Introduction

"Your last book goes off famously, Doctor . . . Nothing like a highly-seasoned work to sell," Mr. Quarto crows. Clerks are milling about behind him, carrying stacks of books to and fro. A customer samples the wares. Mr. Quarto and the Doctor are sitting at a table towards the back of the bookshop. Books and papers lie scattered carelessly at their feet. One is emblazoned with the words *Mysteries of Matrimony*. Another, *Manly Vigour*. "We can push the thing," Mr. Quarto continues, "because it is written by an M.D; the police authorities can't touch us, we are *beyond* all *law*; because we are privileged by the *law* to write obscene books, and call it *science*." "Capital, by Jove," the Doctor exclaims. He leans forward and smiles, satisfied with himself. "It's a jolly lark, though; isn't it? Licensed to write, publish, and sell, [*sic*] all the obscenities we can collect … The only thing which can knock up our trade is, Mr. Morison's system, by which *everyone becomes his own physician*."

This scene is staged in an 1852 advertisement for Hygeism, a holistic system of medicine invented by the Scottish pill-maker James Morison (Figure 0.1). Morison theorized that all diseases resulted from impurities in the blood and claimed that the sick could cure themselves of every malady by taking his purgative Hygeian Vegetable Universal Medicine. Consumed in the recommended quantities, the medicine was a powerful laxative: it caused diarrhoea, dehydration, and, in a few tragic cases, death. Sales went briskly anyway, thanks to the endless stream of propaganda that Morison's institution, an outfit called the British College of Health, issued against its competition. Through public lectures, illustration series, books, and, from 1842, a journal called the *Hygeist*, the College set Morison's theories against what it called the "Organic or Doctors' System," which it framed as hopelessly corrupted by its practitioners' self-interest. It accused M.D.s of experimenting on, poisoning, and molesting patients' bodies in many of these publications, and, in "The Obscene M.D.," of poisoning their minds.[1]

[1] For a more detailed account of Morison and the British College of Health, see Michael Brown, "Medicine, Quackery, and the Free Market: The 'War' against Morison's Pills and the Construction of the Medical Profession, c. 1830–c. 1850," in *Medicine and the Market in*

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Figure 0.1 "The Obscene M.D." Coloured Lithograph. *Morality of Modern Medicine Mongers* (London: British College of Health, 1852). 563105i, Iconographic Collection, WL. Wellcome Collection, CC BY-NC 4.0.

"The Obscene M.D." exploits two familiar features of Victorian culture. One is the proliferation of medical works that described, analyzed, and theorized sex and reproduction. Premodern conceptions of sexual knowledge as pluralistic and experiential had begun to narrow in the previous century, giving way to a model that established sex centrally as a domain of medical expertise.[2] Sexual knowledge was increasingly regarded as a set of biological facts that could be discovered, ordered, and applied to managing bodies and populations. Many of these facts were contested. So were exactly how they should be used and who could speak of them with authority. But the idea that science had a singular power to make the most intimate workings of the body legible and tractable was

England and Its Colonies, c. 1450–c. 1850, ed. Mark S. R. Jenner and Patrick Wallis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 238–261.

[2] Kate Fisher, "Modern Ignorance," in *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Nick Hopwood, Rebecca Fleming, and Lauren Kassell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 471–472. See also Mary Fissell and Roger Cooter, "Exploring Natural Knowledge: Science and the Popular," in *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 4, *Eighteenth-Century Science*, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 129–158; Ralph O'Connor, "Reflections on Popular Science in Britain: Genres, Categories, and Historians," *Isis* 100, no. 2 (2009): 333–345.

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becoming more and more fixed. The bibliographic legacy of this paradigm's rise weighs down the shelves of academic libraries today and is rapidly filling digital space.

At the same time, the lithograph capitalizes on the politicization of access to sexual representations. The meanings and effects of all kinds of depictions of sex came under scrutiny during this period, including medical ones. Legal experts agreed that words and pictures that would render a novel or a newspaper indecent were necessities of medical communication. Authors of works on anatomy or obstetrics could not avoid discussions of sexual matters, nor, in most cases, could they bury the details in euphemism. Resorting to these common strategies of self-censorship risked misinterpretation, if not the destruction of a medical work's utility altogether. Yet, necessity did not ameliorate such works' potential to arouse dangerous thoughts and unseemly feelings. During a period that witnessed the passage of a raft of laws against the display and distribution of obscene material, medical works thus occupied a strange cultural position, traversing the categories of the scientific and the indecent, the licit and the illicit.

The proliferation of medical works about sex and reproduction and the debates about social effects of sexual representation that marked the Victorian period are now considered elements of the same transformation: an "explosion of discourse" that put sex – and its management – at the centre of modern life.[3] Each has been studied extensively within this framework. Less well-understood are the practical implications of their coexistence for the circulation of sexual knowledge and for those who sought to establish themselves as authorities over it. As "The Obscene M.D.'s" setting in a bookshop reminds us, medical books and pamphlets are not just discourse, or even just texts. They are also commercial objects, which had to be made, promoted, and moved into readers' hands. And as they moved through the marketplace, these objects did more than communicate medical information. They also acted as representatives of their makers, and of businesses, professions, and movements with which they were associated.

In a context in which M.D.s could be accused of being quasi-pornographers, and laws against the display and distribution of obscene material could, in fact, accommodate the arrest of figures like the fictive Mr. Quarto, what did trade in medical works on sexual matters really look like? And how did those most invested in medical publishing, practice, and knowledge sell themselves as trustworthy authorities? As the lithograph also suggests, the mobility of print

[3] This framework is elaborated from Michel Foucault's influential theories in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: The Will to Knowledge*, trans. Robert Hurley (1978; repr., New York: Vintage, 1990). For an overview of the historiography I refer to, see the introduction to Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2017).

