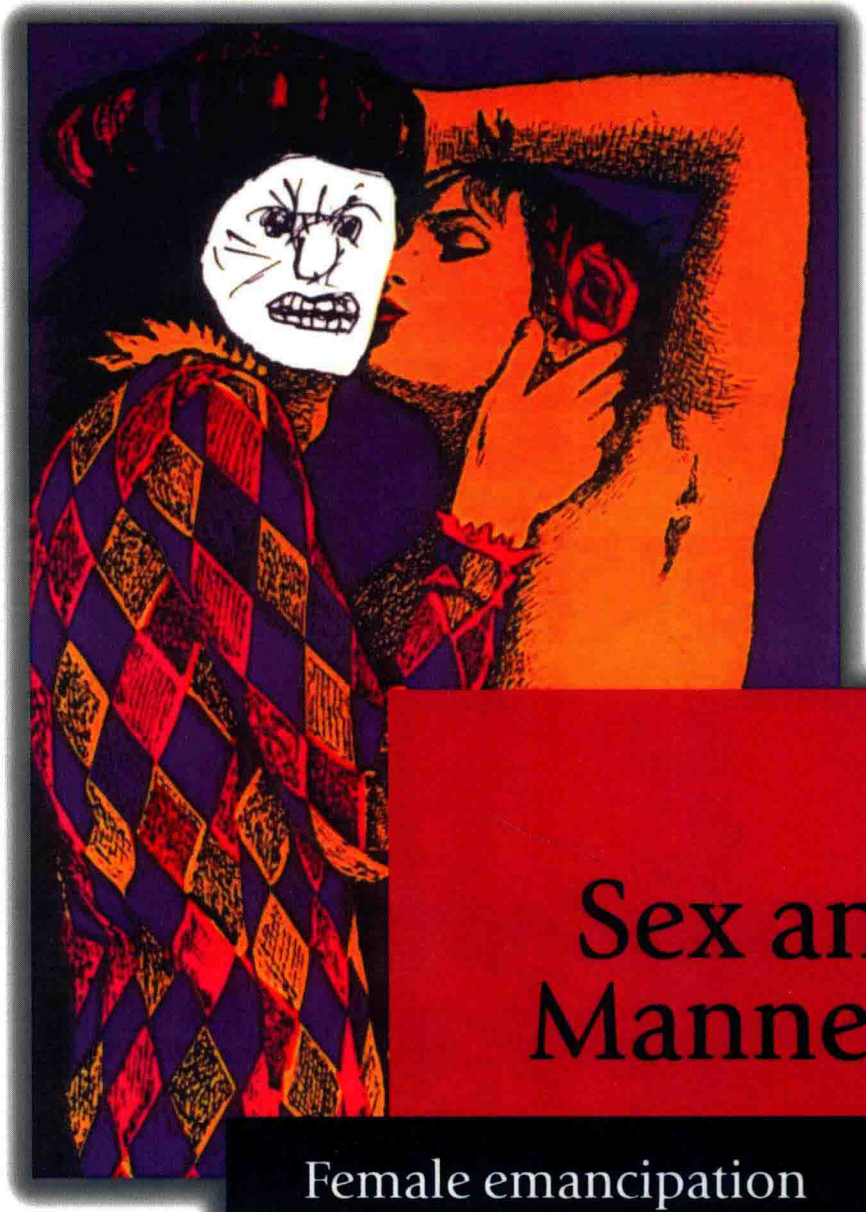

Cas Wouters

Sex and Manners

Female emancipation in the West 1890–2000

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Preface

This book is the result of a larger research project consisting of a study of changes in English, Dutch, German, and American manners books from the end of the nineteenth to the end of the twentieth century. The research design of historical and international comparison focuses on changes and differences in the codes and ideals of manners and emotion management regulating the relationships between people of different rank and different gender. This book focuses on the latter; it presents, compares and interprets national differences and changes pertaining to the relationships between women and men. Special attention is paid to changes and differences in courting and dating. From the perspective of the research project as a whole, many developments presented in this book appear to be specific examples of more general trends and overall processes. In all four countries under study, general trends in all relationships – including those between women and men – have been an informalization of manners, a diminishing social and psychic distance between people, expanding social integration and mutual identification, and an 'emancipation of emotions' implying rising demands on emotion management and self-regulation. Of course, overall processes such as rising social constraints towards self-restraints such as reflection, presence of mind, consideration, role-taking, and the ability to bear and control conflicts, allow for many differences in pace and place. The historical and international comparison in the research project and in this book focuses on these differences as well as on general trends.

