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*Inside and outside, cavities and containers: the organs of generation in
seventeenth-century English medicine*

Helen King
University of Reading

In this chapter, I shall be discussing the gendering of body space, focusing on English seventeenth-century medical literature, produced in a period when the body was experienced not only through the models of Greek and Roman medicine, but also through the discoveries made in human dissection. For western medicine, the body is always located within a space; whether that is the complex environment of a text like the Hippocratic *Airs Waters Places* or the domestic or institutional space within which the medical encounter takes place. Changing beliefs about the source of disease have influenced the location of healing spaces, and the act of medical pilgrimage to a healing site can be seen as a physical expression of the journey from illness to health. Advice to move one's body to a different climate has also been common in the history of medicine, whether that is travelling to 'take the waters' in a spa, or general advice for 'a change of scenery.' Even in our own day, we can sense something of the importance of shifts in space; the referral from the GP to the hospital can be seen as affirmation of one's status as 'sick', although it may bring either hope, that the new space of healing will be one with better equipment or better trained personnel, or with fear, that the new space of healing brings the risk of frightening bugs lying in wait to bring more illness.

But there is another, deeper, level of space for studies of the body: the normally-inaccessible spaces within the body itself. Human dissection made it possible to explore these spaces, but in the seventeenth century this still took place within the dominant Galenic system.¹ In this humoral medical system, the body appears as the container within which fluids are produced and moved around, with the organs simply the means by which fluids are made, collected and passed on. A major shift in the history of medicine then becomes the movement from a 'body of fluids' to a 'body of organs'. In the former, fluids, including but not limited to humours, can change into each other, and can emerge from a range of orifices.² While the female body has often been seen as more 'fluid' than the male body – dominated by blood, with plethora as its natural state – recent work reminds us that we should not distort the historical record by looking only at women when studying the 'body of fluids.'³ In both men and women, fluids need to be produced and kept moving: in both men and women, organs can be less significant than the fluids they process.

I would locate the research presented here within two recent developments in the history of the body. First, there is 'the body in parts' approach, by which changing

¹ See most recently Katy Park, *Secrets of Women. Gender, Generation and the Origins of Human Dissection* (New York, 2006); Park points out that women were "more difficult to understand than men" (p. 103) because their generative organs were less accessible and the state of the organs varied across the menstrual cycle.

² Consider, for example, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century belief in 'diverted menstruation', on which see Helen King, *The Disease of Virgins: Green Sickness, Chlorosis and the Problems of Puberty* (London, 2004), p. 24.

³ See for example Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY, 1993); Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 36-37.

understandings and representations of one specific body part are traced across time; in this model, anatomy – the cutting up of the body – is privileged.⁴ Even before the rise of dissection in the late fifteenth century, the idea of ‘the body in parts’ was supported by early modern cultural practices; for example, the treatment of the dead, saintly body, in which parts could be buried separately, and preserved independently as relics.⁵ Second, some scholars aim instead for the ‘lived experience’ approach, which foregrounds the unity of the body as experienced by its ‘users.’ To date, this approach has been best categorised by those working on the female body.⁶ This chapter attempts to redress some imbalances in work on the early modern body by looking in particular at the male sexual organs and fluids, focusing on particular parts, but also trying to recover some sense of the ‘user’s viewpoint.’

I am interested here in the complex processes of production of early modern medical texts, in which English writers frequently copied the work of their predecessors, both in English and in Latin; to study these texts is often frustrating, as what appeared to be a startling image or original observation often turns out to be simply a translation of a medical text published earlier in Latin. My starting point is Jane Sharp’s *The Midwives Book*, published in 1671, the first midwifery manual written by a British woman; the first such manual in Britain was the English translation of Eucharius Rösslin’s *Der Roszgarten* (1513), which came out in 1540 as *The Byrth of Mankynd*.⁷ The entry into publishing of British midwives is late, compared to their counterparts elsewhere in Europe, such as Louise Bourgeois, midwife to the French royal family at the beginning of the seventeenth century.⁸ In contrast to other parts of Europe, where as early as the mid-sixteenth century midwives were required to take oaths, or trained in hospitals, or examined by physicians, or licensed by the city authorities, English midwives in the early modern period were licensed by the Church of England, and were admitted to the role not because of any formal education or demonstration of skill, but by virtue of their good character. Their knowledge may have been passed down orally, in the case of London by the patterns of long apprenticeship identified by Doreen Evenden.⁹ Even here, manuals were used, but with the senior midwife explaining their contents to the trainee.¹⁰ None of these manuals envisaged an entirely professional audience, whether

⁴ E.g. David Hillman and Carla Mazzi, eds., *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* (London and New York, 1997); James Porter, ed., *Constructions of the Classical Body* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1999); Florike Egmond and Robert Zwijnenberg, eds., *Bodily Extremities: Preoccupations with the Human Body in Early Modern European Culture* (Aldershot, 2003). Eve Keller, *Generating Bodies and Gendered Selves: The Rhetoric of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Seattle and London, 2007), p. 43 criticises the ‘body in parts’ model because she considers that it glosses over a changing view of the self, from being “a distributed entity” in the Galenic body to being a separate, and masculine, entity in the early modern period.

⁵ See Andrew Cunningham, *The Anatomical Renaissance: The Revival of the Anatomy Projects of the Ancients* (Aldershot, 1997); Catrien Santing, *The Heart of the Matter: Signification and Iconic Reification of Human Remains at the Papal Court, c. 1450-1600* (forthcoming).

⁶ Most notably Barbara Duden, *The Woman Beneath the Skin: A Doctor’s Patients in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge, MA, 1991).

⁷ On Rösslin’s use of earlier material, see Monica H. Green, “The Sources of Eucharius Rösslin’s *Rosegarden for Pregnant Women and Midwives* (1513),” *Medical History* 53 (2009), 167-192. See also Elaine Hobby, *The Birth of Mankind, Otherwise Named, the Woman’s Book* (Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2009).

⁸ Wendy Perkins, *Midwifery and Medicine in Early Modern France: Louise Bourgeois* (Exeter, 1996).

⁹ Doreen Evenden, *The Midwives of Seventeenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 2000).

¹⁰ Helen King, “‘As if None Understood the Art that Cannot Understand Greek’: The Education of Midwives in Seventeenth Century England” in Vivian Nutton and Roy Porter, eds., *The History of Medical Education in Britain* (Amsterdam, 1995), 180-195.

of surgeons or of midwives; like her male counterparts, Sharp herself noted that “young men and maids” may well be shocked by the contents of her work.¹¹

Elaine Hobby, who has made an extensive study of the text while producing a modern edition, has argued that Sharp was “taking into female hands a genre which till then had been a male possession,” and has observed that Sharp’s movement into the male territory of publications on midwifery was almost contemporary with men’s movement into the space of normal childbirth.¹² Sharp ridiculed the men-midwives as “forced to borrow from us the very name they practise by.”¹³ However, in the 1670s the presence of men in the birthing chamber was very rare, except for difficult births in which surgical intervention was necessary, or as what Adrian Wilson has called “an adjunct to the midwife”; it was not until the early eighteenth century that men began to assert their authority over normal childbirth.¹⁴ Sharp was therefore not fighting the battle for women to retain control of births which proceed without difficulty; indeed, the contents of her book include almost nothing on normal birth, and instead cover reproductive anatomy, conception and gestation, care of the new mother, diseases to which women are subject, and care of young children. These areas had been within the remit of the midwife for many centuries.