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and the vagaries of interpretation could make communicating the right things to the right people hard to do. Medical works could fall into the wrong hands, and they could be used in the wrong ways. Readers could employ them as a kind of pornography, or as instruction manuals in how to have immoral sex. Disreputable entrepreneurs could capitalize on these uses of medical literature. The motivations of those who made and sold these works could also be misinterpreted, or deliberately misrepresented by hostile agents. How these possibilities were negotiated is the subject of this book.

Selling Sexual Knowledge examines the practices and politics of trade in medical works about sex and reproduction in Victorian Britain. Bringing perspectives from the history of the book together with conversations in the histories of medicine and sexuality, much of it explores how different sourcing strategies, publishing arrangements, marketing techniques, and distribution networks shaped how medical information about sexual matters reached the kinds of readers typically invoked in Victorian debates about obscenity: people who were not medical experts or other professionals who could claim to need such knowledge to do their jobs. Many scholars are used to thinking of a book's text and images as the main event, and of the details of its commercial history as background information. For a period in which print comprised an increasingly important way of sourcing knowledge, however, these kinds of details are vital to establishing how people acquired information that would have influenced their understandings of their own bodies and experiences. More broadly, I argue, paying attention to these details is essential to understanding the consolidation of movements, institutions, and narratives that have come to define how we think about the modern history of sexuality.

When I began the research for this book, I assumed that the biggest problem that sellers of sexual knowledge faced was opposition from people who sought to protect readers from moral corruption. Eventually, I had to concede that such opposition was more limited and, when it appeared, more ambivalent than I had anticipated. Legal experts debated medical works' obscene potential less out of concern for readers' morals than because they worried that vague obscenity laws endangered legitimate sexual discussion. State authorities and anti-vice crusaders were never invested in trying to suppress trade in even the cheapest, most lurid, or most radical medical works. Nor was there any sustained public opposition. Newspapers sometimes railed against trade in cheap manuals on venereal disease, but they advertised the same works that they complained about; and although parents hid midwifery manuals from their children, they owned them and wanted to read them. In fact, the most vocal and most consistent advocates of the idea that medical works could be obscene were medical publishers, practitioners, and activists themselves. With minor changes, "The Obscene M.D.'s" depiction of shady medical bookselling could have been ripped from the pages of the *Lancet*.

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Charges of obscenity can have different aims, meanings, and effects. Victorian allegations of medical obscenity were often tactical and became imbricated in what sociologists of science call "boundary work": projects through which various groups sought to establish moral and epistemic authority at a time when the boundaries of legitimate medical knowledge and practice were ambiguous and contested.[4] In railing against M.D.s for writing obscene books and calling them science in an effort to establish Hygeism as a superior medical system, the British College of Health's "Obscene M.D." offers a helpfully transparent illustration of what this could look like. But allegations of obscenity, and later of censorship on the grounds of obscenity, also functioned as a means through which groups that considered themselves far more respectable promoted books and causes, contested authority, and consolidated emergent collective identities. Over time, relatively crude strategies to promote publications and attack rivals in the marketplace gave way to more subtle rhetorics that helped produce one of the most potent myths ever made about the Victorians: that of their sexual ignorance.

By tracing the evolution of these strategies in tandem with the changing infrastructures of medical publishing and bookselling, *Selling Sexual Knowledge* demonstrates how arguments about obscenity were deployed in contests for authority whose outcomes had far-reaching implications: the consolidation of medicine as a modern scientific profession and the positioning of sexual-scientific knowledge as a means of personal and societal liberation. At the same time, it exposes conditions of communication that made contesting authority in these ways feel necessary in the first place. The technology of print was essential to establishing sex as a field of medical expertise. However, the ease with which print could be copied and claimed, recast and repurposed presented persistent challenges for those who sought to position themselves as authorities over medical knowledge and direct its applications. Alongside the slippery meanings of medical representations themselves, their promiscuous movements through the marketplace constantly threatened to undo careful self-positioning. At its core, this book is about that potential for failure, the consequent struggle to manage interpretation, and its legacies.

Medical Publishing in the Age of Mass Print

A series of developments established the nineteenth century as a pivotal turning point in the histories of medicine, sexuality, and print. Initially a divided body ostensibly run by the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal College of Surgeons, and the Society of Apothecaries in London, medicine ended the

[4] Thomas F. Gieryn, *Cultural Boundaries of Science: Credibility on the Line* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

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century as a legally regulated profession and a far more coherent social and scientific authority. Support for marriage reform, contraception, and same-sex relationships expanded and became more visible, and sexual science began to emerge as a field in its own right. Publishing and advertising transformed with these changes. Literacy rose rapidly from the 1830s, creating new audiences hungry for print. New printing and paper-making technologies made it faster and cheaper to publish. The expansion of the postal service, the introduction of the railway, and the extension of transnational transport networks made it easier to distribute books and pamphlets. The abolition of taxes on the press facilitated their promotion, and the emergence of advertising as a dedicated industry.

These transformations are staged in the history that *Selling Sexual Knowledge* traces. Trade in medical works was populated by a changing but always rather motley crew of players. Working out of tiny printshops and dockside warehouses, country houses and city offices, they harnessed the expanding infrastructures of the press and the post to sell works on subjects as diverse as anatomy, midwifery, venereal disease, "foreign" sexual practices, same-sex desire, and contraceptive techniques across the country and around the world. Many of these agents believed that the works they sold could decrease mortality and improve public health, heal communities scarred by poverty and shame, or bring about much-needed changes to law and public policy. But commerce in sexual knowledge was also an economic enterprise and a means of professional advancement. Trade in medical works facilitated the sale of contraceptives, patent medicines, and a crystallizing media form that was eventually dubbed pornography. It encouraged visits to museums, brothels, and doctors' consulting rooms. It made careers, and it made money on its own.

Reconstructing these activities can be challenging. The business records of many important players in the trade have not survived, nor have many of the cheapest medical works. For different reasons, some agents concealed their identities by publishing anonymously or under pseudonyms, and sometimes affixed false imprints, dates, and places of publication to their books and pamphlets. To address these issues and set the work of publishing and bookselling into its wider contexts, I have drawn on a diverse range of sources, including publishers' archives, newspapers and periodicals, advertisements, court, government, and bank records, private correspondence, and books and pamphlets themselves, which can reveal a great deal about their origins when subjected to different kinds of bibliographical analysis. Throughout the book, I have included notes on the methods as well as the sources that I used to track various elements of the trade in sexual knowledge and highlight aspects of activities under discussion that remain mysterious.

