Karen Harvey explores the construction of sexual difference and gender identity in eighteenth-century England. Using erotic texts and their illustrations, and rooting this evidence firmly in historical context, Harvey provides a thoroughgoing critique of the orthodoxy of recent work on sexual difference in the history of the body. She argues that eighteenth-century English erotic culture combined a distinctive mode of writing and reading in which the form of refinement was applied to the matter of sex. Erotic culture was male-centred and it was in this environment, Harvey argues, that men could enjoy both the bawdy, raucous, libidinous elements of the eighteenth century and the refined politeness for which the period is also renowned. This book makes a significant contribution to the history of masculinity and advocates a new approach to change in gender history, one capable of capturing the processes of negotiation and contestation integral to cultural change.

KAREN HARVEY is a Lecturer in Cultural History at the University of Sheffield. She is the editor of The Kiss in History (2004).
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Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century

*Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture*

Karen Harvey

*University of Sheffield*
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First published 2004
Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeface Times 10/12 pt. System \[ \text{LATEX2ε} \]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
Harvey, Karen, 1971 – Reading sex in the eighteenth century : bodies and gender in English erotic culture / Karen Harvey.
p. cm. – (Cambridge social and cultural histories; 3)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0 521 82235 1
1. English literature – 18th century – History and criticism. 2. Erotic literature, English – History and criticism. 3. Gender identity in literature. 4. Body, Human, in literature. 5. Sex in literature. I. Title. II. Series.
PR448.5/E75H37 2004 820.09’3538’09033 – dc22 2004045743

ISBN 0 521 82235 1

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Acknowledgements

Encounters with four women have shaped this book. Ann Hughes introduced me to women's history as an undergraduate, and supervised my first piece of work on the body. Lyndal Roper had a formative impact during my postgraduate studies and beyond; throughout she has been extremely generous with her time and thoughts. Pene Corfield provided a warm yet steadying hand during my PhD, and posed some vital questions that have made this work what it is. My greatest debt is to Amanda Vickery, who lit up the eighteenth century for me and was critical in my decision to undertake a PhD. As a supervisor she was ever the enthusiast; since then she has been a dear friend.

I am also grateful to several people who have read earlier versions of this work. As my PhD examiners, the late Roy Porter and Mark Jenner asked provocative questions – both big and small – and forced me to think more broadly and more carefully about the book. James Raven gave suggestions on chapter one far too numerous to mention. In various forms, this work was also read by Mike Braddick, Sandra Cavallo, Justin Champion, Michèle Cohen, Lyndal Roper, Eve Setch, Nick Stargardt, David Stevenson and Nick Webb. I am also very grateful for the extremely valuable reports of the two anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press.

Several people have made significant comments or given important references. These include Francesca Berry, Arthur Burns, Anna Clark, Seth Denbo, Charlotte Grant, A. D. Harvey, Clare Haynes, Judith Hawley, Martin Lengwiler, Anthony Milton, John Mullan, Miles Ogborn, John Sainsbury, Nick Webb and Helen Weinstein. Academic audiences too numerous to mention have listened and commented.

I have also benefited from discussions with a number of friends and colleagues, including Sarah Barry, Helen Berry, Hera Cook, Brian Cowan, Seth Denbo, Jonathan Durrant, Tanya Evans, Tim Hitchcock, Eve Setch, Bob Shoemaker, Richard Tacey, Sarah Toulalan, David Turner and Susan Whyman.

The research for this book was funded by several awards from the British Academy. The Royal Historical Society provided additional support. I would like to thank staff at the British Library, Sheffield University Library Special
Acknowledgements

Collections, Chetham’s Library in Manchester, the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, UCLA, and The Huntington Library in California.

I am grateful to all the staff at Cambridge University Press, and particularly to Elizabeth Howard. Caroline Howlett performed a careful job on the copy-editing, though all errors remain my own.


The book was written and rewritten during posts in the Department of History at the University of Manchester, and at the AHRB Centre for the Study of the Domestic Interior (based at the Royal College of Art, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and Royal Holloway). I am very appreciative of the support given by Hannah Barker at Manchester and by Jeremy Aynsley, John Styles and Amanda Vickery at the CSDI. The race to the finish was enabled by the Department of History at the University of Sheffield and particularly to the generosity of Professor Edmund King.

But there are more personal debts to acknowledge. Nick Webb saw this project take shape as a PhD thesis. He gave loving companionship and intellectual support throughout, and sustained me through the process.

My parents have never flinched either at the cost of putting their daughter through years of education or at the topics she has chosen to study. For their loving and laissez-faire support I will always be extremely grateful.

Lastly, I would like to thank Mike Braddick. He has been a true helpmeet throughout the writing of this book, generous with his thoughts and his time, and patiently picking up the slack when my job as historian has encroached on my responsibilities as wife and as mother to Cora. In thanks for his love and support, this book is for him.