Hobby has meticulously tracked down the origins of Sharp’s material in the existing, male-authored literature on anatomy, midwifery and generation, looking at “the systematic way in which she rewrote men’s books to make them properly her own.”¹⁵ Sharp herself not only acknowledged her dependence on these works, but consciously located her authority to write in a combination of male texts and her own experiences in midwifery practice over a period of thirty years; in her preface “To the midwives of England” she noted “I have been at Great Cost in Translations for all Books, either French, Dutch, or Italian of this kind. All of which I offer with my own Experience,” and in the Introduction she insisted that midwives should be “well versed” in both “Speculative, and Practical” knowledge.¹⁶ Here she was very explicitly linking theory (gendered male) and practice or experience (gendered female), opposed terms that characterised the debate over the proper gender of the midwife; for example, a few years later, the London midwife Elizabeth Cellier would attack the Latin of male writers, mocking their lack of practical experience by arguing that few women would wait to deliver a baby while the doctor “fetches his Book,

¹¹ Elaine Hobby (ed.), *The Midwives Book, Or, the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered* (New York and Oxford, 1999), p. 13. The edition is in the series *Women Writers in English 1350-1850*. References to Sharp’s *The Midwives Book* in this chapter will use the pagination of the 1999 edition. With reference to his material on the female genitalia, Crooke warned “wee would advise no man to take further knowledge than shall serve for his good instruction”; Helkiah Crooke, *Microcosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man* (London, 1615), p. 199.

¹² Elaine Hobby, “Yarhound, Horriion, and the Horse-Headed Tartar: Editing Jane Sharp, *The Midwives Book* (1671)” in Katherine Binhammer and Jeanne Wood, eds., *Women and Literary History: “For There She Was”* (Newark, NJ and London, 2003).

¹³ Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 13.

¹⁴ Adrian Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery: Childbirth in England, 1660-1770* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), p. 6 notes that Percival Willughby was exceptional in being a physician in midwifery practice in 1630-1670; see also pp. 47-53. See also Helen King, *Midwifery, Obstetrics and the Rise of Gynaecology: The Uses of a Sixteenth-Century Compendium* (Aldershot, 2007).

¹⁵ Hobby, “Yarhound, Horriion, and the Horse-Headed Tartar,” p. 33. Hobby puts forward the theory that Sharp had access to the many texts she uses through the private library of her “much esteemed, and ever honoured friend,” Lady Eleanor Talbot, sister of the tenth Earl of Shrewsbury, to whom the book was dedicated.

¹⁶ Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 11.

studies the case, and teaches the Midwife to perform her work.”¹⁷ Despite her protestations, however, like Sharp, Cellier relied on men’s books, in particular the English translation of Guillemeau, *Child-Birth or, the Happy Deliverie of Woman* (1612), while giving his work her own particular spin.¹⁸ In her introduction, Sharp walked a tightrope between acknowledging the knowledge men alone can gain from a university medical education, “where Anatomy Lectures being frequently read, the situation of the parts both of men and women, and other things of great consequence are often made plain to them,” and arguing for the superiority of female, practical, knowledge in this sphere.¹⁹ She ridiculed the classical texts that lay at the heart of university medical education, insisting that “it is not hard words that perform the work, as if none understood the Art that cannot understand Greek.”²⁰ But for her, the mediator between male classical theory and female practice was translation into the vernacular: “to have the same in our mother tongue would save us a great deal of needless labour.”²¹

After a three-page Introduction, Sharp moved into the main text of her manual. In what may seem to modern readers an unlikely strategy for a woman writing about midwifery, she followed the examples of the works from which she drew her material, and began with the male reproductive anatomy. Her justification for this was “because it is commonly maintain’d, that the Masculine gender is more worthy than the Feminine”; it is, she stated, “the ordinary method” to begin with men.²² This is in itself an interesting assumption. Mary Fissell has argued that Sharp’s predecessor Nicholas Culpeper, in his *A Directory for Midwives*, “broke with the past” in describing the male body as well; the first section of his main text opened with the words “First, the Genitals of men (for I hope good Women will pardon me for serving my own Sex first),” moving on to women only on page 26.²³ While putting the male body before the female body may have been an innovation in midwifery texts, it was common in other medical books; for example, in 1615 Helkiah Crooke – one of Sharp’s main sources – also chose to start with the male organs of generation, without any explanation of why this should be the case, simply referring to “the parts of

¹⁷ Cellier, *To Dr ... An Answer to his Queries, concerning the Colledg [sic] of Midwives* (London, 1687), p. 7. The text is now available in Mihoko Suzuki, ed., *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works*, Series II, *Printed Writings, 1641-1700: Part 3*, vol. 5, *Elizabeth Cellier* (Aldershot, 2006).

¹⁸ Helen King, *Hippocrates’ Woman* (London, 1983), pp. 183-84. Here and elsewhere I have argued that Cellier read the story of the ‘first midwife’, Agnodike, through the lens of her own experiences with the courts; see King, “The politick midwife: models of midwifery in the work of Elizabeth Cellier” in Hilary Marland, ed., *The Art of Midwifery* (London, 1993), pp. 115-130 and “‘As if None Understood the Art that Cannot Understand Greek’.”

¹⁹ Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 12.

²⁰ “Hard words” is an interesting early modern expression, associated with the first ‘dictionary’ (in the sense of a monolingual, even if far from complete, word list); Robert Cawdrey, *A Table Alphabeticall, conteyning and teaching the true writing, and understanding of hard usuall English wordes* (ed. Robert A. Peters, Gainesville, Florida, 1966), available online at <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/ret/cawdrey/cawdrey0.html> (accessed 24.8.07).

²¹ Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 13; Elaine Hobby, “‘The Head of this Counterfeit Yard is called Tertigo’ or, ‘It is not Hard Words that Perform the Work’: Recovering Early Modern Women’s Writing” in Jo Wallwork and Paul Salzman, eds., *Women Writing 1550-1750*, special issue of *Meridian* 18.1 (2001) notes the play on words here: ‘mother’ being a term for the womb, and ‘labour’ being intended as a further pun. ‘Mother-Tongue’ is also used in Nicholas Culpeper, *A Directory for Midwives, Or a Guide for Women ...* (London, 1651), *Epistle Dedicatorie* and p. 21.

²² Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 13.

²³ Culpeper, *Directory for Midwives*, p. 3; cited in Mary Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies. The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (New York and Oxford, 2003), p. 143.