Given the diversity of the trade and the fragmentary state of the historical record, it is perhaps not surprising that previous work on this topic has been quite targeted. Historians have produced sprawling surveys of medical works

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on sexual matters, to which this book is indebted.[5] However, detailed accounts of their creation, publication, advertisement, and distribution during the Victorian period have mainly focused on single publications, such as Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds's landmark *Sexual Inversion* (1897), and occasionally kinds of publications, such as the contraception manual.[6] Disciplinary trends also shape historiography. Literary and scientific publishing have been the focus of serious scholarship for decades, and there now is a great deal of work on early modern medical print culture. Book-historical approaches to modern medical print culture have been slower to catch on. There is a growing body of scholarship on medical periodicals, and new research on medical publishing and bookselling after 1800 is emerging. Phoebe Gill's recent doctoral work on sexual advice literature, for instance, illuminates how aspects of the trade examined here developed over the twentieth century.[7] However, broad accounts of modern medical publishing are presently few and far between.[8]

While this book aims to cast a wider net than previous studies, it is not by any means a comprehensive survey. As will become clear, medical publishing and bookselling were global enterprises, integrated into the wider web of colonial and transnational traffic in goods, services, and information. Given my interest in the role that the law played in this history, a narrower geographic focus

[5] For instance, see Roy Porter and Lesley Hall, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650–1950* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

[6] Ivan Crozier, "Introduction: Havelock Ellis, John Addington Symonds and the Construction of Sexual Inversion," in *Sexual Inversion: A Critical Edition*, ed. Ivan Crozier (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 1–95 and Ruth Richardson, *The Making of Mr. Gray's Anatomy: Bodies, Books, Fortune, Fame* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) offer rare accounts of the publishing histories of single medical books. Claire L. Jones, *The Business of Birth Control: Contraception and Commerce in Britain before the Sexual Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020) offers a detailed account of the trade in contraception pamphlets, manuals, and catalogues after 1877. I gratefully cite such studies throughout the book.

[7] Phoebe Letitia Gill, "The Production, Circulation, and Reception of Sexual Knowledges in Published Advice Literature in Britain and Ireland, 1918–1987" (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2023).

[8] Nancy Tomes discusses this divide in "'Not Just for Doctors Anymore': How the *Merck Manual* Became a Consumer Health 'Bible'," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 95, no. 1 (2021), 2–3. For broad accounts of medical periodicals, see W. F. Bynum, Stephen Lock, and Roy Porter, eds., *Medical Journals and Medical Knowledge: Historical Essays* (1992; repr., London: Routledge, 2019); Sally Frampton and Jennifer Wallis, eds., *Reading the Nineteenth-Century Medical Journal* (London: Routledge, 2020); Sally Frampton, "The Medical Press and Its Public," in *The Edinburgh History of the British and Irish Press*, vol. 2, ed. David Finkelstein (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 438–456. For broad overviews of medical publishing, see David McKitterick, "Publishing for the Trades and Professions," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 6, ed. David McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 500–530; Elizabeth Lake, "Medicine," in *The Oxford History of the Irish Book*, vol. IV, ed. James H. Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 576–584. There is some work that broadly addresses other medical genres, such as Claire L. Jones, *The Medical Trade Catalogue in Britain, 1870–1914* (London: Routledge, 2016).

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seemed best. My strategy has been to focus on the intersecting activities of four loosely defined groups of players, mostly working in London, who brought medical works about sex and reproduction into non-expert readers' hands and, in different ways, became embroiled in debates about medical obscenity. These groups are *radicals*, or reformers and revolutionaries who sought to galvanize social change; *pornographers*, or entrepreneurs who specialized in making and selling sexual material; *regular practitioners*, or medical practitioners who were generally accepted by members of established medical institutions like the Royal Colleges, and the specialist publishers with whom they collaborated; and *irregular practitioners*, who published and practised medisine outside these institutions, or were expelled from them.

These kinds of figures have rarely marched through the pages of the same book. Their styles and aims diverged in important ways, and while outsiders often found it difficult or pointless to distinguish one from another, making their differences known was very important to members of some of these groups. This was especially true of regular practitioners, who were deeply preoccupied with establishing the boundaries of orthodox medical practice.[9] Troubled by dysfunctional hierarchies of governance, vast differences in training, and shaky public trust in medical expertise, successive waves of reformers sought to hammer medicine into a coherent "scientific" profession that could win the kind of social status and public regard afforded to the clergy and the legal profession. Establishing legislation to regulate medical practice was a major focus of this work. Distancing the profession from lower-status trades and rooting out "quackery," a term used for "a mode of conduct . . . that represented a loss of scientific restraint under the pressures of the capitalist profit motive," was another.[10] The practices of the irregular practitioners examined here embodied this loss of restraint, which medical reformers worried could infect the whole profession and undermine what credibility it enjoyed.

The development of what has retrospectively been called sex radicalism was similar in some important respects.[11] Over the course of the nineteenth century,

[9] Peter J. Bowler and Iwan Rhys Morus, *Making Modern Science: A Historical Survey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Michael Brown, *Performing Medicine: Medical Culture and Identity in Provincial England, c. 1760–1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); W. F. Bynum, *Science and the Practice of Medicine in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Anne Digby, *Making a Medical Living: Doctors and Patients in the English Market for Medicine, 1720–1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[10] Anat Rosenberg, *The Rise of Mass Advertising: Law, Enchantment, and the Cultural Boundaries of British Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 197.

