The History of Masculinity, circa 1650–1800

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The history of masculinity, relatively new on the historical stage, is an increasingly popular subject. But it is not welcomed by all. This new popularity of the history of masculinity, intimately tied to a larger gender history, is for some deeply reactionary, and there are several reasons why feminist women's historians are worried.[1] Some forms of gender history have been denounced as "a male tool used in an attempt to dissipate women's power whereby women become historically viable subjects only when placed alongside men, thus reinforcing their position as 'other.'"[2] Moreover, gender history often explores ideas about and meanings of femininity and masculinity. Focusing on representation and discourse can appear to leave little room in which to ponder the activities of actual individuals with agency. It erases autonomous individuals acting in the world and produces "subjects interpolated in a discursive field."[3] As Judith Bennett cautioned, a history of gender as meaning "intellectualizes and abstracts the inequality of the sexes."[4] For women's and feminist historians, the problem is a political one: gender history can be depoliticized or antifeminist because it allows us to forget the material workings of power in the past.

Gender history is certainly closely related to the cultural turn. The leading statement on gender as an analytical category comes from Joan Scott. For her,

[1] This is surely why the groundbreaking and important "Women's History" seminar at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, has not changed its name to "Gender History." The result is an uneasy compromise in which the famous seminar retains its older name while hosting numerous papers on gender and masculinity. At the time of writing, three papers in the current program explicitly referred to women and three to gender or masculinity.

[2] June Purvis and Amanda Weatherill, "Playing the Gender History Game: A Reply to Penelope J. Corfield," *Rethinking History* 3, no. 3 (1999): 333–38, 335. Some of us working in history departments know that gender history is just as embattled as women's history, however.

[3] Catherine Hall, "Politics, Post-structuralism and Feminist History," *Gender and History* 3, no. 2 (1991): 204–10, 210. See also Purvis and Weatherill, "Playing the Gender History Game."

[4] Judith Bennett, "Feminism and History," *Gender and History* 1 (1989): 251–72, 258.

gender is "the knowledge that establishes meanings for bodily differences."[5] It is deployed in images, texts, and practices to shape meanings, and these meanings then mold people's understandings and experiences. In this vision, to shape meaning is a political act involving the exercise of power that affects peoples' lives. Gender has been not only "a primary way of signifying power relationships," then, but also "a constitutive element of social relations."[6] The history of masculinity intersects with this exploration of meaning in representation. In the introduction to their landmark collection of essays on nineteenth- and twentieth-century masculinities, John Tosh and Michael Roper commented that "masculinity underpins social life and cultural representation."[7] This is why "the history of men" is an inappropriate title for this area: in addition to sounding alarm bells for those who have worked to transform a discipline focused on men to the exclusion of women, the phrase struggles to register the interest in the cultural construction of what it is to be a "man." Yet despite—or perhaps, because of—this cultural bent, the history of masculinity (and gender history more generally) has been preoccupied with questions of power from its inception. To analyze "'manful assertions,' whether of verbal command, political power or physical violence" was a founding objective.[8] Thus gender history—and the history of masculinity—emphatically can and does speak about power. In doing so, these fields are indebted not simply to poststructuralism but to questions originally posed by women's historians. Women's historians have long seen their work as comparative and as employing the category of gender. In fact, if one compares statements from 1985 on what is women's history to statements from 1999 on what is gender history, the two look rather similar.[9] Judith Bennett's manifesto piece on women's history called for the training of women's historians on the question of "the oppression and subordination of women," through a reinvigoration of the concept of patriarchy.[10] As with Roper and Tosh, though with a different emphasis, the common ground is male power.

Nevertheless, historians of masculinity between 1650 and 1800 have not engaged with the question of men's power to the same extent as nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians have. In this brief review of the historiography on masculinity for the period 1650–1800, I will first outline the contours of this field, necessarily surveying only the highest elevations and the deepest depressions. In outlining the historiographical character of men between 1650 and 1800, my main interest is in picking out the key changes and, in particular, the disjuncture between the man of 1650 and the man of 1750. In thinking about how future work might take the history of masculinity forward, I want to suggest that an inclusive and productive history of masculinity for the long eighteenth century after 1650, one

[5] Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1988), 2.

[6] Ibid., 42.

[7] Michael Roper and John Tosh, "Introduction: Historians and the Politics of Masculinity," in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, ed. Michael Roper and John Tosh (London, 1991), 1.

[8] Ibid.

[9] See, e.g., many of the entries in "What Is Women's History?" *History Today* 35 (1985): 38–48. Juxtapose them with the comments in Penelope J. Corfield, "History and the Challenge of Gender History," *Rethinking History* 1, no. 3 (1997): 241–58.

[10] Bennett, "Feminism and History," 259.

that meets the challenges of feminist women's historians, should look to more traditional questions first raised by social historians and historians of women.[11]

THE FOUR PHASES OF MAN

The Household Patriarch

The male protagonist in studies of manhood prior to 1700 is the patriarch in the household. Dictated in works such as William Gouge's *Domestical Duties* (1622) or John Dod and Robert Cleaver's *A Godly Form of Household Government* (1598), both republished later, the vision was of a confessional home that placed the domestic in the wider context of a Christian life. The watchword here was honor, and men's honor accrued from both their own and their women's behavior. The key contribution to this field is Elizabeth Foyster's *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex, and Marriage* (1999), covering the period circa 1600–1700. In a sense, this is gender history in practice—the book is about the relations between men and women and the ways in which their lives were intertwined. It is also very much about power, specifically "the importance that power over women had in the formation of a man's identity."[12] As Foyster argues, "A man's honour depended on exercising control over the sexual behaviour of the women with whom he was associated," and it was this "honourable manhood" that equated with acceptable and normative masculinity.[13] This vision of masculinity is very much about patriarchy in the classic sense of the rule of the father in the house.

