
International Exposure

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PERSPECTIVES ON MODERN EUROPEAN
PORNOGRAPHY, 1800–2000



EDITED BY
LISA Z. SIGEL

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments vii

*Introduction: Issues and Problems in the History
of Pornography* 1
LISA Z. SIGEL

*Wanderers, Entertainers, and Seducers: Making Sense of
Obscenity Law in the German States, 1830–1851* 27
SARAH LEONARD

*Censorship in Republican Times: Censorship and
Pornographic Novels Located in L'Enfer de la
Bibliothèque Nationale, 1800–1900* 48
ANNIE STORA-LAMARRE

*Anti-Abolition Writes Obscenity: The English Vice,
Transatlantic Slavery, and England's Obscene
Print Culture* 67
COLETTE COLLIGAN

*The Rise of the Overly Affectionate Family: Incestuous
Pornography and Displaced Desire among the
Edwardian Middle Class* 100
LISA Z. SIGEL

*Old Wine in New Bottles? Literary Pornography
in Twentieth-Century France* 125
JOHN PHILLIPS

*A Perfectly British Business: Stagnation, Continuities,
and Change on the Top Shelf* 146
CLARISSA SMITH

<i>Global Traffic in Pornography: The Hungarian Example</i>	173
KATALIN SZOVERFY MILTER AND JOSEPH W. SLADE	
<i>Ideologies of the Second Coming in the Ukrainian Postcolonial Playground</i>	205
MARYNA ROMANETS	
<i>Stripping the Nation Bare: Russian Pornography and the Insistence on Meaning</i>	232
ELIOT BORENSTEIN	
<i>Walking on the Wild Side: Shemale Internet Pornography</i>	255
JOHN PHILLIPS	
Contributors	275
Index	279

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Introduction

ISSUES AND PROBLEMS IN THE HISTORY OF PORNOGRAPHY



LISA Z. SIGEL

Like it or not, many of us come across pornography on a regular basis: naughty pictures wink from the seaside postcard rack, dirty magazines beckon from behind the convenience store counter, and scrambled images moan over cable TV. Full-length pornographic films can be ordered by mail, picked up in video stores, or downloaded over personal computers. One paradoxical effect of this saturation is that many people have come to ignore it altogether: to make a bad play on words, pornography is overexposed. Although cultural crises around sexuality and child pornography panics awaken the issue periodically, relatively few people spend their lives thinking about pornography. Consumers use it, but its production lies outside of public purview. Dirty literature, nude photography, and blue film production form the basis of their own industries but ones rarely highlighted in business school casebooks, the tabloid press, or the pages of the *Wall Street Journal*. In Western culture pornography's ubiquity is relatively new; the lack of state intervention is a product of contemporary society. Indeed, most previous work in the field of pornography has charted the history of legalization as a First Amendment or free speech issue in an extensive body of legal and activist works. While this volume necessarily touches on the processes of legalization, it is more concerned with the cultural impact of pornography, whether legal or not. For, if legal sanctions no longer apply to most pornography, if consumers use it as a matter of course, if an industry has emerged to meet that need, and if the general public has become so inured to pornography as to render it invisible, then why should scholars concern themselves with it?

One answer may be that academics engage the world of pornography to fulfill a basic function of scholarship: to provide a reservoir of information on a topic. If academics want to help answer those questions that the public periodically asks about sexuality and about pornography as a cultural form, then there is a need to study pornography. The emblematic "girlie magazine," for example, is a relatively

new invention; nothing preordained its existence. At a material and technological level the developments of the Western printing press (1436–1437), photography (1827), and photolithography (1890s) made such a magazine possible. Even beyond these technical transformations, however, the iconic display of the naked woman is a relatively late invention and by no means the only one possible. Earlier erotic images certainly featured nude women, but they also featured nude men, couples, clerics, and humans and animals in compromising positions. Furthermore, Western European culture eroticizes certain aspects of the female form—such as breasts—while other cultures do not.¹ The girlie magazine is the result of alignments around issues of gender, consumer culture, technology, and class politics. Charting this emergence is no small task, but it remains necessary if we want to understand what such magazines might ultimately mean. To make a case about the recent saturation of such images, academics need to study such phenomena. Pornography's very presence justifies extended inquiry.

Truisms and generalizations have long stood in for clear studies of pornography; as a result, public policies are based on flawed and faulty information at best and a dearth of information at worst. Pornography, like sexuality itself, is an issue with deep symbolic importance. Pornography became a national problem in the nineteenth century, an international issue by World War I, and more recently, with recent debates about child pornography on the Internet, a transnational concern. Since the nineteenth century those concerned with the growing immorality of the general populace have viewed the spread of pornography as a litmus test. By focusing on the immorality of the masses and the vulnerabilities of the weak, European states reconciled an increasing intervention into private lives at the same time that they guaranteed greater freedoms through an expanding liberalism. Panics about cultural decay, whether at the end of the nineteenth century, between the wars, or during the 1980s, looked at pornography as evidence of and culprit in the problems of modern life.