My interest in manners and manners books began in the late 1960s. It originated from being impressed by the enormous changes in all kinds of manners taking place at that time, as well as by reading Norbert Elias's The Civilizing Process ([1939] 2000), for which his study of manners books provided a significant empirical basis. In the late 1980s, I expanded my study of Dutch manners books and headed for a systematic international comparative study. I started out to make myself acquainted with the manners books of the three other countries by developing an overview of the literature with the help of existing bibliographies, bringing them up to date where necessary. In the 1990s, I gathered and studied a large selection of etiquette books in several libraries, an important criterion being whether a book had gained wider recognition, that is, whether and how many times it was reprinted. From these and other books, for instance, the large numbers of manners books for sale in the main bookshops in Berlin, London and Washington

at the time of my visits, I extracted whatever seemed interesting from the perspective of the general research questions. It meant being alert and open to anything that seemed typical for a country or a time, anything that would reveal something about the relationships between people of different rank (or class) and sex, and anything that would imply a change in demands on emotion management or, more generally, self-regulation. In addition, I always compared (changes in) the formal and the informal, the public and the private, in such matters as introductions, the use of personal pronouns, 'social' kissing, dancing, dating, visiting hours, etc. Besides all this, I made myself familiar with the body of literature on manners books. The earlier reports of my research project that have been used to write this book are Wouters 1987, 1995, 1998b, 1999c, 2001a, and 2001b.

In the process of getting acquainted with the manners books of the three countries other than the Netherlands, I have profited from a bibliography and a number of excerpts from nineteenth- and twentieth-century English etiquette books compiled by Stephen Mennell, who very kindly supplied me with copies. In order to find my way into the world of German manners books, the (1984) study by Horst-Volker Krumrey has been a great help. It reports changes in German etiquette books between 1870 and 1970. When my research took me to Berlin, I also benefited from discussions with him. An introduction to the history of American manners was found in a book on this subject by Arthur M. Schlesinger (1946). On the American etiquette books of the twentieth century, Deborah Robertson Hodges has published an annotated bibliography (1989). Both that book and conversations with its author have been helpful in studying the American sources. The same goes for an interview with Judith Martin, better known as Miss Manners. In order to understand the development of courting manners in the USA, I have further profited from studies such as those by Bailey (1988), Baltzell (1964), Caldwell (1999), Fass (1977), Gorer (1948), Mead (1950), Rothman (1984), and Waller (1937).

With regard to the period immediately preceding the period covered in my research, the nineteenth century, in addition to a considerable number of manners books from this century that I have studied, I have drawn on many other studies of these sources, among them the studies of English manners books by Michael Curtin (1987), Leonore Davidoff (1973), and Cecile Porter (1972), and the studies of American ones by John Kasson (1990), Karen Halttunen (1982) and Dallett Hemphill (1996, 1999).

My research project and this book owe a debt to Norbert Elias's work in many ways, but in particular for using his theoretical perspective on manners as explained in his *The Civilizing Process*. Elias presented a large number of excerpts from manners books in chronological order, thus revealing an overall directional trend in codes of manners and emotion management. By studying these sources, he

uncovered evidence of long-term changes in these codes as well as in people's psychic make-up. Elias made connections between the changes in personality structure and changes in the social structure of European societies and offered explanations why this happened. With Elias, I understand changes in the code of manners and feeling to illuminate changes in relationships *between* individuals and groups (nation-states, social classes, sexes, and generations) as well as psychic processes *within* people, in how individuals manage their emotions and 'relate to themselves'. This theoretical perspective will be outlined in the introduction that follows, but it will avoid polemics. Instead, I have preferred to apply this perspective in a diachronical and systematical study of original sources from four countries over a period of more than a century. In contrast to the bulk of studies on the history of relationships between the sexes and their sexuality, Foucault's work included, this study is primarily based upon original sources and upon the work of others who use original sources. This book will provide many quotations from manners books. The authentic sound and the eloquence of these various voices in the choir of history function as empirical evidence. I have tried to orchestrate these voices according to current issues or themes, nationality, and historical sequence. As this sequence is not always indicated before each quotation, the reader is advised to keep an eye on the publication date in the reference following it.

