

Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender and Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830 (Published for the Omohundro Institute ... History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia)

By Clare A. Lyons

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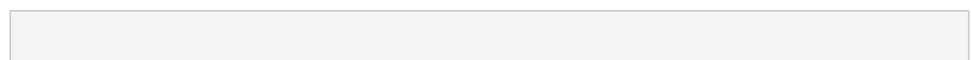
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Placing sexual culture at the center of power relations in Revolutionary-era Philadelphia, Clare A. Lyons uncovers a world where runaway wives challenged their husbands' patriarchal rights and where serial and casual sexual relationships were commonplace. By reading popular representations of sex against actual behavior, Lyons reveals the clash of meanings given to sex and illuminates struggles to recast sexuality in order to eliminate its subversive potential.

Sexuality became the vehicle for exploring currents of liberty, freedom, and individualism in the politics of everyday life among groups of early Americans typically excluded from formal systems of governance--women, African Americans, and poor classes of whites. Lyons shows that men and women created a vibrant urban pleasure culture, including the eroticization of print culture, as eighteenth-century readers became fascinated with stories of bastardy, prostitution, seduction, and adultery. In the post-Revolutionary reaction, white middle-class men asserted their authority, Lyons argues, by creating a gender system that simultaneously allowed them the liberty of their passions, constrained middle-class women with virtue, and projected licentiousness onto lower-class whites and African Americans.

Lyons's analysis shows how class and racial divisions fostered new constructions of sexuality that served as a foundation for gender. This gendering of sexuality in the new nation was integral to reconstituting social hierarchies and subordinating women and African Americans in the wake of the Revolution.



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- Sales Rank: #620154 in Books
- Brand: Brand: The University of North Carolina Press
- Published on: 2006-02-27
- Released on: 2006-02-27
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x 1.08" w x 6.13" l, 1.39 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 432 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

Important and comprehensive . . . likely to become the major point of reference for anyone studying sexual practices and gender politics during the founding of the American republic.--*Eighteenth-Century Life*

No summary of Lyons' argument can communicate the richness of her data or the subtlety with which she wields it.--*Journal of American History*

This fascinating and well-written book describes the making of a 'vibrant pleasure culture' in Philadelphia. . . . Lyons tells a rich story, one full of surprises. . . . An intriguing book that merits a wide audience.--*American Historical Review*

An impressive scholarly accomplishment. . . . So engaging and intriguing that, after four hundred pages, the reader wants more.--*Historian*

Lyons skillfully crafts a book exploring the evolution of power in colonial and early American Philadelphia. . . . [*Sex Among the Rabble*] includes both a convincing thesis and compelling stories.--*Teaching History*

Social history of the highest quality.--*Early American Literature*

Masterful.--*Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*

[A] bold, wide-ranging, and deeply researched book. . . . Refreshingly, it places at the center of analysis the issues of desire and pleasure. . . . The heroes of this book are lusty women shaping their own destinies, satisfying their desires, and pursuing sexual pleasure. . . . Placing provocative interpretations on the table, [it] succeeds admirably.--*Journal of Interdisciplinary History*

Masters the unstable terrain of sexualities and power relations, and gives readers a new, compelling, and

politically significant way to understand the transformations underway in the age of revolutions.--*Journal of the Early Republic*

Summarizing this book does not do justice to its rich detail, attention to race and class, effort to link culture and practice, and fine writing. The amount and quality of information is staggering. . . . With abounding detail it unearths valuable material.--*William and Mary Quarterly*

Review

Lyons has given us a book that has awaited its author for many decades--about sex and the city. The book . . . brims over with a brilliant fusion of social, cultural, and intellectual history, and builds a major thesis--the creation of 'the modern American sexual system'--on an indefatigable exploration of almanacs, poor relief records, court cases, and a host of other sources. . . . More than ever, readers will see how governing sexual relations is one of the most potent weapons of those who would control the city.--Gary B. Nash, University of California at Los Angeles

Historians have long believed that as the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth, the western world's ideas about sex changed dramatically. As to sexual behavior, however, we have remained largely in the dark. Using the records of the early republic's biggest city, Lyons charts the demise of a vibrant 'culture of pleasure'--in practice as well as in theory. . . . Required reading for anyone who wants to understand the foundations of modern sexuality.--Suzanne D. Lebsack, Rutgers University

Lyons's provocative study illuminates a surprising post-Revolutionary world of sexual license in which the old rules have broken down and new individualist behaviors have arisen in their place. But the heyday of the lusty woman . . . was to be short-lived, subdued by the reassertion of sexual order through a redefinition of normative female sexuality.--Kathleen M. Brown, University of Pennsylvania

From the Inside Flap

Placing sexual culture at the center of power relations in Revolutionary-era Philadelphia, Lyons uncovers a world where sexuality became the vehicle for exploring currents of liberty, freedom, and individualism in the politics of everyday life among groups of early Americans typically excluded from formal systems of governance--women, African Americans, and poor classes of whites. Reading popular representations of sex against actual behavior, Lyons reveals the clash of meanings given to sex and illuminates struggles to recast sexuality in order to eliminate its subversive potential.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Katherine Anderson:

As people who live in the modest era should be up-date about what going on or information even knowledge to make these people keep up with the era that is always change and advance. Some of you maybe can

update themselves by looking at books. It is a good choice to suit your needs but the problems coming to you is you don't know which one you should start with. This *Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender and Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830* (Published for the Omohundro Institute ... History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia) is our recommendation to cause you to keep up with the world. Why, as this book serves what you want and want in this era.

Mark Wolf:

Information is provisions for individuals to get better life, information today can get by anyone at everywhere. The information can be a knowledge or any news even a concern. What people must be consider whenever those information which is within the former life are challenging be find than now's taking seriously which one is suitable to believe or which one the particular resource are convinced. If you receive the unstable resource then you understand it as your main information you will see huge disadvantage for you. All of those possibilities will not happen within you if you take *Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender and Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830* (Published for the Omohundro Institute ... History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia) as the daily resource information.

Virginia Higgins:

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