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Sex and the Gender Revolution

Volume One
Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London

Randolph Trumbach

1998

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
CHICAGO AND LONDON

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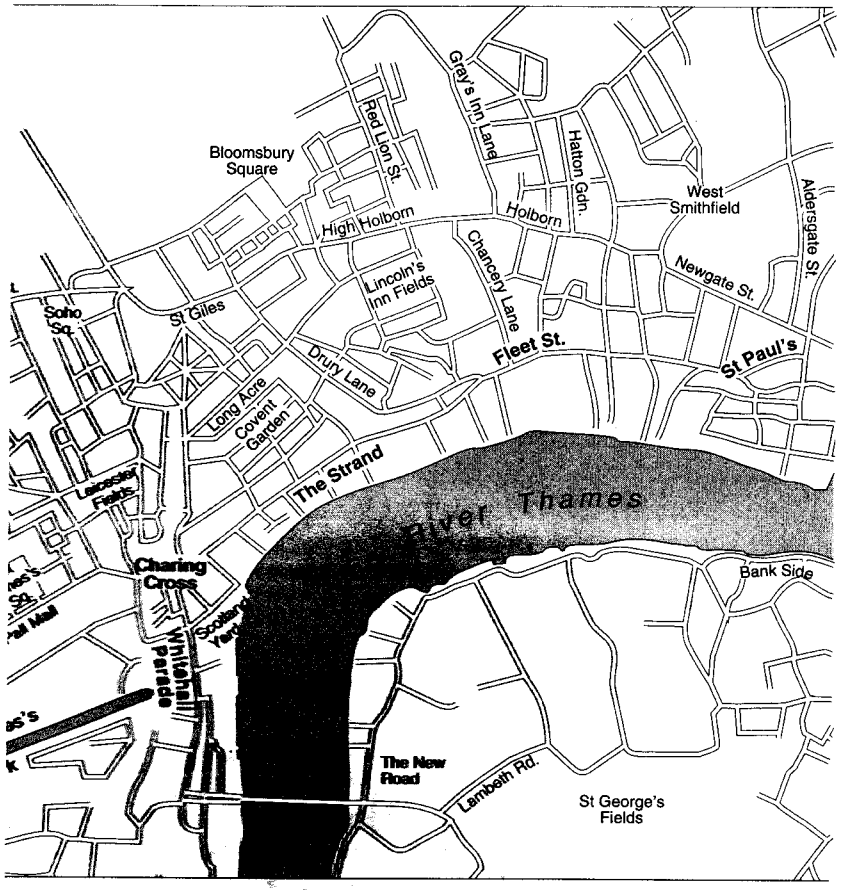

