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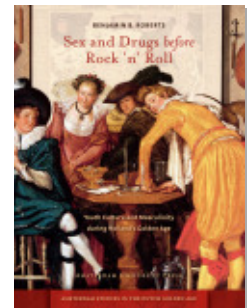
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CHAPTER 5

SEXUALITY AND COURTING

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In 1636, Barent Hendricx, a 27-year-old coffee worker in Delft, married Sara Jans. The couple had five children. However, Sara was not the first woman Barent had sex with. In 1624, when he was 15 years old, he was arrested together with Geertgen Gerrits, a woman from Hamburg with whom he had fornicated. Barent was not prosecuted, but the older Geertgen was banned from the city for 25 years, not only because she was probably a prostitute, but most likely because she had seduced a minor.¹ Teenagers interested in sex were not uncommon in the early seventeenth century. In *Schilder-konst* [Painter's Art] (1618), the painter Karel van Mander (1548-1606) dedicated a didactic poem in a form of a song to his apprentices and acknowledged that sex with and love for 12 to 14 year olds would be common distractions and should not be ignored. However, the young apprentices were urged to observe moderation and to never forget the importance of learning their trade, and not to be obsessed with the idea of marriage (not so early anyway). In Van Mander's eyes, or at least according to the lyrics of his song, composed in a fugue-like dialogue between 'lust', 'the spirit', and 'the youth', in the end, the spirit recognizes the sexual feelings of the young and requests him not to capitulate but rather to save himself for the sake of art.²

During the 1970s Dutch historians of childhood and youth such as Mary Heijboer-Barbas, Lea Dasberg, and Kees Bertels postulated that sexual boundaries between childhood, youth, and adulthood were quite fluid prior to the eighteenth century, and children were not sheltered from the world of adults. In the past two centuries the notion of an innocent, non-sexual child, as modern society often perceives them to be, was crafted by pedagogues, schools, and moralists.³

In general, sexual norms and values are in continuous flux, influenced by the dynamics of economic, social, cultural, religious, and even environmental changes. In the early modern period, the sexual lives of men and women were especially influenced by the religious and social upheaval caused by the Reformation. In the mid-sixteenth century when the Northern Netherlands was still under the hegemony of the Roman Catholic Church, it was not unusual for many young men and women to reside in a monastery where they had to take a vow of celibacy. The

Reformation and abolishment of such papal institutions had a dramatic social and spiritual effect on the lives and sexuality of thousands of young men and women. According to Peter Stearns, these changes also had a significant impact on the family structure. Before the Reformation approximately 20 percent of the population never married because they had no property and were dependent on wage labor their entire lives. After the Reformation, this situation changed.⁴ The landless poor were no longer forced into a life of celibacy, and under the new Protestant family moral they were expected to marry and procreate. However, young people still had to become economically independent, which often entailed delaying the age of marriage. This meant that there was a longer period between the age of sexual maturity and marriage, which became a great concern to moralists and parents alike. Moreover, the average age at which adolescents in the early seventeenth century left the parental home was much younger than in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. After completing elementary school, boys – usually in their early teens (12-14 years old) – either became apprentices or went to a boarding school for their secondary education. Privileged young men had the opportunity to attend a university. In 1620 the average age of students enrolled at the University of Leiden was 21.0 years.⁵ Part of the educational scheme entailed learning a trade or attending a university in another city. Boys would take up residence with the family of the artisan where he was apprenticed, or with one of his professors at the university. When early modern parents sent their sons off, they must have felt fear as well as sadness – an innate worry about the many temptations that the world had to offer – which could not be easily monitored from home. In this chapter we will investigate which sexual outlets young men had before they reached the age of marriage and how moralists and society addressed them.

Sex education

Seventeenth-century Dutch personal documents such as memoirs and diaries reveal little about how young people were informed about sexuality. Youngsters probably learned the facts of life from older family members or friends and neighbors. In all likelihood this knowledge was passed to children through language, humor, and even vulgar gestures,⁶ such as the motion of inserting the thumb between the index and the middle finger, the precursor to giving the middle finger, which of course denoted sexual intercourse.⁷

According to Jos van Ussel's study, which addresses sex education from the late Middle Ages until the 1960s, young people in the early sixteenth century did not need to be informed about 'the facts of life'. Van Ussel argues that young people knew everything about sex and were sexually active. He bases this mainly on the fact that humanistic pedagogues mentioned nothing about masturbation. Young people were comfortable with their bodies and nudity in private as well as in public (from visiting bathhouses). They slept in the nude, sometimes with more than one person in the same bed and sometimes with members of the opposite sex. Moreover, people in the early sixteenth century were at ease with their bodies and had common physical contact with each other like stroking, caressing, hugging, and kissing. Through the course of the late sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries, this attitude towards sexuality underwent

a drastic change as society became more concerned with controlling carnal urges.⁸ For the early modern period Norbert Elias terms the increasing self-regulation of urges, including sexual ones, the transition from *Fremdzwang* (social constraint) to *Selbstzwang* (self-constraint). The transition entailed making the controlling of urges an internal regulation of conduct based on guilt instead of behavior controlled by external regulation and associated with shame.⁹

For the early seventeenth century, we have to presume that there was still a relatively 'open attitude' towards sexuality because few pedagogues addressed sex education. Sex was on the minds of scientists who expressed their fascination with the mechanics of procreation of plants and animals, human sexuality, and its diseases in numerous publications.¹⁰ At that time Dutch society stood on the threshold of many scientific advances in sex and human reproduction. According to the British historian Matthew Cobb, Dutch scientists of the early seventeenth century were in a race to discover the mechanics of the human egg and sperm. In the 1630s and 1640s an entire generation of Dutch scientists was born that would later unravel this mystery of human sexuality. Antonie van Leeuwenhoek (1632-1723) was the first scientist to observe (and report about) his own semen after having intercourse with his wife and squeezing the excess fluid out of his penis and examining the white substance under the lens of his microscope where he discovered spermatozoa; Reinier de Graaf (1641-1673) would make one of the most thorough investigations of the workings of the penis;¹¹ and the eccentric physician Frederik Ruysch (1638-1731) was fascinated with the human body and examined the interior of the penis and discovered that an erection was not caused by wind but by the use of arteries, veins, and capillaries. Ruysch 'showed the expanding and shrinking organ to be a marvel of hydraulic engineering'.¹²

This fascination was widespread. In cities with an anatomical theater, not a seat was left empty during the anatomy lessons. Large audiences gathered especially in the winter when the cold temperature reduced the stench from the decaying corpses. The lessons attracted a wide variety of spectators, ranging from apprentices of the surgical guild to midwives, and even artists who marveled at the detailed anatomy of the human body from inside and out.¹³ The lessons held in Amsterdam's former city gate, De Waag, which was used as an anatomical theater, were immortalized for posterity in 1632 when Rembrandt painted *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*.¹⁴ This fascination for knowledge of the fine mechanics of the body and human sexuality in particular contrasted with the fact that advice books remained silent about the budding sexuality of children: a fact of life that was visible to every parent with an adolescent child. One probable explanation is that moralists did not want to *educate* young men about sexuality: they wanted to *warn* them about the facts of life.

Sexual maturity

Contrary to consuming alcohol which was a cultural rite of passage, sexual maturity was a biological feat. Sexual maturity entails more than that, however, and was determined by prevailing ideas of masculinity and models of manhood. The sexuality of young men was strongly scrutinized by societal norms and codes that were explicitly and implicitly conveyed from one generation to

the next. The norms swayed between two extremes. On the one hand, male sexual maturity was celebrated and revered as a transition to manhood, which must have been a welcomed event that other male family members and peers probably displayed, and young men must have felt proud about it. On the other hand, it was considered evil. While the phallic symbols of the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans had represented fertility, the early Christians demonized the human male member. Whereas the Ancients considered the penis to be the giver of life, late Antiquity church fathers such as Augustine (354 A.D.-430 A.D.) believed it to be the rod of Satan because it was the source of original sin. According to Augustine, 'the cause *and* the effect of original sin is lust, the symptom *and* the disease is the erection'.¹⁵ During the late Middle Ages and early modern period, this idea still prevailed through the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, and consequently permeated Protestant theology.¹⁶

In the realm of the newly acquired sexual openness and freedom that humanism brought to the Northern Netherlands and the rest of the Europe, moralists only provided minimal guidance and counsel to young people, and merely urged them to channel their carnal urges until the sanctity of the conjugal bed. Moralists in the sixteenth century like Erasmus targeted young people with their new sexual norms.¹⁷ In the meantime young men were expected to practice abstinence. The question still remains of how did young men bridge the gap of more than ten years with self-restraint and non-reproductive sexual practices? This issue has been hypothesized by Jean-Louis Flandrin for the late Middle Ages and early modern period but has never been adequately answered.¹⁸

