 'occupation' has three meanings – the profession of painting, the pursuit of the desired woman, and the mounting of Venus' body. Tassi also outlines how the use of 'Pensill' and 'stones' refer to male genitalia, as well as 'spirit' referring to energy and semen.<sup>141</sup> We also have the references to mounting and falling which are common when it comes to sex in the Renaissance. All

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<sup>137</sup> Middleton, *Your Five Gallants*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 613. There is a character named Bungler in *Your Five Gallants* who is associated with impotence (2.4.294). See Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature* (London: The Athlone Press, 1994), p. 173.

<sup>138</sup> Tassi, *The Scandal of Images*, p. 129.

<sup>139</sup> Tassi, *The Scandal of Images*, p. 51.

<sup>140</sup> Tassi, *The Scandal of Images*, p. 128.

<sup>141</sup> Tassi, *The Scandal of Images*, p. 128.

these euphemisms serve to link painting to sexual desire. Similarly, when the instruments of a painter are being discussed, we have the line ‘for the needle standing right in the middle, will leade us the better to our just measure’ (sig.D2<sup>r</sup>). The needle is a clear comic sexual euphemism for male genitalia.

The metaphorical field of painting and sex adds the shock factor to more of the painter’s lines, such as ‘being together, I can the better attend them [multiple women to paint]’ (sig.C3<sup>v</sup>). He will attend to them in a more intimate way than merely painting their image. There is also his highly suggestive statement:

Lady I would crave your pleasure to let me know how you will be drawne, either but a little below the brest or at full length, and eyther as you come into the world, or as you walke in the world, with the ornaments of nature, or the furniture of Art: or as a Sunne in the clowde, with a lawne over your Beautie. (sig.D2<sup>v</sup>)

This is far more lascivious than would be required just to discuss her portrait. The woman’s response to this is ‘what can you paint words as well as faces? [...] but to draw me at length, what part will you begin?’ (sig.D2<sup>v</sup>). The word ‘part’ can, of course, be used for sexual body parts.<sup>142</sup> It could simply be she means any body part, but the fact that she does not name a specific part has clear comic and sexual connotations. The painter describes how he works thus: ‘First take my measure, and then fall to worke, and if you do not fit me with patience, | I shall never touch the life kindely’ (sig.D3<sup>r</sup>). This seems heavy with sexual suggestion, if the concept of ‘fitting’ is equated with ‘penetration’. It could be that the word ‘fall’ is used because he is talking about fallen practices. Also, if his ‘measure’ is a type of ruler, this is another phallic symbol.

Even apparently innocent statements made by the painter can seem lewd. Here, as in many cases, an effect of multiple comic sexual euphemisms is to multiply sexual meanings, ranging, in this case, beyond the metaphorical

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<sup>142</sup> As in Joubert’s phrase ‘parties honteuses’ [‘shameful parts’], see section 4.1; Laurent Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires* (Bordeaux: Millanges, 1578), p. 457; Laurent Joubert, *Popular Errors*, ed. and trans. by Gregory David De Rocher (London: University of Alabama Press, 1989), p. 8.

field to encompass almost anything. When he says 'my house is in the high streete, every body can shew you to it' (sig.E2), it seems to imply that everyone knows the way to his house as he has entertained many women there. This also occurs when he discusses money:

that moste pure of eight crownes a Boxe, heere is two Boxes, the one white, the other red, but I would not wish to open them, til you have neede, and then in a close chamber, for the ayre is very hurtfull to them. (sig.E2)

This talk of opening boxes and the need for it to be done in privacy is sexually suggestive. Some other of the play's comments are more explicit euphemisms. When talking to the painter, for example, Veronte says 'I have heard, they [women] have eyes to blind mens, tongues to enchaunt men, hands, to binde men, and some other thinges, that undoe men' (sig.G). The 'some other things' is, of course, a euphemism for sexual body parts. 'Undoing' men could be leading them to ruin or to undo their clothing. The metaphorical field of painting and sex is, following the Renaissance perception of most painters, an instance of euphemism combining two similar things which Freud discusses (see section 1.5).<sup>143</sup> The painter painting the female subject appreciates bodies in a way that can overlap with the lover.

#### 5.4 The Metaphorical Field of Dancing/Music and Sex

Sex is associated with music in *Your Five Gallants*, in a similar way to its relationship to dancing in *Chaste Maid*. Primero talks of a 'prick-song' (2.1.45), where Taylor and Lavagnino believe 'the bawdy joke is clear'.<sup>144</sup> It is indeed clear, and is then elaborated upon. Goldstone talks of 'viols betwixt their legs' and playing 'the sweetest strokes', leading to innuendo (2.1.77). The line 'they will not endure | To hear of a stop, a prick, or a semiquaver' (2.1.93) has bawdy jokes surrounding 'stop', according to Taylor and Lavagnino, as 'hole in a wind instrument or one of a series of organ pipes',

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<sup>143</sup> Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, ed. by Strachey, p. 114.

<sup>144</sup> Middleton, *Your Five Gallants*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 604.

'prick', and 'semiquaver' as 'in the bawdy sense of a sexual quiver'.<sup>145</sup> The idea of not enduring to hear a stop and so on plays on not wanting to hear the obscene paradoxically allowing for its expression. Dancing's link to sex is evoked in *The Dutch Courtesan* with the innuendo of falling on one's back: a female character lists dance steps including 'my singles and my doubles and my trick o' twenty, my carantapace [Coranto], my traverse forward, and my falling back' (3.1.199-201). Falling on your back is a sign of sexual activity in these plays.<sup>146</sup>

### 5.5 The Metaphorical Field of Law and Sex

Much like *Chaste Maid*, *Your Five Gallants* has frequent euphemistic references to genitalia, including through the use of law imagery.<sup>147</sup> This plays on the discrepancy between formal and ordered legal language and its lewd use by playwrights. Legal terminology becomes bawdy when 'thing' is played with to mean 'penis' and 'wills' means 'vaginas' (3.1.6-11). Law and sex are also important for Sharpham. A conversation takes place between women in which Lady Troublesome is outspoken about sex. This is juxtaposed with one between men, who also discuss sex, cuckoldry, and the 'making of children' with paternity. It uses the language of lawyers and legal courts:

For commonly if one have a thing to be done, as a conveyance to be drawn, or a case in the law to be argued, a man would have the helpe of as many good Lawyers as hee could get: now this case of making of children, and a case in the lawe, is something like, for as one Lawyer takes his fee, and deales in'r, another Lawyer comes and argues the case more profoundly: but in the end when all is done, leaves it to bee tryed by the Jury, in whome the right is, and so must you, when they and you and al have done your best, yet in the end, must leave it to be

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<sup>145</sup> Middleton, *Your Five Gallants*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 605.

<sup>146</sup> The idea of falling back will occur again in section 5.16 below in discussion of 'short-heels' meaning 'prostitute' in *The Dutch Courtesan* (1.2.95).

<sup>147</sup> The law court can be seen as another theatrical environment, with lawyers behaving like actors playing roles.

tried by your wife, whose the childe is, for a womans knowledge in this case, is better than twelve mens. (sig.F6<sup>v</sup>)

This also puns heavily on the euphemism of 'case' for 'vagina'. As with finding humour in grammar and education, an element of fun is injected to a dry subject using sexual comedy.<sup>148</sup> Playing with legal rules has many of the same characteristics as playing with grammatical rules.<sup>149</sup> Both techniques come from educated men and play games with seemingly boring rules which can, ultimately, confirm them.

Legal language is also used as a comic sexual euphemism by Marston, in both *The Fawn* and *The Dutch Courtesan*. In *The Fawn*, a character is told to 'marry a rich widow, or a cracked lady whose case thou shalt make good' (1.2.238-239) – 'cracked' meaning financially ruined and/or flawed with added innuendo and 'case' meaning both lawsuit and female genitalia. In *The Dutch Courtesan*, it is asked 'Do you know no alderman would pity such a woman's case? [...] and, indeed, wherein should they bestow their money better? In land, the title may be cracked' (1.1.109-116). This also brings in the metaphorical field of money and sex, so is an example of the joining of fields. The legal background of Sharpham and Marston influences their theatrical works.

## 5.6 The Metaphorical Field of Food/Meat and Sex, Including French Drama

This field highlights the similarity between flesh as food to be eaten and as living human bodies to have sex with. It also has links to the field of money and sex, if women are commodities to be sold and consumed like meat. Both *Chaste Maid* and *Bartholomew Fair* promote the idea that women are linked to meat, supporting the metaphorical field of scandalous sex (specifically with women) and meat.<sup>150</sup> The link between meat and sex is much stronger in

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<sup>148</sup> Law and sex is also a metaphorical field in Jonson, *Epicene*, Bevington (gen. ed.): 2.3.131-133; see the Conclusion section 6.1. Although, in *Epicene*, the legal link to sex may be more direct and less symbolic, with the law being used for consent for sex.

<sup>149</sup> See section 5.7.

<sup>150</sup> *Bartholomew Fair* also has women uncontrollably vomiting and urinating throughout, what Mikhail Bakhtin would argue indicates a grotesque body; Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, Bevington (gen. ed.); Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World.*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky

Jonson's play than that of business and sex, clothes and sex, or games and sex – all of which are extended further in *Middleton*. The main woman who represents this link in Jonson's play (between meat and women, as well as women and leaky fluids) is Ursula. It is said of her 'Out upon her, how she drips! She's able to give a man the sweating sickness with looking on her' (2.5.108-109). She talks a lot about heat, and people say you could make whale oil out of her.<sup>151</sup> Other lines describing Ursula in this manner include 'This is the very womb and bed of enormity, gross as herself!' (2.2.109-110) and 'Her language grows greasier than her pigs' (2.5.129-130). She is 'fleshly' and 'is above all to be avoided, having the marks upon her of the three enemies of man: the world, as being in the fair; the devil, as being in the fire; and the flesh, as being herself' (3.6.32-35). All these descriptions are comic in their choice of vocabulary and serve to dehumanise her, like a piece of meat.

Since Ursula<sup>152</sup> both sells roast pork and runs a brothel, she immediately connects sex and food in the audience's mind. She is the best breeder of bawds or even the 'Mother o'the bawds', 'Body o'the fair!', 'mother o'the pigs', 'Mother o'the Furies [...] by her firebrand' or 'too fat to be a Fury; sure some walking sow of tallow', the 'sow of Smithfield' as well as being 'An inspired vessel of kitchen-stuff [grease, like meat]' (2.5.72-82, 4.5.73). Her very body, as well as her trade, has meat qualities. She is not the only woman to be associated with fatty grease and meat. Another prostitute is called 'Thou tripe of Turnbull' (4.5.74), with imagery of fatty entrails. She complains that newly recruited women will 'call away our customers and lick the fat from us' (4.5.68-69). It is noteworthy that if their business is stolen, their fat will also be taken from them, implying they will not be meaty if they stop being prostitutes. Pimps are meaty too, with one being labelled a 'bawd in grease' (4.5.71). The humour is found here in the misogyny of women being like meat, so both animalistic and to be used to sate an appetite. This imagery is an example of

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(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 24. According to Luckyj, women were seen as being 'subject to forces beyond their control', as in *Bartholomew Fair* where, as Katharine Eisaman Maus puts it, 'women are their bodies' victims'; Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, Bevington (gen. ed.), p. 965; Christina Luckyj, 'A Moving Rhetorick': *Gender and Silence in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 141. This can relate to discussion of silence and women in the Conclusion section 6.1, as bodily containment was associated with verbal control.

<sup>151</sup> Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, Bevington (gen. ed.), p. 999.

<sup>152</sup> She is named after a bear, an animal used at the time for entertainment in bear pits.

Freud's point that such language finds the similarity between dissimilar things. It can also be seen as the type of sexual aggression from men to women which is discussed by Freud.<sup>153</sup>

Katharine Eisaman Maus believes Ursula 'both ratifies and challenges' misogyny, as 'She has a gift for deriving agency and power from the very symbolic mechanisms that seem to deny her that power', since 'Ursula not only embodies appetite but makes money from it: selling food, drink, and sex'.<sup>154</sup> Her character takes the metaphorical fields of sex and/or women and meat, and sex and money, and turns it to her advantage. She does not undo misogyny or deny that sexually available women can be likened to these things. Instead, she reinforces the symbolism in a way that profits her. She states that 'I am all fire and fat [...] I shall e'en melt away to the first woman, a rib, again, I am afraid. I do water the ground' (2.2.52-54). As well as this reference to her urinating, there are many mentions of her dripping with fat, like fatty meat. Sex, meat, and heat are linked in the statement that at Ursula's 'you may ha' your punk and your pig in state sir, both piping hot' (2.5.40-41), where 'hot' is also a euphemism for venereally diseased. 'Punk' is a euphemism for 'whores', as in 'ale and punk ish i'te pigshty' (3.2.20-21) (said in a heavy accent). There is comedy in the way having sex will make you similar to hot pig meat. She will, therefore, tempt men like Eve, the meaty rib. All this imagery serves to link sex with prostitutes and meat in the metaphorical field.<sup>155</sup>

It is not just this woman who symbolises the link between women and meat. What Maus describes as the 'supremacy of appetite, the inescapability of bodily need'<sup>156</sup> is also demonstrated by Win, a seemingly respectable married woman from a Puritan family. As she is pregnant, her husband uses her urges to eat pig as a device to persuade her mother they should go to the fair. The baby, they say, makes her 'long to eat of a pig' (1.5.152) and so 'I

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<sup>153</sup> See my Introduction section 1.5.

<sup>154</sup> Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, Bevington (gen. ed.), p. 965. All quotations from Maus on *Bartholomew Fair* and *Epicene* are from Bevington's edition.

<sup>155</sup> The reference to a pigsty is reminiscent of Ferrand's comic sexual euphemism for female genitalia being 'la porcherie de Venus' ['Venus' pigsty'], see section 4.2; Jacques Ferrand, *Traité de l'essence et guérison de l'amour, ou De la mélancholie érotique* (Tolose: Colomiez, 1610), p. 193; D.A. Beecher, 'Erotic Love and the Inquisition: Jacques Ferrand and the Tribunal of Toulouse, 1620', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 20 (1989), 41-53 (p. 45).

<sup>156</sup> Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, Bevington (gen. ed.), p. 965.

pray you that she may eat some pig, and her bellyful, too' (1.6.20-21). Her mother is persuaded: 'My daughter Win-the-fight is visited with a natural disease of women called a longing to eat pig' (1.6.42-44). It is declared that 'pig, it is a meat, and a meat that is nourishing and may be longed for, and so consequently eaten' (1.6.52-54). It may seem this is an elaborate pretence, but this longing affects other women in the play, as Ursula adjusts her price for the meat if it is for pregnancy cravings. She outlines how 'Five shillings a pig is my price, at least; if it be a sow-pig, sixpence more; if she be a great-belled wife, and long for't, sixpence more for that' (2.2.113-115). Once again comedy is found in the metaphorical field of sex and meat, by showing how women are inescapably drawn to meat. Even after they have had sex and are then pregnant, this need is only increased not satisfied.