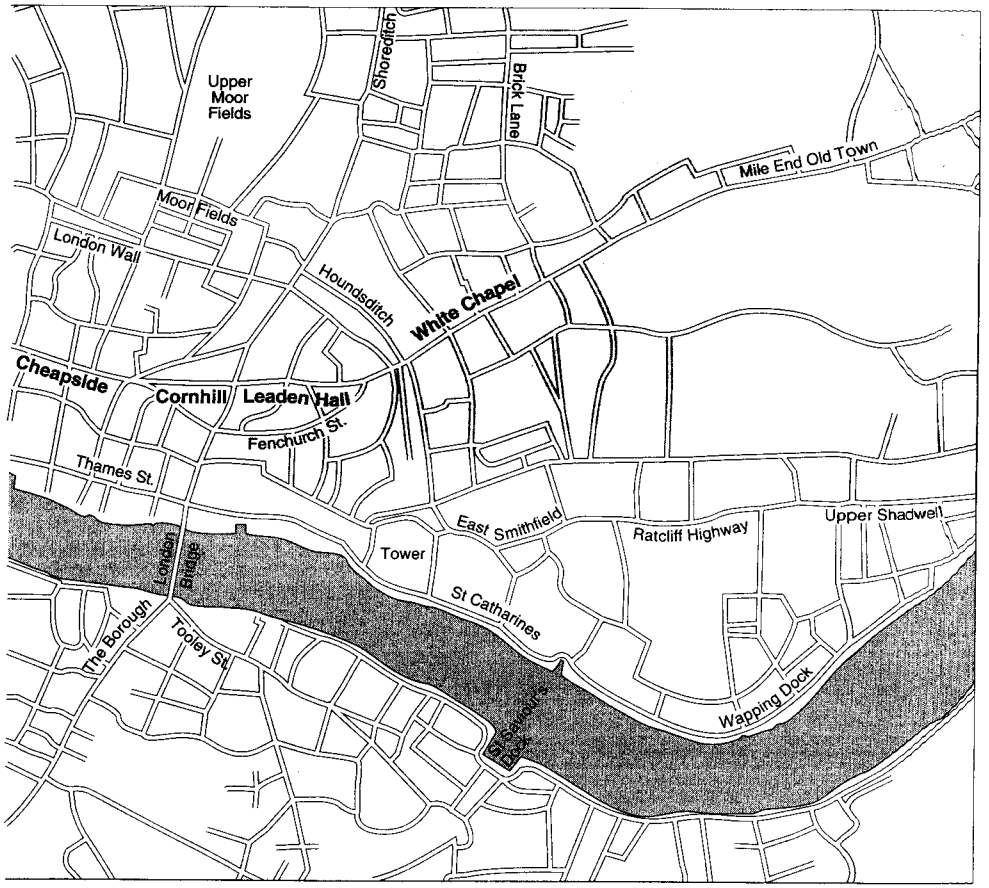

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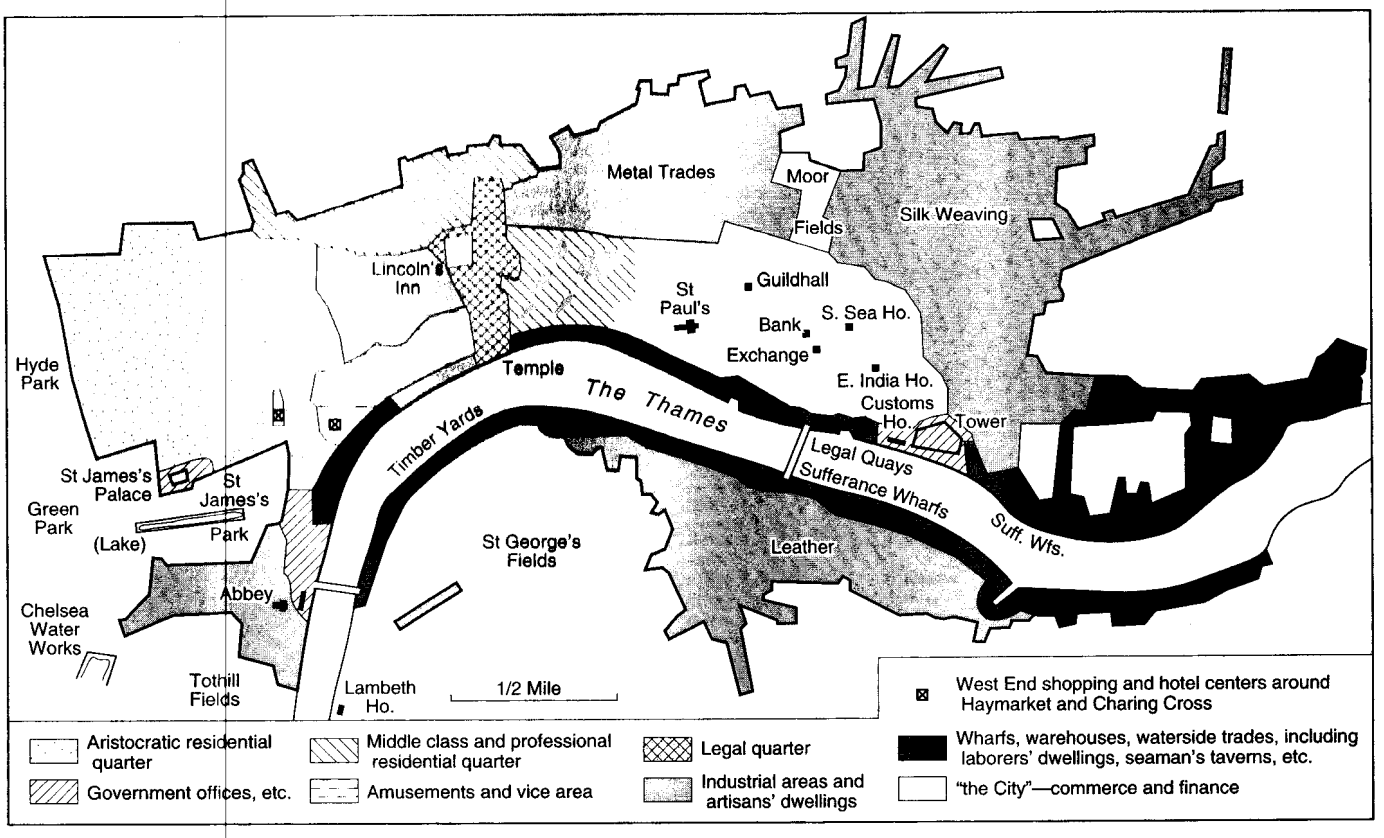

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PART ONE

Introduction

CHAPTER ONE

Extramarital Relations and Gender History

A revolution in the gender relations of Western societies occurred in the first generation of the eighteenth century, and it is the purpose of this book to describe its consequences for the sexual behavior of most men and women. Around 1700 in northwestern Europe, in England, France, and the Dutch Republic, there appeared a minority of adult men whose sexual desires were directed exclusively toward adult and adolescent males. These men could be identified by what seemed to their contemporaries to be effeminate behavior in speech, movement, and dress. They had not, however, entirely transformed themselves into women but instead combined into a third gender selected aspects of the behavior of the majority of men and women. Since a comparable minority of masculinized women who exclusively desired other women did not appear until the 1770s, it is therefore the case that for most of the eighteenth century there existed in northern Europe what might be described as a system of three genders composed of men, women, and sodomites. The lives of these sodomites (and of the sapphists after 1770) have been described recently by myself and by other historians, and I mean in the second volume of this study to present a full analysis of London's sodomites and sapphists. But the consequences for the sexual lives of the majority of men and women of the appearance of the exclusive sodomite has not so far been undertaken. This book therefore aims to do just that, by writing the history of extramarital sexual relations between men and women in eighteenth-century London. It concentrates on extramarital relations because from legal sources such behavior can be more systematically documented for all social classes than can the sexual lives of husbands and wives with each other. The prostitution, illegitimacy, sexual violence, and adultery that can be described from such sources were all behaviors that had occurred before 1700, but they were reorganized

nd given new meanings after 1700 by the appearance of the modern ystem of three genders.

In the eighteenth century these new meanings and the reorganization f long-standing forms of sexual behavior produced among men (but not mong women) what the late nineteenth century described as a heterosexal majority and a homosexual minority. The terms *heterosexual* and *homoexual* were nineteenth-century inventions. But the behavioral patterns hey described came into existence among men in the first generation of he eighteenth century. It is difficult to understand that homosexuality nd heterosexuality are conditions that were socially constructed first for nen at a specific moment in time and then for women because the develpment of the late-nineteenth-century descriptions over the last hundred ears has tended to leave most westerners with the conviction that a hetrosexual majority and a homosexual minority are biological constants that nust have been present in all times and places. The heterosexuality of the najority is usually taken for granted—how can the human race otherwise nave continued to exist? The homosexuality of the minority has been more difficult to understand or to accept. For this very reason, a brief analysis of the differences in Western homosexual behavior before and after 1700 will clarify what it means to say that an exclusive male heterosexual majority first appeared in Western societies in the early eighteenth century.

