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Paratexts and Pornographic Potential in Seventeenth-Century Anatomy Books

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Biographical note

Kit Heyam is a recent PhD graduate of the School of English, University of Leeds. His research interests are in the field of medieval and early modern English literature, with a broad interest in the representation of transgressive sexual desire and behaviour. His PhD thesis investigated the development of Edward II's historiographical reputation over the period 1305-1700. This article emerges from his current research project, 'Negotiating sexual content in early modern printed books'.

Paratexts and Pornographic Potential in Seventeenth-Century Anatomy Books

This article discusses paratexts in seventeenth-century anatomy books and their relation to contemporary concerns that these books might be read erotically. Suggesting that discussions of these concerns have hitherto neglected the material object of the book, I argue for the importance of paratexts (illustrations, legends, prefaces, running titles and marginal notes) as sites of negotiation over anatomy books' pornographic potential. I examine these paratexts both as strategies by which writers and printers carefully and collaboratively attempt to frustrate erotic reading, and as devices that might simultaneously function to facilitate this mode of reading. The centrality of these concerns to the construction of anatomy books indicates, I suggest, a need to augment our characterisation of early modern readers, incorporating wilfully thoughtless and/or excessive reading alongside active and productive reading. My discussion focuses on Helkiah Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia*, and is supplemented with analysis of other English anatomy books published throughout the seventeenth century.

Keywords: anatomy; book history; Helkiah Crooke; paratexts; pornography; erotic reading

Introduction

On 11th November 1614, the Royal College of Physicians held a meeting at which 'there was some discussion regarding the partly released English anatomy of Doctor Crooke and whether it was fitting that it should be published'.¹ The book under discussion was Helkiah Crooke's richly illustrated 13-book folio, *Mikrokosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man*. Some parts of the book had entered circulation before the printing of the whole, and they had come to the attention of John King, Bishop of London, who had alerted the physicians to his concerns.

Three principal objections were raised against the book. Firstly, it was in the vernacular: 'not a few' fellows of the College, the minutes of the meeting report, 'considered that nothing of this kind should be published in English'. Secondly, it bordered on plagiarism: it was argued that Crooke had not sufficiently acknowledged his debt to the Latin anatomies of André du Laurens (for his text) and Gaspard Bauhin

(for his illustrations). And thirdly, some of those illustrations were considered obscene. ‘Some’ fellows, it seems, ‘thought that some subjects and more indecent illustrations should be removed, and other points ought to be corrected, while many considered that book four with the pictures of the generative organs should be destroyed.’

The College’s complaints notably foregrounded Crooke’s paratexts alongside his text. It was ‘some subjects *and more indecent illustrations*’ which, they argued, should be excised; and Book IV (‘Of the Naturall Parts belonging to generation, as well in Men as in Women’) was primarily objectionable owing to its ‘*pictures* of the generative organs’.² Yet the images in *Mikrokosmographia* have largely been treated by scholars as adjuncts to debates about vernacular anatomy books, rather than as aspects of the material book which the College were so concerned to suppress.³ This article aims to shift our focus back to the object at the centre of the College’s discussion. As scholars including Bradin Cormack and Carla Mazzio have argued – and as Crooke himself acknowledged in his preface to Book IV, written after he had successfully evaded the College’s attempt at censorship – the objection as a whole stemmed from an anxiety that anatomy books might be appropriated by readers for erotic purposes. In light of this, the College’s singling-out of Crooke’s illustrations for special censorious mention indicates a fear that a book’s paratexts might function to encourage a mode of reading that seeks titillation.⁴ Their concerns, therefore, do not only reveal anxieties about democratising knowledge of the body, medicine, or differences between sexes; they also envision readers using a book in ways it was not designed to be used. Instead of using its illustrations as repositories of anatomical knowledge, they become sites of erotic contemplation.

The lack of sustained critical focus on Crooke’s paratexts is surprising, given that paratexts were (and are still) the primary means by which writers, printers and

publishers seek to influence readers' use of their books. In the case of anatomy books, devices such as prefaces, figure legends, marginal notes and running titles all function to encourage a scholarly mode of reading – and I would argue that this can be seen beyond Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia*. Yet it is clear from the minutes of the College's meeting that many attendees believed his illustrations could have an oppositional function, encouraging erotic use by way of their 'indecent' nature. As such, while paratexts could be used by writers, printers and publishers to discourage and obstruct erotic modes of reading, I am also interested in the ways in which they might have inadvertently facilitated it. In the struggle between writer and reader to establish control over the way a book was read – since, as scholars of book history and theorists of reading have shown, the same book 'could be put to dramatically divergent uses' by different readers⁵ – I see paratexts as potentially double-edged swords. If they are (as in Genette's original formulation) 'thresholds of interpretation', they are thresholds with two or more doors leading off them in different directions.

This effect is most obvious in the case of images – is an illustration of a naked body an aid to study, or to masturbation? – but applies equally to other paratexts. A table of contents, for example, may be intended to help a working surgeon locate a helpful chapter quickly, but a reader in search of erotic content could equally use it to bypass prefatory instruction and skip straight to their section of choice. Similarly, while the primary aim of a legend or caption may be pedagogical, it could also have the unintended effect of fostering a more taxonomising, less eroticised perception of the image it accompanies. In these cases, paratexts can be seen as having a number of potential functions. Some of these functions are intended and encouraged by the author and/or printer; others, unauthorised and unintended, remain latent, becoming fully realised in the hands of a reader with particular inclinations. In order to come closer to

reconstructing the experience of physically reading these books, it is necessary to consider both categories: to view the functions of a paratext as characterised by potential, rather than certainty.

This concept of *potential* book use – the *possibility* of erotic reading of an anatomy book, and the ways in which paratexts might function to frustrate or facilitate such reading – will remain central to this article. Paratexts can, I contend, be seen as sites of negotiation over the use of a book's content: as spaces in which writers' and printers' attempts to determine use interact with readers' own intentions. In addition, the same paratext might take on a dual function depending on those intentions. Bette Talvacchia, discussing 'flap prints' of Venetian sex workers which enabled people to 'undress' the woman pictured, points out that the 'superimposed sheet both covered the image beneath it and allowed for its disclosure'.⁶ Similarly, Bradin Cormack and Carla Mazziio rightly argue that, 'by warning against misuse, [some] texts...essentially provided a guide, or at least a spur, to their own abuse'.⁷ As confession manuals had warned for centuries, explicit invocation of a particular transgression might raise the idea of that transgression where it would otherwise never have occurred to the listener (or, in this case, reader).⁸

The idea of potential use is particularly germane to sexual content. As Chantelle Thauvette argues, 'To make the term pornography useful in a sixteenth- and seventeenth-century context...we might best conceive of it as a reading process, not a genre, where pornography refers to an interaction between reader and text, not to text or to authorial intent alone.'⁹ In this sense, books with sexual content were not inherently pornographic, but possessed pornographic potential. Thauvette analyses the potential titillatory effects of *Venus and Adonis* in terms of the erotic enjoyment readers 'can' and 'may also conceivably' get from the text, pointing out that these effects arise from

words which are not ‘explicit in and of themselves’ but, ‘along with countless other words, are...easily pressed into describing explicit sexual activity’.¹⁰ Anatomy books can, I suggest, be seen as analogous to this. Though they were of course intended as medical instruction, the College’s objections to Crooke’s book suggest that they were perceived to contain material which made a pornographic reading more likely; in other words, that they had pornographic potential. Thauvette’s concept of pornography as a mode of reading is, I will argue here, a fruitful lens through which to consider concerns about erotic use of anatomy books. While my sustained focus on what modes of reading are *encouraged*, and how books *might potentially* be used, may seem to indicate that this article is grounded in speculation, the attempt to censor Crooke’s book and its consequences indicate that such speculation is a practice I share with the writers and physicians of early modern England – and that it shaped the publication circumstances, content, and paratextual construction of anatomy books.