It is also clearly about sex. Household order required a man to be in control of his dependents, but before a man could govern he had to have control of himself. An important expression of this was sexual probity: "Without the core of a worthy sexual reputation, all other contributing facets to male reputation could be meaningless."[14] Yet men's sexual control extended beyond themselves. Foyster argues that "in the seventeenth century the key to male power in the household was thought to be sexual control of women as well as the self."[15] In this way, Foyster's book dovetails with Laura Gowing's important work of women's history, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (1996). Focusing on the period 1570–1640, Gowing argues that household order and order more generally were based disproportionately upon women's sexual behavior: "Men's and women's sexual behaviour," she states, "were conceived to be incom-

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[11] Judith Bennett—prompted by the publication of Joan Scott's *Gender and the Politics of History*—worried that the emphasis of gender history was on symbols, not material realities of inequality. See Bennett, "Feminism and History." This is part of a revival of the "social," as evidenced in Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, "Introduction," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, ed. Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley, 1999). The same is called for in Elizabeth A. Clark's "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the 'Linguistic Turn,'" *Church History* 67, no. 1 (March 1998): 1–31.

[12] Elizabeth Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex, and Marriage* (Harlow, 1999), 3.

[13] Ibid., 207.

[14] Ibid., 10.

[15] Ibid., 4.

mensurably different."[16] There is a difference in emphasis, though. While Gowing sees the burden of household order resting upon women, Foyster and others retain an emphasis on the responsibilities of men.[17]

The system, in which manhood relied in part on maintaining household order, expressed and constituted by the sexual behavior of women, was an inherently unstable one. Bearing the stamp of the sociologist Robert W. Connell, it is based on the notion that the ideal of household patriarch was a form of "hegemonic masculinity," one that is "culturally exalted" and that embodies the legitimacy of patriarchy.[18] However, many men did not occupy the position of household patriarch. The everyday life of households precluded such simple power relations; the responsibilities of women in the household, particularly if they earned money on which that economy depended, could lend them considerable power.[19] In addition, marriage—the main route to house-holding status—was not enjoyed by all men at all times. Figures show that 82.8 percent of men aged between twenty and twenty-four and 54.5 percent aged between twenty-five and twenty-nine were single.[20] Moreover, as women were deemed the lusty sex never entirely in control of themselves, female sexuality was a precarious basis for male identity.[21]

The gap between ideals of patriarchal manhood and social practice has given rise to a model of anxious masculinity in the historiography of this period.[22] This model of fragile patriarchy features in the much broader analysis of men and masculinity carried out by Anthony Fletcher in *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England, 1500–1800* (1995). Fletcher explicitly takes up the challenge thrown down by Judith Bennett to study the mechanisms of patriarchy in specific contexts and to pay close attention to how patriarchy mutated, adapted, and survived; his is an analysis of "a single historical patriarchy."[23] Fletcher argues that a new ideology of elite masculinity was necessary because the "previous foundations of English patriarchy, resting in scripture and an outdated reading of the body, were simply inadequate to new social conditions."[24] As men faced a series of anxieties—about women's sexuality, about men's inability to fulfill patriarchal models of the household—a revised and reinvigorated patriarchy developed, which had at its core new ideas about sexual difference.[25] While at the beginning of this period "gender was

[16] Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford, 1996), 3.

[17] David Turner's *Fashioning Adultery: Gender, Sex, and Civility in England, 1660–1740* (Cambridge, 2002) is another example of the latter.

[18] Robert W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge, 1995), 77.

[19] See Bernard Capp, "Separate Domains? Women and Authority in Early Modern England," in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, ed. Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle (Basingstoke, 1996), 126–27; Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003), 195–205.

[20] Peter Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations* (1977; Cambridge, 1978), table 1.4, 26. These figures are based on a population of 7,837 from six parishes between 1599 and 1796.

[21] Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, 55.

[22] Karen Harvey, "'The Majesty of the Masculine Form': Multiplicity and Male Bodies in Eighteenth-Century Erotica," in *English Masculinities, 1660–1800*, ed. Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen (Harlow, 1999), 194.

[23] Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England, 1500–1800* (1995; New Haven, CT, 1999), xvi.; Bennett, "Feminism and History," 263-66.

[24] Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination*, 345.

[25] Ibid., 401–2, 407.

not rooted in an understanding of the body, at the end it was becoming so."[26] Women were no longer lusty but passionless; they were also incomparably different from men. Both factors facilitated a more assured and grounded patriarchy.[27]

Libertines and Fops

The household patriarch has a strictly early modern—by which I mean sixteenth- and seventeenth-century—feel about him. He moves to the wings by the later 1600s, as a very different manly character briefly steps out. The latter is exemplified by John Wilmot, earl of Rochester. The obscene and bawdy poetry by Rochester, inextricably linked to his bisexual exploits, typifies the courtly libertinism of the Restoration period.[28] Libertinism has a long history. It has antecedents in the sodomite of the Renaissance, while during the later eighteenth century the tradition was embodied by men such as John Wilkes and Francis Dashwood.[29] Yet these flamboyant figures are particularly dominant in the history of masculinity from the 1670s. Rochester is the exemplary rake—a man who engages in sex with boys or women. Immediately after the Restoration, there were a small number of aristocratic, bisexual libertines or rakes and a group of effeminate but heterosexual fops. Same-sex desire, therefore, was not connected to effeminacy. However, as charted by Randolph Trumbach, between about 1709 and 1750 effeminacy did become linked to same-sex desire. Over time, the fop merged with other male characters—the molly and the queen—for whom effeminacy was a marker of their desire for other men, finally becoming the (modern) exclusive male sodomite.[30]

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[26] Ibid., xvi.

