Fashioning Adultery

This book provides the first major survey of representations of adultery in later seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England. Bringing together a wide variety of literary and legal sources – including sermons, pamphlets, plays, diaries, periodicals, trial reports and the records of marital litigation – it documents a growing diversity in perceptions of marital infidelity in this period, against the backdrop of an explosion in print culture and a decline in the judicial regulation of sexual immorality.

In general terms the book explains a gradual transformation of ideas about extra-marital sex, whereby the powerfully established religious argument that adultery was universally a sin became increasingly open to challenge. The book charts significant developments in the idiom in which sexually transgressive behaviour was discussed, showing how evolving ideas of civility and social refinement and new thinking about gender difference influenced assessments of immoral behaviour.

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Past and Present Publications

General Editor: LYNDAL ROPER, Royal Holloway, University of London

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For a list of titles in Past and Present Publications, see end of book.
Fashioning Adultery

Gender, Sex and Civility in England, 1660–1740

DAVID M. TURNER
To my parents and sister
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Note on the text

Quotations from original sources retain the original spelling, grammar and punctuation. In quoting from legal manuscripts, i/j and u/v have been distinguished and ‘th’ substituted for ‘y’ where appropriate, and the contractions used by court clerks have been expanded. Occasional clerical or printer’s errors in the original sources have been silently corrected. Dates follow Old Style, but the year is taken to begin on 1 January.
Abbreviations

AM The Athenian Mercury


LMA London Metropolitan Archives

LPL Lambeth Palace Library


PP Past and Present


Spectator The Spectator, ed. Donald F. Bond (5 vols., Oxford, 1965)


TRHS Transactions of the Royal Historical Society