INTRODUCTION: GENDERED
GEOGRAPHIES OF VICE

Amanda Bailey and Roze Hentschell

A place sheweth the man.

—Francis Bacon

THE SUBJECTS OF SPACE

Scholars have detailed the vast and sprawling nature of late sixteenth-century London, which as the third largest city in all of Europe daily absorbed a steady influx of strangers from England and the Continent. In 100 years, between 1550 and 1650, the city’s population expanded from 80,000 to 400,000. By 1700, over half a million people lived in London. One historian describes early modern London as “a city packed with people.” Although observations about London’s rapid population growth typically frame discussions of the period’s sweeping economic and social changes, only recently have we begun to relate general trends in urban growth to city-dwellers’ specific, everyday lived experiences. Ian Munro in his book on the crowd, for instance, considers “the phenomenological implications of population growth in the city” and asks us to attend to “the visible and tangible presence of more and more bodies.” In her comparative analysis of early modern London and Paris, Karen Newman explores
Amanda Bailey and Roze Hentschell

a new politics of proximity that heralded an awareness of urban space as constituted by and constitutive of social relations:

The new space of the metropolis, the relentless saturation of what had been only recently empty and open spaces, the promiscuous encounters of the urban pedestrian, and the need to reduce spatial barriers and provide access to newly developing market spaces breached status boundaries and not only generated profound anxiety about order and place but also fueled the production of “the subject as an individual” that will eventually become Jameson’s enlightenment subject and Ferguson’s romantic consciousness.5

In seeking to historicize further how urban subjects experienced the relation between the social and the spatial, Masculinity and the Metropolis of Vice, 1550–1650 asks what the space of the city meant for the doing of gender?6

The central premise of this volume is that “geography matters to the construction of gender.”7 Our understanding of gender as a social relation based in material practice recognizes gender as a function of space. Concomitantly, such an understanding acknowledges that spatial orders are comprehended through the gendered body. Early modern men and women experienced the city as a series of local sites that were gendered in imaginary and concrete ways. As Laura Gowing stresses, “in the early modern city, gendered space was defined not merely through particular configurations of space and time, but also through a sense of the city itself. The city was consistently imagined through gendered personifications, which had their own impact on gendered spatial practices. The early modern image of the city invoked tensions around space, place and gender.”8 On a symbolic level, urban spaces communicated gendered messages—whether by means of overt exclusion or tacit inclusion. On a material level, urban places created the conditions for certain uses and misuses, alliances and identifications, as well as new forms of mobility and constraints that had far-reaching consequences for the articulation and comprehension of gender.

Thus Masculinity and the Metropolis of Vice engages the insights of cultural geographers and social historians to complement a growing body of work on urbanization as a gendered process. This volume also, though, aims to fill a gap in the existing scholarship. While our contributors investigate the gendered spatial practices of early modern Londoners, they do not view masculinity as the static norm against which femininity is constructed.9 In early modern London, access to patriarchal privilege was as varied for men as for women and, as