[27] This model of fragile patriarchy, of anxious manhood based in the household and built partly upon female sexuality, has been challenged by Alexandra Shepard. Her work deals with the period from 1560 to 1640 and is strictly outside the chronological bounds of this review; she is also contributing to this issue. It is worth noting, however, her claim that "manhood and patriarchy were not equated in early modern England" (*Meanings of Manhood*, 1). Patriarchal manhood was not the model to which all men aspired; indeed, some men self-consciously resisted or challenged this ideal. The differences between men, Shepard demonstrates, were as significant as the differences between men and women. Manhood was forged as much between men as between men and women, and this allows a shift in work on seventeenth-century manhood away from heterosociability and toward homosociability.

[28] Randolph Trumbach, "The Birth of the Queen: Sodomy and the Emergence of Gender Equality in Modern Culture, 1660–1750," in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. M. B. Duberman, M. Vicinus, and G. Chauncey (Harmondsworth, 1989); Rachel Weil, "Sometimes a Sceptre Is Only a Sceptre: Pornography and Politics in Restoration England," in *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity*, ed. Lynn Hunt (New York, 1994). See Harold Love, "Refining Rochester: Private Texts and Public Readers," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 7 (1996): 40–49, on the changing reputation of Rochester based on his poetry.

[29] The key text regarding Renaissance sodomites remains Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London, 1982). See also Alan Bray, "Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England," *History Workshop Journal* 29 (1990): 1–19; Alan Stewart, "Homosexuals in History: A. L. Rowse and the Queer Archive," and Nicholas F. Radel, "Can the Sodomite Speak? Sodomy, Satire, Desire, and the Castlehaven Case," both in *Love, Sex, Intimacy, and Friendship between Men, 1550–1800*, ed. Katherine O'Donnell and Michael O'Rourke (Basingstoke, 2003). A queer version of this article is possible, but the focus is, I admit, almost exclusively heterosexual. For libertinism in the later eighteenth century, see John Sainsbury, "Wilkes and Libertinism," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 26 (1998): 151–74; Anna Clark, "Wilkes and d'Eon: The Politics of Masculinity, 1763–1778," in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 1 (1998): 19–48.

[30] Trumbach, "Birth of the Queen," 165. See also Randolph Trumbach, "Sex, Gender, and Sexual Identity in Modern Culture: Male Sodomy and Female Prostitution in Enlightenment London," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2 (1991): 186–203.

This shift, argues Trumbach, had considerable significance for gender roles. From around 1720, the effeminate sodomite or molly emerged as the character against whom heterosexual men were defined. The dominant, hegemonic man is no longer defined by his house-holding status and his good domestic and Christian order but by the fact that he desires and has sex only with women. This argument has been successfully criticized by Philip Carter, who argues that the fop was a social type quite distinct from the sexual category of molly. To be a fop did not mean you were understood to be a sodomite. Rather, a fop was a vain, self-obsessed character who failed to live up to the goodwill, ease, and integrity of the polite gentleman.[31]

The Polite Gentleman

The differences between Trumbach and Carter are significant. In part, they turn on contrasting ideas about what was central to eighteenth-century masculinity, sexual identity or social behavior. The historiography of this period gives prominence to the latter: the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries feature a distinctive manly type, as the polite gentleman moves center stage. In contrast (perhaps in reaction) to the libertine, the polite gentleman strove for restraint. In contrast to the fop, the polite gentleman was easy and thoughtful of others. In contrast to earlier models of civility, the polite gentleman came from the middling sort, not the aristocracy; politeness and commerce went hand in hand. The key work on politeness and masculinity is Philip Carter's *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society* (2001). For Carter, politeness was a form of social refinement that linked virtue with civility, thus producing a new concept of social interaction at the turn of the eighteenth century.[32] It provided "a model of refined masculinity balancing sociability with integrity and self-command."[33] Refinement is a keyword in many histories of eighteenth-century masculinity. David Turner has analyzed the uses of polite language in representations of adultery, arguing that civil codes of values affected the way men were depicted and their fortunes in courts of law.[34] Elizabeth Foyster has demonstrated how earlier expressions of strong emotion by men were reined in and how anger was increasingly regarded as a vice.[35] Robert Shoemaker argues that between 1660 and 1760 men increasingly solved disputes through talking rather than through physical violence, owing to refinement, sensibility, and the Reformation of Manners campaign.[36] One of the key components of polite masculinity was self-government or equanimity.

For some writers, another key component of politeness was mixing with women. Polite conversation could depend on women's presence: they softened the language

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[31] Philip Carter, "Men about Town: Representations of Foppery and Masculinity in Early Eighteenth-Century Urban Society," in *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*, ed. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (Harlow, 1997).

[32] Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain, 1660–1800* (Harlow, 2001).

[33] Carter, "Men about Town," 53.

[34] Turner, *Fashioning Adultery*, 23–50, 172–93.

[35] Elizabeth Foyster, "Boys Will Be Boys? Manhood and Aggression, 1660–1800," in *English Masculinities*, 151–66.

