



Sex and the Gender Revolution, Volume 1: Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London (The Chicago Series on Sexuality, History, and Society)

By Randolph Trumbach

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A revolution in gender relations occurred in London around 1700, resulting in a sexual system that endured in many aspects until the sexual revolution of the 1960s. For the first time in European history, there emerged three genders: men, women, and a third gender of adult effeminate sodomites, or homosexuals. This third gender had radical consequences for the sexual lives of most men and women since it promoted an opposing ideal of exclusive heterosexuality.

In *Sex and the Gender Revolution*, Randolph Trumbach reconstructs the worlds of eighteenth-century prostitution, illegitimacy, sexual violence, and adultery. In those worlds the majority of men became heterosexuals by avoiding sodomy and sodomite behavior.

As men defined themselves more and more as heterosexuals, women generally experienced the new male heterosexuality as its victims. But women--as prostitutes, seduced servants, remarrying widows, and adulterous wives-- also pursued passion. The seamy sexual underworld of extramarital behavior was central not only to the sexual lives of men and women, but to the very existence of marriage, the family, domesticity, and romantic love. London emerges as not only a geographical site but as an actor in its own right, mapping out domains where patriarchy, heterosexuality, domesticity, and female resistance take vivid form in our imaginations and senses.

As comprehensive and authoritative as it is eloquent and provocative, this book will become an indispensable study for social and cultural historians and delightful reading for anyone interested in taking a close look at sex and gender in eighteenth-century London.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Attempting to explain the formation of modern sexual identities, Trumbach (*The Rise of the Egalitarian Family*) offers a theory of how "heterosexual identity" was produced in the 18th century. He attributes it to the rise of the "Molly," a man exclusively interested in sex with other men, who first emerged in 18th-century London. Previously, he argues, it was normal and acceptable for London men to have sexual relations with both boys and women. After the Molly, Trumbach contends, most men (but not women) reorganized their sexual behavior to demonstrate their heterosexuality. Unfortunately, Trumbach never quite makes the abundance of evidence he marshals speak for this theory. Despite a too-brief section on accusations of sodomy, he never links his many long case studies (based on legal records) of the sexual histories of prostitutes, adulteresses and abandoned wives to his theorized changes in male sexual behavior. And while he insists that the "new heterosexuality" was a primary cause of prostitution, he never establishes that prostitution was any less widespread in earlier periods. Trumbach's book will be useful as a source of empirical information for scholars, but it fails to synthesize the material well enough to appeal to a broader audience, or to become a definitive study.

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About the Author

Randolph Trumbach teaches at Baruch College and the Graduate School, CUNY. He is the author of *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family*.

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