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My research project and I owe a lot to Michael Schröter, Berlin, Jonathan Fletcher and Lisa Driver-Davidson, Cambridge, and Irwin and Verda Deutscher, Washington. Not only as hosts when I came to study and collect manners books, but also as partners in discussing problems and data they have been most helpful, particularly Michael Schröter. At some stages of the writing process, I have received comments from Rineke van Daalen, Eric Dunning, Jon Fletcher, Tom Inglis, Richard Kilminster, Stephen Mennell, Jakob Pastoetter, Michael Schröter, Peter Stearns, Bram van Stolk, and Luuk Wouters. I am grateful for their support and valuable comments. My language, including my translations from German and Dutch sources, has been corrected by Eric Dunning and Stephen Mennell. Thanks a lot Stephen! Thanks a lot Eric!

Of course, my work owes a lot to the support of my intimates and friends of whom I would like to mention Truus, Julia, Roos, Sam, and Joost. And it pleases me enormously to dedicate this book to my grandson, Sam Voerman.

Cas Wouters
Amsterdam, November 2002

Contents

1
Introduction

1.1 Perspective and Contents: An Overview

This book reports on a larger comparative study of changes in American, Dutch, English and German manners books from the end of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century. It focuses on changes in the codes of manners and emotions regarding the relationships between women and men, particularly on changes in courting regimes, that is, in the socially organized opportunities for and limitations on courting. From such changes in manners books as disappearing rules for chaperonage and the appearance of new rules for new situations such as public transport, public dances, dates, and the workplace, it will be shown that (and how) women's sources of power and identity have changed and expanded. At the start of the period of research, the last decade of the nineteenth century, these sources were restricted to the home and 'good society', that is, the circles of social acquaintance among people of families who belong to the centres of power, to the establishments (or their functional equivalent down the social ladder). Within the hierarchically layered networks of families that constitute good society, it was women who organized social gatherings such as dinners, visits and parties (they usually still do), thus forming the channels in which reputations are made and broken. In the twentieth century, increasingly large groups of middle-class and working-class women came to be represented in the dominant code of manners and emotions, and came to turn their attention to it. This expansion demonstrates a change in the balance of power between the sexes in favour of women. It is part of more general processes of women's emancipation and social integration.

These trends have not been restricted to the relationships between the sexes: emancipation and integration have apparently involved both the sexes and the classes, and both are characterized by similar part processes: research data show a diminishing social and psychic distance between the sexes and between the classes. Direct references to large differences in power and respect have faded from these sources as well as the more extreme forms of expressing social and psychic distance. Over the whole period covered in the research, manners in general, and manners between women and men in particular, have become more informal, more differentiated and varied for a wider and more eclectic public. An increasing variety of behavioural and emotional alternatives came to be socially accepted. This is one aspect of what I call the twentieth–century process of informalization. At the same time, as the spectrum of accepted emotional and behavioural alternatives expanded, an acceptable and respectable usage of these alternatives implied a continued increase in the demands on emotion management. A major reason is that the ways in which individuals made their selection of behavioural alternatives became increasingly important as a

criterion for status attribution or ranking, for gaining respect and self-respect. Another reason is because the code of manners and emotion management demanded increasingly strict control of displays of superiority and inferiority. Therefore, informalization processes also involve rising social constraints towards such self-restraints as reflection, presence of mind, consideration, role taking, and the ability to bear and control conflicts.

Particularly in the 1960s, the process of informalization spread to increasing numbers of people to include most layers of society: 'emancipation' (of the working classes, of women, of homosexuals, etc.), 'equality', 'permissiveness' and the 'permissive society' became hot topics in public debates. The study of changes in manners books shows that, from the end of the nineteenth century onwards in all four countries under study, there has been a long-term process of informalization, proceeding in a number of consecutive short-term waves or spurts. These occurred in the *fin de siècle* (around 1900), in the 'Roaring Twenties', and in the 1960s and 1970s. Particularly in these short-term phases, the social and psychic distance between people of different social status (including the sexes) reduced significantly while their mutual identification increased. In subsequent (short-term) waves of (re)formalization, the codes of manners returned to greater formality. On the whole, however, the codes continued to allow for greater variation and to attest to a larger spectrum of socially accepted alternatives. To some extent, manners that in the preceding short-term phases of informalization had become more informal, were incorporated into the dominant code. In the twentieth century, short-term phases of informalization have been decisive in determining the direction of the process as a whole. There has been a spiral process of informalization.