Joan Hoff has connected the dearth of historical studies on pornography with the proliferation of policies against pornography in the United States. Hoff points out that, although both the Johnson Commission (1970) and the Meese Commission (1986) acknowledged that the historical work needed to be done, neither commission would sponsor the work. Instead, both commissions issued recommendations based on fictional, historical projections. Hoff argues that detailed histories of pornography would interfere with the underlying political agenda of social control.² Pornography became a focal point for concerns about the problems of modernity.

No matter how culturally or politically problematic, pornography remains an important economic enterprise. Sex sells; pornography proves the point. Pornography is a growth industry, and to understand the economics of modern society, particularly the economics of consumer culture, scholars need to engage pornography. The combination of relaxed legislation and rising consumer desires has made pornography a particularly viable industry. Because pornography encompasses shoddy and elegant literature—images that include postcards and photographs, cinema, videos, and even Web-based products—the study of pornography as an economic enterprise explains the selling of sex in the world market. Por-

nographers need relatively little capital to start an enterprise, allowing it to be a cottage industry at the petty level and a consequently inexpensive export. Production and distribution of pornography provide a blueprint for both illegal and legal entrepreneurial endeavors in the consumer age.

At the same time, pornography became a very private affair, integral to the formation of personal, sexual identities. The dearth of legitimate conduits for information about sexuality in the past has guaranteed that information and titillation overlapped. This is especially true for information regarding sexual deviance. Although novels, plays, philosophy, and medicine provide models and meanings for the budding and inquisitive heterosexual, even that heterosexual could find few guides to sex before the sexual revolutions of the 1920s and 1960s, notwithstanding a few popular works. Pornography provided detailed information on topics as varied as the genital kiss, anal intercourse, and multiple partners that legitimate works refused to acknowledge. This type of information, of no small importance to the “normal” male or female, became even more important for those whose desires deviated from the norm. The circulation of texts that acknowledged lesbian, gay, and rampant desires of all kinds helped create communities of deviants, whether existing purely in the minds of users or actually formed through the circulation of texts. The formation of subversive sexual identities and communities can no longer be written off as mere individual deviance, given recent work in feminist and queer studies. Following Michel Foucault’s insights, scholars have shown that sexual identity has been central to the formation of disciplinary regimes. Rather than being irrelevant to the modern state, deviance is one of the central foci of state action and pornography became an avenue to challenge that relationship.

Sexuality constitutes a large part of modern people’s sense of self. Identities, dreams, and fears can be grounded in sexuality, and pornography allows for the examination of these issues. Laura Kipnis argues that “it exposes the culture to itself. Pornography is the royal road to the cultural psyche (as for Freud, dreams were the route to the unconscious).”³ In her model we need to confront pornography and come to terms with the entangled desires it documents in order to understand our society and its relationship to sexuality. Unconscious, subconscious, and occasionally conscious desires are articulated through pornography. In his masterly study of gay male erotica Thomas Waugh argues that the history of gay pornography provides an “acknowledgment of the erotic as a driving force in the gay imaginary.” It is because of this imaginary that the gay community has been pilloried, and the recovery of it remains central to historicizing the gay experience.⁴ If this is true, then recovering desires remain central to the understanding of identity and the individual’s place in the broader society. Understanding either the gay or straight imaginary is an important project if we understand ourselves as beings driven by sexuality. Waugh’s study provides a model of how to uncover the range of desires in a given community, but the diversity of desires makes this a momentous task. The emergence of multiple, overlapping sexual identities speaks to a new orientation between sexuality, the individual, and society.

The simple binaries of male and female, straight and gay, and rich and poor

lose their analytical cogency when placed within the context of European culture. The perseverance of peasant beliefs, the formation of a working-class culture, the refinement of middle-class tastes, and the persistence of aristocratic attitudes not only overlapped, for example, but formed an extended argument around issues of sexuality that complicates any simple binary reading. When members of the middle class spoke about workers as sexually debased and dirty (as they frequently did in the nineteenth century) and when workers parried with allegations about hypocrisy (as they did less frequently but with equal vigor), both sides were taking part in a long-term deliberation about sexual behaviors, attitudes, and meanings. As Annie Stora-Lamarre demonstrates in her essay on the *l'Enfer* collection of pornography in France, these cross-class dialogues formed the backdrop of obscenity debates. The issue of access to ideas about sexuality remained embroiled in the class-based conversation about civic rights and virtues. The development of a broad-based democracy in France's Third Republic rested upon civic virtues that often amounted to the state's assessment of people's abilities to replicate bourgeois patterns of morality. This assessment occurred within the context of the formation of regional and national identities, which in turn happened in the context of international alignments. French pornographers, for example, used ideas about Russian court life to create fantasies about decadence, while Russian pornography developed against allegations of French decadence even while trying to copy French sophistication on sexual matters.⁵ The clamor created by innumerable, simultaneous conversations about sexuality presents the basic stuff of scholarly dreams; documenting these conversations and then understanding what was at stake in them is central to the historian's task.

