

Petty under the label “political arithmetic”. Some of the most sophisticated treatises of the later eighteenth century, like Jean-Baptiste Moheau’s *Recherches* (1778), still looked back to Bacon. Following a brief survey of the earliest formulations, Rusnock charts the evolution of this tabular method as the basis of a *soi-disant* “medical arithmetic” in a series of eighteenth-century controversies: debates over the merits of smallpox inoculation; attempts to refine tabular methods (sometimes in conjunction with meteorological records) as measures of the healthiness of particular places; and attempts to extrapolate from incomplete local records to estimates of national population. None of the many and various tabular syntheses introduced in the course of these debates ever succeeded in resolving them. Yet, as Rusnock shows, via such controversies quantitative representation of society and its health became a widespread convention; it was established as a telling (if not conclusive) source of evidence of the effects of medical and political administration; and it came to underpin wider discourses on political and economic equity. The last subject is not, however, Rusnock’s primary object in this book. Focusing closely on the sequence of health issues to which tabular arithmetics were applied, she demonstrates the effectiveness and limits of new methods as they developed, and the significant professional differences that often shaped divergent French and English approaches. The book is well illustrated by reproductions of tabular methods. It provides a very welcome and thoughtful introduction to an area of medical knowledge that was livelier and more topical than is now generally appreciated.

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Julie Peakman, *Mighty lewd books: the development of pornography in eighteenth-century England*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp. xii, 263, illus., £25.00 (hardback 1-4039-1500-8)

This work significantly develops our understanding of obscene and erotic literature

and its development as a genre during the eighteenth century in Britain. It is particularly valuable to have the analysis of the production and distribution of obscene materials. Although mechanisms by which obscene literature circulated through the provinces are mentioned, the concentration of the trade in London means that the metropolis forms the chief focus. A number of persistent trends were already in place by the early eighteenth century. Peakman notes the connection between the production and marketing of risqué works and of informative manuals about sex which was to persist well into the twentieth century, as well as the persistent recycling and recirculation of material which became so characteristic.

Peakman also analyses various genre themes and their relationship to popular and scientific understandings of the body and reproductive physiology of the period. The motif of the eroticized landscape and what one might call botanical or horticultural porn is particularly suggestive. Was this perhaps a uniquely English (nation of gardeners, pastoral trope already well-established in mainstream literature) phenomenon? A rather different resort to fruit and flowers encoded sexual information in later works of sex education, while 1920s Lawrentian sexualizing of the landscape was satirized by Stella Gibbons’ 1932 *Cold Comfort Farm*: Mr Mybug’s ‘God! Those buds had an urgent, phallic, look.’

Peakman indicates the associations of erotic literature with the foreign, specifically Italy and France, as well as with the more generally exotic. Many significant early texts were simply translations and adaptations of continental originals. If the notion of Italy as the decadent site of bloody and perverse happenings where anything might go looks back to Renaissance drama, the increasing importance of France would result in French standing as a metonym for obscenity in early twentieth century “French postcards” and advertisements for “French lessons”.

A particularly illuminating discovery is that the archetypal *vice anglais*, flagellation, did not appear as a particular motif in British erotic writing until fairly late in the eighteenth

century: although there is some evidence for its existence as an erotic preference and speciality in literary texts and in the paraphernalia confiscated during raids on brothels. Peakman argues for the influence of the flagellation scenes common within the salacious revelations of anti-Catholic polemic (derived from French anti-clerical literature, but given a specifically British twist). By the end of the eighteenth century highly formulaic “fladge” texts, detached from this particular framework of lecherous priests, naive novices and conniving mothers superior and set instead within a stylized but recognizable secular British context, were deploying various tropes already made familiar by studies of Victorian pornography.

There is a sub-textual suggestion of a move within pornographic texts from the relatively genial, if unthinkingly male in its preconceptions, bawdry of the early part of the century to increasing interest in relations of dominance and submission, abuse of power, and erotic pain. This therefore pushes Donald Thomas’s suggestion, in *A long time burning* (1969), of a shift in Victorian pornography into scenarios of “greater . . . unreality” and increased sadism, rather further back in time, to indicate that development was already well under way by the end of the eighteenth century.

This is one of several places where one might have liked a bit more contextualization and engagement with other recent works on the development of sexual attitudes and behaviour during the eighteenth century, for example the suggestions of Randolph Trumbach, in *Sex and the gender revolution. Volume one: heterosexuality and the third gender in Enlightenment London* (1998) and Tim Hitchcock in *English sexualities, 1700–1800* (1997), concerning increased male anxiety and growing emphasis on penetrative heterosexual sex. Sara Toulalan’s work on late-seventeenth-century erotica tends to push back the “origin story” even earlier than Peakman claims. It would also have been intriguing to relate changing tropes within pornography, and its increasing production and dissemination, to the rise of exactly contemporary fears around onanism. What was the dialectical relationship between the insistence that solitary

sex was dangerous, and the growing amount of “one-handed literature”?

In spite of these cavils, this is an extremely useful beginning exploration of a still under-investigated area: as Peakman makes clear, there are considerable problems of sources and methodology to be taken into account.

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Jane Kromm, *The art of frenzy: public madness in the visual culture of Europe, 1500–1850*, London and New York, Continuum, 2002, pp. xv, 283, £70.00 (hardback 0-8264-5641-3).

Working in the conviction that imagery articulates and shapes, as well as reflects, historical processes and perceptions, Jane Kromm has given us a conceptually high-pitched and correspondingly demanding survey of the ways in which mania or *furor* has been visualized in Europe (mostly England, France, and the Low Countries) from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Her selection of images bears witness to extraordinarily wide looking—no single reader will know them all—and she subjects them to acute and often entertaining visual analyses. Though not about the history of madness, nor of the mad, *The art of frenzy* is invulnerable to any charge (as Kromm summarizes those levelled against Michel Foucault) of a “casual handling of the relationship between motifs and actualities” (p. xii). Where necessary the book offers useful and untendentious accounts of social, legal, and institutional practice. Its writing style is tight, occasionally overwound (“This politically conscious factor in monomania’s reputation represented a subset of a broader mentality in which asylums and mental disorders were persistently regarded in terms of the 1789 revolution”, p. 240), but Kromm is an expert explainer, and she needs to be. An ambitious range means that her readers must be got up to speed on the politics of Greek colonies in ancient Italy and those of artists’ societies in later eighteenth-century London alike.