Generation belonging to men (for of the other we shall see afterwards).”²⁴ Here he was in turn following the model of one of his own sources, Caspar Bauhin, who in his *Theatrum Anatomicum* simply stated that *de viribus primum sermo erit*.²⁵

For a general medical text of the period, to discuss men first could be seen as a strategy based on *Genesis* and the prior creation of man, making men the norm, and women a variant on this norm; this is supported by Culpeper’s letter “To the reader,” “Know this, That God created Adam perfect.” When discussing most conditions of the body, only the male body needed to be described, with conditions specific to women, those of the breasts and genitals, being added on in separate sections. Fissell has identified places in Culpeper where he regarded the male as the norm, then added a few comments on the differences in the part under discussion when it is found in a woman.²⁶ It would be misleading to suggest that, in all cases, this order was followed religiously. For example, following Galen, it was thought that both sexes produce seed, but that female seed is more watery and weak than the male version. Discussing the spermatic or “preparing” vessels, Crooke noted “These are larger in men than in women,” while he also commented that “The Testicles in men are larger and of a hotter nature than in women.”²⁷ Here women are, at least theoretically, being briefly considered as the standard, with men the variation. However, in the specific context of a work on gynaecology or midwifery, a different rationale could be given for the discussion of the male first; namely that men were simply the most important sex where procreation is involved.

INSIDES OUTSIDE?

In the classical tradition, the fundamental difference between men and women was often seen in terms of inside and outside. In one sense, this was about domestic space; while women were traditionally associated with the ‘inside’, men functioned on the ‘outside’. The ideal (or idealised?) ancient Greek woman stays inside the home, while her husband works outside and brings back to her the provisions she needs. Work on ancient Athens in the last 20 years, informed by Mediterranean anthropology, has cast doubt on this model, pointing out that even ‘good’ Greek women needed to go outside for religious festivals, not to mention the daily necessity of fetching water from the fountain. Such work suggests that women’s presence in the ‘outside’ may have been far more widespread, but conveniently not ‘seen’ by their menfolk, rather like the situation of the anthropologist in Greece who can be talking with Greek men in the bar about how ‘decent’ women are not seen alone in the street, even while the wife of one of these men walks past.²⁸

The idealised gendering of space, with all the assumptions about relative weakness and strength that can be tied to it, reached its fullest form in ps-Xenophon’s *Oikonomikos* (Household Management).²⁹ Lorna Hutson has shown the enduring

²⁴ Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 200. Reprinted in 1651 (London: R.C.), this work was a major source for Sharp; see Hobby, “Yarhound, Horriion, and the Horse-Headed Tartar,” p. 33.

²⁵ Bauhin, *Theatrum Anatomicum* (Frankfurt, 1605), p. 171.

²⁶ Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies*, p. 143 citing the testicles and the “preparing vessels” for the seed.

²⁷ Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, pp. 200, 204.

²⁸ David Cohen, *Law, Sexuality, and Society. The Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 1991).

²⁹ See the edition of Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Xenophon, Oeconomicus: A Social and Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1994), which includes discussion of the uses of this text in the early modern period; see also Sian Lewis, *The Athenian Woman: An Iconographic Handbook* (London, 2002), pp. 61–63 on Xenophon and p. 44 on cups showing women’s activities on the inside, men’s on the outside.

power of Xenophon's binary oppositions in sixteenth-century English thought.³⁰ In this model, men's nature fits them to work 'outside' the household, while that of women makes them more suited to remain 'inside': men should acquire, while women should keep safe that which is acquired. Both in the classical world and in early modern Europe, such a division of roles was also found in medical writing, where it was even more firmly rooted in a difference presented as natural and biological.

The 'inside' of the female body, like the real woman 'outside' the home, was invisible. In early modern medical writing, Galen's statement that women's interiority includes having their organs of generation on the inside, while men's are on the outside, was often repeated. It was in his *Usefulness of Parts* that Galen suggested that the organs were equivalent, only their spatial location being different, and that men's greater heat, "Nature's primary instrument," meant that in their case the organs could be pushed out of the body.³¹ For example, in 1615 Crooke observed that "It was the opinion of Galen ... that women had all those parts belonging to Generation which men have."³² Here he was picking up the points attributed to Galen by one of his two main Latin sources, Caspar Bauhin. Bauhin presented a strong inside/outside division; however, he added to this some other binary oppositions not given in the key passage of Galen, namely spacious/narrow and thin/thick.³³

Jane Sharp, following Crooke, noted "Galen saith that women have all the parts of Generation that Men have, but Mens are outwardly, womens inwardly ... the parts are either thrust forth by heat, or kept in for want of heat."³⁴ But, for Crooke at least, one should not stop at Galen's opinion. In the "Controversies" with which he ended each section of his work, taken from one of his other main Latin source – André du Laurens, *Historia Anatomica Humani Corporis* (Lyons, 1605) – Crooke included "How the parts of generation in men and women do differ" and followed du Laurens in stating that, although stories of sex change from female to male had been used to support an inside/outside model, because the genitalia could move from inside to outside if the level of heat increased, the evidence of observation and reason suggested that there was much evidence that challenged it.³⁵ There are, he said, parts

³⁰ Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer's Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth-Century England* (London, 1994), pp. 20-23.

³¹ Galen, *Usefulness of Parts*, 14, ed. Kühn 2.630.

³² Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 216.

³³ Caspar Bauhin, *Institutiones Anatomicae Corporis Virilis et Muliebris Historiam Exhibentes* (?Geneva, 1604), p. 77; *ibid.*, *Theatrum Anatomicum*, pp. 210-211. The vocabulary is that of *intus/extra*; women's organs are "hidden inside" (*intus sunt conditae*) while those of men are located outside (*extra ad perinaeum sitae*).

³⁴ Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 37.

³⁵ This comes from *Quaestio 8* of André du Laurens, *Historia Anatomica Humani Corpori* (Lyons, 1605), pp. 500-3, where it is framed as a discussion of whether the male and female generative parts differ only in situation "as the ancients thought", and whether a woman can become a man; Crooke's version is at times a direct translation from the Latin, at other times a simplification, as titles and chapter numbers of ancient texts are omitted. He also omits du Laurens' comment that the ancients and almost all writers 'today' are of the opinion that men and women only differ in the position of their organs of generation. As Crooke notes in the long title of his book, and at many times in his main text, he based his work on Caspar Bauhin and du Laurens. In his Preface, he describes his approach, noting: "My present worke is for the most part out of Bauhine for the History, Figures, and the severall Authors quoted in his Margents. The Controuersies are mostwhat out of Laurentius, with some additions, substractions and alterations as I thought fit and my wit would serve. The Method I have altered throughout, transported the Tables as seemed best unto me, revised and made choise of the quotations in Bauhine, and interposed them in their owne places. I also added Praefaces to every booke containing the argument and purport thereof: & in the subsequent discourse many passages partly out of my owne observations, partly as I met with them in approved authors. The streame and current of

in men that simply do not exist in women, and others where the number of the parts differs between the sexes, while “Howsoever . . . the neck of the womb [i.e. the vagina] shall be inverted, yet will it never make the virile member” because the latter is made of three hollow bodies, the former only of one. Still following du Laurens, he added that those arguing for the clitoris – which he elsewhere calls the “womans yard” – as the female analogue for the penis were also mistaken, because the clitoris is small, not linked to the bladder, and has no passage from which it can emit seed.³⁶ His other source, Bauhin, was more conservative in his views on the clitoris; Crooke’s “womans yard” simply translates Bauhin’s *penis muliebris*, Bauhin stating that the clitoris is “properly called the woman’s penis, because it corresponds to the virile member.” However, even Bauhin gave some examples of differences between these organs.³⁷ As this case suggests, a satisfactory list of parallels between the male and female generative parts was never produced; to many the vagina seemed analogous to the penis, but this was not the only possibility, and there did not seem to be a female equivalent of the prostate, or a convincing male equivalent of the womb.³⁸