Pregnancy therefore firmly connects women and meat. That is not to say that no men eat the meat. In fact, one Puritan man is shown to be a hypocrite by deploring the eating of it then eating more than anyone else: 'how her pig works; two and a half he eat to his share!' (3.6.46-47). However, the connection to women is stronger, since they are seen to be weaker as a sex. Win's husband must 'satisfy your wife's frailty' or longing (3.2.89). Since a woman can long for meat, she is so weak she 'may long for anything' (3.6.8-9), such as sex. 'She that will venture herself into the fair and a pig box will admit any assault, be assured of that' (3.2.138-140). Exposing yourself to eating meat at the fair can lead to exposing yourself to much more.

As well as the meat side of the meat-sex relationship, Win also humorously represents the sex side. By the end of the play, she is recruited as a prostitute. According to Maus, her 'capitulation is not a knowing choice; it is the mute insurgence of bodies incontinent in every sense of the word'.<sup>157</sup> It may be that sometimes, for some characters in this play, prostitution is too shocking to name, meaning that she could not object to it – it is hard to protest to something you cannot name. She is leaky because she needs to urinate in the play – being ashamed to name her need directly, she uses the euphemism 'what-sha'-call-'em' (3.6.121). This euphemism is comic in the sense that, like the phrase 'you know what', it refers to an open secret that

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<sup>157</sup> Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, Bevington (gen. ed.), p. 965.



everyone knows but feels shame in naming directly. She is taken to Ursula, who addresses every bodily need. Mistress Overdo, who also gets recruited as a prostitute, is another woman whose need for urination is portrayed onstage. She is also ashamed: when told to speak out, she replies 'I cannot with modesty speak it out, but – (*She whispers to him.*)' (4.4.194-196) and is directed to Ursula's chamberpot. This is another example of the comedy of *praeteritio* and leaves the audience with a euphemistic gap to fill in themselves.

The male hypocritical Puritan, Busy, connects themes of inappropriate appetite for meat and garrulousness.<sup>158</sup> This demonstrates that both traits were not just associated with women. On the other hand, it could be argued Busy is behaving in stereotypically (not ideal) feminine ways. In the carnivalesque atmosphere of the fair, the comedy is provided by respectable women taking on the role of prostitutes, Puritans behaving in an un-Puritan manner, and men acting like disreputable women in their meat consumption and garrulousness. Although, if women are meat, it could be argued it is only natural for men to consume meat as they would sexually consume a woman. The carnival and its depiction of meat is an excuse for Jonson to attack Puritans, so instead of a world turned upside down in their case it reveals the way outer Puritanism (for Jonson) hides inner debauchery.

Meat and sex are again comically intertwined in this play when it is thought men have 'bacon a gammon' under their cloaks (5.4.278). There is also reference to a proverbial phrase for marital harmony, 'To fetch a flick of bacon from Dunmow', with the line 'she will not be taken, | After sack and fresh herring, with your Dunmow bacon' (5.4.281-282). This proverb originated from the practice in the Essex town of Dunmow which awarded married couples a side of bacon, according to Bevington, 'if they could prove that they had passed a year without quarrelling'.<sup>159</sup> It could be argued here that scandalous sex of the kind most often compared to meat is the opposite of the type of sex involved in marital harmony. However, it is significant that meat is involved with multiple types of human and sexual relationships in early modern culture and comedy.

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<sup>158</sup> This will come into my discussion of silence in the Conclusion section 6.1.

<sup>159</sup> Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, Bevington (gen. ed.), p. 1057.

It is not just pork meat that is used to signify sex and prostitution in *Bartholomew Fair*. As in *Chaste Maid*, poultry is linked to whores. Ursula complains 'We are undone for want of fowl i'the fair, here' (4.5.14), meaning prostitutes (and with possible wordplay on 'fowl' and 'foul'). Quail and wenches are used synonymously (4.5.16) and women are persuaded to become birds of the game (4.5.17-18). The pun on fowl or foul is continued in 'All the foul i'the fair, I mean all the dirt in Smithfield', referring to fowl and whores (5.1.4-6). Women are also called birds when men say they had 'Best fall off with our birds' (5.6.10) and a wife may be sprung or flushed from cover like a game bird (5.6.24). Prostitutes at the fair are 'Barthol'mew birds' (4.5.13), reinforcing the bestial and meat-like connotations of comically scandalous sex.

Sharpham's and Marston's plays also feature the metaphorical field of food and sex. In *Cupid's Whirligig*, a female character talks in a way linking food and sex: 'but come shal's goe to dinner and see what stomacke I have to by vittales, for y faith I have none to a husband: I would not taste a morsell of man for any money'. Her friend says 'O that's because thou art not hungrie' to which she admits 'Tis true indeed, a little bit would fill my bellie' (sig.F3<sup>r</sup>). Tasting a morsel of man for many also combines money with food and sex.<sup>160</sup>

Sharpham has a line which may have been censored like the cut-off lines in Middleton.<sup>161</sup> Sir Troublesome states that he hates his wife more than the worst sin there is. His friend asks 'And I pra'y which sinne doe you moste hate?' to which he replies 'That which is moste like her, which is thou wilt repeate – ' then a line cuts him off (sig.F6<sup>v</sup>). The men then discuss sins – when they reach 'leachery' they call it a lady and say it is the 'suckingst sinne that a man can bee acquainted with', which can lead to consequences nine months later, especially for Troublesome's wife 'for nought can quench her thirst of lust' (sig.G<sup>r</sup>). The word suckingst is written with a long s which looks like an f, so there is a play on 'fuck'. Even though this joke would only be fully exposed to readers rather than viewing audiences, the two words still rhyme so one can recall the other, especially in the context of discussing sin. The

<sup>160</sup> Marston also has examples of the belly linked to sexual matters which are analysed below.

<sup>161</sup> Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds): 3.3.116-117, 4.1.228, 4.1.232, 4.1.263, 5.4.116-117.

phrase 'thirst of lust' contributes to the metaphorical field of food/drink and sex. The same is true of 'shee hath fild her bellie with something that stood against her stomacke, but doost not thinke tis my childe' (sig.G2<sup>r</sup>). Women can either fill their bellies with food or a baby after sex.

One of *The Fawn's* characters lists aphrodisiacs and sexual stimulants, calling them 'perpetual meats' (2.1.152). The metaphorical field of meat and sex operates comically here by using meats interchangeably with sexual material. Some euphemism highlights the difference between sex and the thing it is compared to – here the similarity is highlighted. The same is true of 'meats that make the original of man most sharp and taking' (2.1.163-164), referring to male fertility and seed. Lustful passions are frequently called appetites (4.1.397), linking appetite for food to appetite for sex. Since both men and women need to eat, it is almost cruel to compare sex to food when women were frowned upon for feeling a lustful appetite – if it is on a par with the need to consume food, logically it should be equally acceptable for both genders.

This is also the case in *The Dutch Courtesan*, where it is said 'Things hoped with fear and got with strugglings are men's high pleasures when duty pales and flats their appetite' (4.1.37-39), with 'duty' referring to dutiful sex with one's wife.<sup>162</sup> One character in *The Fawn* is said to be 'Heated with meats, high fed with lustful ease' (2.1.570), meaning they are stimulated by food. The 'expense of our heat, and the crinkling of our hams' (4.1.403-404) is used to mean the sexual wrinkling of thighs, as Blostein explains.<sup>163</sup> Women are said to have 'feeble hams' so that they must lie down, with a pun on 'lie' (5.1.80). When talking about fathering children, there is mention of 'a huge store of veal and fresh beef, blown up in their flesh' (2.1.166-167). This phrase uses meat flesh to recall the blowing up of human flesh, specifically male genitalia.

Continuing with meat and sex in this play, it is said of one of the characters that 'His youth spent his fodder so fast on others' cattle that he

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<sup>162</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 73. Similarly, in *The Dutch Courtesan*, 'service' means 'duty' with sexual innuendo in the line 'I offer my service, forsooth' (3.1.194). On the surface this sounds perfectly polite and even noble; yet, underneath, there is sexual humour. Talking of sex in terms of duty is a joke featured in the texts in chapter three.

<sup>163</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, pp. 194-195.

now wants for his own in winter' (2.1.188-189). Blostein highlights how in George Wilkins' *The Miseries of Enforced Marriage* (1607), 'the sexually bankrupt Ilford' is described as 'Kex, dryde Kex [a sapless husk or stem], that in summer ha bin so liberal to fodder other mens cattle, and scarce have enough to keepe your own in Winter'.<sup>164</sup> The comparison of cattle to women, and therefore meat to sex, is clear. There is also a clear link here to Middleton, whose Sir Oliver Kix fails to produce children and is named accordingly. In Marston's play, in contrast to the sexually bankrupt character, one man proclaims he is 'fain to supply', as in sexual service, and 'I am supplied' (2.1.190), which could mean, as Blostein suggests, he is well-provided for in sexual prowess.<sup>165</sup> Meat imagery is used to point to both sexual prowess and sexual lacking.

We have an example of meat and sex in *The Dutch Courtesan*, in a similar way to the prostitutes in *Bartholomew Fair*, when 'the cony-catching Cocledomy' (1.1.45-46) consorts sexually with 'his instrument of fornication, the bawd Mistress Mary Faugh' and 'Good poultry was their food' (1.1.14-17). She is also described as 'my worshipful, rotten, rough-bellied bawd!' (1.2.3), (where 'rotten' means diseased from sex) so a woman in a sexual profession is linked to matters of the belly. As in *The Fawn*, sexual passion is often referred to as appetite (1.1.91). Food and sex are also combined in the suggestion that a lady-in-waiting samples food and drink before presenting it, symbolising, as Crane suspects, the mistress' lovers as she becomes pregnant.<sup>166</sup> Copulation is at one point called 'the belly-act' (1.2.73), which also serves to link it to food, and 'piece of flesh' means in-season game but is also an innuendo (3.3.23-24).<sup>167</sup> Also, 'ravenous wenches', in this case male wenchers, are also called 'all-fles[h]-lovers' who, 'swallow all the flesh, all the meat, at once' (5.1.26)<sup>168</sup> and who lecherously love all the flesh. Again, it is men consuming the flesh of women. One woman says to a man, with sexual innuendo, 'I have a piece of mutton and a featherbed for you at all times' (5.3.93-94). Sex, which would presumably take place in the featherbed, is

<sup>164</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 114.

<sup>165</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 114.

<sup>166</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 12.

<sup>167</sup> This is a phrase often used by other Renaissance writers, as shown in chapter three section 3.3.

<sup>168</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 92.

linked to mutton, a word frequently used in the same way by Middleton. Women are therefore portrayed as providers of (not necessarily enjoyers of) sex and food, two of the basic human needs.

Drink is also linked to sex in *The Dutch Courtesan*, when one man is told 'You have been a broacher of profane vessels; you have made us drink of the juice of the whore of Babylon' (5.3.103-104) – profane vessels meaning both wine-casks and women's bodies.<sup>169</sup> This same man is called a 'great jumbler' and is told to 'remember the sins of your nights!' (5.3.110-111). As Crane points out, "jumble" is also slang for "copulate", and both the adulterating of wine and illicit sex take place at night'.<sup>170</sup> In this way the sexual pleasure of the flesh is symbolically linked to the bodily need for food and drink. Here they share the characteristic of going beyond the fundamental need to sinful excess. Instead of drinking to merely survive, for example, characters go further and drink to misbehave. Similarly, they do not just have sex within marriage to procreate, but in a deviant and scandalous manner such as with prostitutes (which, in the world of the plays, almost becomes the norm). Sexual deviance in these texts is often linked to linguistic deviance, such as changing the meaning of words.

In *The Dutch Courtesan*, women are called the 'dainties or second course of heaven's curious workmanship' (1.1.139). The implication is that, as Crane describes, 'created second, after man, they are the sweets to follow the main dish',<sup>171</sup> so food and sex are linked again. Women are turned into objects to be enjoyed, or in this case, eaten. The biblical imagery is continued with talk of eating the forbidden fruit (1.2.16). One man in *The Dutch Courtesan* says he is 'going the way of all flesh' (1.1.80-81). This is referring to, as Crane highlights, death as in orgasm<sup>172</sup> and recalls meat as well as being a phrase with religious overtones. Religious allusions in metaphors of meat can reflect the role of meat in Christianity. The Reformation complicated the issue of the body and blood of Christ, but there remained the symbolism of flesh representing sin, death, and lust. This is an accessible use of imagery which everyone would be familiar with.

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<sup>169</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 107.

<sup>170</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 107.

<sup>171</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 14.

<sup>172</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 11.

Meat is also a metaphor for sex in *Your Five Gallants*:

Ah, the goodly virginities that have been cut up in my house, and the goodly patrimonies that have lain like sops in the gravy. And when those sops were eaten, yet the meat was kept whole for another, and another, and another. For, as in one pie twenty may dip their sippets, so upon one woman forty may consume their patrimonies. (1.1.125-131)

There is a direct link made between women to have sex with and food to eat in a very derogatory manner. They are mutually serving as metaphors for each other, so sex is a metaphor for food and vice versa. Eating the sops or sleeping with a woman once does not prevent future enjoyment of the same meat and woman.

The common metaphor of riding to mean sex<sup>173</sup> is also connected to the metaphorical field of meat and sex in *The Dutch Courtesan* with Crispinella talking of 'to wring the withers of my gouty, barked, spigot-frigging jumbler of elements' (3.2.37-39); as Crane explains, 'withers' is the 'ridge between a horse's shoulder-blades' and 'frigging' is slang for masturbation.<sup>174</sup> It also refers to fiddling with the casks of wine to adulterate it (see above),<sup>175</sup> so links food and sex as well. In this way, in the play, more than one metaphorical field can be employed at a time, since the audience is familiar with this common imagery so can keep up with the fast jumps and overlaps from one to the other. This is consistent with modern linguistic theory, where audiences accept extended metaphors more than one-off singular examples.

Jonson's *Epicene* is not as obsessed with women being like meat as *Bartholomew Fair*, but the subject is brought up. Some characters, for example, plot to disrupt Morose's wedding banquet by luring the women to another location, which they believe is bound to mean the meat is removed as well, as the two are inseparable: 'I'll undertake the directing of all the lady guests thither, and then the meat must follow' (2.6.33-34). Women are also

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<sup>173</sup> There is more discussion of this in section 5.14.

<sup>174</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 63.