To understand the nature of homosexual acts in European society before 1700, one begins from the presumption increasingly made by historians, sociologists, and anthropologists that homosexual behavior in all human societies has been organized by differences either in age or in gender. From this it is apparent that the postmodernist presumption that sexual forms are unlimited cannot be true. In some societies like ancient Greece or Renaissance Italy sexual behavior was structured by differences in age, and adult men had sexual relations both with women and with adolescent males who were sexually passive. In other societies like those of traditional South Asia the majority of both adult and adolescent males had relations both with women and with a minority of passive adult men who had been socialized into a lifelong third-gender role that combined elements of male and female behavior. This fundamental distinction is sometimes difficult for modern Western scholars to see since in their society any experience of homosexual desire assigns an individual to a decided minority without reference to the age or gender of the person desired. From this practice of their own societies Western scholars presume the presence in all times and places of an effeminate minority of males exclusively interested in other males and use this presumption to misinterpret the evidence for

homosexual behavior in the ancient Mediterranean world and in European societies before 1700.[1]

This distinction between homosexual behavior organized by differences in either age or gender therefore reorients the historical quest into a more fruitful path and makes it possible to understand the nature of the change that occurred in Europe around 1700. In European society before 1700 probably most males felt desire for both males and females. Adult men expressed this by having sexual relations with adolescent males and with women. This pattern of behavior was of very long standing in Western societies. It had appeared in ancient Greece and Rome, in early Christian Europe, and in Europe of the later Middle Ages. This is sometimes doubted by modern readers because the sources are fragmentary and literary, and a historian like John Boswell was always determined to find an exclusive homosexual minority and to deny the plain presumption of his sources that homosexual activity occurred between most men and boys. But the brilliant work of Michael Rocke on the exceptional sources from Renaissance Florence allows the pattern to be displayed with statistical certainty. By the age of thirty, one of every two Florentine youths had been implicated in sodomy, and by the age of forty, two of every three men had been incriminated. Sodomy was therefore so widespread as to be universal. But it was always structured by age. Between fifteen and nineteen, boys were always passive. Individuals between nineteen and twenty-three were in a transitional phase in which they were either active or passive but with the older partner always active. After twenty-three men were always active. During this third period young men sometimes also went to female prostitutes. At thirty they married. Sodomy was illegal, and the church taught that it was immoral. But male opinion largely approved of it as long as adult men were always active. There were, in other words, two competing systems of morality in Christian societies, but the actual sexual behavior of men had changed very little from what it had been in the ancient pagan Mediterranean world.[2]

This pattern was also found in Venice and probably in the rest of Italy and in Spain and Portugal, as the Inquisition's records show. It probably also existed in northwestern Europe, but the records there are not so good as those for southern Europe. Statistics like those for Florence cannot be produced for seventeenth-century England, where there were very few prosecutions for sodomy. But the paucity of prosecutions does not demonstrate that there was very little sodomy. Instead it is likely that the severity of the law's punishment—death—made for few denunciations in a society that was not wholeheartedly committed to the Christian standard of sexual

behavior. This had been the case in Florence in the late fourteenth century, when there were also few prosecutions because the penalties were severe. But as these were lightened in the fifteenth century, the number of prosecutions rose and revealed (to our twentieth-century eyes) that sodomy, while not completely approved of, was nonetheless so widespread as to be the norm. In England during the Restoration, wild rakes like Lord Rochester had wives, mistresses, and boys. King William's taste for both women and boys was not criticized as was his friend William Bentinck's supposed sexual passivity; Bentinck was the king's contemporary and therefore too old to be a catamite, which was a role for boys. In *Sodom; or the Quintessence of Debauchery,* Rochester (if he was the author) wrote of sodomy with women and boys as indifferently wicked and exciting.[3]

But in the 1690s opinion changed after a new way of organizing homosexual desire appeared throughout the modernizing societies of northwestern Europe, in England, France, and the Netherlands. No longer did differences in age justify sexual relations with males in the libertine's mind. Instead adult men with homosexual desires were presumed to be members of an effeminate minority. They were given a status similar to that of the hijra in Indian society or the berdache among the North American tribal peoples, who had passive sexual relations with the majority of males in their societies. European society had begun to move from one to the other of the two worldwide systems for organizing homosexual behavior: from a system in which subordination was achieved by differences in age to one whose focus was a third-gender role for a minority of men. In the old system all males had passed through a period of sexual passivity in adolescence. In the new system, the majority of males could not conceive of themselves as passive at any moment; passivity was instead for the minority, the homosexuals (as they have been called since the late nineteenth century), who from childhood were socialized into their deviant role. European societies in the early eighteenth century gave such sodomites a status equivalent to that of the most abandoned women. The majority of men were supposed to avoid any sexual contact with them. But such contact nonetheless occurred, and when it did, it caused profound anxiety to adolescents and adult men—but also perhaps profound excitement.[4]

The new effeminate adult sodomites can be documented among the London poor because of the attacks against them made by the Societies for the Reformation of Manners. These sodomites constructed around themselves a protective subculture of meeting places and ritual behavior. A few who seem to have been involved in prostitution played out a largely feminine identity. They took women's names, spent nearly all their time

in women's clothes, and were referred to as "she" and "her" by their male and female acquaintances. Their male customers in some cases must have known that these prostitutes were genital males, but in other cases perhaps they did not, since some sodomites worked the streets as members of a group of female prostitutes. The gender identity of these transvestite males was not entirely feminine because they sometimes wore men's clothes and were prepared to take the active or inserter's role in sexual intercourse. They were neither male nor female but a third gender that combined some characteristics from each of what society regarded as the two legitimate genders. A few such men may have existed before 1700, when they were likely to have been confused with biological hermaphrodites who sometimes changed (though illegally) from the male or female gender to which they had been assigned at birth. After 1700, however, transvestite adult men who clearly possessed male genitalia and whose bodies showed no ambiguity were classified as part of a larger group of effeminate men who were supposed to desire sexual relations only with other males, who might be either adult or adolescent.

These men, for whom the formal term was *sodomite,* were in the slang of the streets known as *mollies,* a term that had first been applied to female prostitutes. Many of them could not be identified as sodomites outside the context of the molly-house, or tavern. Some of them were married with children, and others provided themselves with female companions so that they could pass with their neighbors. Once inside the molly-house, they displayed many of the feminine characteristics of the male transvestite prostitute: they took women's names and adopted the speech and bodily movements of women. On some occasions, especially at dances, some of them dressed entirely as women. Some sodomites in the molly-houses played men to match the role of female prostitute that others took. But all of these men were obliged to play two roles, one in the public world in which they worked and spent most of their time and another in the molly-house. Some men, of course, could not disguise their effeminacy in public and as a consequence were abused or blackmailed. This suggests that they had internalized their gender role to such a degree that they could not hide it, even though that would have been very much to their advantage in the public world. But in the public mind, all the men in the molly-houses—as well as those who used the public latrines, the parks, the cruising streets, or the arcades to find sexual partners—belonged to the same category no matter what their behavior in the public sphere. All were members of a third gender who deserved to be treated with contempt. Some were hanged in the few cases where anal penetration and

seminal emission could be proven. And others were fined, imprisoned, and sentenced to stand in the public pillory, where a few were stoned to death.