Several scholars have pointed out the pornographic potential of the related genres of midwifery guides and hermaphrodite texts.¹¹ Indeed, we know that midwifery guides were read in this way by adolescent boys in at least two cases.¹² However, I am keen that these books should not be conflated with anatomy books like Crooke’s. The late seventeenth century saw an explosion of cheap guides to midwifery or women’s health, written in the vernacular. This subject matter enabled, and to an extent excused, the inclusion of sexually explicit content; some books, such as the hugely popular *Aristotle’s Master-Piece* (first printed in 1690), walked a fine line between highlighting and disavowing their titillating potential.¹³ *Mikrokosmographia* emerged into a very different context: in a field still dominated by Latin texts, it was transgressive simply by virtue of its language, and was aimed at a professional rather than popular audience. Moreover, it is telling that the writers of midwifery guides could treat anxieties about

erotic appropriation playfully, using them (as the author of *Aristotle's Master-Piece* does) as an opportunity to write a titillating preface.¹⁴ Clearly, the stakes were different for Crooke: in order to avoid suppression of his book, he was compelled (as I will show) to sincerely and comprehensively disavow appropriative readers. As such, although Roger Thompson has argued that it is difficult to draw a clear line between books intended to provide medical instruction and 'books which sought to titillate through quasi-medical information'¹⁵ – and although midwifery guides and hermaphrodite texts can provide instructive points of comparison with anatomy books – this article will focus on anatomy books, which are in any case comparatively under-researched in terms of their erotic content.¹⁶

Much has been written about the erotic potential of dissection, particularly following Jonathan Sawday.¹⁷ However, my discussion focuses primarily on the ways in which the naked human bodies and discussions of sexual activity in these books might be used for personal titillation, rather than on the more abstract erotic thrill which Sawday argues might result from contemplating dissection of oneself or others. While we should not uncritically assume that content which appears potentially titillating to modern readers would have been perceived in the same way by an early modern audience, Will Fisher has concluded (from an analysis of seventeenth-century erotica) that 'there is considerable continuity between modern and early modern representations', and I will use this continuity – alongside the research of Sawday, Thauvette, and Karen Harvey – as the basis for my discussion.¹⁸

In the following discussion, the contentious 1615 edition of Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia* – which was eventually printed by William Jaggard, with the support of James I, around six months after the Royal College of Physicians attempted to suppress it – will form my central case study. However, I argue that Crooke and

Jaggard's paratexts raise questions which are usefully complemented by discussion of other seventeenth-century anatomy books. What features make illustrations 'indecent' – that is, conducive to erotic reading – and how does their relation to their legends and the main text affect this? How do prefaces engage with anxieties about the way in which readers might use anatomy books? And through which other paratexts might writers, printers and publishers attempt to structure and guide a reader's path through a book, facilitating some modes of reading while obstructing others? As such, I supplement my analysis of *Mikrokosmographia* with a small number of other anatomy books published in England at different points during the seventeenth century – books chosen either because they provide useful contrasts to Crooke's, or because their deployment of a particular paratext provides fruitful ground for discussion of the questions above.

Remaining alert to the multiple possibilities that each paratext invites, and keeping the idea of pornographic potential at the forefront of my discussion, I suggest that a focus on paratexts is crucial to appreciating the full extent of early modern anxieties about erotic use of anatomy books and the strategies with which those anxieties were negotiated – as well as to evaluating how reasonable those anxieties were.

Illustrations and legends

As the objections against *Mikrokosmographia* indicate, the illustrations of an anatomy book were held to be particularly dangerous incitements to erotic reading. The fact that only Crooke's book was censored (or subject to an attempted censorship attempt) should not be taken as indicating that there were no concerns about images in other anatomy books. This is partly because Crooke's book was perceived to be breaking new ground, in that it was written in the vernacular and dedicated to the barber-surgeons; but it is also because, even in an era of pre-publication censorship, 'it was often the case that the author of a book had no prior knowledge of the pictorial embellishments that

the printer might intend to use, even at the proof stage of pre-publication'. This meant that 'the opportunity for censorship of such illustrations in books would come post-publication'.¹⁹ The circulation of some parts of Crooke's book before the publication of the whole may well, therefore, have been the first opportunity that the Bishop of London and/or the Royal College of Physicians had to mount a case for censorship.

Two key factors, I would suggest, affect the potential for erotic use of images. Firstly, we should consider the nature of the images themselves: do they portray whole, living people, partially dissected people, or disembodied organs? Many anatomy books, including Crooke's, present us with images that fall into the latter two categories; the College explicitly called attention to this in their objection, asserting that 'book four with the pictures of the generative *organs* should be destroyed'.²⁰ It is difficult to immediately see how images such as this might be considered erotic. However, Sawday has suggested that the partitioning of the body in anatomy books should be seen as analogous to the poetic strategy of the blazon; examining bodies (particularly female bodies) in parts could therefore have been a familiar experience for many readers which tapped into established, eroticised habits of thought.²¹ Equally pertinent is the knowledge of the body which could be gained from these images, something which itself carried an erotic thrill (particularly to readers with little or no sexual experience, such as the adolescent boys referred to above) and which the College – as their mention of language demonstrates – were keen to limit. As Sawday argues, the images' disembodied or dissected nature would not invariably have obstructed their interpretation as erotic: since 'Corpses were not inevitably shown *in situ* on the dissection table', 'knowledge of the body, in these texts, was presented as knowledge of a living rather than dead body.'²² Indeed, the idea that knowledge of sex and reproduction could itself be titillating was accepted in early modern English culture: as

Wye Saltonstall admonished in his 1631 *Picturae Loquentes*, women should not ‘reade books which...natures secrets do discover, / Since still desire doth but from knowledge grow’.²³

‘The tendency of anatomical illustration to situate the body part consistently in relation to an image of a vital whole’, as Nancy J. Vickers puts it,²⁴ also militates against potential reactions of alienation or disgust, rendering the images more conducive to erotic use. We should, I suggest, consider the representation of partially dissected human bodies in this light. The substantial influence of artistic practice on anatomical illustration led to the frequent representation of corpses in statuesque, athletic poses:²⁵ inhabiting ‘a familiar setting, about which there is nothing particularly medical’,²⁶ and very much ‘still alive’, ‘even at the very deepest stages of dissection’.²⁷ This illustrative convention – like the tendency to emphasise the individual part’s relation to the whole, living body – undermines assumptions that representations of corpses cannot be eroticised. This is evidenced by the fact that, as Jillian Linster has observed, concerns apparently arose about the genital details on an illustration of a headless torso in Crooke’s *Mikrokosmographia*. ‘In the first edition,’ Linster points out, ‘the illustration includes detailed depiction of the vaginal cleft’ – but in the second and third, printed by Richard Cotes rather than William Jaggard, ‘the anatomical detail in that area of the woodblock has been obliterated’.²⁸ Despite the fact that this ‘anatomical detail’ was located within an illustration of a dissected, rather than a whole body, it was clearly considered problematic enough for Cotes to remove it.

The second relevant factor to consider here is the relation of text to image. While early anatomical illustrations were labelled with lines pointing out from the image, Vesalius’s *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543) popularised the use of letter keys.²⁹ This practice effectively bisects one paratext into two: an integrated labelled image

becomes an image and a legend, which can be presented together or separated depending on the layout of the book. This affects the way in which the reader is encouraged to use an image: pertinently for my purposes, the collocation of image and legend can function to frustrate erotic use in two ways. Firstly, it frames the body depicted in the engraving as a subject of scholarly study or enquiry, priming the reader to engage with it primarily in that sense. Secondly, it encourages the reader to perceive the body depicted as a collection of parts, rather than as a whole person with whom they might engage in an imagined erotic scenario.

In addition to this distinction regarding legends, illustrated anatomy books fall into two further categories regarding the relation of text to image. The first, like Crooke's, uses images to complement the text: the text describes the human anatomy in detail and the image supports that description, fulfilling 'the assumption implicit in...the idea of "illustration" itself' (Figure 1).³⁰ The second – like Alexander Read's epitome of Crooke's work, *Somatographia Anthropine*, includes text only to enable the reader to decipher each picture, identifying each labelled part (Figure 2). In the latter, illustrations become the book's most significant aspect: the reader is encouraged to use the text only insofar as it helps them use the image.