<sup>175</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 63.

shown to be unable to resist meat and food in *Epicene*'s line 'He is never without a spare banquet or sweetmeats in his chamber, for their women alight at and come up to, for a bait' (1.3.40-42). The line 'If she be fair, young, and vegetous, no sweetmeats ever drew more flies' (2.2.63-64) also links women and meat or food in *Epicene*, this time by likening female attraction to the appeal of food – so women are both attracted by meat and attractive like meat. Also, the masculine Mrs. Otter is the one who allows her husband his 'horse meat and man's meat' (3.1.35). In *Bartholomew Fair*, it is not necessarily the case that women are attractive like meat, but they are certainly linked. Indeed, of the two Jonson plays featured in this chapter, it is *Bartholomew Fair* which has a real obsession with this humorous metaphorical field.

Food and sex is an example of a metaphorical field that is also used by Troterel. The sexual humour moves into the kitchen in *Les Corrivaux*. One character, Almerin, begins by bragging about his sexual prowess:

C'est pourquoy, s'il vous plaist, jouons de la braguette!  
 J'ay le plus bel engin qu'on sçauroit jamais voir,  
 Qui travaille des mieux, qui faict bien son devoir.  
 Comme vous allez voir si vous voulez permettre  
 Que dans... vous m'entendez, je le puisse un peu mettre. (2.3)

[This is why, please, let's play the codpiece! I have the finest tool that anyone could ever see, that works wonders, which does its duty well. As you will see if you will allow me to put a little in... you understand me.]

Joubert uses the word 'engin' to refer to both male and female genitalia, as section 4.1 discussed. This quotation also talks of sex in terms of duty, an issue I analysed in sections 3.2 and 3.3. We therefore have the same types of imagery being used in sexual humour from France and England, such as Harington's text. Perret points out how Almerin cannot show his beautiful tool so transfers his pride to describing it.<sup>176</sup> Almerin addresses Clorette and

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<sup>176</sup> Perret, *Old Comedy*, p. 145.

knows that her lack of prudishness means she will not be shocked by his language. He proclaims:

Ha! ha! le voilà bon! Et quoy! vous avez honte  
D'en ouyr discourir, et vous ne tenez conte  
De le faire cent coups, voire à beau cul levé,  
Avec votre Brillant qui besongne en crevé? (2.3)

[Ha ha, that's exactly. And what! you are ashamed to hear speak of it and you don't take account of doing it a hundred times yes even with your arse up with your Brillant who labours til exhaustion.]

Once again, we have the imagery of labour or work. 'Besongner' is standard sexual vocabulary, defined by Cotgrave as being both 'to work, labour' and to 'leacher with'.<sup>177</sup> As the scene continues, he eagerly attempts to seduce her. This is where the kitchen metaphor comes in.

Faisons donc autrement sans dire une parole:  
Que je monte sur vous et que je vous accole;  
Et puis, si de hasard il vient quelque espion,  
Nous luy ferons signe avec le croupion  
Qu'il n'approche de nous, ains qu'il nous laisse faire  
Tout à l'aise du corps ce beau jeu cullinaire. (2.3)

[Let's do otherwise without a word: let me climb on you and embrace you; and then, if by chance some spy should come by, we'll signal him with the rump so that he doesn't approach us, but that he leave us fully to delight our bodies with this sweet game.]

The word 'game' might suggest that this passage belongs in the section on games and sex. However, 'cullinaire' is an untranslatable pun with a double meaning. It means, according to Cotgrave, 'of, or belonging to, a kitchen', but

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<sup>177</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.



is also a play on 'cul' or 'arse, bumme, tail'.<sup>178</sup> We have the two bodily needs of food and sex combined in both French and English comedies.

### 5.7 The Metaphorical Field of Language and Sex, Including French Drama

Language and sex, on the one hand, are what this entire thesis is exploring – both in terms of language as in vocabulary and language as in English, French, and Latin versus the vernacular. On the other hand, it is a specific metaphorical field. Language can be symbolically involved in sex, or can directly represent it or body parts involved in it. In *The Fawn*, for example, the word 'prick' is bawdily used to mean a punctuation mark (2.1.430); so a sexual body part and a feature of language are referred to with the same word, in this metaphorical field.

There are, for the most part, two types of jokes in this metaphorical field. One features sex which involves language or vice versa. The other has sex directly represented by something linguistic. Table 2 demonstrates how the field of language and sex can work, with Sir Walter being surprised that he has not transmitted the English language through sex like a disease. This is an example of language being involved in sex. Similarly, in *Epicene*, Truewit says 'all your patrimony will be too little for the guests that must be invited to hear her speak Latin and Greek, and you must lie with her in those languages too if you will please her' (2.2.72-75), punning on pleasing a woman and lying with her using language. Language is linked to sex here in a manner akin to Sir Walter's declaration. Also, Touchwood Junior should 'utter all' on his wedding night in *Chaste Maid*, a phrase with several meanings, including to speak and to climax sexually. This example is more of language directly representing sex. Both Sharpham and Marston link sex and language, with Sharpham likening writing a play to being pregnant (see above), so having play-writing with language involving a sex-like process, and Marston constantly combining the two.

Language represents sex in all the English plays with the same joke – a play on the word 'lie' to mean both lie as in using words to not tell the truth and lie to have sex. It is a pun and a comic sexual euphemism, since one

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<sup>178</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

layer of meaning overlays another but the underneath meaning is still transparent. The attempted seducer of Lady Troublesome in *Cupid's Whirligig* is disguised as Captain Wouldlie, a name which entails both meanings. The same joke is made when the lady says 'ile lye for no mans pleasure' (sig.E2<sup>r</sup>). In *The Fawn* the same joke appears when a woman 'only lies well' (2.1.376) and in *The Dutch Courtesan* with 'Lie with you? O, no! You men will out-lie any woman' (2.2.124). This is an example of euphemistic double meaning, with the hidden meaning not actually being very concealed. The word does not need to change to take on different meanings. The joke works by directly representing sex by lying verbally.<sup>179</sup>

Language and sex as a field is combined with other metaphorical fields when Crispinella's suitor says to her in *The Dutch Courtesan* 'If you will be mine, you shall be your own. My purse, my body, my heart is yours; only be silent in my house, modest at my table, and wanton in my bed' (4.1.79-81). This is related to language and sex, and silence, as he wants the sharp-tongued woman to be silent vocally yet not modest sexually. It also links money to his body and contrasts food to sex, as he wishes her to be modest regarding one but not the other. There is potential for comedy, as with other outspoken women defying male expectation, in her clear lack of vocal silence. *The Dutch Courtesan* also links language and sex when one sexually deviant character is described as 'an upright dealer with his neighbours, and their wives speak good things of him' (5.3.117-118). 'Upright' puns on erections and the wives speaking good things of him, because he has sex with them, links language and sex. Sexual success leads to linguistic success in the form of a good sexual reputation. Language and sex are also talked of together in *Cupid's Whirligig* in the statement that 'wordes are to weake to wipe them [horns] off, when deede have put them on' (sig.B3<sup>v</sup>). Additionally, when a suspected father of an unborn child insists the mother is pregnant 'not of my word' (sig.G6<sup>v</sup>), this hints at the metaphorical field of language and sex, since she is not pregnant by his word or seed.

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<sup>179</sup> The double meaning of the two types of 'lying' has been observed by Donald Perret as well: he highlights how Clorette in *Les Corrivaux* is capable of lying with and lying to anyone. Donald Perret, *Old Comedy in the French Renaissance 1576-1620* (Geneva: Droz, 1992), p. 140.

In *Les Corrivaux*, sex and talking are linked in the following lines. ‘Faut-il tant de langage | Puis que l’amour n’est rien qu’un naturel desir?’ (1.2) [Is so much talk needed since love is nothing but a natural desire?]. By saying love and sexual desire could replace talk, the lines put the two on a par where one can take the place of the other. It is almost as if talking about sex could be equivalent to the sexual act. This sentiment regarding love being natural is repeated later in the comedy. Perret points out how nature and natural are key words and how nature is repeatedly referred to in this text as the best teacher.<sup>180</sup> This is indeed the case. At one point, Clorette is quizzed on her sexual experiences. She replies with the same feigning of chastity that I analysed from *Gillette* early in this chapter. ‘Jamais je n’eu d’amour aucune connoissance. | Mais comment est-il fait? Est-il gris, ou bien vert? | A-t-il le corps de poil ou de plume couvert?’(1.2) [I’ve never had any knowledge of love. How is it made? Is it grey, or even green? Does it have a body covered in hair or feathers?]. Eventually, however, she reveals her true lascivious self and, in doing so, also refers to the natural right that is love:

Mais il faut que premier tout le saoul je m’en donne,

Car par droit naturel cela nous est permis

D’avoir quand nous voulons un grand nombre d’amis.

Un seul pas ne suffit et ne peut satisfaire

A cela qui nous est plaisant est nécessaire. (1.2)

[I must first give myself all satisfaction, because through natural right we are permitted to have a great many lovers. A single step is not enough and cannot satisfy that which is pleasant and necessary to us.]

The argument that sex is pleasant and necessary is also made by Marston’s characters (see section 5.2). It is also the viewpoint taken by Joubert, Brantôme, and Jacques Duval, regarding comic sexual language (as I discussed in the third and fourth chapters) – that it has an inherent pleasure to it. Section 4.1 also discussed how Joubert thinks this type of language is necessary and in section 2.4 I demonstrated Montaigne’s thoughts on this

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<sup>180</sup> Perret, *Old Comedy*, p. 141.

subject being natural, necessary, and right. This quotation, therefore, makes similar points to other writers in this thesis. Clorette says she had a rendezvous with Brillant and will 'ventrouiller' with him (1.2), which, according to Cotgrave, means 'to tumble up and down in the mire'.<sup>181</sup> As in the examples from *Gillette* above, this feigning of chastity behaves in the same way as comic sexual euphemism – paying lip service to the rules of decorum while really revelling in the taboo beneath. The belief that love and sex are natural is, therefore, central in this comedy. The fact that a key belief in the comedy is mentioned early on in relation to talking is significant for the metaphorical field of language and sex.

A comprehensive study of Shakespeare's use of sexual double-entendres lies beyond the scope of this thesis. However, *Much Ado About Nothing* can shed some light on the issue of speech representing sex.<sup>182</sup> Like *Epicene*, it is a play concerned with men's ability to ruin with words and slander women's reputation, as well as hearing and overhearing, since another version of the title could be *Much Ado About Noting* (where noting means overhearing). In this play and *Epicene*, talking and conversing are used as a euphemism for sexual acts. The innocent Hero, when accused of having sex with a man who is not her fiancé, declares 'Prove you that any man with me conversed | At hours unmeet, or that I yesternight | Maintained the change of words with any creature' (4.1.183-185). Language and sex are therefore intertwined in a similar way to the metaphorical field in *Chaste Maid*, both here and in *Epicene*, with 'you must lie with her in those languages [...] if you will please here' (2.2.74-75). The act of talking and using language is equated with the sexual act. It could also be the case, as 'nothing' can refer to genitalia, that *Much Ado's* title also contains a euphemism.<sup>183</sup>

### 5.8 Mentula Jokes

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<sup>181</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

<sup>182</sup> William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 569-593. Speech also represents sex in *Epicene*. See the Conclusion section 6.1.

<sup>183</sup> See the Conclusion section 6.1 for more. Luckyj, *Gender and Silence*, pp. 66-67.

Here I examine a branch of language and sex which appears in Sharpham's and Marston's two plays – jokes using *mentula*. This is a word used by Joubert and Rabelais, as I demonstrated in chapter four section 4.1. Since it is an obscene word from Latin, it is on one level a euphemism since it restricts who can understand it, but it can also be used to make clear misogynistic points. Most editors define this word as 'penis', as Peter Davison does.<sup>184</sup> According to the *OED*, it does indeed most often mean penis but can also mean clitoris,<sup>185</sup> so creates gender confusion – in both discussions of Latin grammar and people. In Sharpham's play, four schoolboys, who seemingly serve no other purpose in the story than to provide linguistic play, display their learning. First they recite that

1 Nomnati o hic, haec, hoc.

2 A nowne if the name of a thing.

3 Amo, amass, amavi, amare.

4 In speech be these eight partes. (sig.K2<sup>v</sup>)

They use words such as 'thing' and 'parts', which can (sometimes but not always) also be euphemisms for genitals, although this does not appear to be especially bawdy. That changes, however, when they are then questioned 'what part of speech is *mentula*' and state 'A nowne adjective'. When asked why, they respond 'Because it stands not by himselfe, but it requires another word to be joyned with it' (sig.K3<sup>r</sup>). The penis analogy is clear, and firmly likens grammatical rules to sexual activity. Comedy is found in the idea of there being rules of language and sex to follow and break.

Similarly, in *The Fawn* discussion occurs 'all to find but why *mentula* should be the feminine gender, since the rule is *Propia qua maribus tribuuntur mascula dicas* [Things properly attributed to males should be called masculine]' (4.1.215-217). This is taken from William Lily's Latin grammar book.<sup>186</sup> This tells us the intended audience for this joke would most likely be educated and male. The use of this rule in the play comments on the dual-

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<sup>184</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Davison, p. 112.

<sup>185</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p.

<sup>186</sup> William Lily, *Latin Grammar* (Milton Keanes: General Books LLC, 2012), p. 13.

gendered nature of the word, and plays with the joke of *mentula* going from men into women, so being really a woman's attribute. The *OED*'s earliest examples of this word come from *The Dutch Courtesan* and Rabelais: 'drawing out his *mentul* into the open aire he so bitterly all-to-bepist them'.<sup>187</sup> In *The Dutch Courtesan*, A 'plump-rumped wench' has 'a breast softer than a courtier's tongue, and old lady's gums, or an old man's *mentula*' (4.3.2-4). Crane describes this as 'Rather literary Latin slang for "cock"',<sup>188</sup> but fails to notice the dual-gendered connotations – here, for example, it is applied to a woman. The non-specificity regarding gender has much potential for humour.

There are also examples of jokes using this word from Renaissance France. The early seventeenth-century comedian known as Bruscombille asks the following in a prologue first published in 1613:

pourquoy *Mentula*, qui signifie le plus beau membre qu'ait l'homme, pour perpetuer & faire fourmiller nature humaine, est du feminine genre, veu qu'il est propre à l'homme & luy appartient? Responce sur-le-champ. Ce beau & digne membre appartient veritablement à l'homme: Mais à cause qu'il est employé à travailler pour la femme de jour & de nuict, on l'a fait *feminini generis. Per quem regulam? Esto femineum, &c.*<sup>189</sup>

[why is *Mentula*, which signifies man's most beautiful member, for perpetuating human nature and making it abound, of the feminine gender, when it is peculiar to man and belongs to him? Immediate answer: this beautiful and honourable member truly belongs to man, but because it is employed to work for woman day and night, one has made it of the feminine gender. By which rule? "Should be feminine", etc.]

This demonstrates a certain level of gender confusion regarding *mentula*. It is not clearcut whether this belongs purely to one gender. Similarly, an epigram from France demands

<sup>187</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p.