[36] Robert B. Shoemaker, "Reforming Male Manners: Public Insult and the Decline of Violence in London, 1660–1740," in *English Masculinities*, 133–50.

of men, facilitating smooth social interaction.[37] Indeed, David Hume argued that men were subject to three forms of government: of the state, of self-control, and of "heterosexual interaction or 'conversation.'"[38] Women could gain status and respect from these new codes of behavior, and the compunction to be polite in mixed company could sometimes—though not always—work to encourage civility in the domestic world, as recent work on domestic violence has suggested.[39] Yet politeness is generally seen as a social lubricant for public encounters outside the home. At some of these venues—assemblies, gardens, and town walks—women could certainly play an important role. As Michèle Cohen explains in her contribution to this issue, there were problems with politeness, and one source of great anxiety was the impact that too much female company might have on a man. Adjacent to the polite gentleman loomed the effete, too fashionable macaroni and the overrefined fop. These characters were central to a raft of satires, and they demonstrated what could happen if a man spent too much time in women's company or took politeness to extremes. These figures were all situated by contemporaries "within the public arenas of eighteenth-century polite society."[40] Just as some advocates of politeness argued it was best shaped without female involvement,[41] so some of these venues were almost exclusively male. This is true of the venue that has interested historians of politeness most, the coffeehouse.[42] Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, invariably crowned as the key pioneers of politeness for the middling sort through their periodicals, identified the coffeehouse as the prime site for shaping male polite behavior.[43] Coffeehouses were, historians tend to agree, used by only a very few women as places of leisure or recreation.[44] It is true that (despite the strong association of politeness with women) those historians who explore the impolite in the coffeehouse also emphasize not "male coffeehouse manners" but the high-profile presence of some women.[45] However, the historiographical coffeehouse world remains a masculine one. The leading man in the

[37] Carter, *Men and the Emergence*, 190–91; Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1996).

[38] Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies, 1680–1780* (New York, 1998), 88.

[39] Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, CT, 1998), 195–223; Margaret Hunt, "Domesticity and Women's Independence in Eighteenth-Century London," *Gender and History* 4 (1992): 10–33; Elizabeth Foyster, "Creating a Veil of Silence? Politeness and Marital Violence in the English Household," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 12 (2002): 395–415.

[40] Quotation from Carter, *Men and the Emergence*, 140. See Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity*, 116–56, on macaronis in Vauxhall Gardens.

[41] Carter, *Men and the Emergence*, 66–67.

[42] Ibid., 37–38.

[43] Brian Cowan, "What Was Masculine about the Public Sphere? Gender and the Coffeehouse Milieu in Post-Restoration England," *History Workshop Journal* 51 (2001): 127–57, 136.

[44] Steven Pincus, "'Coffee Politicians does Create': Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture," *Journal of Moden History* 67 (1996): 807–34, esp. 816; Helen Berry, "'Nice and Curious Questions': Coffee Houses and the Representation of Women in John Dunton's *Athenian Mercury*," *Seventeenth Century* 12 (1997): 257–76.

[45] Markham Ellis, "Coffee-Women, 'The Spectator' and the Public Sphere," in *Women, Writing, and the Public Sphere, 1700–1830*, ed. Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Cliona O' Gallchoir, and Penny Warburton (Cambridge, 2001), 37, 39; Helen Berry, "Rethinking Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England: Moll King's Coffee House and the Significance of Flash Talk," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 11 (2001): 65–81. Quotation from Cowan, "What Was Masculine about the Public Sphere?" 141.

historiography of eighteenth-century masculinity is the polite gentleman in the social or public sphere. As Carter has concluded, "The prevailing eighteenth-century concept was of masculinity not just as a social but a sociable category in which gender identity was conferred, or denied, by men's capacity for gentlemanly social performance."[46] Such a concept could allow for several competing masculinities, but these were all—in current literature at least—made in relation to politeness.

As an interlude, let us consider the terms that historians employ in this field. Exemplified by Fletcher's early chapter "Effeminacy and Manhood," on the sixteenth century, and his subsequent chapter "The Construction of Masculinity," on the late seventeenth century and onward, historians swap the study of manhood for the study of masculinity around the time of the Glorious Revolution.[47] The chapter headings in Foyster's book on "manhood" are instructive about the kind of quality being analyzed. The reader is guided through the processes of "Constructing Manhood," "Asserting Manhood," "Lost Manhood," and "Restoring Manhood": manhood is something to be lost and gained. Similarly for Fletcher, "Manhood was thrust upon boys," like heavy outer garments.[48] This is in line with his argument that manhood is not an internalized subjectivity in the seventeenth century and that the key to difference during this period was "outward gender significations."[49] Fletcher moves self-consciously from "the concepts of manhood and the 'weaker vessel'" to "masculinity and femininity in something like a modern sense."[50] Vital to this shift for men in particular is the move from honor to politeness. Historians are agreed that the nature of honor changed in the eighteenth century, becoming less a matter of public reputation and more a matter of individual conscience.[51] Paul Langford also claims that honor became outmoded, certainly as an aristocratic ideal.[52] This shift lies behind Fletcher's changing terms. Manhood was based upon honor, a quality made externally and constituted by "reputation in the eyes of others." Masculinity, by contrast, was "an internalized identity—an interiority of the mind and emotions—as opposed to a sense of role-playing."[53] Fletcher wonders whether the term "masculinity," first recorded in 1748, reflected the need to speak about precisely this "more rounded concept of the complete man."[54] Certainly politeness was deemed by contemporaries as distinctive because it attempted "a synthesis of inner and outer refinement."[55] Something of the implications of this shift in language can be felt in the next scene.[56]

[46] Carter, *Men and the Emergence*, 209.

[47] Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination*, 83–98, 322–46.

[48] Ibid., 87.

[49] Ibid., 83.

[50] Ibid., xxii.

[51] Robert B. Shoemaker, "Taming of the Duel: Masculinity, Honour, and Ritual Violence in London, 1660–1800," *Historical Journal* 45, no. 3 (2002): 525–45, 542, 545.

[52] Paul Langford, "The Uses of Eighteenth-Century Politeness," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 12 (2002): 311–31.

[53] Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination*, 322.

[54] Ibid., 323.

[55] Philip Carter, "Polite 'Persons': Character, Biography and the Gentleman," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 12 (2002): 333–54, 335.