[11] I take this term from Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, *Slow Print: Literary Radicalism and Late Victorian Print Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013). For explorations of different aspects of sex radicalism, see Jones, *Business*; Lesley A. Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); Laura Schwatz, *Secularism, Religion, and Women's Emancipation, England 1830–1914* (Manchester:

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Britain witnessed the rise of a loose, diverse movement for sexual reform that was united only by its adherents' desire for change: it encompassed advocates of family planning, legal equality for illegitimate children, "free unions" outside marriage, more sympathetic treatments of same-sex relationships, and more. The movement's diversity presented considerable problems for it. Many sex radicals were affiliated with secularist, feminist, and socialist groups wary of engaging with causes associated with sex and reproduction, partly for fear of associating their views with sexual immorality. Seeking to reconcile these differences and fashion more coherent collective identities that could gain mainstream support, they worked to distance sexual causes that they believed in from promiscuity and vice. Pornographers, who shared the movement's origins in early nineteenth-century radical circles and intermittently claimed affiliation with social protest, brought these elements together.

It is a testament to the success of the efforts I have described that it does not necessarily feel intuitive to set an account of the activities of the pornographers who set up shop in London's Holywell Street alongside an account of the work of earnest social protestors like Annie Besant, or to study the practices of eminent medical publishers like John Churchill alongside the self-publishing activities of practitioners best known for hawking dubious patent medicines. Yet, this is precisely what is required if we want to understand the practices and politics of selling sexual knowledge during the nineteenth century. Scholars have remarked on how diverse trade in advice about sex and reproduction was, comprising a "polyphony" or "cacophony" of players clamouring for attention.[12] Studying how these groups operated in concert helps identify important elements of this history, such as the pornography trade's traffic in radical contraception pamphlets, that would benefit from closer attention. It also draws attention to serious challenges inherent in establishing coherent collective identities in a context in which print was a major vehicle through which all of these groups engaged the public.

Making Authority in a Convoluted Marketplace

To understand the fraught politics of selling sexual knowledge during this period, we need to move beyond thinking about the nature of the subject matter alone and consider what the messy conditions I have begun to sketch meant for making authority. For many of the agents examined in this book, the act of

Manchester University Press, 2015); Edward Royle, *Radicals, Secularists, and Republicans: Popular Freethought in Britain, 1866–1915* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980); Sarah L. Jones, "'As though Miles of Ocean did not Separate us': Print and the Construction of a Transatlantic Free Love Community at the Fin de Siècle," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 25, no. 1 (2020): 95–109.

[12] Porter and Hall, *Facts of Life*, 132; Fisher, "Modern Ignorance," 478.

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publishing meant more than putting information into circulation or creating a product to sell. It was also a way of defining fields of expertise and of asserting some form of authority over them. In studying the relationship between print and authority, scholars have identified the mechanism of *association* as crucial to this process.[13] Classically, printed knowledge derives its authority from its association with authors or institutions. A publication's identification with their expertise guarantees the knowledge it contains. At the same time, authors and institutions establish authority by publishing. In offering knowledge to the public, they display their expertise. In an ideal situation, this associational loop is clear of obstacles. There is a single, legible group identified with a particular body of knowledge, and the act of putting it into circulation can only be interpreted in one way. The situation that concerns this book was far from ideal on either of these fronts.

Those who sought to position themselves as authorities in sexual matters had to negotiate three overlapping issues that they often worried would undermine their efforts. One issue – the one that has dominated previous accounts of the politics of presenting sexual information to the public – was the slippery meanings and multiple uses of sexual representations.[14] Some agents examined in this book drew attention to medical eroticism and openly encouraged medical works' supposedly immoral applications. However, many worried that their motives for publishing on sexual matters would be misunderstood, and their reputations compromised. Another persistent issue was the slippery meanings and multiple uses of publishing. The difference between publishing for the public benefit and publishing to generate publicity could be ambiguous. Many sellers of sexual knowledge cheerfully exploited this ambiguity. For regular practitioners, however, who were working within a profession obsessed with distancing itself from the market, the idea that their books could be interpreted as advertisements was often alarming.

The third issue was the convoluted physical and textual geography of the print marketplace itself. Especially during the first decades of the

[13] Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) examines the relationship between print's authority and its association with authors; Alex Csiszar, *The Scientific Journal: Authorship and the Politics of Knowledge in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018) examines the relationship between author's authority and publishing.

[14] For instance, see Harry Newman, "'[P]rophane fidlers': Medical Paratexts and Indecent Readers in Early Modern England," in *Medical Paratexts from Medieval to Modern: Dissecting the Page*, ed. Hannah C. Tweed and Diane G. Scott (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 15–42; Sarah Toulalan, "Pornography, Procreation and Pleasure in Early Modern England," in *The Cambridge Companion to Erotic Literature*, ed. Bradford K. Mudge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 105–122; Ludmilla J. Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); Gowan Dawson, *Darwin, Literature, and Victorian Respectability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

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Victorian period, radicals, pornographers, and regular and irregular practitioners could look awfully similar in print. They advertised their publications in many of the same venues, and those publications were often sold in the same places. They routinely addressed the same subject matter, in similar language, and often shared pages of verbatim text. Sometimes, there were few, or no, discernible differences between publications that these groups offered. They were copies of the same works. Some of these overlaps were deliberate. Others were just a result of the way the book trade worked. The Victorian publishing industry relied heavily on economies of reproduction. Most the works that were published, sold, and read during this period were old works, not newly written ones.[15] This was especially true of manuals and pamphlets at the cheaper end of the market for medical literature. New and third-hand editions of *Aristotle's Masterpiece* (1684), a wildly popular midwifery manual, and *Onania: or, The Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution* (c. 1712), a screed against masturbation, mixed and mingled with Georgian and Victorian productions in bookshops and mail-order catalogues. Many publications migrated from producer to producer, and some became staple products of very differently identified players.