<sup>188</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 78.

<sup>189</sup> Bruscombille, *Œuvres completes*, ed. by Hugh Roberts and Annette Tomarken (Paris: Champion, 2012), p. 416. With thanks to Hugh Roberts for this and the following translations.

Dicite Grammatici, cur masculina nomina cunnus

Et cur foemineum mentula nomen habet?

Sic ego, sic aliquis senior de gente veranda

Rettulit, atollens longa supercilia,

Mentula foeminei gerit usque negocia sexus,

Inde genus merito vindicat illa sibi.

Indefessus agit res qui sine fine virorum

Masculina non temere nomina cunnus [h]abet.<sup>190</sup>

[Grammarians, tell me why the *cunnus* is masculine while the *mentula* is feminine? For me, and for any more senior representative of your venerable sort of people, here is what we put forward, frowning with our thick eyebrows: the only concern of the *mentula* is the woman's sex, so it normally claims for itself the feminine gender; the *cunnus* without pause nor tiredness devotes itself to the male thing so is, with good reason, of the masculine gender.]

This type of joke is therefore part of a pan-European tradition of schoolboy humour based on Latin grammar and therefore only accessible to those with a similar education. The suggestion is that people, especially women, are interested only in sex. Words like *cunnus* and *mentula* are used when their vernacular equivalents would be taboo. These jokes are aimed at educated men, and come from educated men as demonstrated by Sharpham's grammar school attendance, Marston going to Oxford, and the legal background of both Sharpham and Marston.<sup>191</sup> Marston's exposure to lawyers may have influenced his plays' legal language. *Mentula* jokes transfer such comedy from the classroom to the stage. Bruscombille plays on a rule from a well-known grammar book by the French writer Johannes Despauterius.<sup>192</sup> William Lily's Latin grammar book, used in *The Fawn*, is an English

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<sup>190</sup> Jean Second, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Roland Guillot (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007), p. 258.

<sup>191</sup> Robert E. Brettle, 'John Marston, Dramatist at Oxford, 1591(?)–1584, 1609', *The Review of English Studies*, 3 (1927), 398–405 (p. 398).

<sup>192</sup> Johannes Despauterius, *Contextus Universae Grammatices Despauterianae* (Paris: Estienne, 1535), p. 13, p. 6.

equivalent. These jokes are a feature of a male community which puts itself over and above women.

The use of Latin provides a socially acceptable veil that some can see through, and by the use of which others can understand something lewd is being said even if they are not literate or do not know the intricacies of Latin grammar. *Mentula* jokes are therefore both explicit and have extra hidden meaning. Like jokes using the law, which also play with rules and are often aimed at men, these jokes bring serious topics down a peg by mocking their learning. By turning this learning into a joke, writers demonstrate their cleverness. They turn the dry and boring subject matter into entertainment using student humour. However, while they play with rules of gender in grammar and human interaction, they also confirm them. In this way they are more than just jokes, as jokes nearly always are. They enforce male control and the depiction of women as unchaste (using one side of the stereotype of women as brazen hussies or chaste perfect beings), so can be construed as unpleasantly misogynistic. Jokes therefore also maintain certain social standards.

Strikingly, *mentula* originally euphemised 'tail', as the second chapter (section 2.3) outlined, a word used often by Marston. (The word 'penis' is also from the Latin for 'tail').<sup>193</sup> Bawdy double meaning comes in *The Fawn* in the form of 'this all of excellency has in the tail of all, a woman' (1.2.66-67), where tail means both 'conclusion' and sexual body parts. Similarly, Crane highlights how, in *The Dutch Courtesan*, 'wagtail' (4.3.6) means whore, pointing to 'tail' meaning 'buttocks'<sup>194</sup> and there is also the phrase 'fit as a punk's tail' (5.3.4), where a punk is a prostitute. The word 'tail' clearly lends itself to many dirty meanings. It is also used in a bawdy sense in *The Fawn*'s line 'all that can whehee or wag the tail, are, upon greivous pains of their back, summoned to be assistant in that session of love' (4.1.260-262) where 'back' is also sexual. Near the end of *The Dutch Courtesan*, there is a song about cuckolds and maids on their backs dreaming of kisses (4.5.64-77). The song advises the maids to keep 'down your smocks' and their thighs close (4.5.75-77), which is another instance of the clothes and sex metaphorical field using smocks

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<sup>193</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p.

<sup>194</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 78.



included in Table 2. It also has a missing word: 'Maids in your night-rails, | Look well to your light – '. Judging by the rhyming pattern, this would probably be 'tails', which are called 'light' (4.5.72-73). Crane suggests the word is left blank 'perhaps because the audience knew the song and could supply it by joining in'.<sup>195</sup> If it was 'tails', it could be a comic sexual euphemism. Such jokes using 'tails', if you have the right knowledge of Latin, have connotations of *mentula*.

### 5.9 The Metaphorical Field of Money/Business and Sex

The metaphor of business for sex commercialises women. Both Middleton plays share this field, but it is again more extended in *Chaste Maid*. There are examples in *Your Five Gallants*, however, such as 'One that sells maidenheads by wholesale' punning on 'hole-sale' (5.1.103). This is an instance of when an apparently innocent term is used to indicate something much less innocent, so is a pun which involves euphemising. In *Bartholomew Fair*, Grace, a ward, is found a husband against her wishes in a business transaction. Money and sex are used in *The Fawn* at one point in a similar way to in Middleton, where passing counterfeit money is symbolically linked to sex. When discussing how 'he that loveth many [women], if once known, | Is justly plagued to be beloved of none' (5.1.259-260), 'An act against counterfeiting of Cupid's royal coin, and abusing his subjects with false money' (5.1.261-262) is proposed. Blostein highlights how many Tudor laws were against counterfeiting, one of which specifically concerning foreign coins.<sup>196</sup> This could be the inspiration of the following punning, which it is useful to include in full:

In most lamentable form complaineth to your blind celsitude your distressed orators, the women of the world, that in respect that many spend-thrifts, who having exhausted and wasted their substance, and in stranger parts have with empty shows treasonably purchased ladies' affections, without being of ability to pay them for it with current money,

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<sup>195</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 88.

<sup>196</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 227.

and therefore have deceitfully sought to satisfy them with counterfeit metal, to the great displeasure and no small loss of your humblest subjects: May it therefore with your pitiful assent be enacted, that what lord, knight, or gentleman soever, knowing himself insufficient, bankrupt, exhausted, and wasted, shall traitorously dare to entertain any lady as wife or mistress, *ipso facto* to be severed from all commercement with women, his wife or mistress in that state offending to be forgiven with a pardon of course, and himself instantly to be pressed to sail in the ship of fools, without either bail or mainprize. (5.1.263-281)

This passage opens with fustian language which is deliberately pompous and obscure. It can be used to disguise sexual content but here the meaning still comes through. The phrase 'stranger parts' recalls foreign money, as well as 'parts' being a word that can refer to the 'shameful parts'. Being financially bankrupt is used to represent being sexually insufficient. There is also double meaning to 'substance', which on the one hand signifies goods, means, or wealth, and on the other implies virility. As the passage continues, this metaphor is elaborated upon.<sup>197</sup> If men are too 'exhausted', they cannot physically share their virility with women. Currency is equated with sexual prowess so bankruptcy makes you insufficient as a man in more ways than one. Matters of love and counterfeit money are further entwined with 'An act against forgers of love letters, false braggarts of ladies' favours, and vain boasters of counterfeit tokens' (5.1.297-299), Zuccone's refusal to 'counterfeitly love your women' (5.1.338), and women being abused 'with counterfeit faces' (5.1.371-372). The above examples from Middleton demonstrate how 'counterfeit' can be significant for comic sexual euphemism, which is a type of counterfeit use of language with its non-literal imagery.

In *The Dutch Courtesan*, one character's name, Cocledemoy, combines money and sex. Crane highlights how 'cockle-demois' meant 'shells of some kind representing money', and that perhaps 'that sense of the

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<sup>197</sup> Blostein states that the 'reader may determine the details of this ingeniously elaborated obscenity for himself'; Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 228; The argument that it is up to the reader to interpret suggests comic sexual obscenity is subjective. He is here talking to modern readers, and is shying away from fully analysing this passage.

counterfeit or the worthless goes together here with a pun on “cuckold + *moi*”.<sup>198</sup> Davison agrees that ‘Cocledemoy’ suggests ‘cuckoldry’.<sup>199</sup> Cocledemoy, therefore, is yet another whose name has comic sexual significance. Money and sex are also combined when ‘One that sells human flesh’, which also hints at meat and sex, is called ‘a money-creature’ and ‘mangonist’ (1.1.96-97), which is, according to Crane, a ‘furbisher up of inferior wares for sale’.<sup>200</sup> When sex is sold, the link to money is often unavoidable, yet these examples really emphasise it. The eponymous prostitute states that ‘Mine body must turn Turk for twopence’ (2.2.41-41), linking money and sex by saying she must, as Crane states, ‘engage in damnable practices (as a Turk, being an infidel, would be damned) for paltry gain’.<sup>201</sup> Of course, her very profession combines money and sex. The phrase ‘Only men give to loose’ (1.1.113) also links these two, as included in its many meanings (according to Crane) are give money to live loosely and lose all financially and sexually.<sup>202</sup> Debt and sexual partners are talked of in the same terminology when one woman says ‘I do lend some of them money; and full many fine men go upon my score’ (3.3.20-21), where ‘score’ means both tally of debt and the notching up of sexual partners.<sup>203</sup> Sexual events are almost synonymous with monetary issues here.

In this play, a bawd’s ‘shop has the best ware’ (1.2.36), which again links money or business to sex. She ‘sells divine virtues, as virginity, modesty, and such rare gems, and those not like a petty chapman [small trader], by retail, but like a great merchant’ (1.2.37-40) and ‘grows rich by others’ rising’ with obvious innuendo (1.2.49). The things she sells are easily seen-through euphemisms for sex. ‘O righteous income!’ (1.2.49-50) also has innuendo, since it can refer, as explained by Crane, to ‘the man’s ejaculation into the woman’.<sup>204</sup> Like Middleton, Marston has the ability to jump quickly from one metaphorical field to another, here following on from disease and sex<sup>205</sup> to

<sup>198</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 4.

<sup>199</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Davison, p. 95.

<sup>200</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 12.

<sup>201</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 36.

<sup>202</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 12.

<sup>203</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 65.

<sup>204</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 17.

<sup>205</sup> This is because these lines follow the exclamation on organ-bellows, quoted in the following section.

music and sex to money and sex.<sup>206</sup> Later on, both a man's goods and wife are called his 'wares' (3.3.13) in a way that also combines business with sex. As the analysis of food and sex showed, the linking of money and sex also has cross-over with the metaphorical field of meat and sex. The combination implies women are objects to be purchased, in some cases, like meat.

### 5.10 The Metaphorical Field of Disease and Sex

It is perhaps not surprising that sex is talked of in terms of disease and vice versa, since the former could easily lead to the latter. What is more striking is the way disease can both act as the thing euphemising and being euphemised. Venereal disease can be the socially scandalous subject matter that is too shocking to explicitly name, as with the following examples from *The Fawn*. On the other hand, sometimes it can be the more acceptable subject matter to use as a veil – a thin veil – over the discussion of sex. In *The Dutch Courtesan's* imagery outlined below, for example, it is more effective to highlight that a brothel causes much disease than to directly point out the rather obvious fact that it has a lot of sex taking place there – in this case, the disease is used as the euphemism, not the thing euphemised. Euphemism and metaphorical fields can use as a comparison to sex something very similar to it or something very different, each entailing their own humour. Sometimes the differences are striking at first glance then melt away when more closely examined. The metaphorical field of disease and sex is one where the euphemistic material is already similar in subject area to what it euphemises. Often this makes it less subtle and opaque.

There are many euphemisms for venereal diseases and their cures in *The Fawn*. The character Puttotta, whose name means 'a handsome plum checked wench' according to Florio's *World of Words* (1611),<sup>207</sup> is a laundress who also supplies food for footmen. Blostein suggests that she may also treat venereal disease.<sup>208</sup> This is supported by the phrasing in her character description of her being someone who 'diets footmen' (Interlocutors.19-20),

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<sup>206</sup> All of which have their own sections in this chapter – 5.10, 5.4, 5.9.

<sup>207</sup> John Florio, *1611 Italian/English Dictionary: Queen Anna's New World of Words*, <<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/florio/>> [accessed 03 Jan 2016], n.p.

<sup>208</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 76.

which has the double meaning of food provision and disease treatment, so links the fields food and sex to disease and sex. Later in the play *Sir Amoroso* 'takes the diet' (2.1.123), a euphemistic phrase for this treatment. In *The Dutch Courtesan*, 'diet' is said to be good for 'rheum', meaning both a cold and venereal disease (2.2.68). Also, at one point in *The Fawn* there is a list of comic euphemisms for venereal diseases: 'the hippout, the strangury, the fistula *in ano*' (1.2.193-194). A 'fistula' is, as Blostein explains, a 'long, narrow, suppurating canal of morbid origin in some part of the body', here the anus.<sup>209</sup> The use of Latin introduces another layer of linguistic veiling to this sexual topic, and adds a medical tone, so would most likely have been beyond some audience members. Illness is also a euphemism for sex when 'the falling sickness' (4.1.113-114) refers to epilepsy but with, as Blostein believes, a double-entendre.<sup>210</sup> This is because you fall to have sex – both physically and perhaps with a biblical reference. *The Fawn's* comic sexual euphemisms and jokes include the phrase 'a health as deep as a female' (2.1.44), which sounds obscene with its penetration connotations, and can be part of health and disease as a metaphorical field with sex.

As in *The Fawn*, there are sexual jokes using diseases in *The Dutch Courtesan*: 'my worshipful organ-bellows that fills the pipes, my fine rattling, phlegmy cough o' the lungs and cold with a pox' (1.2.21-23). As Crane outlines, syphilis or the pox 'gave one cold symptoms in the windpipes, the pipes filled with catarrh suggest organ pipes filled with air, the organ-bellows suggest inflation of the male organ by what is offered by a bawd'.<sup>211</sup> It is these lines which lead into lines on the bawd selling the best wares, mentioned above. The pipe imagery also hints at the metaphorical field of music and sex, as in *Chaste Maid* (1.1.2-5) and *Your Five Gallants* (2.1.45, 2.1.77, 2.1.93). Marston's brothel is said to have a 'house-surgeon' (2.2.69) as it is, as Crane puts it, 'so fertile a producer of disease that it needs its own doctor'.<sup>212</sup> The link to disease is firmly underlined. The world of disease and medicine is also recalled by the line 'Grace and mercy keep your syringe straight and your lotium unsplit!' (1.2.74-75), which, as Crane argues, has euphemisms for

<sup>209</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 91.

<sup>210</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 176.

