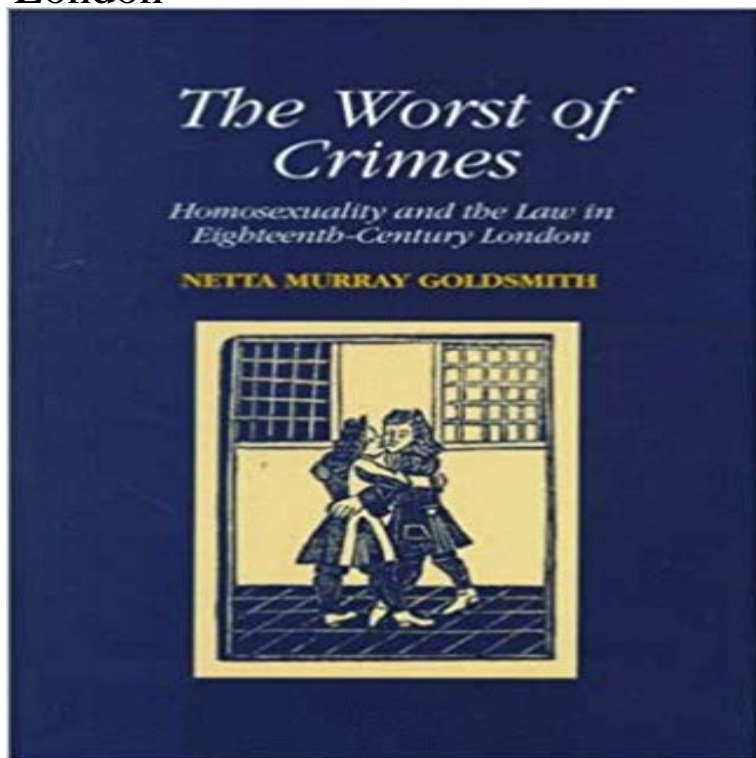


# The Worst of Crimes: Homosexuality and the Law in Eighteenth-Century London



In the 18th century homosexuality became an issue, especially in London with its fast growing population. No one dared to say publicly that it should be tolerated, yet the reactions of men and women to the homosexuals in their midst were varied and complex. Moving from the Old Bailey to the court of Kings Bench, the author discusses the anomalies, inconsistencies and miscarriages of justice that arose as our ancestors decided what to do with defendants accused of the so-called worst of crimes. By studying original trials documents and other manuscripts sources Netta Murray Goldsmith has discovered hitherto unsuspected facts about some cases, including one important instance in which a prosecutor, aided by members of the judiciary, was able to pervert the course of justice. She also shows how reactivated sodomy law put all 18th century male heterosexuals in fear and suggests it led to a distorted concept of masculinity.

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