The same texts also revolved around and around the marketplace in parts. Compilation is a traditional way of organizing and synthesizing knowledge, and has a long history in medicine.[16] Although it is typically associated with older textual cultures, it remained a common method of making books throughout the nineteenth century.[17] Many of the agents examined in this book habitually disassembled writing intended for one audience, edited it, and combined it with material from other sources to make a book for a different audience, often without any kind of attribution. Others borrowed from their compilations, and others borrowed from them. As a result, medical text weaved in and out of contexts that we now associate with the categories of the popular and the professional, the orthodox and the fringe, the respectable and the unrespectable. The corollary of this is that medical text had no fixed identity of its own. Rarely did any aspect of the text itself reliably distinguish an

[15] Leah Price, *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 219–257. Although it focuses on the American context, Meredith McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834–1853* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013) is helpful for understanding the culture of reprinting during this period.

[16] Angela N. H. Creager, Mathias Grote, and Elaine Leong, "Learning by the Book: Manuals and Handbooks in the History of Science," *BJHS Themes* 5 (2020): 1–13.

[17] See Sarah Bull, "Content Generation in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Book History* 26, no. 2 (2023): 324–361 for an overview of recent scholarship on compilation in the nineteenth-century context.

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"original" medical work issued by one of the groups examined in this book from a work issued by another.

These features of the Victorian print marketplace had some important implications for readers, which I primarily explore in the first chapters of the book. They also have wider implications for the history of knowledge that may interest my own audience. Historians of science have long maintained that knowledge does not simply trickle down from experts to lay readers but circulates in all kinds of directions.[18] Patterns of text reuse examined in *Selling Sexual Knowledge* suggest that this was true at the textual level for much of the nineteenth century. The fact that the agents I examine rarely discussed the legal implications of these practices also affirms a growing understanding among historians that the unsettled nature of copyright laws and ideas about what constituted intellectual property supported the continuation of some cultures of text reuse typically associated with the early modern period well past 1800 and facilitated the development of new ones. Acts of copying considered immoral or illegal today were widely practised and often not considered remarkable.[19]

Where these features gain their significance for the politics of selling sexual knowledge is that they magnified problems that regular practitioners and sex radicals faced as they sought to establish themselves as recognized and trusted authorities. How could any group establish a coherent collective identity through print when others sold the same knowledge it claimed, in the same words, down the street? How could any group claim to be trustworthy and respectable, or that the knowledge it claimed was beneficial to the public, when others used it in advertorials for dubious nostrums or sold it alongside pornographic photographs? These issues were an object of particularly deep anxiety for regular practitioners, and their rivals were more than happy to take advantage of the fact. It is no coincidence that "The Obscene M.D.," which attacks members of the Royal Colleges, attributes *Manly Vigour* to them. *Manly*

[18] For an overview of these arguments, see Johan Östling, David Larsson Heidenblad, Erling Sandmo, Anna Nilsson Hammar, and Kari Nordberg, "The History of Knowledge and the Circulation of Knowledge," in *Circulation of Knowledge: Explorations in the History of Knowledge*, ed. Johan Östling, David Larsson Heidenblad, Erling Sandmo, Anna Nilsson Hammar, and Kari Nordberg (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2018), 9–33, especially 21–22.

[19] For instance, see McGill, *American Literature*; Catherine Seville, *Literary Copyright Reform in Early Victorian England: The Framing of the 1842 Copyright Act* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Will Slauter, *Who Owns the News? A History of Copyright* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020); Ryan Cordell and Avery Blankenship, "Reprinting Wright," prepublication release from *Going the Rounds: Virality in Nineteenth-Century Newspapers* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming), https://manifold.umn.edu/projects/going-the-rounds; Petra S. McGillen, *The Fontane Workshop: Manufacturing Realism in the Industrial Age of Print* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

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Vigour was a real title issued by an irregular firm whose practices members of these colleges felt deeply undermined medicine's credibility.[20]

There was no easy means of addressing these problems, least of all through print. Scholars of early modern Europe have shown how medical authors dealt with a context in which distinctions between medical and erotic writing could be even more ambiguous than they were in the nineteenth century by employing various devices to steer readers' interpretations in what they considered the "right" directions.[21] These devices frequently took the form of paratext, a term used in literary scholarship to refer to any material separate from, yet clearly associated with, the main text of a book, from titles, prefaces, epigraphs, and prefatory defences called *apologia*s to bindings and advertisements.[22] Literary scholars have shown that paratexts can act as powerful interpretive mechanisms, influencing readers' understanding of a work by providing them with a framework for comprehending it. A snippet from the surgeon William Burke's *apologia* for describing the generative organs in his *Popular Compendium of Anatomy* (1804) offers an early nineteenth-century example in action:

> While, however, the compiler of the present publication declaims with energy all idea of wishing to gratify the prurient curiosity of a polluted imagination, and is firmly persuaded that nothing will be found in it that will be in the least offensive to the delicacy of a chastened and correct mind, he is desirous of giving such a view of his subject as will best inform the reader, and illustrate the beautiful mechanism of the human frame.[23]

Here, Burke anticipates objections to his work's sexual content by defending its utility, and turns them back on the reader, suggesting that only hopeless leches (certainly not the reader!) will find it anything but enlightening.

[20] C. J. Lucas and Co., *Manly Vigour: A Popular Inquiry into the Concealed Causes of Its Premature Decline with Instructions for Its Complete Restoration* [. . .]. (London: Published by the Authors, 1841).

[21] Sarah Toulalan, *Imagining Sex: Pornography and Bodies in Seventeenth-Century England*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) offers an extended analysis of these categories and their confusion in the seventeenth century. For work on how medical authors employed paratexts to negotiate this issue, see Harry Newman, "'[P]rophane fidlers'."; Toulalan, "Pornography, Procreation." Monica H. Green traces the emergence of some of these techniques to the late medieval period in "'Diseases of Women' to 'Secrets of Women': The Transformation of Gynecological Literature in the Later Middle Ages." *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 30, no. 1 (2000): 5–40.

[22] Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). For insights into how paratexts are used in book marketing, I have found Clare Squires, *Marketing Literature: The Making of Contemporary Writing in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) helpful.

[23] William Burke, *The Popular Compendium of Anatomy: or, A Concise and Clear Description of the Human Body* [. . .]. (London: S. Highley, 1804), 242.