[56] One exception to the lack of interest in seventeenth-century affect is queer history. Work on early

Politeness is joined by another variety of refinement in mid-century, sensibility. Sensibility was in part a response to the posthumous publication of the earl of Chesterfield's letters to his son in the mid-1770s, which revealed the extent to which the outward display of politeness could be manufactured and cut loose from inner morals. For its advocates, sensibility was a more authentic alternative to politeness that reinvigorated the link between inner virtue and outer manners.[57] It stressed the emotional and physical displays of men's sensitivity and their inner spontaneous feelings.[58] There had always been connections between politeness and religion, between decorum, gentility, and Christianity. Indeed, Lawrence Klein has described a "polite religion" in early eighteenth-century England.[59] But the stress on feeling, sympathy, and emotion in sensibility could be more easily tied to Christian compassion.[60] After all, John Wesley, founder of Methodism, claimed that faith was not "a train of ideas, but also a disposition of the heart," while "the manliness of emotion was elevated by Evangelicalism."[61] Indeed, Jeremy Gregory has shown that religion was an important component of ideal masculinity between 1660 and 1830.[62] Yet Gregory's work stands alone, and the history of eighteenth-century masculinity bears the stamp of older stories of secularization.

Toward Etiquette, Taciturnity, and Domesticity

In the final two decades of the eighteenth century, politeness becomes less dominant. Three related developments are important: the move from politeness to etiquette, changing ideals of masculinity, and the emergence of the concept of domesticity. First, guides for social behavior moved from a stress on easy equanimity to carefully detailed rules of etiquette comprising rules of dos and don'ts.[63] Second, a growing emphasis on domesticity seemed to threaten masculinity with too close a relationship with women and led to an imperative to prove masculinity through male-only encounters. Michèle Cohen has charted this process, arguing that from the 1760s politeness was questioned and roughness and taciturnity celebrated in a homosocial context, and in her contribution to this issue she outlines in greater detail how politeness was effectively replaced by chivalry.[64] Third, the domesticity that Cohen discusses in the 1760s is central to the vision of masculinity presented in Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (1987). This book constitutes a

modern sodomy and on same-sex relationships is struggling to locate both the identity and intimacy of men. Several of the essays in O'Donnell and O'Rourke, eds., *Love, Sex, Intimacy, and Friendship between Men*, are about affect. In this regard, queer history is leading the way.

[57] Carter, "Polite 'Persons,'" 336.

[58] Carter, *Men and the Emergence*, 29.

[59] Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1994), 10.

[60] Carter, *Men and the Emergence*, 41–44.

[61] John Wesley quoted in John Miller, *Religion in the Popular Prints, 1600–1832* (Cambridge, 1986), 36; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (1987; London, 1992), 111.

[62] Jeremy Gregory, "*Homo Religious*: Masculinity and Religion in the Long Eighteenth Century," in *English Masculinities*, 85–110.

[63] Carter, *Men and the Emergence*, 214.

[64] See also Michèle Cohen, "Manliness, Effeminacy, and the French: Gender and the Construction of National Character in Eighteenth-Century England," in *English Masculinities*, 44–62.

watershed in the historiography on masculinity. Its integration of class and gender is echoed in some works on the earlier period, but in this respect *Family Fortunes* really looks forward to the nineteenth century. The centrality of religion and the home to this work of gender history revives questions that seem to have been left stranded in the seventeenth century.

FROM A CULTURAL HISTORY OF MASCULINITY TO A SOCIAL HISTORY OF MEN?

The historiography I have outlined narrates a move from a rough-and-ready mid-seventeenth-century man to a refined eighteenth-century man. In fact, this is a story of the rise of modern man, and the modern man has a modern body. Underpinning many accounts of changing masculinities are claims for a change in distinctions between male and female bodies: the boundaries between men and women were becoming clearer.[65] Key to this is an alleged shift from a one-sex to a two-sex model of sexual difference and the redefinition of women as domesticated and sexually passive.[66] This shift has been integrated into histories of masculinity and used to explain the reorientation of ideal manhood away from honor based on the control of wives' sexuality and toward those things that lay outside marriage and outside the home. "Masturbation, pornography, sex with prostitutes, and sex with other men" emerged as the markers of men who had stepped outside hegemonic masculinity.[67] The change in bodies is key: only with the emergence of a two-sex model of sexual difference, in which women were redefined as passive, passionless, and domesticated, and wholly different from men, did patriarchy now appear more secure.[68] These transformations—in bodies, masculinity, and patriarchy—were driven by a cosmic shift from one worldview to another: "ancient scriptural patriarchy" was replaced with "modern secular patriarchy."[69] The periodization of masculinity in this period therefore runs along quite familiar lines of the disenchantment of the early modern world, of emerging modernity, of the civilizing process.

The shift from a one-sex to a two-sex model was perhaps key to books of science and medicine (though even that is debatable), but it does not account for the sum of attitudes toward bodies and sexual difference between 1650 and 1800. In a range of genres that discussed the body, there was considerable flexibility in the relationship between male and female, and much of an apparently traditional nature persisted. Change in ideas about bodies was short-term and insubstantial, rather than long-term and transformative.[70] Moreover, Dror Wahrman has suggested that even as sex was fixed in some quarters, gender was rendered only more mutable, at least until gender categories also became fixed in the last two decades of the

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[65] Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen, "Introduction," in *English Masculinities*, 22.

[66] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA, 1990).

[67] Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, 212, 213–14.

[68] Ibid., 213.

[69] Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination*, 407, 295.

[70] Karen Harvey, "The Substance of Sexual Difference: Change and Persistence in Eighteenth-Century Representations of the Body," *Gender and History* 14, no. 2 (2002): 202–23, and "Gender, Space and Modernity in Eighteenth-Century England: A Place Called Sex," *History Workshop Journal* 51 (2001): 158–79.

eighteenth century.[71] The implications of these more complex understandings of both sex and gender for the history of masculinity are substantial. They shake the foundations of the new and secure eighteenth-century patriarchal ideology and demand a new analysis of the everyday workings of male power.