<sup>211</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 16.

<sup>212</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 37.

erection and premature ejaculation.<sup>213</sup> Male sexual matters are put in a framework of phallic medical equipment. The bawd is called a 'clyster-pipe' (1.2.12), which is a tube for administering suppositories, implying she is, as Crane puts it, 'is the means whereby the customer enters the whore'.<sup>214</sup> Again, this is phrased as if it is a medical procedure. A whore is also called a 'suppository' (1.2.102) or 'supposita', Latin for 'placed underneath', and so, according to Crane, 'comes to be associated with other things placed underneath, even though a suppository strictly speaking enters and is not entered'.<sup>215</sup> According to the *OED*, suppository essentially meant the same thing in the early modern period as today.<sup>216</sup> The use of Latin aims the joke at an educated audience, although some lewd meaning was most likely conveyed to the uneducated.

### 5.11 The Metaphorical Field of War and Sex

Sharpham and Marston invoke the metaphorical field of war and sex – where sexual conquest is likened to combat, with the same dangers and victories. This bears weight for modern linguistic theory, where people are more likely to accept an extended metaphor. If a world is created within plays where sex is akin to war, individual euphemisms make more sense. For one thing, Sharpham mentions the commonplace of Venus and Mars, who binds her in his warlike arms (sig.E3<sup>f</sup>). A man posing as a soldier says he was 'hurt in the groine entring the breche' which has obvious sexual connotations. He also describes his occupation as having a 'maiden-head' (sig.E3<sup>f</sup>). Sir Troublesome is said to be 'with his wife like a cowardly Captaine in an towne of Garrison, feares everie assault, trembles at the battery, and doubts moste, least the gates should bee opened, and his enemie let it at midnight' (sig.C2<sup>v</sup>). The use of the euphemism gates or doors for female parts goes back to Roman times.<sup>217</sup> It is then elaborated that the knight fears his wife will sleep with courtiers, who 'though ye open the Fludgates of your bountie, and fill

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<sup>213</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 19.

<sup>214</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 16. See below for more on her.

<sup>215</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 20.

<sup>216</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p.

<sup>217</sup> Melissa Mohr, *Holy Sh\*t: A Brief History of Swearing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 18. See chapter four section 4.2.

them to the verie brimme, yet theile alwaies stand gaping for more' (sig.C2<sup>v</sup>). This portrays courtiers as very lustful, with 'standing' again implying erection. The elaborate extended metaphor about fortifications and sex is pretty explicit, and highlights the similarities between conquering an enemy and a sexual partner. Thus this supports other texts which view the court and its people as extraordinarily licentious and lascivious. The courtier character at one point dreams he is a flea in a bed hopping onto thighs (sig.K1<sup>v</sup>), which there was fear would cuckold husbands as outlined above, so courtiers are again portrayed as lustful.

Another example of the metaphorical field of war and sex comes in the form of euphemistic phrasing in *The Fawn*. Soldiers are said to be 'maimed or dismembered in love' (5.1.208). The fact that this is in the context of the wars of love gives, as Blostein considers, extra meaning to 'dismembered'.<sup>218</sup> This discussion quickly moves on to mistresses and amorousness, to reinforce the sexual nature of the conversation. This metaphorical field shares features with games and sex, in that it implies sex involves a winner and loser.

### 5.12 The Metaphorical Field of Clothes and Sex

This metaphorical field can serve to dehumanise women, reducing them only to what they are wearing. It also highlights the fact that clothing can act as either an invitation or barrier to sex. Sir Troublesome says he has 'spun a faire thread [...] to be a verry Baude, an arrant wittall' (sig.E1<sup>v</sup>). Spinning thread is linked with clothing. Sharpham's knight states he has sailed to cuckolds' haven, 'yet my saile was but a smocke' (sig.E1<sup>v</sup>), 'smock' being an important word for Middleton as well.<sup>219</sup> Sharpham too hints at sexual activity with the word smock, especially as it is in the context of cuckoldry. Clothes and sex are linked in *The Dutch Courtesan* when one man says his garments need to have their seams let out to accommodate the consequences of his desire (1.2.163-164). Like Sharpham, Marston uses the metaphorical field of clothes and sex with a smock. Zuccone, despairing at his wife's perceived infidelity, exclaims 'may she live to wear a foul smock even weeks together,

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<sup>218</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 224.

<sup>219</sup> See Table 2.

heaven, I beseech thee!' (2.1.312-313). Similarly, we have the line 'I will never [...] ruffle their bosoms, or tear their foul smocks' (5.1.341-342). There is a firm link between smocks and sexual subjects.

Similar imagery to a 'smock' being a loose woman in *Chaste Maid* (3.3.69) is used in *Your Five Gallants*, when clothes that go from hand to hand are associated with prostitution, as Taylor and Lavagnino point out.<sup>220</sup> There are also the lines 'A fine white beaver, pearl band, three falls. I ha' known her have more in her days' [...] 'Alas, an she be but a gentlewoman of any count or charge, three falls are nothing in these days' (1.1.81-84). As Taylor and Lavagnino point out, 'falls' are veils hanging from the back of a hat but also involve a bawdy pun on falling to sexual temptation.<sup>221</sup> The gentlewoman's falls in terms of both meanings are expected to be numerous. In this play, to further the link between clothes and sex, a 'smockster' can mean a 'womaniser' (5.2.46), and a fur hat can represent the female genitals (Interim 2.58-59). Similarly, 'smock-fortune' means success or luck seducing women (2.4.8). The word 'smock' is also included in Cotgrave's definition of 'fornicateur', quoted in full above, part of which is a 'smell-smocke'.<sup>222</sup> Also, in *Bartholomew Fair*, smocks are women and whores (4.6.20-21) and carry comedic obscene connotations. Overall, clothes are clearly a frequent representative for sexual subjects.

### 5.13 The Metaphorical Field of Games and Sex

Comparing sex to a game on the one hand makes it seem playful and for fun. On the other hand, the implication is that, like a game, sex has rules to be obeyed and a winner and loser. In *Bartholomew Fair*, as Bevington outlines, seekers of sex and whores are game-players or gamesters.<sup>223</sup> Cocledemoy, in *The Dutch Courtesan*, asks of Freevill 'art thou going to thy recreation?' (1.2.66). This has a hint of sexual pleasure involved, so combines recreational leisure with sex. At one point, the bawd Mary Faugh in *The Dutch Courtesan* says to the prostitute Franceschina that she has made her acquainted with

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<sup>220</sup> Middleton, *Your Five Gallants*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 595.

<sup>221</sup> Middleton, *Your Five Gallants*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 599.

<sup>222</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

<sup>223</sup> Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair*, Bevington (gen. ed.), p. 996, p. 998, p. 1005, p. 1007.



'the Italian, Master Beieroane' (2.2.14-15) in a passage littered with innuendo, including those involving games. According to Crane, for example, 'Beieroane' may be a nod to the stereotype that Italians were 'fond of anal sex, and something like "buy you're an(us)"'.<sup>224</sup> Another man she acquaints herself with is called 'Flapdragon' (2.2.15), which is a game involving swallowing flaming brandy-soaked raisins,<sup>225</sup> so the metaphorical field of games and sex is used. She has also been acquainted with 'the greatest French' (2.2.17), which has the double meaning of nobility and penis size – the French pox was also, as Crane points out, called 'great'.<sup>226</sup> Overall, in these quotations, she is firmly linked to both sex and games through her acquaintances and activities.

*Your Five Gallants* also has a metaphorical field of sex as a game, though it is less extended than in *Chaste Maid*. Pursenet says 'you've many gentlemen will play with their men', to which Bungler responds 'Ay, and with their maids too, i'faith' (2.4.156-157). The concept of playing, taken from the world of games, is applied to sexual play. At some points, as in *Chaste Maid*, Middleton switches quickly between metaphors: 'She's good enough for gamesters and to pass | From man to man, for gold presents at dice | Your harlot' (2.4.127-129). This mixes talk of games and money, a key theme. Sexual language is passed around as well, a passing made possible by my definition of metaphorical fields. Also, Lady Newcut's name is also the name of a card game, with 'sexual implication' – this is similar imagery to Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, when 'the husband says his wife is "best at newcut"', and the intending seducer comments, "If you play at newcut I'm soonest hitter of any here".<sup>227</sup> This is all part of the metaphorical field of sex and games.

#### 5.14 The Metaphorical Field of Riding and Sex, Including French Drama

A metaphorical field which arose in chapter three as well as these plays is riding and sex. This reinforces male power, degrading women by placing them on a par with animals. In *The Dutch Courtesan*, Crispinella talks of a

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<sup>224</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 34.

<sup>225</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 74.

<sup>226</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 34.

<sup>227</sup> Cited in Middleton, *Your Five Gallants*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 598.

husband's domineering nature, using clear innuendoes like 'hard, stiff' (3.1.75). Her innuendo-packed speech is an example of the practice of her linguistic and moral theory of being outspoken. She uses the metaphorical field of riding and sex in 'virtue gets up upon marriage sometimes and manageth it in the right way' (3.1.86-87), which, according to Crane, is 'as a horse is "managed" when it is broken in or trained'.<sup>228</sup> She also claims 'There is no more affinity betwixt virtue and marriage than betwixt a man and his horse' (3.1.84-85), with a pun on horse and whores. As, she says, 'a horse may be without a man, and a man without a horse', so marriage and virtue can be without each other (3.1.86-90). Similar occurrences linking riding and sex appeared in French at this time, with the word 'chevaucher' meaning 'to ride, or bestride a horse [...] also, to swive a woman', as Cotgrave defines (see section 3.2).<sup>229</sup> (To 'swive' means 'to have sex with').<sup>230</sup> This reduces women to the level of beasts to be ridden by men.

Lust is described in *Cupid's Whirligig* as being 'like an over-swollen river, that breakes beyond all boundes: it's a Divell bred in the blood, nurr'd in desire, & like a Sallamander lives in a continuall fire' (sig.C3<sup>r</sup>). As well as water and fire, lust is also here likened to embracing and entangling ivy, 'a foule usurper on the name of love', reigning with greater domination than an Emperor, and a very leperous itch which stains and fouls (sig.C3<sup>r</sup>). These comments come under the category of riding and sex because the woman making these comparisons talks of her 'mounting thoughts', again hinting at riding and sex, both of which involve mounting (sig.C3<sup>r</sup>). Later on, hunting is talked of along with a 'Sallamander Ladie' (sig.D2<sup>v</sup>). In light of the comparison of lust to a salamander, this suggests hunting is lustful as in another metaphorical field of hunting and sex.

We find similar language used by Troterel. In *Gillette*, the eponymous woman is, as Perret highlights, compared 'repeatedly and metaphorically to a fine horse' by her admirer the 'lubricous knight' Le Gentilhomme.<sup>231</sup> First he describes how he has intentions for Gillette:

<sup>228</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 53.

<sup>229</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

<sup>230</sup> See the analysis of food and sex, section 5.6, for overlaps with riding and sex.

<sup>231</sup> Donald Perret, *Old Comedy in the French Renaissance 1576-1620* (Geneva: Droz, 1992), p. 125.

Il me faut les bornes franchir  
Des vieilles lois du mariage,  
Et rechercher d'un grand courage  
Pour alléger ma passion  
Quelque jeune & tendre sion  
Qui se fléchisse à ma prière.  
Gillette, nòstre chambrière  
Seroit fort propre à mon dessein. (1.1)

[I must overcome the limits of old laws of marriage and seek out with great courage a young and tender plant who bends to my will to alleviate my passion. Gillette, our chambermaid, would be perfect for my plan.]

Then he calls her 'la belle monture' (1.1), which, according to Cotgrave is 'a horse to ride on, a saddle horse'.<sup>232</sup> He continues:

Voilà dequoy desennuyer  
Un expert et fort escuyer:  
Qu'elle est d'une gentille taille  
Pour entrer en champ de bataille. (1.1)

[Behold enough to take away the worries of an expert and skilled rider. She is of a pleasing stature, to enter the battlefield.]

By mentioning the battlefield, he is also entering the realm of the metaphorical field of war and sex. The section below considers other examples from theatre which use more than one metaphorical field. Gillette is also viewed as a workhorse who is given all the chores.<sup>233</sup> By placing this French comedy alongside English examples, we can see that the attitude to woman as being like horses and the way this manifests in sexual humour is alike across the two countries.

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<sup>232</sup> Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie*, n.p.

<sup>233</sup> Perret, *Old Comedy*, p. 125.

### 5.15 Jumping from one Metaphorical Field to Another

These plays also feature quick jumping from one metaphorical field to another. This demonstrates the belief, examined in my Introduction, that using complicated comic sexual euphemism is a sign of skill and competency with language. It also makes demands of the audience to keep up. Like Middleton and the above examples from Marston, Sharpham, for example, is comfortable with jumping quickly between fields of innuendo imagery. For instance, in *Cupid's Whirligig*, in the conversation cited in the language and sex discussion about 'lying' meaning both to have sex and to tell falsehoods, Lady Troublesome says to the man 'it was your leud unbridled will, that made you thus come gallop heither' (sig.E<sup>r</sup>). This likens sex to riding as well as language. Another significant description from Sharpham is of women losing control sexually. Sir Troublesome accuses women of being

a sort of uncertaine giddy wavering, tottering tumbling creatures, your affections are like your selves, and your selves like your affections, up & downe, like the tuckes on your Petticotes, which you let fall and take up as occasion serves: I have seene of your sex fall in love with a man, for wearing a handsome Rose on his shoe: another fall into the passion of the heart, to see a man untie his pointe, to make water: a third fall into the shaking Ague for eating a bodie cherry with two stones. (sig.C<sup>r</sup>-sig. C1<sup>v</sup>)

This hints at many metaphorical fields, such as food and sex, with the cherry, where the two stones may be an innuendo for testicles. There is also the field of clothes and sex, with the petticoats, and possibly even riding and sex, with the up and down motion. Jumping between metaphorical fields suggests audiences have accepted them to the extent that they can move from one to another at speed, which agrees with the modern linguistic theory I discuss.

### 5.16 Other Comic Sexual Euphemisms, Obscenities and Innuendoes

Here I will consider other comical sexual obscenities, euphemisms, and innuendoes. In *The Fawn*, there is the common euphemism of ‘chamber’ for female sexual parts, as in ‘You promised to get into Her chamber’ (4.1.656-657), ‘to entertain you | In her most private chamber’ (4.1.671-672) and ‘The very way and best-elected time | To come unto her chamber’ (5.1.450-451). Links can be made here to chapter three, with Harington’s use of ‘chamber’ imagery.<sup>234</sup> In *The Dutch Courtesan*, a man asks ‘Where’s thy chamber? I long to touch your sheets’ (5.1.23). In *The Fawn* the phrase ‘severed his sheets’ (2.1.325-326) is used to mean, for Blostein, he has stopped having sex.<sup>235</sup> These unwholesome sheets of a prostitute are later contrasted in *The Dutch Courtesan* with the ‘chaste sheets’ and ‘modest pleasures’ of a lawful marital bed which produce ‘undoubted issues’ (5.1.68-71). The double meaning in *The Fawn* is emphasised when a character pretends not to understand: ‘Where’s this her chamber? | Then what means shall without suspicion | Convey me to her chamber?’ (4.1.674-676). Determining whether the lack of understanding is pretence is another side to the issue of outspokenness. It seems, however, that the character in question is aware of sexual topics and is pretending not to be for comic effect. This is not the first time the figure appears of the person who does not get it. They provide comedy in the comic sexual euphemism’s veil working and not being seen through, even if it is transparent.