Sexual relations between women, on the other hand, were not prosecuted. When they occurred, the women were not described as masculinized until the last generation of the century, when some women were categorized as sapphists or tommies, as the effeminate male minority had been called sodomites or mollies since the beginning of the century. Throughout the century there were some women who cross-dressed, and they were sometimes prosecuted for it; but their cross-dressing was undertaken so that they could pass safely in a male occupation rather than to sexually attract women. It was essential that their disguise be fully convincing; any ambiguity that might arise from the mixing of gender traits (as male sodomites mixed them) would have led to their discovery and the failure of their purpose. Among some of these cross-dressing women, there were a few who eventually married women and perhaps even engaged in intercourse with an artificial penis. These women had crossed the gender boundary and were condemned for it, but other women who lived as husbands to women for many years—but against whom no sexual charges were leveled—seem to have passed unscathed. After 1770 there were occasional examples of aristocratic women (sometimes singly, sometimes as part of a female couple) who were either romantically or sexually attracted to women and who cross-dressed in the ambiguous way that effeminate sodomites did. They were accepted when the romance was stressed and the sex vigorously denied, and condemned and ostracized when it was otherwise. It was, however, always much more possible to be unaware that sexual relations between women existed in any form than it was to be ignorant of the existence of effeminate male sodomites.[5]

For most of the eighteenth century, therefore, sexual relations between women still occurred in the context that had applied to sexual relations between males in the seventeenth century, when persons who engaged in sexual relations with their own gender were presumed to be attracted to the other gender as well, and when sexual acts with one's own gender did not compromise an individual's standing as masculine or feminine. Only sexual passivity in an adult male or sexual activity by a woman who used an artificial penis or a supposedly enlarged clitoris had endangered an individual's gender standing. Such individuals, along with biological hermaphrodites, were likely to be viewed as dangerous, since they passed back and forth from active to passive rather than remaining in the passive female or active male conditions to which they had been assigned at birth.

Only the temporary passivity of adolescent males whose bodies had not yet acquired secondary male characteristics did not threaten this system. Seventeenth-century society had therefore presumed that although there were three kinds of bodies (men, women, and hermaphrodites), there were only two kinds of gender (male and female).

After 1700 this system was replaced by another for men but not for women. For males, there were now two kinds of bodies (male and female) but three genders (man, woman, and sodomite)—since the sodomite was supposed to experience his desires and play his role as a result of a corrupted education and not because of his bodily condition. For women, the old system of three bodies and two genders could still be presumed. But men had entered a new gender system by changing the nature of their sexual relations with each other: men no longer had sex with boys and women—they now had sex either with females or with males. They were now supposed to be either exclusively homosexual or heterosexual. The majority of men now desired only women. This necessarily brought them into more intimate relations with women, and their intimacy could threaten the continuing male desire to establish domination. This dilemma was in part resolved by assigning those men who desired males to a third gender role that was held in great contempt. This role played its necessary part in the new relations between men and women produced by the emergence of individualism and equality in eighteenth-century society since it guaranteed that, however far equality between men and women might go, men would never become like women since they would never desire men. Only women and sodomites desired men, and this was true for males from adolescence to old age.[6]

The new heterosexual role for the majority of men that was produced by the system of three genders that came into existence after 1700 affected men of all social classes. It resulted in a pattern of extramarital sexual behavior that endured until the middle of the twentieth century and that is documented in this book by three sets of chapters, on prostitution, illegitimacy, and adultery and violence in marriage. The women who engaged in these extramarital relations did not, however, have their behavior structured by a standard of exclusive female heterosexuality. Their sexual lives were organized instead by the forms of family life that during the eighteenth century came to vary considerably by social class. Poor women, whether as wives, widows, or maids, were bound by the forms of the traditional patriarchal household and family in which servants, children, and wives were subordinated to the authority of older, dominant, and supposedly provident men. Women from the middle and landed classes, on the

other hand, lived in families constructed by increasingly egalitarian relations that found expression in romantic courtship, the close friendship of husbands and wives, and the tender care of children. Male heterosexuality, traditional patriarchy, and modern domesticity are therefore the principal themes that run through the chapters that follow on prostitution, illegitimacy, and adultery. They will sometimes be found reinforcing each other and sometimes be in opposition.[7]

These three standards of heterosexuality, patriarchy, and romance always operated in the persistent presence of men's violence. The violence might appear as an expression of men's contempt for the prostitute or in their attempts to cure themselves of the prostitute's venereal disease by forcing themselves on prepubescent girls; or in courtship when marriage could be offered as a compensation for rape; or after marriage by the husband who to establish his sexual domination of his wife or the absolute possession of her property could treat her in ways that would certify him as mad if used against anyone else. Heterosexuality and the family were also in constant dialogue with Christian religion in its different forms. The last gasps of traditional reforming urban piety appeared early in the century in the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, which attempted to control prostitution and other forms of extramarital relations by turning to the secular magistrates after the church courts had failed. For them sexual sin was equally reprehensible in men and in women. But the Evangelicals at the end of the century were more concerned about the prostitute than about her male customer, for without realizing it, they had become affected by the presumptions of the new male heterosexuality. Women throughout the century were more likely than men to make Christianity their bulwark against the libertine's justification of his practices. But since male heterosexuality made it increasingly difficult for men to enter into intimate relations with a male God, it is likely that the tie between sex and religion was weakened even for those men who were not self-consciously libertine.