In 1642 when 10-year-old Mary Stuart of England married Willem II of Orange, the 16-year-old son of the Dutch stadtholder, the couple was not allowed to consummate the marriage for a few years due to Mary's young age. During that period Mary was commonly referred to as Willem's *kind-bruid* (child bride). Not surprisingly, contemporaries believed the newlyweds to be too physically immature for sexual intercourse. In many respects, the marriage was arranged for immediate political gain and strategically aligned the Stuarts with the House of Orange, the family that held the stadtholderate in a country that was one of the wealthiest in Europe at the time, and the Oranges gained an alliance with a Protestant monarchy. In 1646, when Mary reached the age of fifteen, she and Willem finally consummated the marriage, a feat that was publicly acknowledged.¹⁹

Although this child marriage was an unusual case of an accepted practice among aristocrats in early modern Europe, the crucial question that historians have left unanswered is telling about early modern sexuality: at which age did young people in the early modern period become sexually mature, and when did young women experience *menarche* (first menstruation) and young men *semenarche* (first ejaculation)? According to Arnold van Gennep's rites of passage, physical puberty is more complicated for boys than girls because the first ejaculation is often preceded by emissions of mucus that go unnoticed. Van Gennep argues that a boy's puberty becomes evident in public through the growth of beard and pubic hair, and not semenarche.²⁰ In order to address this matter without using Van Gennep's criteria, we have to focus briefly on the physiology of the human body. Scientists of physiological development claim that external factors such as famine,

poverty, war, and political and social upheaval influence the age of sexual maturity to a certain degree. A balanced diet and minimal stress can accelerate it, whereas a poor diet and psychological traumas can delay the process. Research has shown that sexual maturation takes place in the part of the brain known as the hypothalamus, which transmits a chemical signal to the pituitary gland. This signal tells the pituitary gland to begin releasing hormones called gonadotropins, which stimulate the growth of the testicles in boys and the ovaries in girls. The growing organs secrete sex hormones, such as testosterone in boys and estrogen in girls. The release of these hormones into the body stimulates the development of sexual characteristics, including pubic and axillary hair in girls and boys, facial hair and muscle mass in boys, and breast growth in girls, and awakens the libido. The beginning of puberty is not the same for each child. The hypothalamus only transmits a signal to the brain after a certain amount of body fat has been gained. The amount of body fat can also be influenced by genetic, physical and/or traumatic factors.²¹ With this in mind, we can only hypothesize about the age at which adolescents in the early modern period became sexually mature, and imagine that youths probably matured at a later age than adolescents do today.²²

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the Republic was the wealthiest country in Europe and experienced the least amount of famine. According to Andrew Cunningham and Ole Peter Grell's *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, the Dutch Republic was exceptional in Europe with its advanced trade and specialization in agriculture, which alleviated the repeated threat of epidemics and famine that often re-occurred in other societies in Europe. The four horsemen that shaped and influenced late medieval and early modern society were religion (the white horse), war (the red horse), famine (the black horse), and disease (the pale horse).²³ While the Republic was affected by the Reformation, the Eighty Years' War, and the venereal disease syphilis, it was spared the consequences of the black horse, and the population of the Republic experienced a relative steadfast diet and physiological growth. Most of the country's immigrants, however, were from war-torn areas such as the Southern Netherlands (Dutch Revolt) and German lands (Thirty Years' War), which had experienced famine, disease, stress, and trauma.²⁴ The country's physiological prosperity, in general, must have been influenced by the unstable political situation during the first decades of the seventeenth century. Until 1648 the country was engaged in an 80-year war with Spain, and in 1618-1619 the Republic was on the verge of a civil war that was deeply embedded in a religious conflict among reformed theologians.

In this light, we have to distinguish the age of sexual maturity of young men from the upper and middle classes and of those from the lower ranks of Dutch society. While today it is more or less the same for all children regardless of their socio-economic background, for the early modern period and up until the early twentieth century, there were clear distinctions in physical maturity between youngsters of the same age but different economic classes. There is also reason to believe that the physiological development of young people in the early seventeenth century occurred at a much later age than for adolescents today. Herbert Moller researched biological markers in males such as beard growth and voice-change and argues that the late age of facial growth in the early modern period also indicates a later sexual development. Today, for example,

the growth of facial hair on young men usually starts to appear at the same time as axillary hair (armpit hair), or just a few months earlier. 'This is a relatively late state of pubertal development, about three years after prostatic activity makes seminal emission possible, but is still half a year or more before the production of mature live spermatozoa is likely to begin. For our distant ancestors, therefore, teen-age fatherhood was a rare biological possibility, certainly more rare than teen-age conception, since girls mature about two years earlier than boys'.²⁵

Because early modern sources leave us in the dark about the exact age of sexual maturity, we have to extract data from later centuries to reconstruct it. Norbert Kluge, the German pedagogue of sexuality, claims that the average age of menarche for girls in 1860 was 16.6 years old. Since then, there has been a progressive shift downwards: in 1920 it was 14.6 years, in 1950 13.1 years and in 1980 12.5 years. In 1992, the average age of menarche occurred at 12.2 years old, and the prognosis for 2010 is expected to be 10 or 11 years old. The same trend of early sexual maturity is also valid for boys. If we compare the influence of diet on sexual maturity under modern circumstances, the results are astonishing. For example, the average age of semenarche for boys in 1994 was 12.6 years, while the average age in 1980 was 14.2 years. Traditionally, girls have often matured at an earlier age than boys, but in recent years this gap has narrowed considerably.²⁶ According to physiologists, the early sexual maturation of young people in the past century is primarily due to the increase in body fat. The cumulative economic prosperity and affluence of the twentieth century has had a major hand in this.²⁷ It would be anachronistic to compare this development in human physiology with the situation in the early seventeenth century, but it cannot be disregarded or ignored.

Another aspect, stature, can be taken as a measure of the health standards of young people in the early seventeenth century. According to the anthropometric research of John Komlos, nutrition and stature are correlated throughout history. Over longer periods of time, proper nutrition has led to higher fertility rates and taller stature in the human population.²⁸ Pathological research indicates that the average height of men in the seventeenth century was shorter than today, and that stature has fluctuated according to economic growth and decline, war and famine. Grave excavations from the Pieter's Church in Leiden revealed that the average height of men in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was 166 cm (= 5 foot 4 inches). Male conscripts (average age 25 years old) were 169 cm tall (= 5 foot 5 inches) in 1825, 167.5 cm (= 5 foot 4.9 inches) in 1865, and 178.0 cm (= 5 foot 8.4 inches) in 1965.²⁹ According to a 2000 study, the average height of a Dutch male is 185 cm (6.07 foot), and they are considered the tallest people in the world.³⁰ These statistics suggest that the average height of Dutch men has progressively increased. This statement is valid only if we take the early modern period as the starting point, and not the Middle Ages. Significant evidence reveals that people in the fifteenth century, a period known for its economic and social tranquility, were taller than in the early modern period.³¹ The same can be assumed for the age of sexual maturity, which for many youths came when they were in their late teens.

In the Northern Netherlands as elsewhere in Europe, there are few personal documents or treatises that provide insight into the sexual practices of married or unmarried young peo-

ple. Baptismal, marriage and burial registers indicate that premarital sexual relations were not uncommon in the Dutch Republic, and that plenty of women were pregnant on their wedding day. According to the extensive research done by Manon van der Heijden, pre-marital sexual relations and concubine relations did exist in early modern Rotterdam and Delft and were only made known to the authorities after neighbors complained or gossiped.³² But on a greater scale, these women were still a minority in comparison to the women who gave birth to a child nine months after marriage.³³ Nevertheless, it can be presumed that the sexual practices of unmarried young people oscillated in the middle ground between the celibacy recommended by ministers and moralists and the deviant sexual behavior recorded by church councils and civil authorities, which included fornication, rape, and sodomy. Within this range, there were many alternatives for young people to channel their sexual urges that were less dire. The most likely was masturbation.

Masturbation

With the solitary act of masturbation, the historian is immediately confronted with the dichotomy of where sexuality transgressed in the early modern period, namely between the public and private spheres. In general, municipal authorities were less tolerant of sexuality that took place in the public domain than of what happened behind closed doors. This included women who were clearly prostitutes but also offensive acts like Harmen Jansz. of Delft exposing his genitals to women as they exited a church in 1613. Exhibitionism with a sexual connotation was considered an offence, whereas public nudity such as males swimming naked in canals was accepted by society.³⁴

The sexual act becomes more complicated with masturbation in the private sphere. To understand masturbation in the seventeenth century, we have to leap forward to the eighteenth century and examine a mental barrier in contemporary notions of masturbation. Since the late eighteenth century, masturbation has been a major focus in the pedagogical literature. Moralists and pedagogues warned young people about this as an evil inside oneself.³⁵ In a Latin treatise that was translated into French in 1628, Cardinal François Tolet described masturbation as

‘a very grave sin and one which is against nature: it is not permitted either for health or for life, or for whatever purpose. Therefore those Doctors who advise this act on health grounds sin grievously and those who obey them are not exempt from mortal sin.