While pornography provides a scholarly topic like many others in one sense, it remains distinct in part because of the long-term illegality of the sources and in part because conversations about the topic are new and quickly evolving. Few archives collect pornography, and those that do are often subject to political pressures. While states designated many acts in the past, such as smuggling or prostitution, as illegal the articles relating to those acts were not immolated or subjected to a symbolic auto-da-fé, often complete with a sacrificial effigy. Tea drinkers in the eighteenth-century used that product openly despite its smuggled origins; prostitutes took part in broader community life even when their trade was outlawed. Pornography, on the other hand, remained illegal as a product even after the taint of illegal production dissipated and even though institutions such as the British Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale developed collections as did prominent individuals who stood above the law.

The long-term illegality of pornography has stifled generations of scholarship. A wish list for scholarship in this volume would make this embarrassingly clear; Yugoslavia deserves its own article as being nonaligned in pornography as it was on much else; Swedish and Danish pornography still carries a subversive authority that deserves recognition in scholarship; little has been written about modern Italy, despite its designation as the birthplace of both modernity and pornography. Just working across the map of Europe can provide inspiration for future work. Furthermore, certain types of pornography have fallen between

disciplinary gaps. Historians deal best with print sources, and only recently have scholars embraced the study of film either as a teaching enterprise or as a technical topic. Pornographic film has suffered even more than mainstream film by this omission. Visual culture in all its forms deserves a greater focus than it has received; as the world turns toward multimedia, scholars need to follow. The interwar years, as one can see in this volume, deserve more attention than they get. It is easy to understand why other issues such as the emergence of fascism or Stalinism might command attention to the exclusion of concerns such as sexuality, but we should not overlook sexuality or pornography during the period. Sexual dissidents were targets of liberal and radical regimes alike; pornography circulated throughout Europe and its empires and prompted extended discussion at the League of Nations; much of modernism as a cultural movement emerged from the recognition of sexual tensions in society. Thus, while other concerns have dominated scholarship of the period, sexuality remains so embedded that to overlook it seems willfully obtuse, but, with a few important exceptions, such temporal gaps in this volume echo larger gaps in the scholarship.

It is understandable that scholars might shy away from such a risky venture; it remains impossible to speak of complete collections, individual responses, or social attitudes with any solid assurance. Few other historical sources can so quickly get scholars arrested at customs; work on cinematic pornography remains retarded by current legal restrictions on sources, notwithstanding such works as Linda Williams's *Hardcore*.⁶ Scholars who examine pornography do so at their own risk. Grants, funding, promotions—the bread and butter of academic life—are generally not supportive of the study of pornography.⁷ And few other topics are at once so nebulous and heated: the so-called porn wars of the 1980s made pornography a lightning rod for divisions in the feminist community around the issues of sexuality and state intervention in the United States. The academic clamor from these debates remains ongoing. Only since legalization has the study of pornography been separated from political activism, and only since the relative quiescence over the porn wars has there been room for painstaking historical work.

Nevertheless, a number of remarkable works have appeared. Robert Darnton's *Literary Underground of the Old Regime*, Iain McCalman's *Radical Underworld*, and Lynn Hunt's *Invention of Pornography* each focus on the emergence of premodern pornography and place it within the mainstream of emerging Western society.⁸ Darnton established the overlap between Enlightenment philosophers and erotic pamphleteers. McCalman argued that English revolutionaries used pornography as a way to delegitimize the British monarchy, and Hunt demonstrated the centrality of pornography to the political and cultural formation of modern Europe. These studies legitimized pornography as a serious topic, but the methods, approaches, and even subject matter remain open to further debate. Darnton's approach, for example, which centers on the history of the book, has done much to illuminate the parameters of publication and distribution but offers little insight into the cultural meanings of sexuality. McCalman's history of revolutionary movements demonstrates tangible links between political movements and pornography, but the meanings and uses of those erotic publications remain open. In many ways

this generation of scholars legitimized the study of pornography because they were not pornography scholars but, rather, scholars of “serious” issues whose rigor led them to the topic. They established the importance of the topic, but the subject itself remains underexamined, as do questions about whether these early approaches constitute the best way to continue.