The male heterosexuality, domesticity, and traditional patriarchal domination that run through the chapters that follow are displayed in the physical environment of eighteenth-century London. In 1700 with a population of slightly more than half a million, London had become the largest city in western Europe. A century later its population had doubled to nearly a million. It dominated the rest of English society, and it remained throughout the century the political, economic, and cultural center of its world, even though its total share of England's urban population lessened as urbanization increased. London grew, however, largely as the

result of migration from the rest of England, since its death rate was staggering, especially in the first half of the century. This meant that only a quarter of those who lived in London had been born there. This pattern of migration was of great cultural importance. It meant that probably one in every six people in the entire country had spent part of their lives in London. The patterns of sexual behavior in London therefore had to some extent an influence throughout the country and cannot be attributed simply to the results of the urban environment. If one therefore finds modern male heterosexuality and domesticity in London, it is very likely that they also had made their way throughout the rest of English culture. But certain aspects of London's sexual life were certainly unique to it. It probably had more sodomites than anywhere else in England as a result of migration from rural areas. It certainly had the greatest number of prostitutes. And its level of illegitimacy was also different, but it is disputed whether it was higher or lower than the rest of England.[8]

The structure of London's economy and its role as the country's political center meant that there was present in it the full range of social groups, from the aristocracy and the gentry who spent a part of each year there (and who represented 2 or 3 percent of the city's population), through the professional men and the merchants who organized the national economy (and were 17 to 22 percent), to the poor who were divided between the largest group of skilled laborers in England and a still larger group of unskilled ones (75 percent). The London economy was organized around a service sector in the West End, a manufacturing district north of the City walls, and a third district in the East End tied to the port. These divisions were apparent in its sexual economy as well, since male servants and soldiers fathered the bastards in the West End, as weavers did in the parishes north of the City, and sailors in the parishes of the East End. By 1700 the development of East and West Ends brought a new focus as the parishes that still belonged to the four separate jurisdictions of Middlesex, the City, Westminster, and Southwark merged in daily life and became a single place. Through this newly unified town there ran a great thoroughfare made up of a series of interlocking streets from the Royal Exchange in Cornhill, through Cheapside and St. Paul's Churchyard and down Ludgate Hill to Fleet Street and the end of the City's jurisdiction. From there it continued into Westminster as Fleet Street joined the Strand, moving through Charing Cross and down Whitehall into St. James's Park. It is still London's principal ceremonious route. But in the eighteenth century it also became the beat of the army of streetwalking prostitutes around whom so much of the conflict between male heterosex-

uality and female domesticity was centered. In this huge sprawling city, however, each parish could still be its own separate world. And it was therefore possible to move from one part of town to another and to leave an old sexual life for a new.

The sources of information on the sexual life of eighteenth-century London come in eight different kinds. The consistory court (which was the bishop of London's court) heard suits for defamation and divorce. These records document the history of sexual reputation among poorer Londoners and adultery and sexual violence in marriage among the middle classes and the gentry. Three decades of cases were analyzed from the beginning, middle, and end of the century, and the rest were counted. The notebooks of the secular magistrates for the City, and the recognizances and house of correction calendars in the quarter sessions rolls for the City, Westminster, and Middlesex, are the foundation for the history of prostitution. But they also describe a variety of other sexual behaviors ranging from adultery to wife beating to sexual exposure. Two decades of the rolls from the first and second halves of the century have been read in detail (the 1720s and 1770s) and at least one year consulted in each of the remaining decades. The evidence from the trials at the Old Bailey that was printed in the Sessions Paper gives the histories of sodomy, rape, and infanticide, and all of the series has been included. Illegitimacy can be documented from the poor law examinations and the declarations made to the Foundling Hospital by women who surrendered their children, and four parishes spread across the geographical and economic variety of London provide the foundation for the discussion. The manuscripts of the Lock Hospital for venereal disease show the intimate connection between prostitution, venereal disease, and the life of London's poor families.

The newspapers are an endless source of information. They describe situations that would be difficult to visualize from the manuscript sources, but their record is always highly selective in reporting something like the arrests of prostitutes or the raids on bawdy houses. Sexual libertinism was recommended and opposed in an extensive printed literature. This has been widely sampled (it would be impossible to read it all) and as part of this project many of the more important items on masturbation, sodomy, prostitution, and venereal disease were reprinted in a forty-four volume series.[9] Sometimes a detail has been taken from a novel, a play, or a poem. But it has been an important part of the method of this book to base itself as far as possible on the reports in the legal sources of the behavior of actual human beings, however much those sources may be open to interpretation. Finally, there are the letters and diaries of individuals. These together

with the libertine and the imaginative literatures have provided the sources for most of the previous general interpretations of eighteenth-century English sexuality. But these biographical sources are heavily weighted toward the lives of only 2 or 3 percent of the population. Only in the legal sources (however fragmentary or episodic they may be) is the behavior of the various social classes reported in something like their distribution in the general population. But it is necessary nonetheless to have as full an understanding of the sexual behavior and presumptions of the elite as possible, since it was they who policed society and produced the legal sources that document the behavior of the rest of society.

A study based primarily on legal sources documents behavior that for the most part was illegal. It cannot encompass (by and large) the history of legitimate sexuality in marriage. That can be found, however, in many of the recent histories of the family, to which I have already contributed a study of the aristocratic family in eighteenth-century England. This present book is therefore a study of extramarital sexual relations, and for this there need be no apology, since the history of modern male heterosexuality is substantially a history of extramarital relations. The sexual lives of women, on the other hand, were much more likely to have been confined to marriage, and it is probably a decided minority of London's women who appear in these stories of prostitution, illegitimacy, and adultery. This reinforces the point that women in the eighteenth century had not yet to any significant degree entered the world of modern Western exclusive heterosexuality with its concern for individual sexual identity and self-fulfillment.

The chapters that follow are grouped into three parts, on prostitution, illegitimacy, and adultery and violence in marriage. They are preceded by a chapter on sexual reputation and identity that seeks to establish the sexual roles into which the majority of women and men were socialized. A married woman was supposed to have sexual relations only with her husband, and her neighbors were very likely to gossip if they believed that she had sex with anyone else. They also gossiped if they believed that a couple were living together without really being married (which in some parts of the East End was frequently the case), or if a woman had borne a child before her marriage or been a prostitute. Widows and unmarried women were not supposed to have sex at all, and any misbehavior on their part became the subject of gossip. This could have grave consequences for an unmarried woman since (as a subsequent chapter shows) she was likely to be discharged from her job if she became pregnant. For poor women these distinctions remained vital throughout the century. But the

old tripartite divis[illegible]ives, widows, and maids was part of a world in which potentially [illegible]oman was a whore. Subsequent chapters will show, however, t[illegible] and women from the middle and the landed classes tended i[illegible]ly to divide women into a majority who were presumed to be [illegible]y by nature and not especially sexual and a minority who from t[illegible]nstances of their poverty became prostitutes. A woman might [illegible]sionally fall in love with someone other than her husband, as t[illegible]pter shows. But she did not intend to make him a cuckold. It [illegible]d that they had proven incompatible and the hope was that by d[illegible]h partners might more happily remarry and reestablish their d[illegible].