This story of a shift from the anxious patriarch to the more assured polite gentleman can also be challenged on the issue of the dominance of politeness. The degree to which politeness is part of a modernizing story is illustrated by Carter's description of the rise of politeness as the "male civilising process."[72] But why does politeness dominate the period from the late seventeenth century? In part, this obviously reflects the extent to which this new and distinctive form of refinement was a key eighteenth-century paradigm. The pervasiveness of polite culture was impressive.[73] Yet the historiographical prominence of politeness may have a great deal to do with the centrality of cultural history to the study of the eighteenth century. Paul Langford claims there were two modes of politeness— the Addison and Steele *Spectator* mode, in periodicals, didactic literature, and fiction, and the Shaftesbury mode, after the philosophical writings of the third earl of Shaftesbury.[74] If the first is the domain of cultural historians, the second is the domain of intellectual historians; many historians of politeness discuss both.

For a long-term history of masculinity, at least, the dominance of politeness is problematic: it differentiates the eighteenth century from the seventeenth and the nineteenth, periods about which historians of masculinity are posing similar questions. Lawrence Klein has recently insisted that polite culture was used by specific people in specific places.[75] This can help us take the analysis forward, rolling back politeness in the history of masculinity. It helps us think about who and where was polite culture; it also helps us think about who and where was not polite. There are places—geographical and social—that were not dominated by politeness, and where alternative codes of masculinity may have operated without reference to politeness. Politeness was "a quintessentially urban concept," for example, and representations of rural men suggested a self-conscious resistance to politeness.[76] Nor was politeness socially democratic. Paul Langford argued that refinement allowed bourgeois men to vie in the pursuit of genteel conduct, regardless of education and background, though more recently he has argued that politeness was practiced by the lower orders.[77] Carter also claims that the idea of the "gentleman" was not limited to the social elite and that politeness had "cross-class

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[71] Dror Wahrman, "Percy's Prologue: From Gender Play to Gender Panic in Eighteenth-Century England," *Past and Present*, no. 159 (May 1998): 113–60, and "Gender in Translation: How the English Wrote Their Juvenal, 1644–1815," *Representations* 65 (Winter 1999): 1–41.

[72] Carter, *Men and the Emergence*, 116.

[73] Lawrence E. Klein, "Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century," *Historical Journal* 45 (2002): 869–98.

[74] Langford, "Uses of Eighteenth-Century Politeness," 312.

[75] Klein, "Politeness and the Interpretation."

[76] R. H. Sweet, "Topographies of Politeness," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 12 (2002): 355–74, 355; see also Shoemaker, "Taming of the Duel," 526. See David Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT, 1992), 100, on rural resistance to politeness.

[77] Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727–1783* (Oxford, 1989), 463ff., and "Uses of Eighteenth-Century Politeness."

influence."[78] Certainly, Lawrence Klein has developed this point, arguing that we need to think of "polite society not as a certain segment of society but rather as the entirety of contemporary society insofar as it was influenced by politeness."[79] Politeness was a resource that various groups could tap into. But it is as yet unclear that this extended to the laboring poor, for example, because in gender history the lower orders are explored only as the nineteenth century appears on the horizon.[80] The eighteenth-century working man has been neglected in recent literature, in contrast to an older social history concerned with conflict and hierarchy. The field has changed little since 1991, when E. P. Thompson chastised eighteenth-century historians for their restriction of their concern to the polite and the commercial, ignoring the laboring poor. "Let us leave them happily in their bazaar," he commented disdainfully, "exchanging their surprising cultural products."[81] There is a need for more attention to be paid to status, sorts, and class in the history of masculinity, in part in order that comparisons over time be possible. The range of men who appear in consistory court defamation cases in Foyster's book, for example, are not of the same social group as the legal student or the Anglican clergyman in Carter's work.[82] This undermines any attempt to draw a line from the seventeenth-century patriarch to the eighteenth-century polite gentleman.

If politeness drew on "a new richness of domestic expressiveness and a proliferation of settings for public performance," it was surely circumscribed—after all, the resources of new consumer goods and the assembly room were not necessarily enjoyed by all.[83] Should politeness be linked to the middling sort, then, as William Blackstone's famous reference to a "polite and commercial people" suggests? The eighteenth century is certainly no longer seen as the aristocratic century; on the contrary, the dominance of the middling sort in eighteenth-century historiography—whether externally defined as a social group, internally defined by shared values, or as a polemical tool—is palpable.[84] Politeness must be seen in this context. But it is illuminating that Margaret Hunt's important work on gender and commerce in the middling-sort family demonstrates the extent to which boys were

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[78] Carter, *Men and the Emergence*, 6, and "Men about Town," 39.

[79] Klein, "Politeness and the Interpretation," 897.

[80] The important works are by Anna Clark. See her *Women's Silence, Men's Violence: Sexual Assault in England, 1770–1845* (London, 1987), and *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (London, 1995). Tim Meldrum's *Domestic Service and Gender, 1660–1750: Life and Work in the London House* (Harlow, 2000) is also useful. Works on later periods include Sonya O. Rose, *Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England* (Berkeley, 1992).

[81] E. P. Thompson, "Patricians and Plebs," in *Customs in Common* (1991; Harmondsworth, 1993), 18, 19.

[82] Foyster's book *Manhood in Early Modern England* is based largely on court depositions. She discusses this on pp. 10–15. Carter uses a range of sources, but his discussion of Dudley Rider and John Penrose is based on Rider's diary and Penrose's letters. See *Men and the Emergence*, 164–83.

[83] Klein, "Politeness and the Interpretation," 898. Peter King suggests, though, that the "consumer revolution" was demonstrated in the possessions of the very poor. Peter King, "Pauper Inventories and the Material Lives of the Poor in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," in *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640–1840*, ed. Tim Hitchcock, Peter King, and Pamela Sharpe (Harlow, 1997).