This sin is abandoned with a great difficulty, particularly as the temptation is ever-present: therefore it is so common that I believe that the majority of the damned are tainted with this vice. I think that there is no other effective remedy but to confess often to the same Confessor, and to do so if possible three times a week’.³⁶

In the predominately Protestant Dutch Republic of the early seventeenth century, moralists did not discuss this matter on paper. In fact, autoeroticism was not mentioned in any moral treatises,

and diarists did not shed any light on the subject either. In the diary of Constantijn Huygens (1596-1687), the most revealing Dutch journal written in the seventeenth century, not a word was uttered. Huygens served as secretary to two generations of stadtholders (Frederik Hendrik and Willem II) and was an insider at the courts in The Hague and London; he reported about a wide range of promiscuities in his surroundings from whore-hopping and homosexuality to lesbian cross-dressers, but noted nothing about solitary sex.³⁷ The English diary of Samuel Pepys is more revealing. Pepys (1633-1703), a member of Parliament and chief secretary of the Admiralty under King Charles II and King James II, was well connected with the English court after the Restoration. Pepys wrote a tell-all diary that revealed that masturbation was a common part of his life. He was not ashamed of masturbating. In fact, Pepys was an avid fan of autoeroticism, an activity that he engaged in regularly – in private and in public. Pepys had a vivid imagination, and by closing his eyes he could conjure up his sexual desires, and sometimes climax, as he claimed, ‘hands-free’. His fantasy roamed wildly. While attending church one Sunday, he fantasized about a friend’s teenage daughter, and at a High Mass one Christmas Eve he became so aroused by the sight of the queen and her ladies that he masturbated with his eyes open, ‘which I never did before – and God forgive me for it, it being in chapel’. Aside from the fact it had taken place in church, Pepys showed little remorse for his autoerotic activity.³⁸ Although it is difficult to base any real conclusions on Pepys’s descriptions, we do get the impression that masturbation before the early eighteenth century was not as morally laden and guilt- and shame-riddled as it later became. One explanation for this could be that moralists did not want to instill the idea in the minds of young people. Another reason could be that autoeroticism was an integral part of daily life and considered an innocent safety valve for sexual urges until marriage. The Dutch historian of sexuality J.M.W. van Ussel postulates that in the seventeenth century masturbation was still considered an unproblematic sexual outlet for youths and adults. It was neither condemned nor considered an immoral activity but regarded ‘as a solution for functional needs’ in which the individual was not guilty.³⁹

In order to understand how ‘unproblematic’ the notion of masturbation was in the Dutch Republic during early seventeenth century, it is necessary to examine an important development that occurred a hundred years later when the English treatise *Onania; or the Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution, and All Its Frightfull Consequences* (1730) was translated into Dutch.⁴⁰ This work had been anonymously published in London around 1712 and admonished the young of both sexes, ascribing numerous medical ailments from spinal conditions to early blindness to solitary sex. The reader was maliciously led to believe that masturbation – a practice that was widespread – was ‘self-pollution’: a profanity that would trigger a whole sequence of medical ailments.⁴¹ *Onania* would not have had the impact on eighteenth-century English society (and consequently Western sexuality for the next three hundred years) if it had not been published in the era of a booming commerce in books and the heyday of quackery medicine.⁴² The repulsion towards masturbation became ingrained in the public’s psyche in the course of the eighteenth century. In Lotte van de Pol’s research on prostitution in the early modern period, no word was mentioned

in the bailiff's records in Amsterdam about masturbation or prostitutes who are asked to masturbate their clients until 1750. By the late eighteenth century, this type of sexual service was often registered by the bailiff as '*verregaande vuyligheden*' or extreme vulgarities. In 1771 one prostitute arrested in the Haagsche Bos – the wooded areas on the outskirts of The Hague – confessed that she was asked by a man '*het saad uit te schudden*' (to shake the seed out of him), which she at first refused to do because she thought it to be 'unnatural'.⁴³

There is little doubt that the effect of the translation of *Onania* in 1730 had a profound impact in the Dutch Republic. Within a few years of the first edition, it became a financial success. It was advertised in newspapers throughout the country, discussed in other books, underwent numerous reprints, and was translated for readers on the continent. In hindsight, it was one of Europe's first mass media hypes and scams. With this treatise, masturbation and onanism had become birds of the same feather instead of being two different matters: the former being autoerotism and the latter stemming from the Genesis story of Onan who, according to levirate marriage tradition, was obliged to marry Tamar, the widow of his brother Er, and to procreate in his brother's name (but not in his own). Onan, however, failed to produce offspring because he 'spilled his seed upon the ground', and the Lord struck him dead. It is uncertain whether Onan masturbated or practiced *coitus interruptus*, as onanism later became known in Catholic moral theology.⁴⁴ Not only did *Onania* create a new problem that became associated with guilt and shame, self-pollution also became closely associated with another 'unnatural' outlet of sexuality, namely sodomy. Masturbation was usually a masculine activity: a private vice done in secrecy, as was the erotic male friendship.⁴⁵ It is probably no coincidence that *Onania* was translated into Dutch in 1730 at the height of the first sodomite persecutions in the Dutch Republic (1730-1732). The rounding up of sodomites, uncovering entire networks of homosexual activities, and prosecution recurred in 1764, 1776-1779, and 1795-1798.⁴⁶

These were the sexual problems that evolved in the course of the eighteenth century and did not apply to the adolescents and young men growing up in the early seventeenth century. In the 1620s and 1630s masturbation and sodomy were not connected. However, this does not imply that moralists did not frown on masturbation because it was a sexual act that did not take place within the domain of marriage and did not lead to procreation. In *La somme des péchez et le remède d'iceux* (1601), the Franciscan theologian Jean Benedicti summarized the general attitude of most moralists regarding masturbation in a nutshell. Autoeroticism was harmful for the sexual appetite of young men and women and detrimental to society because men would not want to marry and women would not want to take a husband.⁴⁷ In his investigation of sexual deviances in English court records, William Naphy argues in *Sex Crimes from Renaissance to Enlightenment* that 'sex was everywhere in a world of over-crowded rooms and shared beds. Finally, despite the best efforts of magistrates, lawyers and theologians sex and talking about sex were very much part of life'.⁴⁸ In all likelihood, masturbation between the age of sexual maturity and marriage must have been the most conventional sexual outlet for young men in the early seventeenth century, and underscores Flandrin's argument that masturbation probably became more widespread as moral codes increasingly repressed other pre-marital sexual activities.⁴⁹

Sodomy

In comparison to masturbation, sodomy was a far graver matter and was not taken lightly. According to early modern standards, the term could refer to a wide range of sexual deviations from sex with animals (bestiality), oral and anal sex with women, sex with those who were not Christians (such as Jews) and sex with other men. The latter evolved into the eventual meaning of the term, which was probably facilitated during the Reformation when Protestants in the German lands accused the Pope and cardinals in Rome of being sodomites. Many of the reigning popes of the sixteenth century such as Julius II, Leo X, Clement VII, Paul III, Julius III, and Paul IV were suspected of engaging in sex with young men at their court. The pope and 'his sodomitical court' became a stock phrase in Protestant treatises, but many authors remained vague in how they defined the term, and sodomy remained more of a sexual innuendo than anything else.⁵⁰

In Renaissance Italy, 'sodomy was one of the many strands that composed the fabric of the male experience, one that not only grew out of established social bonds and patterns of collective life but also contributed in creative ways to fashioning and reinforcing them', as Michael Rocke concluded about male sexual behavior in Florence.⁵¹ Same-sex relations had become so commonplace in that northern Italian city in the late fifteenth century that one in two men had come to the attention of the authorities for committing sodomy by the age of thirty.⁵² The age patterns for same-sex relations in Florence and Venice were similar to those in Ancient Greece – the active mature man and a passive youth. Some scholars have ascribed this frequency of same-sex relations to the marriage pattern that differed significantly from that in northwestern Europe. Women usually married in their mid-teens while men tended to marry in their late twenties. Same-sex relations seemed to function as a sexual outlet before the conjugal marriage, and sodomy was mainly a young man's crime.⁵³