[Figures 1 and 2 near here]

An analysis of *Mikrokosmographia* and its epitome helps to illuminate these differences. Printed in 1616 by Jaggard, *Somatographia Anthropine* represents an attempt to reap the full financial benefits of the woodcuts commissioned for the earlier book (a common practice since the epitomising of Vesalius's *Fabrica*).³¹

Somatographia collates *Mikrokosmographia*'s illustrations with their legends, excising the rest of the text so that the book shrinks from folio to octavo. In his preface, the book's only original text, Read engages directly with the book's image-focused nature:

It may bee, that some nice Criticke...having taken a view of this Booke, wil pronounce it altogether unnecessarie, both by reason of the matter and of the Language; seeing *Gaspar Bauhinus* (renowned both for his Learning & Experience) hath set downe the matter more amply in his *Anatomical Theater*, and M. Doctor *Crooke* hath expressed it in our vulgar tongue... If such a one wil so judge because he fixeth his eies onely upon those who are equall with the Authors in this kinde of studie, his censure may passe. But if any man of solid judgement will but consider the proficient, or him who onely by desultorie inspection, laboureth to delight himselfe, he must out of all doubt think otherwise: for in the aforesaid Authors, the descriptions of the parts being interposed betweene the Figures, distract the minde, and defraud the store house of memory... Whereas by the contrarie, this small volume presenting all the partes of the body of man by continuation to the eie, impresseth the Figures firmly in the mind...³²

In this preface, Read ascribes the two forms of text/image relation to two different modes of reading. While readers already ‘equall with’ Bauhin and Crooke in the study of anatomy and surgery may benefit from a text-heavy work like *Mikrokosmographia*, *Somatographia* is aimed at the student (‘proficient’) – and, interestingly, at the reader who ‘onely by desultorie inspection, laboureth to delight himselfe’.³³ Although Read’s references to *Somatographia*’s mnemonic qualities suggest that his primary audience is students of anatomy, his repeated references to its capacity to bring pleasure allow his preface to sanction a different mode of reading. He invokes pleasure several times. Jaggard, Read tells us, printed *Somatographia* in the hope it ‘will proove profitable and *delightfull* to such as are not able to buy or have no time to peruse [*Mikrokosmographia*]’; ‘the collation of the Figures, with the Descriptions, cannot but affoord *great contentment* to the minde’; and the book ‘proceedeth from a mind desirous to give *satisfaction* to all’.³⁴ Read’s main aim in pointing out his book’s pleasurable potential is, clearly, to increase its marketability – a practice likely encouraged by Jaggard. However, a reader inclined to use *Somatographia* erotically might, I suggest, construe these references to ‘delight’ as an encouragement to do so.

Moreover, Read's defence of his images' utility over Crooke's book threatens to encourage their decontextualisation. The ideal interaction with an anatomy book, Read's preface suggests, is primarily with the images: too much text 'distracts' from what should be the main focus, breaking up what should be a stream of non-verbal experience presented 'by continuation to the eye'. However, this factor is mitigated by Read's decision to locate the legends for his images next to the images themselves, rather than bound in at the back of the volume.³⁵ The image in Figure 2 – one of the original 'indecent illustrations' taken from Crooke's Book IV – is set on a page facing text which divides the figure's body into internal parts: 'the inner part of the *Peritonaeum*', 'the embowed part of the Liver', 'the Stomacke'.³⁶ Legend and image can be seen to exist in tension here. The woman's relatively integral skin, and the attention paid by the engraver to the details of her hair and face – effort has been expended on her facial expression, her eye contact with the viewer, and her flowing curls – might invite the reader to perceive her as a whole, living object (or subject) of desire; her loose hair, with connotations of sexual licentiousness, could compound this. But the legend functions to frustrate these effects by calling attention to the fact that her body has been partially dissected: it reframes the purpose of the image as a tool for anatomic instruction, rather than for erotic enjoyment. Rather than seeing these two paratexts as two alternative 'thresholds of interpretation', entry points to the book between which the reader can choose equally, we should pay attention to their potential to act as simultaneous interpretive thresholds in tension with one another. Side by side on facing pages, they pull the reader's interpretation in different directions.

A closer look at the image illuminates its erotic potential. The woman holds her hands in a *pudica* pose, which was commonly used to indicate Venus in Renaissance art, and which (as Nanette Salomon has argued) was pivotal in establishing a distinction

between the male and female nude in terms of their level of eroticisation.³⁷ According to the conventions of this pose, the figure's vulva is partly concealed by her right hand; her left hand covers her left breast but cannot reach her right. This results in her fingers effectively pointing to, highlighting, her genitals and right nipple. The position of her right hand could also evoke masturbation, something relatively common to Renaissance artistic representations of Venus.³⁸ The use of partially dissected women in the *pudica* pose demonstrates that the influence of artistic practice on anatomical illustration contributed to the presence of more eroticised figures in anatomy books.

Eroticised images in anatomy books were not, however, confined to representations of women. In 1681, surgeon John Browne published *A Compleat Treatise of the Muscles as they Appear in Humane Body, and Arise in Dissection*, a book solely illustrated by male nudes in plates re-engraved from Julius Casserius's *Tabulae Anatomicae* (1627).³⁹ The work was revised and reissued in 1684 as *Myographia Nova Sive Musculorum Omnium*, with an English translation (*Myographia Nova, or, A Graphical Description of All the Muscles in Humane Body*) appearing in 1697. All but one of Browne's full human figures are statuesque, standing on stone plinths in a bright rural setting (Figure 3). The exception is the engraving showing the penile muscles (Figure 4). The subject reclines on a cushioned bed, legs splayed, with a relaxed expression. A figure exists in Casserius with a pose almost identical to Browne's in Figure 4 (reclining under a tree rather than in bed – Figure 5); we can thus conclude that this engraving was also based on Casserius, despite how drastically its style differs from Browne's others. Variations between different editions of Browne's muscle treatises (the engraving showing the penile muscles is missing altogether in the first edition of 1681) suggest that Browne and his printer Thomas Newcombe had originally intended to use a full set of engravings in the style of

Casseri in the first edition of *A Compleat Treatise of the Muscles*, printed in 1681, but the penile muscle image was lost or damaged at a late stage in the printing process: it is missing altogether from this edition, though its legend is printed and there is a gap for it in the image numbering sequence. In the next edition (1683, printed by Dorman Newman), the image from Figure 6 appears: this suggests that Newman, the new printer, commissioned a replacement for the lost engraving from a different engraver, with the result that its style did not match the series of earlier engravings.

[Figures 3, 4 and 5 near here]

The coincidence of the genital muscles with the volume's only bedroom scene means that this engraving is charged with sexual suggestion.⁴⁰ The presence of legends in Browne's book should militate against this, encouraging the reader to focus on taxonomising the muscles of the penis rather than imagining the scene's erotic possibilities. However, in one edition of Browne's book – the 1697 *Myographia*, which was the first English expanded edition – a series of errors in the numbering of the figures undermines the legend's function in relation to this image.⁴¹ The result is that no legend or textual reference definitively points to the bedroom engraving, and the reader is given no guidance about how to engage with this image. As explored above, a separation of legend and image frustrates the legend's ability to affect and prescribe interpretation.

Clearly, the likelihood of such confusion arising is affected by the process by which the book is put together. A situation in which legends do not match up with images (as is the case with the 1697 *Myographia*) is more likely to arise in a volume such as this, where the engravings are inserted as singletons rather than being bound into the gatherings, as this offers no opportunity to cross-reference the illustrations with the text until the binding stage. Even at this point it would be difficult to notice such

errors without a thorough reading, something a binder would usually not have time to do. As such, we should consider the physical structure of a book as an additional factor which could indirectly affect the potential for erotic use. Here, the printer's choice to insert the engravings into Browne's volume as singletons has resulted in a lack of any explicit instruction for the use of the engraving of the penile muscles, which can be seen as facilitating potential erotic use.

As well as looking at images, some anatomical publications encouraged readers to interact with them. Fugitive sheets – single pages with multilayered images that allowed people to lift the flaps, revealing the anatomical detail beneath the skin – emerged in Europe around 1538.⁴² Early examples have a recognisable common style: a male and female figure sit on a plinth or stool, legs wide apart, either fully naked or naked except for a cloth across their laps (Figure 6). Attention is paid to the styling of their hair, meaning that (like the woman in Figure 2) they appear as living and relatable human beings: men have cropped hair and a beard, while women have long curly hair pinned up in a similar way to Figure 2. The sheets were designed for public consumption rather than medical education (they were of little use for the latter, since they 'usually [showed] an already obsolete anatomy for the time in which they appeared'⁴³) and were 'highly popular', 'put on display at fairs, public baths, in taverns or improvised temporary stalls set up by barber-physicians'.⁴⁴ Part of their appeal certainly came from lay scientific interest, and from the numerous comic or surprising variations on the fugitive sheet form: some *memento mori* versions revealed a skeleton to the viewer who optimistically lifted a woman's skirt, while others engaged with popular religious sentiment, exposing the Pope as a devil beneath his clothes.⁴⁵ But Kate Heard's research has shown that people also joked about the sheets' erotic potential; and

the popular tourist trade in ‘flap prints’ of Venetian sex workers may have strengthened these associations.⁴⁶

[Figure 6 near here]