Basic analytical approaches vary as widely as methods and foci in the social sciences and humanities. An archaeological approach, established by Michel Foucault and represented here by Colette Colligan, takes a constellation of ideas and traces them backward in time to get at the cluster of associations that they contain at their root. In doing so, archaeological studies of ideas examine often hidden meanings as they circulate in the culture. A traditional, historical approach, as taken by Sarah Leonard, Annie Stora-Lamarre, and me, tends to move forward in time to explore the accretion of ideas and sources. Whereas the emphasis on archaeological examinations is on an encrusted present, the emphasis in historical deliberations is on the past in its own right. A more classical literary approach, used by John Phillips in his article on French literary fiction, examines new literary forms as aesthetic and cultural products. In doing so, Phillips weighs the strengths of such works in aesthetic, rather than political, terms, even as he acknowledges that some of the most important gains made by authors during this period were in the expansion of sexual expression. Katalin Milter and Joseph Slade’s essay and Clarissa Smith’s work examine cultural products through an economic lens. This approach highlights the business aspects of pornographic production and distribution to see the influence of the economy on fantasy. Eliot Borenstein and Maryna Romanets, in looking at Eastern European pornography, foreground the political aspects of pornography that emerged with the dissolution of the Soviet state: Romanets uses a postcolonial approach, while Borenstein uses a more traditional politics of culture approach. Finally, John Phillips uses a queer studies approach grounded in psychoanalytical theory to explore the meaning of gender transmutation. While economic and postcolonial approaches focus on the ways in which politics and economics create sexual options, the psychoanalytical approach explores the meanings of those options.

Clearly, these orientations provide only a beginning to styles and methods of study—for example, the anthropological and philosophical go unrepresented—and each has its own strengths and limitations. Nonetheless, what one can learn from the variety of approaches is the ensuing range of factors that influence sexual fantasy and the variety of effects that emerge from such dreams. Whether one highlights the political, aesthetic, economic, social, or psychological as the purpose of study clearly influences the outcome of analysis. This panoply of approaches can help the study of pornography emerge from the contentious legacy left by previous debates over free speech, social morality, and social protection.

These debates still affect scholarship, however; they have no more disappeared than have the early reasons for studying pornography. Basic definitions of *erotica*, *pornography*, and *obscenity*, for example, remain heavily theorized and heavily contested. To label a source “pornographic” is, in itself, to take a stand. Some scholars, such as Thomas Waugh, use the word *erotica* to avoid the stigma

that the term *pornography* places on people's desires.⁹ Others, such as Joseph Slade, use the term *pornography* to challenge the same stigmas. In their examinations of early modern sexuality Paula Findlen discusses Pietro Aretino and other Renaissance writers as pornographic, while David Frantz places the same writers within the rubric of erotica.¹⁰ These scholars have all produced lucid, thoughtful, and thorough scholarship; more is going on here than shoddy word choice or slipshod editing. The distinction between pornography and erotica might look like semantic nitpicking, but the labels have important consequences that continue to affect policy and perceptions.

While the word *pornography* might have a certain risqué ring, it only emerged during the mid-nineteenth century, when *pornographos*, to write about prostitutes, became *pornography*, salacious art and literature.¹¹ As the new meaning developed, so did distinct ways of dealing with the phenomenon. Obscene art often had a historical legitimacy that saved it from immolation. Instead of destruction, these artifacts were preserved in the oddly evocative "Secretum," or "secret museum," where access was limited to erudite men.¹² Thus, it is anachronistic to use the term *pornography* before the nineteenth century; even during that period, states did not designate the materials as pornographic. A more precise way of discussing such writings and images might be to say that they had erotic elements that the state or church deemed obscene, though this phrase would be misleading, too. When the papacy referred to Aretino's writings as obscene in the sixteenth century, it meant to stigmatize them, much as someone would pejoratively use the term *pornography* today. The word does not need to exist for the category to be meaningful; scholars have shown that an illegal class of materials that promoted sexual arousal preceded the syllogism. Moreover, the use of the phrase "erotic elements deemed obscene" lends itself to an even more important anachronism of schematizing sexual artifacts into distinct categories. The line between what functioned as pornography and what did not has been historically ambiguous.

If the definition of *pornography* remains frustratingly unclear, its implications and effects are even more problematic. Pornography encompasses a wide variety of subjects, from "straight" procreative sex to incestuous unions, it comments upon a wide variety of human endeavors, from masturbation to revolution, and it communicates through a wide variety of mediums, from high literature to mass-produced videos. Some scholars try to establish that pornography serves a social good and thereby save the entire category from the censor's fires; others seek to delineate erotica from pornography and vilify the latter as the root of modern society's decay.¹³ Essays in this volume provide an important counterweight by focusing on those items in which a rough accord was reached. Despite the different approaches to scholarship, the essays take on the task of exploring the production and consumption of desires and grounding these desires in a historic framework. As the authors argue, sexual representations and sexuality itself function in relation to the broader culture. To understand pornography, one must move beyond universalizing definitions or analyses to locate sexuality within complex frameworks that hinge upon changing definitions of obscenity, emerging forms of representations, and shifting cultural contexts. The task of excavating the factors that

contribute to the “pornographic imaginary” demonstrates the complex relationships of sexuality to society during the critical period when sexuality became a focus of state concern.