If we compare this situation with the Dutch Republic, same-sex relations cannot be ruled out, especially in a period when it was common for members of the same sex to share a bed. According to Dutch bailiff's records of the seventeenth century, there is little evidence of sodomy and same-sex relations on the massive scale seen in northern Italy during the Renaissance. According to Theo van der Meer, the few reported cases of sodomy in the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century show similarities in the pattern of a younger man or boy with an older male. Three of the six reported cases of sodomy in Middelburg between 1545 and 1655 involved adult men who were forty years or older and young men who were minors. In 1596 there were rumors in Arnhem that a schoolteacher sexually abused his pupils, and in 1620 a boatsman, Jan Symons Bossuyt of Leiden, was burned at the stake in Delft after he was accused of sodomizing various '*jonggesellen*' (youths). Unfortunately, there are no confession books for this period from the Delft archives that reveal the details of the case. Nevertheless, the incidents were reported to the authorities because the young men involved obviously did not consent, and they were not prosecuted because they were minors. The number of cases in this period remain unknown, especially in an era when it was common practice to share a bed, and often considered a social honor for an apprentice to share a bed with his master or pedagogue. In 1633 there was one complaint in Amsterdam that suggests that a master abused his apprentice in this manner.⁵⁴ In the North

American colony of New Netherland, the Dutch authorities executed a Negro slave in 1646 for sodomizing and raping a ten-year-old African boy. The guilty man was strangled and burned at the stake, while the young victim was punished by being tied to a stake and made to watch the execution. Although the court had recognized the innocence of the young boy, they still found it necessary to beat him with rods. In 1647, Harmen Meyndertz van den Bogaert – a surgeon employed by the West India Company who had earned fame for journeying into the uncharted territory of the Iroquois Indians – was accused of bugging his Negro servant, Tobias. Van den Bogaert sought refuge with the Mohawk Indians but was hunted down and brought back to Fort Orange (Albany) to await trial. He tried to escape by crossing the frozen Hudson River but broke through the ice and drowned. In the colony's third case of sodomy, a Dutch soldier was accused of sodomizing an orphan boy in his employ in 1660. He was stripped of his arms, his sword was broken, and he was tied in a sack and thrown in the river. In 1646 the colony had fewer than a thousand inhabitants. In 1664, there were anywhere between seven and nine thousand residents. During that period there were only three executions for sodomy or attempts brought to light and penalized by death. Violators paid dearly for their offense, and the authorities in these predominantly male environments were sending a clear message to the rest of the population of the colony.⁵⁵ In other male environments such as universities and on board ships, sex between men must have taken place secretly. However, as soon as their sexual activities came to light, they were condemned. On board of a Dutch East India ship sailing to the Far East, two adolescent boys (ages 11 and 16) were caught masturbating together with a soldier. All three were punished by being tied together and thrown into the open sea to drown.⁵⁶ We have to assume that the majority of same-sex encounters or relations in the early seventeenth century went undetected by the authorities and occurred in numerous forms ranging from a clandestine rendezvous to seeking anonymous sex partners in green and wooded areas that surrounded villages and cities. At night, these areas became cruising places for men of all ages who sought sexual encounters with female prostitutes and/or other men.⁵⁷ Regardless of their sexual preference, handsome, young men were wooed by peers or older men. In the early eighteenth century one man revealed how easy it was for him to earn a lot of money selling sexual favors when he was sixteen years old but how impossible it had become seventeen years later to do the same.⁵⁸

Courting activities

One of the most common forums for young men to meet and court young women in the Dutch Republic was during town and village festivities. With singing, dancing, and drinking, young men were usually less inhibited, and the barrier for finding a possible marriage or sexual partner was lowered. Since pagan times, the May Day celebration was a popular courting ritual for young people throughout Europe. For many young people it was a mating festivity for local youths to find a suitable marriage partner which started with the spring month of May.⁵⁹ According to the calendar of the pagans and antiquity, the spring season symbolized youth, just as summer did early adulthood, autumn middle age, and winter old age.⁶⁰ The return of spring and bud-

ding green leaves on the trees signified the great vitality and fertility of nature, and May Day essentially meant the renewal of life, love, and lust.⁶¹ On the British Isles for example, the anthropologist E.O. James noted a strong relationship between the ancient tree-related traditions of the British and the Romans. According to James, youths in ancient Europe cut down a tree and lopped off the branches, leaving a few at the top. They then wrapped it round with violets like the figure of the ancient Roman god Attis. At sunrise, the tree would be paraded in procession through their villages by blowing horns and flutes. The ritual was fairly similar to the tradition in ancient Roman times when a sacred pine tree that represented the god Attis was carried in procession to the temple of Cybele on Rome's Palatine Hill during the Spring Festival of March 22nd. In early modern England youths traditionally organized events on May Day to display their competitiveness, which sometimes included dangerous sports and games. These events were a forum for young men to display physical prowess and to show off their masculinity to the young women who watched.⁶² In the Northern and Southern Netherlands it was common to celebrate the advent of the first of May by decorating houses and streets with the branches of young budding trees. Young men played a special role in the May Day or the maypole celebration, as it was known in many parts of Europe, because they divvied up the marriageable young women. The ritual was also a manifestation of their social control over the sexuality of young women in the village.⁶³ Jacob Cats portrayed the maypole celebration in his bestselling book, *Spiegel van den Ouden en den Nieuwen Tijd* (1632), as a festivity of young people, but also as a celebration in which everyone joined in the merrymaking. The festivities around Cats's maypole are portrayed more as a vanity that adults also participated in.⁶⁴ In rural societies on the eve of May Day, young men would mark the houses of available young women in the village by decorating them with a branch, which symbolized the moral virtue of the young women in question. A green birch branch indicated that an attractive young woman lived there, a dry oak branch symbolized a woman of loose morals, a cherry branch meant that the woman had many lovers, and a branch of thorns signified that the woman had an irritable character. Besides decorating houses and streets with branches and occasionally planting saplings in the middle of the roadways or in public spaces such as in front of the town hall, the May Day celebration was a festivity where young men and women would meet, drink, and dance. This usually took place either under or near a May Day tree taken from a nearby farm or forest and decorated in a central place in the town where local youths could congregate. These festivities, which were noisy and rambunctious, lasted far into the night and disturbed the peace for local residents. Especially in the new republic, Protestant municipal authorities tried to maintain law and order, and curbed traditional pagan and Catholic festivities by issuing numerous decrees that prohibited young people from participating in such activities. In the town of Bergen op Zoom located in the predominantly Catholic province of Brabant, the Protestant magistrate was especially keen on restricting papal rituals from taking place as they regarded themselves to be on a frontier town surrounded by Catholics. In 1591 they passed an ordinance which prohibited young people from dancing and partying in the streets. The ordinances did not stipulate young people in particular, but they were the targeted group by definition. In 1597 the council again issued a decree that outlawed decorating with flower garlands

or dancing near them. They also outlawed the planting of May saplings and May dancing rituals. In 1612 Bergen's magistrate again issued a decree that this time banned military men and civilians from scavenging local orchards, gardens, and forests for trees to be used in the May Day celebration as well as stealing branches to use for decoration.⁶⁵ In the town of Breda, as in other towns in the Republic, municipal councils continued to issue decrees banning the planting of May trees and any other festive activities related to the holiday. Despite the regulation, the festivity continued to be celebrated by young people until late in the twentieth century.⁶⁶

Courting events

According to Lucas Rotgans's portrayal of the rural fair *Boere-kermis* dating from 1708, the kermis was the social event of the year for young men and women of the agrarian communities.

The country youth parade dressed up and walk hand in hand ...
The young men who are apprentices
Escort their girlfriends, neatly dressed and adorned
With their knee-length pants tied with ribbons
Collars at the neck decorated with two pair of silver buttons
The shirt ironed and half open
Sleeves decorated with passement ...
*The young peasant lad is cleanly shaven and whiskerless ...*⁶⁷

In the engravings of Adriaen van de Venne's *Tafereel van de Belacchende-werelt* (1635), the courting activities of young men and women at the kermis of The Hague were little different – with the exception of clothing style – in the 1700s than what they had been in the 1630s. The annual kermis was unofficially nothing short of a meat market where young men and women competed for the attention of the opposite sex. Trying to gain the affections of young men who were popular among the ladies could sometimes turn into catfights with scratching and hairpulling.⁶⁸ Originally, the kermis had been an annual mass to dedicate the church. Each village and city held an annual kermis, which was frequented by all social groups and ages. By the early seventeenth century the kermis was deeply embedded in the social culture. Because it was accompanied by an annual trade fair, the kermis survived banishment by the Dutch Reformed Church for its Roman Catholic tradition, and consequently became the social event of the year. The event had specific days for certain social groups. Thursday, for example, the kermis at The Hague was attended by the middle class, the elite, and the court of the stadtholders, while the higher echelons avoided the kermis on Tuesday and Wednesday when the horse and cheese markets were held, respectively. On those days farmers and peasants flocked to the kermis. It was a combination of market and place of amusement. There was a potpourri of merchants with market stands, caged exotic animals, disfigured people, entertainers such as musicians, cord dancers, acrobats, magicians and healers selling herbal medicines and remedies.

