

Polymorphous Perversity

. . . even in its most simplified and rudimentary form, human sexuality involves the development of motivation through a lengthy and complex process: the positioning, the looks and gestures, the movements and responses; all these are necessary before orgasm occurs. It is all a far cry from the insertion of turgid penises and the depositing of seminal fluid, like squirting jam in a doughnut.

—BRIAN J. FORD, *Patterns of Sex*

We know, from sources other than those recognized by the historians of population, that the European pattern of late marriage existed side by side with prolonged courtship, and that in many countries courtship was not conducted under the watchful eye of a chaperone. Parish records, a kind of evidence which is extensively used by demographic historians, tell us that marriages often preceded christenings by too few months for the conception of the child to have been the result of marital intercourse. A similar pattern prevails in parts of present-day rural Tuscany, and an examination of what it actually entails may prove illuminating for those who are perplexed by the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English pattern.

In some parts of Tuscany (and in many other parts of rural Italy, from Asti to Agrigento), a young man begins to keep company with

SEX &
DESTINY

GERMAINE
GREER

*The Politics of
Human
Fertility*