Thomas Laqueur has labelled the model in which the female and male genitalia were seen as the same organs, but positioned either inside or outside, as the ‘one-sex body’.³⁹ The term remains influential, although his wider argument, in which the eighteenth century is the period in which a ‘one-sex’ model was replaced by a ‘two-sex’ model focusing on the differences between the sexes, has been widely criticised, and not only because it glosses over seventeenth-century discussions – even within a single text like that of du Laurens or of Crooke – as to whether the ‘one-sex model’ was sufficient to account for all the evidence.⁴⁰

In particular, Katy Park has recently pointed out that this is the sole passage in Galen’s enormous *oeuvre* that argues for an inside/outside relationship, so that it is hardly ‘the’ Galenic view; furthermore, she stresses that it is essential to work out when this ancient text was, and was not, available as a resource for those constructing an image of sexual difference or homology. Park notes that *Usefulness of Parts* “had

Bauhines discourse because it is very hard, intricate, and full of long continued sentences, I have broken off and parted as it might best be understood, which was one thing that made the volume to swell. The words of Art most what I have kept that you might not be unacquainted with them, yet have I also rendered them as well as I could into our language. The first booke is almost wholly out of Laurentius saving for some passages, so is the fift.” Later, he notes on du Laurens, “for beside his descriptions, he hath handled learnedly the controversies of every part, with great evidence of argument, wherein I believe he hath satisfied himselfe and all the world beside. These his Controversies we have taken into our worke, yet not alwayes tying our selves to swear what he sayes, but for the most part we finde him in the right” (*Microcosmographia*, p. 25).

³⁶ Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 238 (“womans yard”) and pp. 249-250; noted by Katherine Crawford, *European Sexualities, 1400-1800* (New York, 2007), p. 109. However, Crawford gives too much credit here to Crooke, who is merely (and openly, by interspersing his section with “saith Laurentius” and “saith he”) following du Laurens, *Historia Anatomica*, p. 502.

³⁷ Bauhin, *Institutiones Anatomicae*, p. 86: *proprie virga muliebris, quod virili membro respondeat*, and pp. 258-259, where he notes that, although there is a difference in length, channels and muscles, nevertheless in location, substance and arrangement the penis and the clitoris were similar.

³⁸ Not everyone agreed even on vagina/penis: another possibility was clitoris/penis. The debate about which male organ corresponded to which female organ continued into the nineteenth century; see Helen King, *Midwifery, Obstetrics and the Rise of Gynaecology: The Uses of a Sixteenth-Century Compendium* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 181-182.

³⁹ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA, 1990).

⁴⁰ Critiques include Katy Park and Robert A. Nye, “Destiny is Anatomy,” *New Republic*, 18 February 1991, 53-57; Helen King “The Mathematics of Sex: One to Two, or Two to One?,” *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History: Sexuality and Culture in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, 3rd series, vol. II (2005), 47-58.

relatively little circulation in Latin Europe before the late fifteenth century and was not published until 1528 ... References to the homology between the male and female genitals were conspicuously absent from medieval anatomical texts and images before the thirteenth century.”⁴¹ Only then did some writers describe the homology, based on a reading of Avicenna’s eleventh-century discussion of the uterus in the *Canon* – itself clearly based on Galen – where the “instruments of generation” are the uterus and the penis. In this variant, “the membrane of the uterus is like the scrotum and the penis is like the neck of the uterus and the two eggs (Latin *ova*) are in women as in men.” But, while the penis is “complete (Latin *completum*), and stretches outside,” the uterus is “diminished and retained inside and is like an inverted male instrument.”⁴² (illustration 1). Even here, therefore, there is difference – complete versus diminished – in the midst of similarity, and this difference extends beyond simple location. The ‘one-sex body’ thus comes into western medicine only in the thirteenth century and, by the early seventeenth century, it is clearly disputed in medical writing.

NAMING OF PARTS

Body space, including gendered body space, is thus open to a range of interpretations. A further example of this lies in the terminology applied to the body. In any historical period or specific writer, how are the interior body spaces of women and men divided and labelled? Indeed, to what extent are the penis or vagina seen as separate organs, when – for example – in early modern medical Latin, the word ‘vagina’ can mean what we call ‘the womb’, with what we call the vagina being regarded as ‘the neck of the womb’?⁴³ Variations in terminology existed between types of text, so that medieval texts on anatomy separated out the ‘neck’ of the womb, while treatises on infertility did not.⁴⁴ In some texts, the clitoris had its own ‘head’, the *tentigo*.⁴⁵ Because early seventeenth-century medical writers accepted Galen’s view that women as well as men produce seed, they organised their discussions of the female generative parts on the model of the male body, first describing the vessels that produce, store and evacuate this seed, before moving to the organ of evacuation: the penis or the womb.⁴⁶

In her work on Sharp’s *The Midwives Book*, Hobby has drawn attention to one of the by-products of the ‘one-sex body’ model: its tendency to focus on the bodies of women, rather than those of men. She writes, “Although Laqueur has suggested that the male body has no history, being a stable point of reference against which the woman’s was measured and found wanting, comparing Sharp’s account of men’s anatomy with those given in others’ books ... shows that this is not the case.”⁴⁷ It is my intention here to consider the history of the penis in the early modern period in

⁴¹ Park, *Secrets of Women*, pp. 186-187.

⁴² Avicenna, *Canon* 3.21.1.1 (Venice, 1507), fol. 360.

⁴³ See for example Hobby, *Midwives Book*, p. xxxi. Crawford, *European Sexualities*, pp. 106-108 notes that “Female parts were not distinct enough to merit separate names”; this is rather overstating the situation, since works such as Bauhin’s *Theatrum Anatomicum* included the *fundus*, the *os*, the *cervix* and the various parts of the *pudendum externum*, among them the clitoris and labia. However, see Amy Lindgren, *The Wandering Womb and the Peripheral Penis: Gender and the Fertile Body in Late Medieval Infertility Treatises*, PhD thesis, University of California, Davis, 2005, p. 103 on the “blurry or even nonexistent” boundaries between the womb, vulva and female testes.

⁴⁴ Lindgren, *Wandering Womb*, pp. 92-93.

⁴⁵ E.g. Bauhin, *Theatrum Anatomicum*, p. 259: *caput ipsius tentigo proprie dicitur*. Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 40.

⁴⁶ E.g. Bauhin, *Theatrum Anatomicum*, p. 214; *ibid.*, *Institutiones Anatomicae*, pp. 78-80 on the woman’s *vasa spermatica*, *testes*, *vasa defentia seu eiculatoria*, then pp. 80-86 on the womb.