The overall dynamic momentum of these directional processes derives from 'the increasing division of functions under the pressure of competition' (Elias, 2000: 433), tending to integrate growing numbers of people in expanding and increasingly dense networks of interdependence. In the period covered by my research, the twin processes of differentiation and integration of social functions have also exhibited a spiral movement. Continued differentiation of functions allowed for diminishing power inequalities and eventually for the collective emancipation of whole social groups. The latter has been characteristic of each short-term phase of informalization. In the other phase, co-ordination and integration of social functions and institutions became dominant (power inequalities stabilized or increased), which limited the emancipation opportunities of individuals and spurred accommodation, a stronger identification with the established and their codes, more open displays of distinction, and (re)formalization. Thus, the transition from one phase to the other was directly connected to the presence or absence of collective emancipation opportunities (see Wouters, 1986, forthcoming).

The changes in popular dances can serve as a visual illustration of the short-term phases of informalization and (re)formalization in a spiral movement. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the popular waltz

visualized the prevalent ideal of relationships of harmonious inequality between the sexes: the man led, the woman followed, and together they created harmonious figures. Each movement on his part presupposed one on her part and vice versa. In the 1920s, the waltz came to be seen as a manifestation of an old-fashioned and more inhibited way of dancing. But, at the start of the century, the waltz still represented a break from earlier group dances such as the popular cotillion. Accordingly, as a dance for two, the waltz was a clear step in the direction of individualization. Actually, the waltz was a prelude to the individualized dancing of the 1920s. At that time, however, the waltz was scorned and new dances (among which the Charleston is best remembered) were welcomed as 'the liberation from the constraints of earlier dance figures ... in one word: one dances individually' (Viroflay-Montrecourt, 192–, II: 68). From the end of the 1920s onwards, the waltz and other such dances regained popularity and they prevailed until somewhere in the 1960s when individualized dancing again became popular and even dominant. In individualized dancing, each individual tries to adjust his or her movements to the music as well as to those of the partner. The dancers follow less of a set pattern; their movements are more informal and more varied. It is less easy to see who is leading and who is following, and it is less predictable. Different shades and gradations of leading and following are possible. If the two partners are well matched, there can very well be moments when all the separate, loose movements nevertheless seem to flow together into joint harmonious figures. This would seem to be the lofty ideal of individualized dancing. In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a revival of the older type of dance styles, and popular style dances like salsa fit the description of the waltz again. Many other dances involved sticking to the style of individualized dancing, and thus the whole twentieth-century trend in dancing runs parallel to the spiral movements in the process of informalization: more variation, enlarged choice of acceptable alternatives.

This example is one of many showing how processes of emancipation and social integration are connected to the process of individualization or, more precisely, to a spiral movement in the 'We–I balance' of individuals in the direction of the I, that is, the I-identity of most individuals took on a stronger emotive charge as compared to their we-identities (the groups people refer to as we) (Elias, 1991; Wouters, 2002). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the I-identity of individuals was highly subordinated to their we-identity, but throughout the century there was a zigzag spiral movement in the direction of emphasizing personal identity rather than group identity. At the same time, the balance of controls shifted from an emphasis on external social controls to an emphasis on self-control. In terms of the example of dancing: the fixed steps, dance-cards, dancing programmes and dance masters that used to regulate and control manners and activities in the ballroom and on the dance floor have disappeared; in dancing as elsewhere, people have come to navigate predominantly under their own steam, that is, they have

come to rely on their own and each other's self-control. Dancing masters, so to speak, have become internalized.

These changes in the balance of controls, in the We–I balance and in the spiral process of informalization can be understood as manifestations of overall processes of social integration. The latter were carried by the successive ascent of larger and larger groups, their increasing status and power relative to other groups, their representation in good society and in the dominant codes and ideals of behaviour and feeling, in an overall style of emotion management, in *social habitus*. As more and more groups and strata became further emancipated and came to be represented in the various centres of power and their good societies, their members came to orientate themselves to the same codes of manners and feeling, and they came to experience all others who did so as belonging to their we-group or nation. This expanding group-feeling or widening identification somewhat weakened the boundaries of class, ethnicity, sex, age and religion, and provided a basis for a rising societal level of mutual trust or mutually expected self-restraints and, correspondingly, a declining level of anxiety, mutual suspicion and hatred.