By the seventeenth century, individual fugitive sheets were being collated into slim books. A popular example was Johann Remmelin’s 1613 *Catoptrum Microcosmicum* (later published in English as *An Exact Survey of the Microcosmus or Little World*).⁴⁷ The book’s title page proclaims it as ‘Useful for all, Physicians, Chyrurgeons, Statuaries, Painters, &c.’ Unusually, this allows the book to transcend strictly medical use; the reference to ‘statuaries’ and ‘painters’ suggests the possibility of engagement with the images as aesthetic objects, enjoying their visual appeal as well as taking profitable knowledge from their representation of ‘all the Parts...in their proper site’. ‘All’ and ‘&c.’, meanwhile, effectively sanction an infinite span of undefined possible uses. Like earlier fugitive sheets, the images in Remmelin’s book had little medical utility: ‘the anatomical content was out of date even with their first appearance in print’.⁴⁸ Aside from the title page, the book offers little guidance for its use; indeed, the first edition (which Remmelin later claimed was unauthorised, but which was very popular) was entirely ‘without text or explanations of the lettering on the figures’.⁴⁹ The 1619 edition, the first to bear Remmelin’s name on the title page, included legends and a preface; but as Russell’s research has shown, even many later editions have no prefatory material.⁵⁰ As such, the reader of Remmelin’s book is largely able to direct their own progress into knowledge of the body, revealing and lingering on whichever parts they choose.

The book comprises five double page spreads with four large engravings: the first showing two flayed figures exposing the veins and nerves; the second a variety of body parts, with a male and female figure on plinths on either side, and a pregnant torso

at the centre; and the third and fourth a full male and female figure respectively, each again surrounded by details of internal organs. The genitalia of the latter two figures are covered by engraved details: a plant covers the man's penis (Figure 7), while a cloud of smoke from a tiny phoenix covers the woman's vulva, presumably indicating the entrance to the womb and the source of new life (Figure 8). The reader is able to effectively undress the figures, teasingly peeling back the flaps that cover them. Interestingly, however, the act of flap-lifting makes no clear distinction between undressing and dissecting: as Crupi puts it, 'the reader/spectator is invited to take part in a virtual autopsy'.⁵¹ The reader can lift the cloud from the woman's vulva, then lift the vulva itself; they can reveal the man's penis, then reveal his abdominal organs. As Talvacchia points out, the removal of skin could be experienced as an analogy for the removal of clothes.⁵² Undressing and dissection become part of the same continuous process, enabling the reader to pursue their impulse to reveal the body past its usual bounds.

[Figures 7 and 8 near here]

In this context, it is easy to see how the act of dissection could be perceived not just as erotic, but as a sexually predatory act perpetrated by male readers on imagined female bodies. As Sawday has discussed, readers of anatomy books were presumptively gendered male in early modern culture, while anatomical subjects were frequently female or feminised.⁵³ Vesalius's influential *Fabrica* (1543) has – owing to its frontispiece, which depicts the dissection of a pregnant woman by a male anatomist surrounded by a large crowd of male onlookers – been particularly subject to feminist readings. The argument of Jessica Patella König is a typical example:

That the body is female, that it is supine, that it is naked, and that it is open all have particular significance when positioned against the present males, Vesalius most notably. In its violent exposure, the female body is objectified, and through this

objectification is made vulnerable. In contrast, an empowered Vesalius stands with his scalpel and his manuscript ready at hand, prepared to uncover and record the secrets of her exposed flesh.⁵⁴

Readings such as this can potentially elucidate cases like the title page of Crooke's 1631 *Mikrokosmographia* (Figure 9) The frontispiece features engravings by Martin Droeshout, depicting a male and female figure who are represented in strikingly different ways. The man's skin is flayed, displaying muscles and veins. While striking a lifelike pose in the style popularised by Vesalius's illustrations, he does not invite an eroticised gaze – indeed, his one missing hand makes him appear to be decaying slightly, distancing him from the living – although Droeshout seems to have still considered him potentially erotic enough to warrant concealing his genitals with a flowering plant. (Indeed, the choice of a plant – also used in Remmelin's engravings for the same purpose – may have erotic associations in itself, given the deployment of plant metaphors in erotica to indicate fertility and 'productive sex'.⁵⁵) The female figure, by contrast, is a version of the eroticised *pudica* figure (Figure 2) analysed above: like the corpse in Vesalius's frontispiece, 'her genitals and her breasts...are still intact regardless of the violence done to the rest of her'.⁵⁶ In this context she functions as a teasing hint of what the book offers: by revealing one breast but not the other, and opening a small visceral window, the engraving stimulates the reader's desire for further knowledge of the female body.

[Figure 9 near here]

The critical focus on women's bodies in early modern anatomy books is, to some extent, justified by the acute concern in the period over controlling access to knowledge about those bodies.⁵⁷ Patella Konig is not wrong to draw connections between the pursuit of this knowledge through dissection and through sexual conquest: 'To lay the female body widely open in the anatomy theatre, in the laboratory, in the

courtroom (and quite possibly in the bedroom) is to engage in an act of discovery, but underlying this drive to discover is a drive to know, to dominate and to control.’⁵⁸ Moreover, dissection and medicine in England were increasingly processes in which gender mattered, owing to the efforts of ‘a growing male medical establishment interested in regulating its membership’.⁵⁹ However, this perspective is limited for two reasons. Firstly, its focus on the sociopolitical reasons for the male investigation of female bodies in an early modern context threatens to obscure the more pressing medical and biological motivations behind this: pregnancy and childbirth were still disproportionately dangerous for both parent and baby.⁶⁰ This, rather than voyeurism and a ‘drive...to dominate and to control’, is likely the reason behind Vesalius’s choice of a pregnant figure for the frontispiece of the *Fabrica*, and behind the high number of pregnant bodies depicted in early modern anatomical illustration (even in slim books or those with very few images). Secondly, feminist readings which focus exclusively on the ways in which male dissection of female bodies might reflect unequal gendered power differentials risk erasing the fact that men’s bodies can also be the objects of sexual desire in this period. This is owing firstly to potential female readers – the quotation from Saltonstall’s *Picturae Loquentes* analysed above refers specifically to women, and cultural concerns about vernacular anatomy almost certainly indicated fears about female as well as less educated male readers – but also to the potential for men to desire other men. Literature provides plentiful examples of the latter. The character of Gaveston in Marlowe’s *Edward II*, for example, offers an eroticised description of his planned entertainments for the king:

Sometime a lovely boy in Dian’s shape
With hair that gilds the water as it glides,
Crowns of pearl about his naked arms,
And in his sportful hands an Olive tree,

To hide those parts which men delight to see,
Shall bathe him in a spring...⁶¹

‘Those parts which men delight to see’ are, here, at best ambiguous: the eroticised figure of Gaveston’s masque may be ‘in Dian’s shape’, but he remains essentially ‘a lovely boy’. His coy ‘sportful hands’ attempting to ‘hide’ his genitalia with an olive tree foreshadow Rimmelin’s figures, their genitals hidden behind foliage for the reader to expose. The playfulness of this attempt at concealment prefigures the woman in Figure 2, her fingers half-covering, half-highlighting her vulva. Most important for our purposes, however, is Marlowe’s reference to generic ‘men’: as Ralf Hertel argues, ‘Gaveston’s envisioned masque presupposes a natural homoerotic desire when he refers to the genitals of the “lovely boy in Dian’s shape” as “those parts which men delight to see” – not just some men, but men in general.’⁶² Where critics such as Patella König refer exclusively to ‘the male voyeur’, then, I would argue that we should question the gender of both the subject and object of that gaze.

Indeed, when we consider Rimmelin’s book alongside earlier fugitive sheets, we see that both men and women can be undressed and dissected to an equal extent. Both double-page spreads feature a man and a woman in relatively symmetrical orientation. The first spread, featuring details of various body parts, draws the eye to a pregnant torso as its central focus; here, however, the woman is reduced to her reproductive capacity rather than to her potential status as erotic object. This invites a problematisation of the feminist argument that ‘The drama of the Renaissance anatomy theatre, and representations of it, is the drama of the eroticised female body and the male voyeurs that surround her’⁶³. As previously argued, familiarity with the reproductive system was of considerable importance to physicians owing to high mortality rates surrounding childbirth; as such, the majority of the spectators on

Vesalius's frontispiece to whom Patella König refers are likely to have been not 'voyeurs', but physicians and medical students seeking to learn about a crucial aspect of their profession. Similarly, the eroticised man in Browne's muscle treatises sits uncomfortably alongside this line of thought. It could be argued that he is feminised by being positioned as the object of sexual desire, but this rests upon anachronistic and heteronormative assumptions; moreover, it does not adequately reflect the dynamics of the image. The man looks relaxed rather than powerless, and appears to be displaying himself – brazenly, legs akimbo – rather than being displayed.