Another example of comic sexual euphemism from *The Fawn* involves using the structure of Cupid’s parliament to represent parts of the body. Parliament is given a comic sexual twist which highlights how a formal entity with ordered rules can be played with, in a similar way to playing with legal and grammatical rules. Also, the importance of the court to Marston is shown by the fact that, as well as his main fictional court, at the end there is a made-up – within the play – court of Cupid: ‘O ay, in Cupid’s parliament all the young gallants are o’ the nether house, and all the old signiors that can but only kiss are of the upper house. Is the princess above?’ ‘No, sure, I think the princess is beneath, man. Ha’ they supped, fool?’ (5.1.36-41). The nether house is literally the lower house of the Commons, but metaphorically it

<sup>234</sup> See section 3.3. This is a word which is added to the translation by Harington.

<sup>235</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 122.

recalls the nether regions of a person. This is reinforced by older men only being able to kiss so being restricted to upper body parts. It would also explain why the princess is beneath, which, without the dirty joke, would seem strange. Marston does not use the word 'Common' but alludes to it. It was also an adjective for prostitutes, so serves to further use parliament to suggest scandalous sex, as pointed out by Blostein<sup>236</sup> and Davison,<sup>237</sup> who highlights the phrase in *The Dutch Courtesan* 'get you gone, punk rampant [...] common up-tail!' (4.3.15-16). 'Punk rampant' was also terminology for prostitutes, and contains reference to tails which, as I have discussed, has sexual connotations. The immediate jump above in *The Fawn* to questions about food fits with the metaphorical field of food and sex so is another example of more than one type of pleasure of the flesh being evoked at one time.

At one point in *The Fawn*, Zuccone speaks an obscenity in the double meaning of 'And do not stand too stiffly' (5.1.112), alluding to erection. He is fed the line by someone else and repeats it without at first understanding its comic sexual meaning. When he realises, he asks 'Do you make an ass of me?' (5.1.112-114). This is similar to the event in Sharpham's play, when a man fails to grasp the full bawdy meaning of what is said. The difference is Zuccone does soon after, while Sharpham's character has to have it explained to him. Still, both examples show comic sexual obscenity can be subjective, especially if only one level of meaning is understood. The same is true of *The Dutch Courtesan's* Cocledemoy, dressed as a barber, making innuendoes which another character fails to notice, but the audience understands so provides another example of dramatic irony. 'Thou art sometimes at court?', for example, to which the answer is 'Sometimes poll a page or so, sir' (2.3.30-31). This, as Crane points out, has innuendo with poll '(from the slang sense of "pole") i.e. fuck.'<sup>238</sup> Both King James and his court were much suspected of homosexuality'. Having in-groups which understand the hidden meaning of euphemisms, as opposed to out-groups who do not, is (as discussed above) referred to by Erasmus and modern linguistic theorists.

<sup>236</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 225.

<sup>237</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Davison, p. 110.

<sup>238</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 46.

*The Dutch Courtesan* has many innuendoes and sexual connotations to statements made, such as 'I have delivered greater things than this to a woman's own hand' (3.2.20-21), which is, according to Crane, to do with erection,<sup>239</sup> and 'I had it somewhere, and I had it indeed' (3.3.56-57). The comedy works here in being obvious. This is not elaborate double-entendre, unlike other examples. The humour can be found in not stating explicitly yet still being clear. Some are barely disguised, as with 'Divine ejaculatories' (4.2.10), which are, Crane states, 'Short, fervent prayers (the sexual sense of "ejaculation" is intended to lurk here, or course, fended off by the rare use of the adjective as a quasi-noun, which cannot strictly carry the sexual sense'.<sup>240</sup> As in some examples above in section 3.1, we have a filthy spin put on religious occurrences which would concern Erasmus and Castiglione. There is also comic sexual euphemism in 'suffer a man to have a hole to put his head in' (1.1.68-69). One, innocent, side of the double meaning here is to have shelter, while the other, ruder and more prominent, meaning is sexual penetration. Many different areas of life can be used as euphemisms.

There is also double meaning in discussion of the Low Countries which 'Englishmen love' (1.1.66-67), being both the Netherlands and, as Crane highlights, a 'sexual reference to the "low" parts of women, below the waist'.<sup>241</sup> Netherlands and nether regions are likened. Sexual puns also arise in 'lust is a most deadly sin' and 'I am sure 'tis one of the head sins' (1.1.72-74), with a double-entendre on 'head'. Crane suggests this is unintended by the character.<sup>242</sup> This would certainly add to the comedy, although it can be problematic to determine when, if ever, comic innuendo is unintended.<sup>243</sup> However, the play might itself perform a character who unintentionally makes what others see as a sexual pun. Lust is also called 'one of the middle sins' (1.1.75), as in committed in the body's middle. The language of morality is itself co-opted to express the obscene. (The same joke is made later with 'I am, as many other are, pieced above and pieced beneath', which is answered by 'Still the best part in the – ' (3.1.109-111). The cut-off word may well be

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<sup>239</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 63.

<sup>240</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 76.

<sup>241</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 10.

<sup>242</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 11.

<sup>243</sup> See Methodology section 1.3.

'middle', as Crane suggests,<sup>244</sup> so it could refer to the best body parts being those in the middle. Elsewhere, when a line is cut short (4.1.62), Crane argues that it is unlikely to be a rude word, 'since the rest of the play is so full of them').<sup>245</sup> Yet my examples in this chapter show how even theatre littered with offensive vocabulary can have some of it censored. It is said, that if lust were not a sin, 'few men would wish to go to heaven' (1.1.79), as they would be happy to stay on Earth and have sex.<sup>246</sup> This puts sexual language into a context of being desired by everyone so acceptable to be included in this piece of theatre.

One of the sexual jokes in this play, which is worth quoting at length, is very nearly the same as one used by Freud.<sup>247</sup>

Would you have them get their living by the curse of man, the sweat of their brows? So they do. Every man must follow his trade, and every woman her occupation. A poor, decayed mechanical man's wife, her husband is laid up; may not she lawfully be laid down when her husband's only rising is by his wife's falling? A captain's wife wants means, her commander lies in open field abroad; may not she lie in civil arms at home? A waiting gentlewoman, that had wont to take say to her lady, miscarries or so; the court misfortune throws her down; may not the city courtesy take her up? Do you know no alderman would pity such a woman's case? Why, is charity grown a sin? or relieving the poor and impotent an offence? You will say beasts take no money for their fleshly entertainment. True, because they are beasts, therefore beastly. Only man give to loose, because they are men, therefore manly; and, indeed, wherein should they bestow their money better? [...] employ your money upon women, and, a thousand to nothing, some one of them will bestow that on you which shall stick by you as long as you live. [...] do you rise, they'll fall; do you fall, they'll rise; do you give them the French crown, they'll give you the French –

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<sup>244</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 54.

<sup>245</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 74.

<sup>246</sup> Section 5.6 on meat and sex examines how one man refers to death and orgasm in *The Dutch Courtesan* with the phrase 'going the way of all flesh' (1.1.80-81).

<sup>247</sup> Freud does not refer to the play and I am not suggesting it was his source.



*O iustus iusta iustum!* They sell their bodies; do not better persons sell their souls? [...] Ay me, what base ignobleness is it To sell the pleasure of a wanton bed? Why do men scrape, why heap to full heaps join? But for his mistress, who would care for coin? For this I hold to be denied of no man: All things are made for man, and man for woman. Give me my fee! (1.1.98-134)

He demands a fee at the end since he defends whores like a lawyer. This is a mock encomium, praising something not normally deemed worthy of praise, in this case a vice. Ironically, this brings in money similarly to money and sex for prostitutes, as with the mention of coin. The type of joke about the wife earning by lying back is clearly widespread, being similar, though not identical, to Freud's:

Mr and Mrs X live in fairly grand style. Some people think that the husband earned a lot and so has been able to lay by a bit [...]; others again think that the wife has lain back a bit [...] and so has been able to earn a lot.<sup>248</sup>

In both this joke and that of *The Dutch Courtesan*, the woman is fallen as in physically lying down and fallen as in partaking in impure sexual activity. Related imagery is used later in the play, when a wanton woman is called 'short-heels' (1.2.95), since, as Crane describes, 'on short heels one is easily tipped onto one's back'.<sup>249</sup> The same joke exists in French where 'avoir des talons courts' ['to have short heels'] is to be a woman who falls into bed easily. Both countries use the same phrases involving heels for prostitutes, so link heels to sex.

This passage from the play is very rich in types of imagery. There is reference to the biblical Fall in mankind being cursed, and women falling and (as Crane argues) sweating their brows during sex,<sup>250</sup> since sweating labour was part of God's punishment. Religious language could be its own

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<sup>248</sup> Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, ed. by Strachey, p. 66.

<sup>249</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 20.

<sup>250</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 12.

metaphorical field. In some ways it is more dangerous to use than, say, legal terms, as more people will know what is being talked about and might be offended by it. In other ways, it provides writers with a level of protection, if their source for language is biblical so reduces some of the blame. The use of the phrase ‘French crown’ is, as Crane argues, slang for baldness caused by syphilis.<sup>251</sup> It can also refer to the coin of payment, in return for which you will get the French pox – although the speaker cuts himself off before pox, with three nominative Latin forms (masculine, feminine, neuter) of just<sup>252</sup> as if learning a Latin paradigm. The quotation plays with language and moral values. Legal language is again applied to talk of sex, when he insists on a fee. So, again, we have examples of educated writers playing with the conventions of Latin and the law. The mock praise of sexuality and vice is the technique *paradiastole* which Montaigne is fond of, praising cannibalism and sexual pleasure.<sup>253</sup> It is a risky tool to use and is very consistent with this character of Marston’s.

There is also Montaigne’s influence in this passage with use of his statements that ‘They sell but their bodyes, their willes cannot be put to sale, that is too free, and too much it’s own’.<sup>254</sup> In the play it is repeated ‘again, they sell but only flesh, no jot affection; so that even in the enjoying, *Absentem marmoreamque putes*’ (2.1.140-142).<sup>255</sup> This slightly misquotes Martial’s *Epigrams*, which is correctly quoted by Montaigne: ‘*Absentem marmoreámve putes*’ meaning ‘Of Marble you would thinke she were, | Or that she were not present there’.<sup>256</sup> In the original Martial, this is in the context of discussing the beauty and suitability of two women, Phlogis and Chione, where Chione is seen as impassive and marble-like.<sup>257</sup> It is unclear whether the slight misquoting is deliberate or not. The use of Martial again nods to those in the audience with education. It is also asked ‘Since, then, beauty, love, and

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<sup>251</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 13.

<sup>252</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 13.

<sup>253</sup> See Quentin Skinner, ‘Thomas Hobbes: Rhetoric and the Construction of Morality’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 76 (1991), 19-39; Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 140-172 (pp. 171-172).

<sup>254</sup> Montaigne, *Essayes*, trans. by Florio and ed. by Saintsbury, III.5.

<sup>255</sup> Selling flesh again brings in money and has meat connotations, as does the phrase ‘fleshly entertainment’ above.

<sup>256</sup> Montaigne, *Essayes*, trans. by Florio and ed. by Saintsbury, III.5.

<sup>257</sup> Martial, *Epigrams*, ed. and trans. by Bailey, pp. 54-55.

women are good, how can the love of woman's beauty be bad?' (1.1.140-141). This is an obviously paradoxical line of reasoning, and is close to mock *encomium*, the praise of anything that is not normally deemed worthy of praise, or *paradiastole*, the praise of vice. This play ends by talking to the audience, with a possible final innuendo thrown in with 'we fear to swell' (5.3.163). Crane says this is swelling with pride,<sup>258</sup> but it could also have sexual connotations.

All these comic uses of sexual vocabulary can be called bawdy. This is a term which itself has wider connotations, particularly regarding the language of prostitution. Both Sharpham and Marston use the word 'bawds' in different ways. Sharpham does not go into much explanation for his 'bawde' or 'baud' character (sig.E6<sup>v</sup>, sig.L<sup>r</sup>), although the word is sometimes a willing cuckold in this play and is used in connection to the statements 'you are a Punke wife, a punke [...] You are a cockatrice wife, a cockatrice [...] a Baude, a Pimpe, a Pander' (sig.E2<sup>r</sup>). Marston, in contrast, has the word mean a 'vile woman, reprobate woman, naughty woman' in *The Dutch Courtesan* (2.2.40), as well as an affectionate variant of aunt so 'naunt' also means bawd (2.2.23) (1.2.8).<sup>259</sup> The word can be used to undermine the reputation of women. This is directed at Mary Faugh, the female pimp, as are the words 'my worshipful, rotten, rough-bellied bawd!' (1.2.3). One character comments that 'Cheaters and bawds go together like washing and wringing' (3.3.127-128). Another word common to Sharpham's and both of Marston's plays is 'punk', referring to prostitutes. Sharpham's play says 'they love their punkes exceedingly' in 'baudie courts' and 'baudie houses' (sig.L1<sup>v</sup>). In *The Fawn*, prostitutes are called 'gills, his punkes, polecats, flirts, and feminines' (4.1.56-57). Similarly, in *The Dutch Courtesan*, there is 'a punk, an honest polecat' (2.1.155). Other frequent words for prostitutes in these plays are 'rampant' in *The Fawn* (2.1.415) which can mean lustful or standing on hind legs.<sup>260</sup> Prostitutes are portrayed as relishing in their trade. The lustful meaning of 'rampant' is demonstrated by *The Dutch Courtesan*'s 'Go, y'are grown a punk rampant!' (2.2.84), 'rampant cockatrice' (3.1.225), 'my fine punkes' (4.5.15), and 'get you

<sup>258</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 109.

<sup>259</sup> Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. by Crane, p. 35, p. 15.

<sup>260</sup> Marston, *Parasitaster, or The Fawn*, ed. by Blostein, p. 127.

gone, punk rampant' (4.3.15). Sharpham also uses the word 'cockatrice', as does Marston again with 'You may call her a courtesan, a cockatrice' (1.2.100-101), showing how these two playwrights weave a similar tapestry of vocabulary. These sexual terms, being more euphemistic but also more inventive than simply using the word 'whore', all serve to add to the comic environment in these plays.