A man's [illegible] reputation, on the other hand, as chapter 2 shows, was no longer [illegible]e went to prostitutes. This now instead helped to establish [illegible]nal standing. He was still not very likely to seduce the ma[illegible] household, since this violated the standards of both traditi[illegible]y and modern domesticity. But the extensive population [illegible] who walked the streets between the ages of eighteen and t[illegible]re fair game. This population of streetwalking prostitutes [illegible]most distinctive aspect of the sexual lives of modern citi[illegible]ld War II. These women and the men who went to th[illegible] in the five chapters that make up the second part of the [illegible]. Chapters 4 and 5 take up the number of prostitutes, the shifting geography of prostitution, and the management of the brothels, and how and why women entered and left the life of prostitution and their sexual behavior as prostitutes. Three chapters look at the men who went to prostitutes. In chapter 3 the libertinism of gentlemen is distinguished from that of [illegible]. Romance and domesticity did modify the behavior of some gentlemen, but, as chapter 6 demonstrates, instead of giving up the prostitute, they domesticated the brothel and tried to reform the prostitute in magdalen houses. But male heterosexual desire could not be challenged directly since it was the bulwark men had built against the sodomite. The fear engendered in an adolescent by a man who made a pass at him and the terror of the adult man who allowed himself to be blackmailed because he was not certain that he could disprove a charge of sodomy once made are established in chapter 2. Appearing along with this new taboo on all forms of sodomy was another against masturbation that maintained that "self-abuse," whether it was solitary or with a group of other males, led to the gravest physical and mental degeneration. Male reputation and identity therefore grew out of a struggle to achieve an exclusive

[illegible]xuality that avoided sodomy on the one hand and masturbation [illegible]other, and that proved itself most easily by going to prostitutes. [illegible] women neither masturbation nor female homosexuality were of [illegible]consequence. Before marriage it is likely that most women would [illegible]e thought much about sex, since sex for them was always subordi[illegible] courtship and marriage. Their heterosociality (or their social relations [illegible]ith men) preceded their heterosexuality. But for men, masturbatory [illegible]y on their own or with other males and their social or sexual interac[illegible]h sodomites either preceded or accompanied their sexual interac[illegible]h the population of streetwalking prostitutes. This sexual develop[illegible]ually occurred before men attempted to court women in marriage [illegible] to seduce them for their pleasure. Male heterosexuality therefore [illegible]efore male heterosociality. But the prostitutes with whom most [illegible]e likely to have relations before marriage were usually venereally [illegible], as chapter 7 argues. They infected their customers, and these [illegible] the disease home to their wives and children. The development [illegible]le heterosexual role in the early eighteenth century therefore [illegible]d that most sexual encounters were shadowed by the specter of [illegible]his remained the case until the late twentieth century, when [illegible] premarital intercourse, the decline in prostitution, and the de[illegible] (before AIDS) of an easy and effective cure for venereal disease [illegible]nstituted a new sexual regime.

[illegible] male heterosexuality was not expressed, however, only in rela[illegible] the small minority of women who became prostitutes. It also af[illegible]n's relations with the majority of unmarried women, and this is [illegible]d in the chapters on illegitimacy that comprise the third part of [illegible]. The nature of the sources that survive does not make it po[illegible] establish definitively the level of illegitimacy in London. But it is [illegible] possible that London's illegitimacy surged ahead of the rest of [illegible], as it did in the late twentieth century, when once again a new [illegible]ystem first made itself felt there. The sources do however, ma[illegible]lear that London's poor women were left to deal on their own [illegible] harsh consequences of the seductions inspired by the new male [illegible]uality and that they did not have the consolations of romantic lo[illegible]e available to women from the middle and landed classes. The p[illegible] seduction varied throughout the city according to the econom[illegible] parish in which they occurred. In fashionable West End parishes [illegible] were seduced either by the male servants with whom they worked or by the soldiers they met walking the streets. In those streets

women also met gentlemen, but their own masters did not seduce them to any significant degree. In the East End the still tightly knit weaving communities north of the City walls produced a quite different pattern from the parishes east of the walls, where the sailors were found. But whether in the East or the West End, a servant lost her employment once she became pregnant, and after she had used up her savings and sold her clothes, she was obliged to turn to the parish for relief or to give up her child to the Foundling Hospital. Through all this she also had to deal with the disapproval of strangers as well as the ambivalence of the families in which she had worked and of her own family. For some women their pregnancies represented failed courtships. But never more than a fifth of them ever claimed to have been promised marriage, which makes it likely that a high level of sexual activity occurred without much thought for the future. Women because of their diffidence, however, always had great difficulty in resisting forceful advances from men. This becomes clear in the rape cases recounted in chapter 9 that conclude the third part of the book. These cases also show that men who violently assaulted women could afterward propose "to make the matter up" by offering marriage, and the acceptance they sometimes received demonstrates that self-conscious romance had not yet affected the sexual lives of the poor to any significant degree.

The role of romance among the middle and landed classes, and its interaction with the new male heterosexuality and with traditional patriarchy, are the themes of the three chapters on marital violence and adultery that make up the fourth and final part of this book. Most of the evidence for these chapters is drawn from the divorce cases in the London Consistory Court. The nature of these divorces changed sharply around 1750. In the first half of the century women brought twice as many cases as men. They complained most often of their husbands' violence and less frequently of desertion. In these early cases men also complained of desertion and adultery by their wives, but they usually did so many years after the marriage had broken down and when they feared that they might become liable for the debts that their wives had contracted. After 1750 a great deal of this changed. Women still complained of violence, as chapter 10 makes clear. And it is likely that the new heterosexuality reinforced the old patriarchy for those men who beat their wives from the beginning of their marriages as a way of establishing their sexual and financial domination as well as for those who began their violence some years later after they had fallen in love with another woman. But some forms of violence disappeared from the cases: it became harder to lock a woman away in a madhouse, and the number of widows whose second husbands beat them to gain control of their property markedly declined.