It seems, therefore, that while the gender of an anatomical subject is sometimes an important factor (as the feminist readings of Vesalius's frontispiece, and the contrast between the male and female figures on Crooke's title page, indicates), it is not a paramount issue in every context. In Remmelin's books the reader can teasingly undress both the male and female figures; in Browne's muscle treatises the most eroticised figure is male; and the would-be censors of Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia* did not discriminate as to *which* generative organs should be removed. When considering the potential for erotic use of these books, it is thus imperative that we consider the representation of all human figures.

Prefaces

As I have already suggested, prefaces are unquestionably a key device with which writers of early modern anatomy books attempted to influence readers' use of those books: in Genette's words, 'to ensure that the book is read properly'.⁶⁴ Writers with anxieties about potential erotic use take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the preface to make disclaimers about their motivations and those of their intended readership, and 'to put the...reader in possession of the information the author considers necessary for this proper reading'.⁶⁵ Any reader who bypasses the preface, of course,

misses out on such information and disclaimers and may be more likely to misuse the book. As demonstrated below, paratexts such as contents-tables and running titles can facilitate non-linear modes of reading, enabling the reader to skip straight to their chosen section without reading the preface. This section, however – using Crooke’s multiple *Mikrokosmographia* prefaces as my main case study – considers the preface itself as a paratext, and how authors attempt to use it to “‘define and shape” the reading experience’,⁶⁶ despite their ultimate lack of control over whether it was read.

Although we know from the censorship of Crooke’s *Mikrokosmographia* that some parts were circulating in November 1614, his preface is dated ‘this last of May, 1615’.⁶⁷ This means that we can read this preface in the light of the censorship affair and the Royal College of Physicians’ anxiety about erotic use of his volume, and at some points as directly informed by and responding to it. Crooke addresses and refutes the Royal College’s three concerns one by one, mounting a thorough defence of his book in a format reminiscent of a scholarly rhetorical exercise. The allegation concerning his ‘indecent illustrations’ is rendered as ‘The Figures are obscene as Aretines’.⁶⁸ This gives us more detail than the *Annals of the Royal College of Physicians*, making explicit what the official record merely implied. ‘Aretine’ refers to Pietro Aretino, whose name became a byword for erotica after his *Sonnetti Lussoriosi* were published alongside Giulio Romano’s *I Modi* (‘The Positions’), a series of erotic engravings depicting the sexual encounters of classical gods, in 1526.⁶⁹ By having his imaginary opponent voice this comparison between Aretino and Romano’s explicitly titillatory work and his own anatomical engravings, Crooke presents his censors as melodramatic. His choice of wording is also useful, however, in that it clarifies the subtext of the College’s objections: clearly, Crooke received the message that they were

worried that his chapters on the genitals would be used by readers for erotic purposes.

This worry, Crooke responds in his preface, is:

A shamelesse accusation; for they are no other then those of Vessalius, Plantinus, Platenus, Laurentius, Valverdus, Bauhinus, and the rest; no other then those which were among our selves dedicated to three famous Princes, the last a Mayden Queene. For my adding the History of the parts of Generation, I have already given account, partly to his Majesty, partly in my Prefaces to the fourth and fift bookes.⁷⁰

Crooke's disclaimer regarding his illustrations is true: all of his engravings, save the 1631 engraved title page, were drawn from earlier anatomical works. However, it leaves many questions unanswered – most notably, the grounds on which he expects his illustrations to be excused.. It is not clear whether he is shifting the blame for any obscenity onto the earlier authors (which would not negate that obscenity); whether he is claiming that his illustrations cannot be obscene because they are not new (which makes little sense, although it does arguably point out the hypocrisy of the College in accusing him of both plagiarism and unprecedented obscenity); or whether his attack is not on the *validity* of the accusation but its unfairness, since his illustrations were not condemned when they appeared in other works. The latter seems the most logical course of action – likely, too, given that his attack focuses on the ‘shamelesse’ nature of the ‘accusation’ rather than on the innocence of the ‘Figures’ – but in itself does more to discredit Crooke's censors than it does to excuse his illustrations. This suggests that he is more concerned with exonerating himself than with preventing misuse of his book.⁷¹ This is also suggested by his title page, which – ‘whether or not a deliberate act of arrogance’ – shows two figures ‘borrowed from Bauhin's *Theatrum Anatomicum*’, one of which also appears as an ‘indecent illustration’ in Book IV.⁷² Indeed, by linking his illustrations with those of *I Modi* through simile – even if he subsequently disclaims that

simile – Crooke (inadvertently or not) calls the reader's attention to his book's erotic possibilities.

Crooke's claim to have 'already given account [for 'adding the History of the parts of Generation'] ...in my Prefaces to the fourth and fift bookes' makes it unclear whether his prefaces to the individual books (none of which are dated) were written pre- or post-censorship. His use of the adverb 'already' might simply indicate that he wrote those prefaces earlier in 1615, while *Mikrokosmographia* was being prepared for publication, and then wrote the preface to the whole volume afterwards, in May; but it could indicate that they were written in 1614, when we know parts of the volume were printed and in circulation, and so we cannot treat them as definitive responses to the censorship. However, the preface to Book IV certainly displays a great deal of anxiety about potential erotic use.

Unlike the main preface to *Mikrokosmographia*, Crooke's preface to Book IV takes an assertive rather than a reactionary approach, establishing the multiple justifications for his inclusion of the genitals before citing any objections. Marginal notes call attention to the structure of his engagement with the issue: 'Arguments perswading us to prosecute the history of these parts'; 'Objection answered'; 'How cautelous we have been herein'.⁷³ His first reason for including Book IV is that of completeness: 'I conceived my labour would be but lame if it wanted this limbe', he writes, not just because one part of the body would be missing, but because of the crucial importance of the reproductive organs in demonstrating 'the wonderfull wisedome and goodnesse of our Creator'. Secondly, Book IV is necessary for its medical utility: 'the diseases hence arising, as they bee most fearefull and fullest of anxiety especially in the Female sexe, so are they hardest to be cured'. In this respect, reluctance to write about or depict the genitals is actively harmful: 'the reason [that

these diseases are the hardest to cure] I conceive to be, because the partes are least knowne as being veyled by Nature, and through our unseasonable modesty not sufficiently uncovered'. There are also, Crooke points out, precedents elsewhere in Europe for the writing of vernacular anatomy books: 'Againe, the examples of all men who have undertaken this taske even in their mother tongues as we say, did sway much with me whose writings have received allowance in all ages and Common-wealths'.⁷⁴

Crooke stresses the comparatively hefty weight of these justifications against what he presents as a single counter-argument: 'On the contrary there was onely one obstacle; to reveyle the veyle of Nature, to prophane her mysteries for a little curious skilpride, to ensnare mens mindes by sensuall demonstrations, seemeth a thing liable to hevye construction.'⁷⁵ Crooke's focus on 'construction' is significant: rather than admitting that the content of his work might be problematic, he focuses on the fact that readers or censors might *construe* it to be so. In an attempt to stifle such 'hevye construction', he sets out his ideal intended reader: 'it were to be wished that all men would come to the knowledge of these secrets with pure eyes and eares, such as they were matched with in their Creation'. Those who cannot meet this standard of propriety should not, he argues, obstruct the 'preservation' of the genitals, which are a 'transcendent' aspect of God's creation: 'shall we therefore forfeit our knowledge because some men cannot conteine their lewd and inordinate affections?' The implications are clear: the responsibility for any erotic reading of Crooke's work lies with the readers, and not with the writer, whose work contains no inherently pornographic content. Crooke's use of 'we' here positions the ideal, virtuous reader as his addressee and ally, opposed to 'some men' who might practice erotic reading. As such, if (as Cormack and Mazzio argue), 'Prefaces...offered the opportunity for presenting a version of the reader to himself or herself', I would add on the evidence of

Crooke's preface that they also offered an opportunity to tell the reader what version of themselves they should be; that is, the mode of reading with which they should approach the book.⁷⁶