[84] For a helpful review of how the early modern middling sort has been identified, see Henry French, "The Search for the 'Middle Sort of People' in England, 1600–1800," *Historical Journal* 41, no. 1 (2000): 277–93.

socialized into "thrift, hard work, and the acquisition of business-related skills" but fails to mention politeness.[85] Rational self-discipline, rather than refinement, was the key for some middling-sort men, and it was likely to have been the most proficient and hardworking of such young men who staffed the growing bureaucracy of the fiscal-military state.[86]

Administratively, culturally, and militarily, Britain was forged during this period, yet there is little work on the period's relationship between war and masculinity. It is clear, however, that military and naval campaigns had considerable impact on discussions of masculinity and politeness in particular. During this period, either setbacks in conflict or the cessation of victorious combat could spark debate about what kind of masculinity would most effectively serve the British nation, and these debates were particularly vociferous in the decades following England's declaration of war on Spain in 1739 and the wars of the Austrian Succession, which began the following year.[87] Writers of erotic skits complained that "the dainty Hands of our present pretty Men" were unfit for "the Barbarous, rude, rough Work" of war.[88] In this context, certain military and naval men could become attractive heroes. Admiral Edward Vernon, who captured Porto Bello in the Caribbean from Spain in November 1739, was celebrated with festivals the length and breadth of England. Vernon gained a reputation as a vigorous and hearty commander and set himself apart from "those fine Gentlemen, who are afraid of letting the Wind blow upon them for fear of blowing the Powder out of their Wigs" and who, Vernon supposed, might not "bear the smell of Gun-Powder."[89] In contrast, effigies of Admiral John Byng, the commander who tried to relieve Minorca from the French in 1756, were defiled and burnt in numerous ceremonies across the country. Significantly, these effigies were dressed "with a lac'd Coat and Hat [and] fine Wig," or "most finically dress'd, and emblematically ornamented, to shew the reverse of a Hero."[90] Byng represented the effeminate, Frenchified aristocrat, opposed to the tough and potent middling ranks in whose hands Britain's imperial future lay.[91] As early as the 1730s, then, softer forms of masculinity were seen to put Britain in peril. Rarely explored by gender historians, the naval and military contexts in which some men's masculinity was forged suggest limits to the hegemony of politeness.

Politeness was not men's guiding light in the middling-sort home, as work already referred to on domestic violence also suggests, and it did not govern all social interactions. Certainly, violence in general decreased during this period. However, the duel continued to flourish until the 1840s, though recent work

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[85] Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680–1780* (Berkeley, 1996), 48.

[86] See John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688–1783* (London, 1989), 104–9, where Brewer discusses the skill and expertise of the excisemen, for example.

[87] See Karen Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* (Cambridge, 2005), chap. 4, for further discussion.

[88] Vincent Miller [pseud.], *The Man-Plant; or, A Scheme for Increasing and Improving the British Breed* (London, 1752), 38.

[89] Quoted in Nicholas Rogers, *Whigs and Cities: Popular Politics in the Age of Walpole and Pitt* (Oxford, 1989), 237.

[90] Quoted in Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (Cambridge, 1995), 180.

[91] Ibid., 188–90.

demonstrates that the significant reduction of injuries and fatalities in duels during the eighteenth century was in part due to "the adoption of ideals of politeness by elite men."[92] Yet women writers in the eighteenth century were ambivalent about masculine politeness, questioning the extent to which there had been a shift from "sanctioned violence to refinement."[93] Peter Clark's account of British clubs and societies before 1800 alerts us to the continuing presence of traditional forms of male sociability, holding out as politeness and sensibility came and went.[94] There might be a history of the public sphere in which politeness is a mere footnote. Certainly, the history of homosociability and good fellowship cannot be contained within refined parameters. Eighteenth-century men read erotica in groups, for example, aping refined forms but relishing smut and innuendo.[95] Indeed, politeness could be integrated more fully into the history of sexuality. There is little work that unites men's social and sexual roles in the context of politeness, nothing that tries to marry the Paul Langford world of polite and commercial people with the Roy Porter vision of the liberation of the libido.[96] Sex is seen in tension with politeness, as when James Boswell wrestles with the tensions between his ideal of "pretty man" and the sexual character of blackguard, because he inhabited a world in which "manly behaviour was defined less by sexual prowess than such qualities as self-command, independence, dignity and politeness."[97] Sex has also been seen as a dark underside of politeness, as when Anthony Fletcher presents politeness as a façade behind which lay hedonism.[98] But the polite gentleman never has sex. If we can unite the sexual with the social for eighteenth-century men, it may facilitate a comparison with the earlier house-holding man of sexual probity.

A reconsideration of politeness is important in allowing an assessment of the shift from seventeenth-century manhood to eighteenth-century masculinity; this in turn might allow us to think about change and periodization. We can also pose new research questions. One significant omission in the historiography for eighteenth-century masculinity is home and household. I do not propose replacing politeness with another all-embracing model, but putting eighteenth-century men back in the home allows us to compare them with their seventeenth-century ancestors more readily.[99] One of the reasons the post-1700 historiography departs so considerably from the pre-1700 work is because the latter tends to place men in the home and the former tends to place them in social spaces such as the coffeehouse. David Turner's recent book also goes some way toward bringing eighteenth-century men into the home, while Elizabeth Foyster's recent work links an older historiography on nineteenth-century domestic violence with the

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[92] Shoemaker, "Taming of the Duel," 544.

[93] Laura L. Runge, "Beauty and Gallantry: A Model of Polite Conversation Revisited," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 25, no. 1 (2001): 43–63, 44.

[94] Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1500-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 2000), 203.

[95] Harvey, *Reading Sex*, chap. 1.