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Literary scholars emphasize that paratexts do not have to be as explicit as Burke's *apologia*, which bludgeons readers with his preferred interpretation of the sexual details in his book and his motives for including them, to be effective. Even the quality of a book's binding can speak volumes in a culture in which certain material features of a publication are thought to signify respectability. However, as episodes in this book illustrate, paratexts could not be counted on to function as desired – and this was doubly true in a marketplace teeming with competing players. Like the texts they framed, paratexts could be ignored or misinterpreted. They could be misrepresented, or contaminated by agents who co-opted them for their own purposes. And their powers could be overwhelmed: irregulars traded so much in information about venereal disease from the eighteenth century, for instance, that the topic became closely associated with commercialism and showmanship, while pornographers' regular traffic in contraception manuals from the 1830s intensified their identification with licentiousness.

Over time, regular practitioners addressed some of these issues by developing stricter, more distinctive conventions for writing, publishing, and advertising. Extrapolating from Alex Csiszar's study of the scientific journal, which explores how specialized publishing formats function as frameworks for legitimating knowledge and consolidating public trust in expertise, I argue that a variety of conventions came to operate in concert as a more robust framework than single paratexts for legitimating medical books and their producers.[24] Just as a physician's qualifications, social networks, dress, comportment, and sex traditionally combined to endorse him as a credible medical practitioner,[25] certain styles of writing, publishers' imprints, advertising methods, and distribution networks increasingly came together to mark a book out as a credible medical intervention – and relatively minor deviations from this set of conventions increasingly marked one out as dubious. These conventions included significant constraints on medical book advertising, one of several developments in medical publishing that I argue had important implications for public access to information on sexual matters and, initially, for emerging cross-disciplinary fields like sexology. They also coalesced so slowly and gained such uneven recognition with the public that they did not begin to present a meaningful resolution to the problems I have described until the end of the nineteenth century.

[24] Csiszar, *The Scientific Journal*.
[25] See Hannah Barker, "Medical Advertising and Trust in Late Georgian England," *Urban History* 36, no. 3 (2009): 379–398.

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The Frame of Obscenity

The potentially obscene status of medical works on sexual matters offered alternative possibilities for contesting authority and consolidating collective identities, and much of the book focuses on how regular practitioners and sex radicals deployed them. When the British College of Health accused M.D.s of writing obscene books and calling them science, it referred to a legal as well as a moral offence. Initially derived from common laws against libel during England's Restoration, laws against the publication, display, and distribution of obscene material multiplied during the nineteenth century, largely as a result of lobbying from the Society for the Suppression of Vice, Britain's longest-running anti-vice society. The passage of the most famous of these laws, the 1857 Obscene Publications Act, was plagued by legislators' reservations about the ambiguous legal meaning of the term "obscene." Unlike "blasphemy" or "sedition," the term was not attached to any specific language, subject matter, media form, genre, style, or range of imagery. Even the first legal definition in Britain, formulated in 1868 by the Lord Chief Justice Alexander Cockburn, defined obscene material only by its effects (to "deprave and corrupt") on its likely audience ("those into whose hands it may fall").[26]

Obscenity was thus more of an argument about a work's social effects than a thing in its own right.[27] And it proved to be a highly portable argument that has been put to work for a wide variety of purposes: as a spectacular means of performing and justifying state power; as an "entrepreneurial gimmick" used to sell books, films, and lifestyles; as an aesthetic device in avant-garde literature; and more.[28] These diverse uses of the idea of obscenity are often implicitly characterized as post-Victorian innovations, with modernist sophistication replacing corseted prudery. However, a closer look at the Victorian context repudiates this view. Arguments and laws addressing obscene material were routinely used to advance goals that extended beyond, and sometimes had little to do with, concern about the specific works at issue.

[26] Regina v. Hicklin, *Law Reports 3: Queen's Bench Division* (1868), 371. These developments are examined in detail in Chapter 4.

[27] I am adapting an argument about the term "pornography" from Walter M. Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture* (1987; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), xiii.

[28] Jordan S. Carroll, *Reading the Obscene: Transgressive Editors and the Class Politics of US Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021), 6. See also Adam Parkes, *Modernism and the Theater of Censorship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Leon Janssens, "Erotische censuur: De seksuele revolutie in gecensureerde pornografische filmposters in België (1971–1980)," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 133, no. 2 (2020): 347–366; Loren Glass, *Counterculture Colophon: Grove Press, the Evergreen Review, and the Incorporation of the Avant-Garde* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Allison Pease, *Modernism, Mass Culture, and the Aesthetics of Obscenity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Rachel Potter, *Obscene Modernism: Literary Censorship and Experiment, 1900–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

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Claims about obscenity were commonly used as a marketing strategy. As we will see throughout this book, claims that a work had been suppressed, or was liable to be suppressed, reliably spurred sales. But different agents also made more sophisticated use of the argument to advance other interests. The state and anti-vice societies periodically exploited the ambiguous meaning of the term "obscene" to crack down on fraud, political organizing, and the sale of graphically explicit novels, prints, and photographs: items whose primary aim was considered sexual arousal, whose rapid refinement by a new body of specialized producers and increasing visibility in public spaces did attract consistent opposition. From the mid-1880s, this material would collectively be labelled "pornography." (I use the term for the entire period in this book because there was no stable term for this material before the 1880s.)[29] Finding pornography to seize could be difficult because sellers learned to conceal it. Fraudulent acts were hard to prove in court. Intervening in radical politics was a minefield. In some cases, authorities seized medical works from individuals involved in these activities even as they allowed the same works to circulate openly – and often on a much larger scale – in other hands.

