

**Exchanging Flesh: Prostitution and Plastic  
Surgery in Seventeenth-Century England.**

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates discourses of shame, sexuality, disease, and the commoditised body in seventeenth-century England. I examine literary and non-literary sources relating to corporal interpretability and the exchange of human flesh in two areas: prostitution and plastic surgery. I consider the relationship between these exchanges and the individual's access to social capital, and explicitly examine the role of shame in facilitating or hindering the trades. Through close readings of fictional and archival prostitution texts (especially *The London Jilt*), I examine representations of sexual and other bodily exchanges as fraught commodity transactions. In conjunction with this, I consider in detail the transplantation of purchased flesh allegedly involved in rhinoplasty, which also posited a shameful commodification of the body. The reconstruction of the nose was most prominently detailed by the Bolognese surgeon Gaspare Tagliacozzi in *De curtorum chirurgia per insitionem* (Venice: 1597), and he became synonymous with the highly controversial operation. Histories of plastic surgery currently state that after Tagliacozzi's death in 1599, his procedure disappeared from medical knowledge. I demonstrate that this was simply not the case, and provide a thorough book history of an English translation of *De curtorum chirurgia* that was published in London in 1687 and 1696. In order to account for rhinoplasty's stigmatization, I examine its association with syphilis and the shame associated with that disease, and the manner in which it was thought to enable the patient to 'pass' as healthy. I also trace the popular narrative around Tagliacozzi that suggested he would purchase the skin required for his graft from "the brawny part of [a] porter's bum", and that it would shrivel and die when its donor

did.<sup>1</sup> This discourse provides an as yet unexamined archive through which to understand early modern England's relationship with the commodification of living human bodies.

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*, ed. John Wilders and Hugh de Quehen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), l.i.280.

## Declaration of Originality

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution to Emily Cock and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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A version of Chapter Two, Part One appears as 'Affecting glory from vices: Negotiating Shame in Prostitution Texts, 1660–1750', in *Performing Emotions*, ed. Philippa Maddern and Joanne McEwan (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

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## Note on the Text

I have retained original spelling in all quotations. I have silently modernised the use of “u/v/w” and “i/j”, and long-s has been printed as “s”.