It is interesting, then, that Crooke's preface to Book IV actually comes close – the closest of any paratext so far observed – to Cormack and Mazzio's concept of books that 'by warning against misuse...essentially provided a guide, or at least a spur, to their own abuse'.⁷⁷ Immediately following the argument summarised above, Crooke draws the reader's attention to a further safeguard against erotic use of his book: 'Beside,' he writes, 'we have so plotted our busines, that he that listeth may separate this Booke from the rest and reserve it privily to himselfe.'⁷⁸ Here, Crooke presents himself and Jaggard as a team, who share responsibility for the 'plott[ing]' of the book and who have worked together to frustrate erotic reading. As a result of the way they have constructed the book, any reader who wishes can easily extract Book IV 'and reserve it privily to himselfe'. Crooke surely expects this to be for censorship purposes: the act of 'reserv[ing]' the section 'privily' is opposed to the act of allowing uncontrolled public consumption. However, this sentence could equally be read as indicating that Book IV can be separated for private use, as opposed to being removed from public use. In other words, 'He that listeth' could use the tools crafted by Crooke and Jaggard (analysed in the next section) to separate Book IV and 'reserve it' for his (or her, or their) own erotic reading. This goes beyond the effect of most paratexts examined here, which merely have the potential to facilitate erotic reading; in this case, Crooke effectively highlights the possibility of this mode of reading. In attempting to provide instructions 'to ensure that the book is read properly', Crooke's preface to Book IV simultaneously provides instructions for its misuse.

Fascinatingly, one anatomy book in the collection of Cambridge University Library appears to have fallen victim to the opportunity for excising potentially erotic sections which Crooke identifies. Ijsbrand (Ysbrand) van Diemberbroeck, a professor of anatomy at Utrecht University known for his treatise on plague cures, published his Latin *Anatome Corporis Humani* in Europe in 1672. The Latin text of the *Anatome* was first printed in England in 1685, as part of a posthumous collection of van Diemberbroeck's *Opera Omnia*.⁷⁹ Subsequently an English translation by William Salmon, *The Anatomy of Human Bodies*, appeared in 1689, and was reprinted once in 1694. In the copy of the 1689 *Anatomy* held by Cambridge University Library, fols. T4-2D have been roughly removed with a knife or scissors.⁸⁰ Consulting the 'Index' and 'Explanation of the Sixteen Plates' it seems that these pages treated the penis, female genitals, conception and birth: missing are subjects such as 'Hermaphrodites', 'Cleft of the female Pudendum', 'Copulation, whence the pleasure of it' and 'The Yard, whether a living Creature'; and pictures of 'the Yard, with the Seminary Vessels, and other Parts annexed to it', 'the Constitution of the Womb, and the Female Privities, and the Parts adjoining', and 'the Genitals of Women taken out of the Body, and placed in their natural situation'.⁸¹ It is difficult to tell exactly when these pages were removed. The discoloured stubs of the excised pages indicate that the removal took place over 100 years ago. The 'Academiae Cantabrigiensis Liber' bookplate on the inside front cover was introduced in 1706-07, when the library was enlarging its collections, so van Diemberbroeck's volume may have been purchased around this time.⁸² Since it is not clear when the library stopped using the bookplate, we cannot rule out the possibility that this was an act of Victorian censorship. However, it is tempting to imagine two alternative versions of an early modern reader: one excising the female genitals as an act of censorship, mistrusting other readers' motivations; the other spotting the section's

erotic potential and sequestering it for pornographic use, decontextualising it so that it becomes a genital-focused sheaf rather than one stage in the dissection of a whole body.

Read's preface to *Somatographia Anthropine* arguably enacts a similar double-edged effect to Crooke's preface to Book IV. In the process of defending his book's right to exist, Read refers not just to its lack of extraneous text (as analysed above) but to its size. His preface asserts that 'this small volume' (an octavo of 116 x 167mm) 'being portable may be carried without trouble, to the places appointed for dissection'.⁸³ This sentence provides an implicit direction for use by specifying only one space in which the book is to be used: 'the place appointed for dissection'. However, it also calls attention to its portability, suggesting an easy transference between this prescribed space of use and other undefined situations. There is evidence to suggest that the size of books played a role in facilitating their erotic use: in the Massachusetts case of erotic use of midwifery guides by adolescent boys, one participant concealed his book 'on the backside of the chimney on press', while another hid it 'between his coat and the lining'.⁸⁴ If we consider the difference in size between Read's volume and Crooke's (as Read's preface invites us to do), it seems clear that such concealment would be far more feasible with the former. The size of *Somatographia* can therefore be seen as a paratextual feature that enhances the opportunities for misuse already provided by its self-consciously image-focused nature; the preface, concurrently, can be seen as a paratext that calls attention to this feature and the ways in which it might be instrumentalised.

We should also not neglect the possibility that the text of a preface might itself function as a site of erotic engagement. The final paragraph of Crooke's preface to Book IV – whose subject, 'The nature of the obscaen parts', is signalled by a marginal note – contains an evocative and potentially titillating treatment of sexual desire:

Againe, that there might bee a mutuall longing desire betweene the sexes to communicate one with another, and to conferre their stockes together for the propagation of mankinde, beside the ardor and heate of the spirits conteyned in their seeds, the parts of generation are so formed, that there is not onely a naturall instinct of copulation, but an appetite and earnest desire thereunto, and therefore the obscoene parts are compounded of particles of exquisite sense, that passion being added unto the will, their embracements might be to better purpose.⁸⁵

Crooke's description here is ostensibly utilitarian – outlining the ways in which God's design of the genital parts facilitates reproduction – but the level of detail he includes makes this a vivid depiction of sexual intercourse, the desire that leads to it, and the pleasure it induces. Sexual desire is 'mutuall', 'longing' and 'earnest'; sexual pleasure is 'exquisite'; sexual partners' responses to one another are characterised by 'ardor', 'heate', and 'passion'. This paragraph is ripe for erotic reading in its own right; and in addition, if Crooke's preface functions to “define and shape” the reading experience of Book IV, this final impression potentially frames the subsequent text and images as aids to the reader's vivid imagination of sexual activity. Indeed, the remainder of the paragraph can be seen in this light as a teasing promise that more of the same is to come:

As for the particulars it shall be in vaine in this place to make mention of them, because the following discourse shall at large discipher them unto you. In which we will first describe the parts of generation belonging to men, and then proceede to those of Women also; of which wee would advise no man to take further knowledge then shall serve for his good instruction. And so we descend unto our history.⁸⁶

Crooke closes his preface with a final warning against erotic use, specifically of the sections of his chapter that deal with the female body: these are to be used solely for 'good instruction'. But set against his earlier depiction of 'earnest desire' and 'embracements', this warning loses some of its potency; the text censures erotic use

while arguably encouraging it through titillating language, again proving the validity of Cormack and Mazzio's observation that proscribing erotic reading may inadvertently point the reader towards it.

Structuring the reading process: running titles and marginal notes

Acknowledging that even readers who bypassed prefatory material could be influenced by paratexts, this final section will briefly consider the different choices made by printers about the content and positioning of running titles and marginal notes.

Alongside prefaces, these features function to guide a reader's path through a book or an individual page. In the case of Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia*, the relationship between preface and running titles is clearly symbiotic: the running titles fulfil Crooke's prefatory promise that 'he that listeth may separate this Booke from the rest and reserve it privily to himselfe'. For the first three books, the running title contains only the title of each particular book: for example, in Book III the running title consistently reads, 'Of the Parts Belonging to | Nutrition or Nourishment'. (In Book II it changes once, from 'Of the Common Investing | and Contayning Parts' to 'Of the Investing Parts | Proper to the lower Belly', but still does not reflect chapter-headings.) The reader flicking through in search of a particular section cannot glance at the top of each page to guide their search, but must use the more time-consuming method of reading the main text. From Book IV onwards, however, the running title changes to reflect the specific body parts dealt with on each page. On fols. T6^v-V^r, for example, it reads 'Of the proportion of the Parts | Of the Preparing Vessels', demonstrating that the titles can change even within a double page spread. Although this change continues for all the subsequent books, it seems oddly coincidental that it should begin on the contentious ground of Book IV. I suggest that, when Crooke claims that he and Jaggard have 'plotted their business' to facilitate the separation of 'indecent' subject matter, these

subject-specific running titles constitute the strategy to which he refers. Using the running titles, the would-be censor could choose the *parts* of Book IV he wished to remove – for example, like the reader of the Cambridge copy of van Diemberbroeck’s *Anatomy*, they could remove the sections on female genitals but leave the male ones. Such paratextual facilitation, however, remains a double-edged sword: our would-be censor could equally be a reader seeking erotic images or descriptions. The printer cannot control whom their running titles guide to each genital part.