In her earlier edited volume on the invention of pornography, Lynn Hunt argued that pornography “was almost always an adjunct to something else until the middle or end of the eighteenth century.”¹⁴ Pornography, rather than merely engaging in the libidinal, emerged from the very movements that defined the modern world: humanism, the scientific revolution, and the Enlightenment. Hunt argued that after that crucial point, the balance shifted and the erotic became a main focus of pornography; nevertheless, that does not mean that pornography did only sexual work. Science, imperialism, nationalism, race relations, and familial patterns developed through pornographic discourse; pornography remained enmeshed in the larger contradictions and problems of European society. At the same time, however, pornography had its own hidden history, one that it often wryly self-acknowledged. To understand modern pornography, whether literary, visual, or cinematic, one must acknowledge its debts and the ways it carries with it vestiges of its premodern inheritance.

Early modern pornography developed alongside the introduction of the printing press and the rise of print culture; the establishment of a commerce in learning; a new urban concentration of men, clubs, and societies; and an appreciation of satire and political subversion. The rediscovery of ancient works about sexuality encouraged Renaissance writers and painters to redefine erotic expression. Elite writers such as Ferrante Pallavicino adopted styles from the ancient world and immersed themselves in pre-Christian perspectives on sexuality. Ancient Greek and Roman writers had engaged topics such as priapism, prostitution, and same-sex love; the Renaissance rediscovery of these themes created room for the exploration of sexuality in opposition to ecclesiastical mandates at the same time that writers created works that circulated within and outside the ecclesiastical community. A heightened interest in the human form produced erotic as well as anatomical drawings of the body, and a voyeuristic gaze was incorporated into graphic and literary materials.

At a more popular level writers saw themselves as analogous to prostitutes; they used the trope of the whore to make the wheezing, farting, sexually protean body central to the human comedy, and they welded satire to sexuality. In doing so, they provided entertainment and political commentary by criticizing rivals, religious orders, and social rigidity. Their writings combined erudition and sophistication with the carnivalesque. Pornography also allowed those writers possessing rhetorical prowess to achieve patronage and a literary reputation. The most famous writer of this sort was Pietro Aretino, who deliberately violated religious and social taboos and who consciously commented upon the power of the word to arouse and sometimes deflate the body; he recognized the pornographic even as he created it.¹⁵ Pornography thus emerged at two levels simultaneously, one that served the elites and one that filtered ever downward in opposition to elite hypocrisy.

The adoption of the mechanical printing press contributed to the dispersal of obscene texts. Renaissance pornography became so popular that the papacy ex-

plicitly outlawed recent erotic writings at the Council of Trent (1563), although classical texts remained exempt.¹⁶ In spite of this ban, the Italian style of bawdy writing spread across the Continent. Taken as a whole, Italian pornography combined an attention to ribald and vernacular folk culture with pandering to the tastes of the urbane and wealthy. This combination of bottom-up impulses and top-down access paradoxically made pornography at once politically subversive and socially conservative by simultaneously scrutinizing the links between political and sexual order and limiting the extent of the conversation.

By the seventeenth century an international traffic in sexual ideas linked the intellectual centers of Europe. Because Italy had become the spiritual homeland of obscenity, other European authors paid homage by laying their fictional scenarios there. Italy was more than a geographical expression; it became a style, an orientation, and an erotic Utopia. Thomas Nashe, the English author of “Choice of Valentines,” bluntly stated that he imitated the Aretines.¹⁷ Such tributes suggest the breadth of bawdy learning across the Continent. Although publishers routinely falsified information about locations, authorship, and dates, the fictitious and real information signaled the arrival of a self-aware cosmopolitan sexuality. For example, Nicolas Chorier of Vienna wrote *Aloisiae Sigaeae Toletanae Satyra Sotadica de arcanis Amoris et Veneris* (commonly called *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*) and published it in Grenoble (or Lyon) in 1659 (or 1660). To further confuse matters, he attributed the work to a Spanish woman and the translation to a Dutchman. The text, first published in Latin, was then translated into English and French by the 1680s.¹⁸ Between the fictive and real information, the work touched on the major and minor centers of education, literacy, and wealth and demonstrated the overlap between the realm of pornography and the arrival of a broad sense of European sophistication that was tilting toward Western Europe.