Most importantly for the youth, the kermis was an ideal venue for them to dress in their best outfits and meet others from the surrounding vicinity.⁶⁹ Sometimes the high concentration of young people from the countryside in confined environs in combination with too much alcohol consumption erupted into violent scenes of fistfighting, especially when girls would flirt with young men from another town or village. On a subliminal level, the masculinity exhibited in public also played an important role in attracting women. Drunkenness among young men was a common complaint about the kermis, which often ended in immoral behavior. The fighting could lead to young men getting physically wounded. Among rural youths a scarred face obtained from a fight was often a token of manliness and could be sexually appealing to young women.⁷⁰ According to a description from a local kermis in a conservative Protestant community in Zeeland, it sometimes degenerated into 'Sodom and Gomorra' scenes with prostitution and other immoral acts. Young men like apprentices were especially apt to get drunk and indulge in pleasures of the flesh.⁷¹ For the impoverished laborers working in Leiden's textile industry, the kermis was the only recreation in their dreary lives, and often a place where unmarried workers could meet and find sex partners. Although no research has been done on this, it would not be surprising if the number of births increased nine months after the local kermis.⁷²

However, not every kermis climaxed in violent mayhem. For innocent young men, it remained the only place to meet and flirt with young women. In order to break the ice, specific rituals helped young men and women come into contact with each other. For example, according to an eighteenth-century engraving, it was common practice at the Amsterdam kermis for a young woman to be offered one of the popular *taai-taai* or *speculaas* cookies by a young man who stood near a cookie stand. If the young woman accepted the cookie, it meant she would accompany him to the inn and go for a dance or drink in a tavern, nothing more and nothing less.⁷³

During the Middle Ages and early modern period, one of the most widely accepted forms of sexual outlets for young people in rural communities was nightwalking. The activity occurred at night and under the auspices of the youths from the village. Minister Den Heussen, for example, complained about the 'nightwalking' of the young people of the Dutch island of Vlieland.⁷⁴ On the islands off the coast of North Holland and Friesland, nightwalking remained a common ritual of young people until the late eighteenth century. On the island of Texel, this tradition was known as '*kweesten*' and entailed that a young woman would leave her bedroom window open at night so her lover could enter and spend the night with her. The young man would sleep with his clothes on and lie with his body on top of the covers. Although we have no records of what took place, most likely their activities could have included everything from heavy petting to mutual masturbation, but no coital penetration. If a young man went too far and became frisky with the girl (i.e. such as demanding penetration), she would bang a kettle that would alarm family and neighbors. By doing so, she protected her honor, which was especially important if she hoped to have other prospective beaux. In rural societies like Texel, the rituals concerning marriage were done collectively, which meant that the group kept a watchful eye on the courting practices of the individual couples within the group. On the former island of Marken, it was a common ritual

for young people to go outside in the evening and meet in a large group. After nightfall, young couples would retreat to boats so they could be alone. This was known as the exchange phase (*beurzen*) where a couple got to know each other, and probably only kissed, cuddled, and hugged. After a few years of *beurzen*, they would be considered a couple, and the young man would be allowed to spend the night at the girl's house. This too remained under the scrutiny of the local youth group, which had the right to enter the house of a girl, and if they should find the young man engaging with her without having first gone through the *beurzen* phase, they were known to drag these young men out and place them on a cart where they would be publicly humiliated.⁷⁵

In the countryside and in urban areas, the night belonged to young people. By the day's end, young men would congregate to chat, drink, play cards, and flirt. However, the combination of young people, alcohol, and no supervision was often a recipe for havoc. After sunset, many early modern European cities turned into a Sodom and Gomorrah. At night, they were overrun by prostitutes, thieves, and people engaging in criminal activity, in which young people were active participants. Without the social controls of *beurzen* and *kweetsen* which country youths had, the night for urban youths before streetlighting was an unsupervised domain that allowed them to engage in sexual activity.⁷⁶

Courting space

The nocturnal clashes between urban authorities and young immigrant populations accelerated in the cities of the Northern Netherlands after the outbreak of the Eighty Years' War in the late sixteenth century and continued into the seventeenth century. Haarlem's dominant immigrant population from the Southern Netherlands caused much disturbance at night. The young people from the south were well known for their extravagant drinking and dancing festivities that lasted until the early hours of the morning. According to Gillis Quintijn's moralistic treatise, *De Hollandsche-Lijs met de Brabandsche Belij* [Holland's Tortoise with Brabant's Greenhorn] (1629), at dawn crowds of young people caroused through the streets of Haarlem, turning over flower-boxes, hanging cats by their tails, ringing doorbells, and disturbing the sleeping public. In due course the young people headed towards the nearby dunes where they frolicked in the water. As Quintijn's account developed, the innocent fun of Haarlem's youth turned into foreplay: young couples retreated to the dunes where they fornicated.⁷⁷

In a nutshell, Quintijn's depiction of Haarlem's youth is a paradigm of the social tension in Dutch cities during the early seventeenth century caused by the clash of cultures between the Northern Netherlands and the Southern Netherlands, between urban and rural, and between young and old. At this crossroads, the nocturnal activities of Haarlem's immigrant youths were an old variation of rural youth culture that was slowly transforming. Their behavior had become a serious law-and-order issue which city authorities took action to suppress. Consequently, in the early decades of the seventeenth century, young people in urban environments changed the courting rituals and sexual outlets, and developed new ones.⁷⁸



Illustration 20 Adriaen van de Venne, 'Dancing Youths at a Neighborhood Party' in G. Quintijn, *De Hollandsche-Lijs met de Brabandsche Belij* (1629)

In this realm, youth culture and manifestations of masculinity evolved in the urban areas of the Dutch Republic. Tighter regulation by municipal authorities and parenting that was centered around the nuclear family transformed collective-style socialization practices such as maypole celebrations and nightwalkings. In cities, the upper- and middle-class youths courted in organized gatherings that occurred in the daytime. They met at organized garden parties where they ate and drank, played music, and sang songs together. In this new social setting young men learned how to associate with women in a civilized fashion.⁷⁹

Premarital chastity

Despite understanding the natural urge for youths to want to have sex, the physician Johan van Beverwijck warned from a medical perspective in *Schat der Gesondheyt* [The Treasure of Health] (1636) that youths between the ages of 14 and 21 should not fornicate. According to the prevailing assumptions of humoral balance, the sexual act would cause a youth's body to become weakened, cold, dry, and numb. Sexual intercourse for young men would disturb the body's intricate humoral balance and ultimately damage the body for the rest of their lives.⁸⁰ Van Beverwijck's friend, Jacob Cats, approached pre-marital sex from a different standpoint. At the time, Cats was one of the most influential moralists who provided young men in the 1620s and 1630s with advice about sexuality. Cats, or 'Father Cats' as he was known, was the best-selling author of the

seventeenth century and continued to be widely read in the eighteenth century. In his popular emblem book *Spiegel van de Oude en Nieuwe tijdt* [Mirror of Old and New Times] (1632), he addressed contemporary issues about the sexuality of young unmarried people, namely young men. Instead of treating sexuality in the vulgarized fashion that boys and youths must have heard on the streets and in the taverns, Cats addressed the facts of life in a didactic and civilized manner. The medium of using an emblem book worked in a complementary fashion. His written advice was accompanied by an engraving that illustrated his guidance. In the first chapter Cats advised young people about the importance of finding a suitable marriage partner in what he called ‘*Eerlijcke vrijage*’ (sincere courtship). He suggested that there was a clear distinction between ‘fooling around’ with women and looking for a suitable partner for marriage. Cats understood that it is difficult for young men to find a suitable marriage partner and that the task might take some patience.

The next section of *Spiegel* addressed what happens when young men have a lack of patience and cannot curb their sexual desires. In the section entitled ‘*Hoeren, ende ongemacken van de selve herkomende*’ [Whores and the Discomforts that Originate from Them], Cats warned young men about the diseases they might be contaminated with by visiting prostitutes. The first engraving *Een rupse op een kool, een hoer in een huys* (A Caterpillar on a Cabbage Is Like a Whore in a House), is a metaphor. The text is accompanied by an illustration of an elderly man strolling alongside a young man in a vegetable garden who points towards a ruined head of cabbage.