A counter-example can be found in van Diemberbroeck, whose running titles are comparatively non-specific: they consistently read ‘Of the lowest cavity’ from fol. A1^r to 2N2^r, and this category contains all the abdominal organs as well as the genitals and reproductive organs. The mutilator of the Cambridge copy would not, therefore, have been able to rely on the running titles to guide their removal of specific sections. However, they might have relied on the *Anatomy*’s marginal notes. These are specific and numerous, averaging 10 per double page spread. For example, fols. V1^v-V2^r – which discuss the penis – have eleven marginal notes: ‘Situation, figure and Bigness’, ‘Its Substance’, ‘The Urethra’, ‘The largeness’, ‘Its use’, ‘The nervous bodies’, ‘Their Rise’, ‘The Vessels of the nervous Bodies’, ‘The Glans’, ‘Figure and colour’, and ‘Substance’. Clearly, these are not immediately comprehensible without van Diemberbroeck’s text to contextualise them: presented with the marginal notes alone, the reader might ask, ‘The substance, largeness and use of what?’ This is not an obfuscatory technique specific to sections discussing the genitals, but is typical of the marginal notes in van Diemberbroeck’s book: the pages on fat, for example, have marginal notes referring obliquely to ‘Colour’, ‘The Plenty of it’, ‘Situation’ and ‘Connexion’.⁸⁷ The occasional more specific examples (‘A thin nervous Membrane call’d Hymen’; ‘Whence the pleasure of Copulation’) are exceptions.⁸⁸ Indeed, this lack of independent

comprehensibility appears to be typical of marginal notes in seventeenth-century anatomy books more widely: Browne's preface deploys 'It' in identical ways ('Its Structure'; 'It hath veins'⁸⁹), while Crooke's marginal notes are similar: although they have a higher incidence of longer clauses and lexical detail ('The generation of perfect creatures'; 'Natural pleasure in generation'⁹⁰), they are still very frequently opaque without context (the 'preparing vessels' of the testicles have the marginal notes 'The right' and 'The left'; 'Of the Lap or Privities' has 'The position of it' and 'The parts of it'⁹¹). Only the notes in Browne's main text have a function independent of the text and are comprehensible without it: they provide an English gloss on the Latin muscle names, so that the section subtitled 'Detrusor urinae' has the marginal note 'This dischargeth the Urine'.⁹²

In these anatomy books, then, I would suggest that marginal notes primarily assist the reader who is already paying some attention to the text. Their difference in utility from running titles could be characterised as the difference between flicking through a book and skim-reading it: the former is a rapid process involving brief glances at the top of each page in search of the desired content, while the latter involves at least cursory attention to the main text. While both modes of reading could indicate either scholarly or erotic reading, the former involves less exposure to the text, and thereby to the writer's cautions, instructions or admonishments. This may seem an obvious point, but it complements an investigation of the strategies by which Crooke and his printer 'plotted [their] business' to satisfy the Royal College of Physicians and the Bishop of London. Running titles, it seems, were considered more crucial to this process.

Conclusion

I have argued here that the erotic reading of anatomy books in early modern England should be considered not just as a concern with relevance to broad cultural preoccupations concerning language, knowledge and gender, but as the use of physical books – each of which contained a different set of paratextual devices designed to shape their use as far as possible. The case of Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia* has illuminated this line of enquiry. The Royal College of Physicians' focus on its illustrations in their unsuccessful attempt to suppress the book invites us to consider the nature of anatomical illustrations and what factors determine their erotic potential. This potential, I have argued, should be evaluated through consideration of the location, presence or absence of legends, which can frame an image as a scholarly or pedagogical tool and encourage its perception as a collection of parts rather than a coherent whole; the presentation of the human figure in the illustration and the extent to which this echoes other eroticised scenarios; and the ways in which the reader is encouraged to visually or physically interact with an image. Crooke's discussion of the College's objections in his preface points to the centrality of prefaces as sites in which writers articulate their envisioned use of a book and engage directly with their own or others' anxieties about erotic reading, but also to the inadvertent effects of calling attention to that mode of reading as a possibility. Running titles and marginal notes, as devices which enact and support the warnings voiced in prefaces about prescribed modes of use, are underacknowledged evidence of careful consideration between writers and printers of anatomy books (the 'we' of Crooke's 'we have so plotted our business') about how modes of reading might be managed.

Implicit in this discussion has been the fact that not all early modern readers used books in a way that we might recognise as thoughtful and productive. Much scholarship on the history of the book centres around an imagined early modern reader.

That reader, it is frequently assumed – even if they were not using a book in quite the way the writer had intended – practised a mode of reading that was earnest and improving: books were approached for their utility in a practical, political or personal sense, and readers practised ‘a mode of textual engagement that was goal-directed and purposive’.⁹³ The readers at the heart of this article, however, are not engaged in this process. Instead, I would argue, they should be seen as practising one of two alternative modes of reading. Those readers who aim to pick out the most titillating parts of a book – and avoid content or features that might threaten to undermine this – can be seen as practising not ‘thoughtful and critical rumination’,⁹⁴ but wilfully thoughtless reading. This is the reader inadvertently envisaged by Alexander Read in his preface to *Somatographia*: they focus on a stream of images that are presented ‘by continuation to the eie’, practising a form of shallow skim-reading which bypasses sections or strategies that might de-eroticise the sexual content of an anatomy book. Conversely, however, Crooke’s preface to Book IV frames erotic reading as excessive over-reading. His final admonition to the reader of Book IV is articulated in these terms: ‘of [this section] wee would advise no man to take *further knowledge then shall serve for his good instruction*’.⁹⁵ Erotic readers, in Crooke’s formulation, are reading for scholarly instruction and then some: they are not neglecting the book’s instructional potential, but are inappropriately going beyond that, practising a mode of reading that extracts more from the book than they should. This framing doubtless reflects the association between sexual pleasure and excess in early modern English culture, arising from an understanding of the rational mind as in tension with the body and the physiological passions that threaten to overwhelm it.⁹⁶ Crooke also gestures towards this understanding earlier in his preface to Book IV with his image of men who ‘cannot containe their lewd and inordinate affections’.⁹⁷ What it means, though, is that we

should think carefully about how we characterise early modern readers. We should avoid seeing the early modern ‘active reader’ as a default, and we should think critically about the ways in which modes of reading that were opposed to explicit authorial instruction were understood. It is vital that we, as scholars of book history, contextualise our imagined early modern readers with attention to the content they are reading, the ways in which each individual book encourages them to approach that content, and the wider cultural associations and framing that each type of content had. The Royal College of Physicians had a vividly imagined reader in mind when they tried to censor *Mikrokosmographia*, as did Crooke and Jaggard when they ‘plotted their business’ to obstruct erotic reading of Book IV. This investigation has, I hope, brought the wilfully thoughtless reader and the excessive reader to prominence alongside their productive and purposive counterparts, and made the case for their powerful influence over the paratexts of anatomy books.

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1. *Annals*, 11/11/1614.

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2. I have silently modernised u/v and i/j in quotations from early modern texts, and expanded contractions.
 3. See e.g. Otten, “Eros Vulgarized”; Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*, 186; Rowe, ““God’s handy worke””, 294-295; Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, 225-226.
 4. Cormack and Mazzio, *Book Use, Book Theory*, 24; Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*, 186; Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, (1615), ¶2^v.
 5. Sherman, *Used Books*, 10.
 6. Talvacchia, *Cultural History*, 16.
 7. Cormack and Mazzio, *Book Use, Book Theory*, 120.
 8. Jordan, *Invention of Sodomy*, 92-113.
 9. Thauvette, “Defining Early Modern Pornography”, 46.
 10. Thauvette, “Defining Early Modern Pornography”, 45-46, 34.
 11. E.g. Mann, “Hermaphrodite”; Chamberlain, “Bad Books and Bad Boys”.
 12. Chamberlain, “Bad Books and Bad Boys”, 189; Harvey, *Reading Sex*, 46.
 13. See e.g. Salmon, *Aristotle’s Master-Piece*, A4^f.
 14. Chamberlain, “Bad Books and Bad Boys”, 189; Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies*, 70-71, 154.
 15. Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 164.
 16. For a similar reason, I will not address the well-known case of Charles Estienne’s *De Dissectione Partium Corporis Humani Libri Tres* (1541), whose anatomical woodcuts are ‘reinterpretations of a “key” Renaissance erotic text: Perino del Vaga’s sequence of engravings showing gods and goddesses copulating with one another’ (Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, 194). Jeremy Norman suggests that ‘the publishers intended to commercialise the anatomy by stressing the erotic overtones’ (“Charles Estienne”).
 17. Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, 11-12, 50-51.
 18. Fisher, ““Wantoning with the Thighs””, 3, n. 10; Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*; Thauvette, “Defining Early Modern Pornography”; Harvey, *Reading Sex*.
 19. Williams, “Censorship”, 52.
 20. *Annals of the Royal College*, 11/11/1614 (emphasis added).
 21. Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, 191.
 22. Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, 114.
 23. Saltonstall, *Picturae Loquentes*, B1^v.
 24. Vickers, 8.
 25. Acheson, 128; see also Thornton and Reeves, 46.
 26. Harvey, “Visualising Reproduction”, 44.
 27. Sawday, 103, 112.