⁴⁷ Hobby, “‘The Head of this Counterfeit Yard’,” p. 19.

order to investigate some questions about the interior and exterior spaces of the male body that tend to be glossed over in the ‘one-sex body’ model. In the process, I will argue that some of Hobby’s conclusions about the representation of the male genitalia in Jane Sharp’s work should be generalised out to a particular genre of medical writing, whether authored by men or by women. I will also challenge Hobby’s presentation of Sharp’s ‘ironic’ attitude to her sources for, *inter alia*, the male genitalia.⁴⁸ As part of her picture of Sharp as reusing male medical texts but injecting her own “jokes and anecdotes,” Hobby has described Sharp finding the scrotum and penis “comical and sickly organs”; while I agree on the comedy, I will show that some unease about the penis is also found in male writers and, furthermore, that some forms of medical writing had, since the middle ages, regarded the penis as a mere conduit for seed.⁴⁹

What terminology and imagery was used for the penis in early modern medical writing, and how far did vernacular and Latin terms differ in their import? Hobby has convincingly argued that the term Sharp used for the male organ – yard – is not a simple equivalent of our use of ‘penis’; “the seventeenth-century yard was a muscular organ that responded positively to the eating of peas and beans, whereas the twentieth-century penis is fleshy and adversely affected by alcohol consumption.”⁵⁰ One of the most common statements about the organ in seventeenth-century medical writers is simply that it has many names; Crooke notes that it is the penis (thought to be from *pendendo*, ‘of hanging’), or the yard, or the *virga*, and in addition “Many other names it hath both in Greek and in Latin.”⁵¹ The names were listed more fully in his sources, André du Laurens and Caspar Bauhin, extending to around twenty in Greek and only a few less in Latin; du Laurens simply lists the names, while Bauhin gives the ancient source for each.⁵² The mid-seventeenth century writer Nicholas Culpeper, in his mission to bring medical knowledge to those who did not know Latin, simply omitted the Latin terms, suggesting that only very lecherous people need many words for an organ; he wrote that “The Latins have invented very many names for the Yard, I suppose done by venerious people (which Rome it seems was full of then...).”⁵³ Names therefore carry different meanings, and the profusion of names is assumed to have a meaning of its own. A further question concerns to what extent the penis represents a single ‘body part’; when was it considered to be independent of the testicles and scrotum?⁵⁴

The relative independence from the rest of the body of the male and female genitalia also merits discussion. In Hippocratic medicine, it was believed that the womb would wander about the body in search of fluid; by means of a disorder called

⁴⁸ Elaine Hobby, “‘Secrets of the Female Sex’: Jane Sharp, the Reproductive Female Body, and Early Modern Midwifery Manuals”, *Women’s Writing*, 8 (2001), 201-212; p. 12 on “the author’s ironic perception of the misogyny that underpinned accepted ideas about the female reproductive body.”

⁴⁹ Hobby, “‘The Head of this Counterfeit Yard’,” p. 14; Hobby, *Midwives Book*, p. xxvii; Hobby, “Yarhound, Horriion, and the Horse-Headed Tartar,” p. 35 describes Sharp as regarding the penis as “comical and threatening.”

⁵⁰ Hobby, *Midwives Book*, pp. xxx-xxxi.

⁵¹ Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 210. Crooke’s source here, Caspar Bauhin, *Anatomes liber primus* (Basel, 1591), p. 95, gives the origin of the *pendendo* etymology as Persius. Bauhin repeats the etymology without the reference to Persius in *Theatrum Anatomicum*, p. 198 and *Institutiones Anatomicae*, p. 61 (named because *extra corpus pendens*).

⁵² See du Laurens, *Historia Anatomica*, p. 474; Bauhin, *Anatomes*, pp. 94-103.

⁵³ Culpeper, *Directory for Midwives*, p. 17.

⁵⁴ In one of his “Controversies” taken from du Laurens, Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 27 includes a discussion of what counts as a ‘part’; following the humoral model of the body, he focuses on the containers and the contained.

‘suffocation of the womb,’ this belief eventually became crystallised in the concept of ‘hysteria.’⁵⁵ Malcolm Jones’s study of medieval popular tradition has drawn attention to a type of pilgrim’s badge that shows the vulva wearing a pilgrim’s hat and small phallus epaulettes, carrying a phallus-tipped staff and a rosary, and this image may reflect a difference between earlier sets of terminology, and our own; it is possible that this particular badge is a reference to the ‘wandering womb,’ here taken to extremes by going on pilgrimage (illustration 1).⁵⁶ The ‘wandering womb’ of Hippocratic gynaecology was denied by seventeenth-century writers, because they knew that it was kept in place by ligaments, but the fact that they needed to distance themselves from the belief suggests that it had not entirely disappeared.⁵⁷ But the womb was not the only organ with an idiosyncratic style of movement. There is a long tradition in Western thought of discussing the ‘natural’ and ‘animal’ aspects of erection, and seeing the penis as acting independently of the will, so that a recent “cultural history of the penis” uses as its title *A Mind of its Own*.⁵⁸ In a section on Leonardo da Vinci’s drawings of the penis, its author, David Friedman, notes that da Vinci represented the organ as “an independent agent, strong-willed and out of control.”⁵⁹ The penis could also appear as an alternative to the fingerpost in manuscript marginalia (illustration 2). The earliest representation of the penis as outside male control is, as far as I know, in Plato’s *Timaeus*, which is also famous for its description of the womb moving independently up and down the body if it is not able to procreate. Historians trying to find a classical predecessor for ‘hysteria’ have made much of this latter passage, but have ignored the point that Plato describes other organs too – including the penis – in a similar way.⁶⁰

Hobby has argued that Jane Sharp, as a woman and midwife, deliberately focused on the unpredictability of the penis which, she said, “swells with a windy spirit only,” in order to show that it was the male body rather than the female body that was dominated by a fickle organ.⁶¹ “Windy spirit” is a reference to the Galenic ‘natural’ faculties of the body, which are involuntary, in contrast to the ‘animal faculties’ that are under the control of the brain. Crooke includes as one of the ‘Controversies’ which he took from du Laurens “whether erection is natural or animal”; his answer is that it is both.⁶² It is “partly Natural, to wit, an abundance of winde and spirits filling the hollow Nerves; and partly Animall, from an appetite moving the muscles which are appoynted to make this erection”.⁶³

Having chosen to deviate from her source in order to make the penis seem less under conscious control, it is then interesting that, when Sharp turns to discuss “the strangling of the womb,” she does not see the womb itself as moving; instead, she regards it as the source of vapours which then rise to affect the rest of the body.⁶⁴

⁵⁵ See Sander Gilman, Helen King, Roy Porter, George S. Rousseau and Elaine Showalter, eds., *Hysteria Beyond Freud* (University of California Press, 1993), especially King, “Once upon a Text: The Hippocratic Origins of Hysteria,” pp. 3-90.

⁵⁶ Malcolm Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages* (Stroud, 2001), pp. 248-256 suggests this could be a reference to women going on pilgrimage in search of sexual adventures. The phallus-on-pilgrimage also exists; see below for discussion of the mobility of the penis.

⁵⁷ Bauhin, *Theatrum Anatomicum*, pp. 227-228.

⁵⁸ David M. Friedman, *A Mind of its Own: A Cultural History of the Penis* (New York, 2001). On natural/animal, a discussion originating in Aristotle, see e.g. Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 244.

⁵⁹ Friedman, *Mind of its Own*, p. 48.

⁶⁰ King, “Once upon a Text,” pp. 25-28; Plato, *Timaeus* 71a, 91a-c.