In arguing that medical works could be obscene, state authorities and anti-vice crusaders relied on a contextual model of obscenity that Cockburn formalized in the 1868 case *R.* v. *Hicklin*. What made a work dangerous to the public was not the intent with which it had been written, they argued. The issue lay with the mode of its sale, which could expose vulnerable readers to dangerous material. Scholars have shown that these arguments relied on paternalistic models of reading that cast young men, women, children, and, in some contexts, racialized groups as especially vulnerable to the influences of print. However, their significance for this book lies largely in their insistence that a work's commercial context determined its legitimacy, to the point that the same work might be legitimate when sold in one context, and illegitimate when sold in another. Grounded in the idea that commercial context influences who engages with a text, and how, these arguments speak to Victorians' sophisticated understandings of interpretation, and reflected real cultural concerns about the social effects of an expanding media world. However, they also served transient interests of state authorities and anti-vice crusaders, and the longer-term interests of regular practitioners, who used language and laws against obscenity to attack rivals in the marketplace, distance medicine from "trade," and define its field of authority.

My interest in this history was initially aroused by the work of Alan Bates, who has argued that during the mid-nineteenth century medics opposed public

[29] My reasons for this choice of terminology are practical and generally align with Lisa Z. Sigel's in *Governing Pleasures: Pornography and Social Change in England, 1815–1914* (Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

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anatomical museums on the grounds that they were obscene because they threatened medicine's authority over anatomical knowledge.[30] This book shows that campaigns against so-called obscene quackery spanned a much longer period and often focused on publications, moving from relatively crude campaigns aimed at convincing newspaper editors to stop publishing advertisements for irregular health manuals to organized efforts to use obscenity laws to distance medicine from overtly commercial styles of practice and situate them as illegitimate. Like many of the publications examined in this book, these tactics were not very original. Medical practitioners had contested authority through allegations of various transgressions involving the misappropriation or misrepresentation of knowledge, including piracy, fraud, quackery, and indecency, for centuries.[31] I argue that an array of developments simply made allegations of obscenity look like an especially promising means of contesting authority in some contexts.

Sex radicals' uses of the idea of obscenity were also adaptations of earlier strategies, this time from radical politics. Many sex radicals were affiliated with political groups that had a long history of protesting restrictions on the freedom of the press and recognized that decrying restrictions on the circulation of knowledge could galvanize support for controversial causes and help consolidate collectives around them. In a context in which authorities seized progressive works on sexual matters in the interest of fighting the pornography trade, and, in one case, anarchist organizing, sex radicals made claims about their medical publications' vulnerability to destruction under obscenity laws to distance causes that they believed in from immorality and galvanize support from other activists, scientists, and members of the public. Under the evolving narratives that they constructed, sexual causes became free speech issues, sex reformers and sexual scientists became seekers of truths that could liberate society from sexual ignorance, and pornographers became exploiters of that ignorance.

This is not to say that no Victorian really thought that medical works on sexual matters endangered morality, nor that some sellers of these works did not genuinely worry about arrest. Although Victorians often resisted the idea that medical works could, or should, be criminally obscene, they accepted that people could misuse them, just as people had in earlier periods.[32] Tactical

[30] A. W. Bates, "Dr. Kahn's Museum: Obscene Anatomy in Victorian London," *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 99 (2006): 618–624.

[31] Adrian Johns, *Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 83–108, especially 98; Roy Porter, *Health for Sale: Quackery in England, 1660–1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989). On the twentieth-century context, see Colleen Derkatch, *Bounding Biomedicine: Evidence and Rhetoric in the New Science of Alternative Medicine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[32] See Toulalan, "Pornography, Procreation," 107–109 for details about early modern perspectives.

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actions, trade routes, and marketing techniques examined here repeatedly associated certain works with indecency, too. These actions influenced public perception, and in some cases increased the risks of prosecution for selling them. Overall, though, *Selling Sexual Knowledge* argues that language and laws about obscenity should be seen less as impediments to the work of selling sexual knowledge in either sense of the term than as means through which sexual knowledge was defined and promoted as a specialized field of expertise.[33] Allegations of obscenity were used by those most invested in medical publishing, practice, and knowledge to market medical books and pamphlets, define what constituted sexual knowledge, and promote its production and distribution as projects of vital importance. At the same time, such allegations were deployed to position certain kinds of figures as legitimate authorities over this knowledge, and others as mere exploiters of it.

Plan of the Book

Because collective identities are so important to this history, most of the chapters in this book focus on the activities of particular groups of players, though their stories become increasingly intermingled over the course of the narrative. The chapters proceed chronologically, but only roughly. The first three chapters examine the activities of three different groups in parallel, covering the first half of the Victorian period, from the mid-1830s to the early 1860s. The middle chapter examines important legal developments in the 1850s and 1860s, and their relation to conditions explored in the previous chapters. The last three chapters examine the activities of three different groups of players, again roughly in parallel, from the 1870s to the early 1900s.

The book begins with a chapter on the pornography trade. In "Holywell Street Medicine," I trace the trade's birth out of the collapse of revolutionary politics in the 1820s, and show how its reliance on scavenging for content fostered a vibrant mid-century traffic in cheap reprints and reworkings of works on contraception, venereal disease, procreation, and midwifery. While showing how pornographers harnessed the expanding infrastructures of the press and the post to sell these works across the nation, I demonstrate how they framed them through two different lenses. Pornographers followed a long line of disreputable booksellers in framing some medical works on sexual matters as voyeuristic *entrées* to "secret" knowledge that people could read for pleasure. However, they also adapted radical arguments for sex education, reproductive autonomy, and female pleasure to position medical knowledge as practical

[33] For an overview of recent work on the history of "sexual expertise," which influences the perspective I outline here, see Hannah Charnock, Sarah L. Jones, and Ben Mechen, "Sexpertise: Sexual Knowledge and the Public in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Social History of Medicine* 36, no. 4 (2024): 585–591.

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information that readers could apply to support safe, pleasurable sex lives of their own.