During the eighteenth century pornography spread across the Continent. Not every nation developed an indigenous pornographic tradition—indeed, most countries lacked one at least until the nineteenth century—but each nevertheless had a small pool of pornography that circulated among the wealthy. Establishing the non-existence of a tradition is always dicey, but it appears that little pornography was produced in Germany, Spain, Russia, or Finland; even the Netherlands had only an abortive pornographic tradition.¹⁹ Even in these countries, however, translations and republications continued to appear. David Stevenson’s work on Scottish Clubs during the Enlightenment demonstrates that the circulation of pornography reached from the backwaters of the Scottish countryside to Russia through the links of convivial societies, free trade, and informal ambassadors.²⁰ Pornography linked centers of learning, seeping into the fabric of eighteenth-century society.

Enlightenment ideals such as rationality and natural rights could be validly applied to sexuality. The ongoing rejection of tradition piqued pornographers into considering a sexuality freed from contemporary restraints; free-thinking politics overlapped with free-thinking sexuality.²¹ A legal overlap between philosophy and pornography also emerged from patterns of censorship. By outlawing the works of the *philosophes* and pornographers in tandem, for example, the French government solidified the relationship between the two genres and between the writers

and publishing houses that engaged in illicit trade.²² Like philosophers, pornographers chiseled away at the corrupt foundations of society, including those built around sexuality. They accused the Church of perversity and insisted that it had little right to restrict more mundane sexual practices. Just to stay on everyone's good side, pornographers also made allegations of sexual perversity about the monarchy and argued against a familial (and thus implicitly sexual) rule of succession and for a new social contract. Philosophers such as Comte de Mirabeau and Denis Diderot produced political, philosophical, and obscene writings simultaneously.

The dramatic cultural changes that occurred during the French Revolution—from new attitudes to divorce, the repudiation of the monarchy, and the curtailing of Church control—can be tied in part to the critiques found within French pornography. This type of political pornography reached its apex (or nadir, depending on one's point of view) in the 1790s in France and ebbed after the trial of Marie Antoinette.²³ While many of the political arguments about pornography and many of the themes and tropes it relied on were set by the Revolution, changes in the relationship between society and desire continued to occur with the rise of new forms of representation, new political alignments, and new controls by the state.

Across the Channel, England developed its own pornographic tradition, one that also gained currency in the rejection of older forms of government.²⁴ While English pornography evolved against the historical controversies around religion, governance, and empire, by the eighteenth century these currents merged with a middle-class culture and began to generate significant works such as *Fanny Hill*, or, more formally, *The Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748 or 1749). *Fanny Hill* fit into a broader literary development as it followed the transition from the epistolary novel to that based upon plotting, character development, and description.²⁵ Pornography did not remain isolated; the pornographic novel rose in form alongside the more “canonical” one.²⁶ With the French Revolution, English pornography became more overtly politicized as texts, writers, and ideas were influenced by the wave of revolutionary sentiment that spread across Europe.²⁷ This English tradition of political pornography continued well into the nineteenth century, bolstered by the continued participation of political radicals such as William Dugdale and John and Benjamin Brookes and by their republication of pornographic, political texts. As the Queen Caroline Affair demonstrated, pornography could cross the political divide, serving either radical or conservative masters equally well.

In the German states new immoral books emerged after the Enlightenment tradition during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and generated new definitions of obscenity based on the emerging definitions of bourgeois citizenship, rather than the overlap of politics and sexuality. As Sarah Leonard demonstrates, Germany lacked the philosophical and anticlerical traditions of obscene writing found in France or England but remained aware of the burgeoning of sexual and revolutionary radicalism through the availability of French texts. The overlap between political and sexual enticements were firmly established when Germany began to develop its own canon. The German texts differed from classical “erotic” works by eschewing titillating details, but the police and guilds saw them as

“lewd and immodest” and developed definitions of *obscenity* to counter their circulation.

Leonard shows that German obscenity emerged at a critical period between the Napoleonic Wars and the formation of the German Empire, when older ties and allegiances were broken down and new requisites for citizenship emerged. In this context pornography combined the questioning of sexual and social contracts with critiques of the emerging pattern of bourgeois sexuality. Works such as *Beloved of Eleven Thousand Women*, *Memoirs of Lola Montez*, and *Memoirs of a Singer* raised questions about citizenship, gender, and the erotics of the modern world. In these three examples the key theme of social wandering becomes set against the emerging bourgeois values of hard work, progress, stability, and gender difference. Althing's novel, *Beloved of Eleven Thousand*, follows a downwardly mobile character as he makes his way through a sexually and politically fragmented world. The dissolution of family, trade, and citizenship leave him vulnerable to vagaries of modernity and its seductive forces. *The Memoirs of Lola Montez* recounts the personal history of the dancer and consort of King Ludwig of Bavaria, who promised her citizenship and elevation to the aristocracy before protests forced Montez into exile and the king into abdication. Montez's memoirs denounced radicalism and extolled the value of loyalty in the fragmenting political world. In contrast, Wilhelmine Schroeder-Devriant, a political and social radical expelled from Dresden for her participation in the uprisings in 1848, purportedly wrote *The Memoirs of a Singer*. Her fictionalized memoirs recount the sexual life of the “modern” woman who documents her history for the benefit of “science.” Neither the conservatism of Montez nor the radicalism of Schroeder-Devriant precluded the works' reception as “immoral.” Instead, the definitions of *obscenity* worked across the political spectrum even as pornography, by having characters carve new social and sexual contracts, addressed new political realities. Obscenity, as her essay demonstrates, maintained its status as politically corrupting even as the basis of politics changed.