*Bartholomew Fair* is also significant in terms of euphemism for its puppet episode. Fairground characters use puppets for a performance, and, as they are at a remove from the actors, they can be used to discuss gender in a shielded and more acceptable fashion. A Puritan objector claims that 'you [the puppets] are an abomination; for the male among you putteth on the apparel of the female, and the female of the male' (5.5.96-98). A puppet replies:

It is your old stale argument against the players, but it will not hold against the puppets; for we have neither male nor female amongst us. And that thou mayst see, if thou wilt, like a malicious purblind zeal as thou art! (*The puppets take up his garment*). (5.5.101-104)

Just as Epicene's peruke is lifted to reveal her gender, the puppet's garment is lifted to reveal a lack of genitalia. The Puritan's argument is proved invalid and he is forced to admit he was wrong. In this way the puppets act as a kind of comic euphemism that is exposed, except what is shown to be hidden underneath is not the shocking and offensive sight protesters anticipated. Another character's disguise, that of Justice Overdo undercover to observe the fair, is a different sort of euphemism. The audience, who Erasmus might have called the right people, can see through the veil (creating dramatic irony). The disguise therefore acts in the same way as disguised comic euphemistic language that some can see through.

### 5.17 Bringing Theatre Findings Together

The method this chapter takes, of breaking down findings into sections on metaphorical fields, allows me to present individual findings but also make an

overall point. This point is that, while each text has its own characteristics, it is also the case that a consensus of sorts exists across texts from different genres and nations. Scholarship often has a tendency to place texts in boxes and it can be rare to find work on both French and English drama. Yet, as this chapter has demonstrated, there are many similarities between some theatrical texts from both countries. The first way this occurs is in the influence of some of the thinkers I discussed in my theoretical sections on playwrights from France and England. Troterel was influenced by Cicero and Erasmus in that he deliberately rejected their views on moral decorum. Middleton would also have been influenced by Erasmus and disobeys his teachings on how to speak chastely and use copiousness. He uses Erasmus' suggestions on copiousness but in a way Erasmus would not approve of since it is anything but chaste. Montaigne had a strong influence on Marston, bridging the gap between French and English writers.

The second way the similarities between this French and English drama occurs is in their use of metaphorical fields in sexual humour. Every metaphorical field included in Table 2 also has its own section demonstrating how it works in other plays. However, it is not just plays which share similarities with other plays. These French and English plays use, for example, the metaphorical fields of riding and sex, language and sex, and food and sex. This imagery is also used in courtly texts, as chapter three discussed in depth, so is not only shared between theatrical comedies from the two countries. Of these examples, the first and second metaphorical fields are used in England by Harington and the third is used by both Harington and, in France, Brantôme. Freud's argument that humour often combines both the similar and dissimilar (see section 1.5) is borne out by more than one genre of text. Again, we can tend to consider types of text in too much isolation. I hope I have demonstrated that we need to observe texts in relation to their counterparts from other countries but also alongside texts from different social worlds, such as the court and medicine, which can perform sexual language as if on their own stages. Writers in very different contexts can use the same imagery to make the same point. Such imagery, as I have highlighted, has wider impacts upon and implications for many aspects of Renaissance

society, particularly the treatment and perceptions of women. This sexual humour is, therefore, so much more meaningful than a simple joke.

This chapter as a whole can be concluded by a brief reiteration of the questions which have now been illuminated. Comic sexual euphemism and language play a hugely important role in these plays, and are impacted upon by gender issues. These texts share traits with French medical texts and courtly texts from both France and England. Linguistic theory can be very useful in seeing these plays in a new light. In turn, these plays can shed new light on texts elsewhere in this thesis, especially those of Brantôme and Harington, so the full extent of courtly metaphorical fields can be realised in comparison with theatre. With similar humour occurring in Cotgrave and French texts, putting all these texts together in this network provides much deeper insight into the sexual humour of France and England than can be achieved individually. Different metaphorical fields each have their own implications, most or all of which contribute to misogynistic attitudes. Painting and sex highlights the potentially dubious relationship between painter and subject, which was perceived as easily leading to sex. Law and sex, like playing with grammatical rules, can exclude those without higher levels of education, and highlights the contrast between formal language and lewd practice of such language – while ultimately reinforcing the rules they play with. Meat and sex plays with different ways bodies can be enjoyed and, like money and sex, makes women commodities. Disease is both the thing euphemising sex and being euphemised. War and sex likens combat to the attempt to make sexual conquests. Clothing and sex reduces women to items and riding and sex degrades them to animals, while games and sex highlights the playful yet rule-driven nature of sex. Even language itself, the tool with which these sexual jokes are made, can be a comic sexual euphemism.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

This thesis has produced a number of insights and answered the questions outlined in the Introduction. Comparing French and English has revealed the French language to often capture elements which the English misses. Yet this is a trend which is broken by Sir John Harington, who adds more sexual humour to his text. These two countries share similar features in some uses of imagery but are also distinct in other ways. Context can be crucial, with different standards of what was acceptable on the one hand, while, on the other hand, a consensus of sorts was reached as similar language was used across nations and genres. Comic sexual euphemism is found in France and England, across different types of text. This language allowed people to speak the unspeakable, sometimes engaging with the taboo more than straightforwardly explicit speech. It was certainly both more entertaining and intelligent than plain statement, which is partly why it was used even when it is meant to be seen through. One of the threads running through this thesis is the manner in which comic sexual imagery can be theatrical beyond the genre of drama, in the contexts of the court and medicine. This language seems to need performance and audiences, whether this is between the monarch and courtiers, from doctors to medical students, or from actors to play-goers.

The court in both countries, often influenced by the Italian court, has been shown to be an environment in which sexual humour creates tension between the rhetorical rules and the recorded reality. Wit involving sexual jokes was a tool for seeking attention at court and improving social status, but one had to be careful not to go too far and get into trouble. In this way protection from sexual obscenity was about social status as much as morality. Gossip could ruin the reputation of the person telling it and the person it is being told about. Power and honour are crucial themes, where the imperative to protect women clashes with the desire to gossip about them. The world of French medicine was much more humorous and far less clinical than might be expected, with doctors having fun with salacious material. This type of language does not seem to feature to this extent in contemporaneous English medical texts. Examining theatre demonstrates how similar language and

metaphorical fields appear in Renaissance drama and other genres. Women in sexual contexts are portrayed as animalistic in the metaphorical field of riding and sex, to be consumed in meat and sex, to be conquered in war and sex, to be won in games and sex, and to be sold in business and sex.

Comic sexual euphemisms and X-phemisms therefore participate in early modern misogyny. Since women were the property of men in the honour culture of the time, both genders were hugely affected by this language and attitude. This euphemism also separates people into gender categories which are more complex than simply male and female. The use of Latin and sophisticated language excludes men who lack education as well as women from some in-groups, whereas using the vernacular widens the field of who can be exposed to such material. Sometimes women are divided into experienced wives versus young virgins who need their chaste eyes to be diverted from the scandalous. Renaissance texts can be schizophrenic about whether they are approving of the comedy of sexual euphemism or not, with the official standard differing to the underlying desire. Warning readers away and breaking rules is part of the joke. Perceived obscenity can be blamed on the eye of the beholder, as discussed by Thomas Wilson in his rhetorical treatise as well as Middleton in discussion of this issue within his plays. In a way, 'official' morality – whether it is from ancient or early modern writers – predicts or even encourages comic sexual euphemism, which plays with the injunction on naming sexual matters openly. It amounts to a provocation to break the rules. The use of sexual comic euphemism plays with societal rules of behaviour, be they grammatical, sexual, social, or legal, in ways that temporarily unsettle but can ultimately reinforce the existing standards. Comic sexual euphemism can take many different forms and occupy different positions on a scale of explicitness. The literal terms for sexual obscenity can be taboo, but comic sexual euphemism can be even more explicit in its non-literalness. Such euphemism does not have to be in the form of words: it can be visual, like the asterisks from Joubert's printer, or, as I shall explore in the following section, through silence. As Freud argues, jokes can find humour in the similarity between things or the bringing together of disparate entities. Sexual jokes perform both of these. Even language itself can be an extended metaphor for sex.



The Introduction highlighted how Kerry L. Plaff, Raymond W. Gibbs, and Michael D. Johnson found that using euphemism shows a high level of skill and sophistication with language.<sup>1</sup> I agree: many Renaissance writers demonstrate their rhetorical skill through comic sexual euphemism. This issue takes us back to the etymology of 'euphemism' which involves speaking well.<sup>2</sup> Theorists including Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson discuss how positive politeness occurs in communities. I have shown how this applies in early modern settings, ranging from the court to the anatomy theatre. My concept of metaphorical fields is supported by Erasmus' writings on copiousness and the choice of words in metaphor being very important, combined with modern assertions of this and theory on positive politeness. Future research could, in light of the idea of metaphorical fields, return to François Rabelais or William Shakespeare with this new approach in mind. For now, the following section will consider the final type of euphemism to be featured in this thesis, namely silence.

### 6.1 Silence as Euphemism

This section considers silence as a type of euphemism that can also be comic and sexual in Jonson's *Epicene* and, to a lesser extent, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*.<sup>3</sup> Silence is an important branch of euphemistic language. An ellipse (a use of language which interested many writers I include in my theoretical sections, as pointed out above) can act as a euphemism if it replaces an explicit term; if read aloud, an ellipse is silent. This is just one way silence and euphemisms interact. It is therefore apt to conclude this thesis with, since it somehow encapsulates the duplicitous and contagious nature of comic sexual euphemism: even silence is not immune to the comic and

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<sup>1</sup> Kerry L. Plaff, Raymond W. Gibbs and Michael D. Johnson, 'Metaphor in Using and Understanding Euphemism and Dysphemism', *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 18 (1997), 59-83.

<sup>2</sup> See section 1.1.

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from plays, using act, scene, and line numbers, are taken from the following editions which are the same as used in chapter five (the chapter makes it clear which play is being discussed). Thomas Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 907-962; Ben Jonson, *Epicene*, in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. by David Bevington (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), pp. 775-860.

sexual. It is a form of communication precisely because of its lack of spoken language. It could be used in many ways at this time, such as a refusal to utter obscenities – yet, like many comic sexual euphemisms, it often fails to be euphemistic. It is intertwined with gender and what is acceptable for whom. Its contrast to and relationship with speech in the early modern period was often discussed. Wilson, for instance, believed that skills in speech and rhetoric are connected to morality, for, as the closing lines of his *Arte of Rhetorique* state, ‘the wicked can not speake wel’.<sup>4</sup> A moral character is linked here to a talent with language. My Introduction and second chapter established arguments involving silence. Erasmus’ concern over pejoration invites the suggestion that anything can be vulnerable to having its meaning twisted into an obscenity.<sup>5</sup> If the position taken by Erasmus, that a metaphor can be more obscene than a simple word, is accurate, what is the rational reaction to this danger? If, with pejoration, any word can be obscene, how do we stop this process? For Quintilian, the logical conclusion over such issues is silence in the face of unbecoming expressions. He concludes that ‘For my part, I shall content myself with our modest Roman ways, and follow the tactful procedure of answering such speakers by silence’.<sup>6</sup> Erasmus’ suggestion that some words should be completely avoided seems to confirm this, as this can lead to silence. Eric Partridge argues that, if the aim were to hide the obscene, silence would be more effective than euphemism.<sup>7</sup> However, this section will demonstrate how silence can be too much of a euphemism to be able to always hide comic sexual material or, if the euphemism is seen through, provide protection from the offensive. Michel de Montaigne states that some people place talk of sexual activity ‘en la franchise du silence’ [under ‘the protection of silence’].<sup>8</sup> This can also be

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (n.p.: Hiidenkirja, 2012), p. 262.

<sup>5</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *Institution of Christian Matrimony*, ed. by Michael J. Heath in John W. O’Malley and Louis A. Perraud (eds). *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 203-438 (p. 428); Erasmus, *On Copia*, ed. and trans. by King and Rix, pp. 22-23.

<sup>6</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ed. and trans. by Donald A. Russell (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 2002), pp. 362-363.

<sup>7</sup> Eric Partridge, *Here, There and Everywhere* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais, Livre III*, ed. by V.L. Saulnier and Pierre Villey (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965), III.5; Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*,

translated as the 'frankness of silence', which is more accurate for the examples I consider here.

Silence can therefore be a type of euphemism, if it is an alternative to speaking something offensive. It is a branch of the metaphorical field of language and sex which can be a means to express sexual content comically. A major instance of this is *Epicene's* portrayal of the legally legitimate interpretation of silence as consent for sex.<sup>9</sup> Another important example of silence takes the form of the censored lines in *Chaste Maid* which ended in silence to mask obscenities.<sup>10</sup> At least, the ostensible reason to end obscene lines in silence is to mask indecency. However, whether it is an inadvertent side effect or secret plan all along, silence can actually be funny and act as innuendo. By its very nature, silence is problematic to analyse as it is ephemeral and difficult to record, which is why Middleton jokingly has Moll speak to emphasise her silence.

For Erasmus, we can ascertain what is obscene by observing what chaste people are not talking about. 'Whence then is derived a rule of obscenity? From nowhere else but from the usage, not of anyone whatsoever, but of those whose speech is chaste'.<sup>11</sup> In this way the definition of obscenity emerges from a type of silence because the obscene is what chaste people keep silent about. Rather than being an absolute category, this comes from practice and usage. A significant attitude regarding this is included in the meaning of 'noisome', mentioned in *Bartholomew Fair* (4.4.111) as a synonym for 'disagreeable' or 'offensive'. According to the *OED*, this word derives from the medieval word to 'annoy', and did not come to the fixed meaning of 'noisy' until the nineteenth century. Until then it meant 'having an extremely offensive smell', 'disagreeable', or 'unpleasant'.<sup>12</sup> It is important that so early on a word linked to noise had other links to offensiveness, so presumably silence could be thought of as agreeable. Silence could therefore indicate that what would fill in the gap would be offensive and scandalous.

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ed. and trans. by M.A. Screech (London: Penguin, 2003), III.5. See my second chapter section 2.4.

<sup>9</sup> This is discussed in more detail below.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in chapter five, see section 5.1.

<sup>11</sup> Erasmus, *On Copia*, ed. and trans. by King and Rix, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson (eds), *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 971.

When discussing the euphemistic nature of silence in the early modern period, it is impossible to ignore Jonson's *Epicene* or *The Silent Woman*. It is a major example of Renaissance portrayals of silence. Despite having a section on silence and drama, Christina Luckyj does not discuss *Epicene* in depth, which is surprising considering how much this play talks about the issue of silence. She does not consider silence as a type of euphemism. As David Bevington states, Jonson joked to William Drummond, his friend, that the subtitle was suitable because no one applauded at the play's first performance,<sup>13</sup> but it also serves an important function of asking whether it is possible to have a silent woman. This play both reinforces and undermines the gender line when it comes to silence and comic sexual obscenity.