⁶¹ Hobby, “‘The Head of this Counterfeit Yard’,” pp. 19-20.

⁶² Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 247.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

⁶⁴ Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 235.

However, here Sharp is not departing from her male sources. Echoing contemporary male writers who based their discussion on Arabic sources, which in turn had developed Galen's theory that retained seed rotted in the womb, Sharp states that "the true causes of this Disease are the poisonous vapours that rise from the womb."⁶⁵ Here she – and her authorities – aligned themselves with what they saw as a 'modern' rejection of the ancient belief in womb movement, leaving the male body as the only one with an organ capable of independent motion. This, of course, also reduces further the idea that the bodies of men and women are analogous.

Although Sharp sees erection as outside the control of the male will, she insists that this is not the case for ejaculation. The "meanders and turnings" of the carrying vessels mean "that the seed pass not away without a mans will."⁶⁶ This raises the question of how far the experience of men is represented in the medical literature. Occasionally, as I shall show, in male-authored medical texts, we can speculate that some sense of the 'owner's experience' is coming through.

THE MIDWIFE MEETS THE PENIS

It is in chapters 9-11 of *The Midwives Book* that Sharp focuses on the Yard. In contrast to her simple factual approach to other parts of the male organs of generation, Sharp began the section with a simile and a moral message. "The Yard is as it were the Plow wherewith the ground is tilled, and made fit for production of Fruit."⁶⁷ This image goes back to the classical writers; most famously, in Sophocles' *Trachiniai*, Heracles is described by his wife Deianeira as sowing his seed and then coming back nine months later for the harvest. Crooke described how the man sows his seed "in the fertile field of Nature the wombe of the woman."⁶⁸ Sharp said that some people have an annual crop: but others "plow up other mens ground." In what follows, the penis is made the object of some ridicule. It is like the heart and arteries in its motion, but unlike them it "moves only at some times, and riseth sometimes to small purpose." Nor is size everything. If it is too long, "the spirits in the seed fly away," and "Some men, but chiefly fools, have Yards so long that they are useless for generation": if it is too short, "it cannot carry the Seed home to the place it should do."⁶⁹ Here again, the penis is seen in terms of function, but by using the word "home," Sharp put a female spin on the story of procreation. Furthermore, by supporting the "generally held" belief that the length of the penis depends on where the umbilical cord is cut, Sharp put midwives in control of penile size; however, this belief was clearly also held by male medical writers.⁷⁰

In her description of the male sexual parts, Sharp separated the "Stones" (testicles), the "Seed-vessels" (prostate), and the "Yard" (penis). The testicles reside in the "Cods" (scrotum), which – in what may appear to be one of Sharp's frequent homely similes – is "as it were a purse for the Stones to be kept in with the seminary vessels."⁷¹ However, in fact the "purse" image was a common one, used also by Sharp's likely source here, Crooke's *Microcosmographia*, which stated that "the

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 239. Hobby identifies Daniel Sennert as the source of this section. For discussion of the theories of hysteria, see King "Once upon a Text," pp. 41, 49-54.

⁶⁶ Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 21.

⁶⁷ Hobby, p. 23. This differs from the tradition of Aristotle and Avicenna, on which a long penis is a problem because the seed will become too cold to act; see Lindgren, *Wandering Womb*, pp. 118-122.

⁶⁸ Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 200.

⁶⁹ Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 24.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 25. The point is made in, for example, du Laurens, *Historia anatomica*, p. 476.

⁷¹ Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 17.

scrotum or Cod was made as a purse or bagge” (illustration 3)⁷² The image was also used by Crooke for the structures surrounding the bladder, and the heart (the pericardium).⁷³ Within this system, the penis is the organ “that from these containing Vessels, casts the seed prepared into the Matrix” (the womb).⁷⁴ For Sharp, its function is thus described in a way that reduces its importance; the penis is simply a way of moving the seed to its ultimate destination. The more important parts are the vessels that transmute blood into semen; the stones are linked to the main organs of the body – the brain, liver and heart, which Sharp’s source Crooke characterises as the “Principall parts” – and act as a magnet drawing to them blood from all over the body.⁷⁵

Sharp’s description of the male reproductive organs certainly does not hold them in awe. The various vessels are just pipes, language also used by Crooke; but in language that seems to be unique to Sharp, the “Vessels for Seed” are “like a Honeycomb,” while the vessels that carry the seed are represented like good housekeepers; they “are storehouses for it, that the whole store be not wasted in one act.”⁷⁶ But does her approach to the penis differ significantly from that of male writers?

Before examining this question, we can look at the image of the womb in Sharp and her sources. Hobby has noted that “The mother’s body is not an attractive entity in the majority of early modern midwifery writings.”⁷⁷ She mentions images of the womb as a dungeon and as ‘unclean’. Fissell has subsequently added to this catalogue seventeenth-century representations of the womb as being like a drain, or sewer, for the whole body; however, she presents these as new, when in fact they reproduce a view common in sixteenth-century Latin texts, which can be traced back to Avicenna.⁷⁸ Hobby comments that “Sharp responded to such attitudes with direct assertions and with tactical rewritings of her male-authored sources,” using as an example Sharp’s comment “we women have no more cause to be angry, or be ashamed of what Nature hath given us than men have, we cannot be without ours no more than they can want theirs.”⁷⁹ In a footnote, Hobby notes that this passage is close to Culpeper’s introduction to his section “Of the Genitals in Women”: “Women, who have no more cause than Men (that I know of) to be ashamed of what they have.”⁸⁰ In addition to his aside here, Culpeper makes a claim to be telling women something they do not know already; this is omitted by Sharp. Crooke included some highly positive gendered images of the womb in *Microcosmographia*, calling it “the most noble and almost divine nurse”; as Keller has observed, he presents the womb as “the perfect housewife and mother.”⁸¹

In the seventeenth century, therefore, positive images of the womb are not restricted to a female writer like Sharp. But what was the male attitude to the penis?

⁷² Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 204.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 223: the non-gravid womb is the size of “a Peare or halfe-penny purse”. The bladder is enclosed “as it were with a purse or Sachell” (p. 345) while the heart is contained in a “purse” (e.g. pp. 352, 355, 356).

⁷⁴ Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 14.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19. On the (Galenic) “Principall parts”, see Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 31.

⁷⁶ Sharp, *Midwives Book*, pp. 19-21. The terminology of pipes is common: “a little pipe ... obscure, hollow Pipes” (p. 20); “small pipes which open into the common pipes” (p. 21).

⁷⁷ Hobby, ““Secrets of the Female Sex”,” p. 202.

⁷⁸ Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies*, pp. 59-61; on earlier uses of the image, see King, *Midwifery, Obstetrics and the Rise of Gynaecology*, pp. 55-57.

⁷⁹ Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 32.

⁸⁰ Hobby, ““Secrets of the Female Sex”,” pp. 210-211, n. 7; Culpeper, *Directory for Midwives*, p. 26.

⁸¹ Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, pp. 262-263; Keller, *Generating Bodies*, pp. 68-69.