It was, however, the cases in which men sued their wives for adultery that changed most significantly, as chapter 12 shows. They increased in number, and men now brought twice as many cases as women. They made their complaints as soon as they discovered the adultery, and usually their wives had fallen in love with their best friend or a close associate. It is likely that the new heterosexuality had opened a space for intense friendships between men, and that one friend became more likely to ask another home to share the warmth of his new domesticity. But romantic love raised higher expectations of marital fulfillment in women who, usually after they had been married for a number of years, expressed their needs by falling in love with men who had recently entered their domestic world. This must have stung their husbands with all the force that the taboo against sodomy now carried and the fear that it created of any sexual subordination to another man. But it is also likely that the old belief that incompatibility ended a marriage was strengthened by the new romance. Chapter 11 argues that the poor and the middle class had often ended incompatible marriages by private agreements that were illegal in both common and canon law. But the landed classes in the early eighteenth century created a new form of divorce by which an act of Parliament allowed both spouses to remarry if the wife was adulterous. This device was used by a considerable number of the men who brought cases in the consistory. In this way divorces for the wife's adultery were transformed into divorces for mutual incompatibility. It was a clumsier device than the more straightforward divorces for incompatibility that appeared in revolutionary France and elsewhere in Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. But the connection between sexual compatibility and modern marriage had been established, even though it was not until the generation after 1960 that divorce for mutual incompatibility became the legal standard throughout the Western world.

If it is the case that women appear in this book largely as the victims of modern male heterosexuality, it is also true that the behavior of the adulterous women in the divorces after 1750 establishes quite firmly that the new romance and domesticity did not destroy sexual passion in women. Before 1750 married women were frequently suspected of being unfaithful to their husbands, as the defamation cases from the consistory show. Similarly, in the divorces before 1750 (that are discussed in chapter 12) two kinds of passionate married women appeared. There were those who became prostitutes, some from economic necessity in the absence of

their husbands; but there were other young women who seemed to have been released by their first intercourse in marriage into an overwhelming desire for many men. In a second category were the widows who used their financial independence to acquire younger, sexually desirable husbands. But in the divorce cases these attempts at sexual domination were usually literally beaten back by their husbands. This was a world, however, in which every woman was potentially a whore. After 1750 romance and domesticity divided women instead into a deviant minority who walked the streets as prostitutes and a majority who were faithful wives and devoted mothers and for whom sexual desire was supposed to be secondary. It is certainly true that women who intended to leave their husbands for a more satisfactory lover sometimes tried (but without much success) to ask for a reconciliation once they realized that a divorce meant that they would lose their children from their first marriage. But it is apparent that in the throes of their illicit love, they were overwhelmed by sexual desire, however much they might justify it to themselves in the name of romance and a higher standard of love. This passionate adultery coexisted after the 1770s with the newly emerged role of the masculinized sapphist who was exclusively interested in other women, and it may be that the presence of the sapphist role began to reorganize the desires of the majority of women into a female heterosexual identity. The appearance of the effeminate sodomite had certainly had that effect on the sexual identity of the majority of men at the beginning of the century. But the sapphist's presence was never as pronounced as the sodomite's. And what men did with each other was always of greater consequence than anything that might occur between women. It is therefore likely that women's sexual identity continued to be defined primarily in terms of their relationship to men and to the family and that there was still at the end of the century no exclusive heterosexual identity for women.

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A number of the previous attempts to interpret the history of eighteenth-century sexuality have dealt with many of the forms of behavior described in this book. They have not, however, organized themselves around the presumption that heterosexuality and homosexuality are not biological givens but are instead socially constructed aspects of male and female gender roles that did not appear until the early eighteenth century, when the modern Western culture system in which we still live first arose. Michel Foucault originally intended that his history of sexuality should start in the early eighteenth century, and it is with that period that his introductory volume is mainly concerned. Foucault seems to have been struck by the literature against masturbation that first appeared in that period and used it to document the origins of what were for him the repressive structures of modern society. But he did not see in that volume any connection between masturbation and homosexuality. Instead he argued in a paragraph that has had an influence out of all proportion to its importance that the modern sense of the homosexual as a distinct kind of person did not appear until the late nineteenth century. In an interview two years before his death, however, he apparently changed his mind and declared that homosexuality first became a problem in the eighteenth century. But his followers (many of whom have tied their work to his first declaration) have not so far taken up their master's later position. Foucault's account of the eighteenth century (in what admittedly was to have been merely an introduction) is also unsatisfactory because it fails to deal with the histories of adultery and prostitution.[10]

Foucault's argument that modern homosexuality was a product of the late nineteenth century—which was simultaneously made by Jeffrey Weeks on the basis of a much more serious documentation—has been used by Jonathan Ned Katz and Kevin White to argue that modern heterosexuality must therefore similarly have been a product of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. But all four of these historians make the same mistake and fail to see that the late-nineteenth-century discussions of homosexuality and heterosexuality (in which the words were first coined) did not invent the roles that they considered. By 1880 modern Western homosexuality and heterosexuality had existed for nearly two hundred years. The new names therefore only represent a new stage in the public discussion of these roles, however much the discussion may have changed the political environment in which the roles were enacted.[11]

Five historians have discussed the sexual history of eighteenth-century England. Lawrence Stone in his general history of the family, sex, and marriage relied mainly on the letters and diaries of gentlemen. He asserted that in the eighteenth century sexual pleasure became a part of romantic marriage. He noticed an increase in prostitution as well as the new taboo against masturbation and a greater discussion of homosexuality. But he interpreted as a growing toleration for homosexual behavior what was for an unprecedented level of anxiety over its new form. And he did not consider that if masturbation, sodomy, and prostitution were put together with the traditional level of sexual violence (which he did not dispute) a sexual identity was produced in most men that could exist only in the most uneasy way with sexual romance in marriage. Roy Porter in