The cabbage is swarming with caterpillars. Cats explained to the young man that going to women of ill repute is similar to the half-eaten head of cabbage. The message is twofold. Firstly, young men, just like caterpillars, cannot temper their lust and will only want more, and secondly, they would also ruin themselves and become infected with the most dreaded venereal disease of that era. His caterpillar on a cabbage was a seventeenth-century metaphor for a far greater social malice. In all likelihood, the half-eaten spots on a head of cabbage symbolized the pockmarked face of a young man who suffered from syphilis.⁸¹ Besides blemished genitals, it was common knowledge that victims of syphilis could easily be recognized in public by their scarred faces, perforated noses, hair loss, missing teeth, and paralyzed legs. Not only could their physical appearance be horrifying in advanced cases, but also the suggestion of having the disease or being related to someone who did could ruin the reputation of any young person. According to the Danish historian Johannes Fabricius, the social stigmatization and social implications of syphilis in the early modern period were similar to those who suffered from AIDS in the 1980s.⁸² In seventeenth-century England, for example, the poor who were infected with syphilis were ostracized and condemned to ‘foul houses’ where they were treated. The wealthy, on the contrary, were able to conceal their disease from public humiliation by visiting doctors who advertised discretion and treated patients in rural areas. Some doctors even offered visiting hours at night and had backdoor entrances to minimize the chance of being recognized. In 1664 when Samuel Pepys’s brother Thomas died under suspicion of having syphilis, Pepys not only checked the genitals of his deceased brother for pockmarks but also threatened his brother’s doctor if he dared breathe a word of the dreaded disease.⁸³



Illustration 21 Adriaen van de Venne, 'A caterpillar on a cabbage is like a whore in a house' in: J. Cats, *Spiegel van de oude en nieuwe tijdt* (1632)

If Cats only alluded to syphilis with a metaphor of a half-eaten head of cabbage, in the next emblem he clearly warned young men about becoming infected by prostitutes with this feared malady. In the section entitled '*Hoeren en slimme streken van de selve*' [Whores and Clever Tricks of the Same], the illustration portrays an attractive woman offering a young man a pan of burning coals. The burning coal symbolizes a man's inflamed sexual desire. In the text Cats explains to young men that although a woman might be offering a *geschenck* (gift), beneath the surface, a young man might wind up with something he does not want: '*U kool doet als haer vrou, sy brant, of sy besmet*' (Your coal is just as the woman, she burns or she infects).⁸⁴

There was a good reason for this warning. Among the male population in early modern Europe, single young men such as apprentices, students, sailors, and soldiers were a high-risk group for syphilis. The venereal disease was by far the most dreaded of the era, and its victims were not only young and in the prime of life but also mobile. Geographically, this group traveled more between towns and villages of Europe and the world than older people did.⁸⁵

For soldiers, syphilis was the most common disease in the early modern period. Although we do not have any statistics of how rampant the venereal disease was in the early modern period, the French philosopher Voltaire estimated in the eighteenth century that approximately two-thirds of the soldiers were infected with the malady. Based on a *guestimate* like that, soldiers during the Eighty Years' War were more likely to have been a victim of syphilis than wounded by gunshot or a cannon. The Spanish tried to curb the spread of the venereal disease by importing

healthy prostitutes by the thousands. In the sources, the States-General, the law-making body for the union of the states of the Republic, recorded little about syphilis except that it was a ‘filthy disease caused by carnal intercourse with such persons, or women who openly and without shame rent their bodies’. In practice, there were approximately three to eight prostitutes for each infantry company, and at the battle of ‘s-Hertogenbosch in 1629, the Republic’s army consisted of 28,000 military men with about 200 prostitutes in the near vicinity. One way of being cured of the dreaded disease was to be admitted to a hospital where a *pokmeester* or ‘pox healer’ administered a laxative, followed by daily steam baths, and drinking a mixture made from the wood of the Guajak tree which was imported from South America.⁸⁶ As sufferers of syphilis in the Dutch Republic were often removed from the densely populated inner cities and relocated to facilities on the outskirts of town – the *Pesthuis* [Plague House] – where they were treated together with smallpox patients, it is difficult to determine how widespread the disease in the Republic actually was. In this regard, smallpox and syphilis were blurred together.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, the contemporary literature reveals that syphilis was a known danger for university students and university personnel. In 1598 Leiden’s university senate discharged Pieter Bailly, the macebearer of the university, after he had taken students to *oneerlycke huysen* (brothels) where they not only squandered money that was intended for their education but also endangered their health.⁸⁸ In all-male environments including universities, it has to be assumed that visiting brothels and soliciting prostitutes were commonplace. In the satirical story *Satyricon in corruptae iuventutis mores corruptos* (1631), Leiden’s ethics professor, Jan Bodecher Benning, described how a young student loses his virginity while visiting a brothel in a nearby village fictitiously named Dorpigra. Benning changed the names and places, but for the readers it was clear that the town of Dorpigra was Leiderdorp, which was on the outskirts of Leiden. Just as the students criticized Benning for his accusation of excessive drinking in the same satire, one student argued that in order for him to write with such accuracy about brothels, Benning must have been a visitor there himself. Nevertheless, the student sarcastically referred Benning to Kaspar Barthius’s 1624 Latin translation of *La Celestina* (1499), which was given the Latin title *Pornoboscodidascalus* [Teacher of the Brothel Master], to improve his jargon.⁸⁹ For many students, womanizing was more important than the scholarly aspects of an academic education. In the popular student albums where verses and drawings were inscribed, R. Schatton wrote to Johan van Mathenesse about how the thought of a woman’s bottom will get a young man out of bed more than the sound of twenty-five church bells ringing:

*Laat de lide seggen wat sie willen
 Ick seg dat twee wackere Juffren billen,
 Meer jonggesellen komen locken
 Als vijffentwintich kosters mit haer locken’.*

(Let people say what they will,
 I say that a nice woman’s buttocks
 Awakens more young men
 Than the sound of twenty-five bell-ringers’.)⁹⁰

Sex was on the mind of students, especially Jacobus van Dorselaer from Amsterdam, a theology student enrolled in the University of Leiden. At Leiden, he was expelled for writing scandalous comedies and songs (one which was entitled 'De radslag der Goden' [The Cartwheel of the Gods]). Afterwards the 25-year-old enrolled at the University of Groningen as a student of medicine, where he was accused of writing risqué songs and passing them out to other students. But this time he made scandalous references to Susanna van Bloys van Treslong, daughter of the Republic's heralded admiral, Willem Bloys van Treslong, and wife of Cornelis Pijnacker (1570-1645), who was a law professor at the University of Groningen. The latter did not take the insult to his wife lightly. Pijnacker had been a professor in Leiden between 1611 and 1614 and probably played a role in getting Dorselaer expelled, and now thought he would teach the young Dorselaer a lesson and tried to obstruct him from obtaining his doctor's degree. After a long drawn-out procedure of interrogations, Jacobus's elder brother, Abraham van Dorselaer (1579-1655), the well-known reformed minister from Enkhuizen, intervened on his behalf, and Dorselaer was allowed to receive his degree.⁹¹

Moralists were aware that young men were preoccupied with sex. That was the reason why Kaspar Barth translated the Spanish comedy *La Celestina* (1599) into the scholarly language of Latin, which was primarily read by students. *Pornoboscodidascalus* (1624) was intended as a didactic work to educate young students while studying abroad, especially Protestant German students, about the seductive tactics of prostitutes. Barth argues in his prologue: 'I chose to translate this play because it contains much-needed lessons on how to lead a cautious life for our young people, who are so prone to sinful pleasures. I also chose this brief play because it is sprinkled with many important sayings that are applicable to daily life. He who remembers and learns to apply them as rules for life – especially if he lives away from his homeland – will establish an excellent reputation among all judicious men'.⁹² According to Barth, prostitutes were women who did not coax young men with love but only with pleasures of the flesh. They knew how to inflame a young man's desires and make them fall in love with her, and in the end, a young man will abandon his honor.⁹³

The student seduced by a prostitute was a popular theme. Whereas the elder Crispijn de Passe warned youths about drinking and recreational activities in his *Academia* in 1612, his son Crispijn de Passe – the younger – went one step further. In *Spieghel der alder-schoonste Cortisanen des Tijts* [The Looking Glass of the Fairest Courtiers of These Times] (1631), the younger De Passe warned young men and youths about the dangers of visiting prostitutes and brothels. The engraving on the title page illustrates two young men visiting a brothel. As one young man sits with a pipe in his hand near the fireplace and is shown portraits of potential ladies by the brothel's madame, the roaring flame in the fireplace is an allegory for his burning desire and the long-stemmed pipe was often a metaphor for an erection.