If Sharp regarded the penis as simply one stage in a process of moving seed to the womb, did men think any differently about their own bodies? Here I will focus on Crooke's *Microcosmographia*, one of her main sources. Crooke generally discussed the male organs in an objective way, although at one point he did move into the first person plural – “Columbus also saith that these muscles have some use in our making water” – and he referred to women as “this other sex.”⁸² At many points in his narrative, he mixed admiration for the male genitalia with some practical unease. For example, he praised the testicles – “the Testicles are esteemed the prime instruments of generation ... in excellency the Testicles are like unto the heart,” to the extent that a cordial can be equally effective if applied to them – while showing some unease about their appearance: “because it was neither profitable nor handsome that they should hang bare; for the receiving and clothing of them, the scrotum or Cod was made as a purse or bag.”⁸³ This is a clear contrast with the alternative medical view of the testicles, taken from Aristotle, in which they were simply the equivalent of loom weights, their purpose being to control the movement of the passages from the kidneys to the penis.⁸⁴ Even greater unease, and some fear, is revealed in Crooke's comments on the “fungous or spongy” “blackish” matter in the penis. In Crooke, other parts of the body such as the inner nostrils, and the neck of the womb, share the “fungous and spongy” texture; the neck of the womb is explicitly linked to the penis, being “fungous or spongie, like that of a man's yard.”⁸⁵ “Fungous” in this period simply translates the Latin *fungosa*, ‘spongy’, and is a term used by both of Crooke's main sources. Du Laurens used *nigricans* and *nigricantia* in his descriptions of the penis, while Bauhin described the central channel of the penis as *laxa, fungosa, nigricans*.⁸⁶ But only Crooke, a physician writing for surgeons, felt the need to warn his readers that the blackish matter is entirely natural; he was concerned “that in the section of a putrid yard, they do not take that for rotten which indeed is but Natural; the want of which knowledge I am persuaded hath cost many a man a good joint, which might otherwise well have been saved.”⁸⁷ His movement into the first person singular is noteworthy here (illustrations 4 and 5).

In addition to this belief that the penis and testicles are visually unattractive and that the core of the penis appears ‘rotten,’ the potential inconvenience of erections is shown by Crooke's comment, taken from Bauhin, that the human penis

... is not bony, as in a Dog, a Wolf and a Fox; for so it would not be a pleasure but a great trouble to the other sex; besides, being always rigid or stiff it would have been both uncomely and have hindered many actions and postures and positions of the body.⁸⁸

Yet this extract also shows that Bauhin and Crooke were thinking about the penis as a source of “pleasure” to women, in contrast to the more common situation in which

⁸² Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, pp. 214, 216.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 204, 207.

⁸⁴ Lesley Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science* (Oxford, 1994), p. 187. In *On Semen* Galen 1.16.5, criticised Aristotle's view as erroneous.

⁸⁵ Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 222. On the upper nostrils, p. 950.

⁸⁶ *Fungosa*: du Laurens, *Historia Anatomica*, p. 488. *Nigricans*, p. 475; *nigricantia*, p. 488. Compare Bauhin, *Institutiones Anatomicae*, p. 62.

⁸⁷ Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 210-211.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, *Microcosmographia*, p. 211; translating Bauhin, *Theatrum Anatomicum*, p. 202: *Osseum ergo non debuit esse, ut in cane, lupo, vulpe, utero enim fuisset molestus, nihil voluptatis attulisset, quin et rigidus semper prominendo, et indecens, et multis peragendis impedimento fuisset.*

male writers viewed the sexual act from their own perspective; for example, regarding the vagina as “the part which receives the Yard,” although Sharp too calls it “a fit sheath to receive the Yard”.⁸⁹ When Sharp adapts Bauhin’s comparison between the human and canine or vulpine penis, any reference to pleasure is lost as she writes, “The yard of a man is not bony, as in Dogs, and Wolves, and Foxes; nor gristly, for then it could not stand and fall as need is.”⁹⁰ Where Bauhin and Crooke only thought about erection here, it is interesting that Sharp also evoked the image of the penis that does not stand, but fall. Crooke also considered female pleasure in his section on the foreskin; having noted that the glans or “nut of the yard” is of “exquisite sense,” he explained that in intercourse the foreskin “is moved up and down, that in this attrition it might gather more heat and increase the pleasure of the other sex.”⁹¹ In Sharp’s discussion, while the foreskin is no “hindrance to procreation or pleasure,” neither does it make any positive contribution to women’s enjoyment.⁹²

Alongside the signs of unease about the appearance and nature of the penis, Crooke’s discussion of this organ, again based on Bauhin, also singled it out as very special. As we have already seen, it has many names. While the womb, too, had many names in Bauhin and Crooke, those applied to it “allow an easy slippage between part and person” in a way not found in the vocabulary of the penis.⁹³ Bauhin describes the substance of the penis as “special” (Lat. *peculiaris*), and in Crooke’s translation this is developed by stating that the penis is not bony, not gristly, not like a vein, not like an artery, not nervous, not a ligament, and not a tendon, nor is it made of flesh, glandules, muscles or membranes.⁹⁴ This hymn to the uniqueness of the matter of the penis was compressed by Sharp into the statement that “it is compounded of a peculiar substance that is not found in any other part of the body.”⁹⁵

Yet possibly the most surprising comments from a man on the male genitalia came immediately after Crooke’s praise of its uniqueness. In a section on the ‘bridle’ (*frenum*), Crooke commented

oftentimes in lustful disports or imaginations, if this bridle be but lightly moved the seed will incontinently issue forth; even as after a full meal, if a man but touch the end of his throat with his finger, the stomach by reason of the continuity of the parts, contracteth itself and returneth the *crapula* or undigested gobbets into the lap by vomit.⁹⁶

While the first part is based on Bauhin, the last part – as far as I can tell – is pure Crooke.⁹⁷ Ejaculation as a reflex like that of vomiting is an image far from straightforward penis-worship.

THE PERIPHERAL PENIS

⁸⁹ Daniel Sennert, cited in Hobby, “‘Secrets of the Female Sex’,” p. 202; Sharp, *Midwives Book*, pp. 45-46.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁹¹ Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 215.

⁹² Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 31.

⁹³ Bauhin, *Anatomes*, pp. 94-103; Keller, *Generating Bodies*, p. 67.

⁹⁴ Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 211; based on Bauhin, *Theatrum Anatomicum*, pp. 202-203; a version also appears in Bauhin, *Institutiones Anatomicae*, pp. 61-62.

⁹⁵ Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 25.

⁹⁶ Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 215.

⁹⁷ Bauhin, *Institutiones Anatomicae*, p. 209.

While the Yard is the final element in the story of the male genitalia as told by Sharp and her sources, it follows from what I have already noted about the economy of the system of seed production that it is not the focus of Sharp's discussion, nor indeed of the works of her male predecessors. Indeed, for Sharp the Yard is a threat to the other organs, and to the safe movement of seed; the vessels carrying the seed need to be defended by other structures "lest by much standing and stretching of the Yard the carriers of seed should be hurt."⁹⁸ This points us to what I think is the most important aspect of procreation: not the Yard, but the seed.