three discussions of gentlemanly libertinism has produced a genial picture of sexual liberation tempered by hostility toward the sexual lives of women, the poor, the young, and the homosexual. In some ways it is similar to the history of aristocratic libertinism presented in this book and in two earlier essays of mine. But it presumes that heterosexuality is a biological given, and it accounts for a very small part of eighteenth-century society. G. J. Barker-Benfield has tried to show the way in which libertinism was modified by another component of Enlightenment thought, namely sensibility. But of the five accounts under discussion, his is the least satisfactory. Its evidence is drawn principally from novels; it discusses neither homosexuality nor domesticity; and it repeatedly asserts that sensibility was the product of a consumer society without ever showing how this could have been so. A. D. Harvey certainly gives homosexuality its due, in what he says is a discussion of attitudes and not actual behavior, and devotes a quarter of his book to the subject. But the discussion is out of focus because he presumes that the prosecutions for sodomy in European societies before 1700 show that modern homosexuality cannot have emerged in the early eighteenth century. He does not see that in the cases before 1700 adult men who were not effeminate and who were also attracted to women were prosecuted for sexual relations with boys. Not seeing this, he cannot make the most of his own observation (for which he seems to take exclusive credit) that homosexual effeminacy did first appear in the eighteenth century. Harvey's principal concern, however, is to suggest that sexuality after 1750 became identified as an exclusively male interest for the class of people who wrote books and that women were confined to another sphere. But since domesticity and adultery are missing from his book, this part of his discussion is also unfocused; and the heterosexual and homosexual roles in his world never engage each other. Tim Hitchcock in his historiographical essay is the most satisfactory of these historians. He claims that the majority of men moved from a culture of heavy sexual petting to one in which penetration frequently occurred and that this can be tied to the rise in population and to earlier and more widespread marriage and higher rates of illegitimacy. But he strangely does not believe that this resulted in higher levels of prostitution and venereal disease. He does not explain why the female partners of these penetrative males did not have a similar identity. He simply says that women came to be seen as more passive, without considering whether this reflected actual behavior or simply the views of the elite; and because he does not analyze the history of adultery and its connection to romantic

love, he overestimates the extent of female passivity. Finally, the relationship between these identities in the majority of men and women and the male and female homosexual minorities is not adequately considered.[12]

The connection between the new male heterosexuality among men of all social classes and the appearance of domesticity and romantic love, which affected women more than men and which until the early nineteenth century was to be found only among the elites and the middle classes, is raised in two recent histories of gender by Anthony Fletcher and by Anna Clark. Fletcher maintains that the discussion of women's nature that occurred among the aristocracy and the middle class between 1670 and 1800 did not represent an improvement in women's place in the world. Instead women were subordinated to romantic love and separated from the outside world. Traditional patriarchy in this way reconstructed its basis: this was not the start of modern feminism, even though an older negative image of women was conquered. But Fletcher fails to discuss sexual behavior in the early eighteenth century, whether marital or extramarital, and as a consequence he does not see that the reconstruction of women's domestic role was accompanied by an even more startling change in men's role, represented by the new ideal and practice of an exclusive male heterosexuality. If domesticity was merely a reconstructed patriarchy, the level of male anxiety represented by the new heterosexuality becomes difficult to understand. This male heterosexuality preceded the ideology and practice of romance among the majority of men. Clark shows that it was not until the early nineteenth century that they came together in the lives of the poor. When in the 1820s, for instance, Richard Carlile tried to persuade working-class women that contraception would allow them to have more frequent sex with their husbands and provide the men with an alternative to the prostitution that (as I argue) was a necessary part of modern male heterosexuality, he received a shocked response from the women, who asserted that contraception insulted them as wives and mothers. Poor women had come to domesticity but not to heterosexuality, which remained a male defense against domesticity. Female heterosexuality would have been too much like the old presumption that women were sexual monsters. Motherhood and domesticity (while not to the liking of some kinds of late-twentieth-century feminism) did more for the respectability of women. Those women who in the eighteenth century used romance to reconstruct their sexual lives often had to endure ostracism and violence, as chapter 12 in this book shows. But the new domesticity (if it was merely a reconstructed patriarchy, as Fletcher holds) had such a pow-

erful effect on men's traditional roles that they constructed for themselves a separate world from women that this book calls modern male exclusive heterosexuality.[13]

There remain a series of large speculative questions that establish the need for a new kind of history, which this book begins to write. Why did a new sexual system come into existence in all of northwestern Europe (in England, France, and the Netherlands) in the early eighteenth century? Why did the division into heterosexual and homosexual roles occur first in men, and at what point did the distinction (or some variant of it) become crucial for the gender identity of women? What connection was there between the distinction into heterosexual and homosexual roles and the development of the ideals of romantic marriage and domesticity? When did a system that first appeared in northern Europe and North America spread to the rest of the Western world, to southern, central, and eastern Europe, and to Latin America; and how did the system change during this process of diffusion? And finally, why did a system of almost three hundred years' standing begin to change considerably after 1960, and did it change sufficiently to warrant the description of being postmodern? No-fault divorce, widespread premarital sexual relations between men and women who were not engaged to marry, widespread birth control, the expectation that women should have equal pay and equal access to work and that men should share in the duties of childrearing, the decline in prostitution, the control of venereal disease, and the appearance for the first time in most Western societies of a gay and lesbian movement—all these occurred together in a single generation, and in the very same countries that first experienced around 1700 the modern sexual system that these new forms of behavior have to some extent displaced. To these many questions, this book does not attempt to supply answers. It is apparent that we do not have much of an idea why or how cultural systems change rapidly in the course of a single generation, whether the change occurs around 1700 or around 1960. It is as baffling as trying to explain the rise and fall of diseases—the plague, syphilis, smallpox, or AIDS. It will be enough therefore in this book to begin the analysis of the division of the sexual world into a homosexual minority and a heterosexual majority that has been one of the most salient features of the modern Western culture that first appeared in the generation after 1700.

CHAPTER TWO

Reputation and Identity

The sexual reputation of women and men among their neighbors is one of the best guides to the varieties of sexual identity in eighteenth-century society. The present chapter contrasts the standards for women with those for men. A woman's sexual reputation was defined by her relationship to men, and by her status as a wife, a widow, or a maid. A wife could legitimately have relations only with her husband. The other married women in her neighborhood enforced this by making any violations the subject of gossip that discredited the woman and her husband. Defamation suits in the consistory court indicate that neighbors made four different kinds of accusations. They charged a woman with adultery. Or they said that she was not really married to her husband. They maintained that she had borne an illegitimate child before after her marriage. And occasionally they suggested that she had been a prostitute before her marriage. Sometimes the charges were made as a result of a financial dispute or simply because of anger with a woman; it becomes clear that abusive language against women was more likely to be sexual than in the case of men. But sexual gossip was also a means to validate and enjoy one's sexual fantasies in a public forum. These points are established in the first half of the chapter through the defamation suits married women brought against each other in the consistory court. A much smaller number of widows also sued those who said that they were presently having sex with a man, or that they were prostitutes or in cases or had borne bastards. Single women brought the fewest cases, probably because they could least afford to do so and because they did not have husbands who were determined not to be thought cuckolds. But I will show that a single woman who offended against chastity was more likely than a wife or a widow to suffer severe financial loss since she could probably be discharged from her place as a servant.