A quite simple illustration of this ongoing process of social integration consists of the fact that, in the course of the twentieth century, the public of readers of manners books expanded. Authors of manners books in the four societies under study increasingly came to direct themselves to wider middle-class and 'respectable' working-class circles, and thus, manners books came to represent growing numbers of people from more layers of society. This expansion was more or less running in tandem with the social emancipation of these people, and also, of course, with the growth of wealth over broader social layers. The same movement characterized other advice literature: 'the articles in the early decades [of the twentieth century] are aimed at a much more affluent group of women than in later decades, and we would expect the subculture of these affluent women to be less traditional than that of average women' (Cancian and Gordon, 1988: 329). The widening of the circles of the readers of manners books implied a widening of the circles directing themselves to the dominant code, which, therefore, in the course of the century increasingly became the *national* code.

Advice on such topics as courtship, dancing, dating, engagement and marriage reveals the processes of the social emancipation of women and the accommodation of men, together with the inherent pressure to control feelings of inferiority (women) and superiority (men). In my study, I have taken feelings and gestures of superiority and inferiority into special consideration. During the whole period covered in my research, direct references to large differences in power and respect have continued to fade from manners books and other advisory texts. Discussing differences of rank and power, particularly the connected feelings of superiority and inferiority became increasingly embarrassing and taboo. In the 1980s, this stimulated the emergence of 'political correctness' (see Hinz, 2002: 163–5). The trend of increasing social controls towards restricting and avoiding expression

of feelings of superiority and inferiority, whether pertaining to manners between people of different social class, age or gender, can be traced back to earlier ages. And it was continued in the twentieth century. As noted, according to Elias, the dynamic momentum of this directional process derives from 'the increasing division of functions under the pressure of competition.' It comprises 'the tendency to more equal dependence of all on all, which in the long run allows no group greater social power than others and nullifies hereditary privileges' (2000: 433). The dynamics of co-operation and competition tended to integrate increasing numbers of people in expanding and increasingly dense networks of interdependence. Elias showed how these changes in interdependency networks (or figurations) are connected to changes in the sources of power and identity, in the competition for status and a meaningful life, and also to changes in the ways in which people of different class, sex or age demanded and showed respect or feared the loss of it. By the end of the nineteenth century, social superiors and inferiors (in classes and sexes) had become interdependent to the extent that expressing social and psychic distance had to be done in relatively cautious and concealed ways.

Based on the evidence from these sources and from this (Eliasian) perspective, in this book I sketch the expansion of upper-class and middle-class women's sources of power and identity – traditionally restricted to the home and good society (or its functional equivalent in other social strata). In Chapter 2 a sketch of this confinement to the drawing room forms the point of departure from which my study jumps into the stream of history. Indeed, much of the emancipation of women in the twentieth century can be described as women increasingly succeeding in escaping from being confined to their home and good society. I have used this escape as an organizing principle in this book: Chapters 3–6 will focus upon four major ways of escaping from this confinement. One of these ways is that women had to get rid of chaperones; they had to become their own chaperone and to do their own courting (Chapter 6). They also had to gain the right to pay for themselves (Chapter 4), and the right to earn, to have a job and go to work (Chapter 5). In all these respects, transitional phases are observed and presented according to both nationality and historical sequence. At work, for instance, the transition shows changing mixtures of traditional drawing-room manners and business or office manners. The data also show national varieties, either a development in the direction of a synthesis between the two codes or one in the direction of segregation: one code for work settings and another for dates and other social occasions.

Two other ways of escaping home have been going out to take part in sport and going out to dance. From scattered remarks in manners books, it appears that sport as a way to escape parental control and to meet contemporaries of the opposite sex has been quite significant. And it did raise many eyebrows, of course, regarding female participation in 'masculine' sports (see Dunning, 1999; Elias and Dunning, 1986), but not as many as going out to dance did, at least not in manners books.[1] Public dance halls were places of