Chapter 2, "Stereotyped Knowledge," examines another major route through which readers encountered sexual information: irregular practitioners' global trade in cheap manuals on venereal disease, sexual debility, and fertility problems. While historians have often focused on these manuals' lurid depictions of weakened male bodies, this chapter emphasizes their origins in respected publications: irregular practitioners combined verbatim sections from textbooks and treatises aimed at practising medics with snippets from works in other genres to construct their own "popular treatises." These productions offered readers an affordable means of acquiring up-to-date information about sexual health, and their authors a means of cultivating trust in their expertise and advertising more expensive products and services. By examining other practitioners' responses to these figures' publishing and advertising activities alongside the activities themselves, this chapter begins to demonstrate why these figures attracted virulent opposition in regular medical circles: the way they used print to commodify medical expertise was seen as both an economic and an existential threat to regular medicine.

Regular practitioners portrayed pornographers' and irregulars' uses of sexual knowledge as misuses. While exploring how specialist medical publishers and regular practitioners worked together to publish and advertise their own works, however, Chapter 3, "Publishing for Professional Advantage," shows that the boundaries between communicating knowledge, promoting expertise, and trading on medical eroticism were also blurry in regular medicine. Works issued by medical publishers were often textually similar to those issued by pornographers and irregulars; worked up using similar techniques; and advertised and distributed in similar ways, in the same venues. Building on Chapter 2, this chapter examines how and why overlaps between regular and irregular medical publishing aroused especially acute concern among medical reformers. Instead of concentrating on disciplining regular medical publishing, however, many reformers initially sought to remedy this situation by launching campaigns aimed at stamping out irregular practitioners' trade in sexual health manuals.

Chapter 4, "Obscene . . . in a Certain Sense," shows how charges of obscenity were used against pornographers and irregulars during the 1850s and 1860s, amid landmark changes to obscenity law. In doing so, it introduces one of the book's major arguments: that allegations of medical obscenity were usually tactical, and became increasingly imbricated in projects aimed at contesting moral and epistemic authority in a marketplace that invited troubling confusions of identity. Many Victorians did not believe that obscenity laws applied to medical works. However, anti-vice crusaders recognized that legal arguments could be made that they did, and capitalized on it as they attempted to destroy

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the pornography trade. I parallel these tactics with tactics in the medical press. With mixed success, anti-quackery campaigners sought to discredit irregulars and even bring about their prosecution by arguing that their sexual health manuals' low prices and wide circulation made them a threat to public morals. The chapter ends with the 1868 *Hicklin* judgement, which affirmed such arguments could justify charges for distributing obscene material.

Chapter 5, "Dull Instead of Light," examines increasing efforts to disambiguate "medicine" and "quackery" in *Hicklin*'s wake. The first section explores how regular practitioners experimented with using obscenity laws as alternatives to the Medical Act (1858) to regulate medical practice. These experiments foundered after a few years, but in some respects the work they did to collapse quackery and obscenity paid off: authorities now accepted that irregular trade in sexual health advice was illegitimate and introduced legislation to limit advertising for it. The rest of the chapter examines efforts to professionalize regular medical publishing. In advocating limitations on book advertising, the use of dry, technical language in professional writing, and other changes to medical print culture, regular practitioners again worked to disambiguate "medicine" from "quackery." The lines between popular and professional medical works had previously been blurry. The changes examined in this chapter helped cleave a growing chasm between the kinds of sexual knowledge accessible to medical and non-medical audiences.

Chapter 6, "Branding Birth Control," examines how sex radicals made claims about medical works' vulnerability to destruction to distance contraception from sex itself, frame its advocacy as a free speech issue, and generate publicity for the cause. Both social reformers and pornographers had long sold contraception pamphlets first published by radical agitators in the 1820s and 1830s. In 1876, a figure with feet in both worlds was arrested for selling one of them, Charles Knowlton's *Fruits of Philosophy* (1832). The following year, the Secularists Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh engineered their own trial for selling Knowlton's pamphlet. The chapter examines the selective publication history that Bradlaugh and Besant constructed to divorce *Fruits* from the pornography trade and promote contraception as both a respectable and a radical cause. It also examines their trial's afterlife. The trial attracted enormous publicity, and practical works on contraceptive techniques sold in huge volumes in the 1880s and 1890s. Although they encountered relatively little legal opposition during this period, birth controllers claimed that selling such works was incredibly risky. I argue that these claims operated as a way of generating further publicity for the cause and branding it as brave, modern, and progressive.

The book ends with a chapter on sexology. In "Be Careful about the Publisher," I examine how the diverse sources, distribution networks, and audiences associated with sexology undermined Havelock Ellis's attempts to

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frame *Sexual Inversion* as a serious medical work and led to its appearance in the obscenity trial *R. v. Bedborough* (1898). Authorities were aiming to break up a radical group when they charged George Bedborough for selling *Sexual Inversion*, but sexologists and their allies framed his arrest and trial as an ignorant attack on scientific progress. Elaborating on strategies pioneered by birth controllers, they argued that the censorship of "naturalistic" sexual expression had mired society in sexual ignorance, fostering "abnormal" sexual behaviour and appetite for pornography, the rightful target of obscenity laws. In doing so, they obfuscated sexology's debts to the pornography trade, which increasingly disseminated sexual-scientific publications and supplied material used in sex research. By examining sexologists' attempts to navigate these issues, the chapter further demonstrates how arguments about obscenity and censorship were used to sanitize sexual knowledge and promote a particular group's authority over it.

The conclusion, "Victorian Ignorance," places this history into conversation with the emergence of a new history of sexual knowledge at the turn of the twentieth century. Drawing on the work of Kate Fisher, it begins by considering how well publishing activities explored in the book served Victorian readers. The ways Victorians discussed their own reading experiences evince what Fisher calls an "epistemology of sexual ignorance," in which sexual knowledge is thought of as a set of facts that must be learned through interaction with an expert.[34] The conclusion reflects on how commercial practices and rhetorical strategies that the book examines not only encouraged this way of conceptualizing sexual knowledge but also helped foster the emergence of historical narrative about Victorian censorship that would serve as a powerful justification for sexual-scientific research and sex reform movements in the twentieth century. It would also obfuscate the extent to which Victorians enjoyed access to sexual information in the new age of mass print.

[34] Fisher, "Modern Ignorance," 484.

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