Importantly, silence can allow women to be manipulated when interpreted by men in certain ways. In some situations, silence could lead to sexual relations, often the opposite of chastity. This is because silence, according to Bevington, 'was legally taken to signify consent' for sex.<sup>14</sup> Jonson's play has an example of this: 'When I court her for the common cause of mankind, and she says nothing but *consentire videtur* [seems to consent], and in time is *gravida* [pregnant]' (2.3.131-133). This portrays silence as being comically and sexually eloquent. The use of Latin and the pompous phrasing of 'common cause of mankind' function comically to create an in-group of educated audience who will understand this more than those lacking in education. Daw, as Luckyj puts it, 'construes her silence as an open space ready to be filled up by phallic "speech"'.<sup>15</sup> This open space to be filled acts as euphemism often does, as when one euphemistically says 'you know what': the recipient of the statement can decide what this is referring to. Whenever a blank is left to be filled, power is given to the beholder to fill it, potentially in a different way to that intended by the speaker. The play also has women's lack of silence suggesting they are as sexually forward as men (2.5.48-52). So speech and silence could both lead to a woman's (reputation of) chastity being damaged.

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<sup>13</sup> Jonson, *Epicene*, ed. by Bevington, p. 780.

<sup>14</sup> Jonson, *Epicene*, ed. by Bevington, p. 800.

<sup>15</sup> Christina Luckyj, 'A Moving Rhetoricke': *Gender and Silence in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 63-64.

The meaning behind silence being open to interpretation is similar to comic sexual obscenity being in the eye of the beholder, when authors play on the reader or audience member supplying the obscenity through their interpretation. It must be asked whether, as with euphemism, the gap is more or less dangerous when filled. For Erasmus, 'nothing is more disgraceful for anyone than [...] to be silent when the situation calls for speech', though undoubtedly he would feel the situation does not call for speech if it would be obscene language. He believed 'Women are more inclined to the affliction of talkativeness than men'.<sup>16</sup> In all likelihood, therefore, he would prefer women to be silent gaps, inviting male dominance.

Gender is thus particularly important for where silence meets euphemism. As with Castiglione discussing honourable and dishonourable women, early modern texts feature both silent and garrulous women, and both traits, as Luckyj argues, were 'gendered female' (one being the desired ideal and the other the feared reality).<sup>17</sup> It was expected that chaste women would be silent about, and protected from, offensive material. If women are silent themselves, this adds a further layer of protective shielding, as they can neither speak nor hear obscenities. Women become an absence or gap, to be filled or not. As Erasmus and Montaigne have pointed out, sometimes gaps draw more attention than explicit content. It may be the case that the figure of the silent woman is another danger, as she may be thinking sexually obscene thoughts without others knowing, though it is debatable how acceptable this would be if she kept them to herself.

In *Chaste Maid*, on Touchwood Junior's wedding night, he is expected to 'utter all' (5.4.48) which referred to speaking and sexual climax.<sup>18</sup> This is one of the examples of the metaphorical field of language and sex. This makes logical sense with the early modern belief that, broadly speaking, silence is linked to chastity and virginity, especially for women, so their opposites are also linked. The act of talking and language can represent sex. This is why, in *Epicene*, when some characters plan to slander Epicene by starting rumours she is not chaste, part of their plan is to 'make her talk,

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<sup>16</sup> See Luckyj, *Gender and Silence*, p. 50, p. 74.

<sup>17</sup> Luckyj, *Gender and Silence*, p. 49.

<sup>18</sup> As shown in chapter five, see section 5.1. Middleton, *Chaste Maid*, Taylor and Lavagnino (gen. eds), p. 908.

believe it. | Or if she will not, we can give out at least so much as shall interrupt the treaty' of the marriage (1.2.46-47). Talking, the opposite of silence, can disprove chastity. Also, uttering 'all' in *Chaste Maid* implies that any and all language can be sexualised, reinforcing Erasmus' worry. Moll declares 'I am silent with delight' when she is married (5.4.49). This makes a joke out of a typical early modern female reaction, it being a contradiction in terms: she is indeed delighted, but is not silent about it. To be able to say she is silent, obviously she must not be silent, however temporarily. Paradoxically, then, this display of feminine silence actually indicate that there is no such thing. The silence is played up and spoken.

In *Timber*, Jonson declares 'Language most shewes a man' – by implication, silence is most appropriate for a woman.<sup>19</sup> This is explored in *Epicene*, with implications for euphemism and gender, experienced through the examination of silence. Morose, 'a gentleman that loves no noise', marries Epicene, 'supposed the silent woman' (as the Persons of the Play declares)<sup>20</sup> who is neither silent at times nor a woman. (It is scholarly convention to refer to Epicene with 'she' and 'her'). 'Her silence is dowry enough, he says' (1.2.25-26), as she 'is exceedingly soft-spoken, thrifty of her speech, that spends but six words a day' (1.2.29-30). Her stage directions say '*she speaks softly*' and '*speaking softly*'.<sup>21</sup> Morose's unreasonable desire for silence in women is an exaggeration of the truth found in early modern attitudes. He is the hyperbole of real men. Thomas Wilson, for example, believes that

What becometh a woman best, and first of al? Silence. What seconde? Silence. What third? Silence. What fourth? Silence. Yea if a man should aske me til dowmes day, I would stil crie, silence, silence, without the whiche no woman hath any good gifte, but having the same, no doubt she must have many other notable giftes, as the whiche of necessitie do ever folow suche a vertue.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See Luckyj, *Gender and Silence*, p. 37.

<sup>20</sup> Jonson, *Epicene*, ed. by Bevington, p. 782.

<sup>21</sup> Jonson, *Epicene*, ed. by Bevington, p. 804.

<sup>22</sup> See Luckyj, *Gender and Silence*, p. 42.

Here we have a piece of early modern theory for the real world being put into practice in early modern theatre. Through the character of Morose, Jonson is also mocking this kind of absurd and misogynistic attitude by demonstrating what can happen when it is carried out. Both Morose and this theory produce laughter through their hyperbole. When Epicene's 'peruke' is taken off, to reveal to Morose that he has 'married a boy, a gentleman's son' (5.4.200-202), it could be said Epicene's whole female persona is a comic sexual euphemism: a (poor) veil covering a humorous sexual topic, with similarities to the puppets in *Bartholomew Fair* in that what is revealed is not what was expected.

After their marriage, Epicene becomes talkative, loud, and nagging (and therefore linked to speech not silence). Her 'masculine and loud commanding and urging the whole family, makes him think he has married a Fury' (4.1.9-11). She 'takes any occasion to speak' (4.1.13) and Morose compares her to 'a conduit pipe that will gush out with more force when she opens again' (4.4.77-79). This sexual imagery fits with Gail Kern Paster's theory that women were seen as leaky, in that they leaked bodily fluids and speech.<sup>23</sup> Luckyj agrees, arguing that the 'pervasive cultural link between women and verbal fluency may originate with the female body's excessive production of fluids'.<sup>24</sup> This is displayed in *Bartholomew Fair* with women uncontrollably vomiting and urinating, the opposite of self-contained behaviour and what Mikhail Bakhtin would argue indicates a grotesque body.<sup>25</sup> This is because, as Kobena Mercer puts it, the 'openings and orifices' of such a carnivalesque body 'are emphasised, not its closure or its finish'.<sup>26</sup> The bodily fluids of the women at the fair certainly focus attention on openings and leakiness rather than containedness.

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<sup>23</sup> Gail Kern Paster, *Leaky Vessels: The Incontinent Women of City Comedy*, in Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Discipline of Shame In Early Modern England* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 23-63 (p. 23).

<sup>24</sup> Luckyj, *Gender and Silence*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>25</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World.*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> Kobena Mercer, 'Carnavalesque and Grotesque: What Bakhtin's Laughter tells us about Art and Culture', in *No Laughing Matter: Visual Humour in Ideas of Race, Nationality, and Ethnicity*, ed. by Angela Rosenthal, David Bindman and Adrian W.B. Randolph (Dartmouth: Dartmouth College Press, 2016), pp. 1-22 (p. 6).

The muddled gender status of Epicene, who is biologically male, is reflected in her name, from the Greek *epikoinos* and literally meaning to have 'characteristics of both sexes or no characteristics of either sex'.<sup>27</sup> It has connotations of androgyny, effeminacy, and asexuality, and its first recorded use in English is 1528. In Latin and Greek grammar, it is 'said of nouns which, without changing their grammatical gender, may denote either sex', states the *OED*.<sup>28</sup> It is perhaps ironic that the supposed silent woman has a name so connected to speaking and language. Her name is also significant in that it hints to the audience, who are otherwise kept in the dark along with Morose, that, as it was, according to Bevington, 'Originally, a Latin word that was both masculine and feminine', this is 'by extension, a sexually ambiguous person'.<sup>29</sup> Readers of the printed version are also given warning of the gender ambiguity, as Epicene is 'supposed' the silent woman in the Persons list (quoted above). This relates to the metaphorical field of language and sex, where grammatical rules are often played with.

The character of Jack Daw is an admirer of Epicene before she gets married, and claims at the play's end (before her true gender is revealed) that he had sexual relations with her. He and another man humiliate themselves by claiming, with sexual double meaning, 'we have known your bride' (5.4.108), using the biblical sense of 'to know'. Characters comment on Daw's behaviour, highlighting some of the issues and contradictions surrounding male attitudes to female silence that he portrays: 'He would lie with her, and praises her modesty; desires that she would talk and be free, and commends her silence in verses' (1.3.15-18), such as the statement that it is her 'virtue' to 'be so silent to the dotes' of admiring men (again showing chastity as almost synonymous with silence) (2.3.100-103). He both wants her to talk and praises her silence, creating an impossible standard to live up to.

Luckyj makes a point that serves to connect silence, euphemism, and comic sexual obscenity:

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<sup>27</sup> Soanes and Stevenson (eds), *Oxford English Dictionary*, p. 479.

<sup>28</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://0-www.oed.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/Entry/76238?rskey=z2y8WN&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>> [accessed 27 Sept 2013], n.p.

<sup>29</sup> Jonson, *Epicene*, ed. by Bevington, p. 782.



Silence as a sign of female chastity is further destabilised when one recalls the common early modern euphemism for the female genitals as “nothing” [...] For, like silence, the “nothing” which is “no-thing” (no phallus) is in fact *something*, however hidden it is beneath clothes and folds of flesh [...] If the woman’s tongue figures the phallus she can never possess, her vagina suggests a mouth without a tongue, engulfing, devouring, consuming – in silence.<sup>30</sup>

The euphemism ‘nothing’, as it is *nothing*, itself uses the euphemism of ‘thing’. The idea of women having or being nothing fits with their representation as gaps or blanks, silent and to be filled and defined by men.

It is ironic that a play, which is part of a genre of speech, dialogue, and projecting to an audience, should concern itself so with silence. On the other hand, perhaps it is not so surprising that a play would explore silence, as the word ‘audience’ comes from the Latin *audientia* for ‘hearing’, linked to ‘audio’.<sup>31</sup> The *OED*’s extensive definitions of audience are full of references to hearing.<sup>32</sup> The dichotomy of hearing and silence is therefore significant. *Bartholomew Fair*’s Induction declares it to be ‘full of noise’ (Induction.82). Ultimately, the link between early modern feminine silence, chastity, and purity from the obscene is strong, but has other facets. Luckyj argues that ‘Silence, that traditional outward sign of feminine modesty, could also be just that – an outward sign, a seductive strategy’.<sup>33</sup> This is certainly the case for the outwardly perfect wife Epicene. If the outward performance is seen through and the woman is therefore suspected to be deceptively not really silent and chaste, the perception of her may switch to that of a seductive whore.

As chapter three discussed, women’s reputations were very important and intertwined with their perceived exposure to obscenity. *Epicene* often talks of wounding reputation in relation to language and sex. When Daw and another man claim to have ‘had favours’ from Epicene, they also claim to

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<sup>30</sup> Luckyj, *Gender and Silence*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>31</sup> James Morwood (ed.), *Oxford Latin Desk Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 20; Soanes and Stevenson (eds), *Oxford English Dictionary*, p. 85.

<sup>32</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.p.

<sup>33</sup> Luckyj, *Gender and Silence*, p. 63.

have 'conversed with her hourly', as if this is on a par with sexual relations. It is said following this that 'she is married now, and you cannot hurt her with any report' (5.1.83-86). However, in the end it is not her marital status but her male gender which protects her. When it is revealed she is male, she is encouraged to 'beat you [her accusers of sexual impurity] now thriftily for the common slanders which ladies receive from such cuckoos as you are' (5.4.231-233). Her masculinity saves her from this gossip. It is thought that women may not be able to be trusted to speak for themselves: 'I would not give a fly's leg in balance against all the women's reputation's here, if they could be but thought to speak truth' (5.2.70-72). Once again, sex is represented in terms of talking, the opposite of silence, which is often a euphemism.

To conclude this section, there are similarities to be found between these attitudes to silence and Castiglione's portrayal of the role of gender at court. Just as the situation for women at court seems to be a sort of 'catch-22' where women should be protected from sexual humour but are sometimes expected to participate in it under special circumstances, so here women cannot escape the risk of being seen as unchaste. Jonson's play asks the question of whether men's expectations of women are unrealistic, or whether all women are inadequate for not living up to them. This question must be extended to comic sexual obscenity and euphemism – if even silence counts as a double-entendre, how is it possible to escape sexual meanings? Silence, on the one hand a portrayal of chastity, can also be mentally filled by obscene content. Sometimes euphemism is in the form of an ellipsis so is a type of silence. This and other kinds of euphemism act as gaps to be filled in. Silence can act symbolically like blushing, which can be a sign of innocence and chastity or sexual arousal. Ultimately, comic sexual obscenity – even when euphemised – seems inescapable, as even silence, particularly when interpreted as legal consent for sex, does not offer a way out. Even silence is not the solution hoped for by the thinkers at the beginning of this section such as Erasmus and Quintilian, since it can itself lead to obscenities. Rather, silence can be closer to the frankness Montaigne ascribes to it.

We have now come full circle with discussion of silence, right back to the etymology of 'euphemism', silence being an important part of the definition

of this word. The Renaissance period is, of course, a vibrant era for sexual humour. Comic sexual euphemism, often dysphemistic, was a powerful tool for the expression of what was deemed unsuitable to say literally. This thesis has demonstrated that, as Bakhtin believed, laughter can have a deep philosophical meaning, whether it is a positive or negative one. As Montaigne explained, the sun and wind are stronger when deflected, and this applies to sexual meanings too. The examination of comic sexual euphemism has provided insight into the early modern approaches towards bodies, society, and misogyny but also, ultimately, the joy language can bring.

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