Despite the changing relationship between pornography and society, as a product, pornography showed great continuity. Pornographers continued to print texts using letterpress, to illustrate them using woodcuts and copper plates, and to sell their works in markets, fairs, and bookshops in the first half of the nineteenth century. Even the texts remained fairly standard. *Fanny Hill*, for example, continued to gain prestige in the nineteenth century, and editions in English, French, Italian, and German poured off the presses.²⁸ Pornographers had an established body of knowledge, a preexisting consumer base, and a repertoire of pirated texts, ideas, tropes, and examples.

By the midcentury, however, three related contextual developments began to transform the trade: the overlap between the sexual and political spheres began to break down, pornographers focused on consumer products, and states across Europe concerned themselves increasingly with moral surveillance of their subjects. As revolutions soured the upper classes on the ideals of radical change, the ties between revolution and pornography began to unravel.²⁹ By the 1860s most governments, including those in England, France, and Germany, began national

campaigns to control their populations through the censorship of sexual ideas. The state intervened with the justification that it needed to help the weak—particularly the young, poor, and female—who remained susceptible to immorality. The essays by Annie Stora-Lamarre, Colette Colligan, and me demonstrate how these topologies emerged in the nineteenth century as oversexed and implicitly corruptible. The focus on hypersexualized women, children, and perverts correspond to the typologies that Foucault delineated as emerging in the modern world. Pornography became another disciplinary regime that overtly said what other forms of discourse both aroused and tried to silence. Pornographic tropes began a new form of political work in the nineteenth century as overt and confrontational politics lost its hold over the expression of sexual ideas.

Symbols that maintained cultural currency were adapted to the broad cultural changes of the period as writers recycled figures and tropes and applied key themes to new circumstances. As Stora-Lamarre demonstrates, the idea and image of the sexually rampant women remained central to French pornography throughout the nineteenth century; despite this dominance, however, the image of women underwent a series of broad transformations. The books of *l'Enfer* written by men and contained by male censors demonstrate a changing conception of female sexuality. These shifts illustrate the cultural memory of masculine desire as the nineteenth century struggled with the impacts of democracy, industrialization, the expansion of consumer culture, and nationalism.

Stora-Lamarre argues that the changing ideals of female sexuality link the broadest debates about the nation to the minutest form of perversion. Early-nineteenth-century works saw sexually voracious women as adventurers who climbed the social ladder. By the 1830s female heroines, whether nubile adults or precocious children, became more voracious and driven by monstrous desires; they no longer controlled their world and their sexuality, but, as early *femme fatales*, were now at the mercy of them. Once driven by great passions, by 1900 female characters became industrialized: sex became reduced to manipulation, and love and lust gave way to mechanization. In France the outpouring from the pornographic press and the importation of works that detailed ever more perverse practices created a crisis in democratic ideals. According to critics, the masses' familiarity with such terrible creatures could only corrupt reason as the crowd gave way to the audience. During the *fin de siècle* it was posited that this debased audience included women who would eschew faithfulness and virtue in favor of lust and excitement. According to this line of reasoning, the absence of morality on the part of men and women would weaken the nation. The control of fictional creatures and their supposedly real-life counterparts became integral to the functioning of the Republic. The early pornographic tradition became caught in the ebb tide of political alignments; having once served the Revolution, by the late nineteenth century it began to limit the efficacy of people's abilities to rule. This mutability gets to the center of debates about pornography's relationship to politics in the modern world: as a consumer product, pornography became unaccountable to political allegiances, even though it had political connotations that remained formidable.

Colligan demonstrates that racialism underwent substantial revisions during

the same period. Early in the nineteenth century abolitionist texts raised the issue of sexual violence for humanitarian purposes, but, once raised, racialized, sexual violence continued to circulate as a trope. Pornographers picked up the implicit sexual tension between denunciation and prurience in abolitionist literature and created a new flagellant, racist pornography out of an older humanitarian tradition. The beaten female slave served many masters: from arousal that wedded titillation to political action, sexual parodies that exploited homoerotic tension through the medium the female body, and chastisements for female aspirations that served as counter-nationalist propaganda. As Colligan demonstrates, sexual exploration divorced itself from the social roots of abolition, allowing the idea of the slave to cross literary forms and remain contextually mutable. The reworking of the slave narrative, in turn, became a strand in the fabric of English flagellation literature. Flagellation, long considered the English vice, emerged at the intersection of a long-standing racialism, an emerging consumerism, and a progressive past; theories of sadomasochism (S-M) that see the practice as playing with power for liberationist purposes need to take this past into their accounts.