great excitement because of the novelty of erotic steps to 'wild' music in addition to the lack of parental control over these places where the young could become partners and hold and touch each other for the duration of a dance. To some extent, the brief report of some of these changes in Chapter 3 may be read as a prelude to the changes that get most attention: those in chaperonage and courting. These will be dealt with in Chapter 6 entitled 'Developments in Courting Regimes'. These developments coincide with an emancipation of sexuality. This emancipation consisted of an increasing erotic and sexual presence of mind, more latitude in sexual activity, and a spread of (awareness of) the erotic and sexual aspects of relationships. This emancipation of sexuality depended upon the emancipation of women, that is, upon women becoming more equal erotic and sexual partners in relation to men: a change from being mainly sexual objects towards becoming more equal sexual subjects. The empirical question is: how did these courting regimes change? More specifically: what changes can be found in manners books (and also dating advisories) regarding the socially organized opportunities for and limitations on courting possibilities such as those for being alone together and going somewhere alone together? And what changes can be traced in the manners and ideals regarding meeting when young people are eventually enabled to find and choose a partner and make the transition from parental to marital home?

A leading focus in this study of changing courting regimes is on changes in the codes of manners (ideals and practices) regarding the relationship between the longing for sexual gratification and the longing for enduring intimacy. This balance of sex and love is conceptualized as the 'lust-balance'. Throughout the century, the traditional lust-balance of a lust-dominated sexuality for men and a complementary (romantic) love- or relationship-dominated sexuality for women has been shifting in the direction of a 'sexualization of love' and an 'eroticization of sex', provoking new and more varied answers to the lust-balance question: when or within what kinds of relationship(s) are (what kinds of) eroticism and sexuality allowed and desired? This focus is further discussed in the introductions to Chapters 6 and 7.

Until the 1920s, in all four countries under study, advice concerning courting and chaperonage shows a similar overall development. From the 1920s onwards, however, advice on dating, petting and necking only appeared in American manners books, signifying the development of the dating system in the USA. An attempt is made to describe and explain the rise and fall of the American dating system, and also of its successor, 'going steady', or rather, going 'in and out of circulation' (6.7). In this attempt to understand, interpret and explain the rise of this first western youth culture – which was restricted to the USA in contrast to the second youth culture, that of the 1960s, which was a western international one – attention is paid to the peculiarities of the dating system such as the competitiveness involved and practices such as 'rating', 'necking', 'petting', the 'line', the 'stag line', 'cutting in', and 'getting stuck'. The dating regime was the first social

institution which substituted for and succeeded the previous regime of rather strict parental and family control of courting possibilities. The escape of young people from under the parental wing and the formation of a relatively autonomous courting regime of their own, were a novelty in the history of the relationship between the sexes. Its significance has provided a motive not only for focusing extensively on developments in the American courting regime, but also for concentrating on changes in financial (in)dependence. This is based on a (hypo)thesis developed during this study, namely that the relatively early rise of greater freedom for both sexes in the dating system partly explains the relatively late acceptance of the right of women to pay for themselves and also the development of a double standard of manners, one regulating the relationships between the sexes at work and another one for dating and relating outside work situations. In the 1980s and 1990s, these two codes and ideals still appeared to govern the relationships between women and men. This led to the assumption that this continuity is a social legacy of the dating regime as it developed in the 1920s and 1930s. In addition, this continuity appears to be related to the relatively lower level of social integration in the USA. The structure of this book partly derives from these hypotheses; following them demanded, for instance, presentation of the data on changes in financial (in)dependence first, before those on chaperonage and courting.

My initial comparison of national differences between, and general trends in, courting regimes (6.8) is restricted to the period up to the Sexual Revolution and focuses on developments in the USA and in the three European countries under study. Before the development of the dating system, in all four countries under study young people first had to commit themselves to an engagement before they were allowed to touch and hold and kiss. Up to World War II, trends went in the same direction of an emancipation of the younger generations and their sexuality, and both courting relationships and engagements increasingly came to be charged with sexuality. In the European countries, however, this emancipation was relatively limited. After that war, when it became socially accepted that young people in the European countries would also practise some form of 'dating' and 'going steady', trends in all four countries more or less converged.

Only since the Sexual Revolution have women themselves actively taken part in public discussions about their carnal desires and the achievement of a more satisfactory lust-balance. From then on, increasingly large groups of people have been experimenting between the extremes of desexualized love (sexual longing subordinated to the continuation of a relationship) and depersonalized sexual contact. In an attempt to capture the developments which have taken place since the Sexual Revolution more fully, in Chapter 7 I use data obtained from sociological and sexological research, and draw additional empirical evidence from sexual advice books and from a study of (changes in) the most popular Dutch feminist monthly magazine. The latter source implies (and allows for) a focus on women, the women's movement, the emancipation of women,