If young audiences were excited at this stage, De Passe immediately cooled their libido in the introduction where he warned them about the beauty of women and how attractively they can be dressed (disguised!) to seduce young men into a life of lechery. The book proper begins with a series of dialogues and illustrations of numerous attractive young women. The ladies of the



Illustration 22 Crispijn de Passe, 'Young Man in a Brothel' in: *Spiegel der alder-schoonste Cortisanen des Tijts* (1631)

evening are from France, Italy, England, Germany, Bohemia, and East Prussia. It is not surprising that the majority of them are foreign and from countries that a student might visit on the grand tour. According to the dialogue of one of the courtesans named Anna Maria from Strasbourg, she states that before becoming a prostitute, she was known for her beauty in her home of Strasbourg. However, a young student had seduced her and ruined her honor. In many cases young women were forced into a life of prostitution by their mother or another family member. In the dialogue with Margo la Belle Gantiere, she explains that she was only 16 years old when she lost her virginity and honor after her mother had sold her for sexual services. Many of the dialogues include stories of how young women entered their profession, but the moral message is that young men should be chaste and think about the consequences of premarital sex.

The moral advice in such works was a ploy for authors to protect themselves from being accused of publishing immoral books. With the exception of Johannes Torrentius's graphic print of a couple engaged in sexual intercourse (with a man's penis visible to the viewer), there are no known pornographic-like prints from the early seventeenth century.⁹⁴ Crispijn de Passe's *Spiegel der alder-schoonste Cortisanen des Tijts* does, however, feature titillating illustrations of bare-breasted young girls.⁹⁵

De Passe did address issues of daily life. Temptations of the flesh loomed on every street corner. In industry towns such as Leiden, there were numerous prostitutes. Susanne Jans, for example, was a seamstress by day and prostitute by night. At least that is what was recorded in the



Illustration 23 'One of the available women at the brothel' in: Crispijn de Passe, 'La Belle Zavonnare Courtisan' in: *Spieghel der alder-schoonste Cortisanen des Tijts* (1631)

bailiff's report when she was arrested in July 1626. Susanne, who was originally from Groningen, probably supplemented her meager income working in the linen industry by selling sexual pleasures in the evening.⁹⁶ Some of the neighborhoods in Leiden such as *Vreugdenrijk* [Kingdom of Joy] and *Het Belofte Land* [The Promised Land] were located near academic buildings and were notorious for street prostitution.⁹⁷

Any feelings of lust that might have been aroused in De Passe's young audience were quickly dampened by Cats's advice about visiting prostitutes. His emblem *De katte die veel snoepen wilt, wort licht eens op de neus geknilt* [The cat that eats (=womanizes) too much, will be caught by the nose] was a direct warning to young men about the risk of contracting syphilis by visiting prostitutes when traveling abroad. The word 'nose' in the title most likely alluded to the punctured nose, the characteristic symptom of syphilis victims in an advanced state of the disease. Cats's text describes the story of a young man who returns from a journey at sea. The fellow is no longer recognizable: he has lost his hair, his nose is perforated, his lips are colorless, his eyes tear, his teeth have fallen out, his mouth stinks, his hands are covered with blue pockmarks, and his legs can no longer move. The young man contemplates that his youth has vanished and that his suffering is a deserved plague. Cats concludes:

*De kadt die overal den myyl in steken wilt,
Wort op het lest betrafft, en op den neus geknilt*

(The cat that sticks its mouth in everything,
winds up getting punished and caught by its nose.)⁹⁸

With the emblem portraying an attractive woman holding a lamp at night while walking in a remote area outside the city, Cats explained how easily young men can be misled by the beauty of a young woman. Although she might have a pretty face, rosy cheeks, beautiful hair, and be a good conversationalist, she is still a woman who will not commit herself to one man, and who has no shame. She is a whore, and her beauty is tarnished. In this emblem, the text clarifies what is portrayed in the illustration; however, the image is probably a metaphor for the women of the night who were usually prostitutes. At night, the lantern partially illuminates the face of the young woman; thus, a young man only sees the superficial splendor of the woman and not her moral beauty.⁹⁹

In the next emblem Cats's advice is not couched in a metaphor but is based on a real-life situation, one that young men could easily relate to. In the illustration, a woman is shown sitting on the lap of a young man and caressing his face. The young man's sexual desire for the woman is symbolized by a roaring fire in the hearth in front of the couple. The accompanying text reads:

*Ick was eens gestreelt, gekust
en ick swom in volle lust,
Want men boodt my hooger gunst ...
Alsser oyt een echte man
Van sijn wijf geworden kan.*

(I was once caressed and kissed
And I was burning with lust,
Because I was offered ... greater favors,
than any man could
ever get from his own woman.)¹⁰⁰

The bottom line is that sexual desire is fleeting. Cats emphasizes that after having been to bed with a prostitute and having paid her, a young man will be tossed out on to the street and be replaced by the next paying customer. Afterwards, he will only feel hopeless and be poorer. By making young men aware of the feelings of emptiness they will have after having been to bed with a prostitute, Cats advised them to suppress their carnal urges:

*Vrienden, wat ick bidden magh
Wort toch wijs uyt mijn beklagh,
Let niet op de geyle lust,
Want haer vyer is haest geblust,*

*Maer denck om het ongeval
Dat vry langer dueren sal.*

(Friends, how I do pray
Please listen to my complaint
Don't yield to your horniness
It will only be quenching
Think of the mishap
and how its effects will last longer than your lust.)¹⁰¹

Again in this text, Cats emphasizes the fleeting gratification of going to prostitutes and points out the danger of becoming infected with syphilis. After reading Cats, young men in general must have been less eager to go to bed with lewd women and probably petrified of contracting syphilis. Cats hoped that his young readers would choose premarital chastity and avoid seeking the company of lurid women because they could not offer stable support and a good reputation, and moreover endangered their life with a horrendous disease. In order for a young man to become an adult and a respectable burgher, Cats encouraged them to look for a proper marriage partner because, ultimately, that was what it was all about. In his popular book *Houwelijck* [Marriage] (1625) that was published seven years before *Spiegel*, he had already relayed good advice for finding a suitable marriage partner: *niemand koopt edelstenen bij nacht, zoekt dus geen meisje bij kaarslicht* (nobody buys jewels at night, hence don't look for a girl by candlelight). The quintessence of the proverb is clear for young men. Although the proverb is a metaphor, Cats also underlines the new courting rituals of young people in the cities of the Republic, which occurred in the daytime and no longer at night as in rural societies. What a young man found after dark would only be one of the riff-raff such as thieves and prostitutes that overrun the cities at day's end. In this realm the day was not only the preferred physical time to find a suitable partner, but the moral one as well.¹⁰²

Engaging in premarital sex was more of a risk for unmarried women. In an era with no reliable birth control, women who opted to have sexual relations with men were left to their own devices with herbs that were either taken orally or applied like tampons. Early modern women could try to abort unwanted pregnancies by beatings, tight-lacing their garments, and using herbal concoctions.¹⁰³ Some potions made from rye infested with the fungus ergot or from juniper, which was a common garden plant, were known remedies to induce abortions. The English physician Nicolas Culpeper (1616–1656) forewarned pregnant women about the 'manifest danger' of consuming the plant.¹⁰⁴ No doubt Cats recognized the jeopardy that young women put themselves in when engaging in premarital sex. This is probably why Cats also addressed his advice of restraint to young women. In *Spiegel* he advised young women about this matter with an emblem of a pig decorated with an expensive golden ring in its nose.

In the accompanying dialogue-like text, Cats states that the ring made of gold is worthier in the ears of a young girl or a virgin bride. A whore – who is included in Cats' dialogue – is offended and interrupts him. Finally, the prostitute warns young women not to throw the gold of youth into the muck, and young women should not waste their virginity before marriage.¹⁰⁵