In a similar process, in which pornographers made use of preexisting symbols and tropes, incest underwent extensive renovation. Before the nineteenth century the trope of incest was used in negative propagandistic campaigns such as those against Marie Antoinette. In the late nineteenth century pornographers began to develop the theme of incest as a positive pleasure rather than a negative example. My essay charts fantasies of incest in the late nineteenth century and the transference of desire within the family. Incestuous pornography—produced, sold, and read by men—created a fictive access to children’s desires. As readers used such texts to look into the fictional minds of children, the fictional children looked out with longing on the men who read. Children in these works were doubly sexual: they became not only sexual objects, worthy of erotic contemplation, but also sexual subjects who actively desired the attention. By engaging in sexual intercourse with children (often in a forced embrace), adults liberated children’s desires in this model. The shift in the meaning of incest in pornography shows the ways that consumerism made use of existing tensions and tropes to whet, make, and meet emerging desires.

Taken together, the essays by Stora-Lamarre, Colligan, and me show the conservative turn that pornography took over the course of the nineteenth century. As these essays demonstrate, pornography became another path toward disciplining, examining, and enjoying the politically subordinated in European society, a path that complemented patterns of censorship, even as the state justified such patterns based on the purity of those under question.³⁰ It is here that one can see the connection between what are often thought of as individual perversions and broader cultural patterns. Deviance, a modern concept, emerged in relation to the exigencies of consumer culture, shaped and organized by the illegal market. At the same time, this market responded to the broader culture and choreographed the emergence of identities in conflict with the modern state. Gender roles, the family, the racial order, and heterosexuality contained paradoxes that pornography elaborated in ways that both supported and undercut official morality. The state would be hard-

pressed to argue that it supported incestuous rape or racialized discipline, but it remained incapable of offering an alternative logic to the ones that so fully emerged from other, state-sanctioned realms. By shedding its overtly political messages and, instead, contributing to a covert politics of consumption, by ignoring the rules of aesthetics when desirable, adopting them when useful, and satirizing them at every possible turn, pornography counterbalanced the more bourgeois processes of refinement—artistic, ideological, hygienic—that dominated the polite world. The obscene and aboveboard, however, had the same roots in the expansion of culture as an item for consumption.

Inexpensive paperbacks, pamphlets, and photos were joined by postcards, penny-in-the-slot machines, and films encouraging circulation across the class structure.³¹ At the same time, the rapidly expanding European empires provided new opportunities for a popular, symbolic imperialism. Malek Alloula has tied the erotic postcard to the popularity of imperialism.³² Photographs and illustrations from Asia, Central America, and Africa flooded back to Europe, allowing all levels of European society to see concrete images of imperialism and European dominion. Images of naked and partially naked Algerian, “Moorish,” South African, and Caribbean women permeated the metropolises of Europe, corroborating fictional accounts of nonwhite sexuality. Even stamps produced by the imperial governments showed images of naked natives well into the twentieth century. The invention of motion pictures in the 1890s allowed early displays of female nudity, and cinematic pornography emerged with either *Le Voyeur* (1907) or *A l'écu d'or ou la Bonne Auberge* (1908). French filmmakers pioneered the pornographic film, but German and Italian filmmakers quickly followed. These silent films erected few linguistic barriers, becoming staple fare at brothels and traveling between towns in France and, more covertly, airing internationally.³³

Across Europe, states responded to the emergence of consumer pornography by increasing the tenor of criticism against pornography and by emphasizing the vulnerability of suspect populations; both the state and pornography focused on women, on people of color, on children and the young, with ever greater attention. Most European states let the police, the customhouse, and the courts winnow out the obscene on the ground, while organizations and state agencies joined together into international organizations to confront the problem. They lobbied for the passage of new, but largely ineffective, legislation. National governments began to work together, share information, and organize censorship campaigns; these measures hampered but did not end the trade.

The formation of the social sciences between the 1880s and 1920s allowed emerging disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, criminal justice, and psychology to investigate sexuality as an academic pursuit separate from erotica. As social sciences legitimated the objective study of sexuality, *pornography* became a catch-all term to include those works that did not neatly fit within scholarly inquiry. In essence, as legitimating functions broke away from pornography, pornography lost its claim to a social function apart from arousal. Yet a relationship between the newly compartmentalized schemas for addressing human sexuality continued, however much social scientists tried to divest themselves of the stigma

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