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28. Linster, "Crooke and Censorship".
 29. Herrlinger, *History of Medical Illustration*, 112-113.
 30. Lees-Jeffries, "Pictures, Places and Spaces", 197.
 31. O'Malley, "Helkiah Crooke", 6; Thornton and Reeves, *Medical Book Illustration*, 57.
 32. Read, *Somatographia Anthropine*, A3^r-A3^v.
 33. "proficient, n. 2."
 34. Read, *Somatographia Anthropine*, A3^v (emphasis added).
 35. For an example of legends bound together at the back of a book, see van Diemerbroeck, *Anatomy*.
 36. Read, *Somatographia Anthropine*, S2^r; c.f. Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, (1615), V5^v.
 37. Salomon, "The Venus Pudica", 73.
 38. Clarke, "The Masturbating Venuses".
 39. Russell, *John Browne*, 503.
 40. See also Harvey, *Reading Sex*, 167-68.
 41. E.g. Browne, *Myographia Nova* (1697), L2^v, M^v, N^v.
 42. For more information on the emergence and origins of fugitive sheets, see Russell, *Bibliography of Remmelin*, 15-18; Crummer, "Checklist"; Herrlinger, *History of Medical Illustration*, 160-62.
 43. Choulant, *History and Bibliography*, 156.
 44. Crupi, "Mirabili visioni", 24.
 45. Crupi, "Mirabili visioni", 24.
 46. Heard, "Gift of a Print"; Hufton, "Istruzione, Lavoro e Povertà", 90.
 47. Remmelin, *Catoptrum Microcosmicum*, 1619; Remmelin, *Exact Survey of the Microcosmus*, 1670. See Russell, *Bibliography of Remmelin*, for details of all editions.
 48. Russell, *Bibliography of Remmelin*, 7.
 49. Russell, *Bibliography of Remmelin*, 1.
 50. Russell, *Bibliography of Remmelin*, 2 and *passim*.
 51. Crupi, "Mirabili visioni", 20.
 52. Talvacchia, *Cultural History*, 17.
 53. Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, 182.
 54. Konig, "Francis Bacon on Nature". See also Wall, *Imprint of Gender*, 202-203.
 55. Harvey, *Reading Sex*, 113.
 56. Konig, "Francis Bacon on Nature".
 57. Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, 225; see also Bicks, *Midwiving Subjects*, 64.
 58. Konig, "Francis Bacon on Nature".

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59. Bicks, *Midwiving Subjects*, 12.
60. Schofield, 'Did the Mothers Really Die?', 259-60.
61. Marlowe, *Edward II*, I.i.60-65.
62. Hertel, *Staging England*, 216.
63. König, "Francis Bacon on Nature".
64. Genette, *Paratexts*, 197.
65. Genette, *Paratexts*, 209.
66. Smith and Wilson, *Renaissance Paratexts*, 6.
67. O'Malley, "Helkiah Crooke", 7; Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), ¶2^v.
68. Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), ¶2^v.
69. See Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*.
70. Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), A2^v; Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1631), §3^r.
71. For this reason I cannot agree with Otten, who argues that Crooke was anxious 'about using the vulgar tongue for the genitals'. Her evidence for this appears to be Crooke's assertion in his preface to Book IV that he has 'had the opinion of grave and reverent divines', which she interprets as indicating that Crooke was so worried about his use of the vernacular that he 'consulted clergymen before going to print'. However, given that Crooke was compelled by the Royal College of Physicians to accept the Bishop of London's scrutiny of his book before publication, it seems more likely that this phrase refers to that enforced clerical approval rather than voluntary consultation. Otten, "Eros Vulgarized", 197; Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), S3^r-S3^v.
72. O'Malley, "Helkiah Crooke", 8.
73. Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), S3^r.
74. Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), S3^r.
75. Contrary to Otten's suggestion, this sentence refers to Crooke's anxieties about the whole of Book IV here, and not specifically to the use of vernacular terms for the genitals; in fact, Crooke does not refer to this anywhere. The sentence Otten quotes in support of this point, 'mooveth or stirreth up images or shadowes of venerious delights in the fantasies of men', actually refers to the mechanism by which erections occur, and the subject of the clause is not English words for the genitals, but 'the seede contained in the Prostatae'. Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), Y4^r; Otten, "Eros Vulgarized", 199.
76. Cormack and Mazzio, *Book Use, Book Theory*, 62.
77. Cormack and Mazzio, *Book Use, Book Theory*, 120.
78. Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), S3^r.
79. Van Diemberbroeck, *Opera Omnia*.

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80. Cambridge University Library, Rare Books Room, Hh.2.50.
 81. Van Diemerbroeck, *Anatomy*, 4k-4k4; a-d4.
 82. Oates, *Cambridge University Library*, 479.
 83. Read, *Somatographia Anthropine*, A3^v.
 84. Chamberlain, “Bad Books and Bad Boys”, 189.
 85. Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), S4^f.
 86. Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), S4^f.
 87. Van Diemerbroeck, *Anatomy*, C2^v-C3^f.
 88. Van Diemerbroeck, *Anatomy*, Z3^f, X4^f.
 89. Browne, *Myographia Nova* (1697), C2^f, D1^f.
 90. Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), S4^v.
 91. Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), S5^f, X5^f.
 92. Browne, *Myographia Nova* (1697), M2^v.
 93. Jeffrey Todd Knight, “‘Furnished’ for Action: Renaissance Books as Furniture”, *Book History*, 12 (2009), 37-73 (p. 38)
 94. Jennifer Richards, “Useful Books: Reading Vernacular Regimens in Sixteenth-Century England”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 73.2 (2012), 247-71 (p. 270).
 95. Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), S4^f. Emphasis added.
 96. See e.g. Paster, *Humoring the Body*.
 97. Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), S3^f.

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Figure captions

Figure 1. In Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia*, the illustrations function to complement the explanation provided by the text. Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), S6^r. Credit: Wellcome Collection (<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/k4mrquag>). CC BY.

Figure 2. In *Somatographia Anthropine*, Alexander Read's epitome of *Mikrokosmographia*, the text functions only to gloss the image. Read, *Somatographia Anthropine*, S1^v-S2^r. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library. Classmark: Syn.7.63.318.

Figure 3. Example of a typical statuesque figure from Browne's *Myographia Nova*. Browne, *Myographia Nova* (1697), Tab. I. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library. Classmark: Keynes.T.6.21.

Figure 4. Anomalous bedroom scene in Browne's *Myographia Nova*. Browne, *Myographia Nova* (1697), M2^v and Tab. XIII. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library. Classmark: Keynes.T.6.21.

Figure 5. Figure in Casserius's *Tabulae Anatomicae*, on which the engraving in Figure 4 is based. Casserius, *Tabulae Anatomicae*, Tab. XV. Credit: Wellcome Collection (<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/wgf6c478>). CC BY.

Figure 6. Example of typical fugitive sheet. "Anatomical fugitive sheet, female; 1560?". Credit: Wellcome Collection (<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/uhd6xjzc>). CC BY.

Figure 7. Male figure in Remmelin's *Catoptrum Microcosmicum*. Remmelin, *Catoptrum Microcosmicum*, Visio Secunda. Credit: Wellcome Collection (<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/aghr8kbt>). CC BY.

Figure 8. Female figure in Remmelin's *Catoptrum Microcosmicum*. Remmelin, *Catoptrum Microcosmicum*, Visio Tertia. Credit: Wellcome Collection (<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/dh22tswg>). CC BY.

Figure 9. Title page of 1631 edition of Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia*, showing a female figure in an eroticised *pudica* pose. Credit: Wellcome Collection (<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/jh6d9mt9>). CC BY.