Here is Culpeper's opening sentence on the male genitalia in full:

First, for the Genitals of men (for I hope good Women will pardon me for serving my own Sex first) some prepare matter to make seed of, and they are called Vasa Praparantia; some elaborate, or work this matter, as the Corpus Varicosum, some make the seed fruitful, as the Stones; some carry the seed back from the Stones, and those are called Deferentia; some keep, or contain the seed so carried, as the Seminal Vessels, or the Prostates, some ejaculate or cast out this seed from those Vessels into the Womb, as the Yard.⁹⁹

The word that dominates this section is "seed." The Yard is merely the instrument responsible for the delivery of the end product. For comparison, here is Sharp:

There are six parts in Men that are fitted for generation.

1. The Vessels that prepare the matter to make the seed, called the preparing vessels.
2. There is that part or Vessel which works this matter, or transmutes the blood into the real desire for seed.
3. The Stones that make the Seed fructifie.
4. There are Vessels that conveigh the Seed back again from the Stones when they have concocted it.
5. There are the seminal or Seed-Vessels that keep or retain the Seed concocted.
6. The Yard, that from these containing Vessels, casts the seed prepared into the Matrix.¹⁰⁰

While Sharp omitted the Latin terms for these parts, she used the technical word "concoct." Both writers focused on the seed, but it may be significant that, even here, Sharp managed to inject a gentle female spin; while Culpeper managed to end with the word "Yard," Sharp ended with a word for womb, "Matrix."

In his own description of these parts, Crooke had followed the same order, and made even clearer the centrality of the seed. In his introduction to the book on the organs of generation, he stated that "The whole body is the Epitomie of the world, containing therein whatsoever is in the large universe: Seed is the Epitomy of the body, having in it the power and immediate possibility of all the parts."¹⁰¹ He went on, here following Bauhin,

⁹⁸ Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 21.

⁹⁹ Culpeper, *Directory for Midwives*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Sharp, *Midwives Book*, pp. 13-14.

¹⁰¹ Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 197.

The generation of perfect creatures is accomplished when the male soweth his seed, and the female receiveth and conceiveth it ... The parts of Generation belonging to men... are very many, but all conspiring unto one end, which is to exhibit something out of themselves which may have the nature of a Principle; by which, and out of which a new man may be generated. The Principle exhibited is seed.¹⁰²

As I have already noted, Crooke's *Microcosmographia* regarded the stones as being linked to the main organs of the body – the brain, liver and heart – and acting as a magnet drawing to them blood from all over the body.¹⁰³ The belief that male fertility was dependent on these three organs was common; as Amy Lindgren, who has studied what she has labelled “the peripheral penis” in five late medieval treatises on infertility, has shown, the focus on these organs contributed to the view that the testicles and penis were just “passive conduits.”¹⁰⁴ She sets her work explicitly within a critique of Laqueur; instead of a parallel between womb and scrotum, or penis, “In the realm of medieval infertility manuals, the penis, scrotum, and testicles have virtually no importance as markers of maleness, whereas the womb is the most significant feature of femaleness.”¹⁰⁵

Lindgren has analysed medieval texts to suggest that they may carry evidence of sex-specific attitudes to the testicles and their role in defining gender. She cites a story told by Gregory of Tours, of a boy who was raised by his mother as a girl after his testicles were cut off due to disease; while the mother thought that the absence of testicles made him ‘female’, the men in the story considered that it was the penis – which this boy retained – that defined him as ‘male’.¹⁰⁶ The link between the production of seed and the brain, liver and heart was prominent in one of the writers studied by Lindgren, Bernard Chaussede, who argued that a blow on the head could make a man cold, so that he was incapable of ejaculation.¹⁰⁷ In the medieval treatises on infertility, male fertility was seen as very fragile indeed; faults in the digestive system could also have an adverse effect on it.¹⁰⁸

As for the penis, Lindgren argues, in the medieval infertility treatises it was not “an active participant in the actual generative processes,” but merely “a passive passageway” and even “an anatomical afterthought.”¹⁰⁹ Bauhin's work demonstrates that this view was still powerful in the seventeenth century. Seed is what counts, and before discussing the penis, he describes the order in which seed is made in the male body, using the verbs to prepare, develop, assign, bring down, retain, preserve and pour forth.¹¹⁰ For each of these, a different set of vessels or organs is responsible; the penis only has a purpose in the final action of the list. As for the womb and the penis as similarly mobile organs, Lindgren suggests that there is a significant difference; it is only movement of the womb that has any effect on the rest of the body, and thus on female health as a whole. While the penis has input from the rest of the body, it has no

¹⁰² Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 200; using Bauhin, *Theatrum Anatomicum*, p. 171 *viriles licet variae sint, omnes tamen in unum conspirant, ut semen conficiunt*. Crooke's translation clearly echoes this *conspirant* with his “conspire.”

¹⁰³ Sharp, *Midwives Book*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁴ Lindgren, *Wandering Womb*.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41; citing *History of the Franks* (Dalston, ed., 1927), vol. 2, p. 449.

¹⁰⁷ Lindgren, *Wandering Womb*, pp. 64-66, 78.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 93, 99, 140.

¹¹⁰ Lat. *praeparant ... elaborant ... tribuunt ... deferent ... recipiunt ... conservant ... effundit*.

influence on other organs.¹¹¹ She concludes that “A fertile man’s maleness was not defined by his possession of a penis, but rather, by his possession of a generative brain, heart, and liver.”¹¹² As I have already noted above, these three organs alone continue to be listed by Crooke as the “Principall parts”, and he disagrees with Galen, who in some of his treatises “addeth to the Principall parts the Testicles, because they are the chiefe Organs of procreation, by which alone, the species or kinde is preserued.”¹¹³

What is most striking about Lindgren’s analysis is that she has identified different approaches to the penis in different types of medieval medical writing. For the infertility treatises, it is merely a conduit. Yet in pharmacological writings, where remedies are applied directly to it, the penis “is an important part of the male reproductive body.”¹¹⁴ This suggests that the early modern midwifery book – whether by men or by women – developed from the medieval infertility treatise, a finding that complements Monica Green’s argument that it was through treating infertility that, from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, men were gradually able to move into setting themselves up as experts on gynaecology.¹¹⁵

This material suggests that although the direct models for Crooke, and then in turn for Sharp’s midwifery manual, were anatomy texts, these had inherited from medieval discussions of generation and failures of generation a view of the penis that was neither deferential nor celebratory. Unique as it was in its structures, the organ took second place to the power of the seed, for which it was simply a delivery mechanism; and not always the most efficient delivery mechanism at that. I have argued for the need to consider the different genres of writing within ‘medicine’; the material presented here both suggests the continuity of the ‘body of fluids,’ and affirms variation. What we recognise as one organ could be seen as more than one: what we see as separate body parts could be understood as a single organ. As the ‘one-sex body’ model was both repeated, and challenged, in the seventeenth century, individual writers rewrote or reinterpreted traditional notions of gendered body space, sometimes – as in the case of both Sharp and Crooke – allowing their gendered voices to be heard above the material they shared. However, the vigour of early modern English prose should not be allowed to obscure the continued dependence on different parts of the classical tradition.

Helen King

¹¹¹ Lindgren, *Wandering Womb*, pp. 100-101, 111.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹¹³ Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, p. 31.

¹¹⁴ Lindgren, *Wandering Womb*, p. 168.

¹¹⁵ Monica H. Green, *Making Women’s Medicine Masculine: The Rise of Male Authority in Premodern Gynecology* (Oxford, 2008).