[96] Compare the contrasting visions of the eighteenth century in Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, and Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth, 1982).

[97] Carter, "Men about Town," 129.

[98] Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination*, 345, 346.

[99] Anthony Fletcher's coverage in *Gender, Sex, and Subordination* is, I think it is fair to say, much better for the seventeenth century.

earlier period.[100] Yet generally the emphasis is largely homosocial rather than heterosocial. This is surprising. John Tosh continues to emphasize the importance of the home to the study of middle-class nineteenth-century masculinity, but there is nothing for eighteenth-century men that tries to achieve what he does in *A Man's Place* (1999).[101] Yet an apparently older discourse of economy remained powerful during the eighteenth century, and integral to this are concerns for men's power in the home. In this context, the concerns of seventeenth-century patriarchs in their little commonwealths appear not so distinctive after all. Indeed, Tosh has singled out household authority as one example of "enduring masculinity."[102] Focusing on eighteenth-century men in the home has further dividends. First, it would facilitate a truly holistic gender history, enabling historians of masculinity to join with women's historians for whom domesticity is a key concept. The argument that women were increasingly restricted to home and household during this period has been fiercely and convincingly challenged. Amanda Vickery has pointed out that the economic developments supposedly underpinning these changes were uneven, while Linda Colley has interpreted the vociferous commentary on women's proper domestic roles as a reaction to women's increasing public gains.[103] Nevertheless, a historiographical interest in women as mothers and managers of the family before 1800 is not matched by an equally legitimate interest in men as fathers and economists.[104] Second, examining men in the home enables us to ask about eighteenth-century men and religion, filling a yawning chasm between the religious governors we have for the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Finally, a focus on men and household would allow us to reunite the history of masculinity with a revived social and economic history of proto-industrialization and the Industrial Revolution, one that is geared for questions about gender, wealth, politics, and class. Of course, studying men and the elite of the middling home is easier than studying the plebeian home, and ideals of domesticity are profoundly affected by social rank. Yet some workingmen did write about their house and time spent in the domestic interior.[105]

The history of masculinity for the period 1650 to 1800 currently traces a move from a rough-and-ready seventeenth-century manhood, perhaps resting on control over women's sexuality, but anxious to defend patriarchal authority in public, to a polite and civil eighteenth-century masculinity. I contend that this shift from seventeenth-century man of honor to eighteenth-century man of refinement may

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[100] Turner, *Fashioning Adultery*; Foyster, "Creating a Veil of Silence?"

[101] John Tosh, "What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain," *History Workshop Journal* 33 (1994): 179–202, "The Old Adam and the New Man: Emerging Themes in the History of English Masculinities," in *English Masculinities*, 217–38, and *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, CT, 1999).

[102] Tosh, "Old Adam," 223.

[103] Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres: A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *Historical Journal* 36 (1993): 383–414; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven and London, 1992), 237–81.

[104] For example, the chapter "Prudent Economy," on women as domestic managers, in Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, 127–60, could be matched with an equivalent investigation into men as housekeepers.

[105] See, e.g., the autobiography of Benjamin Shaw. Alan G. Crosby, ed., *The Family Records of Benjamin Shaw, Mechanic of Dent, Dolphinholme and Preston, 1771–1841* (Chester, 1991), 32–33 and passim.

in large part be a product of the different kinds of men sought by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century historians, and the different questions these historians ask of their subjects. We are destined to find modern man in the eighteenth century because of the places we choose to look. We study men in the public space of the urban coffeehouse, for example, and we tend to divest these men of their faith. We still know too little to argue for an ancien régime of masculinity, but we have certainly overstated a modernizing sea change.

There are other ways to think about change in the history of masculinity. There are signs of a cyclical pattern. The later eighteenth century seems to have brought a revival of older modes of manhood, suggesting that the dominance of politeness was relatively short-lived, sandwiched between early modern and nineteenth-century ideals that had much in common. This points to another way of imagining change, because it suggests there is plenty of evidence for continuity. Certainly some things have endured through the move from manhood to masculinity, including a core notion of self-discipline and an (often specifically English) roughness that remained while codes of manners waxed and waned. A third suggestion is to think about flashpoints in the history of masculinity. Here, drawing closer connections between discourses of masculinity on the one hand and social and political events on the other becomes profitable. Notwithstanding the capture of Porto Bello in 1739, the late 1730s and early 1740s brought a series of defeats to Britain, all set against the backdrop of intensifying opposition to Robert Walpole's administration. This period witnessed an intensification of fears about English masculinity in an international context, which fed into alarmist comments about effeminacy and male fertility.[106] This was prompted by a number of factors, including Britain's ignominious defeat to Spain during the War of Jenkin's Ear in 1739, a mortality peak across Europe in the early 1740s, and a new interest in botany that discussed plant sex life in terms of heterosexuality.[107] An older idea of crisis at one level may still have some purchase, when set against other levels— and patterns—of change.[108] Such visions of change in the history of masculinity emerge from an analysis that keeps in play questions about meaning in representation but returns to issues of power and patriarchy first raised by feminist women's historians, thus producing a social history of men to complement our cultural history of masculinity.

[106] Carter, *Men and the Emergence*, 130–31; Harvey, *Reading Sex*, chap. 4.
[107] John D. Post, *Food Shortage, Climatic Variability, and Epidemic Disease in Preindustrial Europe: The Mortality Peak in the Early 1740s* (Ithaca, NY, 1985); Londa Schiebinger, "Gender and Natural History," in *Cultures of Natural History*, ed. N. Jardine, J. A. Secord, and E. C. Spary (Cambridge, 1996), 166–67.
[108] Laura Gowing challenges this idea of crisis in *Domestic Dangers*, 28–29, arguing instead that gender "is *always* in contest." We must allow room to talk about intensifications in debates, though.