In the early modern period, the long period of abstinence for young men was not always matter of fact. Early modern society turned a blind eye to the sexual promiscuities of some young men because of their young age. For students who studied away from home, there was little social control. Consequently, self-restraint was not always observed. According to the Academic Vierschaar of Leiden University, students had intimate relations with women from the city's lower social echelons. Relations between students and poor women usually never resulted in marriage due to the social and economic disparity between the two, but that did not stop students from promising marriage to a girl from such a background in anticipating that she sleep with him. These promises, however, were not without consequence. In April 1625, Neeltje Jorisdochter filed a paternity suit against Jacob Porret, a 29-year-old medicine student at the University of Leiden. She demanded Porret marry her daughter Marijtje or pay 1100 guilders for the loss of her daughter's honor, costs for the midwife, and alimony for her daughter's baby, who bore Porret's name. The Academic Vierschaar deemed the amount to be too high and only awarded her 200 guilders for the 'deflowering' of her daughter, the incurred midwife expenses, and 60 guilders a year alimony for the child.¹⁰⁶ In Groningen, Johannes Goldbach, the 20-year-old son of the well-known German Lutheran minister, Daniel Goldbach from Ratingen, became involved in a precarious situation when he promised to marry the widow Anneken Babelers. The young student and Anneken pre-registered with the municipality on December 22, 1632, which was a legal intent to marry within four to six weeks.¹⁰⁷ With the public promise of marriage, many women felt assured and were more willing to engage in intercourse with their future husbands. Consequently, many young men thought this was a good ploy to get a woman to sleep with them. That was the case for Johannes and his future bride Anneken. However, by the time it came to exchange marital vows, Goldbach fled the city and returned home to Ratingen in the Duchy of Berg in Germany. The public humiliation for Anneken Babelers must have been devastating. In March 1633 she petitioned the academic senate to have Goldbach return to Groningen and answer for breaching his marital promise, or otherwise allow for her to be treated as a widow and dress in black. To enforce her case, she claimed that the couple had slept together.¹⁰⁸ In the next two and a half months letters were exchanged between the university senate and Goldbach senior and junior and Johannes's brother, who was in Groningen and represented him on his behalf. The ordeal must have been a disgrace to the Goldbach family. Daniel Goldbach's own reputation was at stake, especially during the upheaval of the Thirty Years' War when the Duchy of Berg had passed to the Count of Palatine who had converted to Catholicism; his Protestant congregation had become a persecuted minority.¹⁰⁹ In Berg, the news about Anneken Babelers's claims of engagement to Goldbach's son and their fornication would have traveled quickly in the Protestant communities and would have shamed the minister and his family. In the end, Father Goldbach persuaded his son to marry her, and not long afterwards, Anneken Babelers traveled to Ratingen where the couple was united in matrimony. They later had five children who reached adulthood, and Johannes followed in his father's footsteps as a member of the clergy and became minister of the Lutheran Church of Wülfrath. Their children and grandchildren became a dynasty of ministers in the area.¹¹⁰

Johannes Goldbach's vow of marriage was not only an embarrassment to his family but also for the university senate, as the academic body was expected to be a *loco parentis* and keep students away from such situations. In order to protect students from making the same mistake, the senate declared that all requests for marriages had to be approved by the university senate.¹¹² Thus, early modern Dutch universities allocated themselves a protective role for students when it came to choice of marriage partners.

Sexual deviance abroad

After students graduated from a university, some crowned their education with a grand tour of Europe, which could last from six weeks to two years abroad. These long sojourns to France, England, Italy, and Switzerland gave young men much more leeway than they had at home or at the university, where, a governor or elder family member might have been looking out for them. While abroad, their sexuality could have free reign. The primary motive for such a trip was education in the broader meaning of the word. It could include earning a degree from a foreign university and learning the culture and customs of the country, attending dance and riding schools in order to learn good posture and etiquette, and developing the skills of a 'gentleman'.¹¹³ According to Thomas Erpenius's travel guide, *De Peregrinatione Gallica Utiliter Instituenda tractatus* (1631), students were given recommendations about what to read while on the grand tour. The guide advised about the languages they should learn, what to read about religion, history, and literature, and which scholars young men should meet while abroad.¹¹³ Once they had experienced the civilized customs of Paris, viewed the relics from Antiquity in Rome, and seen the beauties of the Renaissance in Florence and Padua, their formal education was finished. The grand tour was regarded as the last stage before adulthood, and any sexual escapades that young men might have had during their university period and travels abroad were accepted as the follies of youth. In the Protestant-dominated Republic, Catholic countries including France and Italy had a reputation for loose sexual mores and immoral women. The French called syphilis the 'Disease of Naples', and ironically the Italians and Neapolitans referred to it as the 'French disease'. The Portuguese called it the 'Castilian disease,' and in Portuguese India it was known as the 'Portuguese disease'. In the psyche of each country, the disease originated in a distant land where the sexual norms were believed to be less virtuous than those practiced at home.¹¹⁴ The fact that young men were promiscuous during the grand tour was a public secret and accepted fact. This folly was tolerated as long as a young man practiced discretion. However, when that code was breached and the sexual escapades that young men had abroad became public knowledge, the family name and reputation were at risk. Although there are no examples of exceptional cases of wayward young men during the 1620s and 1630s, there is one case from the 1640s that is quite revealing. When the 22-year-old son of the Lord of Clootwijk, Matthijs van Merwede, visited Rome in 1647, he was expected to admire the beautiful paintings and sculptures, as well as learn about the Italians and Italian culture.

Little did his parents know that Van Merwede was also a great admirer of Italian wom-

en.¹¹⁵ When he returned home in 1651, Van Merwede published an account of his erotic adventures in two poetry books, *Uyt-beemsen oorlog ofte Roomse min-triumfen* [Foreign War, or Roman Love Conquests] (1651) and *Geestelyke minnevlammen* [Spiritual Love Affairs] (1653). Van Merwede revealed intimate details of his Italian sexual conquests. His poetry alluded to many young Italian women with whom he had fornicated. In the book's introduction, Van Merwede clearly stated that he never intended to marry foreign women, merely use them 'recreationally'.¹¹⁶ His poetry which referred to *verwaende pop* (prostitutes) and *heeten kerkgang* (syphilis) left little to the imagination on how he spent his time in Italy. From the physical descriptions we know of Van Merwede with his blue eyes and blond hair, his Nordic features were probably popular among the dark-haired Italian women. The parents of his last romantic conquest had to put their daughter in a convent because their daughter's reputation was tarnished by her sexual escapade with Van Merwede, and consequently she had forfeited her chances of finding a suitable marriage partner.¹¹⁷ According to one unverified source, one of Van Merwede's sexual escapades was with a 12-year-old girl, which might have happened after he contracted syphilis; based on his doctor's recommendation, he was advised only to have sex with virgins.¹¹⁸

The publication of Van Merwede's first book unleashed a flood of criticism due to its immoral content. Van Merwede was forced to leave The Hague, where he resided at the time. Booksellers were fined 25 guilders if they sold Van Merwede's work. Jacob Cats condemned Van Merwede's book for its corrupting nature and stated that he had gone too far by flaunting his behavior.¹¹⁹ Van Merwede had clearly broken the 'gentlemen's agreement' of discretion, which was practiced by young men of the elite in general.¹²⁰

Promiscuous sexual behavior in other social echelons of Dutch society was also accepted while young men were abroad. Throughout the early modern period there are numerous examples that sexual deviance while abroad was a tolerated phenomenon. Young apprentice craftsmen in the late eighteenth century also deemed a visit and prolonged stay abroad to be the icing on the cake of their professional education. During the Batavian period (1796-1801), for example, more than 48 tailors, 26 furniture makers, 22 jewelers/goldsmiths, 20 shoemakers, 10 chefs, and 7 carpenters traveled to Paris to become further educated in the latest French fashion. While in Paris these young men often resided in the same district of the city, in the same homes, and formed associations, which had specific initiation rites. These groups of young men undoubtedly visited the city's brothels and prostitutes in adjoining neighborhoods. Despite dwelling in residents with a 'house mother' who kept an eye on them, once a young man ventured out into the street there was little these women could do.¹²¹ At home, the age of youth and the social acceptance of the follies of youth with its excessive drinking and sexual experimentation were officially over. The sons of the elite were considered adult, and had to accept a position in their father's business or political office. Within a year of return, young men usually married or followed in the occupational footsteps of their father.¹²²

Conclusion

In the urbanized Dutch Republic during the 1620s and 1630s, a significant transition occurred in the courting rituals and expression of sexuality for young men. In cities, rural youths from the lower echelons who were traditionally raised in the collective domain were expected to be educated and socialized in the new domain of the nuclear family and under the restraints of civic law and order. Whereas the sexuality of young men in rural society was regulated by the youths themselves, in the civic realm of Dutch cities, the sexuality of young men was governed more by education and internal channeling of lust. Young men, especially from the higher echelons of society, were educated by moralistic treatises that advised them about the dangers of unrestrained sexuality, and argued for the rationale of chastity before marriage. For young men in the early seventeenth century, there was not a wide margin for error when it came to sexuality, considering the risk of contracting a fatal venereal disease. Moralists made a fine distinction between 'educating' and 'warning' young men about sexuality. They preferred to warn them about the dangers of women with logical arguments and reasoning. The most popular moralist of the seventeenth century, Jacob Cats, warned young men about syphilis – the most dreaded venereal disease of the era. This disease loomed in the background for all men in society and made no distinction between social and economic groups. Educating or rather warning young men about other sexual outlets such as nightwalking or visiting prostitutes was considered better than remaining silent about these matters, as they were the most obvious sexual channels for adolescents and young men prior to marriage. Jacob Cats stood out among other contemporary moralists by recognizing the sexual desires of young men, but in the end urged them to practice abstinence from the age of sexual maturity (which was often quite late in the early modern period) until the age of marriage. His advice was presented to young people in a modernized version of emblem books and with new elements of courting rituals that took place in organized daytime events instead of in the realm of the youth group during the night, which was new to the youth culture of the 1620s and 1630s.